

Rhode Island's Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan: Recommendation Guide

As Rhode Island prepares to transition to the new federal education law – the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – we have the opportunity to review and revise many current educational policies and practices in our state. The following represents a summary of the key issues we are considering during this transition. The list below outlines major decisions within ESSA, the federal requirements surrounding that decision, and the current practice in Rhode Island. There are also links to the current recommendations for each consideration point. No recommendations or decisions have been finalized at this date.

Decisions are presented in the categories of: [Accountability](#); [Educator Quality](#); [Supports for Equitable Student Achievement](#); [School Improvement](#)

Accountability

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Questions Under Consideration	ESSA Requirements	Current Practice in Rhode Island	Recommendation
What measures should Rhode Island include in the school accountability index?	The state accountability index , the composite measure used to classify schools, must include multiple measures for performance, including academic achievement on English Language Arts and math assessments, growth in academic achievement, high school graduation rates, English Language proficiency, and at least one other additional measure of school success or student support. <i>§ 1111(c)(1)-(5)</i>	The following measures are currently included in a Composite Index Score for accountability : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of students that meet or exceed expectation on state assessments • Performance gaps between subgroups of students on the state assessment • Growth in percent of students that meet or exceed expectation on state assessments (Elementary & Middle School) • Graduation rates (High School) 	Recommendation
How will Rhode Island hold schools accountable for high school graduation rates in the school accountability index?	States must include a measure of how many students graduate in four years in their high school accountability and may include adjusted cohort graduation rates to include students who take five, six or more years to graduation high school. <i>§ 1111(c)(4)(B)</i>	Rhode Island currently uses a Composite Graduation Rate measure that is a weighted average of four-, five- and six-year graduation rates.	Recommendation
How will Rhode Island include a measure of English Proficiency in its school accountability index?	States must set an expected level of growth in English Proficiency for English Learners and include student results on the English Proficiency assessment within its accountability index. <i>§ 1111(c)(4)(A)-(B)</i>	Rhode Island does not currently include English Proficiency in its accountability index.	Recommendation

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<p>What should the minimum number of students be in a federal accountability subgroup?</p>	<p>States must collect data on federally-identified student subgroups, under ESSA, including the “new” subgroups of homeless, foster, and military-affiliated youth. All metrics within the accountability index must be disaggregated based on these subgroups and each state must identify the minimum number of students for subgroups to be included in accountability and reporting. <i>§ 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi)</i> <i>§ 1111(h)(1)(C)</i></p>	<p>Rhode Island currently requires a minimum of 20 students within any one student group to include that student group within the accountability index for the school.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>How will accountability data be used to classify public schools? How will the index be used to identify schools in need of support and improvement?</p>	<p>Based on the performances of schools on the state accountability index, states are required to “meaningfully differentiate” public schools, annually. States must specifically identify the lowest-performing 5% of schools for comprehensive support and improvement and, for those with consistently underperforming subgroups, targeted support and improvement. <i>§ 1111(h)(1)(C)-(D)</i></p>	<p>Rhode Island currently calculates a Composite Index Score using the accountability metrics and ranks scores to categorize schools. Classification labels for the 2015-16 school year will include Priority, Focus, and Commended.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>What measures should be included on school report cards?</p>	<p>States must design and produce annually a report of each school’s performance, including, but not limited to, metrics within the state-defined accountability index and any classification that it receives. States must make this information accessible to parents and community members and it should be easily understood by the general population. <i>§ 1111(h)(2)(A)-(C)</i></p> <p>States are required to report in a manner and format that is accessible to parents and community members. <i>§ 1111(h)(1)(B)</i> <i>§ 1111(h)(2)(B)</i></p>	<p>Rhode Island currently produces report cards for each school that includes all the data included in the Composite Index Score for accountability, assessment participation rates, and the school’s current classification.</p> <p>School, LEA, and state-level report cards are currently posted on the RIDE website annually.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>

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Educator Quality

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Questions Under Consideration	ESSA Requirements	Current Practice in Rhode Island	Decision Status
<p>How will Rhode Island ensure and measure that low-income and minority children are not served by ineffective, out-of-field, and/or inexperienced teachers?</p>	<p>States are required to identify the measures they will use to determine the proportion of low-income and minority students being served by inexperienced teachers. <i>§ 1111(g)(1)(B)</i></p>	<p>RIDE's plan for ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators was approved by USDoE. Many task level strategies were implemented this year by the Educator Excellence team</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>What can Rhode Island do to support a robust talent management system so that every student has an exceptional teacher and every school has an impactful leader?</p>	<p>Resources will be provided to states and school districts to implement activities to support teachers, paraprofessionals, and other educators. School leaders will have the authority to make staffing decisions that meet the needs of the school. <i>§ 2103(b)(3)</i> <i>§ 2212(e)(2)(C)</i></p> <p>Resources will be provided to states and school districts to implement activities to support leaders. School leaders will have the authority to make staffing decisions that meet the needs of the school. <i>§ 2103(b)(3)</i> <i>§2212(e)(2)(C)</i></p>	<p>RIDE has revised its standards for preparation programs and is implementing a revised approval process to ensure quality and provide feedback for improvement. Rhode Island does not yet have a state-wide, shared understanding of what a talent management system is and how its components work together as an essential element for successful schools.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>Should Rhode Island utilize a small portion of LEA Title II, Part A funds to support statewide effort to prepare and develop effective school leaders?</p>	<p>Three percent of Title II funding may be designated by states for specific state-level strategies related to the training and development of school leaders. <i>§ 2101(c)(4)(B)</i></p> <p>A small portion of Title II funding may be used to establish or expand teacher, principal or other school leader preparation academies run by the LEA. <i>§ 2101(c)(4)(B)(xii)</i></p>	<p>For state fiscal year 2017, RIDE received a state allocation from the general assembly to support leadership activities.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>

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Supports for Equitable Student Achievement

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Questions Under Consideration	ESSA Requirements	Current Practice in Rhode Island	Decision Status
How will Rhode Island support students in typically transient sub-groups?	States must collect data on federally identified student subgroups, under ESSA, including the subgroups of homeless, foster, migratory, and military-affiliated youth . State agencies and schools must collaborate to ensure educational continuity for foster youth and students experiencing homelessness and ensure equitable access to educational services. § 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) § 1111(g)(1)(E) § 1304(b)(3) § 4103(c)(2)(C)	Approximately 5 districts in Rhode Island are granted funds under the McKinney-Vento act to support students experiencing homelessness. Rhode Island does not currently accept federal funding to support migrant students, and therefore does not track these students separately. Identifying and supporting students in foster care and military-affiliated youth is a new federal requirement.	Recommendation
How will Rhode Island support students affiliated with the juvenile justice system?	States must ensure the timely re-enrollment of each student who has been placed in the juvenile justice system in secondary school or in a re-entry program. States must provide opportunities for such students to participate in credit-bearing coursework. § 1414(a)(2)(E)	Students who are placed in the juvenile justice system are given opportunities to earn high school credit through the Department of Children, Youth and Families educational programs. At least 15% of funding for these programs is used to support transition and re-entry into high school.	Recommendation
What will Rhode Island's criteria be for community-based programs receiving funding under the Title IV Part B 21 st Century Community Learning Center grants?	The state will award 21st Century Community Learning Center grants on a competitive basis to support high-quality, effective programs, criteria for which shall take into consideration the likelihood that a proposed community learning center will help participating students meet the State's challenging academic standards and any local academic standards. The state must give priority to schools identified for targeted or comprehensive support and intervention. § 4203(a)(5)(A) § 4204(b)(2)(D) § 4204(i)(1)(A)	Currently, programs receiving 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants must serve students from schools where the majority of students come from low-income families. The grants are awarded based on need, staff quality, program management, evaluation methods, school partner support, and sustainability.	Recommendation
What strategies should Rhode Island take on to support all students	ESSA requires that each state define the strategies they will use to support all students across the state to meet the academic standards the state has set and access a well-rounded education. States are also required to describe how students in each subgroup will have access	RIDE makes every effort to shape state strategies based on the needs of the state overall.	Recommendation

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<p>in having equitable opportunities to meet challenging academic standards?</p>	<p>to these strategies and how federal funds will be consolidated to support the strategies. <i>§ 4103(b)</i> <i>§ 2101(d)</i></p>		
<p>How will the state use the Title IV Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants to support equitable student achievement?</p>	<p>Each state must develop a plan for the use of these funds to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of states, LEAs, schools, and local communities to: (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. <i>§ 4107(a)</i> <i>§ 4108</i> <i>§ 4109(a)</i></p>	<p>This funding is a new offering within ESSA.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>

School Improvement

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Questions Under Consideration	ESSA Requirements	Current Practice in Rhode Island	Recommendation
<p>How should RIDE support LEAs with schools identified for improvement?</p>	<p>The state must provide technical assistance to each LEA serving a significant number of schools identified for either comprehensive or targeted support. <i>§ 1111(d)(3)(A)</i></p>	<p>Currently, RIDE provides technical assistance and facilitates meetings with LEAs and schools to review school improvement plans.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>What should be required of LEAs within their improvement plans for schools identified in need of comprehensive or targeted support?</p>	<p>LEAs must develop evidence-based improvement plans for all schools identified in need of comprehensive or targeted support. All plans must be developed in partnership with stakeholders (ex: principles, teachers, parents) and must address deficiencies in student performance and other metrics within the accountability index. Schools identified for comprehensive support must also include a needs assessment, identify resource inequities, and have their improvement plan approved by the school, LEA, and state. <i>§ 1111(d)(2)(B)</i></p>	<p>Currently, identified schools in Rhode Island are required to develop an annual plan informed by multi-year intervention strategies, chosen from a list provided by the state, and annual targets set by the LEAs.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p>How will RI allocate available federal funds to support LEAs with schools</p>	<p>States may set aside federal funds (up to 7% of Title I) to allocate to LEAs to support schools implementing targeted or comprehensive support initiatives. States may allocate these</p>	<p>Rhode Island annually sets aside up to 4% of Title 1 and allocates these funds (1003a) on a formula basis to support</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>

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<p>in need of targeted or comprehensive support? Will grants be competitive or formula?</p>	<p>funds on a formula or competitive basis and may define funding criteria. States and LEAs have flexibility on how these funds may be used, rather than on pre-determined federal school improvement models. § 1003(a)-(b)</p>	<p>school improvement at low-performing schools. Historically, Rhode Island has also allocated school improvement grants (1003g – which are no longer available in ESSA), as available, on a competitive basis for schools to implement pre-defined school improvement models.</p>	
<p>How can schools exit identification as needing improvement?</p>	<p>States must create exit criteria for schools identified as needing either targeted or comprehensive support and improvement. States must also take rigorous action if a school identified for comprehensive support has not met state-established exit criteria within a state-identified period of time (not to exceed four years). States may also initiate additional improvement strategies in any LEA with a significant number of schools identified for comprehensive support that do not meet the exit criteria. § 1111(d)(3)(A)(i)</p>	<p>Rhode Island’s current exit criteria for “Focus” or “Priority” schools are, respectively, two or three consecutive years of receiving an index score greater than or equal to 50. Rhode Island has continued to support schools with their transformation efforts if they have not yet met the exit criteria</p>	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p>

Closing Note:

Engagement and public input are critical elements of our state planning process. Over the course of the 2016-2017 school year, RIDE will be engaging with the greater education community with critical questions surrounding our state plan, as outlined above. Starting in July 2016, a group of 30 community members will gather monthly as a **Committee of Practitioners** to give the RIDE team input on high-level questions concerning ESSA, to serve as liaisons to the community at large regarding our planning process, and to weigh in on multiple drafts of the Rhode Island State ESSA Plan.

To cultivate widespread input and feedback, RIDE, with the Committee of Practitioners, hosted open **community forums** in November 2016, will launch a **public survey** on April 1, 2017, and will hold a **second round of community meetings** in April and May 2017. Additionally, RIDE has been meeting frequently with **critical stakeholder groups** on pertinent topics to gain understanding and advice on how the state plan can support current practice. A final public comment period will be open in June 2017. RIDE’s internal ESSA Team will incorporate all of this feedback, input, and guidance into several drafts of an ESSA state plan and submit to the U.S. Department of Education for the September 18, 2017 deadline.

To stay up to date on the latest ESSA state planning news, please visit RIDE’s ESSA website at www.ride.ri.gov/ESSA
For questions or comments, please email us at ESSA@ride.ri.gov.