

### Legal Background

The President recently signed into law the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), which requires certain minimum expectations with regard to school accountability in order “to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” Like its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), ESSA requires states to include in their state accountability systems annual measurements of achievement, specific performance indicators, annual differentiation of schools and student sub-groups, and the identification of schools in need of improvement.

Louisiana state law ([R.S. 17:10.1](#)) also requires a public school and district accountability system that:

- Requires and supports student achievement in each public school;
- Provides assurance to the citizens that the quality of education in each public school is monitored and maintained at levels essential for each student to receive a minimum foundation of education;
- Provides clear standards and expectations for schools and school systems so that assessment of their effectiveness will be understood;
- Provides information that will assist schools and school systems in order that energies and resources may be focused on student academic achievement; and
- Requires the assignment of a letter grade to each public elementary and secondary school and school district.

State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) [Bulletin 111](#) sets forth the specific regulations by which the Department of Education and local education agencies shall comply with federal and state laws.

### Transitioning to New Federal Accountability Requirements

ESSA provides for the expiration of federally approved state flexibility waivers on or before August 1, 2016, and the full implementation of updated (per ESSA requirements) state accountability systems with the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. The 2016-2017 school year, therefore, is a transition year in which states may discontinue only activities no longer required by federal law and begin planning and implementing newly required provisions. During this time, states must continue comply with those requirements contained in both the old and the new federal laws, as well as state laws and regulations.

In order to prevent any gaps in providing student and school performance information to educators, parents, and the public, Congress charged the U.S. Secretary of Education with facilitating an “orderly transition” from NCLB to ESSA. For example, throughout the 2016-2017 school year, the U.S. Department of Education has provided guidance to states that they must continue to implement interventions for low-performing schools until new state accountability plans are approved for the 2017-2018 school year and beyond. Any changes to states’ accountability plans during the 2016-2017 school year that are not specifically discontinued per ESSA or per federal [guidance](#) must continue to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Therefore, in accordance with the [plan](#) shared with the state’s Accountability Commission on January 29, 2016, BESE and the Department of Education will continue to implement the present accountability system for public elementary and secondary education schools during the 2016-2017 school year while working with stakeholders on Louisiana’s 2025 Accountability Plan, including provisions responsive to ESSA, for 2017-2018 and beyond as the new federal law requires.