Induction, School Improvement, and Equity in the Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have an opportunity to improve how they organize and sustain support for their teachers, especially in communities with high rates of struggling teachers and low student academic achievement. A foundational piece of this opportunity is the intersection of induction, equity, and school improvement in the law.

Comprehensive induction programs can be used to meet the needs of schools identified for support and improvement and ensure equitable access to excellent teachers for disadvantaged students. ESSA, in statute and regulations creates new opportunities to extend and sustain induction supports.

School Improvement

Under ESSA, the process of identifying and supporting schools identified for support and improvement is different from the structure under the previous law in a few key ways:

- **Consolidation of school improvement funds.** Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the previous federal education law enacted in 2002, school improvement funds were split into two parts: (1) a state reservation of 4% of Title I, Part A funds and (2) a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to states under the Assistance for Local School Improvement program (Sec. 1003(g)). Under ESSA, these funds are allocated entirely through a state reservation of 7% of Title I, Part A funds. Under this structure, states are responsible for allocating all funds and may choose to allocate funds on a formula or competitive basis (Sec. 1003).

- **Increased flexibility in identification and corrective action.** Under ESSA, the school improvement process offers states and districts more flexibility. States can make key decisions impacting how schools are identified for support and improvement, and the strategies used to meet improvement goals are chosen by the district or school within some constraints (Sec. 1111(c)(4)(D) and (d)). In addition, identified strategies must be evidence-based and, for some schools, must be based on a needs assessment.

- **Shift to local control.** Local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools have more authority to determine the plan for improvement and to monitor progress. However, states have some monitoring responsibilities at the school level. These responsibilities include, for example, establishing the exit criteria for some school improvement categories and taking additional action if such criteria are not met in a state-determined number of years (Sec. 1111(d)(3)). This also includes approving, monitoring and periodically reviewing implementation of some school improvement plans (Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)).
With these changes in mind, there are some key elements of the school improvement process under ESSA to consider:

- **Required designations.** Under ESSA, there are two required designations to differentiate school performance, Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools. CSI schools are those schools identified as the lowest performing 5% and high schools that fail to graduate one third or more of its students (Sec. 1111(c)(4)(D)). TSI schools are those in which any subgroup of students is “consistently underperforming (Sec. 1111(c)(4)(C)(iii)).” Another type of TSI school (Additional TSI) is also identified if any subgroup, on its own, would lead to identification of the school for CSI (i.e., lowest performing 5%) (Sec. 1111(d)(2)(C)).

- **Support and improvement plans.** CSI plans are created by the LEA based on a school-level needs assessment, which is approved by the school, LEA, and state, and is monitored by the state. Such plans must also identify resource inequities, possibly including a review of school-level budgeting (Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)). CSI schools must meet state exit criteria within a state-determined number of years (no more than four) or receive additional state intervention (Sec. 1111(d)(3)(A)(i)). TSI schools must create a plan to improve accountability outcomes for those subgroups leading to identification, which is approved and monitored by the LEA. TSI schools must successfully implement their plan with an LEA-determined number of years or there will be additional action (specified in the plan) (Sec. 1111(d)(2)(B)). Additional TSI schools must develop a TSI plan and meet state exit criteria within a state-determined number of years or be converted to a CSI school. Such schools must also identify resource inequities, as CSI schools do (Sec. 1111(d)(2)(C) and (D)).

- **Connection to equity.** The requirement for CSI and Additional TSI schools to identify “resource inequities” creates at least a potential connection with equitable access (Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)(iv) and 1111(d)(2)(C)). The final regulations take this further by defining such inequities to include, among other things, inequitable access of low-income and minority students to ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers (34 CFR §200.21(d)(4)(i)(A) and §200.22(c)(7)(i)).

**Equity**

Under NCLB, states were required to create plans to ensure that poor and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by underqualified, inexperienced, or out-of-field teachers.

In 2014, states were asked to revisit the extent to which equity gaps persist and to engage in a more comprehensive planning process including:

- Considering the root causes of existing gaps
- Designing or describing strategies to address root causes
- Putting forward plan to monitor and assess progress in reducing any existing gaps
ESSA largely maintains the NCLB equity requirements in that the relevant statutory language is similar and is found in the same section of the law. However, ESSA did make a few key changes to these requirements including the following:

- **Eliminated “highly qualified teacher” requirements.** Under ESSA, there are no highly qualified teacher requirements as they appeared in NCLB. States must still provide an assurance that they will ensure that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in a program supported by Title IA meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements (Sec. 1111(g)(2)(J)). They must also report on the professional qualifications of teachers, including those not teaching in a subject or field for which they are certified (Sec. 1111(h)(1)(C)(ix)).

- **Replaced “unqualified teacher” with a new equity term: “ineffective teacher.”** In a provision similar to the one in NCLB, ESSA requires states to describe how low-income and minority students are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. This introduces the term “ineffective” to the equity requirements for the first time (Sec. 1111(g)(1)(B)). ESSA allows states to define this term, requiring only that an assurance be provided that they will make public the methods and criteria used to measure educator effectiveness for the purpose of meeting the equity requirements (Sec. 1111(g)(2)(A)).

- **Connected equity with school improvement.** The requirement for CSI and Additional TSI schools to identify “resource inequities,” described in the school improvement section of this document, implies a link between equity and the school improvement process.

**Induction**

In the United States, 29 states currently require support for new teachers (Goldrick, 2016). Only 15 of these states require support for new teachers in their first and second year, and only nine states require support beyond the second year. Three states (Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa) require a multiyear support program for new teachers, require teachers to complete an induction support program in order to attain a professional license, and provide dedicated funding for induction and mentoring support for new teachers. However, according to New Teacher Center’s Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning survey data, even in states in which mentoring support is required, many beginning teachers continue to report not having a formally assigned mentor and even those who have an assigned mentor often report not engaging in mentoring activities focused on improving instruction.

Dedicated state, federal, and local funding can help promote the development and implementation of quality induction programs as mentoring and induction support can cost thousands of dollars per beginning teacher (Goldrick, 2016). In the New Teacher Center’s most recent review of state policies, it was found that 16 states provided dedicated funding for mentoring and induction support. Five of these states (Illinois, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin) provide limited competitive funding, not universal funding statewide.

International comparisons that show the United States losing ranking as a top-performing nation have led to many studies to understand this decline and to determine how to improve students’ educational achievement. In a 2011 policy paper titled, “What the U.S. Can Learn from the World’s Most Successful Education Reform Efforts,” Dr. Steven Paine and Andreas Schleicher
determined that the most valuable lesson from high-achieving nations is the investment in, preparation of, and continued development of high-quality teachers. The following paragraphs give a few examples of induction and mentoring support in some of the top achieving nations.

Shanghai (China) and Finland, two of the top performers on Program for International Assessment (PISA), place strong emphasis on training teacher candidates in pedagogy during preparation and induction (Tucker, 2011). In Finland, there are no “alternative routes” into the teaching profession. The only way to become a teacher is to attain a university degree. All teachers receive an education of five years or more, and the time is divided almost equally between content and pedagogical training. In Shanghai, although 90% of the preservice training is devoted to content mastery, all new teachers are expected to spend their first year teaching under the supervision of a master teacher who is released from all or most of his or her classroom teaching responsibilities. The master teacher models teaching, observes the new teacher, and provides feedback and intensive coaching.

In Germany and Japan, nations where students regularly score high on PISA and outperform the United States, teachers enter the profession through one or two years of heavily supervised teaching even after completing rigorous preparation programs (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2013). During this supervised period, beginning teachers typically receive “a reduced workload, strong mentoring from master teachers and continued formal instruction before they are given complete control over a classroom” (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2013, para. 5).

Australia and Singapore provide two years of induction support for all new teachers (Le Donné, Fraser, & Bousquet, 2016). In Australia, the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning education reform spans the whole career spectrum of a teacher from training and induction to valuing experienced teachers and supporting aspiring leaders. The new support system includes induction support for new teachers in their first two years of teaching, including release time to participate in development activities such as formal mentoring from an experienced teaching colleague. In Singapore, all teachers attend the Beginning Teachers’ Orientation Program, a three-day induction program conducted by the Singapore Ministry of Education. The program emphasizes the importance of the role of teachers in nurturing the whole child and inducts new teachers into Singapore’s teaching fraternity in the areas of professional beliefs, values, and behaviors. Additionally, as part of the induction process, teachers participate in the Instructional Mentoring Program, a two-year mentoring program with experienced teachers who serve as instructional mentors specially trained on mentoring knowledge and skills.

Opportunities Through ESSA for Supporting Induction

There are two key opportunities for supporting comprehensive induction programs through ESSA, as follows:

- **Title II, Part A state and local activities.** The most straightforward opportunity to support comprehensive induction programs through ESSA is in the Title II, Part A state and local activities. Both states and districts may use these funds to support new educator induction programs that are designed to improve achievement and increase the retention of effective educators (Sec. 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(III) and 2103(b)(3)(B)(iv)).
- **Support and improvement plans.** An additional option for funding comprehensive induction programs may be as part of a strategy for school improvement. However, such strategies must meet the top three tiers of the evidence-based definition to be supported by school improvement funds (Sec. 8002(21)). They also must be part of a support and improvement planning process that meets the relevant requirements in ESSA.

Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of how each of these elements are interrelated and can figure into a strategy to expand and sustain induction supports through ESSA.

**Figure 1. Induction, School Improvement, and Equity in ESSA**
References


