

Initial CLI District Response to 6 Key Elements of the Every Student Succeeds Act: Curriculum—Instruction—Assessment

Analysis of relevant elements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) suggests topics of discussion for the CLI district’s curriculum coordinating council. Although those who prepared ESSA say the act places most responsibility for establishing provisions to ensure school accountability on states, many stipulations included at the federal level do not allow much leeway for creativity or alternative interpretations. It is therefore suggested that curriculum coordinating councils place the **selected relevant topics** found in the table below on discussion agendas, with the expectation that whatever the state ultimately decides will need to fall within the stipulated parameters is incorporated into the district’s response. Familiarity with the entire ESSA document, which speaks to state level options and opportunities, is also advisable.



RELEVANT ESSA STIPULATION	INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLI MODEL	SUGGESTED CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE
<p>Each state’s plan must provide an assurance that the state has adopted challenging academic content standards and aligned academic achievement standards (challenging state academic standards) that include not less than three levels of achievement.</p>	<p>This was written with the knowledge that some states will use national standards such as the Common Core State Standards or Next Generation Science Standards, and others will either write new standards or retain those used during the NCLB era. The ESSA stipulation neither requires nor eliminates the use of state tests in specific subject areas, but obviously suggests the development of local assessments that can classify and record student achievement according to proficiency levels.</p>	<p>A CLI district that has completed all elements of its K-12 curriculum should find it easy to align with any new state standards, since the wording and formatting are already in place. CCC directives to SACs when modified state standards are prepared are to cross-check for wording, especially in terms of measurable verbs and academic content. New or additional high achievement unit outcomes may need to be written. Also, SACs may need to examine the summative assessments and formative assessment categories in instructional planning resource (IPR) documents to ensure the inclusion of point totals or rubrics that meet the “three levels of achievement” indicated in the ESSA stipulation.</p>

INITIAL CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE TO 6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

RELEVANT ESSA STIPULATION	INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLI MODEL	SUGGESTED CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE
<p>Each state is required to adopt ELP (English language proficiency) standards aligned to the state’s reading or language arts content standards. Standards must be aligned to ensure students who meet the standards are on track for postsecondary education or employment.</p>	<p>At this point we cannot be certain how a given state will “align” ELP to its reading or language arts content standards. However, there will doubtless be some kind of proficiency indicator with regard to speaking, reading and writing the English language that includes vocabulary tests measuring how well students understand commonly applied technical terms, or phrases associated with other forms of higher education.</p>	<p>Once a clearly articulated English Language Arts curriculum is established, English language learner specialists can help to identify the additional language needs of English language learners. Those learner outcomes or accommodations would be added to the English curriculum. A CLI district also often develops and uses a vocabulary/spelling proficiency list for each of the grade levels and subject areas, especially at the elementary school level. Teachers are required to include those words in their instructional programs. Building principals would also play a role in working with teachers in improving instructional programs.</p>
<p>Assessments must measure multiple measures of student achievement, including higher order thinking skills and student growth. States are permitted to meet these requirements by administering a single summative assessment or multiple assessments during a school year. Each method must result in a single summative score. Portfolios, extended performance tasks and computer-adaptive assessments are permitted testing practices.</p>	<p>Your state may have already decided on the kind of assessments it will use, or will just continue to use what it already has. The problem is that many older tests do not test for high order thinking or student growth. Mass testing requires mass scoring, which should include the creation of very sophisticated assessment items as well as extensive training for those who evaluate them. This is especially true for portfolios and extended performance tasks.</p>	<p>CLI districts are already acquainted with high achievement unit outcomes that require multi-faceted student responses. They are often used in the summative assessment category of instructional planning resource documents. In fact, the assessments written by CLI districts might serve as examples of how state assessments could be created to measure higher order thinking skills.</p>

INITIAL CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE TO 6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

RELEVANT ESSA STIPULATION	INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLI MODEL	SUGGESTED CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE
<p>Accountability is measured through academic achievement measured by proficiency on annual assessments, which may include student growth for high schools. Allowed in elementary and middle grades is a measure of student growth or other valid and reliable indicator that allows for differentiation in student performance. Progress (in all grades) must be achieved in English language proficiency. At least one indicator of school quality or student success must be deemed valid, reliable, comparable and allow for meaningful differentiation.</p>	<p>Clearly, a one size fits all state assessment of the kind used predominately in the NCLB era would be difficult to use to measure student growth in terms of “differentiation in student performance.” Mixed with the assessment of English language proficiency, it is even more difficult. An indicator of school quality in the context of validity and reliability, and a measure of comparability and differentiation, is difficult to define.</p>	<p>Let us assume that state officials will need to depend on model district and school programs to define and apply the stipulation found here. As with the above response, student growth in the academics and English language can be measured using CLI processes, primarily because they are built on specific and carefully worded intentions for student learning (outcomes/components). CLI’s IPR and teacher use of it will certainly facilitate validity (meeting intended purposes) and reliability (meeting such purposes consistently). Again, the existence of a well-crafted and written curriculum provides a much better chance that comparisons among proficiency scores can be made and differentiations noted in the quality of student learning.</p>
<p>For each school identified as low-performing, districts must develop a comprehensive support and improvement plan that includes evidence-based interventions. The plan should be developed after a needs assessment and the identification of resource inequities in each low performing school.</p>	<p>The assumption in this stipulation is that a district would use an intervention only when a school is low-performing. The more efficacious method would be to have a continuously applied plan to maintain quality among ALL schools, making modifications when evidence indicates implementation problems in those schools which are not meeting expectations.</p>	<p>The CLI Model is already established as an ongoing plan to continuously improve ALL schools in a district, and the data generated by the implementation of that plan makes any deficiencies clear. The academic governance structure of the CCC/SAC system, working in concert with the administrative team and board of education, can quickly make necessary adjustments in low performing schools.</p>

INITIAL CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE TO 6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

RELEVANT ESSA STIPULATION	INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLI MODEL	SUGGESTED CLI DISTRICT RESPONSE
<p>States must establish and implement, with consultation with school districts, standardized statewide entrance and exit procedures for English learners. Educator professional development and preparation activities must be established to improve teaching skills in meeting the diverse needs of English learners.</p>	<p>Districts in each state must obviously work in concert with the state in making this kind of system work. States might be advised to study progressive districts who have designed ELL entrance and exit programs that serve the described needs of English learners. Professional development at the district and building levels should incorporate training in working with English learners along with all other students.</p>	<p>The CLI Model is both a program development and maintenance construct, as well as an ongoing and integrated form of teacher training. Again, in the CLI Model the curriculum is actually developed and implemented by teachers, as led by the CCC, SACs, and administrative teams. Such constant improvement efforts and monitoring are ongoing and effective.</p>



The above areas of interest are primarily focused on matters pertaining to a district’s curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They are very relevant to the work of the district’s curriculum coordinating council and subject area committees. While the excitement around ESSA focuses on the return of powers to state and local boards, it is still important for district officials to become familiar with all the ESSA regulations with regard to requirements of states, including funding distributions, data collection of student progress, and other matters that will impact the allocation of federal funds for school improvement activities.