



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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KENTUCKY'S PLAN FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT MOVING THROUGH THE REVIEW PROCESS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Kentucky’s plan for implementing the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has taken a step forward in the process toward approval.

This week the United States Department of Education (USED) provided feedback based on its initial review of the plan submitted in September.

“Overall, I am pleased with where we are in the process and the feedback we have received,” Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt said. “Primarily, USED is requesting clarifying or additional information, and several revisions to language, some of which has already changed as a result of the state regulatory process, so that our plan is in clear compliance with the federal law. Certainly that is our intent.”

ESSA provides states flexibility in how they meet the letter of the law. As a result, each state plan is different. To date, many states have received similar types of feedback on their plans as Kentucky.

Kentucky developed its plan over the past year-and-a-half with input from thousands of shareholders including educators, business and community leaders, parents and legislators.

The plan outlines how the state will evaluate public schools and districts, including charter schools, and hold them accountable for equitably educating each child regardless of where he or she lives, the student’s race, ethnicity, family income or whether the student has a disability. Kentucky’s plan, based on a system of continuous improvement for all schools, incorporates a method for identifying the lowest-performing schools and providing support. The plan also includes aggressive goals for closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates and ensuring all students leave high school with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to be successful in college or the next phase of their career education and training.

A panel of four peer reviewers, the majority of which have had recent practical experience in the classroom, school administration, or state/local education agencies, also evaluated portions of Kentucky’s plan and had some very positive feedback. Specifically, they cited:

- the state’s attempt to include every student in accountability
- the growth of individual students toward proficiency and beyond
- the state’s focus on reducing the achievement gap
- the inclusion of social studies and science in accountability
- the state’s plan to identify both Title I and non-Title I schools for comprehensive support and improvement

(more)

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The peer reviewers also noted the state’s unique opportunity and access indicator, which includes multiple measures of school quality and student success. Among the strengths mentioned:

- the inclusion of visual and performing arts, physical education, career exploration, cultural studies, and career and technical education including a work ethic certification
- the intent to focus on high-achieving students in addition to those who are low-performing
- the focus on whole-child supports to address a variety of student and family needs
- an opportunity for districts and charter schools to highlight their focus or priorities
- the state’s plan to report additional measures not included in the accountability system

In the area of school improvement, reviewers praised the Kentucky Department of Education’s rigorous approach to providing supports and technical assistance for schools before state intervention and called the state’s support plan for schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement “well thought out and impressive.”

The goal of the peer review is to support state- and local-led innovation by providing objective feedback on the technical, educational and overall quality of the state plan and advising USED on the approval of the plan.

While the report highlighted strengths of Kentucky’s plan, both the USED and peer review reports also made suggestions on how Kentucky’s plan could be strengthened.

“We recognize there is always room for improvement,” Pruitt said. “We welcome the feedback and will consider it very carefully before resubmitting our plan. We anticipate that, when all is said and done, Kentucky’s plan will be approved and will set an example for other states. Most importantly, we will have a strong roadmap for school improvement that will

close the achievement gap and ensure all Kentucky children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.”

The state has 15 calendar days to respond to the initial feedback and resubmit its consolidated state plan. However, due to the upcoming holidays, the state requested an extension beyond the January 4, 2018, deadline to ensure staff has adequate time to review all feedback and provide details that will clarify the state’s intent, methods and processes. It is anticipated the state will resubmit its plan sometime around the end of January 2018.

A copy of [Kentucky’s plan as originally submitted](#) and the [initial feedback letter](#) are available on the USED website, as are peer review reports related to [Title I, Part A; Title III, Part A](#) and the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#).

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