

A Critical Opportunity for Teachers to Inform Education Policy: Guiding Principles for Educators on the *Every Student Succeeds Act* November 2016

Background

The Rodel Teacher Council, an initiative of the Rodel Foundation of Delaware, was founded in 2013 to elevate the voices of teachers, represent the diversity of the teaching force in Delaware public schools, provide a venue for teachers to weigh in on important issues affecting their work, and help set the course for education improvement in Delaware. The Council is dedicated to finding solutions, improving their craft, and leveraging their voices for the benefit of their students.

Five Critical Opportunities for Teachers to Inform Education Policy: Guiding Principles for Educators on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was authored by six members of the Rodel Teacher Council. These principles are grounded in the policy recommendations of the [Blueprint for Personalized Learning](#).

What is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?

ESSA is the most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESSA governs around \$25 billion in federal resources allocated to states, with about \$58 million to Delaware in 2012-13. ESSA contains numerous requirements that educators and leaders need to know, including on standards and assessments, accountability, reporting, school improvement, and teachers and leaders. Currently, all states are in the process of forming their plans for implementing the new law. Delaware is collecting community input throughout fall 2016 as they draft their implementation plans.

What is personalized learning?

Great educators and parents know that students have different learning styles—what works for one student does not necessarily work for the rest of the class. Personalized learning offers a new vision for education—one in which students become the center of the learning environment, and where students and teachers work together toward students' individual learning goals. This allows students to learn at their own pace, while empowering teachers to utilize technology and other innovative tools to support student learning. Personalized learning combines technology with advanced instruction techniques to increase student engagement and achievement.





RECOMMENDED GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The recommendations that follow are guiding principles and opportunities for five elements of ESSA for educators to be aware of as they advocate on behalf of their students.

Professional Learning: Great professional learning transforms schools, promotes innovation, and encourages creativity.

- Opportunity: Within ESSA, state and local leaders can allocate Title II funds (state and local) for professional development to support teachers in preparing for student centered approaches to practice, such as blended learning, competency-based learning, and personalized learning models.

Assessment and Accountability: Parents, students, educators, and the public need timely, relevant and useful information about student performance—on assessments and other data—to make student-centered decisions.

- Opportunity: Under ESSA, Delaware has the opportunity to adjust its accountability indicators to incorporate metrics aligned to personalized learning models, such as increasing the weight of existing “growth to proficiency” metrics to incentivize success for all students.
- Opportunity: In addition to student performance on assessments, Delaware can incorporate additional indicators of school success into its accountability system, such as indicators of school climate and safety, student and educator engagement, and community engagement.
- Opportunity: ESSA established a pilot program, the Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority, which will allow up to seven states to design, build, and implement innovative, competency-based assessment systems to drive continuous improvement of learning. Delaware should apply to be a member of this pilot program.

School Improvement: School improvement efforts should identify the needs and strengths of individual schools and support schools to seek innovative solutions with transparency and local input.

- Opportunity: Delaware can take advantage of flexibility within ESSA to develop processes to help underperforming schools implement personalized learning strategies, including identifying research-based approaches and partnering with approved technical assistance providers.



Meeting the Individual Needs of All Students

- Innovative Approaches: Student-centered environments encourage students, families, and educators to work together to support student learning.
 - o Opportunity: ESSA allows states to use resources in Title I and Title IV to encourage LEAs in advancing personalized learning approaches, especially those focused on mastery-based learning, social and emotional learning, and building community partnerships.
- High Need Students: All students deserve access to a high-quality educational program that meets their specific needs. This includes special education students, English learners, gifted and talented students, and low-income students.
 - o Opportunity: Through ESSA, Delaware has the opportunity to build upon the work of many groups who have advocated on behalf of these students, and can ensure that all student needs are met through the use of student-centered approaches and a meaningful accountability system.

Teacher Involvement: Educators' voices and expertise must inform the development and implementation of ESSA plans.

- Opportunity: Through its increase in state and local decision-making and responsibility, ESSA provides an incredible opportunity for teachers to sit at the table to advise local and state policymakers. To that end, there are several ways teachers can get involved:
 - o Attend local community conversations to give feedback on the state's draft ESSA plan (November/December 2016)
 - o Educate one another on ESSA using study groups or focus groups
 - o Build relationships with members of the Governor's ESSA Advisory Team to have your voice heard as they weigh in on the first and second drafts of the state plan
 - o Write an op-ed stating educator suggestions on ESSA
 - o Make a public statement
 - o Write/call/meet with local school leaders and policymakers share your input
 - o For educators at a school identified for comprehensive support/improvement or targeted assistance, get involved in the needs assessment and development of the school's improvement plan



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Additional Resources

Delaware Department of Education, [ESSA Resources](#)

KnowledgeWorks, [Recommendations for Advancing Personalized Learning Under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#)

Rodel Teacher Council, [Blueprint for Personalized Learning in Delaware](#)

Rodel Teacher Council, [Personalized Learning Policy Briefs](#)

Rodel Foundation of Delaware, [ESSA Resources](#)

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