

Your Question:

You asked if ECS has a quick resource on the federal laws as it pertains to accountability and assessments that states must follow.

ECS Resources:

- 50-State Comparison: [States' School Accountability Systems](#), 2021: this resources looks at rating systems, indicators and other components of state accountability systems in all 50 states.
- 50-State Comparison: [States' School Improvement Policies](#), 2019: this resource looks at improvement categories, needs assessments, improvement plans and intervention strategies across the 50 states.
- 50-State Comparison: [State Summative Assessments](#), 2018: this resources includes information on the summative assessments administered and vendors engaged.
- [ESSA: Quick guides on top issues](#), 2016: this report provides quick looks at the main components of ESSA and state options under ESSA.
- [Assessments 101: A policymaker's guide to K-12 assessments](#), 2017: this report provides an overview of the policy options and landscape of K-12 assessments.

Accountability

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires state accountability plans to include five indicators. These indicators are:

- Proficiency on assessments, which may include growth in proficiency in high school;
- Growth in proficiency in grades below high school or another academic indicator;
- High school graduation rates;
- Progress of English language learners toward proficiency and
- A non-academic indicator/indicator of school quality or student success (SQSS).

States are allowed to choose their measure(s) of SQSS, although ESSA suggests possible measures:

- Student engagement (e.g., chronic absenteeism).
- Educator engagement.
- Student access to and completion of advanced coursework (e.g., high school students enrolled in calculus).
- Postsecondary readiness (e.g., college enrollment following high school graduation).
- School climate and safety (e.g., student survey).

Other possibilities for the SQSS measure not mentioned explicitly in the law might include:

- School inspections.
- Surveys of students, teachers and parents.
- Parent or community involvement.
- Well-rounded curriculum.
- Access to arts and other programs.
- Student attendance rates.

- Student retention rates (especially for choice communities).
- Suspensions/expulsions.
- Safety/discipline infractions.
- National industry certifications/credentials attained.
- Ninth graders on track to graduate.
- Teacher absenteeism.
- Teacher turnover.
- Teacher certifications: percent of highly qualified, percent of provisionally certified, percent with advanced degrees.

All accountability system indicators, including the measure of SQSS, must be:

- Measured annually for all students and for each subgroup.
- Able to provide meaningful differentiation between schools where appropriate, based on the long-term goals in the state plan.
- Included in state and district report cards.

For more about ESSA’s accountability requirements, visit ECS’ [ESSA: Quick guides to top issues](#) report.

Assessments

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 includes various requirements around assessments, including:

- **Required Assessments**
 - Math and English Language Arts: each year in grades 3-8 and once in high school.
 - Science: once in specific grade spans (3-5, 6-9 and 10-12).
- **Opt-Out:** states can permit parents to opt their children out of taking assessments. However, ESSA requires at least 95% of students and 95% of each group of traditionally underserved students be assessed.
 - According to the Center for Standards, Assessment & Accountability’s [State of the States Tool](#):
 - Seven states provide a process for parents to opt their children out of the statewide assessments.
 - Forty-one states and the District of Columbia (including **Arizona**) do not allow students to opt-out of assessments
 - **Idaho** leaves opt-out authorization to the districts.
 - **Maine** has no statewide policy on opting out of assessments.
- **Funding:** Authorizes \$378 million annually to support state assessments.

In addition to those requirements, ESSA also gives states flexibility in the choice and design of assessments administered:

- Local districts may adopt “nationally recognized” tests in lieu of statewide assessments.
- States may set a target limit on the amount of time spent on administration of assessments.
- States may choose to use college entrance exams (SAT and ACT) in place of standards-based assessments.
- States may participate in the ESSA Innovative Assessment Pilot.
- Local districts can use multiple interim assessments to equal a summative assessment. This dual-purpose option allows teachers to change course and may serve to reduce the testing burden for students.

For more about ESSA’s assessment requirements, visit ECS’ [ESSA: Quick guides to top issues](#) and [Assessments 101: A policymaker’s guide to K-12 assessments](#) reports.