

Contact:
Alejandro Sandoval
Phone: 916.448.3868
Email: alejandro@edvoice.org



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EdVoice Commends U.S. Department of Education’s Continued Focus on Academic Outcomes and Closing Achievement Gaps in the Proposed ESSA Regulations

Sacramento, CA – Today the U.S. Department of Education reinforced important equity principles in proposed regulations for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) enacted by Congress late last year in a rare sign of bi-partisanship. The proposed regulations require transparency in all public schools by requiring states to assign a comprehensive, summative rating for each school to provide a clear picture of its overall performance that is understandable to parents and the public.

“The proposed regulations make it clear that if California wants to continue to receive over \$7 billion a year in taxpayers’ money to help disadvantaged students, its system of accountability must tackle achievement gaps and be transparent in the academic outcomes of districts, schools and of subgroups of students, and make results easily available to parents and the public,” said Bill Lucia, President of EdVoice.

The regulations require state accountability systems to inform the public and policy makers regarding student academic outcomes and efforts to close persistent achievement gaps between low-income students, students of color, English learners and their more advantaged peers. By requiring outcome data to be disaggregated by each group of students, the regulations will prevent states, schools and districts, which receive billions of dollars of federal funds to help educate disadvantaged students, from hiding data on academic results, ignoring whole groups of students, and masking unacceptable inequities of opportunity as measured by huge gaps in student outcomes.

While affirming states set their own ambitious goals and measurements of progress and grade level expectations, the proposed regulations ensure that states take into account the improvement necessary among subgroups of students to make significant progress in closing gaps in statewide proficiency and graduation rates.

“EdVoice applauds the Secretary’s continued focus on prioritizing academic outcomes of all children regardless of their ethnic background, economic status, or language proficiency,” said Lucia. By providing more guidance on what states must do in their accountability systems to emphasize academic outcomes, the regulations reflect a bi-partisan agreement in Congress rooted in the believe that every child can learn. The regulations track the requirement in the law, which explicitly require academic outcomes to be afforded “substantial” weight individually and “much greater” weight in the aggregate.

“This is a loud and clear message to California that public schools can’t hide unacceptable academic achievement gaps or mask results by pushing out kids or hiding school and district student subgroup assessment results from the public,” Lucia stated.

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