



News Release

Contact: Martin Ackley, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, 517-241-4395
Bill DiSessa, Spokesperson, 517-335-6649

MICHIGAN TAKES ANOTHER STEP FORWARD TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTING FEDERAL ESSA PLAN

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LANSING – Michigan’s plan to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) moved a step closer Wednesday after a phone call between the Michigan Department of Education and officials from the U.S. Department of Education (USED).

“We had a very positive phone call with USED to help address some technical issues they had with Michigan’s plan and help clarify other parts of the plan,” said State Superintendent Brian Whiston. “We will be addressing all of the issues quickly, so we can begin implementation this year.”

Following months of public input, the Michigan Department of Education submitted this past spring its final plan for meeting the requirements of ESSA, which replaced the previous No Child Left Behind Act.

“This ESSA plan is a key component of making Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years,” Whiston said. “Educators, parents, legislators and community members across the state devoted significant time and effort to this. It is designed for Michigan students and educators to achieve and succeed.”

Based on the Wednesday phone call, USED now will finalize its feedback letter, outlining parts of the Michigan plan that need more detail. That letter will not be a determination on Michigan’s plan – merely feedback from USED and peer reviewers that Michigan can consider in preparing its final submission to USED.

Whiston was told by USED officials that U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos will make her determination based on the state’s compliance with the strict statutory requirements of ESSA.

“We were told that the Secretary’s determination will be based on compliance with the letter of the law only, and no subjective judgements on what is in the plan,” Whiston said. “This is in line with what Secretary DeVos promised about giving more flexibility and control back to the states on what they think is best for their state.”

Whiston said that in addition to the technical amendments to the plan, more work will be required by MDE to show how the state's Transparency Dashboard will be designed and used to identify the state's most struggling schools.

"We will get that done and back to USED so we can get the Secretary's determination by the end of August," Whiston said.

Whiston said Michigan's ESSA plan has a "whole child" focus; will have less student testing; focuses on student academic growth; institutes a Partnership Model for improving low-performing schools; has a school accountability system tied to the Top 10 in 10 strategies; gives schools more flexibility on how they choose to improve; and gives schools greater ownership in how they follow their own plans.

The Every Student Succeeds Act was signed into federal law on Dec. 10, 2015, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act. This law represents a shift from broad federal oversight of primary and secondary education to greater flexibility and decision-making at the state and local levels. ESSA requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and special help for struggling schools.

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