

THE AWESOME IEA Podcast

Episode 1: The Every Student Succeeds Act

K: *Welcome to the AWESOME IEA Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.*

D: The podcast for curious well-informed association members.

K: I'm one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department

D: And I'm Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.

K: The goal of this podcast is to educate our members about important new educational policy initiatives in a brief and *hopefully* entertaining format.

D: Today we are going to discuss what you need to know about our new state education accountability system.

K: So, Diana, let's jump in: Why do we have a new accountability system?

D: Well, you might remember the No Child Left Behind Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA has replaced the No Child Left Behind Act as the new federal education accountability law.

K: So, what does that mean exactly?

D: Each state is required to develop their own state plan that includes a new accountability system.

K: Does Illinois have a plan?

D: Yes, Illinois' plan was approved by the federal government this past summer and full implementation of the plan will begin in the 2018-19 school year.

K: So, What's the purpose of this new state accountability system?

D: Great question! The accountability system is a set of policies and practices that the state, specifically the Illinois State Board of Education, uses to measure and hold schools and districts accountable for the achievement of all students.

K: What does this system look like?

D: Well, the accountability system has two parts. First, a process for measuring and communicating expectations for school performance. Second, the actions low performing schools must take to increase achievement, and the distribution of ADDITIONAL state resources to support those actions.

K: So, in the future, how will the state measure school performance?

D: 75% of the schools accountability rating will be measured using traditional academic indicators including math and English language arts proficiency, English language proficiency, and high school graduation rate. In that 75% a new measure of student growth in math and English language arts will be included at the elementary level. Science proficiency will be included as an indicator in the 2019-20

school year. Again, these indicators are weighted to account for a majority or 75% of a schools accountability rating.

K: So, what's the last 25%?

D: The last 25% will include new school quality indicators. Again, these indicators will only account for 25% of a schools accountability rating. It is important to note that the state is still working on defining many of these measures – they include chronic absenteeism, school climate, college and career readiness, and 9th grade on-track. The state plans on adding an elementary and middle grade indicator, a PreK through second grade indicator, and a fine arts indicator in the 2019-20 school year.

K: So using these indicators, what are the possible ratings schools can receive?

D: Based on the outcomes of the accountability system, schools will be placed in one of four tiers: exemplary schools, commendable schools, underperforming schools, and lowest-performing schools.

K: How will these ratings affect schools?

D: Both underperforming and lowest-performing schools will be required to complete a needs assessment and develop local school improvement plans in collaboration with teachers and paraprofessionals to receive support from the state. The local school board approves plans for underperforming schools and the local school board and state approve plans for the lowest-performing schools.

K: What additional resources will the state provide to these schools?

D: The state plans to provide services to schools through a framework called IL-Empower.

K: So, IL-Empower? What's that?

D: IL-Empower vets external contractors who might provide services to districts within three buckets. The buckets are governance and management, curriculum and instruction, and climate and culture.

K: So a lowest-performing school must use IL-Empower?

D: Actually, The state plan requires lowest-performing schools to work with one of the IL-Empower providers. However, ISBE has indicated that lowest-performing schools may not be required to work with an IL-Empower provider if they have identified internal staff who can help implement their approved plan

K: Why is this distinction important?

D: Because this would allow resources to be directed toward the school rather than an external provider.

This is a great opportunity for districts to ensure money is being used effectively to ensure the success of all students in local schools. The National Education Association has developed resources to help schools develop their local plans, and the IEA is available to help as well.

K: Are there any other opportunities with ESSA our members need to be aware of?

D: Yes, as I stated earlier, teachers and paraprofessionals must be involved in the development of local school improvement plans in order to receive additional support from the state.

K: What should our members do to get involved?

D: Local associations should contact their school and district administration and inquire about their plans to collaborate. The IEA has an example letter local associations may adapt on our members only website.

K: I've been hearing a lot about Title II funds, what's up with that?

D: The ESSA expands collective bargaining opportunities that now include Title II funds. Title II funds may be used at the local level to prepare, train, and recruit teachers and paraprofessionals. This is a great opportunity to include contract language or develop memorandum of understanding that require teachers and paraprofessionals to be actively involved in the development and selection of future training and professional development opportunities.

K: Do you have any additional recommendations for local associations or association members?

D: It is important that local associations educate themselves about the state accountability plan. It is also time to begin preparations for implementation by working collaboratively with school and district administration to identify areas of local improvement and create a plan to improve these areas. We have included additional resources on the IEA webpage.

K: Great, thanks so much Diana. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the Podcast page on the IEA Website.

D: We will also post some helpful links in the show notes section on the Podcast Page as well.

K: The links include ISBE ESSA information, My School My Voice from NEA, and the Great Public Schools Indicators from NEA. There will also be a transcript available on the Podcast Page as well.

K: Thanks for joining us!

K & D: BYE!