THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)  
MYTHBUSTERS

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Myth: ESSA significantly changes the amount of standardized testing called for under NCLB.

Truth: States are still mandated to test annually in math and reading grades 3-8 and once in high school with grade span testing for science (once in grades 3-5, 6-9, 10-12). However, within ESSA there is less focus on, and a decoupling of, the high stakes associated with standardized tests, so students have more time to learn and teachers have more time to teach.

Myth: Only school personnel, like the superintendent and Board of Education members, have a voice in state and local plans.

Truth: Educators and other stakeholders have a guaranteed seat at the table empowering educators with a greater voice in educational and instructional decisions and incentivizing collaboration of educators, families, and communities to support local schools.

Myth: Accountability is based only on test scores with ESSA. Schools and teachers are rated solely on how many students scored proficient on the standardized tests.

Truth: The law requires that state-designed accountability systems be comprised of multiple indicators. These must include at least one “opportunity” indicator of school success or student support such as: access to advanced coursework; positive and safe school climate; bullying-free environment; fine arts education; regular physical education; and access to counselors and nurses. These opportunity indicators can help ensure that states report on resource inequities and opportunity gaps and take action to close them.

Myth: ESSA only benefits a small percentage of students.

Truth: ESSA strives to ensure that all students receive a high-quality and equitable education. It provides more opportunity for all students and includes—for the first time—indicators of school success or student support (the “Opportunity Indicators”) to help identify and begin closing opportunity gaps.

Myth: State and local report cards are no longer required to report information disaggregated by student subgroup.

Truth: States must collect and report on the indicators in its accountability system, disaggregated by student subgroup, and should quickly remedy any gaps in the resources, supports, and programs. Subgroups of students include: 1) economically disadvantaged students; 2) students from major racial and ethnic groups; 3) children with disabilities; and 4) English learners. Local school districts must annually disseminate a report card that mirrors the state report card. Local report cards may contain additional indicators of school quality or student success to provide a means to identify inequities in resource inputs.