



A Practical Guide to the Every Student Succeeds Act and Future Ready Schools®

For the Future Ready state—or one that is interested in ensuring the effective use of technology in the classroom—the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides several opportunities to support state initiatives. This practical guide provides a walkthrough of those opportunities.

A PROJECT
OF THE



ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION
www.all4ed.org

1. ESSA, Technology, and State Flexibility

The opportunity to support state initiatives arises from the convergence of two aspects of ESSA. Specifically, there is

- increased flexibility and autonomy that has been granted to states with regard to implementation of ESSA in alignment with their particular goals; and
- specific provisions within ESSA that support increasing the use of technology in the classroom, generally, and through personalized learning, specifically.

As such, the US Department of Education expects to receive states consolidated plans that incorporate technology or personalized learning. The way states take advantage of this opportunity will depend on each state's vision for digital learning. Is the state's goal to ensure equitable access in classrooms across the state? Or it is to leverage personalized learning as a strategy for school improvement? Or is it both?

2. Supporting Digital Learning

If a state has an interest in supporting both the use of technology in the classroom and its Future Ready Schools® (FRS) initiatives, it should address the following sections in its consolidated plan:

- **Section 2.1.B: Outreach and Input.** States need to list all stakeholders that have been engaged for feedback in the development of its consolidated plan. Include groups with a particular interest in supporting the use of technology in the classroom and any associations, business industry groups, etc., who support a FRS state initiative.

- **Section 5.1.C: Educator Growth and Development Systems.** In general, this section does not specifically reference technology, but logic dictates that if technology fits into a state’s vision for teaching and learning, it must factor into the state’s plans and activities for educator growth and development.
- **Section 5.2.A: Resources to Support State-Level Strategies.** This section is also about educator development, with a focus on state programs and strategies designed to improve overall educator effectiveness and quality. In this section, there is an opportunity to include strategies that support teachers’ use of technology and digital leadership.
- **Sections 6.1.D: Effective Use of Technology and 6.1.E: Supporting Family and Community Engagement.** These sections of the consolidated plan address provisions of Title IV of ESSA and specifically reference technology. It will benefit states to read through Title IV A of ESSA and the companion guidance promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED’s) Office of Education Technology to better understand the use of Title IV dollars to support use of technology. In short, district’s receiving more than \$30k annually in Title IV A funds must use some of the money to support the use of technology. Those receiving less than \$30k annually may use it for this purpose but are not required to do so. In these sections, include anticipated usage of Title IV funds. Notes: ED’s non-regulatory guidance on Title IV makes specific mention of FRS resources (see p. 46) and the FRS interactive planning dashboard is the only planning tool referenced in the document.

3. Supporting Personalized Learning

If a state specifically identifies personalized learning as a strategic initiative, there are other areas within ESSA and a state’s consolidated plan that will support a personalized learning initiative, as noted below.

- **ESSA Section 1111(b)(2): State Plans, Challenging Academic Standards, Academic Assessments.** ESSA creates greater flexibility at the state level for the administration of assessments, including incorporating several options (e.g., administering several interim assessments rather than one summative assessment, portfolios, projects, etc.) that could better align with personalized learning models. In addition, ESSA provides an opportunity for up to seven states to administer innovative assessment systems (e.g., performance tasks, competency-based systems, etc.) as pilots in some school districts. Each state must provide assurances in their consolidated plan that their assessments will align with their challenging state standards and the assessments will undergo separate peer review.
- **ESSA Section 1003A(c)(3)(D): Direct Student Services, Local Use of Funds.** Under ESSA, states may set aside a portion of Title I funding to work with districts to provide innovative approaches to supporting student learning. Part (D) expressly states that these “direct student services” may include components of personalized learning. To take advantage of this opportunity, states must opt to set aside 3 percent of their Title I funding and consult with certain districts prior to creating a grant and application process to distribute the funds.
- **Consolidated Plan Section 4.3.B: Technical Assistance Regarding Evidence-Based Interventions.** In this section, states provide information on how they will support school improvement efforts utilizing “evidence-based interventions.” Personalized learning can be utilized as an evidence-based intervention.