

Clarence Bee Article – October 2017
Geoffrey Hicks, Ed.D. - Clarence Superintendent of Schools

Every Student Succeeds Act

In 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law establishes accountability parameters for states and school districts who receive federal funds. In total, New York State receives \$1.6 billion in federal money. In Clarence, we receive approximately \$1 million in federal funds. Most of the money is aid for special education students. Some of it is apportioned for staff development and for schools with higher poverty levels.

Each state is required to formulate an ESSA plan that meets the federal guidelines and establishes an accountability structure for school districts. New York State's plan was submitted in September after almost a year of preparations and public hearings. The goal of the plan is to ensure that all students, regardless of background, zip code, first language or disability, get the help they need to succeed and thrive in school.

All schools in New York will continue to measure academic achievement in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science annually. High schools will also measure achievement in social studies, graduation rate, and a new index of college, career, and civic readiness. In the future, the accountability system will measure out-of-school suspensions, high school "readiness", and indicators inherent to the learning environment, such as class size and access to arts coursework.

New York State will test students in grades 3-8 on ELA and mathematics, but the testing period will be reduced from three days to two days. The state is also looking into developing more performance tasks in the assessment system that will measure critical thinking. ESSA requires that a minimum of 95 percent of students in each grade level participate in the ELA and mathematics test. At the present time, very few school districts across New York meet the 95 percent test participation standard. Schools that consistently and significantly fail to meet the 95 percent participation rate will be required to conduct self-assessments and develop local plans to improve their participation rate. There is also a provision that the state will step in to develop plans improving participation rate if schools cannot meet the standard over multiple years.

New York's plan will create new public reports called "dashboards" that show information on student test scores, graduation rates and other accountability indicators. The reports will include per pupil spending statistics, class size metrics and college and career readiness indicators.