



A Union of Professionals

Every Student Succeeds Act

A New Day in Public Education

The Every Student Succeeds Act and Paraprofessionals

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, recently known as the No Child Left Behind Act and now officially known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, is a long-overdue reset of the federal role in education policy. ESSA paves the way for a public education system that's much more focused on teaching, learning and collaboration—a system that gives states and educators more latitude while maintaining federal funds for the students who need them most. While not perfect, this overhaul includes tremendous gains.

The new ESSA:

- Protects ESEA's original intent of mitigating poverty and targeting resources to students in need, and adds an early childhood investment.
- Maintains paraprofessional certification requirements and provides new professional development opportunities.
- Ensures that teachers, paraprofessionals, students, parents and communities have a voice throughout its implementation.
- Improves tests and creates an accountability system that is less test-based, which will return joy to teaching and learning.

This is an opportunity for states to reshape their education systems. It will not happen overnight, but without federal prescriptions on exactly what accountability, interventions for struggling schools, and teacher evaluation must look like, there is a path forward for states to reset these systems.

ESSA supports paraprofessionals by:

- **Maintaining the role of paraprofessionals.** ESSA keeps paraprofessional certification requirements, which help prevent school districts from hiring paraprofessionals with little educational experience or professional training.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- **Requiring collaboration with paraprofessionals.** ESSA ensures that paraprofessionals are included in the list of stakeholders who must be consulted in the development of state and local plans under Title II, and local plans under Title I, including the operation of targeted assistance school programs.
- **Advancing the professional development of paraprofessionals.** ESSA expands professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals, including programs on how a state can establish, expand or improve pathways for paraprofessionals to earn a teacher certification.
- **Providing collective bargaining protections.** Teachers and paraprofessionals are covered by the Title I and Title II collective bargaining protections.
- **Supporting efforts to improve teaching and learning conditions.** ESSA allows states and districts to use Title II funds to conduct and publicly report on an assessment of educator support and working conditions.