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U.S. Department of Education Asks for Revisions, Clarifications on ESSA Vermont State Plan

Vermont continues to move forward in process

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Barre, VT. –The U.S. Department of Education (USED) today sent a letter to the Vermont Agency of Education asking for revisions and clarifications to sections of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Vermont State Plan. The agency submitted the plan to USED in early April.

The letter comes after several other states received feedback on state plans from the federal department. The implementation date of the federal plan is still on track for the 2018-19 school year. Secretary Rebecca Holcombe said, “our conversation with USED was highly productive, and their questions helped us to think more deeply about several issues. I think the feedback will help us to ensure a final plan is of the highest quality.”

The agency now has 15 calendar days to respond to the feedback we received and submit a revised state plan no later than August 22, 2017. [Written feedback](#) is available online for the public to view.

“This is part of a process and dialogue moving forward with USED to create a plan that satisfies the federal law while keeping in mind our Vermont education priorities,” said Deputy Secretary Amy Fowler. “We are committed to getting a plan approved that is reflective of Vermont’s goals. In Vermont, we believe that if schools teach well and children are engaged and supported, young people will thrive – not just on tests, but in their communities and in the economic life of the state.”

In addition to meeting the requirements of the federal law, the Vermont State Plan reflects the education goals of Vermont to prioritize support for the most vulnerable Vermont students, prepare students to be members of a growing Vermont economy, and frame proposals that will be affordable to implement and maintain.

The Agency of Education developed the state accountability plan during the past two years with the help of more than 2,000 stakeholders from every county in the state. With this plan, Vermont will use federal dollars to help our communities better understand their schools’ success and needs in serving their children. The plan will provide communities with the tools and feedback to improve educational practices and student outcomes.

In addition, the federal plan will provide a little extra support for communities where children – because of poverty, bias or disability – need a little more support and effort on our part in order to thrive.

“When these children are supported well, learning is improved for all,” Secretary Holcombe said. “The measures that we use in the state accountability system are intended to give us a broad overview of school performance, but we know that local measures of student performance and experience are also critical for understanding if students are meeting the expectations for proficiency their communities hold for them.”

“Stakeholders and educators throughout the country have said that our plan has worked hard to make it first about what Vermont needs and less about strict compliance to federal law,” said Deputy Secretary Fowler. “Our revised plan will continue to showcase what we think is important about learning in the Green Mountain State.”

About ESSA

ESSA was signed into law in December 2015, and is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, a civil rights law. This legislation seeks to reduce equity gaps for historically marginalized students by identifying gaps where they occur and targeting dollars and support to local efforts to close those gaps. ESSA replaces No Child Left Behind, which rewarded schools that taught narrowly to high stakes tests.

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