



Township High School District 214

2121 South Goebbert Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005
847-718-7600 ■ www.d214.org

Dr. David R. Schuler
Superintendent

Thank you. I would like to extend my deep appreciation to Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and the entire Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions for your tireless work to complete the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is my belief that the language of the Every Student Succeeds Act is an exceptional piece of legislation and I applaud Congress' overwhelmingly bi-partisan support for ESSA.

This new law holds States and school districts accountable, while still allowing significant flexibility. 'Tight on goals and loose on means' is a well-researched philosophy that correlates positively to student achievement. Past conversations regarding innovation and inspiration always started, and usually stopped, with the construct of "Will this comply with our State Waiver or NCLB?". Now, with those constraints lifted and ESSA the law of the land, States and districts can focus once again on truly meeting the needs of every student who walks through our schoolhouse doors on a daily basis and for that, I am truly thankful to the Committee.

Two weeks ago at the National Conference on Education, AASA, The School Superintendents Association launched a new research-based, multi-metric initiative to redefine what it means to be college and career ready. That would have never happened under the waiver process or NCLB. Now, we have the ability to acknowledge that we all learn in different ways, our students learn in different ways, and they should be able to demonstrate readiness in different ways. Under ESSA, you have given us permission to dream and lead and transform public education in this country and we will do just that.

States now have an opportunity to examine schools on a more holistic level with the inclusion of a non-academic factor. This represents a dramatic shift from the NCLB focus on snapshot testing to a more nuanced, well-rounded system to assess school quality. Rather than solely focusing on compliance and reporting to our State and the Department of Education, which at times felt like all we were doing, we will now be able to direct and target our energies and resources where they can have the most impact... on our students and schools with the most needs.

I would caution the Department of Education to use restraint when issuing regulations and guidance, to ensure those regulations meet the letter, spirit, and intent of the law. In fact, I would urge the Department to consider creating a working group or task force of practitioners from diverse settings to review potential regulations and provide insight into the real implications and consequences of regulations before they are released.

I would further urge the Department to find out what data is already being collected at the State level and not duplicate efforts. It is incredibly frustrating as a school district superintendent to have the State request a certain data set and then the Department request a very similar, but not identical data set. That is extra work for our staff and provides murky and confusing data for the public... and I would implore the Department not to request data submission over the summer.

Buffalo Grove High School ■ Community Education ■ Elk Grove High School
John Hersey High School ■ Newcomer Center ■ Prospect High School ■ Rolling Meadows High School
The Academy at Forest View ■ Vanguard School ■ Wheeling High School

Many of the rural schools in our country don't have the twelve-month staff to comply with requests that come in during the summer and require compliance prior to the start of the following school year.

Instead of focusing on collecting data to hammer and judge districts, imagine if the Department could be a repository for what is working in our nation's schools in regards to career pathways, coding, closing the achievement gap, grade level readiness, a digital curricular transformation, resource efficiencies, and other issues facing U.S. schools. Wouldn't that be awesome? The Department being the 'go-to' place schools and Districts could find best practices from across the country.

I would like to call out one area where I think ESSA is a pure work of genius. In allowing high schools to use a college admissions test in lieu of the high school State assessment, as long as the college admissions test is approved by the State, it is my belief that you will change lives. Taking a college admissions test can change the trajectory of a student's dreams and aspirations. We have many students who don't think college is an option until they receive the results of their college admissions test. You are putting a realistic dream of post-secondary education in front of students who may have thought that graduation was the end point. That is truly changing lives... one public school child at a time.

I know that there have been concerns raised regarding schools, districts, and States lowering standards and expectations and I just don't believe that will happen. We have been examining student group data for years, and the vast majority of school districts have used data to improve instruction. That will continue. With Congress being the face of the implementation of ESSA, you will have the oversight to ensure that ESSA is implemented in a manner consistent with the language, spirit, and intent of the legislation.

America's teachers and school district leaders will not let you down. I applaud the Committee's work on ESSA and am confident that America's public education system will be better as a result of the Every Student Succeeds Act being the law of the land. Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you this morning and I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

David R. Schuler, Ph.D.
Superintendent
AASA President

Buffalo Grove High School ■ Community Education ■ Elk Grove High School
John Hersey High School ■ Newcomer Center ■ Prospect High School ■ Rolling Meadows High School
The Academy at Forest View ■ Vanguard School ■ Wheeling High School