

## Secondary Schools

Today's middle and high school students have spent their entire K-12 experience under the failed No Child Left Behind Act. Passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ushers in a new era in public education for students, families, and educators, and closes the chapter on the formerly one-size-fits all approach. ESSA will ensure every student has access to a high quality education, regardless of ZIP code, that will help prepare them for a variety of postsecondary options.

### Key provisions:

- Ensures schools will continue to have the flexibility to innovate and maintain practices that have incrementally raised the graduation rate across the country to an historic 81 percent.
- Codifies a uniform calculation of the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and the extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate.
- Newly defines a well-rounded education to correct NCLB's narrowing of curriculum: A well-rounded education includes "English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience."
- Allows school districts, with state permission, to decide what test to use in their high schools instead of the traditional state exam. Such tests may include the SAT or ACT.
- Prioritizes interventions and resources for high schools where less than two-thirds of students graduate and extends additional focus to any school where one or more subgroups of students are underperforming.
- Provides additional resources, although consolidated, for physical education, mathematics and science partnerships, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and education technology programs.
- Specifies that state plans must include strategies for student transition from middle to high school and from high school to postsecondary education, specifying the integration of rigorous academics, career and technical education, work-based learning, and career counseling. Resources also are available for efforts to increase student access to early college high schools and dual enrollment programs.
- Emphasizes the significance of students' access to career exploration, and provides for specific school counselor training to ensure the effective use of labor market information in assisting students with postsecondary education and career planning.