

NEWS

For Immediate Release

TESOL Contact:

John Segota
+1 703-518-2513
jsegota@tesol.org

Barry Pilson
+1 703-518-2512
bpilson@tesol.org

TESOL International Association Releases Statement on Every Student Succeeds Act

Alexandria, VA (4 December 2015) — The recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in the U.S. House of Representatives is a major step forward in bringing significant changes to public education in the United States. TESOL International Association is encouraged that this effort to update the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) keeps a strong focus on supporting the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and is moving forward in a bipartisan manner.

Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) recognized the needs of ELLs, ESSA makes significant and long overdue improvements to problematic areas of that legislation. First and foremost, it de-emphasizes the high stakes assessment practices that have become the focus of public education. As President Obama noted recently, testing should not “crowd out teaching and learning,” nor should it drive instruction so that teachers are simply teaching to the test.

TESOL is also very pleased that ESSA maintains the historic federal commitment to support disadvantaged students, which is at the center of ESEA, and does not include provisions such as the Title I portability proposal that TESOL International Association and other education groups have opposed.

Because ELLs continue to be one of the fastest-growing student populations in the United States, English language development will become a priority in statewide accountability systems under Title I of ESSA. TESOL is especially pleased that the legislation not only maintains the commitment of federal funds to support language instruction for ELLs and immigrant students under Title III, but also reflects higher authorization levels advocated for by TESOL International Association and many of its partners in the education community.

The diversity of the ELL population and the complexities of second language acquisition are also reflected in several of the new provisions in ESSA. As part of the reporting requirement under Title I, states will be required to report on the academic performance of ELLs but also on long-terms ELLs and those with special needs. In addition, the legislation allows states to exclude test results for those newly arrived students who are first learning English, and it includes the performance of former ELLs for reporting purposes up to four years. TESOL International Association is very pleased that these provisions, which are supported by TESOL and its partners,

the [American Federation of Teachers](#) and the [National Association for Bilingual Education](#), are included in the final language of the bill.

While these elements are encouraging, the bill could have gone further in other areas. Although language in the bill includes broader support for professional development for teachers in working with ELLs, the legislation does not include any specific proposals or mechanisms to increase the number of English as a second language and bilingual specialists, which are needed in U.S. schools. Moreover, the legislation does not provide explicit support for high quality bilingual education, dual language programs, and multilingual enrichment programs that are valuable assets in meeting the demands of a globally competitive economy.

TESOL greatly appreciates the cooperative efforts by the leaders of the U.S. Congress to develop this bipartisan, bicameral bill. The much needed fixes to NCLB are long past due. It is time to focus on modernizing the education system in the United States so that all students and teachers receive the resources and support they need.

About TESOL International Association

Founded in 1966, [TESOL International Association](#) is a professional community of educators, researchers, administrators, and students committed to advancing excellence in English language teaching for speakers of other languages worldwide. With more than 13,000 members representing 150 countries, TESOL fosters the exchange of ideas, research, and peer-to-peer knowledge, and provides expertise, resources, and a powerful voice on issues affecting the profession. Through professional development programs, its international conference, special interest groups, and publications, TESOL engages tens of thousands of professionals to collaborate globally and create a world of opportunity for millions of people of all ages who want to learn English. For more information, please visit www.tesol.org.

###