

Education Minnesota

ESSA plan raises community voices, but preserves too much testing

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ST. PAUL, Minn. Sept. 18, 2017 – The Minnesota Department of Education submitted the state’s plan for implementing the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, on Monday. Education Minnesota President Denise Specht released the following statement in response.

“Classroom educators, outside experts and other interested parties spent hundreds of hours in committee meetings over nearly two years giving input into the plan submitted today,” Specht said. “While none of us are completely happy with the final draft, I hope we can all agree Commissioner Cassellius and her staff led an open process in which everyone had a chance to comment.”

“The new accountability system is designed to radically increase the number of schools through Minnesota targeted for improvement, but it also creates an exciting new tactic for helping those schools,” Specht said. “The comprehensive needs assessment will bring together the whole community to identify the resources and policies needed to help their schools grow. We expect legislators to listen to their constituents and provide the funding for these hundreds of community-driven solutions.”

“We also support the attempts in the plan to restore teaching standards that were recently lowered by the state Legislature,” Specht said. “The plan creates an incentive for districts to perform regular evaluations on the new class of teachers who could have virtually no formal training in education. Lawmakers had specifically exempted these teachers from the mandates in the state’s teacher evaluation and development law.”

“Educators believe the new accountability plan relies too heavily on standardized tests instead of taking steps to create a new system that would recognize schools for providing opportunities parents want for their children, like art, music, extracurricular activities, or career and technical education,” Specht said. “While there isn’t enough data to reward schools for offering a well-rounded education this year, but Minnesota could be taking concrete steps toward that goal in two or three years.”

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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