# Opportunities to Shape How ESSA Affects Your Classroom:

# *Flexibility Means More Opportunity for Educator Input*

The new, important flexibility granted in the Every Student Succeeds Act is an opportunity—but it’s not without risk. Teachers, paraprofessionals and school staff nationwide were instrumental in achieving the unprecedented federal flexibility in ESSA. And now, we must continue to make our voices heard as ESSA is implemented. If we just sit back and watch, we leave states and districts to do this alone and squander the opportunity we worked so hard for. State and local plans that are shaped now will likely dictate much of how our schools run for the next decade.

**W*hat are states grappling with? What are the tough questions educators should be asking?***

**Vision:**

* What are the state’s and district’s visions for ESSA?
* Do these visions support teachers?
* Do these visions provide the resources and supports needed to help teachers help every child achieve?

**Message:**

* Does the state and local messaging support educators?
* Does the messaging invite community organizations to the table to ensure we leverage all of the supports needed to help every child succeed?
* Does the message reflect the new ESSA mindset of support and innovation, not the NCLB message of punishment and one-size-fits-all approaches?

**Accountability Systems:**

* How will state systems, through ESSA’s additional indicators, ensure a well-rounded approach to school accountability?
* How will we make sure accountability systems are weighted so that the additional indicators, rather than just test scores, have a big impact on evaluating school performance?

**School Improvement:**

* How will schools be identified for school improvement?
* What kind of additional supports and training will be provided to the schools that are identified?
* How will teachers be consulted on what interventions are used in their schools?

**Assessment Innovations:**

* Is the state considering applying for the innovative assessment pilot to try new and more meaningful ways of assessing performance?
* How can teachers be involved in designing better and more useful assessments that support learning, not punishments?

**Teacher Evaluation and Supports:**

* With no mandate for teacher evaluation, how will teachers be consulted on any existing state teacher evaluation systems?
* What additional supports will be provided to teachers of English learners now that English proficiency is part of the accountability system?

**Holding Charters Accountable:**

* Are charter schools being transparent as ESSA calls for?
* How will states and authorizers ensure charter schools live up to the academic and financial requirements under ESSA? How will this information be made public?

**Resource equity:**

* Are states following through on the requirements to uncover and report on resource gaps? What role can teachers play in this process?