

NC DPI
ESSA Webinar 20160713

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M/F: Male/Female Speaker

Hobe: Good afternoon, and welcome to the first in a series of webinars on the Every Student Succeeds Act. I'm Karen Hobe in accountability, and in the room with me, I have Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, Curtis Sonoman, Faye Brown, and Swetha Pamulaparthi. We will go ahead and get started. First of all, a few housekeeping rules. We want to let you know that the webinar is being recorded, and you should be able to see the webinar in one to two days, so probably by the end of this week. We will address questions at the very end, but please feel free to enter your questions and comments in the questions or chat box as we go along. ESSA focuses a great deal of attention on considering stakeholder input, and as stakeholders, your comments during today's webinar and future webinars may be used in our documentation of stakeholder input, and I just want to make you aware of that.

Let me give you an overview of what we're going to cover today. First we're just going to give a little history of ESEA and how that sets the stage for ESSA. We will cover the proposed timeline for developing our draft ESSA plan; what's going to happen during the transition to ESSA. We will talk a little bit about what we've done so far, and then we're going to take a deep dive into section B of ESSA law, which covers standards and assessment, but today we will

focus on standards. And then we'll share some resources with you for more information on ESSA. So at this time, I'm going to turn it over to Curtis Sonoman to tell us a little about the history of ESEA.

Sonoman: So ESSA, which was just passed, is not the start of accountability, as many of you know. We've been dealing with accountability for a long time. It was really started with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, where focus was put on providing resources to schools with high poverty rates, from the federal government. The intent was to offer equal access to education and establish high standards and accountability, and focus on the reduction of achievement gaps between students by providing them a fair and equal opportunity to receive an exceptional education.

It really provided financial assistance to local education agencies with high concentrations of children from low income families to expand or improve their educational programs by various means. Some notable reauthorizations of ESEA really began to kick up in the '90s, with the Improving America's Schools Act, where a focus was put on the extra help for disadvantaged students, and really beginning to hold schools accountable for results. Then came the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, where the focus was on accountability to identify and provide consequences for low performing schools. It's really where the consequences began to kick in under ESEA. And then the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 is the system of which we'll offer flexibility for states and develop accountability models.

So under the Improving America's Schools Act, the purpose in 1994 was to provide an opportunity for children to acquire the knowledge and skills they needed to meet those challenging state performance standards. It really expanded Title 1 to provide extra help for disadvantaged students, and held schools accountable for their results. It provided innovative education strategies, safe and drug free schools, professional development, and increase in bilingual and immigrant education funding. It was really the beginning of the call for standards, and standards in curriculum, standards in assessment. This is where the term adequate yearly progress first began to be used, but it really didn't have the definition that it did when it changed under No Child Left Behind.

At this time, they were required to do grade span assessment, so it wasn't the assessment system of testing every student in grades three through eight, and in high school. It was more, like, grade span model. Then No Child Left Behind came; it supported the reforms based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve outcomes in education. It began to require those assessments aligned to content standards, and required more testing, that grades three through eight, and once in high school, for reading and math, and once at each grade span for science, and as I believe most or all of you know, the science is grades five, eight, and eleven in North Carolina.

No Child Left Behind allowed individual states to develop their own academic achievement standards, but they did set the requirement that all students meet proficiency on the assessments administered by 2014. So 100% proficiency by 2014. It really expanded the federal role in public education because it

emphasized the annual testing and the academic progress, and required report cards to be developed, and teacher qualifications, as well as significant changes in funding. And we all know that 100% proficiency is very aspirational, and as a result, near the end of No Child Left Behind, the Department of Education offered states the opportunity to apply for waivers from some of the sanctions of the law, like the expectation of 100% proficiency. Waivers were implemented in most states; I believe the last count I saw was 40 states have a waiver, including North Carolina. The waivers allow states to include additional reporting and measures to their accountability systems; it changed from the adequate yearly progress requirements to allowing states to measure targets and annual measurable objectives. It allowed states flexibility in choosing other subgroups, creating super subgroups, things of that nature; it allowed states to change the minimum number of students used for those calculations, and it did require things like educator effectiveness, where increasing teacher standards was a requirement under the waivers.

Then comes the Every Student Succeeds Act, which is where we are currently positioned. In April of 2015, that bill was introduced to Congress; it took them about a half a year to get that figured out and it was passed by the House and—on December 2nd, and by the Senate on December 9th, and signed into law December 10th. So we really are only about six months into this adventure under Every Student Succeeds Act, seeing that it was passed in December, and that was really right before Christmas, so there wasn't a whole lot of work done in those first couple of weeks after passage. It does afford states

more flexibility in measuring schools and student performance. It also continues to promote equity for students—disadvantaged students and high need students. It requires all students be taught high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers. It ensures that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through statewide assessments that measure progress towards these high standards. So there still is requirements of report cards and individual student reports on their performance, and providing information to schools to help students to perform better in the future.

It also promoted innovative practices that have an impact on student achievement. This is where a lot of the flexibility comes in, into the accountability model to measure areas that haven't traditionally been measured before, to see if we can get the innovation going in schools that may need some extra help. It maintains the expectation that they'll be accountability in action to affect that positive change in the low performing schools, and where graduation rates are low over an extended period of time, and also where students are not making progress.

We just want to check one more time to make sure that you can hear us. By a show of hands, could you please raise your hand if you can hear us? Thank you.

So now we'll talk a bit about what the planned timeline is for submission of North Carolina's ESSA plan. So right now we're in the July-August drafting of the plan. We were in a meeting earlier this week, and as Dr. Howard put it, this is more the outlining phase, where we're really just getting the outlines of the things

that we want, and the things that we think we may include, so that we can then get some public feedback in September and October, and really revise that plan, and get it narrowed down into the things that we want to have into the ESSA plan. Then in November, it will be finalized; in December, it will be taken to the board for approval and submitted to the Governor. One of the requirements of ESSA, the state said it must be submitted to the Governor for a 30-day review. They are not required to sign off on it, but they are required to receive it to review it. Then in 2017, in January, it will be presented to the General Assembly, and then the intent is to deliver the North Carolina plan to the US Department of Education on March 6th.

So as we move from No Child Left Behind, and the ESEA waivers, to ESSA, there is some transition when it comes to assessment and accountability, and here are some of the highlights for those. There are other transitions occurring, but we're focusing on assessment and accountability for this particular conversation. So the waivers expire on August 1st, so just a few weeks away, the waivers will technically be no more. At this point, we are not required to report annual measurable objectives, or the annual measurable achievement objectives for English learners, for the 2015, '16, or '16-'17 school year. So you will note that on some of our preliminary reports that you've been getting a chance to look at in your LEAs, you don't see any of the target information.

We are required to have the 95% participation rule on assessments throughout the transition, so we will continue to monitor the 95% participation, as well as implement the sanctions required with the 95% participation for each of

the years, as we had under our waiver and in board policy. The priority in focus schools will remain as they were identified last year, so until the new identification under ESSA, the current priority and focus schools will continue to implement their plans and receive assistance from NCDPI as put forth under the waiver. There will be no further reward school identification as we know it right now.

So what's happened so far? The Department of Education has provided a guidance regarding the transition to the ESSA. There is a frequently asked questions document that keeps getting bigger and bigger, every month or so. They have provided proposed negotiated rules for accountability, state plans, and data reporting. We're currently in the process of reviewing that and the agency is developing feedback to provide to the federal government as far as what those rules are. As you review those rules, and if you have thoughts, please feel free to comment and provide your feedback so that we can hear what you have to say about some of the rules that they're proposing. That feedback is due August 1st for that section.

The proposed negotiated rules for standards and assessment were just released actually the beginning of this week. They're a little bit shorter, and don't have quite as many things to go over, but that feedback is due September 9th on the standards and assessment for the negotiated rules. The Department of Education has also conducted presentations regarding those proposed rules, so there has been some presentations that were done; all of that information is available on the Department of Education's website.

So what has been happening so far as DPI and feedback? Monthly updates have been provided to the state Board of Education, and those will continue. There have been six public comment sessions across the state that were led by Donna Brown and Lou in getting feedback from the public on what North Carolina should do under ESSA. There was a stakeholder's meeting with education partners from across the state; information and feedback sessions were conducted at superintendent's quarterly meeting; there is public feedback that's being submitted through the Let's Talk on NCDPI website, and that's ongoing. If you have feedback that you want to put in there, feel free to do that. And Lou and Donna are leading the ESSA work at DPI, and they are meeting regularly with internal and external stakeholders. So that's really what is happening on our end, so these webinars that we're holding are a part of that input and feedback, so as we keep going and give you more and more information, we hope that you'll be able to return to us some input and give us some feedback on some of your thoughts and ideas.

As far as resources are concerned, we have a list of resources here, and so when you have access to the webinar, you'll be able to see these resources easier and take the time to see them, and we will likely provide you with the PowerPoint presentation itself so you can just copy the links out of here. The first one is the DPI website, where all the ESSA information is provided, gives you the timeline and some of the things that have been happening, and what continues to happen. On the Department of Education, the main ESSA link is there, as well as an index to some of the further information.

[INAUDIBLE]

Sonoman: And it was brought to my attention that the DPI website may not be right on this slide, so we will check to make sure that it does work. And we'll make sure that we get the right one on the one that we release to you. In addition, there are some documents from CCSSO, which is one of the chief groups that we're working with; as we navigate the Every Student Succeeds Act, they provide assistance to lots of states, and are sort of the major player that we go to for resources when we need some help in identifying some information. And these are some great links for you to review.

There are also numerous educational and professional organizations that have recorded YouTube webinars on ESSA, and made policy documents, and written white papers; simply googling Every Student Succeeds Act will afford you all sorts of places to look for information and find information that you may find useful as you're going through all of these laws and trying to understand what people are talking about and thinking about, and as you think about within your LEAs and schools, what North Carolina should do as far as assessment and accountability is concerned, and what other states are thinking about, or other people are proposing.

At this time, I'm going to turn the conversation over to Dr. Martin, and we're going to have a conversation about these standards. Today, we are going to focus on the content standards part of section B; we will talk about assessment in great detail, probably the entire webinar next week. So I'm going to turn it over to her.

Martin: Good afternoon, everyone. As Curtis shared, I am Maria Pitre-Martin, and I am the new chief academic and digital learning officer here at the department. Prior to that, was working in a school system and before that, I was the director of curriculum and instruction here at the department. So I'm actually sitting in today for Dr. Tiffany Perkins, who is the current director of K-12 curriculum and instruction in standards here at the department, but certainly we all work together to ensure that the work of standards is completed. I think this is very important that we start here today, in this discussion of ESSA, because we know that everything really starts with what students should know and be able to do. And in the state of North Carolina, that is the North Carolina standard course of study.

So within ESSA, which is the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed on December 10th of 2015, it talked about the challenging state academic standards. We know that having challenging and rigorous academic standards have been seen in our previous federal laws. But in this particular law, it speaks to more specifics around what is intended with college and career. We know that we as a state will have to provide some assurance that they are challenging, and that they are aligned to other sets of standards. For example, you will read in ESSA where there is a discussion of content standards being aligned with our career in technical education standards.

You will also see in ESSA that they ask us to ensure that the content standards are aligned with the credit they are in entry level courses at our institutions of higher learning. So as opposed to just saying college and career readiness standards, they are giving us some specifics around what that might

look like. We also know within ESSA, they talk about the achievement standards shall include not less than three levels of achievement; we know that in the state of North Carolina, we currently have five achievement levels, so we know that we're already ahead of the game there in meeting that requirement. And we also know that these are standards that would apply to all public schools and public school students, and again, that is the North Carolina standard course of study. And in it, you should include the knowledge, skills, and levels of achievement that it—are expected for all of our students in the state. Again, this is what our students should know and be able to do in the state of North Carolina.

Also, there should be some exceptions for students with the most cognitive disabilities, and we will talk a little bit more about that in future slides. Next, it just highlights the content areas that are required within ESSA; we know that mathematics, reading or language arts, and science are certainly the key areas for assessment purposes. And I'm sure when you have your assessment webinar next week, we will go into greater detail about that, but again, mathematics, reading, and science are the key areas. Of course, we know that the North Carolina standard course of study has standards for many, many other content areas as well, but those are the three—mathematics, reading, and science—that are required within ESSA.

Also we know that the state must demonstrate that the standards are aligned, again, with those interest requirements for credit-bearing course work with our institutions for higher learning, and then our career and technical ed standards. In another area, we are ahead of the game in North Carolina because

we have really always worked with our institutions of higher learning and our business community to ensure that our standards are providing what they need, as well. Just as we have to remember from our state board's strategic plan, we are trying to decrease the number of students who need remediation when they enter into a community college setting. So as you can see, all of this is working together to improve some very critical data points.

A few minutes ago, I talked about the importance of extending the content standards for students who might have the most significant cognitive disabilities, and so again, this is the ESSA requirement. We know in the state of North Carolina, we have extended content standards and our exceptional children's department works very closely with curriculum and instruction, so that once we start to review content standards, they are part of that process to determine what the extended content standards would certainly look like in preparation for our assessments in instruction. So that would continue to happen, and there's a list here of things that we should provide for with those standards, and making sure that those extended content standards, again, are aligned with state academic standards; they promote access to the general ed curriculum, they reflect good professional judgment at the highest possible standards achievable by such things, because we want students to be able to reach their potential and just not meet the basics.

There are designated, of course, in an IEP for our students in that they are aligned to ensure that a student who meets all academic achievement standards is on track to pursue the world of work or post-secondary education. So again, we

have to take all of those things into consideration and we are looking at the content standards. We know that there—within the ESSA continued requirements, prohibition on any other alternate or modified academic achievement standards; that is really not something new to the federal law. We have to continue to take a look at providing standards and assessment, to stay as close to that general curriculum as we can. So the state shall not develop or implement or use any alternate academic achievement standards for our students.

And then again, it comes back to prohibiting assessments like NCEXTEND2, which were used in the state several years ago. We would not be doing that moving forward, based on the federal law. Also within ESSA, there is quite a few specific statements about English language proficiency standards, and while we have an opportunity to share that there is also a change in terminology, and now instead of saying ELO students, we are talking about ELs in this process, as well. But taking a look at those proficiency standards, which in the state of North Carolina, we have used standards for quite some time. But taking a look at that, and being able to report that students have demonstrated their adoption of the English language proficiency standard. And so you will hear more about what that will look like, to be able to report out on the standards for English language proficiency, and I'm sure that will be a part of the assessment webinar, as well as moving forward.

Continuing on, and this is actually our last slide specific to content standards, and we see that there are a few questions to address, the state shall not be required to submit content standards to the US Education Department for

approval. We know that most states will review content standards every five to seven years, and I'm sure many of you are aware that we have started that process here in the state of North Carolina. We recently spent several months reviewing the high school math standards for courses North Carolina Math 1, North Carolina Math 2, and North Carolina Math 3. That was just approved by our state board the 1st of June, and so we have started the process to implement those revised content standards for those three courses effective 2016-2017.

But we're also going to use this coming school year to take a look at the mathematic standards for kindergarten through eighth grade, as well as the English language arts standard for kindergarten through twelfth grade. So the discussion of the revision of content standards and how it relates to ESSA is very timely for the state of North Carolina, because we are very deep into that process, as we are going through the submission of our ESSA plan. And of course, the state may revise any standards adopted before or after the adoption of ESSA, provided that they remain consistent, and again, that goal is to have college and career readiness at the forefront, that is aligned with career and technical educational expectations, and expectations of credit-bearing courses going into a community college institutions of higher learning.

So we are very excited about the opportunity to enter into this work, and of course you will see this as a critical part of the ESSA plan that will be submitted to our federal government. So I will pause at this time, and I think we might have a few questions as well.

Hobe: So before we move onto those questions, I want to just go ahead and lay out for you our plans for the future webinars coming up. As you know, today we focused on just an introduction to ESSA and then a deep look at section B standards in ESSA. So this is basically the law around standards that ESSA outlined for us. Section B also covers assessment, which is very lengthy and we will get into that in our next webinar, a week from today, on July 20th at the same time. On July 27th, we will cover sections C and H, which are accountability and reports, and then on August 11th, we hope to engage you and get your feedback on what you think should be included in the draft plan. And we hope on August 24th to be able to give you a good update on where we are in the process of developing our draft plan and share with you where we are and where we're going—what the next steps are for getting this plan in place.

So we are going to take some questions, but I just want to point out that our vision here is that accountability be a continuous system of improvement, and add a little humor—share with you a metaphor that if you want to eat an elephant, you have to do that one bite at a time, and of course, that's sort of a ridiculous saying, but it gives us a really good metaphor here, because the law for ESSA, I think, is 391 PDF pages, and if we break it down into smaller chunks, then it becomes much more feasible for us to achieve it. So that's what we're doing, even here in these webinars, trying to break this down and give you the information from the law in pieces, so that you can begin to absorb it, and hopefully give us feedback for what you would like to see in the plan.

At this time, we will address questions. I know that some questions have been entered, so I'm going to let Faye and Curtis share those questions, and then we will answer them as we can. If someone will read them for us, that'd be great.

Sonoman: First question is: so there will be no new focus or priority schools identified? And that is correct, except for the rule for focus participation schools, so we still have that requirement in state for policy that says if you're in your third year of not meeting participation expectations, you'll be identified—or fourth year, now that we're in our fourth year, you will be identified as a focus participation school and be required to implement a participation plan. But under the rest of it for focus and priority schools, the ones identified based on gaps and low performance, those remain the same as they were identified earlier this year.

F: Okay, the second question: where can we find the negotiated rules that were released on July 11th?

Sonoman: You can find those in the federal register. You can get there through the ESSA website. It will provide you with a link to the federal register, where you can download the PDF of the negotiated proposed rules.

F: Okay, next question: will North Carolina continue with five achievement level standards, or return to four levels of achievement standards?

Sonoman: Currently we are at five, and I think that is one of the things that we will have to have conversations regarding—the state remaining with five or moving to four, or doing all sorts—there's lot of options that I think we're not taking off the table at this time when it comes to what's going to be in the plan.

F: Okay, has information been sent to register for the July 20th webinar?

Sonoman: Yes, that information was sent on the TNN, so when you registered for this one, the information for the July 20th webinar was listed right underneath it. All of the webinars for—the five webinars were listed on that TNN message.

F: Okay, next question, or I should say questions. Can you provide an update on AMOs? Am I correct that AMOs will no longer be reported? Has there been any communication to districts or schools regarding AMOs for this year? Yes, we just recently released the key date memo that outlines the timeline and also the things that have changed for the '15-'16 school year, and that was posted on our TNN message board, so if you need to access that, check with your testing coordinator if you're not a testing coordinator, or who has access to TNN.

Okay, will the AMO reports be released and school letter grades be released this fall?

Sonoman: So AMOs will not be reported, but all of the accountability reporting under the ready model—the performance of schools and growth will be reported along with school performance grades. The only thing not being reported this year are the annual measurable objective targets that were set in 2012, '13, and whether or not subgroups are meeting those targets. All of the other information will remain the same.

Hobe: Again, we should emphasize that participation still is going to be reported and still is required to be reported during this transition to ESSA.

F: Okay, I think that's the last of our questions.

Hobe: So we'll give you a minute in case you have another question to input. We do thank you for taking your time to join us in this webinar, and look forward to

sharing more information with you in future webinars. So if there are no more questions, then we can wrap up and just remind you the next webinar is a week from today. It will be on section B, assessments, so that's where we will spend the time next week. It's July 20th, 2:00 to 3:30 pm; as Curtis said, the TNN message that was sent out has the registration details, or you can contact your RAC for more information and we appreciate again your time, and just wanted to let you know, we've accepted the challenge and we're looking forward to your feedback in the process.

F: And we have a final question: how will we receive a copy of the webinar?

Sonoman: Email. Once we post the recorded webinar onto the GoToMeeting, you will likely receive an email from GoToMeeting that says it's available, and you'll be able to access it there, and we will post the PowerPoint presentation on TNN.

F: Thank you all.

Hobe: Thank you.

Sonoman: Thank you.

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