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MONTANA
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
ESSA Stakeholder Work Group Meeting 1 - Summary
May 25-26, 2016
Helena, MT

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) staff reviewed changes in ESSA compared to NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) in these areas:

- State Plans, Title I, Supplement not Supplant, Transferability of Funds, Assessments, Student Subgroups, Early Childhood, Title II, the new Title IV, and Homeless Education
- Accountability System Components

OPI staff facilitated break-out Sessions to review and discuss Program Outlines with requirements for each of these topics. Stakeholder Comments/Questions/Suggestions were collected.

- Title I, Part A – Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
- Title II, Part A – High Quality Teachers and Principals
- Title III – Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students
- Title IV, Part A – 21st Century Schools (Student Support and Academic Enrichment)
- Title IV, Part B – 21st Century Community Learning Centers

For each Title reviewed, OPI staff discussed the purpose, funding levels, and decision areas where input is needed. More information on each of the titles will soon be available as Program Outlines on the OPI ESSA web page.

Sampling of Questions/Comments/Suggestions

- Several comments were on the provision that only 1% of disabled students may take the alternative assessment statewide and what this will mean for Montana. Note: The 1% rule does not apply to individual districts, but statewide—some districts will have a higher percentage of severely disabled students, others will have zero percent. The law includes significant accommodations for special education students to take regular test.
- How can we support the federal focus on early childhood education and opportunity to align preschool with K-12? The commenter was concerned about access to preschool teachers given low pay.
- The accountability process needs to be valuable for schools that won't be targeted for support or improvement. We want all schools to have data to help them improve, and for schools that have improved or are being successful to be recognized.
- How will we ensure that our standards are career ready as well as college ready?

- Several questions were raised about how we know our assessments are sufficient. Note: All states' assessment systems will undergo a peer review; Montana is scheduled for February 2017.
- How are we measuring ineffective teachers? Note: OPI provides guidance on effectively evaluating teachers through the Educator Performance Appraisal System (EPAS) which districts may participate in or use as a model.
- We need to work closely with Higher Education on the college-ready requirement for standards
- Currently, technology and best practices are not clearly defined in terms of options.
- We need additional regional trainings and annual professional development conferences for Montana educators.
- We need to support certification for teachers who don't have access to universities (e.g. alternative routes for certification for people who want to stay in their home towns).
- Provide free mentorship programs; collaboration and mentorships via the OPI Teacher Learning Hub.

Summary comments/recommendations about content

- All want the plan to be tailored to the needs of Montana, including needs of rural schools.
- Many want deeper discussion about accountability; consider lens of different groups (e.g., trustees) and opportunities to learn from successful schools/districts.
- Look at how to connect different pieces of the law. It currently seems fragmented.
- There is a shared sense that ESSA is more focused on the whole child instead of punitive sanctions. This should be about educating kids and what they need, about how students are prepared for what's next after they leave our systems.
- Questions about how to communicate about funding: programs that will no longer be funded, and programs that are new.

Summary comments/recommendations about process

- Many enjoyed small groups; many want specialty and content breakouts for the next meeting and the opportunity to work with more people (e.g., different group for each breakout session).
- Provide more information ahead of time and topical agenda before meeting so people can prepare. Some don't mind homework.
- Need to help trustees understand the law. Montana School Boards Association needs to get involved in sending information to trustees.
- Provide estimated timeline for the work.
- Provide more time for comments/questions from communities and information on how different stakeholders will be affected.
- We need more input from reservation schools.
- Please provide takeaway messages to give to constituents so the group will be unified on what we are saying.

Next Steps: Stakeholders will receive an invitation to begin using an account set up at www.google.com where documents will be posted. A tutorial on how to use the site is being prepared. The next meeting is planned for September 26 at the Radisson Hotel in Helena.
n this circumstance? Guidance is needed here.