

Renewal Debate, Side by Side

A number of differences exist between an ESEA renewal bill approved by the Senate education committee last fall and a House draft proposal. Both proposals also contrast with the Obama administration's vision for overhauling the law, which is reflected in its plan allowing states that meet certain conditions to receive waivers of some mandates under the law's current version, the No Child Left Behind Act.

| | Current Law | Senate Bill (Harkin-Enzi) | Obama Administration Waiver Plan | House Draft Legislation |
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| STANDARDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires states to adopt standards in reading, math, and science. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires states to demonstrate they have college- and career-ready standards in math, reading, and science, but would not require them to join the Common Core State Standards Initiative. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires states to craft college- and career-ready standards in math and reading, either by joining the common core or by having the state's university system approve them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires states to craft standards in math and reading, but avoids use of the term "college- and career-ready standards." Specifically prohibits the U.S. secretary of education from doing anything to promote a specific set of standards, such as the common core. |
| ACCOUNTABILITY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires annual testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school. Requires schools to make adequate yearly progress toward performance targets, with the goal of bringing 100 percent of students to proficiency in math and reading by 2014. Sanctions schools for failing to make AYP for at least two years in a row. Requires achievement targets for subgroups of students, such as racial minorities, students with disabilities, and English-language learners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps annual testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school, but scraps AYP. Requires disaggregation of data by subgroup, but wouldn't require achievement targets to be set by subgroup (though this could be resurrected during Senate floor action). Doesn't require any federally approved interventions for any other schools besides those in the School Improvement Grant program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps annual testing in place but allows states to scrap AYP and design their own differentiated accountability system, with their own student-achievement goals. Retains requirement to disaggregate data and set achievement targets by subgroup. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps annual testing in place, but allows states to scrap AYP and design their own accountability systems. Requires disaggregation of data by subgroup, but doesn't require achievement targets to be set, either for student subgroups or entire schools. |
| TEACHERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires 100 percent of teachers to be "highly qualified," which includes having a college degree and license in the subject taught. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lets states decide how to evaluate teachers, but would require states that want Teacher Incentive Fund grants to craft evaluations based at least in part on student growth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the highly qualified provision. Requires states to create and at a minimum pilot evaluation systems based at least in part on student growth, which would be used to inform personnel decisions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scraps the NCLB law's requirement that teachers be highly qualified. Allows states that already have crafted a state evaluation to keep it in place. Districts in states that don't have a statewide evaluation system have to craft a system that measures teacher performance in significant part by student achievement. The systems must have more than two categories for rating teachers. Evaluations have to be used to inform personnel decisions. |
| LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For schools that fail to make AYP for five consecutive years, requires the school to enter into "restructuring" using a menu of options that includes turning schools over to a charter operator or using some other strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lays out a series of federal interventions for turning around the lowest-performing schools based in part on the Obama administration's regulations for the School Improvement Grant program. Allows states to submit their own turnaround strategies for federal approval. Allows students in the bottom 5 percent of schools in a state to transfer to other schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the use of one of the four federally prescribed turnaround models in the 5 percent of lowest-performing schools receiving School Improvement Grants. Requires states to use those four models, or another federally approved strategy, to intervene in an additional 10 percent of a state's most troubled schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires states to help low-performing schools improve, but doesn't require them to focus on a certain percentage of schools. No federally mandated school improvement interventions are required. Scraps the School Improvement Grant program, which provides resources to states to turnaround their lowest-performing schools. |
| FUNDING/SPECIAL GRANTS AND PROGRAMS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires 20 percent of Title I money to be set aside to pay for tutoring and school choice for students in schools that fail to make AYP for at least two years in a row. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates that 20 percent set-aside. Streamlines the U.S. Department of Education by consolidating 82 programs into about 40 broader baskets of funding. Creates a new grant program to recruit and train principals who lead turnaround efforts. Resurrects Educational Technology State Grants. Authorizes Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and Promise Neighborhoods grant programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows states flexibility to use the 20 percent tutoring/choice set-aside and a limited number of other program dollars to target specific high-needs areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidates programs dealing with migrants, neglected and delinquent students, rural students, and English-language learners into Title I. Schools could move money from one program to another. Consolidates a number of grant programs, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Safe and Drug Free Schools, into a single formula grant program for districts. Ten percent of the money must be reserved for programs outside the public school system (such as after-school programs or tutoring services). Does not authorize Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, or Promise Neighborhoods programs. |