

News & Notes

President-elect Donald Trump campaigned on a few preK-12 initiatives: a new \$20 billion federal investment in school choice—\$5 billion more than Title I—and a new childcare tax credit. If his administration presses them, congressional deficit hawks are likely to push back. Yet the administration could find support among Republicans that back school choice and among state leaders of both parties who have been working to promote kindergarten readiness and close persistent achievement gaps. The early care strand could take the form of continuing funding for the Preschool Development Grant program, which was authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), or as part of the administration's expected focus on school choice.

The president's selection of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education demonstrates his commitment to school choice and charters, but education policy observers should also watch other Education Department appointments. The assistant secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education will also be critical, as ESSA implementation could fall primarily on this office's shoulders.

In addition to the new administration's policy focus on school choice, ESSA implementation will head the department's K-12 agenda in 2017, as the new team inherits responsibility for this task regardless of other plans and priorities.

Given the timeline and the fact that a new team will not be fully in place until late winter or early spring, it would be difficult to fundamentally change the law's regulatory structure. Thus, the new administration may have to settle for a few discrete near-term changes, which would still require public notice and comment.

The new team must quickly prepare to review states' ESSA consolidated plans, which states are submitting in April or September, in order to implement the law fully by the 2017-18 deadline. State plans are likely to be approved without changes unless they clearly conflict with the statute or if peer reviewers highlight fundamental flaws.

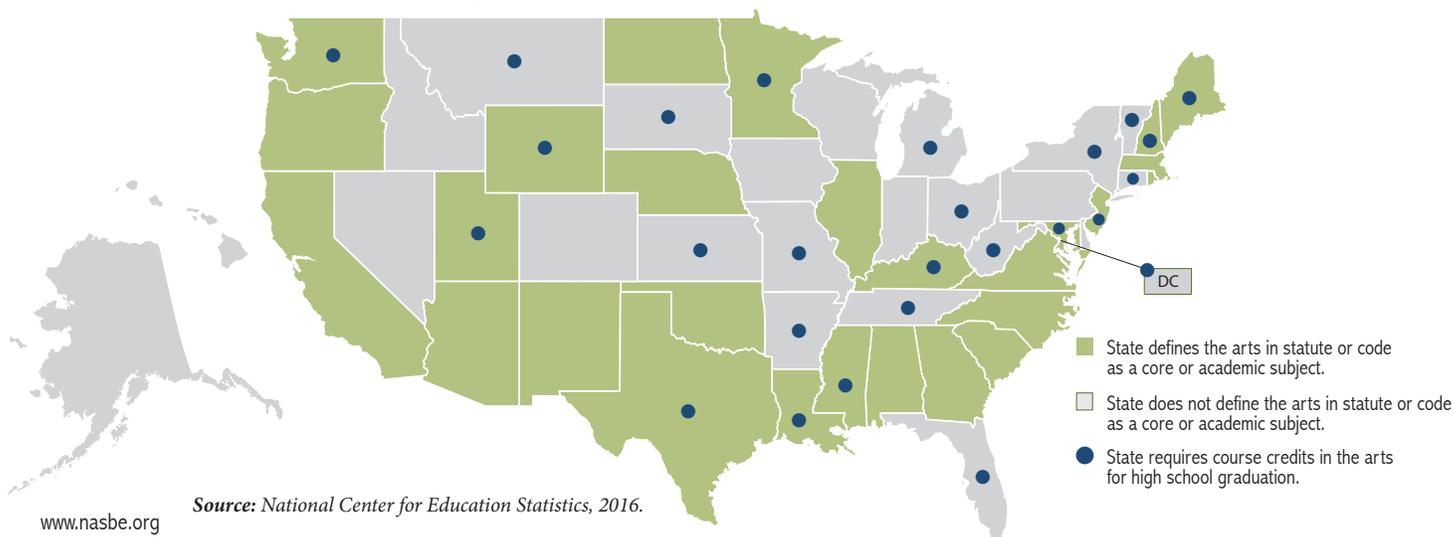
The department published a final accountability rule for ESSA in late November 2016. The rule incorporates revisions NASBE sought in comments it submitted earlier in the year: longer time for implementation, more flexibility regarding the 95 percent test participation requirement, and emphasis on continuing stakeholder engagement as state plans are implemented.

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and ranking member Patty Murray (D-WA) will continue to lead that committee. Senator Alexander will remain focused on ESSA implementation, ensuring ED's new leadership does

not unduly influence states' consolidated plans during peer review. He has also expressed interest in reauthorizing the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and can be expected to champion restrictions of the education secretary's CTE regulatory authority. He may also use the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization as a lever for overturning or modifying new teacher preparation regulations. Senator Murray will no doubt use her position to protect ESSA's accountability requirements and to continue as a leading voice for early learning policies and investment.

Virginia Foxx (R-NC) will replace retiring John Kline as House Education and Workforce Committee chairman. Bobby Scott (D-VA) will continue as the committee's senior Democrat. The committee is likely to focus first on HEA and Perkins. Representative Foxx worked closely with Chairman Kline to support ESSA's passage and opposed ED's "supplement, not supplant" rule making. She can be expected to urge new ED leaders to address her concerns. Representative Scott is likely to continue advocating for a strong federal role in educational equity and accountability. Scott has also been a champion for early learning and could be an unlikely administration partner if it follows through on the president-elect's proposals.

Arts education as core subject and as a graduation requirement.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2016.