

ESSA State Plan Amendment

History and Process



Objectives

- Understand the history, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement efforts that informed North Dakota's proposed ESSA State Plan Amendment.
- Identify the key changes reflected in the redlined amendment, including updates to accountability, student readiness, reporting, and school identification and support.

Consultation Channels

- NDDPI Messenger
- Formal Memos
- Committees and Advisory Groups
  - ESSA Committee
  - Title I Committee of Practitioners
  - Tribal Consultations
  - ND Indian Education Advisory Committee
- NDDPI Website



- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan serves as North Dakota's agreement with the U.S. Department of Education outlining how the state measures school performance, supports continuous improvement, allocates federal education funds, and ensures all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities.

ESSA Amendment Consultation Timeline

2024-2025

ESSA subcommittee work on Accountability for Unique Schools and K-8 Accountability Indicators

March 2025

Full ESSA Committee survey on ESSA Amendment feasibility and topics

October 2025

ESSA Committee work session on ESSA Amendment topics

January 2026 – December 2026

Updated ESSA Amendment timeline shared; drafting ESSA Amendment; consultation and feedback cycles administered to key stakeholder groups

August 2026 – September 2026

State Superintendent Levi Bachmeier requested input from superintendents on accountability changes through a feedback survey



Superintendent Bachmeier also presented NDDPI's proposed ideas to the Interim Legislative Committee on September 15, 2026, to fulfill the below requirement:

15.1-02-17. State accountability plan - Legislative review.

Before the superintendent of public instruction may submit to the United States secretary of education any proposed changes in the state accountability plan required under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 [Pub. L. 114-95; 114 Stat. 1177; 20 U.S.C. 28 et seq.], the superintendent shall present the proposed changes to an interim committee designated by the legislative management. The committee shall review the proposed changes; accept testimony and documentary evidence regarding the impact of the proposed changes on the students, schools, school districts, and taxpayers of this state; and provide advice and recommendations regarding the proposed changes to the superintendent.



One State, One Team

140+ DISTRICTS SUBMITTED FEEDBACK

97% OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL STUDENT ENROLLMENT REPRESENTED

Proposed ESSA Amendment

GENERAL UPDATES: A DECADE OF LEARNING

- Incorporates general updates to modernize language, correct inaccuracies, and reduce any specific mentions of partners or vendors
- Broadens definitions within the plan of student engagement and teacher effectiveness to allow for greater flexibility to make business rules updates based on continuous improvement and ongoing collaboration
- Enhances the approach to “annual meaningful differentiation” and improves NDDPI’s visibility and transparency in reporting school and district results

Proposed ESSA Amendment

BETTER MEASURES OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

- Includes a personalized student growth calculation
- Adjusts EL proficiency formula and methodology to match EL best practices
- Improves point assignment weights and methodology to more accurately represent school performance in all areas
- Establishes objective thresholds for identification of schools in need of improvement and support
- Ensures direct relationship between performance gains and points earned

Proposed ESSA Amendment

STRENGTHENED ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

- Adds a Middle School Accountability 'Pie' to incorporate the creation of a Middle School "Choice Ready" framework
- Creates an additional accountability pathway to ensure that we are better measuring and supporting unique schools such as alternative high schools, colony schools, Level D facilities, etc.

Proposed ESSA Amendment

CLEAR AND FAIR PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

- Shifts total points possible in accountability calculations to improve public understanding of areas of relative performance
- Increases emphasis on growth in language more easily understood by teachers, students, and parents
- Utilizes definitive rankings for both schools and districts in place of unclear letter grades

Impact of the Changes



1. Transparent & Understandable

A simplified accountability structure that all stakeholders can understand and easily replicate, calculate, and use for local goal setting.



2. Meaningful System Benefits

Students and families get clearer pathways and fairer growth measures; schools and districts get consistent calculations and clearer expectations; taxpayers benefit from more transparent and understandable reporting.



3. Future-Ready Accountability

A modernized system with clearer reporting, aligned components, and structures that support long-term improvement and statewide consistency.



4. Statistically-Sound Growth

A new model that focuses on actual growth, providing a more accurate picture of student progress and school success.

ESSA Amendment Next Steps

October 2026

Present proposals at the fall ESSA Committee meeting

November 9, 2026 – December 7, 2027

Open a public comment period

January – April 2027

70th Legislative Assembly

January - March 2027

Submit amendment to the USED

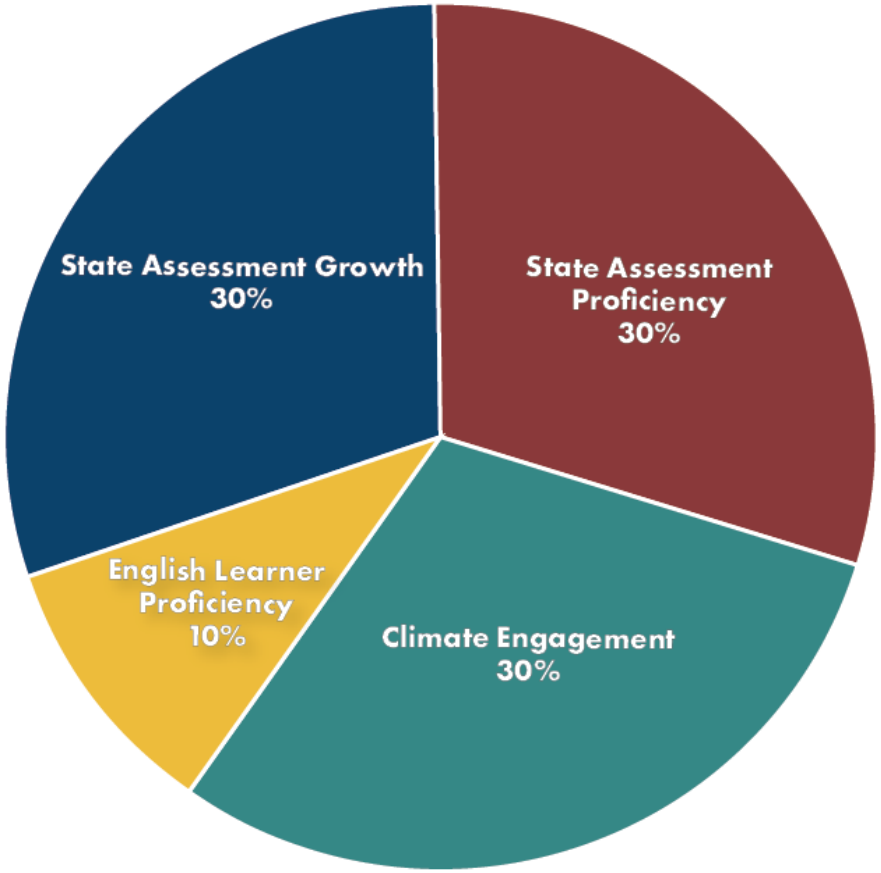
January 2027 – July 2027

Await USED decision; ND will revise as needed, to support full approval; USED decision will be communicated to ESSA Committee

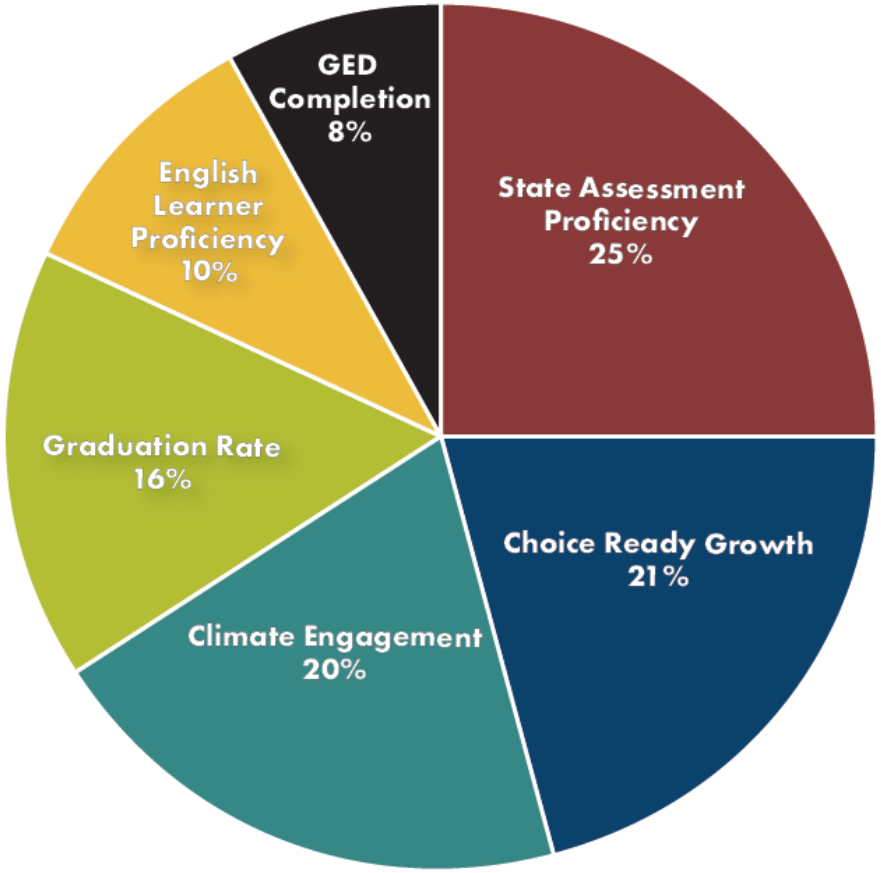
Current Accountability System

For accountability purposes, grades 7 and 8 are included with the elementary report, except for large districts with an approved middle school.

Elementary (K-8)



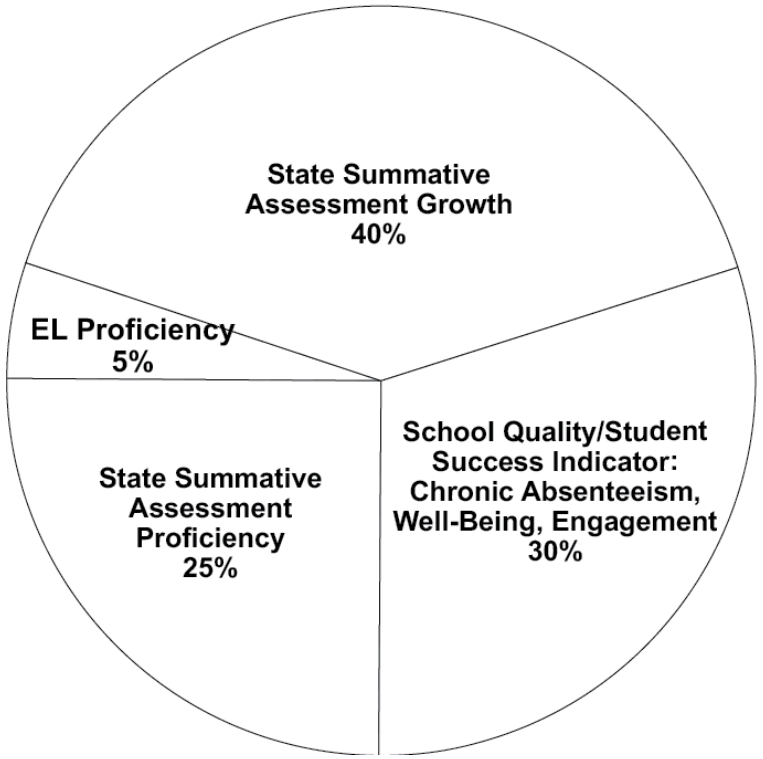
High School (9-12)



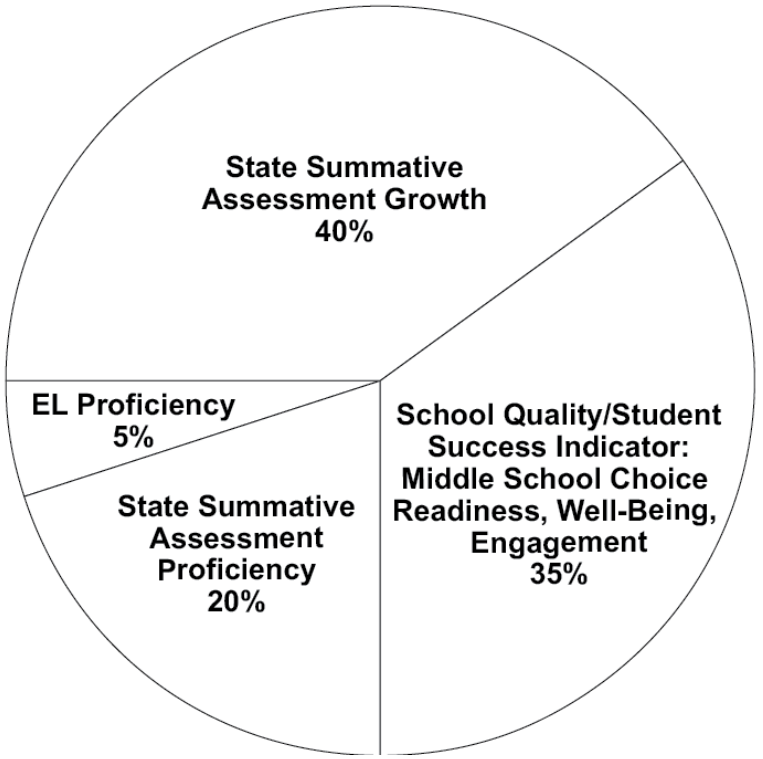
NDDPI

Proposed Accountability System

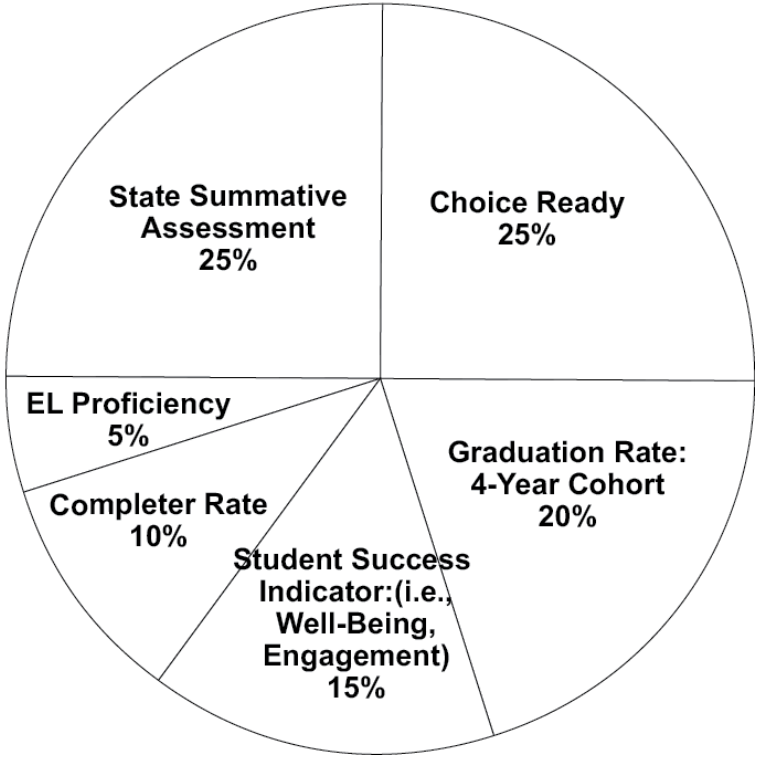
Elementary (K-5)



Middle School (6-8)



High School (9-12)



Development/Implementation Timeline

August 2026

Assessment standard-setting process

Summer 2026

WIDA standards change

2026-2028

- Internal team development of business rules, as well as charter school accountability indicators
- EL updates developed and utilized in preparation for an ESSA amendment; resources updated to reflect accountability calculation adjustments
- Internal team development of business rules; accountability per ESSA amendment submission is run; resources updated to reflect accountability calculation adjustments

2028-2029

New CSI cohort identified; Approved ESSA State Plan fully realized

Moving the Work Forward

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

- Long-term goals established in Spring 2027
- Subcommittees will be established to design the proposed areas and begin the writing of business rules and operational models.
  - Middle School “Choice Readiness”
  - Formula Updates and Unique Schools Pathway Expectations

Commitment to Transparency

THROUGHOUT THE AMENDMENT PROCESS, NDDPI HAS:

- ✓ Provided background on federal ESSA requirements and North Dakota's current State Plan
- ✓ Reviewed the existing plan and accountability system to build shared understanding of current practices and proposed changes
- ✓ Shared data, research, stakeholder feedback, and implementation lessons gathered over the past decade
- ✓ Engaged the ESSA Implementation Committee, educators, school leaders, and other stakeholders in reviewing proposed revisions
- ✓ Allowed time for questions, clarification, discussion, and refinement throughout the development process
- ✓ Provided follow-up materials and technical explanations to support informed participation
- ✓ Distinguished between continuous improvement updates that could be implemented without a formal amendment and revisions requiring approval by the U.S. Department of Education
- ✓ Considered the policy implications and practical effects of the proposed changes on students, families, districts, and communities

NDDPI reaffirms its commitment to transparency by documenting the amendment process, explaining each proposed change, sharing relevant materials, and providing stakeholders with a meaningful opportunity to comment. This work reflects an open, collaborative, and well-documented approach designed to support thoughtful decision-making and continuous improvement before the amendment is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.