

**For immediate release**



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Learning Forward statement on the ESSA draft regulations from the U.S.  
Department of Education

**DALLAS** – May 31, 2016 – Learning Forward is pleased to see that the draft regulations for ESSA implementation from the U.S. Department of Education include a requirement for consolidated state plans to describe states’ systems for educator development, retention, and advancement, including how the state will “ensure that each LEA has and is implementing a system of professional growth and improvement for teachers, principals, and other school leaders....”

We are also encouraged that the requirements ask states to describe their approach to “continuously improve implementation of SEA and LEA strategies and activities that are not leading to satisfactory progress toward improving student outcomes and meeting the desired program outcomes.”

Prioritizing effective professional learning is paramount for achieving the outcomes all stakeholders want for children. Research shows that no in-school factors matter more than teachers and leadership, and educators, like students, need continual opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills to enable all students to reach higher career and college-ready standards. Sustained systems of support coordinated by districts and states are essential to achieving the law’s aspirations of equity and excellence for all.

Learning Forward and its partners support meaningful implementation of ESSA, and urge the U.S. Department of Education to additionally specify in its regulations that professional development align with the definition outlined in the law itself. The definition is clear that professional development is “sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused” and can encompass many strategies and content areas aligned to student and teacher needs. The learning that most educators experience is not yet aligned to this definition despite evidence from research and practice that indicates these elements are essential for professional learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Additional findings continue to elevate the importance of coherent systems of professional learning that are grounded in evidence, adequately supported, and designed to achieve the goals of equity and excellence. We believe the consolidated plans can spur advancement to educational excellence if regulations encourage a more coherent approach to professional development. State plans can describe states' vision for professional learning and how they intend to use all available federal funding sources to achieve it.

Learning Forward appreciates the opportunity to continue to engage with the Department to shape effective implementation of ESSA. We will urge our members and partners to offer their input on the regulations, focusing on the critical role effective professional learning systems play in achieving ambitious goals for all students.

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Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K-12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Information about membership, services, and products is available from [www.learningforward.org](http://www.learningforward.org).