

March 13, 2017

A Message from Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

As Ohioans, we all want every child to receive a high-quality education so they can succeed in life, careers and future learning. That unity is crucial as we seek to lead our education system to be the best it can be in the service of every child. Only by working together can we reach our aspirations.

The submission of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) response should be an event that unites us. In recent weeks, we've heard from stakeholders who feel their input was not reflected in the ESSA template. In reality, however, stakeholder sentiments were heard loud and clear, and we have stated our commitment to identifying solutions to the challenges raised. Much of this work can be done outside the narrow focus of the ESSA specifications. For example, we already have sought recommendations for changes to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System from the Educator Standards Board.

Federal law now gives states the flexibility to make choices that best suit our needs. We are convening a Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Assessments to focus on the full range of testing issues — including state-required tests, as well as district-level tests. From the beginning, we also have envisioned a more comprehensive strategic planning process that would not be limited by the narrow focus of federal regulations. We are excited to begin that work.

To allow this work to advance and drive needed change, the Department will delay the ESSA submission to the U.S. Department of Education to September. This also will allow more time to ensure that feedback received on the draft template can be considered carefully.

In a transparent way, we will continue to work closely with legislators, the governor, business leaders, educators and the public to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning process. The strategic plan will include a clear vision for education in Ohio, supported by a set of goals, strategies, tactics and metrics.

After the ESSA template is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in September, we will continue to engage stakeholders to develop resources, design supports and assist school districts with implementation.

Thank you for all you do for our children and families. Together, we'll make significant strides in improving opportunities and outcomes for Ohio's students.