ESSA is...
The main federal law for K–12 public education in the United States. It aims to make sure public schools provide a quality education by holding schools accountable for how kids learn and achieve.

ESSA supports high expectations for all public school students. This includes students in four historically underserved groups:

- Low-income students
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- English language learners
- Students with disabilities

There are students with learning and attention issues in each group. They make up the majority of students receiving special education services.

ESSA requires states to...
Develop education plans for public schools within a framework provided by the federal government. Each state’s ESSA plan must:

- Set academic standards in reading, math and science. ESSA calls for “challenging” standards to prepare kids for college and careers.
- Test students annually in reading and math in grades 3–8, and once in high school; and in science once in grade, middle and high school.*
- Set achievement goals for all students, including “ambitious” goals for underserved groups, like kids with disabilities.
- Identify struggling schools using academic and other measures and create improvement plans for these schools.
- Publish school report cards with information like test scores, graduation rates, funding and teacher qualifications.

*Accommodations such as extra time on these tests can be part of IEPs and 504 plans.

Parents have a role in ESSA
ESSA requires states to include parents when developing their education plans. Parents also have a say in the report cards their state develops to inform the public about how schools are doing. Learn how to be an ESSA advocate at u.org/ESSAtoolkit.