



## What should I be saying about STEM and ESSA?

Making STEM a priority in every state under the new Every Student Succeeds Act can help ensure all our children have the opportunity for not only a great education, but also to pursue the college or career pathway of their choice.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which became law in late 2015 as the replacement to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), puts greater emphasis on ensuring a well-rounded education and ensuring equity, two issues that are critical to STEM learning.

Across the country, every state is developing a new plan to submit to the U.S. Department of Education detailing how they will implement ESSA. As states develop new plans under ESSA, all members of the STEM community have an important role to play to keep great STEM teaching and great STEM learning a top priority for students.

There are several important messages on why STEM matters, how STEM is an important part of ESSA, and the impacts a high quality STEM education can have for all students.

- STEM education helps ensure students have the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life.
- ESSA puts a greater emphasis on ensuring a **well-rounded education** and **ensuring equity**—and high-quality **STEM education opportunities are essential** to achieving both these goals.
  - STEM learning opportunities and support for STEM teachers are mentioned specifically throughout ESSA.
  - ESSA provides states with flexibility to set new policy and funding priorities, and they can do that to support STEM learning.
- High-quality STEM education is essential to a **well-rounded education** for all students.
  - STEM is a way of thinking and learning as much as it is tied to a specific set of classes. It helps engage kids in school and learn important life skills, such as creativity, perseverance and experimentation.
  - In addition to the arts, civics, and other academic areas, STEM helps promote a well-rounded education.
- Increased access to STEM learning promotes greater **opportunity, fairness, and equity**.
  - STEM learning not only provides interesting and engaging education opportunities, but also allows students to pursue a college or career pathway of their choice. Increasingly STEM skills are needed across the workforce, and high-quality STEM education helps students gain the skills they need to be successful in life, no matter the career they choose.

- No matter a student's background or where they live, all students should have access to high-quality STEM learning in and out of school. Students from both rural and urban communities—and everywhere in between—need the opportunity to gain the skills they need to be successful in life.
- In today's economy, **employers are looking for workers with STEM skills.**
  - STEM-related fields are the fastest growing job sectors in our economy.
  - In fact, over the next decade, there will be about 1 million more US jobs in the tech sector than computer science graduates to fill them—and just 25% of our nation's high schools offer computer science classes.
  - Millions of jobs are unfilled given today's workers do not have the skills employers are looking for.
  - Traditional STEM jobs aside, the majority of jobs in today's economy now require the knowledge, training, and skills gained through STEM.
- That's why **Making STEM a priority in every state under the new Every Student Succeeds Act** can help ensure all our children have the opportunity for not only a great education, but also to pursue the college or career pathway of their choice.