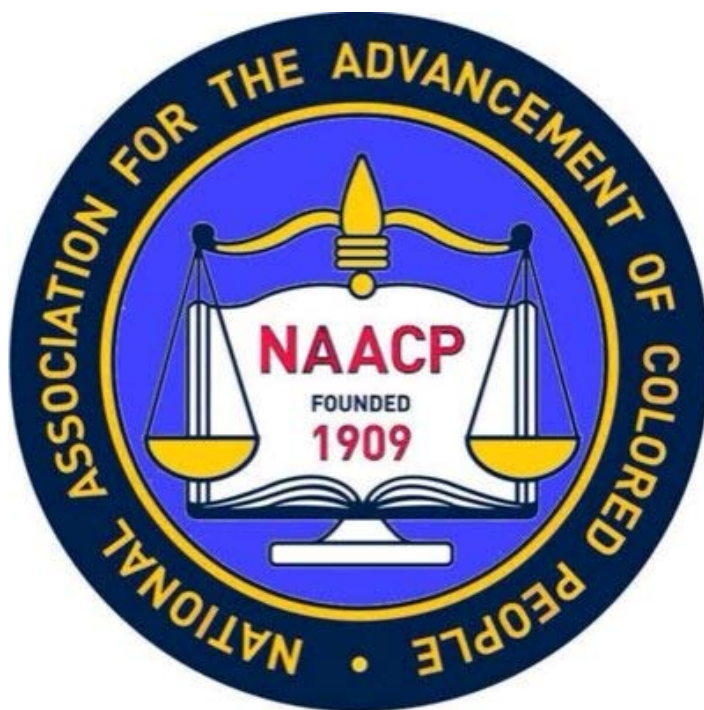


# **ESSA**

## **REVIEW OF SELECTED STATE PLANS**



**Report Commissioned by the NAACP Education Department**



# **ESSA: Review of Selected State Plans**

Report Commissioned by the NAACP Education Department

Funded by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust

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## About the Authors

**Dr. Elfreda Massie** has over 40 years of experience driving positive change and initiating reform in high-performing and challenging environments in diverse education communities. She specializes in coaching and empowering leaders to reach their full potential. She has held key leadership positions in public education including Superintendent, Chief of Staff, Deputy Superintendent, Associate Superintendent for Human Resources, and Director of Professional Development. She is a coach with EdFuel as well as a facilitator and coach with the National Institute for School Leadership. She has directed comprehensive human resources and talent development programs and managed complex labor negotiations. She is adept at coaching and counseling those going through life transitions and those entering leadership positions in public education and corporate communities.

Dr. Massie has a Ph.D. in Policy, Planning and Administration from the University of Maryland, and a Master's Degree in Counseling from John Hopkins University. She has held senior leadership positions at Blackboard, Harcourt, Global Partnership Schools, and Knowledge Delivery Systems. Elfreda has served on the boards of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, See Forever Foundation, and Boys Town of Washington, DC. She serves on the Executive Council of New York University Metropolitan Center for Urban Education.

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**Dr. Barbara Dezmon** completed her doctorate in Education Policy, Planning, and Administration at the University of Maryland at College Park. During her studies, she focused on the academic achievement of minority students. Dr. Dezmon's work experience includes classroom teacher, administration, professional development, as well as parent, community, and business relations. Her leadership experiences include Executive Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent as well as Assistant to the Superintendent for Equity and Assurance. In those roles, she provided leadership and support to central offices and schools in many areas and on a range of subjects ranging from administration to curriculum and instruction. She has also advised and presented on a broad array of topics, including strategic planning, diversity, differentiation, student achievement, discipline, and cultural responsive education, to assist school districts and other organizations at local, state, national, and international levels.

In addition to her work on numerous commissions, committees, and task forces in various arenas, she notably served as chair of the Maryland State Department of Education's Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students (AIMMS) Steering Committee, which provided recommendations to improve practices related to the education of minorities as well as oversight and monitoring of minority issues to assist the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and local school systems throughout Maryland. Dr. Dezmon currently serves as State Education Chair for the Maryland State Conference NAACP and has provided assistance to the organization locally and nationally.

Throughout her career, she has worked to reform practices and to bring many positive changes in education for students from varied backgrounds and with special needs. She has worked tirelessly and undeterred to eradicate barriers and establish positive bonds between peoples. In both her personal and professional life, she has proven profound commitment to equity, civil rights, and the welfare of children.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report prepared for the NAACP features cogent points from the final Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plans submitted by 18 states and the District of Columbia in 2017. The information is intended to assist NAACP State Conferences in their reviews of their respective ESSA plans.

When the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed in 2015, there were two major purposes in this congressional move. The first was to replace the No Child Left Behind legislation which many had criticized for assigning too much authority over education at the state and local levels to the federal government. NCLB was also criticized by conservative thinkers who asserted that the law demanded too much from the states and replaced unreasonable expectations on school performance. Accordingly, the other intent of ESSA is to grant more autonomy and responsibility to the individual states. Both NCLB and ESSA espouse equity and quality education for all students. In addition, ESSA specifically places stronger emphasis on closing the academic achievement gaps between student subgroups.

The following information highlights aspects of states' ESSA plans that are important to the NAACP, parents, and communities. A brief description of major parts of ESSA is Appendix A, "ESSA: Parts at a Glance," of this document. Although this review mirrors similar information in other reports, the essential focus is how the plans involved various constituencies and stakeholders during development and if the plans reflect appropriate actions to provide minority and other students equitable education. From a generalized perspective, the state plans all adhere to the requirements stated in the ESSA legislation and the directions posed by the federal government. The plans do differ in certain aspects, especially those related to accountability and

measuring performance and academic achievement among student subgroups. It is important to reiterate that this document reviews the state plans only as written and submitted by the state educational agencies. Therefore, it is even more paramount that NAACP state conferences and local units devote attention to the further relevant specifics and fidelity of implementation of plans by states and local districts. To assist in that effort, a guidance tool, “NAACP Criteria for Assessment of State ESSA Plans,” is included in the Appendix B. To provide further assistance, Appendix C, “ESSA Plan Advocacy Tips for Stakeholders,” features a list of key advocacy tips to consider in reviewing state ESSA plans.

A commonality between both initiatives, NCLB then and ESSA, is that they hold the promise for African American, other minorities, and all children to obtain high quality education contributing to future success in their lives. Then as now, it is important that all responsible parties, including parents, government representatives, educators, advocacy groups, etc., work together to assure that the promise is fulfilled.

## **SELECTED STATE ESSA PLANS REVIEWS**



# ARIZONA



# **ARIZONA**

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

There is not strong evidence in Arizona's plan that it has engaged parents, especially those in the disability community.

## **GOALS**

Arizona's long-term goal focuses on student growth and proficiency on state assessments for both ELA and math. By 2027-2028, the goal is to close proficiency gaps by at least 50 percent. By 2039-2040, all subgroups must reach at least 90 percent proficiency on state ELA and math assessments. Arizona expects a 90 percent graduation rate by 2030.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Arizona plans to use a school rating system based on A-F school grades. An "A" school would be considered "excellent" and an "F" school would be considered "failing". The state's two main long-term goals for academic achievement have different timelines: One is set for 2027-28, the other is 2039-40. Arizona is still working on the specifics of its accountability indicators. Arizona's plan places strong weight on student achievement and growth by combining measures of student achievement with two different measures of student growth - one that compares students to each other and one that compares them to a common, grade-level benchmark.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support can apply for grants using a needs assessment and action plans. Priority is given to schools that show evidenced-based decision-making, research-based interventions, root cause analysis, greatest need, and strongest commitment to using funds for student achievement and outcomes.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Arizona has a strong definition of an ineffective teacher is based on its teacher evaluation system, which includes, multiple, objective measures of student learning and growth that research demonstrates are critically important to measuring teacher quality.

Arizona plans to implement multiple strategies designed to eliminate its educator equity gaps, including: 1) strengthening the rating reporting system to provide more reliable data on teacher effectiveness and training administrators on the use of this data, 2) reducing the number of inexperienced teachers by employing effective retention and recruitment strategies, and 3) providing incentives for teaching in high-need areas.

Arizona does not include data demonstrating the rates at which low-income and minority students are taught by ineffective, inexperienced or out-of-field teachers, nor does it include timelines and interim targets for eliminating existing educator equity gaps.

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Arizona's plan provides incentives for teaching in high-need areas, such as new teacher stipends and housing allowances, and includes plans to improve new teacher induction.

### **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Arizona's achievement indicators are academic achievement, academic progress, and graduation rates for high schools, English-language proficiency and improvement of outcomes for special education students in literacy. Arizona's plan places strong weight on student achievement and growth. Other indicators are: For elementary schools - acceleration and readiness; for high schools - college- and career-readiness.

### **TESTING**

Schools may opt-out if there is a 95-percent participation rate on mandatory exams; in addition, schools that miss that participation rate over multiple years will have to use interventions to address the issue.

### **CONCERNS**

Arizona's plan does not provide sufficient guidance on addressing large gaps in achievement in the time frame identified. The plan lacks detail on how it will identify schools for improvement, and the criteria low-performing schools would need to meet to exit improvement status. It is not clear how it will support its large English learner population. Overall, the plan does not adequately address how it plans to increase student achievement, increase academic options and pathways for students, or intervene in chronically low-performing schools.

# COLORADO



# ***COLORADO***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Colorado has reached out to its stakeholder groups through its “hub and spoke” model for soliciting feedback and input.

## **GOALS**

Colorado’s goal is to have all students scoring at the 50th percentile on state English/language arts and math exams, in six years. The state also wants all students and student subgroups to have a graduation rate of 90.3 percent or higher in six years.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

There will be a points-based system and four performance bands, with cut-offs for each performance band at the 15th, 50th, and 85th percentiles. Colorado has lowered the threshold at which it includes subgroups for accountability purposes. Colorado has a high-quality assessment system, the Colorado Measures of Academic Success, in grades three through nine, which includes state-developed science and social studies assessments and PARCC English language arts and math assessments. Colorado is one of the few states that includes science in its assessments.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

16 students for academic achievement and graduation rates, 20 students for growth indicators.

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Colorado’s plan has a wide range of supports for schools at varying levels and establishes a broad range of interventions in response to their needs. The plan includes a strong focus on training school leaders to assure that school turnaround efforts are successful.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Colorado has a strong definition of an ineffective teacher is based on its teacher evaluation system, which includes, multiple, objective measures of student learning and growth that research demonstrates are critically important to measuring teacher quality. The state’s strong definition of an inexperienced teacher as a teacher with 0-2 years of experience is supported by research indicating that teachers experience the greatest increase in effectiveness in the first two years of teaching.

They will calculate and report educator equity gaps using school-by-school student level data. This is a good strategy because within-school equity gaps are typically obscure.

Colorado’s plan includes clear, timelines and interim targets for eliminating its identified equity gaps by the 2025-2026 school year. Including these timelines and interim targets enables Colorado and its stakeholders to help ensure accountability for eliminating educator equity gaps.

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

The plan includes establishing local teacher cadet programs; continuing to support new teacher induction programs; and improving the human capital management system.

### **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Colorado’s school quality indicators are a reduction in chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle schools and a reduction in dropout rates for high schools.

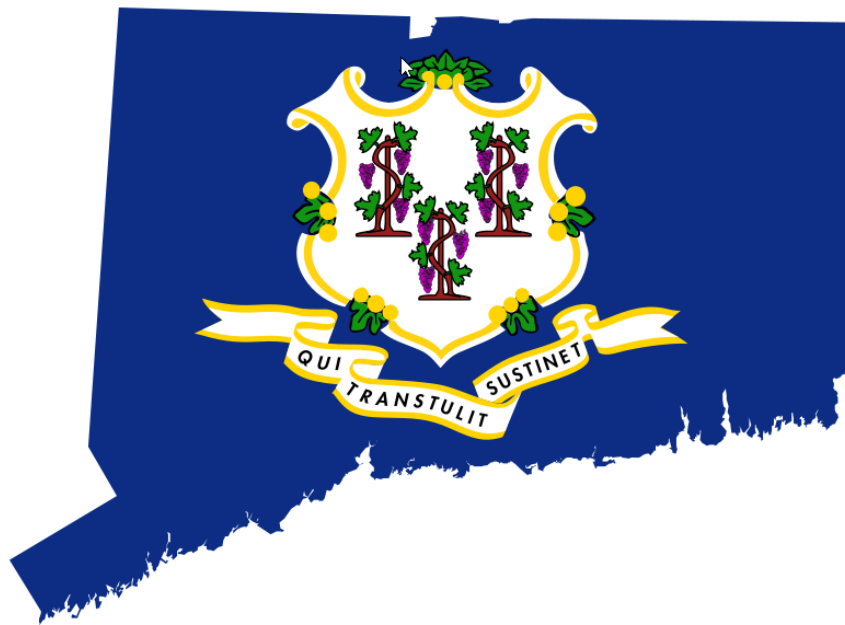
### **TESTING**

A school or district that misses 95 percent on the state English arts or math exams must create and distribute an improvement plan to address the situation.

### **CONCERNS**

Colorado engaged stakeholders but its process would be improved if more input is solicited outside the education system, as well. The state has not provided a clear strategy on how it will create the percentile-based system that is intended to raise the statewide performance from the 50th to the 53rd percentile. The plan does not provide specificity about proficiency performance, goals, and interim targets for English-language learners. Colorado’s definition of “consistently underperforming” subgroups is unclear. If a school has a subgroup underperforming in math and English achievement, it would still need to also earn the lowest rating on a third indicator to be labeled for targeted support. The definitions and differences between “consistently underperforming” and “chronically low performing” subgroups are not specified.

# CONNECTICUT



# ***CONNECTICUT***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Connecticut significantly involved stakeholders in its planning process, which began prior to passage of ESSA. Through site visits, surveys, and focus groups, there appeared to be a substantial effort to engage practitioners, parents, and the public. It appears that there was little diversity in the stakeholder groups, and it is unclear whether parents of minority student groups and parents of all educational backgrounds provided input. According to their state data for their survey results, 79.7 percent of the survey respondents were white, and more than 85 percent indicated they had completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Those rates are much higher than their representation in the state's population.

## **GOALS**

Connecticut's goal is that 100 percent of all students and subgroups will hit various growth targets by 2029-30 and that 94 percent will graduate high school in four years by 2029-30. They show a robust list of measures in the accountability systems, including measures in art, physical education, science, and college attendance.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Accountability measures are summative ratings based on a 0 to 100 index on 12 indicators.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

The state intends to award 70 percent of its school-improvement funds on a formula basis to districts with comprehensive support schools. The remaining 30 percent would be competitive grants awarded to districts with evidence-based interventions that are most closely aligned with the needs identified in those schools.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Connecticut intends to attract teachers to the profession through a marketing campaign and working with the Department of Labor to develop a repository of recruitment and retention strategies. They will continue to support new teacher induction programs and mentor programs for schools in high-poverty, high minority districts.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are gains of achievement and growth in reading and math and graduation rates. The focus of improvement for special education students is early literacy. Connecticut's accountability system incentivizes both academic achievement and growth over time.



## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

School quality indicators are chronic absenteeism, preparation for college-and-career coursework, participation rates on tests, postsecondary enrollment, physical fitness, access to arts education, and on-track graduation for 9th graders.

## **TESTING**

A school that receives the highest or second-highest ranking would be knocked down one ranking if eligible students do not take the state exam.

## **CONCERNS**

Connecticut's plan does not include proficiency targets, and its accountability system does not include any measure capturing whether students have met the state's grade-level standards. The state's plan also has several potentially negative implications for subgroups of students. The state uses a "high-needs" group, which would combine low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. This is problematic because these three groups have different educational needs, and by focusing on these groups, they Connecticut would be ignoring the performance of other groups, like African American and Hispanic students.

# DELAWARE



# ***DELAWARE***

## **GOALS**

Delaware intends to cut by 50% the number of students and subgroups who are not scoring at a proficiency level on English/language arts and math exams by 2030 and the number of high school students not graduating after four years. The plans show strong commitments to college- and career-readiness and high-quality, aligned assessments in math and English Language Arts, as well as, assessments in science, social studies, and the early grades. By including science and social studies in the accountability system, the state is emphasizing the importance of a well-rounded education for all students. Delaware has also focused on early literacy for special education students.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Delaware's accountability system is built on the foundation of preparing all students for college- and career-readiness. They have already put in place many policies to support this goal. They have lowered the minimum group size from 30 to 15 to ensure that more schools will focus on the performance of more subgroups of students. The state has also included interim targets for each subgroup. This strategy will increase the likelihood of the state closing achievement gaps over time.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

15 students

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

The plan to address educator equity is their 2015 State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educator. This plan assures that highly qualified teachers are assigned to the students who need it most. The 2015 plan addresses equitable assignment of teachers and includes an Educator Equity Planning Toolkit for LEAs.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Delaware's plan includes developing online teacher recruitment portals, collaborating with teacher prep programs at universities, providing support for new teacher induction programs, and providing resources on induction and mentoring programs. They will support teacher leadership through the Teacher-Leader pilot program that is in place in several LEAs and provide districts with data about the state teacher pipeline. Leadership will also be provided through the Delaware Talent Cooperative, a forum for professional learning, collaboration and recognition of Delaware's top educators in high-needs schools.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Delaware will provide LEAs with competitive grants to design, implement and support school leadership opportunities; recruitment and prepare leaders; and for retention efforts. The plan includes support for a comprehensive induction program for new school leaders to identify effective instruction and provide effective feedback to teachers based on student academic performance.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic growth and proficiency in English language arts and, in some grades, social studies and science; on-track high school graduation for 9th graders; progress in English-language proficiency; and the focus area for improvement for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; college-and-career preparedness

## **TESTING**

A school would have to submit a plan to increase testing participation

## **CONCERNS**

Delaware's plan does not indicate how it would hold schools with large achievement gaps accountable. It doesn't specify how many schools would be identified or what steps they would be asked to take. Delaware has a detailed timeline for identifying schools and monitoring performance, but it won't identify schools until after the academic school year has begun.

# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



# ***DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA***

## **GOALS**

The District of Columbia's indicators of student performance are based upon new metrics that include access to and successful completion college-level coursework and chronic absenteeism. By 2038-39, 85 percent of all students and subgroups are expected to score a level 4 or 5 on the PARCC exam and 90 percent of high school students are expected to graduate after four years.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

The District of Columbia has lowered its minimum subgroup 6 to 10 students. By lowering its minimum subgroup size, they are attempting to ensure that more students are included in its accountability system and their performance is monitored more closely. They plan to use the "School Transparency and Reporting" (STAR) system to provide annual summative ratings for schools. Each school would be placed into one of five performance tiers. For the first time, they will rate public charter schools with the same ratings as traditional public schools.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

10 students

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

The District is exploring development of a Talent Information Hub to post vacancies and receive information about teacher candidates. It plans to develop and support teacher leadership, organize communities of practice and institutes, and award \$1.5 million in competitive grants from Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act funds for the public charter sector for teacher pipeline initiatives. These grants will support efforts that recruit high-quality candidates new to teaching for DC charter schools. They will continue the teacher leadership pathway program, which will focus on cultivating and engaging highly effective educators from across the District in a year-long community of practice. They will facilitate collaboration among teachers from various schools as they identify and implement evidence-based strategies to drive student achievement. They will provide feedback and guidance around state policies and initiatives, engage in community outreach.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic growth; graduation rates; English-language proficiency; and college-readiness measured by ACT, AP, and IB participation and scores. The focus area for improvement of outcomes for special education students is graduation rate. They are considering developing a principal leadership cadre similar to the master teacher professional learning community.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; attendance indicators; re-enrollment in same school; and standardized observations that incorporate factors such as, classroom organization, emotional support, and instructional support for students.

## **TESTING**

They would monitor and assist schools, then consider the criteria for testing opt-outs.

## **CONCERNS**

The District of Columbia's growth and performance outcomes are not clear. Their interim goal is to decrease the gap between each group's current proficiency rate in half within 10 years. That timeframe should be shorter. The plan does not indicate consequences for schools that do not meet the participation rates in annual testing.

# ILLINOIS





# ***ILLINOIS***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has solicited and included feedback from their stakeholder groups. Throughout the plan, ISBE cites specific feedback as the reason for adoption of particular approaches. ISBE also included dissenting opinions.

## **GOALS**

Illinois' goals show alignment and coherency. They have a clear rationale for K-12 goals, with close alignment to postsecondary attainment goals. In linking the two, the state will bring coherence across multiple systems and ensure that there is shared ownership for students from K-12 to postsecondary education. By 2032, 90 percent of all students and subgroups will be proficient in English/language arts and math; by 2032 and 90 percent of students will graduate.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

The accountability system is a four-tier school rating system, ranging from "exemplary" to "lowest-performing", based on graduation rates, academic performance, and performance of subgroups. They include a unique process for reporting students who exit special education and who achieve English language proficiency.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Illinois will award a "significant" portion of its funds for targeted school supports through a competitive grant process.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Illinois will support the development of teacher residencies; create grants for research projects where teacher leadership practices are investigated; create and support an educator leader network to connect leaders among districts.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Illinois is investigating the possibility of using some of the Title II funds for LEA grants focused on principal training. They plan to provide school leaders with opportunities to build their capacity as facilitators of continuous teacher learning and development and create and support an educator leader network to connect leaders between districts. Professional learning opportunities will be provided to school leaders whose schools have been identified to receive comprehensive wrap-around community services.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic proficiency and growth, English-language proficiency, and graduation rates. They are considering adding science proficiency and exploring fine arts as another indicator for elementary and middle schools. The focus area for improvement of outcomes for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; climate surveys; 9th graders on track to graduate; an early-childhood education indicator; and possibly an arts indicator.

## **TESTING**

A school could not get top score for academic proficiency alone. The participation rate would also be factored into school-improvement decisions.

## **CONCERNS**

Illinois' calculation for student growth is confusing, and by weighting growth twice as much as proficiency, it may over-emphasize growth at the expense of grade-level proficiency. Illinois could also strengthen its plan by developing a more rigorous method for identifying and supporting schools with low-performing subgroups of students. Illinois' primary focus on the bottom 5 percent of students may lead to the maintenance of significant gaps within school districts, as long as subgroup performance does not fall below the bottom 5 percent.

# LOUISIANA



# ***LOUISIANA***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) had extensive stakeholder engagement. LDOE held meetings with school leaders, education associations, business and community leaders, civil rights organizations, college and university leaders, representatives of the military and advocacy groups to review the requirements of ESSA and receive feedback on the development of the plan. The State Superintendent of Education, John White, hosted regional town hall meetings where many parents, educators and community leaders attended.

## **GOALS**

Louisiana has an annual average improvement target of 2.5 percentage point gains in achievement on state reading and math tests between 2018 and 2025 for all students and student subgroups. The plan includes a goal of reaching a graduation rate of 90 percent by 2025 for all students and student subgroups. Louisiana has had recent gains and plans to sustain these gains, as well as, increase its proficiency rates for all student groups.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Louisiana will give A-F school grades, based on index scores ranging from 0-150. Louisiana's will provide stakeholders with a single, clear, summative rating to understand school performance. They plan to identify about 17 percent of its schools for comprehensive support and improvement. This is above the 5 percent that is required by federal law. Louisiana plans to measure student academic growth by considering whether a student is on track to mastery and whether the student is growing at the same pace, faster or slower than peers.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Louisiana's school-improvement model is easy to understand and has clear timelines and expectations for improvement. The state will use its authority to take over schools that are not seeing dramatic improvement through its Recovery School District authority.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Louisiana plans to collaborate with teacher prep programs at universities; support teacher residencies in identified shortage areas; and develop policies to formalize the mentor teacher role. 16 rural districts will receive funding through the USDE Teacher Incentive Fund Grant to offer more competitive salaries. The state will continue to support the Teacher Leader Network and its Teacher Leaders and Teacher Leader Advisors with webinars and annual conferences. They will create a Teacher Mentor certificate and provide stipends to mentors. The Teacher

Residency role will have a certification in state regulations. Teacher candidates in a full-year residency will receive a minimal stipend of \$2,000 each year to cover lost part-time wages and travel expenses through 2018-19. The state will provide financial support for the Louisiana Principal Fellowship for strong teacher leaders and mentors who wish to pursue administrative pathways.

### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

The state will support the Louisiana Superintendents Academy for school and district administrators wishing to pursue district leadership. They will also create and support an educator leader network to connect leaders between districts. They are developing a school leadership preparation study pilot.

### **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic achievement on state exams, including high school end-of-course exams and an ACT/Work Keys index; a student growth index; graduation rate index; English-language proficiency index; and school quality indicators, including access to a well-rounded education. The focus area for improvement for special education students is intermediate literacy.

### **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Middle schools would be measured on credit accumulation through 9th grade; high schools would be measured on the "strength of diploma" students receive; and all schools would be measured on "interests and opportunities" that cover various programs.

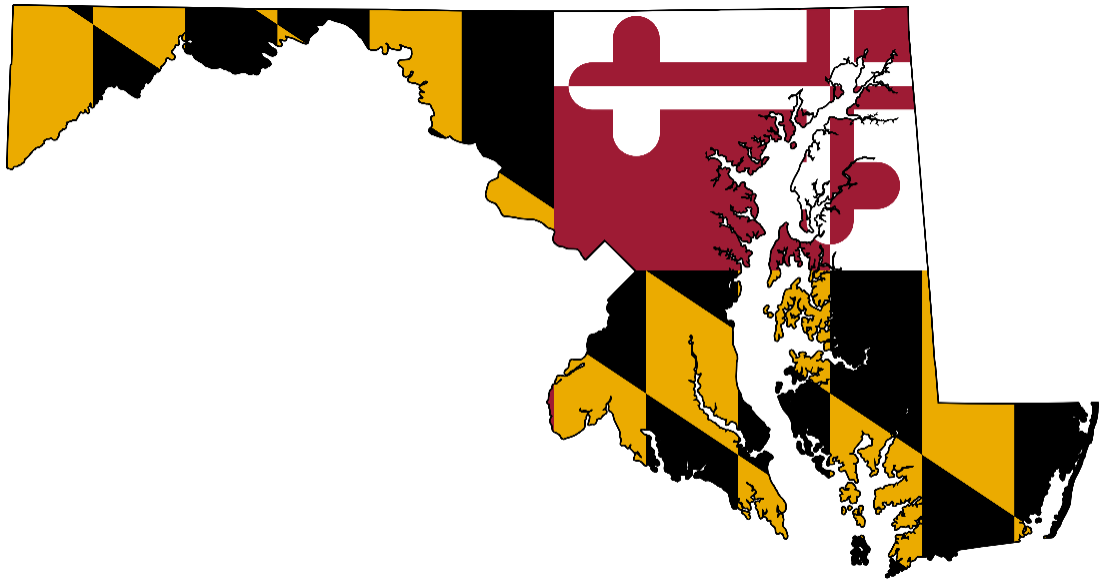
### **TESTING**

All non-participants in the state exam will receive a score of zero, which will impact the school scores on the state's accountability system.

### **CONCERNS**

The plan does not describe the expectations or specific supports available for schools with low-performing subgroups, or for schools with high levels of out-of-school suspensions. Louisiana's plan may not adequately address schools with low-performing student groups that remain low performing over long periods of time, and its exit criteria for targeted support schools could allow schools to exit improvement status after only minor improvements in subgroup scores.

# MARYLAND



# ***MARYLAND***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) posted a general survey on its website to solicit input and capture feedback. It also received input from the External ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Committee that has broad representation of its communities. The committee continues to meet.

## **GOALS**

Maryland has a long-term goal of having two-thirds of students proficient in math and English language arts by 2030.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Maryland’s plan states a proficiency level of 4 for the ELA and Math PARCC assessments. Differentiated targets will be set for all LEAs, schools, students and students groups to close achievement gaps in ELA, math and science. High schools will be accountable for meeting the state target for 4-year and 5-year Cohort Graduation Rates. Each school will be given either an “up,” “down,” or “sideways” pointing arrow in different academic and non-academic indicators to acknowledge growth or regression in those areas. Schools will be given a rating on a five-star scale. A five-star rating will be given to the state’s highest-performing schools, and the system will work down to one star for the lowest-performing schools. Sixty-five percent of a school’s rating will be determined using academic measures, which include growth and proficiency in test scores. The remaining 35 percent will be determined by factors, such as, school climate, chronic absenteeism, and access to a “well-rounded curriculum”.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

10 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

The bottom 5 percent of schools, which receive intensive state support, will be determined by test scores and chronic absenteeism.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Maryland is considering a revision of its teacher certification regulations, partnering with colleges and universities to facilitate faster certification, and establishing new guidelines for mentor teachers. They are exploring ways to expand the Quality Teacher Stipends and assuring equitable application of the standards for traditional and alternative pathways to certification. Their goal is to increase the number of minority hires by certification area and to decrease the percentage of classes taught by unqualified teachers.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

The state plans to collaborate with LEAs to develop professional learning for principals, assistant principals, aspiring principals and teacher leaders. They are considering residency programs; academies; professional learning communities; webinars; online courses; regional workshops; and action research. They plan to develop and support teacher leadership by expanding mentoring and coaching programs. They will support LEAs in the creation of a consistent, structured mentor training program for both principal and teacher mentors and provide opportunities and structures to collaborate and partner with institutes of higher education on professional learning needs, such as, induction, cultural proficiency, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and restorative practices.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Maryland will retain up to 3 percent of Title II funds for professional development for principals, assistant principals and teacher leaders. MSDE will support LEAs in the creation of a consistent, structured mentor training program for both principal and teacher mentors.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic performance and growth in English language arts and mathematics, credit for completion of a well-rounded curriculum, progress in achieving English language proficiency, chronic absenteeism, on track in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and graduation rate. The focus area for improvement of outcomes for special education students is early math.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

For all high schools: 4 and 5-year graduation rates and drop-out rates; college and career readiness indicators, including performance on AP, IB, SAT, ACT; dual enrollment, postsecondary enrollment; CTE concentrator; and industry certification.

For all middle and elementary Schools: chronic absenteeism and other measures, including but not limited to teacher attendance, climate surveys and discipline data.

## **TESTING**

In 2015, Maryland began implementing PARCC assessments which are aligned to MCCR standards. Science and Government are additional assessments that Maryland will continue to administer and will include in the accountability system.

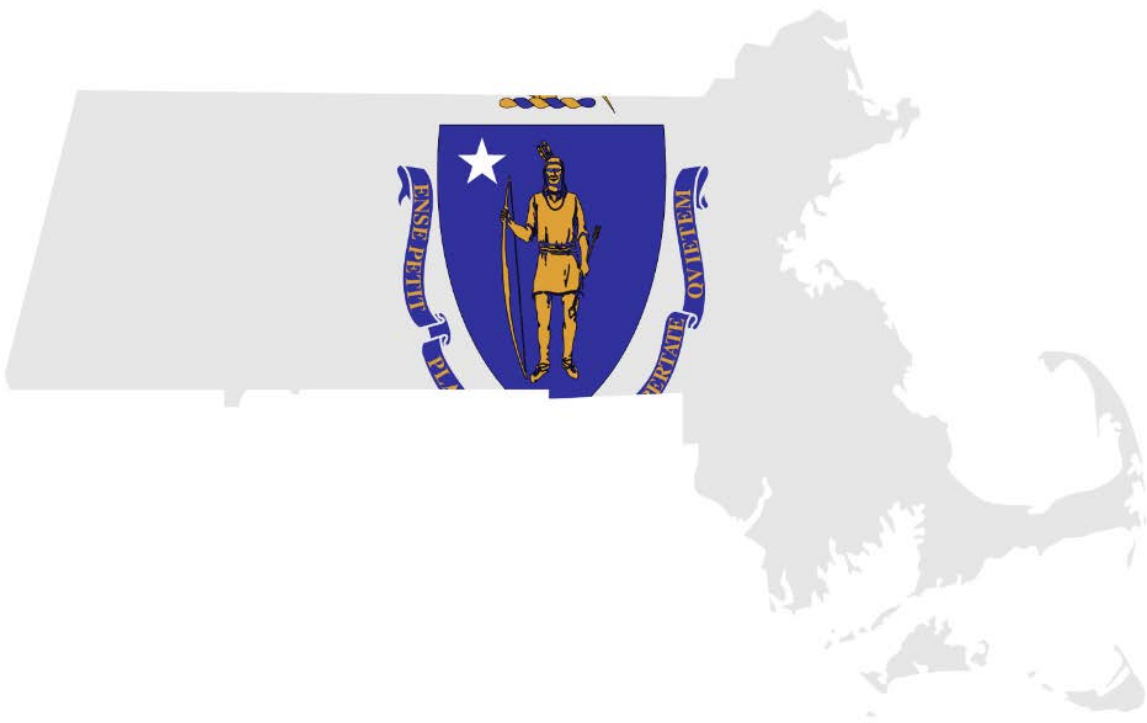
Maryland assesses students at grades 5 and 8, and high school in science. Starting in 2016-2017, Maryland is implementing a new science assessment aligned to the next generation science standards. Government is also administered once in high school. Alternate Assessment tests are provided to students with disabilities in ELA, Math and Science.



## **CONCERNS**

The plan does not state the criteria for becoming a five-star school. The state has not determined what qualifies as a "well-rounded curriculum."

# MASSACHUSETTS



# **MASSACHUSETTS**

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Massachusetts has included a broad constituency of stakeholders in developing its plan.

## **GOALS**

Massachusetts plans to reduce the proficiency gap by one-third over the next six years and to increase overall and subgroup graduation rates by 5 percentage points by 2020. Massachusetts has had strong standards that align with college readiness, but the state is currently revising those standards.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Massachusetts has a six-tier performance rating system, based on 1-100 index.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Massachusetts has commissioned two studies, *Turnaround Practices in Action* and *Evaluation of Level 4 Turnaround Efforts in Massachusetts*, to determine the effectiveness of its turnaround efforts. Massachusetts plans to identify any school with a subgroup in the lowest performing 10 percent of “all eligible subgroups” for targeted support. These studies will be the foundation for the state’s current practices and Massachusetts plans to embed the principles that are deemed to be effective into competitive grants for school-improvement.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Their plan includes sharing best practices, providing resources for the teacher induction program and supporting a teacher residency program for new teachers. Massachusetts has been the top performing state on international assessments so the state’s plan for Supporting Excellent Educators may be model that other states will want to study. The emphasis of the plan is on early literacy and middle school mathematics.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Massachusetts plans to develop residencies and academies to train and support school leaders.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic gains and growth in reading and math; achievement in science; graduation rates and the percentage of students enrolled in high school; dropout rates; and English-language proficiency.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; success in 9th grade courses; successful completion of a broad and challenging high school curriculum, including taking AP and IB courses.

## **TESTING**

A school's overall summative rating would decline if eligible students opt-out of taking state exams.

## **CONCERNS**

Massachusetts' growth measures compare students with each other, not with an objective standard. They plan to include other growth measures based on whether students are meeting state standards, but there is little information regarding that plan or the timeline of including it.

# MICHIGAN



# ***MICHIGAN***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Michigan's plan shows a commitment to engaging stakeholders in the process, with specific attention to government consultation with the state's federally recognized tribes. Outreach efforts included reaching out to diverse groups, including civil rights groups.

## **GOALS**

Michigan proposes that 75 percent of schools and 75 percent of all student subgroups reach various proficiency targets on state exams in English/language arts, math, science, and other subjects by 2024-25.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Michigan's plan has two options for A-F school grades, one that gives schools a summative grade, and the other that gives A-F grades to each component of the accountability system. The state is also developing a dashboard system combining the system's six elements. Michigan's plan includes assessment of science and social studies and an indicator that measures student performance in the fine arts, music, physical education, and access to library media specialists.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

30 students, except for English-learners, whose sub-group size is 10 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Michigan's plan does not provide specificity about how it will identify or provide supports to schools. The plan does not indicate how the state will help improve schools that are identified for comprehensive and targeted support schools or how it will use its 7 percent of federal funds dedicated for school-improvement activities.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Michigan's plan does not address educator equity as it relates to the assignment of teachers to assure that all students are taught by highly effective teachers.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

The plan provides support for teacher residencies in identified shortage areas; improvement of new teacher induction programs; creation of teacher-leader networks and a new teacher fellows program housed at the department of education. They have plans to develop pathways to teacher education careers.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Michigan plans to develop school leadership, including residencies and academies and to establish a pipeline aspiring leaders.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Michigan's achievement indicators are a 100-point achievement index; a 100-point growth index; four-, five-, and six-year cohort graduation rates; a 100-point English-learner progress index; various school-quality indicators depending on grade level; and participation in state assessments. The focus area for improvement for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; time spent in arts, library, and physical education programs in K-8; advanced coursework in grades 11-12; and postsecondary enrollment rates

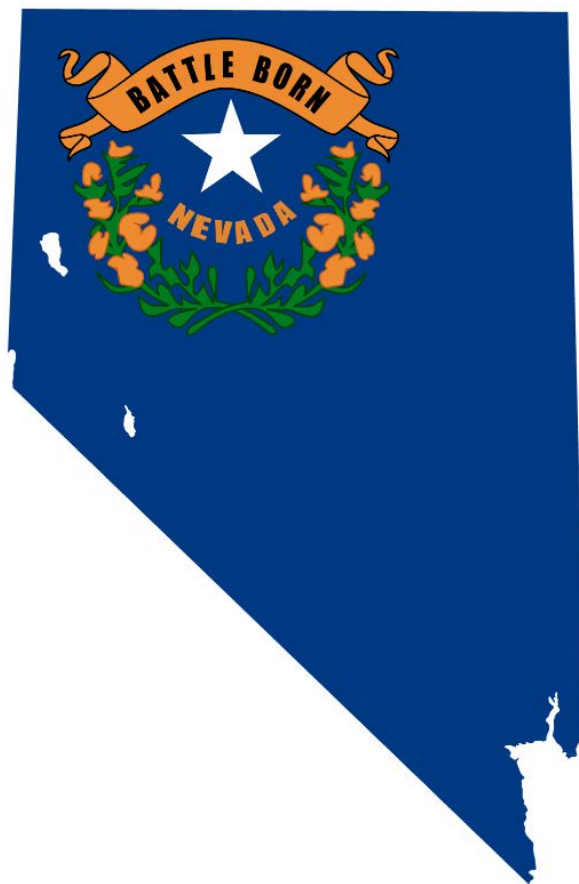
## **TESTING**

Eligible students who do not take state exams would be recorded as having a score of zero when determining proficiency rates in the state accountability system.

## **CONCERNS**

Michigan's plan is incomplete in that it does not address all criteria that are required for the state to receive federal education funding. They have not finalized and submitted their accountability systems. The subgroup size of 30 is too large, so some students who need extra support may not be targeted. Michigan's plan does not address educator equity as it relates to the assignment of teachers to assure that all students are taught by highly effective teachers.

# NEVADA





# **NEVADA**

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Nevada invited citizens and advocates to participate in Work Groups and Advisory Group. These work groups, as well as work groups initiated before ESSA and those continuing after this planning process, are composed of “trusted advisors” to the state department who represent schools and communities.

## **GOALS**

By 2022, Nevada expects to have 61 percent of all students and subgroups proficient in English/language arts and 41 percent proficient in math, and have 84 percent of high school students graduate after four years.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

Schools would receive an index score on a scale of 1-100, and a rating using one to five stars. Before exiting targeted improvement status, schools must demonstrate significant improvements over time based upon clear benchmarks. Nevada will also assess student engagement using the criteria chronic absenteeism and school climate and data from individual student learning plans.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

10 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Nevada’s plan includes competitive grants for districts that are developing turnaround plans to support low performing schools. Schools that are not improving will be assigned to an Achievement School District established by the state. This district will be staffed at a higher level than other schools to ensure that struggling students are supported. Nevada is using its 7 percent set-aside for school improvement efforts through a competitive process.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Educator equity is addressed in Nevada’s plan. They plan to increase the quality and quantity of teachers and other leaders who increase achievement, provide high quality instruction to students with specific learning needs (including students with disabilities, English learners, gifted and talented and students with low literacy levels). They plan to ensure that students with these learning needs are taught by experience, certified, effective teachers. Based on scores received on various indicators within each standard, Nevada teachers receive one of four ratings: highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective. The Nevada Department of Education was granted approval to request educator evaluation data from districts and will use this data to determine educator equity differences.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Nevada has created a Great Teaching and Leading Fund to support teacher recruitment, retention and training. It plans to increase teacher compensation; provide scholarships for teachers and aspiring teachers, and partner with the Council of Chief State School Officers State Teacher of the Year Program. They will also revise their teacher certification system to ensure reciprocity with other states and develop a teacher recognition program for those who gain National Board Certification. They will award grant funds to districts, charter schools, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations and regional professional development programs to recruit teachers and provide professional development for science standards implementation.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Nevada plans to develop school leaders by awarding competitive grants to LEAs or other providers who participate in a school leadership preparation study pilot. They will use three percent of state's Title II allocation for statewide activities related to leadership development, including a portion for the Nevada Educator Performance Framework implementation and school turnaround/transformation.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic proficiency and growth in the content areas; English-language proficiency; and high school graduation rates. The focus area for improvement for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Student engagement; college-and-career readiness; and closure of opportunity gaps for elementary and middle schools

## **TESTING**

A school would be given a "warning," then subject to increasing penalties after multiple years.

## **CONCERNS**

Nevada's plan does not include disaggregated data for student subgroups in its five-star school rating system. They will identify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups, but with a subgroup size that increased from 10 to 25 students, students who are low performers in small schools may not be for targeted support.

# NEW JERSEY



# ***NEW JERSEY***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

In its plan, New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) refers to the input of stakeholders through conversations, but does not specify how they gathered the data and which stakeholders gave input. The plan references ongoing input through the ESSA Stakeholder Focus Group, New Jersey Accountability Committee (volunteers from ESSA Stakeholder Focus Group), the Title I Committee of Practices, the Bilingual Advisory Committee, Performance Report focus groups and various roundtable conversations throughout the state.

## **GOALS**

New Jersey plans to have 80 percent of all students and subgroups meet or exceed expectations on PARCC and 95 percent of all students and subgroups graduate after four years in high school by 2030. They will develop college- and career-ready standards and high-quality, aligned assessments in math and English Language Arts, as well as assessments in science, social studies, and early grades. The state has benchmarked its 2022 goal and interim targets on the states that are making the greatest gains. They have seen great gains in graduation rates and plan to increase those rates by an average of 10 percentage points by 2022.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

New Jersey is double-counting the weighting of all its students' subgroups in the accountability framework to ensure that schools prioritize the needs of all students.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

New Jersey has created a multi-tiered system of supports to assist identified schools and districts. They are also providing supports to schools to increase the participation of all students in advanced math courses.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Through the Excellent Educators for All initiative in 2015, states were asked to develop plans to ensure students equitable access to teachers who are effective, experienced, and teaching in the fields for which they were trained. New Jersey's plan builds upon its 2015 plan. The only change is that it defines excellent educators as teachers who have earned "effective" or better on AchieveNJ, the statewide evaluation system. After doing a root cause analysis, New Jersey developed strategies based on the data to incorporate in its plan. The data showed that low income and minority students do not have access to effective teachers at the same rate as their peers; they may be potentially taught by out-of-field teachers at higher rates than their peers; and

that all students are taught by a significant number of novice teachers. Their strategies include developing a comprehensive recruitment plan, retaining the most effective teachers at high rates and removing those who are consistently low-performing.

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

New Jersey plans to address teacher recruitment, hiring and retention by developing an aggressive marketing program, partnering with university teacher prep programs; and providing districts with data about the state teacher pipeline. They will continue to support new teacher induction programs and extend their Building Teacher Leadership Capacity to Support Beginning Teachers Grant Program to a third year, with the goal of determining and implementing best practices.

### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

New Jersey plans to develop school leadership, awarding competitive grants to LEAs or other entities. They will also expand the Achievement Coaches program to create a grant focused on developing principals and supervisors to become more effective instructional leaders. The program will expand its focus to train them to better use the Achieve NJ teacher evaluation system and will include a pilot of a new principal evaluation tool that is being developed.

### **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are academic growth, graduation rates, and English-language progress. The focus area for improvement of special education students is graduation rate.

### **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism; school climate; and student access to full-time health professionals

### **TESTING**

Each student at the school causing a participation rate below 95 percent would be scored not proficient.

### **CONCERNS**

New Jersey's plan does not have clear exit criteria for schools that are in improvement status. are essentially the reverse of its identification criteria. It appears that schools can exit when little improvement is shown.

# NEW MEXICO



# ***NEW MEXICO***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

New Mexico’s plan indicates strong involvement of stakeholders. It describes ways it has and will continue to engage stakeholders on key aspects of its implementation efforts, including a “Return Tour” after the plan was submitted to share updates and explain how the plan will affect schools and communities.

## **GOALS**

By 2022, 64.9 percent of students will be proficient on PARCC ELA test, and 61.2 percent will be proficient on PARCC math test. New Mexico’s vision is that 66 percent of its working-age adults will have a college degree or post-secondary credential by the year 2030. The state has included a goal to reduce the percentage of post-secondary enrollees who require remediation, and the state’s accountability system includes a college-readiness indicator. There is a strong commitment to college- and career-ready standards and high-quality, aligned assessments in math and English Language Arts, as well as assessments in science, social studies, and early grades (K-2) that will help address concerns about curriculum narrowing.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

The state plans to use an A-F school grading system to rate schools. New Mexico will pair student proficiency rates with a school’s overall year-to-year student growth, plus specific attention to the growth of each school’s bottom 25 percent of students. Schools must choose from a concrete list of intervention options, or the state department will select an option. New Mexico is committed to providing additional funding for district and school plans that use the strongest base of evidence. New Mexico will also provide direct student services to support extended learning time, AP course access, early literacy and mathematics, pre-K services, and personalized learning. This is one of the few states that includes a provision for student transportation beyond the normal school day in its plan.

New Mexico’s accountability indicators include growth of the lowest-performing students, extended-year graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, and college- readiness. The state also plans to add measures such as a new science indicator and the inclusion of college enrollment and remediation rates.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

New Mexico’s plan includes interventions and multiple supports for targeted low-performing schools. The plan specifies actions that must be taken if schools do not improve three years after being initially identified for comprehensive support and improvement.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

New Mexico is one of the few states where the definition of "ineffective" teacher includes number of years of experience and lack of success in attaining high levels of achievement among students.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

New Mexico plans to recruit more Native American teachers, support new teacher induction programs, and provide teachers with funding to purchase classroom supplies. They will promote teacher professional development through support for the Teacher Leader Summit and the New Mexico Teacher Leadership Network.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

New Mexico will continue supporting the Principals Pursuing Excellence program, a two-year leadership development program that assigns mentors to work with principals in struggling schools and trains principals to practice effective leadership behaviors that support teachers in achieving significant student achievement gains.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

New Mexico's achievement indicators are 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rates, achievement in core subject areas, growth in four-year graduation rate; STEM readiness, and English-language proficiency. The focus area for improvement for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

School climate surveys that measure student engagement, attendance, and college-and-career readiness.

## **TESTING**

A school will have its A-F grade decrease by one letter if 95 percent of students don't take the state English/language arts or math test.

## **CONCERNS**

New Mexico's plan has an inequity in that it has different standards to define consistently under performing groups. This will cause confusion and would be unacceptable to districts and parents.



# NEW YORK



# ***NEW YORK***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

New York State Department of Education (NYSED) included multiple stakeholders in its planning procedures. Over one hundred organizations participated in what New York refers to as “Think Tank” in preparation of the plan. These organizations comprise groups representing numerous constituent groups, and include school districts, parents, businesses, teacher associations, as well as child advocacy, educational, and civil rights groups. In addition, New York conducted meetings and hearings, involving over 4,000 people, and received both written and oral comments.

## **GOALS**

As other states, NYSED asserts that its mission is to provide every student “equitable access” to high quality instruction and education to all students. Another goal is to have more schools provide advanced coursework with emphasis on career readiness.

NYSED has set its “end” goal for performance in English language arts and mathematics for each subgroup statewide and each subgroup within each school demonstrate proficiency by achieving Performance Index of 200. NYSED poses 2021-2022 as the year in which the state will set its first long-term goal. Future long-term goals will be established annually based on outcomes and focus on 5-year increments.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

NYSED will implement a data-driven performance management system that emphasizes “differentiated technical assistance, progress monitoring, compliance review, and corrective action in support of continuous improvement of student outcomes.” Accountability will reflect subgroup performance relevant to State goals and annual progress. There will also be indicators in the areas of science; social studies; chronic absenteeism; acquisition of English language proficiency by English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners; and college, career, and civic readiness. Data dashboards will offer clearer results related to accountability and more comprehensive views of indicators, including those “that are not part of the accountability and support system.”

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

New York State sets an n-size of 40 for determining participation rate and 30 for measuring performance.

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

NYSED lists extensive criteria for identifying need for both Comprehensive and Targeted (CSI and TSI) support for schools. NYSED also lists many differentiated interventions to be applied based on circumstances in schools and districts. The supports include:

- Supporting the Comprehensive Diagnostic Needs Assessment process
- Supporting the development and implementation of schoolwide plans
- Supporting the implementation of Evidence-based Interventions and Improvement Strategies
- Promoting District-wide Improvement through Training and Support to Districts
- Providing data to inform plans and call attention to inequities
- Connecting schools and districts with other schools, districts, and professionals
- Allocating and monitoring school improvement funds
- Providing additional support and oversight for schools not making progress

School improvement plans for low performing schools will be based on diagnostic needs assessment that looks at “whole school practices.” NYSED will include Title I schools that meet alternative criteria to implement a Schoolwide program, even if their poverty rates are below 40 percent.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

New York’s plan places increased emphasis on evidence-based school improvement plans and more equitable distribution of resources. NYSED plan includes reporting and helping districts analyze equity gaps in their schools’ access to effective educators. The state is considering changes in teacher candidates’ field experiences and placement. New reports will outline how much each school is spending per student and from what source. NYSED will strengthen the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to provide equal instructional and learning opportunities for students. Throughout its professional development, NYSED expresses commitment to enhancing culturally responsive education.

The plan also indicates that NYSED will help districts to solidify early intervention strategies for English Learners; Students with Disabilities; Migrant Youth; Youth in Foster Care; Homeless Youth; Youth in Temporary Housing; Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk Students as defined in Title I, Part D; and other at-risk/underserved groups such as girls and LGBTQ Youth.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

NYSED states a goal to provide access to experienced, fully prepared, and effective educators. The state will also award grants to districts to provide teachers and administrators professional development. Districts will emphasize field experiences and placement requirements for teachers to assure their preparation to present rigorous instruction. NYSED will also employ strategies and resources to increase communication with higher education institutions that prepare teachers to attract graduates to New York schools. In addition, NYSED intends to assist school districts with developing career ladders or pathways that enhance the profession and attract prospective educators.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

NYSED will work with school districts to emphasize field experiences and placement requirements for school leaders to adequately prepare them for their roles.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

In the plan, schools and districts will be measured annually on these indicators as follows:

For all schools

- English language arts
- Math
- Science
- Progress in learning English (for those who don't speak it)
- Chronic absenteeism (absent 18+ days, with exceptions)

For high schools

Social studies

Graduation rate

College, career, and civic readiness index: taking advanced coursework, earning technical education certificates, etc.

NYSED intends to deploy improved English language arts, mathematics, and science learning standards.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

NYSED will develop and pilot assessments related to school climate. Other indicators, such as out of school suspensions and learning environments will begin being addressed in 2018.

## **TESTING**

Under ESSA, NYSED states that 95% of students in each tested grade and subgroup will take the appropriate tests. In its plan, New York has requested 3 waivers to the ESSA: Grade 7 HS Math and Grade 8 HS Science; Off Grade Testing for Students with Disabilities; ELA Testing Waiver for Second Year ELLs and MLLs. The waiver requests that non-English-speakers' test scores don't count until their third year of enrollment. For ELA and student with disabilities waivers, New York states "that the students are required to participate in assessments that do not allow to students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do, the assessments do not provide actionable information on student performance to districts and schools. As a result, these assessments do not foster the most prudent instructional decisions."

Among other reasons for waiver requests, New York includes avoidance of placing undue burden on students, particularly ELAS and high achieving students while not providing substantive data. New York assures that it will provide academic assistance to related student populations through its testing policies and Regents testing protocols, and the provision of appropriate accommodations.

NYSED also expresses intent to increase translation of tests into native languages to accommodate students.

## CONCERNS

NYSED presents a heavily detailed plan that addresses aspects of the ESSA in compliance with the legislation. However, as in other plans the performance proficiency gains stated for the long-term goals, though differentiated, still arouse concern regarding closing academic gaps. For example, will closing the gap be attributed to reducing the gains expected from higher achieving subgroups as much as raising the achievement levels of traditionally lower achieving groups? While it is worthwhile to focus on percentages of students that reflect a rise in achievement, the fact remains that there a substantial percentage who are still lagging.

Another area that may raise questions relates to including science in its areas of annual testing. While this is commendable, some critics of ESSA plans have expressed concern that the tests should focus on just mathematics and English language arts and that including other subjects, like social studies and science, distracts from the purpose of the testing.

There is also concern related to the subgroups size  $n=40$  for participation and  $n=30$  for performance. Though setting the subgroup size at those numbers can certainly fit within a certain statistical rationale, the numbers are still large and raise questions accountability and subgroups within schools.

# OHIO



# ***OHIO***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Ohio is still in the process of revising its plan. Ohio has requested and received feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders and are still seeking public input.

## **GOALS**

Ohio plans to have at least 80 percent of students scoring proficient or higher on each state test and a graduation rate of at least 93 percent for all students.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

For identifying comprehensive schools, Ohio uses a summative rating system as the basis for A-F ratings for schools. Schools and districts receive up to 10 measure grades, which are combined into 6 “component” grades: achievement, academic progress, graduation, gap closing, K-3 literacy, and Prepared for Success. The six components are then combined to produce one summative letter grade from A-F.

Dropout prevention and recovery schools have a different rating scale. Rather than A-F grade, they receive one of the following ratings: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, or Does Not Meet Standards. For the recovery and dropout prevention schools, components are given points based upon extent to which standards and benchmarks are met.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

15 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Ohio has 3 levels of support, 1) Universal supports, 2) Moderate supports and 3) Intensive supports. Intensive supports include coordination with community partners who provide mental health support, child welfare, and other social services supports.

In addition to CSI And TSI schools, Ohio includes an additional “Watch” category for other low performing schools. This classification goes beyond ESSA requirements.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Ohio recognizes the need for minority and low-income students to be taught by effective, in-field, and experienced teachers. Accordingly, Ohio has identified causes for disproportionate teacher assignment rates of ineffective teachers to low income and minority students. Ohio has also identified four main strategies to strengthen teacher preparation, target hiring barriers, improve teaching and learning conditions in schools, and provide professional development.

The plan indicates how teachers will be recruited and supported, and the pilot program focused on training and professional development. However, it does not address the assignment of effective teachers to low performing classrooms.

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Ohio will provide support for those teachers who have passed the Resident Educator Summative Assessment. In the third year, they will add one additional year to the program for teachers to participate in Exploring Leadership Year activities. They will use 3 percent of Title II funding for teacher, teacher leader and principal support. They may design pilot programs focused on teacher training, induction, mentoring, coaching and professional development of principals, teachers and teacher leaders who are assigned to low-performing schools.

### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Ohio includes principal coaching and professional development in the 3 percent that has been set aside in Title II funding.

### **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Achievement indicators are: Academic achievement and progress in ELA and math, gap closing, graduation rate, College and Career Readiness, and chronic absenteeism. The focus area for improvement of special education students is early literacy.

### **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Ohio also considers factors such as school climate, access to rigorous coursework, and student and teacher engagement.

### **TESTING**

Administration of grade 3 English language arts assessment; Grades 4 and 6 social studies assessments; American history and American government end-of-course assessments; end-of-course assessments in English language arts and mathematics.

### **CONCERNS**

The Ohio plan is incomplete and does not clearly state its goals and achievement targets. Though the public gave input that there is too much testing, there are no changes in the testing requirements. Ohio plans to re-examine its testing requirements. The Ohio plan does not address educator equity as it relates to the assignment of teachers to assure that all students are taught by highly effective teachers.



# OREGON



# ***OREGON***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Oregon's plan indicates broad stakeholder engagement.

## **GOALS**

Oregon intends that 80 percent of all students and student subgroups to score at a level demonstrating that they are on track for postsecondary readiness, and all students and student subgroups to graduate at a minimum 90 percent rate by 2024-25.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

There will be three categories for assessing school performance, but no single, final rating for all schools; for each indicator, there will be five levels of performance, ranging from "meets goal" to "in the lowest 10 percent of schools".

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Oregon's plan does not indicate how it will spend the 7 percent set-aside targeted for school-improvement activities.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

The 2015 State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educator is the plan Oregon is using to address equitable distribution of teachers. This state uses the three percent set-aside of state Title II funding to support principal and teacher leadership with a specific goal of ensuring that all students, especially those in high poverty, high need schools are taught by effective teachers. Oregon's school improvement priorities are focused on improving instruction for struggling students, particularly students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners and students experiencing poverty.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Oregon plans to continue to support their new teacher induction program and improve and upgrade their human capital management system.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Oregon's primary goal is to recruit and retain culturally and linguistically diverse educators.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Their achievement indicators are academic gains in English language arts and math; growth in English language arts and math; graduation rate; English-language performance and growth. The focus area for improvement for special education students is early literacy. Oregon will offer districts a choice of nationally-recognized high school tests. Oregon will continue to consider “combined underserved race/ethnicity” subgroups when a school’s groups do not meet the state’s minimum threshold. Oregon will also focus on early learning and consider developing social-emotional learning standards for kindergartners, as well as, the use of culturally relevant teaching strategies.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism, 9th grade academic progress, and high school completion

## **TESTING**

Schools where one or more student groups do not meet 95 percent participation must develop a plan to improve participation rates.

## **CONCERNS**

Oregon’s plan doesn’t clearly define consistently underperforming subgroups, or how schools with low-performing groups will be identified annually for targeted support.

# SOUTH CAROLINA



# ***SOUTH CAROLINA***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

South Carolina held four statewide stakeholder meetings with diverse community leaders and groups to inform stakeholders, to generate input around critical questions, and to elicit feedback on drafts of the plan. The Board of Education, Education Oversight Committee, South Carolina Association of School Administrators, Palmetto Teachers Association, SC Teachers Association, and the SC Urban League provided input into the plan.

## **GOALS**

South Carolina established two long-term goals: 1) By 2035, 90 percent of students will graduate “college, career, and citizenship ready” as outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. 2) Beginning with the graduating class of 2020, the state, each district, and each high school in South Carolina should increase annually by 5 percent, the percentage of students who graduate ready to enter postsecondary education to pursue a degree or national industry credential without the need for remediation in mathematics or English.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

A baseline on the new multi-metric accountability model for South Carolina will be set and reported beginning with the November 2017 report card. For South Carolina to meet its transformational goal of 90 percent of students to graduate college, career, and citizenship ready as outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, the state must set rigorous graduation targets for all subgroups.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

20 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Schools that need Comprehensive Support and Intervention because they meet one or more of the following categories, will be identified as Priority Schools:

- Title I schools in the bottom 5 percent using the weighted point index, or non-Title I schools differentiated by elementary, middle, and high school in the bottom 5 percent using the weighted point index; or less than 70 percent graduation rate, or Title I Schools with chronically low-performing subgroup(s).
- High Schools, both Title I and Non-Title I will be identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools if their four-year cohort graduation rate is less than 70 percent. High schools (both Title I and Non-Title I) performing in the bottom 5 percent on the weighted point index will also be identified.

Students who are identified at-risk of not meeting South Carolina academic standards are

provided a multi-tiered system of research based supports and interventions. All districts in the state offer a summer reading camp to identified third grade students who are not reading proficiently on grade level. Identified students have opportunities to receive small group and individual instruction by highly effective teachers who have experience in working with struggling readers to work on their reading, writing, listening, and researching skills.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

South Carolina expresses commitment to ensuring that all students are taught by teachers who are effective, in-field, and experienced. An ineffective teacher is defined as a teacher who has received a “Not Met” rating for one year, or a teacher on an induction contract who has received a Not Met rating for a second year. An out-of-field teacher is defined as a teacher who is teaching one or more courses or classes in a subject for which he/she does not have the appropriate certification. An inexperienced teacher is defined as a teacher who has three or fewer years of teaching experience as indicated on his/her South Carolina license.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

The state will maintain the Assistant Principal Program for Leadership Excellence program for first-year assistant principals designed to develop and sustain their leadership, management and instructional leadership skills. They will sustain the School Leadership Executive Institute, which is a rigorous, one-year institute for veteran principals focused on enhancing principals’ skills in three areas: leadership, management and educational best practices. They will continue the state’s Developing Aspiring Principals program for experienced assistant principals who aspire to be principals.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

South Carolina will continue to support the Assistant Principal Program for Leadership Excellence for first-year assistant principals. They will continue to support the School Leadership Executive Institute, which is a rigorous, one-year institute for experienced principals to enhance their skills in leadership, management and educational best practices. They will continue the state’s Developing Aspiring Principals program for experienced assistant principals who aspire to be principals.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

South Carolina’s achievement indicators are: 1) Reduce the percentage of students in grades 3-8 who “do not meet expectations” from 2018 baseline on ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies assessments 50% by 2024 and 2) Reduce the percentage of high school students who score below 60% on English 1, Algebra 1, Biology 1, and United States History from the 2018 baseline 50% by 2024. The focus area for improvement of outcomes for special education students is early literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Reducing incidences of bullying and harassment; the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and the use of aversive behavioral interventions that

compromise student health and safety.

## **TESTING**

In 2018, South Carolina will be fully transitioned from prior assessments that were reported at five performance levels in grades 3-8 ELA, math, science and social studies to new assessments reported at four performance levels in these subjects. The cut scores that mark the four performance levels are college and career ready achievement standards. The high school End of Course Examination programs will continue to be reported at five levels; however, the same college and career ready achievement levels were applied to English 1, Algebra 1, Biology 1, and U.S. History. Their goal is that by 2035, 90 percent of students will score at Level 2 or higher in ELA and Math.

## **CONCERNS**

The membership of the five workgroups is not available on the Department of Education ESSA website, so it is difficult to determine which community groups have been involved in developing the plan. The plan makes no mention of the setting of goals and targets by subgroups of students. The state has two primary goals for career and college readiness, but few clear goals for academic progress of students at all grade levels.

# TENNESSEE





# ***TENNESSEE***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Tennessee has a comprehensive plan for stakeholder engagement that includes continuous engagement and involvement throughout the implementation of the plan.

## **GOALS**

Tennessee proposes to have all students perform in the top half of 4th and 8th grade NAEP scores among states by 2019; 75 percent of 3rd graders proficient in reading by 2025; average ACT composite score of 21 by 2020; and 95 percent graduation rate by 2024-25. Tennessee has a goal of all students demonstrating college and career readiness, beyond just earning a high school diploma.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

The state plans to use A-F grades to rate schools. Tennessee plans to use the WIDA assessment, that is used in 36 states, to assess its English learner students in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Tennessee's plan shows a strong commitment to growth and proficiency. Tennessee plans to award federal funds to districts with strong research-based interventions for school improvement.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

30 students

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Tennessee has multiple tiers of support to drive improvement in the lowest-performing schools and districts. It includes district and state level interventions, including their iZone model for newly identified schools and membership in the state's Achievement School District for schools that show no improvement.

Tennessee is planning to distribute its 7 percent set-aside dedicated for school-improvement activities through a competitive grant process. The state will award federal school-improvement funds to those districts committed to interventions with the strongest evidence base.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

The 2015 State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators is the plan they are using to address equitable distribution of teachers. They will use the three percent set-aside of state Title II funding to strengthen administrator and teacher leadership with a specific aim of improving equitable access to excellent educators for all students, specifically those in low poverty, high need schools. They have established school improvement priorities focused on improving instruction for struggling students, especially students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners and students in poverty.

## **TEACHER RECRUITMENT, HIRE, RETENTION, TRAINING**

Tennessee will implement teacher residency programs in high-need districts across the state using Title II funds. These residency programs will provide an opportunity for prospective teachers to teach alongside an effective teacher in a mentor/mentee capacity. The state will support districts interested in applying for Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund grants. Tennessee will invest \$100,000 in innovation grants to recruit diversity and establish a partnership with Educators Rising to interest high school students in the teaching profession. They will develop an online recruitment portal, differentiate pay for those who take on additional responsibilities, support the Teacher Leader Network, and provide districts with data about the state teacher pipeline including progress reports to address equity gaps.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Tennessee will continue to support the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance, which serves as a vehicle to help districts develop a deeper pool of high-quality school leaders.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

Their achievement indicators are growth, graduation rates, college-, career-, or military-readiness; and English-language proficiency. The focus area for improvement for special education students is intermediate literacy.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

Chronic absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions; graduation rate; military or workforce certification; ACT scores

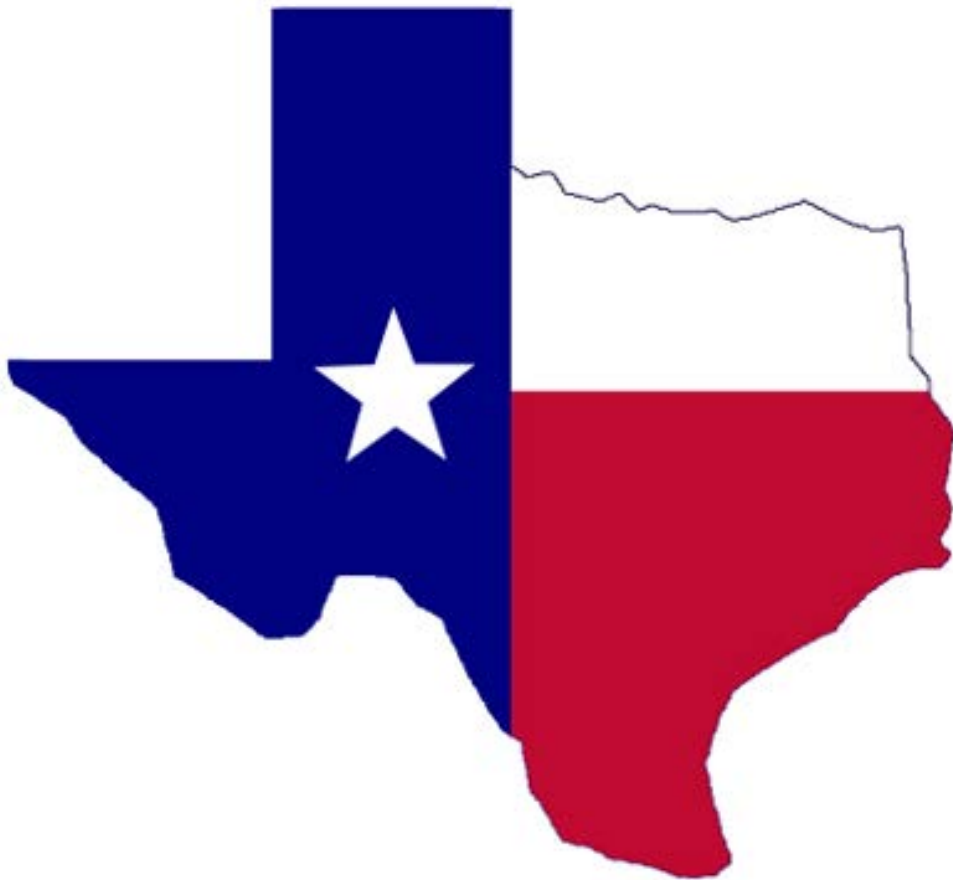
## **TESTING**

A school would get an F grade in academic proficiency for all student groups not reaching 95 percent participation.

## **CONCERNS**

Tennessee plans to continue combining the scores of black, Hispanic, and Native American students into the “BHN” subgroup. This makes it difficult to capture the performance of individual subgroups.

# TEXAS



# ***TEXAS***

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Texas Education Agency (TEA) states that in January 2016, TEA collaborated with the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) to design and implement a broad campaign to engage multiple stakeholders in development of the ESSA plan. TEA employed in-person and virtual meetings with stakeholders, as well as an online public survey. TEA held statewide meetings with various stakeholder and advocacy groups in addition to multiple meetings with regional service centers and 47 school districts. Besides a public online survey, TEA sponsored over 70 statewide meetings to inform the public about ESSA and to obtain stakeholder input. In its efforts to engage the public, TEA also collaborated with state education professional associations and other organizations in planning related activities such as focus groups.

## **GOALS**

Texas has aligned long term goals for ESSA with its existing goals, in this case the 60X30 plan to have 60 percent of high school graduates completing some form of post-secondary credential by 2030. Texas Education Agency has also set long-term goals under ESSA at 90 percent of all students and all student subgroups at the “Approaches Grade Level” performance target by 2032 and to hold all students to the same standard while closing achievement gaps. In addition, TEA projects a goal that by the year 2030, 60 percent of Texans aged 25-34 should possess some form of post-secondary credential.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL RATINGS**

TEA will periodically review LEA resource allocations for districts that serve LEAs serving a “significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement,” applicably including analysis of per-pupil spending for identified schools relative to other non-identified schools. The initial focus will be on districts with the highest percentages of comprehensive and targeted schools. TEA lists many interventions and support resources to be devoted to the schools, including technical assistance, resource libraries, and toolkits for school improvement. TEA will also furnish connection with appropriate agencies, access to a statewide Center for School Improvement and Center for School Transformation, vetted Professional Service Providers, and vetted School Improvement Partners (organizations with a specialty and track record in different aspects of school improvement and school transformation) or School Transformation partners.

## **SUB-GROUP SIZE**

Texas State sets an n-size of 10 for all students and 25 for student subgroups for accountability purposes.

## **COMPREHENSIVE AND TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

Using a rank ordering method, TEA will identify at least the lowest five percent scoring campuses that receive Title I, Part A funds for comprehensive support. In turn, the state can “maximize support and resources for those campuses that are in greatest need of assistance, while minimizing confusion from multiple identifications.” High school campuses that do not reach a 67 percent will be automatically identified for comprehensive support and improvement.

TEA will annually identify campuses for comprehensive support and intervention beginning with the August 2018 accountability release, which is based on School Year 2017-2018 performance data. “Any campus that has one or more significant achievement gap(s) between individual student groups will be identified for targeted support and improvement. TEA defines “consistently underperforming” as a school having one or more student groups that do not meet interim benchmark goals for three consecutive years.”

Beginning in August 2018, schools that have not been classified as receiving comprehensive or targeted support, but receive an “F” rating in the Closing the Gaps domain, will be identified for additional targeted support.

After 2 consecutive years, schools that do not rank in the bottom five percent for two will exit the comprehensive support status; schools under Targeted Support should exit after 3 years of not meeting the low performance criteria.

## **EDUCATOR EQUITY**

Regarding equity, TEA refers to their previous versions of their equity plans, particularly that from 2015. A major focus of the TEA ESSA plan is to assure that minority and students from backgrounds of poverty have teachers with appropriate experience, qualifications, and credentials. Due to its size, diversity, and challenging accessibility to statewide data regarding teacher performance, Texas is preparing a new teacher evaluation system to support the above aim.

To further ensure equity, TEA will also propose actions such as the following:

- Disseminate the recommendations of the Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee (TTMAC) report to all districts.
- Create a one-day training for mentors and teacher-leaders.
- Collect data on current district supports for first year teachers.
- Disseminate Educator Excellence Innovation Program (EEIP) program information on mentoring best practices.

TEA also makes available the Texas Equity Toolkit to promote school improvement, equity and instruction in districts. This initiative focuses on professional development for districts that the accountability system determines not satisfactory. It is intended to provide instructional leadership training for principal supervisors, principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders to build skills in coaching, growing, and developing educators.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

TEA will also enhance supports such as professional development for school leaders. TEA intends to broaden Texas Principal Evaluation & Support System (T-PESS) as well as its Advancing Educational Leadership (AEL) to enhance training in areas like curriculum and instruction, data collection, goal setting, conflict resolution, and team building etc.

## **ACHIEVEMENT/ACADEMIC INDICATORS**

For academic achievement indicators, TEA will use achievement results from students' performance on State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) grade 3-8 and end of course assessments in ELA/reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies. TEA will review growth on STAAR assessments in reading and mathematics over a two-year period.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

In partnership with the Institute for Restorative Justice and the Restorative Dialogue at The University of Texas at Austin's School of Social Work TEA has launched a statewide initiative for Restorative Discipline Practices for district administrators. TEA is also focusing on developing parent resources that are user friendly to provide parents meaningful information related to their children's education, including revision of the STAAR report card. In its planning, Texas is also focusing also features extending resources for migratory and homeless students.

## **TESTING**

Texas currently uses the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to gauge college readiness and academic achievement. This assessment systems features four performance levels to classify student academic status: Masters Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, Approaches Grade Level, and Did Not Meet Grade Level. The long-term goal related to ESSA is to have all students and student groups to reach the 90 percent threshold at the Approaches Grade Level.

TEA also focuses on achievement of the following groups:

- Economically disadvantaged
- Students receiving special education services
- Students formerly receiving special education services
- English learners (EL)
- Continuously enrolled
- Mobile

TEA has set a goal for students to reach the 90 percent Approaches threshold by 2032. TEA also set interim targets over five-year intervals beginning in 2017-2018 to better enable local districts to develop short- and long-term improvement strategies. Schools that have demonstrated adequate growth from a previous year will not be "labeled" for improvement.

In addition to the STAAR assessments, TEA will measure interim progress toward meeting the long-term goals for academic achievement.

Texas provides the following Spanish assessments: STAAR Spanish grades 3–5 mathematics, STAAR Spanish grades 3–5 reading, STAAR Spanish grade 4 writing, and STAAR Spanish grade 5 science.

TEA will deploy the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and set a long-term goal 46 percent of students making progress in achieving English language proficiency by the year 2032.

## **CONCERNS**

While TEA sets ambitious goals, it has been criticized for not specifying strategies to realize those same goals. Also, earlier the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) criticized the plan for what it considered not taking optimum advantage of the flexibility that ESSA affords for innovation in assessments and accountability.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **ESSA: PARTS AT A GLANCE**



## **ESSA: PARTS AT A GLANCE**

ESSA was signed into law on December 10, 2015 and replaces NCLB. The following section provides a brief description of certain major components in the ESSA legislation.

1. Title I, Part A focuses on support for school districts and states and emphasizes the education of low income students.
2. Title I, Part B provides information related to grants for state assessments.
3. Title II, Part A focuses on funding to enhance instruction.
4. Title II, Part B involves literacy grants for states.
5. Title IV, Part A focuses on grants for student support and enrichment programs.
6. Title IV, Part C involves grants for charter schools.

In the planning process, ESSA stresses tenets of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL refers to utilizing a “scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice” which supports instructional flexibility and setting and establishes high expectations for all students. UDL themes are particularly apparent in grant stipulations under ESSA. In the state plans, there should be evidence in multiple areas, including standards, student growth, graduation, as well as support and school improvement for students.

**APPENDIX B**

**NAACP CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF  
STATE ESSA PLANS**

## NAACP CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF STATE ESSA PLANS

The following table refers to aspects of state ESSA plans that should be considered in evaluating the plans and implementation thereof. Responses that rate as “NO” or “SOMEWHAT” will require further investigation and consultation with state and/or local education leaders.

TOPIC	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT
<b>PLANNING AND PUBLICIZING</b>			
Did the state adhere to valid planning structures, processes, and procedures?			
Does the state adequately publicize the plan to all stakeholders?			
Does outreach go beyond just posting plan on website?			
Are there other proactive measures employed to inform parents about the plan and engage them in its development?			
Are there funds dedicated to disseminating the plan?			
Is the plan translated in other languages and has the vocabulary been adjusted for readability?			
<b>GUIDANCE TO LEAs</b>			
Does the state give explicit, appropriate guidance to LEAs, including structures, resources, and where the limited funds will be targeted?			
Funding may be moved around in categories. Is there enough guidance to encourage LEAs to target funds to the neediest student populations?			
Does the plan have specificity regarding actions or does the plans simply repeat the wording of the requirement?			
Does the plan give adequate contextual background information to highlight achievement gaps and disparities?			
Does the plan emphasize the need for researched, evidence based strategies?			

TOPIC	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT
<b>RESOURCE EQUITY</b>			
Is there evidence of resource equity for economically disadvantaged and historically under-served and poor students?			
Is there a clear commitment to transform the lowest performing schools?			
Are there plans to address gaps in reading, mathematics and science?			
Is there funding for academic acceleration such as tutoring, summer academic and arts programs, after-school academic and arts programs?			
Is there innovative funding based on student need?			
Are there resources for teaching and learning materials?			
Are there resources for birth to school programs for early childhood so all students enter school ready to learn?			
Is funding included to pay for AP prep and AP testing for needy and low performing students?			
<b>TEACHER ASSIGNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>			
Does the plan incorporate measures to assure equity in teacher assignments – assuring that the highest quality teachers are assigned to the lowest performing or the neediest students?			
Does the plan include high quality, relevant, job embedded professional development for teachers?			
Is there funding to recruit high quality teachers and principals?			
Are there plans to address teacher and principal diversity?			
<b>HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM</b>			
Is there curriculum redesign with access to acceleration for disadvantaged students?			

TOPIC	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT
<b>HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM (cont.)</b>			
Is the curriculum being redesigned to incorporate deeper learning skills that lead to metacognition?			
Are there high quality high school to college and career pathways?			
Are there opportunities for students to take college credit courses in high school? Is there a partnership with a local community college or university to prepare for college or work readiness?			
Does the curriculum provide for higher order thinking skills, increased writing, and problem solving?			
Does the curriculum include access to music, physical education, science, the arts and language study?			
<b>IMPROVEMENT OF LEARNING CONDITIONS</b>			
Are surveys of learning conditions going to be conducted? Will school culture be assessed and measured?			
Does the plan address the assurance of safe school environments?			
Will parent training be provided?			
Will parents have access to resources?			
Is technology being used to give parents access to student performance on a regular basis?			
Are there strategies to reduce high and disproportionate suspensions and chronic absenteeism?			
Are there plans to address discipline in an equitable way?			
Are there plans to create learning environments that motivate all students to be accountable for their own learning?			

TOPIC	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT
<b>ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE</b>			
Are there multiple measures to assess school performance and progress?			
Is the school rating system one that shows transparency about progress?			
Is it a dashboard that shows how the school is performing and progressing and not just a letter grade A-F?			
Are there measures of completion of opportunities to learn, such as completion of high school to college and career programs and completion of high level and AP courses, not just enrollment in these programs and courses?			
Are there strong indicators of parent and community engagement?			
Are the performance metrics easy to interpret?			
Are there measures for English Language proficiency gains?			
Do the performance measure show student outcomes, not just teacher inputs?			
Will there be individual student growth profiles?			

## **APPENDIX C**

### **ESSA PLAN ADVOCACY TIPS FOR STAKEHOLDERS**

## ESSA Plan Advocacy Tips for Stakeholders

The following has been extracted from the publication *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan Review Guide & Advocacy Tips* (© June 2017 National Down Syndrome Congress and The Advocacy Institute). The guidelines included in the list refer to key topics and strategies that parents and other stakeholder groups should consider when reviewing their state ESSA plans particularly regarding minority, poor, and students with special needs..

### Challenging State Academic Standards and Assessments

- Request that information about UDL and assessment be added to the state plan, at least with respect to the alternate assessments since that description is required to be in the plan.
- Request that the plan describe the steps the state will take to ensure it does not exceed the 1% cap. Additional information on this is available in this NCEO document at <https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOBrief12OnePercentCap.pdf>. According to NCEO, half of all states have been administering Alternate Assessments to more than 1% of students with disabilities.
- Although this will not likely be part of the state plan, ensure that any state discussion about the definition of “student with the most significant cognitive disability” includes input from the parents of students with disabilities. Make sure the definition reflects the fact that these students should be receiving instruction based on the academic content for the grade in which they are enrolled (even if accommodations, adaptations etc. are needed). Otherwise, there is no way to know if a student is “a student with the most significant cognitive disability” or is simply not receiving adequate instruction.

### Statewide Accountability System and School Support and Improvement Activities

- To advocate on the many issues that affect all the subgroups, consider collaborating with organizations at the state and local levels that represent students in the other subgroups and students with other types of disabilities. Together you can have more influence and be more powerful!
- Look at the plan to see if the state is combining subgroups and advocate against this, especially if the N-size is higher than 10.
- Make sure the state plan does not include former students with disabilities in the disability subgroup. This practice was permitted under the ESSA accountability regulations that were repealed by Congress on March 9, 2017. However, some states are not removing this provision from their plans even though it is not permitted under the statute. This change is the only positive result of the repeal of the regulations.
- Find out what your state is proposing for its n-size for the purposes of assessment performance, participation rate and graduation rate. All this information should be included in the state plan.
- If the N-size exceeds 10, point out that a minimum subgroup size of 10 is recommended by the IES study for confidentiality purposes, and therefore should be no higher for



reporting participation rate and graduation rate. For assessment performance purposes, you should raise concerns if the N size exceeds 20.

- Ask for information on the number and percentage of students who would be included (or excluded) from school-level accountability determinations due to this N-size, as well as the number and percentage of schools in the state that would not have to use the disability subgroup for accountability determinations due to this N size. You should get this information for both assessment and graduation rate accountability. It is important data for transparency and for informed stakeholder involvement in the decision about N-size.

### **Establishment of Long-Term Goals**

- Consider whether the number of years your state uses is unreasonably long to wait for the goals to be met. Some states have long-term goal periods that last up to 20 years.
- Check whether your state's goals close the gap between where students are now (baseline) and 100% proficiency or graduation rate. A gap-closing method for setting goals usually doesn't help students with disabilities that much because of how far behind they already are. For example, improving the percentage of non-proficient students with disabilities by 50% when a state starts out with a 20% proficiency rate for these students, will only get them to 60% proficiency (20 plus 50% of 80) at the end of the long-term goal period). It is much more meaningful if there is a concrete goal (e.g. 90% proficiency) set for all students and all subgroups by the end of the long-term goal period.
- Encourage your state to make a commitment to hold all goals and interim targets steady; and not reset downward when/if actual performance falls short of the targets. Constantly re-setting of targets renders the long-term goal meaningless.
- Check whether the goals, as required by law, consider the improvement needed to make significant progress in closing proficiency (measured by assessment scores) and graduation rate gaps for subgroups who are behind on these measures.
- If the state uses extended-year graduation rates, check to see if the goals are more rigorous than for the 4-year ACGR.

### **Indicators to be Measured in State Accountability System**

- Make sure the Academic Achievement Indicator in your state plan is based ONLY on proficiency on the reading/language arts and mathematics annual state assessments. Some states are adding other measures into the Academic Achievement indicator that are not permitted by law (e.g. proficiency on assessments for other subjects, such as science, or growth). These extra measures dilute the importance of this indicator. Reporting academic achievement using scale scores rather than proficiency rates does not comply with ESSA. States may report scale scores in addition to proficiency rates but not in lieu of.
- Check to see whether your state is using student growth percentiles (SPG) to measure academic growth. SGPs describe a student's academic progress from one year to the next compared to other students with similar prior test scores (called academic peers), when the state assessments are actually designed for comparing students to the state's achievement standards in a specific subject area. Use of SGPs is highly questionable as reported in the research brief, *Why We Should Abandon Student Growth Percentiles*, by the Center for Educational Assessment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst ([https://www.umass.edu/remap/pdf/CEAResearchBrief-16 --1\\_WhyWeShould](https://www.umass.edu/remap/pdf/CEAResearchBrief-16--1_WhyWeShould))

[AbandonSGPs.pdf](#).) Growth towards the standard is a preferable measure for public reporting and as a metric in the state's accountability system regarding student growth.

- If the state is counting students who take alternate assessments as having graduated because they received a state-developed alternate diploma as defined by ESSA, make sure they provide details in the plan on how the alternate diploma is standards-based and aligned to the regular high school graduation requirements (these are the state-defined alternate diploma criteria in the law).
- Although states can use extended-year graduation rates for the graduation rate indicator, encourage your state to place an emphasis on the 4-year ACGR, so schools feel the imperative to help students graduate on time.
- Check to see whether the additional indicator or indicators of school quality or student success that your state selects are meaningful, able to be measured objectively and able to be disaggregated within each school by subgroup (which means there is data about this indicator for students with disabilities, as well as for the other subgroups in ESSA). Teacher qualifications, chronic absenteeism, and the rate of suspensions/expulsions are good examples of strong indicators, as opposed to indicators like teacher/student satisfaction or school climate that are measured with unreliable surveys. These indicators may differ across grade spans but must be the same for all students within a grade span. For example, elementary/middle schools and high schools can have different indicator(s).

#### **Annual Meaningful Differentiation Between Schools (e.g. statewide school rating system)**

- Ensure that the combined weight of the four ESSA required academic indicators have “much greater weight” in the aggregate than other indicators in the accountability calculation as shown in the examples above).
- Advocate for proficiency on assessments (and graduation rate in high school) to weigh more than the growth indicator since the ultimate goal of ESSA is to get all students to meet the standards and graduate, not just to improve performance.
- Ensure that the academic achievement of students with disabilities has an impact on the method used to determine whether schools are the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools
- Check the plan to see whether there are methodologies stated for including schools that serve special populations such as special education students and alternative schools in the state accountability system that provide meaningful accountability for such schools.

#### **Identification of Schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)**

At least once every three years a statewide category of schools needing comprehensive support and improvement must be identified, which must include the following three categories of schools. *However, the state may use its discretion, to make additional statewide categories of schools eligible for comprehensive support and improvement.*

1. Not less than the lowest-performing 5% of all schools receiving Title I funding (those with high levels of economically disadvantaged students)
2. All public high schools failing to graduate one-third or more of their students (e.g. graduation rate of 67% or less)

3. Certain other Title I public schools, which have a subgroup or subgroups performing as poorly as the “all student group” in bullet #1, have been identified for targeted support and improvement, and have not exited that category for a state determined number of years (“low-performing” subgroups that are now considered “chronically low-performing” subgroups).

- Ensure that your state plan follows the rules described above for identifying schools for CSI.
- Check how often your state intends to identify these schools (ESSA says at least every three years so they can do it in a shorter timeframe).
- Check to see how many years the state determines it will take for a school with one or more low-performing subgroup(s) to be considered a school with one or more chronically low-performing subgroup(s). This determination will move the school (if it is a Title I school) from a Targeted Support and Improvement Plan to a CSI Plan.

### **Identification of Schools for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) Plan**

ESSA requires states to identify schools for a TSI plan. TSI identified schools must include any schools (whether or not they receive Title I funding) that have:

1. Annually: One or more subgroups (e.g. disability subgroup) that are **“consistently underperforming,”** as that term is defined in the state plan, or
2. At least once every three years: One or more subgroups that are **“lowperforming,”** which means they are performing as poorly as the “all student” group in the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools.

- Ensure that the words “consistently” and “underperforming” are defined by your state in a way that will trigger targeted supports and improvement in a timely manner before students are so far behind they will never catch up.
- Our recommendation is that “consistently underperforming” should be defined in your state plan to refer to any subgroup that has not met (or is not on track to meet) the state long-term goals and interim measures of progress for two consecutive years.
- Ensure that these low-performing schools do not linger for too many years before they move from TSI plans to CSI plans. The law requires these schools to have a TSI plan that identifies resource inequities (which may include a review of local educational agency and school level budgeting). Advocate for this to be mentioned in the state ESSA plan.
- Consider recommending that schools with consistently underperforming subgroups be eligible for or required to move to CSI plans after a certain period of time of continued underperformance while implementing TSI plans.

### **Annual Measurement of Achievement**

- Ensure that the N-size for determining participation rate data for school subgroups is small enough that this rule can be applied in nearly every school (e.g. N-size of 10).

- Ensure that your state factors the failure of schools to meet the 95% participation rate requirement into the accountability system in a significant way.
- We recommend that unless the 95% participation rate is achieved or exceeded (for the whole school and EACH subgroup), the school/district should not be rated as satisfactory or above in the state accountability system (based on whatever “rating” the state uses). Missing 95% participation for even one subgroup should trigger this consequence.
- Encourage your state to require schools to develop a plan to improve their participation rate in the future if they fail to meet this requirement. Such a plan should be targeted specifically to the subgroup(s) of students that failed to be tested at or above 95%.

#### **Continued Support for School and LEA Improvement**

- Check the state plan to see your state’s proposal for allowing schools to exit CSI status; including the criteria that must be met and the number of years the improvement must be sustained.
- Our recommendation is that a school should not exit CSI (or TSI) unless it has NOT met the identification criteria for two consecutive years.
- Advocate for your state to move to more rigorous state-determined action after two years if the school still has not yet exited CSI.

#### **Technical Assistance**

- Ensure that your state defines “significant number or percentage of schools” in a way that the LEAs needing technical assistance get it, instead of setting the bar too high.
- Ensure that the technical assistance and any optional additional action that your state describes in these sections are designed to improve the academic performance of ALL students, including those with disabilities in these LEAs (e.g. UDL and inclusive best practices).

#### **School Conditions**

- Ensure that these issues are addressed in the plan and there is a focus on students with disabilities – who are disproportionately subjected to these practices
- Advocate for your state to specifically mention strategies that will reduce restraint and seclusion, which fall under aversive behavioral interventions.
- Advocate for the state plan to mention Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusive best practices as strategies that will improve school conditions for student learning.

#### **Title I Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-risk**

- Considering the percentage of students with disabilities in the programs covered by Title I Part D. Frequently students with disabilities are over-represented in juvenile detention and correctional facilities. Although the percentage of youth in juvenile detention with a history of special education services varies across states,

typically more than 50 percent of youth in detention are eligible for special education services. The information provided in this part of the state plan should specifically address these students. You can get this information for your state at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/>.

### **Improving Skills of Educators**

- Ensure that the strategies discussed in this section of the plan are designed to address all students with specific learning needs, including those with disabilities.
- Advocate for capacity building strategies for UDL and inclusive best practices to be added to this section of the plan, if these are not already discussed. UDL should be discussed in many places throughout the plan, but especially in this section where UDL implementation initiatives would have the most impact for all students. A document that discusses in greater detail how UDL can be included in ESSA state plans can be found at [http://www.udlcci.org/policy-two-pagerdraft-2-4-17\\_vers41/](http://www.udlcci.org/policy-two-pagerdraft-2-4-17_vers41/)

### **Title IV Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants**

- Urge your state to address how it will meet each part of the purpose of this subpart and provide equitable access for all students to the activities described, including aligning those activities with the requirements of other Federal laws.
- Advocate for UDL and inclusive best practices to be discussed in this section.
- If your state plan does not discuss how the ESSA plan will coordinate with its State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) under IDEA, request that this information be added. There is a tool to help states align their ESSA plan and their SSIP at <https://ncsi.wested.org/news-events/tool-checking-for-alignment-in-every-studentsucceeds-act-plans-and-state-systemic-improvement-plans/>.

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