SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
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AGENDA

Joint Meeting of

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee
&
Public Awarness Subcommittee

Monday, November 20, 2017
10:00 a.m.
Room 433, Blatt Building

I. Welcome ..... Dr. Danny Merck

II. Approval of Minutes of August 16, 2017 Meeting..... Dr. Danny Merck

III. Action Item:
Accountability Recommendations
Proposed by SC Department of Education ..... Dr. Danny Merck

IV. Action Item:
Design of Report Card ..... Mrs. Barbara Hairfield

V. Information Item: ..... Mrs. Dana Yow
Update on Public Awareness Campaign Initiatives

Adjournment

Subcommittee Members:

Academic Standards and Assessment
Dr. Danny Merck, Chair
Neil Robinson, Vice Chair
Barbara Hairfield
Sen. Greg Hembree
Dr. John Stockwell
Patti Tate

Public Awareness
Barbara Hairfield, Chair
Anne Bull, Vice Chair
Rep. Raye Felder
Sen. John Matthews

Neil C. Robinson, Jr.
CHAIR
Daniel B. Merck
VICE CHAIR
April Allen
Cynthia M. Bennett
Anne H. Bull
Bob Couch
Raye Felder
Barbara B. Hairfield
Greg Hembree
Kevin L. Johnson
Dwight A. Loftis
John W. Matthews, Jr.
Henry McMaster
Molly Spearman
John C. Stockwell
Patti J. Tate
Ellen Weaver

Melanie D. Barton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Minutes

Joint Meeting of

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee

&

Public Awareness Subcommittee

August 16, 2017

10:00 a.m., Room 433 Blatt Building

Subcommittee Members Present:

Academic Standards and Assessments: Dr. Danny Merck; Barbara Hairfield; Neil Robinson, Dr. John Stockwell; and Patti Tate

Public Awareness Subcommittee: Barbara Hairfield; Anne Bull; and Rep. Raye Felder

Other EOC Members Present: Senator Kevin Johnson

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Melanie Barton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow

On behalf of the two subcommittees, Dr. Merck welcomed members and guests in attendance.

The minutes of the May 15, 2017 joint meeting of the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee and EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittees were approved as distributed.

Approval of Metrics for Consolidated Accountability

Mrs. Barton went through the responsibilities of the EOC and the legal constraints under which the EOC must operate, namely the federal requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Acct (ESSA) and the state requirements as adopted by Act 94 of 2017. To meet the September 18, 2017 deadline by which South Carolina must submit its draft ESSA state plan, the subcommittee must adopt the metrics and weights to be used in establishing an accountability system. Ms. Barton noted that no decision is final, especially as it relates the final readings until the EOC receives the assessment results and graduation rates from the2016-17 school year. – until the EOC receives the 2016-17 data. Ms. Barton discussed her recent meeting at the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education where the focus on college/career readiness was discussed.

Members asked questions of Ms. Barton as she presented the initial work of the staffs of the South Carolina Department of Education and EOC. The indicators presented were those included in the January 17, 2017 EOC report Single Accountability System and information as provided by US Department of Education staff at the EOC summer retreat.

Ms. Hairfield asked if South Carolina has preparation programs for WorkKeys and if high schools are taking advantage of it. Dr. Merck responded, stating that districts are taking advantage of the program called ACT Career Ready 101.

Rep. Felder confirmed we were not using NAEP for accountability purposes. She wanted to know if we know what percentage of freshman is in credit-bearing courses. Sheila Quinn said that we don't have this information by high school; we currently must use the College Freshman Report produced by CHE. Ms. Barton stated that we do not have a handle on who is delivering remedial courses to whom. The two-year colleges are the only institutions that can provide remediation but other support is happening in postsecondary institutions. Rep. Felder said we cannot improve our education system do justice to students if we can't develop a genuine accountability system; early childhood is a pivotal part of the system.

Dr. Stockwell mentioned that the Spartanburg Academic Movement uses data from the National Clearinghouse to track student's success across the country eight years after graduation. He said while the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is a good tool, it does not tell communities what they can do to improve kindergarten readiness. Ms. Barton said that the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee would consider a recommendation to fund a survey that will measure citywide and neighborhood data and map children's health and development across multiple domains.

Ms. Hairfield questioned whether the English language proficiency indicator was growth or proficiency. She noted that these students are often very mobile. In response, Dr. Stockwell said their data suggest that among Hispanic students, they often get huge gains during their first school year. The first summer slide is equally as dramatic. They do find that the summer slide is less impactful over time and by 5th grade, most non-transient students have caught up.

Mr. Robinson asked about the status of the student survey. Ms. Barton stated that it is still being procured by the SCDE.

When talking about the end-of-course assessments, Ms. Barton and Dr. Quinn clarified the confusion. Only end-of-course assessments in English language arts and mathematics will "count" at the high school level, even if middle school students took the exam. Rep. Felder worried that students might be discouraged to take the assessments in the middle school. Dr. Quinn stated that she does not believe this will happen since most of these students are otherwise high-achieving students who are placed in these classes.

In asking about the cut scores for SC READY, Dr. Quinn stated that they SC READY 8th grade cut was set to college-readiness cuts on ACT for Reading and Math.

Mr. Robinson said he felt the proposal by staff for the Academic Achievement targets was lenient, and although he expected push back, he offered an amendment to the target percentages. The amendment would increase the number of schools rated Unsatisfactory for the Academic Achievement indicator. He also proposed using the same target percentages for Academic Achievement for high schools. In discussing the proposal, Dr. Quinn stated that the South Carolina Department of Education would need additional resources to support more schools.

Rep. Felder advised that the accountability system require a minimum percentage of students complete the student engagement survey in order to "count" in the accountability rating. Dr. Quinn noted that the 95 percent rule would be implemented as well for the student survey.

Rep. Felder also concurred that the state should include social studies and science assessment results in the Preparing for Success indicator to conform to the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. There being consensus among the members, the EOC staff was directed to include this indicator in the recommendations to the full EOC.

Mr. Robinson then moved to adopt the revised indicator for Academic Achievement as proposed for elementary, middle, and high schools and defer action on the English language proficiency indicator until the full Committee meeting in September. Mrs. Hairfield seconded the motion. The motion passed with one dissension.

The Subcommittee deferred action on the overall ratings for schools until the September meeting of the EOC.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Subcommittees: **Academic Standards and Assessments and Public Awareness**

Date: **November 20, 2017**

ACTION:
Accountability Recommendations Proposed by the SC Department of Education

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
Sections 59-18-120 and 59-18-900(B) of the Education Accountability Act (EAA) as amended by Act 94 of 2017 require the Education Oversight Committee to determine the overall performance rating of schools and the criteria or indicators that determine the rating. The law stipulates that the total number of points assigned across all indicators is 100 points. The law further denotes that each indicator will be assigned a rating of Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average or Unsatisfactory.

CRITICAL FACTS
On October 9, 2017 the State Superintendent of Education submitted to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) six recommendations for amending the state's ESSA plan. Three of the recommendations affect the 2017-18 school year and three the 2018-19 school year. These recommendations are included in the State's ESSA plan as submitted on October 13, 2017. The following is an analysis of each of these six recommendations along with information from other state's ESSA plans, conclusions, and recommendations to be considered by the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee and Public Awareness Subcommittee.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
Any changes to the criteria or indicators used to determine school ratings must be approved by the EOC and the United States Department of Education.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: No fiscal impact beyond current appropriations

Fund/Source:

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**

☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
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Accountability Recommendations
Proposed by SC Department of Education

On October 9, 2017 State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman submitted to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) six recommendations for amending the state's ESSA plan. Three of the recommendations affect the 2017-18 school year and three the 2018-19 school year. These recommendations are included in the State's ESSA plan as submitted on October 13, 2017.

The following is an analysis of each of these six recommendations along with information from other state's ESSA plans, conclusions, and recommendations to be considered by the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee and Public Awareness Subcommittee on November 20, 2017. Also included is written feedback received on these recommendations.

Summary of Staff Recommendations

SCDE Recommendation	Staff Recommendations	Additional recommendations for future
Recommendation 1: Include ALL AP and IB courses in the College/ Career Ready metrics.	Accept SCDE recommendation	Consider indicator used in Illinois which incentivizes more rigorous coursework options AND a postsecondary metric within the School Quality or Student Success indicator at the high school level.
Recommendation 2: In the career readiness metric for CATE completers with an industry credential, allow for 1) a national or state-recognized industry certification, or 2) a successful state-approved work-based learning exit evaluation from an employer, or 3) a state-approved end-of-pathway assessment to document career- readiness	Accept SCDE Option 1 Defer action on: Option 2 until a system of rigorous work-based learning experiences is developed and approved jointly by education and business community Option 3 until end-of-pathway assessments are identified and approved by jointly by education and business community. State funding and procurement of the assessments also needed before metric can be included in accountability system.	Option 1: State should work with SREB, postsecondary, and business/industry partners to establish a process through which quality stackable credentials in high-skill, high-demand career pathways can be established. With partners, establish a statewide definition of and model for what strong, structurally guided career pathways should look like across all career clusters. EOC staff recommends Louisiana's Jump Start Program be used as a model. Option 2: Further work must be done in this area. A system of rigorous work-based learning experiences should be developed for inclusion in the accountability system going forward. EOC staff recommends Georgia Work-Based learning system be used as a model. Option 3: Further work must be done in this area. Assessment systems such as those set up in states like Kentucky should be considered as South Carolina begins to incorporate the elements necessary for such a system. Staff recommends that other options be considered in the future for students who do not have access to national or state industry-recognized certifications and as a longitudinal data system is put in place.

SCDE Recommendation	Staff Recommendations	Additional recommendations for future
Recommendation 3: Include social studies dual credit/enrollment courses in the courses that count for college readiness if a student earns a C or higher.	Accept SCDE Recommendation	
Recommendation 4: Include a college and career readiness metric that is aligned to the outcomes of the SC Employability Credential	Defer action To be consistent with Act 54 of 2017, the EOC should defer action on this recommendation until full-scale implementation as required by law with the senior class of 2021-22.	For the next several years, data can be collected and reported on the school and district report cards that identify students who are in the process of earning the uniform state-recognized employability credential.
Recommendation 5: Develop a Student Success metric for elementary and middle school that measures student participation, progress and/or mastery in non-tested subjects aligned to *the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.*	Defer action on Recommendations 5 and 6 until additional stakeholder feedback is obtained.	Following the example of other states, South Carolina should convene at least two groups of stakeholders to identify leading indicators for a School Quality or Student Success Indicator for elementary/middle schools that would reflect between 20 and 25 percent of the overall school rating of an elementary or middle school. South Carolina should focus on measures critical for schools to ensure that all students achieve the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. For each measure the following should occur: • A uniform definition must be developed; • A data system to collect the data must be developed; • The integrity (reliability and validity) of the data must be demonstrated; and • Evidence that the data cannot be compromised must be demonstrated. The staff offers examples of non-academic indicators being considered by other states.
Recommendation 6: Include a School Quality metric that documents continuous improvement initiatives and/or high quality curricular programs (STEM, STEAM, Arts in Basic Curriculum, Primary Years International Baccalaureate Programme, etc.) for schools that receive externally-validated scores on national or international program evaluation rubrics.		

Future Work:

1. Following up with EOC discussion at the September 11, 2017 meeting regarding ASVAB, the EOC staff recommends reviewing and possibly amending the definition of Career Ready in the future using ASVAB to follow the Kentucky model. The Kentucky accountability system allows a student to be considered military ready if the student scores a 50 or more on ASVAB. If a student does not meet the benchmark score of 50, they can earn a score of 31 or above AND enlist in a branch of the military service OR be enrolled in a third credit of JROTC.

2. The EOC staff recommends that going forward, the State should consider incorporating measures into the accountability system that incentivize career AND college-ready measures, not positioning either one as a "lesser-than option." South Carolina also needs to analyze data for a year or two and determine which measures actually impact postsecondary and career success before adding additional measures.

3. The EOC staff recommends that following the lead of other states and with the support of Governor Henry McMaster, South Carolina should move forward with including a K-3 Literacy Improvement indicator in the School Quality or Student Success Indicator in the future.

4. Finally, based on national input and pending evaluations of states' ESSA plans that will be released by the end of the year, the EOC staff recommends that work going forward in determining a comprehensive School Quality or Student Success indicator proceed with caution. It will be critical that states only include metrics in this indicator that reflect clearly defined state priorities.

Recommendation 1- Effective 2017-18

Include ALL AP and IB courses in **the College and Career Ready metrics.** The EOC recommendation only includes AP and IB courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies, which excludes college level courses in the arts, technology, and world languages where students take examinations and earn passing scores that lead to college credit. These courses are not only key facets of the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate,* they are also rigorous college-level courses that integrate reading, writing, mathematics, and social science knowledge within the disciplines. They also represent fields of study where students can obtain viable skills that lead to careers in the state, nation, and world.

Analysis:

Currently, for accountability purposes, the definition of College Ready is defined as the percentage of students in the *graduating* class who meet one of the following criteria:

- Scores a composite score of 20 or higher on the ACT composite; **or**
- Scores a composite score of 1020 or higher on the SAT composite; **or**
- Scores a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement (AP) exam in English, mathematics, science or social studies or an AP capstone. Specific courses will be determined using the Activity Coding System; **or**
- Scores a 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate (IB) assessment in English, mathematics, science, or social studies. Only higher learning (HL) exams in English, mathematics, science and social studies may count. Specific courses will be determined using the Activity Coding System; **or**
- Completes at least six (6) credit hours in dual enrollment courses in an English or mathematics course or STEM course with a grade of C or higher. STEM is defined as a natural/lab science or computer science course.

Including all Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) subjects in the College and Career Ready metric involves the following. First, of the 2016-17 AP exams administered in South Carolina, there would be an additional **15** AP Subjects eligible for the college readiness indicators. In South Carolina, using 2016-17 AP exam data, that equates to 1,299 exams which earned a 3 or higher as noted below. A student may take more than one exam; therefore, there may be duplicate counts.

AP Subject	# Exams 2016-17	# Exams with a 3 or Higher Score
Art History	162	101
Music Theory	299	157
Studio Art: 2-D Design	411	356
Studio Art: 3-D Design	97	81
Studio Art: Drawing	257	235
Chinese Language & Culture	4	4
French Language and Culture	91	51
French Literature	0	0
German Language and Culture	23	13
Italian Language and Culture	0	0
Japanese Language and Culture	0	0
Latin	30	12
Latin Literature	0	0
Spanish Language and Culture	325	289
Spanish Literature and Culture	0	0
TOTAL:	***1,699***	***1,299***

Regarding International Baccalaureate (IB) exams, only Higher Learning (HL) exams that received a score of 4 are eligible for college credit by the state's public higher education institutions. The recommendation would expand the list to include: HL exams in dance, music, film, theater and visual art and HL exams in foreign (non-native) language and promoting an understanding of another culture through the study of its language.

Because there are only 23 high schools that are IB schools and because the EOC staff did not have access to IB scores at each high school, the following analysis focuses only on AP exams.

Based upon the 2015-16 results of the ACT and on Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores, there were 8,020 students in South Carolina who took the ACT and at least one AP exam.

- Of these students, 6,838 met the college readiness indicator on either ACT or AP.
- Among students who earned a score of 3 or higher on any AP exam, 96 percent also earned a composite score of 20 on the ACT.

- Of the students who scored a composite score of 20 or higher on the ACT, 69% also received a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam.
- Adding additional courses adds less than 2 percent to the total percentage of students who meet the joint ACT/AP conditions.

Conclusion: There will be no significant impact on the percentage of students who are college ready by expanding the definition of courses to all subjects. There may, however, be an incentive for schools to offer multiple AP courses.

Staff Recommendation: The EOC staff would also propose for future consideration by the South Carolina a College and Career Ready indicator used in Illinois which incentivizes more students to pass advanced coursework exams, pass college level career pathway courses, etc. In addition, South Carolina should consider for the future including a postsecondary metric within the School Quality or Student Success indicator at the high school level. Such data will be collected upon implementation of the longitudinal data system.

Recommendation 2 - Effective 2017-18

In the career readiness metric for CATE completers with an industry credential, allow for 1) a national or state-recognized industry certification, or 2) a successful state-approved work-based learning exit evaluation from an employer, or 3) a state-approved end-of-pathway assessment to document career- readiness (Example: *Precision Exams, KOSSA* assessments, or other end-of-course assessments across CATE programs that document technical skill attainment). Southern Regional Education Board published *A Blueprint for College Readiness: Incorporating Measures of Career Readiness* where they document and endorse several states' approaches to validating authentic career readiness. All three options listed above were praised and are in use in other states. For example, Georgia allows both national and state-recognized industry certifications as well as work-based learning employee evaluations to document career readiness. Kentucky also uses state- approved, end-of-course exams entitled the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment ***(KOSSA).*** The CATE programs in South Carolina that do not have a nationally-recognized industry credential include Cosmetology and Agriculture.

Analysis:

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) reports that by 2025, two out of every three jobs in the United States and in the SREB's 16-member states will require some postsecondary training and education.[1] To emphasize the enormity of this situation, the latest data suggests the demand for advanced credentials or a degree at the associate level indicates there will be 11 million jobs not filled across the United States because individuals are not being prepared at high levels.

Currently in South Carolina, there exists many underemployed and unemployed individuals because they lack the credentials needed to get a job. Across the southeast United States, employers are saying they struggle to find individuals who possess the industry-specific technical skills, all-purpose STEM skills and essential employability skills. Despite increasing graduation rates, many students, especially low income and minority students, are graduating without the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need for a credential or associate degree. This under-preparedness in high school translates to students not being able to find a job making a living wage.

South Carolina's long-term competitiveness depends on our ability to close critical credential attainment and skill gaps. South Carolina's goal should be to prepare more students to earn credentials and degrees for high demand career fields. High quality career pathways that are aligned with industry standards have the potential to prepare students with the knowledge, technical skills and dispositions to be career-ready when they graduate from high school, which translates to, securing good paying jobs and

[1] Southern Regional Education Board. (2017). *Valuing Both Cs in College and Career –Readiness Accountability Systems*. Atlanta, GA.

sustaining a middle-class life.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are critical elements in preparing students for careers and fields of study. CTE programs are designed not just to prepare students for entry-level jobs, but help them prepare for careers. As the requirements for the workforce rise, students need to have the opportunities to earn advanced credentials earlier and enter the workforce or further their education better prepared. Currently in South Carolina, CTE coursework and programming is delivered primarily through Career and Technical Education (CATE) centers and comprehensive high schools.

What are Career Pathways and why are they important?
South Carolina has identified 16 Career Clusters, which are "groupings and broad industries based on commonalities that provide a vital framework for organizing and delivering quality CATE programs through learning and comprehensive programs of study." Note that while *Government and Public Policy* is a Career Cluster, South Carolina students do not currently have access to any courses in this cluster.

Career pathways need to be **rigorous and relevant** for students, providing them with opportunities from high school to postsecondary education and the workplace. SREB has identified five Essential Elements in the "Career Pathways State Self-Assessment Tool." (Appendix A) They include:

1. Career pathways combine a college-ready academic core with challenging technical studies and require students to complete real-world assignments.
2. Career pathways align secondary, postsecondary and the workplace through strategies like dual enrollment and work-based learning.
3. Career pathways create guidance systems that include career information, exploration and advisement and engage students in ongoing career and college counseling beginning with middle grades.
4. Career pathways allow students to choose accelerated learning options in setting that provide the extended time needed to earn advance industry credentials.
5. Career pathways lead to further education and training and high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-demand industries.

Within the 16 *Career Clusters*, SC has identified more than 79 *Career Pathways* for students. For example, Graphic Communications is one of six *Career Pathways* identified under the *Career Cluster* of Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications. The pathway includes four courses: Graphic Communications 1, 2, 3, and 4 as well as a work-based credit within the *Career Cluster*. There are four national industry-recognized certifications offered for students in this pathway, all Adobe Certifications that are each less than $200 in terms of cost.

Current EOC Recommendations regarding measures of Career Readiness, adopted September 15, 2017

The current EOC recommendations propose the following indicators for Career Readiness for CATE completers, of which students must meet **one** to be considered

career-ready:

- Earns a national industry credential (or state if national not available) as determined by the business community; OR
- Earns a Silver, Gold or Platinum National Career Readiness Certificate on the WorkKeys exam; OR
- Earns a scale score of 31 or higher on the ASVAB; OR
- Completes a registered apprenticeship through ApprenticeshipSC.

These measures were approved for inclusion in the report cards of high schools. There is no current proposal for rating or reporting on the performance of CATE Centers.

In 2017, EOC staff met three times with CATE Center Directors and staff to discuss possible measures of accountability for Career Centers as well as proposals for accountability of career-ready measures. As a result of the June 2017 meeting, EOC staff electronically surveyed CATE directors and leaders to ensure the EOC was properly informed about the impact of decisions on "the field." Although the meetings were productive and collaborative, there is not consensus among the state's CATE community on what measures should be used to determine the career readiness of students. Therefore, staff recommended to delay a recommendation to the EOC on Career Center accountability until the 2018-19 school year. The career readiness of students, along with other measures such as graduation rate, would be considered in the accountability system recommendations for students' feeder high schools beginning with the current school year.

Proposed Option 1: Add a national or state recognized industry credential as a career-ready indicator

The term "industry-recognized", as defined by the Association for Career and Technical Association, means a credential that (A) is sought or accepted by employers within the industry or sector involved as a recognized, preferred, or required credential for recruitment, screening, hiring, retention, or advancement purposes; and (B) where appropriate, is endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization representing a significant part of the industry or sector.

Based on information on currently industry recognized credentials, provided by the SCDE, 13 of the 15 Career Clusters with current available courses offer "industry-recognized" credentials. Of the industry-recognized certifications, 179 are national and nine are state. State credentials offered include the SC Early Childhood Credential; Certified Nurse Aide (SC Dept. of Health and Human Services); Certified Feeding Assistant; and licenses for registered barber; hair braider; master of hair care, cosmetologist, esthetician, and nail technician. Technical Skill Assessments/Certifications, not national or state-recognized industry credentials, are currently offered in pathways within the Career Clusters of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources or Finance. In the case of the Finance cluster, the Academy of Finance certificate is a program that costs $4,000.

What is not available to SC students currently are industry-recognized "stackable" credentials, which allow students to articulate to progressively higher-level credential, certifications, or degrees. Stackable credentials, as defined by the SREB, are part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway, potentially to higher paying jobs. Only two of the current industry-recognized credentials available to SC students are considered "stackable." Using the Certified Nurse Aide as a practical example, students in SC often leave high school with a CNA certification since it is a high-demand field. The average annual base salary for a CNA in Florence, SC is $28,000, and the job demands are often very physical and demanding. A stackable credential system, like a system like in Washington, would allow students to earn other non-degree certification options, such as Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or phlebotomist. A well-articulated, stackable credential system would also include postsecondary education and workplace training (i.e., including apprenticeships, credentials, and degree programs.)

Furthermore, South Carolina does not currently have a process through which secondary, postsecondary, and industry partners identify quality stackable credentials which are valued by employers and may carry postsecondary credit depending on the rigor of the technical and academic content.

Conclusion:
National and state industry credentials as determined by the business community are rigorous tools to measure the career readiness of students. However, there is currently very little coordination between business and industry or higher education with decisions made about career and technical education.

Staff Recommendation:
This option affirms the EOC's current adopted recommendation. A measure of career-readiness should include students who complete a career pathway approved by the South Carolina Department of Education AND successfully complete a terminal national- or state-approved industry credential(s) aligned with the pathway.

Going forward, the EOC staff recommends that the State work with SREB, postsecondary, and business/industry partners to establish a process through which quality stackable credentials in high-skill, high-demand career pathways can be established, allowing students to earn credentials of value to them now and in the future.

Furthermore, the EOC recommends postsecondary partners as well as business and industry be engaged to assist the SCDE in establishing a statewide definition of and model for what strong, structurally guided career pathways should look like across all career clusters. EOC staff recommends Louisiana's Jump Start Program (Appendix B) be used as a model. The program requires students to attain industry-valued credentials to graduate and schools receive the same "credit" for preparing students for careers in high-demand job sectors as they do for students who achieve top AP test scores.

Proposed Option 2: The addition of a successful state-approved work-based learning exit evaluation from an employer as a measure of the career-readiness of a student

Work-based learning (WBL) is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop employability skills. Work-based learning experiences occur in a work setting, typically at an employer's worksite. The work-based learning activities are coordinated with school-based activities to show students the "why" of what they are learning.

South Carolina currently offers work-based learning through ten experience options: cooperative education; internship; mentoring; registered apprenticeship; school-based enterprise; service learning; shadowing: on-site; shadowing: virtual; structured field study; and youth apprenticeship.

Experience type	**Total number of experiences: ALL GRADES**					
	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11
Cooperative Education	1,537	1,465	1,520	866	742	649
Internship	3,576	4,087	2,941	2,718		3,422
Mentoring	1,495	3,363	3,547	3,544		3,008
Registered Apprenticeship	55	57	66	74	78	53
School-Based Enterprise	4,328	3,857	3,249	3,146	2,813	4,194
Service Learning	13,025	21,343	17,638	21,105	27,755	26,552
Shadowing: On-site	30,033	35,514	30,988	35,632	35,274	38,308
Shadowing: Virtual	32,734	33,490	22,948	33,772	30,534	29,408
Structured Field Study	21,174	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Youth Apprenticeship	78	75	53	87	50	71
TOTAL	108,035	103,251	82,950	100,944	104,226	105,665

Source: SCDE

The two apprenticeship programs, Registered Apprenticeship (ApprenticeshipSC) and Youth Apprenticeship are earn-while-you-learning training models that combine on the job training, job-related education, and scalable wage progression.

The programs, as defined by the SCDE in the *2017-18 Work-Based Learning Implementation Guidelines*[2], define the apprenticeship options as the following:

Registered Apprenticeship: An adult educational program that is registered with the

[2] https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/career-and-technology-education/career-guidance/work-based-learning/2017-18-work-based-learning-manual-pdf/

U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. The traditional program is designed for adults; however, it may be linked to an approved youth apprenticeship program in grades 11-12 with a minimum student age requirement of 16 years old.

Youth Apprenticeship: A structured program giving youth at least age 16 or older an opportunity to earn while they learn. This forward-focus program combines classroom instruction with one to two years of on-the-job training with an end result in a "certification of mastery of a specific technical skill." A youth apprenticeship may matriculate to a registered apprenticeship after high school. High school completion is a requirement of the program.

Among the other eight experience options, some are offered as course credit and the completion guidelines vary by school and district, as do the criteria and guidelines. **Exit evaluations are not currently required in any of the current work-based learning experiences.**

EOC staff has received significant feedback from the CATE directors and others in the field that allowing only registered apprenticeships to be the only work-based learning option to count as career-ready was problematic. However, the EOC staff has maintained that the quality standards and program fidelity could not be confirmed in the other work-based options despite requests of the field and of the SCDE.

Georgia's work-based program is mentioned in SCDE recommendation 2 as a model, as they allow "work-based learning employee evaluations to document career readiness." The Georgia system of work-based learning is robust and extensive. They involve highly-structured work-based placements. Employee evaluations of students are required of employers once students qualify for the experience, sign off on an extensive training agreement, and also submit a portfolio of the work-based learning experience.

Conclusion:
In order for students to possess both the technical and knowledge based skills, work-based learning experiences should be comprised of high-quality, structured learning experiences that integrate academic, technical and workplace readiness skills.

An employer evaluation, under the auspices of the current work-based leaning model in South Carolina, is not rigorous enough to be considered a measure of career-readiness. Exit evaluations are not currently required in any of the current work-based learning experiences.

Staff Recommendation:
EOC staff recommend this option as written not be adopted by the EOC at this time; instead, a system of rigorous work-based learning experiences should be developed for inclusion in the accountability system upon completion.

To account for experiences other than ApprenticeshipSC, the EOC staff recommends

work-based learning experiences which count for accountability purposes and document career-readiness of students should successfully complete (or be in the process of completing with a grade of C or better) the career courses in their chosen pathway. The work-based learning component should be driven by a comprehensive work-based plan, which should at a minimum include the following components:

1. directly align to the career pathway of which the student is enrolled,
2. include a minimum of 720 hours of on-the-job training,
3. include a detailed training plan with the technical and knowledge skills identified with an end result in a "certification of mastery of a specific technical skill(s)",
4. include identification of specific workplace competencies,
5. an evaluation component aligned to the technical skills, knowledge skills and workplace competencies expected in the specific work-based experience,
6. and include periodic evaluations conducted by both the school and the employer to ensure the plan is being implemented and the student is being successful.

The EOC staff would further recommend the SCDE consider using the Georgia Work-Based Learning Standards and Guidelines to streamline the menu of options available to students and allow for a more coherent, rigorous system.

Proposed Option 3: The addition of state approved end of pathway assessment to document career-readiness (Example: Precision Exams, KOSSA assessments, or other end of course assessments across CATE programs that document technical skill attainment).

South Carolina does not currently define or offer "end-of-pathway assessments" to document career-readiness. Technical Skills Assessments/Certifications, as defined by the SCDE, are "state-approved support assessments or certifications used for students to demonstrate knowledge after completing the required units of study in specific career pathways." Although not specified in the recommendation, the state also offers Career Focused Assessments/Certifications, which are defined by the SCDE as "support assessments/certification which can be used as a stackable certification for students to begin building their career portfolios by demonstrating knowledge and skills in specific career pathways."

According to the most recent data provided by the SCDE, 57 technical skill assessments/certifications are offered; all are national assessments or certifications expect for one that is state (Certified Feeding Assistant). The SCDE also defined the purpose and use of the assessments on the Department's website, and affirms that only one of the assessments is currently used to meet the federal Perkins requirements:

> "Over 50 technical skill assessments are currently approved by the OCTE for use in CATE programs. Due to persistent challenges in matching student data in PowerSchool with assessment results at the state level, the only technical

skill assessment that has been used to measure performance for Perkins Indicator 2S1–Technical Skill Attainment is the National Health Science Assessment for Health Science completers."[3]

The Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (KOSSA) is one of two measures given to students to measure the career-ready technical portion of college and career readiness. State-developed assessments, KOSSAs are aligned to CTE Career Pathways. Despite the alignment, Kentucky does not allow passage on KOSSA alone to fulfill the requirements for Career Readiness. As seen in Table 1, students must meet additional requirements if KOSSA passage is used.

[3] https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/career-and-technology-education/performance-accountability/career-and-technology-education-technical-skill-assessments/technical-skills-assessments-purpose-and-use/

Table 1. Kentucky Transition Ready Chart in State ESSA Plan

Student Expectations for Transition Readiness – Elementary and Middle Schools

Elementary	Middle
Meet a benchmark on a composite score that combines student performance on reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies by grade 5	Meet a benchmark on a composite score that combines student performance on reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies by grade 8

Student Expectations for Transition Readiness – High School

High School Diploma

Earn a high school diploma by meeting/exceeding the Kentucky Minimum High School Graduation Requirements

NOTE: Essential skills and attendance are reflected in the Opportunity and Access indicator.

AND

Meet Requirements of ONE type of Readiness

Academic Readiness	Career Readiness	Military Readiness	Required for English Learners (only) English Language Readiness
✓ Benchmarks, determined by Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) on a college admissions exam; OR ✓ A grade of B or better on 6 or more hours of KBE-approved dual credit; OR ✓ A score of 3+ on exams in at least 2 or more Advanced Placement courses; OR ✓ A score of 5+ on at least 2 or more exams for International Baccalaureate Courses; OR ✓ Benchmarks on at least 2 or more Cambridge Advanced International examinations.	✓ Benchmarks on Industry Certifications *(Approved by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board on an annual basis)*; OR ✓ Earn KOSSA as appropriate for articulated credit; AND ✓ A score of B or better on 6+ hours approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit courses; OR ✓ Complete 2 CTE credits and enroll in a the next credit in CTE program of study; OR ✓ KDE/Labor Cabinet-approved apprenticeship; OR ✓ KDE-approved alternate process to verify exceptional work experience	✓ Meet the benchmark on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) AND ✓ Enlist in a branch of military service; OR ✓ Complete two (2) certificates of training and is enrolled in the third credit within a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program	✓ Require reclassification as English language proficient for an student who received English Language services during high school.

Note: Students participating in the alternate assessment program and earning an alternate diploma will have criteria for transition readiness based on alternate assessment requirements and employability skills attainment.

Conclusion:

The current offerings of Technical Skills Assessments/Certifications and Career Focused Assessments/Certifications are not well-defined or aligned with national industry standards. Only one Technical Skills Assessment, the National Health Science Assessment, is currently used to measure performance for Health Science completers for federal Perkins funding.

Staff Recommendation:
EOC staff recommend this option not be adopted by the EOC now as an additional measure of career readiness; national or state-recognized industry credentials are currently included in 13 of the 15 Career Clusters that include current coursework. Assessment systems such as those set up in states like Kentucky should be considered as South Carolina begins to incorporate the elements necessary for such a system. Academic career readiness, like college readiness, should be measured using valid and reliable assessments.

The SCDE affirms similar findings in EOC reports, such as the High School Task Force Report, that assert that there are issues with data collection and reporting. As headway is made in the development of a statewide, longitudinal data system and the rigor of non-industry-recognized credentials can be verified among business and industry, higher education, and K-12, EOC staff recommends that other options be considered in the future for students who do not have access to national or state industry-recognized certifications.

Additional Staff Recommendations for Future Work

1. The current recommendation setting the Career Readiness on ASVAB is low, set at 31. The ASVAB assesses individuals' academic and occupational readiness for military service. According to SREB, "the Pentagon recommends a cut score set at the 50th percentile for individuals planning a military career." ***The EOC staff recommends the State should consider a system like the one in Kentucky beginning with the current school year. The Kentucky system allows students to be considered military ready if they score a 50 or more on ASVAB. If a student does not meet the benchmark score of 50, they can earn a score of 31 or above AND enlist in a branch of the military service OR be enrolled in a third credit of JROTC.***

2. The current recommendations for high school accountability do not place value on college **AND** career readiness. As one South Carolina district superintendent stated, a score of 20 on the ACT is comparable to a 31 on the ASVAB in the current system. In Kentucky's accountability system, currently under review, schools receive one point for each student who meets college-readiness benchmarks or academic and technical career-readiness benchmarks, plus a bonus half-point for each student who meets both. According to SREB, since adopting career-readiness measures and a bonus half-point, Kentucky has seen steady increases in the percentage of students who earn three or more CTE credits and achieve college and career readiness – from 34 percent in 2010 to 76 percent in 2016. ***Going forward, the State should consider incorporating measures into the accountability system that incentive career AND college-ready measures, not positioning either one as a "lesser-than option."***

Recommendation 3 - Effective 2017-18

Include social studies dual credit/enrollment courses in the courses that count for college readiness if a student earns a C or higher. The current EOC recommendation only includes English, mathematics, science, engineering and technology dual credit/enrollment courses to be counted for college-ready. There is no research to support the notion that college-level courses in history/social sciences are less rigorous, valuable, or viable for a student's intellectual development and global awareness. The *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* specifically names the social sciences in the world class knowledge we expect students to attain. Additionally, AP and 1B social studies/social science courses are already approved in the college ready metrics.

Analysis:

The overwhelming majority of dual credit/dual enrollment students, between 10,000 and 11,000 each year, earn dual credit/enrollment at two-year institutions governed by the South Carolina Technical College System. For a student to take a history/social science course at a two-year technical college, the student must have successfully taken and passed English 101 and English 102.

Conclusion: Expanding the definition of Career Ready to include dual credit/enrollment courses in social sciences in which a student scores a C or higher will not impact the percentage of students deemed college ready in the state accountability system. Students will have already earned 6 credit hours by successfully completing English 101 and 102. Expanding the definition may, however, encourage students to take college level courses in history/social sciences.

Increasing access for more students to take dual credit/enrollment courses at the South Carolina Technical College System must be a priority for funding in Fiscal Year 2018-19 and in subsequent fiscal years through increased funding for the South Carolina Technical College System.

Recommendation 4- Effective 2018-19

Include a college and career readiness metric that is aligned to the outcomes of the SC Employability Credential and IDEA for students with moderate to severe disabilities to demonstrate career readiness aligned to their IEP goals and career transition plans. Although these students represent a statistically small population in South Carolina, they should be able to work in ways that are meaningful to them to become career ready. Career preparation is a central part of their high school curriculum, but the appropriate metrics to measure career readiness for these students are not a part of the four "career-ready" metrics in the current EOC proposal. Documentation of career readiness should include:

- ✓ A career portfolio that includes a multimedia presentation project;
- ✓ Work readiness assessment results that demonstrate the student is ready for competitive employment;

Analysis:

Act 54 of 2017 requires the "State Board of Education, through the Department of Education and in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Department of Employment and Workforce, businesses, and stakeholders" to develop criteria for a uniform state-recognized employability credential that is aligned to the program of study for students with a disability whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines, and agrees in writing, that a diploma pathway would not provide a free appropriate public education. The State Board of Education, in conjunction with the department, shall develop a rubric and guidelines to identify and assess the employability skills of the students, based on appropriate standards established. The credentials must be uniform in size, shape, and design." However, the effective date of implementation is the freshman class of 2018-19.

Conclusion: To be consistent with state law, the EOC must defer action on this recommendation until full-scale implementation with the senior class of 2021-22. For the next several years, data can be collected and reported on the school and district report cards that identify students who are in the process of earning the uniform state-recognized employability credential.

Recommendation 5- Effective 2018-19

Develop a Student Success metric for elementary and middle school that measures student participation, progress and/or mastery in non-tested subjects aligned to the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.* ESSA explicitly describes the expectation that students have access to a well-rounded education. The EOC recommendation for elementary and middle schools does not reflect opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and proficiency outside of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. This metric should include:

- ✓ Documented student participation and "meets or exceeds expectations" performance levels in Arts, Technology and/or STEM, World languages, Physical Education, and/or Character Education

Analysis:

ESSA allows states to use at least one additional "indicator of school quality or school success." The indicator must allow for "meaningful differentiation in school performance" and must be "valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide."

Education Week recently analyzed the state ESSA plans that have been submitted and/or approved and found that 34 states and the District of Columbia have chosen to include a measure of chronic absenteeism in their plans.[4] Six, including South Carolina, have chosen to include school climate surveys of students. No state included measures of social-emotional competencies in their school accountability system to measure the "whole child." Social-emotional competencies include self-management and decision-making competencies, which are reflected in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. Researchers like Angela Duckworth who have emphasized the importance of students developing skills of cooperation, persistence, growth-mindset, etc., have published reports noting that assessments of such skills are not unbiased or error-free. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning or CASEL notes that states did not include such measures because measures of social and emotional development are currently based on students' responses to surveys about their own character traits.[5] CASEL is working with a group of 20 states to determine how to ensure that development of students' social and emotional development into classroom work along with student surveys to help teachers determine if the instructional strategies are effective.

The Foundation for Excellence in Education also discourages the use of measures of character education in accountability because – while character education is important -- there are significant flaws in every existing method used to measure character traits and skills. Similarly, formative or diagnostic assessments are not designed for accountability but instead are designed to inform instruction. And, while access to or participation in

[4] Blad, Evie. "No State Will Measure Social-Emotional Learning Under ESA. Will that Slow its Momentum?" *Education Week*. October 23, 2017.

[5] https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/State-Efforts-to-Promote-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-Jan-2017-1-16-17.pdf

courses or programs are important, the Foundation encourages states to hold schools accountable for performance since access measures tend to be easy to game and interfere with school-level decisions about how best to prepare students for success.

The EOC staff analyzed the ESSA state plans of eight states that have been approved by the United States Department of Education. (Appendix C). The analysis focuses on each State's:

- Educational goals;
- Minimum number or n-size of students to identify subgroup performance in the accountability system;
- Accountability indicators and relative weights; and
- Any other indicators, including non-tested indicators, being considered by the State for future inclusion in the accountability system.

The analysis concluded:

- Like South Carolina, these eight states heavily rely on Academic Achievement, Academic Progress and English language proficiency in the accountability system for elementary and middle schools.

    - The state of Vermont has 100% of the overall school rating at the elementary and middle schools dependent upon the following indicators: Academic Achievement; Academic Progress, English language proficiency; and for School Quality or Student Success science, assessment results and Physical Education assessment results.

    - Illinois and Massachusetts have the highest weighting for School Quality or Student Success at the elementary/middle school level at 25 percent. For Illinois, initially 20% of the School Quality or Student Success indicator reflects chronic absenteeism and 5% for student climate surveys. For the future, Illinois is considering how to incorporate: chronic absenteeism; fine arts; student climate surveys; a P-2 Indicator; and an elementary/middle grade indicator into the rating for school year 2019-20. Massachusetts attributes 25% to science assessment results in grades 5 and 8 and chronic absenteeism.

- Like South Carolina, other states want to include more non-assessed indicators at the elementary/middle school levels to measure a well-rounded education system. The greatest obstacle is the availability of data. Currently, states are not collecting data on student participation, extracurricular activities, service-learning opportunities, etc.; therefore, states cannot determine if the indicators provide "meaningful differentiation in school performance" and are "valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide."

- Arizona and Delaware are creating a searchable online system that with readily available information to parents and the public on such issues as: curriculum; suspension/expulsions; postsecondary outcomes; Career and Technical Education programs; access to effective teachers; arts; health and wellness programs, advanced and accelerated learning options as proposed by the Department of Education; gifted and talented; arts and music; and even technology options and support.

- Tennessee is incorporating "transparency metrics" to provide additional information to all stakeholders:
  - Postsecondary matriculation
  - Postsecondary completion
  - Teacher retention
  - Access to highly effective teachers

  For future years, Tennessee is looking at other metrics including:
  - Teacher chronic absences
  - Educator Effectiveness data
  - Students participating at least one extracurricular activity

Conclusion: How will South Carolina define "meets or exceed expectations" in arts, technology, world language and physical education? Will the state eliminate the suspension of the foreign language program assessment and the physical education assessment., which have been suspended by budget provisos since Fiscal Year 2009-10?

Recommendation 6 - Effective 2018-19

Include a School Quality metric that documents continuous improvement initiatives and/or high quality curricular programs *(STEM, STEAM, Arts in Basic Curriculum, Primary Years International Baccalaureate Programme,* etc.) for schools that receive externally-validated scores on national or international program evaluation rubrics. First, schools and districts are intensely involved in continuous improvement initiatives that focus on specific priorities identified within the school and district and externally recommended by external review teams. School quality is documented by an external team on an international rubric across five high leverage standards of quality including mission and vision, governance and leadership, teaching and learning, resource management, continuous improvement which lead to a district Index of Educational Quality (IEQ) Score. Districts with higher IEQ scores indicate that the system is working to create the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning. Second, the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* highlights world class skills (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, collaboration and teamwork, communication, and knowing how to learn) and world class characteristics (integrity, self-direction, global perspective, perseverance, work ethic, interpersonal skills). Student focus groups in South Carolina identified that students gain these skills and dispositions through project-based learning and other engaging curricular programs that are deeply embedded into the school instructional program. Students also gain these skills and dispositions through participation in extra-curricular, co-curricular, and athletic programs. Suggestions for this metric include:

- ✓ Differentiated points could be distributed using accreditation or school improvement scores (Ex. AdvancED rating) that are *at or above the state average.* The district IEQ score, which is a compilation of <u>each</u> school's rating, is compared to the state and national IEQ average.

- ✓ Initiatives, such as STEM certification, Arts in Basic Curriculum, Primary Years and Middle Years International Baccalaureate Programme, Lighthouse Status for Leader in Me, Learning Forward Designation, Partial Immersion Programs, etc. use external teams to validate high levels of curricular implementation in the school.

- ✓ Other student-centered measures of school quality can be obtained by analyzing the unduplicated student participation in a wide range of academic clubs and competitions, service learning programs, sports, and co-curricular programs.

In conversations with South Carolina Department of Education staff, the intent is that Recommendation 6 would serve as "bonus points" in the accountability system. It is unclear how many additional bonus points and if all schools would be eligible to earn these points. In addition, since data on student participation in clubs, competitions,

service learning, sports, and co-curricular programs are not currently collected, there are no data to ensure that all schools could earn the additional points. For example, as reported on the South Carolina Department of Education's website, as of August 30, 2016 there were 20 public school districts in the state that offered at least one International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, or Diploma Programme.[6] The following table summarizes the number of schools by IB Programme.

	Number of Schools
Primary Years Programme (Students age 3 to 12)	11
Middle Years Programme (Students age 11 to 16)	19
Diploma Programme (Students age 16-19)	25
TOTAL:	55

- Note: Not included are candidate schools and Career-Related Programmes, which are also offered at A.C. Flora High School in Richland 1 and Hilton Head High School in Beaufort, schools that also offer the Diploma Programmes.

In the analysis of the eight approved ESSA plans, no state included accreditation indicators in a state accountability system. According to information provided by the Department of Education, AdvancED maintains the IEQ rating data for schools and districts. To date, the data are not public. The IEQ score is based on the accreditation visit. Schools/districts receive an IEQ score at their accreditation visit. The IEQ scores are earned at the five-year renewal cycle for accreditation.

And, none of the eight ESSA plans included "bonus" points for the overall rating. States did give bonus points for College/Career Readiness if students criteria for being both college and career ready.

Staff Recommendation regarding Recommendations 5 and 6: Following the example of other states, South Carolina should convene at least two groups of stakeholders who can identify leading indicators for a School Quality or Student Success Indicator for elementary/middle schools that would reflect between 20 and 25 percent of the overall school rating of an elementary or middle school. South Carolina should focus on the measures that are critical for schools and the state to ensure that all students achieve the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.

To address inequities across the state in terms of access, the indicator School Quality or Student Success at the elementary and middle school level should include a menu, like that used in Illinois, of measures that ensure all schools have the opportunity to provide the School Quality or to ensure Student Success. Not all schools would be able to earn all types of points under the metric depending upon the grade configuration and offerings of the school, but there would be multiple ways to earn the points to ensure equity across

[6] https://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/instruction/standards/Advanced%20Programs/IB-Schools-ByDistrict-083016.pdf

schools. Furthermore, the School Quality or Student Success indicator would count for no more than 25 percent of a school's overall rating. For each measure the following should occur:

- A uniform definition must be developed;
- A data system to collect the data must be developed;
- The integrity (reliability and validity) of the data must be demonstrated; and
- Evidence that the data cannot be compromised must be demonstrated.

First, at the elementary level, Governor McMaster and the EOC have strongly encouraged developing a **K-3 Literacy Improvement** indicator into the School Quality or Student Success Indicator. In September of 2017 the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) released a report *Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework: Opportunities to Integrate Early Childhood in ESSA Toolkit*.[7] The toolkit provides a framework and corresponding research for states to consider. While school accountability systems have historically measured progress at 3rd grade, the research is clear that "children begin developing critical language, literacy, and numeracy skills and foundational content knowledge long before they reach third grade."[8]

For states who want to create an early Learning Indicator, CCSSO and CEELO propose thirteen indicators that focus on Access, Engagement and Academic indicators:

- Access
  - Chronic Absenteeism
  - Student Discipline
  - Teacher Absenteeism
  - Teacher Qualification/Effectiveness
  - Access to Resources
  - Access to Full-day Kindergarten
  - Access to Publicly-funded Pre-K
  - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)

- Engagement
  - Chronic Absenteeism
  - Student Discipline
  - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)
  - Social and Emotional Learning

- Academic
  - Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results
  - Teacher Observations, Instructional Quality Reviews, Teacher/Student Interaction Measures

[7] http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2017/Birth%20to%20Grade%203%20Indicator%20Framework.pdf.

[8] Ibid., p. 1.

- Formative or diagnostic assessments of academic progress

The EOC staff review of the ESSA State plans also found other examples and promising work:

- Massachusetts is considering adding an indicator to School Quality or Student Success that measures the percentage of 3rd graders achieving proficiency in reading. Similarly, South Carolina could consider increases in the percentage of 3rd graders achieving proficiency in reading or decreases in the percentage of 3rd graders scoring Does Not Meet in reading;

- Illinois is in the process of developing a P-2 indicator to acknowledge that "early learning is critical to long-term success and including an indicator as part of the accountability system will ensure recognition of its importance."[9] The recommendations will be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education by December 31, 2017.

- Ohio's September 18, 2017 submitted ESSA plan includes a K-3 Literacy component that counts for 15 percent of an elementary school's overall grade. The indicator "looks at how successful the school is at getting struggling readers on track to proficiency in third grade and beyond." [10] The K-3 Literacy Improvement uses results from two assessments: a reading diagnostic given to all students in kindergarten through grade 3 at the beginning of the school year and Ohio's state third grade English language arts test given to third-graders twice during the school year.

  The grade for the measure is based on the prior year's state average. State law requires that the statewide average represents the bottom of the C range. Any school or district that had fewer than 5 percent of its kindergartners reading below grade level at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year will not receive a letter grade for this measure. The grades for this measure and component are based on the percentage of students in each of the following situations:

  - Students who were not on track in reading last year in kindergarten and now are on track in first grade; • Students who were not on track in reading in first grade and now are on track in second grade;
  - Students who were not on track in reading in second grade and now are on track in third grade; and
  - Students who were not on track in reading at the beginning of third grade who scored "Proficient" on Ohio's third grade English language arts test.

[9] https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/ilconsolidatedstateplan.pdf., p.57.
[10] Appendix B of Ohio's ESSA Plan. http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-ESSA/ESSA-Appendix-B.pdf.aspx

Second, South Carolina should also consider adopting a **menu or toolbox that measures the School Quality or Student Success** for elementary and middle schools. The following indicators should be considered:

- Science and social studies assessment results which are already part of the indicator;
- Student survey, which is already part of the indicator could be combined with surveys of other stakeholders as well;
- Percent of 6th graders achieving proficiency in mathematics;
- Percent of middle school students earning high school credit;
- Percent of time in fine arts, music, and physical education or comparable measure. Illinois is working on a fine arts indicator which will not be used until 2021-2022;
- Prime instructional time, a measure that has been reported for over a decade on school and district report cards in South Carolina. This indicator provides information on the percentage of instructional time available when both teachers and students are present;
- Breadth of curriculum (e.g. access to courses beyond ELA, math, science, history and civics such as the arts, physical education, computer science and community service); and
- On Track to Graduation – percentage of 9th graders earning at least four full-year credits in ELA, math, science, social studies and/or world language attributed back to middle school where last attended.

And, the EOC staff recommends that two working groups be formulated beginning in January to begin work on the above: one working group should include primary schools, schools with grade configurations of kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade levels along with elementary school leaders; and the second working group should include elementary and middle school leaders. These working groups would recommend valid and reliable measures to determine an early literacy indicator and a comprehensive School Quality or School Success indicator for elementary and middle schools. The stakeholders could review other states' efforts and determine what data exist or could be collected to ensure that the indicators:

- Are valid and reliable;
- "Meaningfully differentiate" across schools;
- Are measured consistently statewide within each grade span; and
- Can be reported annually for all students, and for subgroups of students.[11]

[11] Erika Hall, *Identifying a School Quality/Student Success Indicator for ESS: Requirements and Considerations*, Council of Chief State School Officers, January 2017. http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2017/ESSA/CCSSOIdentifyingSchoolQualityStudentSuccessIndicator1242017.pdf

Appendix A

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INTELLECTUALLY DEMANDING CAREER PATHWAYS SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL				
Five Essential Elements	**Key Indicators**	**Existing Policies / Practices**		**Evidence**
		Yes	**No**	
Career pathways combine a college-ready academic core with challenging technical studies and require students to complete real-world assignments.	All students complete a college-ready academic core and a concentration (e.g., a career pathway of four+ courses) that provide the foundational skills they need to earn credentials and secure jobs.			
	All students take four years of math related to their career pathways (e.g., students preparing for STEM-related certificate and degree programs take an advanced math pathway that includes Algebra II and higher math).			
	Strong emphasis is placed on the skills students need to read complex texts across a range of disciplines and explain in writing what they mean.			
	All teachers receive professional development on how to design project-based assignments and integrate literacy and math in their instruction.			
Career pathways align secondary, postsecondary and the workplace through strategies like dual enrollment and work-based learning.	Local, state, and federal funds incentivize secondary, postsecondary and employer partners to develop and jointly administer career pathways that span high schools and community colleges and align with critical workforce needs.			
	Low-performing high schools are encouraged to use their discretionary funds to restructure their curricula around high-quality career pathways.			

Five Essential Elements	Key Indicators	Existing Policies / Practices Yes	No	Evidence
Career pathways create guidance systems that include career information, exploration and advisement and engage students in ongoing career and college counseling beginning in the middle grades.	Career exploration courses and activities are mandated in the middle grades and high school, and distributed, curriculum-based career guidance systems make career and college counseling the shared responsibility of every adult.			
	A career pathway website includes information on jobs, salaries, educational and skill requirements, postsecondary programs and costs.			
	State and local funds support high school career and college advising centers featuring marketing materials and online resources that counselors, teachers and students can use to explore career pathways and make plans.			
Career pathways allow students to choose accelerated learning options in settings that provide the extended time needed to earn advanced industry credentials.	Schools are incentivized to offer career pathways in diverse settings that allow students to earn advanced credentials and college credits while still participating in activities at their home high schools.			
	Shared-time technical centers house early advanced credential programs that align instruction across home high schools and community colleges.			

Five Essential Elements	Key Indicators	Existing Policies / Practices Yes	No	Evidence
Career pathways lead to further education and training and high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-demand industries.	The school districts prioritize investments in career pathways that lead to good jobs in state and regional industry sectors experiencing skilled worker shortages.			
	Regional career pathway councils comprised of secondary, postsecondary and industry partners work together to identify key industries, align career pathway curricula, instruction and assessments with industry and postsecondary standards, and audit career pathways for quality.			
	Partners commit to helping 25 percent more young adults acquire credible industry and postsecondary credentials by age 25 over the next decade.			

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Internal	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
External	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Analysis				

Appendix B

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

JUMP START

Louisiana's Jump Start Program

(August 6, 2015)

Louisiana's Jump Start program is a new paradigm for career and technical education (CTE), requiring students to attain an industry-promulgated, industry-valued credential in order to graduate high school.

Background – Louisiana's Career Diploma had fallen into disrepair and was seldom used. Students with the Career Diploma were not prepared to attain entry-level jobs in high-demand industry sectors. Unfilled jobs in these high-demand industry sectors continue to detract from Louisiana's economic growth.

Solution – Louisiana's Jump Start program, which for the first time aligns Louisiana's K-12 CTE strategy with the state's economic development strategies.

What's Different about Louisiana's Jump Start Program?

1) Requires student to attain industry-valued credentials to graduate
2) Regional teams lead implementation, creating Jump Start Graduation Pathways ("a pathway for every student")
3) Schools receive the same credit for preparing students for careers in high-demand job sectors as they do for students who achieve top AP test scores
4) New funding sources tied to teacher development and investment in modern CTE facilities
5) Regional team-developed Career Readiness course suites (8th grade course on Career Awareness, 9th grade course on Personal Path / High School Success, 12th grade course on Job Attainment / Job Performance)

Jump Start regional teams – consisting of school districts, colleges, businesses and workforce / economic development experts – collaborate to provide career courses and workplace experiences to high school students. Students have the opportunity in high school to earn industry-valued, industry-promulgated credentials in the career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs, while preparing them to continue their post-secondary education (in 2- and 4- year colleges) and career development.

Schools receive the same credit in their letter grade for students who earn a nationally- recognized certificate in a high-demand job sector as they currently do for students who score 3, 4 or 5 on an AP test. *Schools will be rewarded for preparing their students for college and career.*

Jump Start courses and training will be offered to all high school students regardless of diploma pathway: as elective credit for students pursuing a TOPS Academic Diploma and required credit for students seeking a Jump Start Career Diploma.

Sample Jump Start Industry-Promulgated Credentials		
"Statewide" Industry Credentials	**"Regional" Industry Credentials**	**"Complementary" Credentials**
• ASE Student Certification (auto service) • AWS Welding • C4M (certification for manufacturing) • Certified Nursing Aide • CompTIA Security+ (Cybersecurity) • EMT Basic • NCCER Electrician	• Certified Hospitality & Tourism Management Professional (American Hospitality & Lodging) • Commercial Drivers License • Customer Service (National Retail Federation) • LA Meat Processors Meat Processing • National Retail Fed. Customer Service • Priority Dispatch (National Academy of Emergency Dispatch)	▪ First Aid / CPR / AED ▪ Microsoft Office Certification ▪ OSHA 10 (Workplace Safety)
"Statewide" credentials are for high-demand industry sectors. "Regional" credentials are for regional employers. "Complementary" credentials have value across industry sectors. *Each graduation pathway (see next page) specifies the required culminating industry credential(s).*		

Jump Start established a four year implementation plan, with complete statewide implementation set for the 2017-2018 school year. ***Louisiana is one year ahead of the Jump Start implementation schedule, and seeks to complete its four year Jump Start implementation within two years.***

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Jump Start Graduation Pathways – Jump Start regional teams have developed 47 graduation pathways, following through on the promise of "a pathway for every student."

Statewide Graduation Pathways	
1) Automobile Service	11) HVAC Tech
2) Carpenter	12) Industrial Maintenance Mechanic
3) Certified Mechanical Drafter	13) Internet Web Foundations
4) Certified Nursing Assistant	14) Mobile Crane Operator
5) Collision Repair	15) Oil & Gas T2 Safety Systems
6) Cyber Engineering	16) Pipefitter
7) Dental	17) Plumber
8) Electrician	18) Prostart / Restaurant
9) Emergency Medical Tech	19) Web Design Professional
10) Four Stroke Engine Tech	20) Welder
Integrated Graduation Pathways	
21) Agriculture Tech	26) Manufacturing Specialist
22) Digital Media and Entertainment Technology	27) Manufacturing, Construction Crafts & Logistics
23) Health Sciences – Patient Care and Management	28) Maritime
24) Hospitality, Tourism, Culinary and Retail	29) STEM
25) Information Technology	30) Technology Specialist
Act 833-Eligible Regional Pathways	
31) Ag Tech 833-Eligible	33) Manufacturing, Construction Crafts and Logistics 833-Eligible
32) Hospitality, Tourism, Culinary and Retail 833-Eligible	34) Workplace Safety 833-Eligible
Regional Graduation Pathways	
35) Business Management	41) Mason
36) Carpenter's Helper	42) Micro-Enterprise
37) Commercial Driver	43) Pipefitter's Helper
38) Electrician's Helper	44) Public Service
39) Fashion Design	45) Sheet Metal
40) Industrial Maintenance Mechanic's Helper	46) Welder's Helper
	47) Workplace Safety

Each of these pathways – as well as fact sheets providing comprehensive information on each industry credential – are available for download on the Louisiana Department of Education's *All Things Jump Start* web portal.

Appendix C

In the spring of 2017 fourteen states submitted State plans for peer review pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The following is a summary of eight of the fourteen plans as approved by the United States Department of Education.[12] Included in the analysis are the states of Delaware, Louisiana and Tennessee, states like South Carolina who are members of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) as well as Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts and Vermont. The non-SREB states were selected either because the state has experienced significant gains in academic achievement over the past decade or because national accountability experts recommended the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) consider these State plans.

The following analysis focuses on each State's:

- Educational goals that address academic achievement, graduation and postsecondary education goals but excluded are English language proficiency goals;
- Minimum number or n-size of students to identify subgroup performance in the accountability system;
- Accountability indicators and relative weights along with detailed information on School Quality or Student Success indicators; and
- Any other indicators, including non-tested indicators, under consideration by the State for future inclusion in the accountability system or for reporting purposes.

Page references are attributable to the State's approved ESSA plan.

[12] United States Department of Education. Accessed on October 30, 2017. https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html

Arizona

Long-term goals:

- By 2027-28 the state will close the proficiency gaps by at least 50 percent. The proficiency gap is defined as the difference between 90 percent proficiency and baseline subgroup proficiency. (p. 13)
- By 2039-40 all student subgroups must reach at least 90 percent proficiency on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics statewide assessments.
- By 2030 all students and subgroups will achieve a 90 percent on-time graduation rate.

n-size: 20

Indicators and Weights: Each school can earn 100 points from the following indicators:

ESSA Indicators	**State Category**	**K-8 (Elementary & Middle)**	**9-12 (High)**
Academic Achievement	Proficiency	30%	30%
Academic Progress	Growth	50%	20%
English language proficiency	ELL	10%	10%
Graduation Rate	4-year (10%) 5-year counts (8%) 6-year counts (5%) and 7-year counts (1%)		20%
School Quality or Student Success	Acceleration Menu Items	10%	
	College and Career Ready		20%
		100%	**100%**

Acceleration Menu Items – An elementary or middle school can earn up to 10 points from a menu. (p.21). Not all schools can earn all types of points depending on their grade configuration and offerings, but there are multiple ways to earn 10 points:

- End-of-course math testing
  - A school can earn up to 5 points
  - Increasing the percentage of students in grades 5 - 8 accelerating in math.
  - A school's current year proficiency percentage is greater than the schools' prior year proficiency earns 5 points.
  - A school's current year and prior year proficiency percentage equal 100 earns 5 points.
  - A school's current year proficiency percentage is less than the school's prior year proficiency percentage earns 0 points.

- Decreasing 3rd grade minimally proficiency (lowest student performance level)
  - A school can earn up to 5 points
  - A school's current year minimally proficient percentage is less than the school's prior year minimally proficient percentage = 5 points.

- A school's current year and prior year minimally proficient percentage equals 0 = 5 points
- A school's current year minimally proficient percentage is greater than the school's prior year minimally proficient percentage = 0 points.

- Subgroup improvement
  - Two points per group with a maximum of 6 points
  - School's current year weighted, stable proficiency compared to the prior year weighted, stable state average for the subgroup.

- Special education inclusion in general classroom
  - A school can earn up to 2 points
  - Schools with 7% or more of their population in special education are eligible.
  - Students spending 80%+ of their day in the general education classroom receive points depending on their classification. Depending on the average points per special education student enrolled, schools receive points.

- Chronic Absenteeism: Student absent 10% or more of the year (18+ Days)
  - A school's current year chronic absenteeism percentage is less than the school's prior year chronic absenteeism percentage = 5 points.
  - A school's current year and prior year chronic absenteeism percentage equals 0 = 5 points
  - A school's current year chronic absenteeism percentage is greater than the school's prior year chronic absenteeism percentage = 0 points

College and Career Ready – Total points per senior, students can earn up to 2 CCRI points based on the rubric below in any combination of college and/or career readiness. (pp. 24-25) Bonus points are awarded if a student accumulates 1.0 point from the red indicators and 1.0 point from the blue indicators.

Indicator Points	Indicators
1.25	Earns a Grand Canyon Diploma or International Baccalaureate Diploma
1.25	Completes a CTE sequence and passes the Arizona Technical Skills Assessment for that sequence
.5 per exam	Passing a score on AzMERIT Algebra 2 or ELA 11
.35 per exam	Meets cut score on ACT English, math, reading or science exam
.5 per exam	Meets cut score on SAT English or math exam
.5 per exam	Meets cut score on any AP exam
.3	Completes the FAFSA (Red or Blue)
.5 per course	Passes a college level career pathway (CTE) course for which college credit can be earned with an A, B, or C (i.e. dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment)
.5 per course	Passes a college level English, math, science, social studies, or foreign language course for which college credit can be earned with an A, B, or C (i.e. dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment)
.25 per course	Completes a CTE course with an A, B, or C (Outside of completed sequence referenced above)
.5	Meets benchmarks for ASVAB
.5	Meets benchmark for ACT WorkKeys
.35 per exam	Meets cut score on ACCUPLACER, ALEKS, COMPASS (or any nationally recognized college placement exam currently used by an Arizona institution), or Cambridge IGCSE English, reading, writing, math, social studies, science, or foreign language exam
.5 per exam	Meets cut score on CLEP, Cambridge A or AS, or IB English, math, social studies, science, or foreign language exam
.5 per credential, certificate, or license	Earns an Industry-Recognized Credential, Certificate, or License No more than one point may be awarded in this indicator.
1	Completes well-defined Work-Based learning (i.e. internship) of at least 120 hours
1	Meet all 16 Arizona Board of Regents program of study requirements

Under Consideration:

Arizona is addressing the need for schools to provide a well-rounded education by providing more comprehensive data and information to the public. Arizona will create a searchable online system that has such information as: Career and Technical Education options; health and wellness programs; advanced and accelerated learning options like Advanced Placement, gifted and talented, arts & music, physical education programs, athletics, and technology options and support.

Connecticut

Long-term Goals:

- By 2029-30 all students and subgroups will achieve a performance/proficiency index of 75. Unlike other states that set student performance levels at a specific scale score, Connecticut believes that a student must be performing solidly in the desired performance level of proficiency.
- By 2029-30, 100 percent of students and subgroups will achieve growth target for students in grades 4 through 8.
- By 2028-29, all students and all subgroups will achieve an on-time graduation rate of 94%. (Connecticut is starting at 87.2% for all students).

n-size: 20

Indicators and Weights: A school earns points from the following indicators and their corresponding weights:

ESSA Indicators	Elementary	Middle	High
Academic Achievement	31.6%	30.0%	51.6%
Academic Growth	42.1%	40.0%	
English Language Proficiency	10.5%	10.0%	6.5%
Graduation Rate			6.5%
School Quality or Student Success:			
Chronic Absenteeism	10.5%	10.0%	6.5%
Physical Fitness Assessment	5.3%	5.0%	3.2%
On Track to High School Graduation		5.0%	3.2%
6-Year Graduation Rate			6.5%
Preparation for College/Career Readiness - Coursework			3.2%
Preparation for College/Career Readiness - Exams			3.2%
Postsecondary Entrance			6.5%
Arts Access			3.2%
TOTAL POINTS:	950	1,000	1,550

Chronic Absenteeism – Percentage of students missing 10% or greater of the total number of days enrolled. The chronic absenteeism rate should not exceed 5%; therefore, full points are awarded if the rate is 5% or lower. No points awarded if rate is 30% or higher. Rates between 30% and 5% receive proportional points.

On Track to High School Graduation - Percentage of 9th graders earning at least five full-year credits. It applies to middle schools with (with 8th grade) and high schools. Target is 94%.

Preparation for Postsecondary and Career Readiness Coursework – Percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 who participate in at least one of the following during high

school: Two courses in AP/IB, dual enrollment; two courses in one of 17 career and technical education categories; or two workplace experiences courses. Target is 75%.

Preparation for Postsecondary and Career Readiness Exams – Percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 who attain benchmark scores on at least one college/career readiness exam (SAT, ACT, AP, IB) Target is 75%.

Postsecondary Entrance – Percentage of graduating class enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution any time during the first year after high school graduation. Target is 75%.

Physical Fitness – Percentage of students meeting or exceeding the "Health Fitness Zone Standard" in all four areas of the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment which includes tests that assess muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness. It is administered to all students in grades 4, 6 and 8 and once in high school. Criterion-referenced standards are used. Target is 75%.

Arts Access – Percentage of students in grade 9 through 12 participating in at least one dance, theater, music or visual arts course in the school year. Target is 60%.

Schools will be lowered a category or rating if they do not test at least 95% of students or if achievement gap in any subject or graduation rate is significant, at least one standard deviation greater than the statewide gap.

Under Consideration:
Connecticut acknowledges "ESSA provides an opportunity to improve linkages between early learning programs and the K-12 system so that children and families have every opportunity they need to succeed in school and beyond. These recommendations are designed to improve collaboration, expand access and quality of programs serving children from birth to third grade, and identify and implement policies and practices that will create high quality learning environments for all young children. They are also designed to create a shared vision across early learning and K-12 systems so that all adults working with young children can help advocate for developmentally appropriate, evidence-based policies and practices at all points in a child's educational career." (p.165)

Delaware

Long-term Goals:

- By 2030, decrease the percentage of non-proficient students in each subgroup by 50% on English language arts and mathematics at each grade level (Grades 3 through 8) and on SAT in Grade 11. Goal is a gap-closing methodology.
- By 2030 reduce by 50% the percentage of non-graduating students who do not graduate in four years. The current on-time graduation rate of all students is 84.35% with the long-term goal being 92.1%.

n-size: 15

Indicators and Weights:

ESSA Indicators	**State Category**	**K-8 (Elementary & Middle)**	**9-12 (High)**
Academic Achievement		30%	40%
Academic Progress		40%	
English language Proficiency		10%	10%
Graduation Rate			15%
School Quality or Student Success	Proficiency in Science (5, 8 and 10) Proficiency in Social Studies (4, 7 and High School) Chronic Absenteeism (K-12) College & Career Readiness (High School) % of 9th graders earning a total of 4 or more credits in ELA, math, science, social studies and/or world languages (High School)	20%	35%
		100%	**100%**

Note: Academic Achievement at the high school level is based on SAT. State is considering in the future using PSAT scores to measure Academic Progress at the high school level.

College & Career Readiness: The numerator is the number of 12th grade students who

meet one or more of the following eight college and/or Career Preparedness options divided by the total number of 12th grade students.

College Preparedness Options:

- AP of 3 or better
- IB of 4 or better
- Postsecondary credit attainment with a B or higher
- SAT Benchmark

Career Preparedness Options:

- Delaware Department of Education approved industry credential
- Postsecondary degree credit of B or higher within a state-approved program of study
- Successful completion of an approved co-operative education and/or work-based learning extension
- ASVAB score of 50+

Bonus points are earned if the student meets one college and one career preparedness option.

Under Consideration:

To be reported but not counted include: (p.43-44):

- Suspension/Expulsions for K-12
- Student/teacher/parent Survey (K-12)
- Educator/School Administrator Retention (K012)
- Class Size (K-12)
- Specialist to Student Ratio (Specialists include counselors, librarians, nurses, school psychologists and other school-based specialists)
- Equitable access to Effective Teachers (K-12)
- Postsecondary Outcomes - % of students who enroll in a postsecondary institution within one year after high school graduation.
- Rate of ELP Attainment – Percentage of English language learners who obtain proficiency annually
- Five and six-year graduation rates (High School Only)
- Rate of ELP attainment

Illinois

Long-term goals:

- By 2025, 60% of Illinoisans will have a high-quality degree or postsecondary credential.
- In fifteen years. . .
  - 90% or more of 3rd grade students are reading at or above grade level.
  - 90% or more of 5th grade students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics.
  - 90% or more of 9th grade students are on track to graduate with their cohort.
  - 90% or more of students will graduate from high school ready for college and career.

n-size: 20

Indicators and Weights: 75% of indicator weights are Core Academic Indicators and 25% are Student Success/School Quality Indicators at K-8 and High school levels.

For School Year 2018-19:

ESSA Indicators	**State Category**	**K-8 (Elementary & Middle)**	**9-12 (High)**
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency Math Proficiency	20%	20%
Academic Progress	ELA & Math Growth	50%	
	Science Proficiency	0%	0%
English language proficiency	ELL	5%	5%
Graduation Rate	4-year , 5-Year, and 6-year counts		50%
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	20%	7.5%
	Climate Surveys	5%	5%
	College & Career Readiness		6.25%
	9th Grade on Track		6.25%
		100%	**100%**

For School Year 2019-20:

ESSA Indicators	State Category	K-8 (Elementary & Middle)	9-12 (High)
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency Math Proficiency	15%	15%
Academic Progress	ELA & Math Growth	50%	
	Science Proficiency	5%	5%
English language proficiency	ELL	5%	5%
Graduation Rate	4-year , 5-Year, and6-year counts		50%
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	5 to 10%	0 to 7.5%
	Fine Arts Indicator	0 to 5%	0 to 5%
	Climate Surveys	5%	5%
	P-2 Indicator	5%	
	Elementary/Middle Grade Indicator	5%	
	College & Career Readiness		6.25%
	9th Graders on Track		6.25%

College & Career Readiness –

- One academic indicator in each of the ELA and math during the Junior/Senior year (or Algebra II at any time)

ELA	Math
ELA AP Exam of 3 or higher	Math AP Exam of 3 or higher
ELA AP Course Grade of A, B, or C	Math AP Course Grade of A, B, or C
Dual Credit English Course Grade of A, B, or C	Dual Credit Math Course Grade of A, B, or C
IB ELA Course of A, B, or C	IB Math Course of A, B, or C
IB Exam of 4 or higher	IB Exam of 4 or higher
	Algebra II course grade of A, B or C
Minimum ACT Subject Scores of English 18, Reading 22	Minimum Subject Score of Math 22, + Math in Senior Year
Minimum SAT Subject Score of Evidence-Based Reading and Writing of 480	Minimum SAT Subject Score of Math of 530 in Math in Senior Year

- Identify a career area of interest by the end of the sophomore year
- Minimum of Three Career Ready Indicators during the Junior/Senior Year

- Workplace Learning Experience
- Industry Credential
- Military Service (Including ROTC)
- Dual Credit Career Pathway Course (A, B or C grade)
- Completion of a Program of Study
- Attaining and maintaining consistent employment for a minimum of 12 months
- Consecutive summer employment
- 25 hours of community service
- two or more organized co-curricular activities

Under Consideration:
Illinois wants to allow every 9th grade to take PSAT to have a measure of academic growth in high school.

Fine Arts – to consider the percentage of students enrolled in a fine arts course during the school year. It will receive 0% for the next four school years. During that time a work group will analyze available data to ascertain if/how the indicator can be further refined. (P.48)

9th grade on track – if students earn at least five full-year course credits and no more than one semester F in a core course in their first year of high school.

Climate Survey will address parents, teachers and student's views.

P-2 – Work is underway to investigate the development or identification of a P-2 indicator for inclusion. The workgroup will begin in spring of 2017. (p.57)

Elementary/Middle Grade Indicator – This indicator will be modeled after college/career readiness indicator for high school. Like the college/career readiness indicator that looks at a variety of curriculum, extracurricular, work and military experiences, the Elementary/Middle Grade Indicator would be similar to identify a range of experiences that children undergo during their school that contribute to school success in later grades (e.g., opportunities for acceleration, participation in extracurricular activities). Work is underway to investigate the development and identification of this indicator for inclusion in the system. (p.58)

Louisiana

Long-term Goals:

In setting goals, Louisiana looked at its own state gains on NAEP and at gains made by Massachusetts over the past decade and decided that annual gains of 5% or more are reasonable and can be accomplished.

- Annual improvement targets between 2018 and 2025 that will represent average improvement of 2.5 percentage points per year in student proficiency for all students and for all subgroups.
- By 2025, Louisiana will have a four-year graduation rate of 90%. Furthermore, beginning 2017-18 students not graduating with the state' university preparatory diploma will be required to attain a Jump Start credential to receive a high school diploma. Jump Start centers on the attainment of a high school diploma and a nationally recognized industry-based credential in high demand, high wage fields. (p.12)

n-size: 10

Indicators and Weights:

ESSA Indicators	State Category	Elementary	Middle	High
Academic Achievement		50%	46.67%	20.83%
Academic Progress		25%	25%	
English language proficiency		*	*	*
Graduation Rate				41.67%
School Quality or Student Success	Science & Social Studies	25%	23.33%	4.17%
	Dropout/credit accumulation		5%	
	ACT & WorkKeys			25%
	Strength of Diploma			8.33%
		100%	100%	100%

* ELP is its own measure but weight comes from relationship to academic content assessments.

Dropout/Credit Accumulation Index– Transition from middle school to high school is important. Therefore, as part of its student success indicator for middle schools, schools with an 8th grade are held accountable for the successful transition of students to high school by counting credits earned.

9th Grade Credits Earned	2016-17 Index	2017-18 Index and beyond
7 or more	150	150
6.5	150	125
6.0	150	100
5.5	125	75
5.0	100	50
4.5	75	25
4 or less	50	0
3rd year 8th grader	25	0
Dropout	0	0

ACT/WorkKeys Index – Requires access to the ACXT for all juniors. Additionally, students may take WorkKeys. Student's highest results through their grade 12 year are included in the school's ACT/WorkKeys index, worth 25% of all high school scores.

ACT Composite/WorkKeys	2016-17 Index	2017-18 index and Beyond
0-17	0	0
18/Silver	100	70.0
19	102.8	80.0
20	105.6	90.0
21	108.4	100.0
22	111.2	103.4
23	114	106.8
24/Gold	116.8	110.2
25	119.6	113.6
26	122.4	117.0
27	125,2	120.4
28	128	123.8
29	130.8	127.2
30	133.6	130.6
31/Platinum	136.4	134.0
32	139.2	137.4
33	142	140.8
34	144.8	144.2
35	147.6	147.6
36	150.4	150

Massachusetts

Long-term Goals:

The state is focused on two areas where state performance has been stagnant: (1) early grades literacy; and (2) middle grades math. Focus at high school is to ensure all students have multiple pathways to educational and career opportunities after high school. System focuses on student achievement, growth and graduation data with emphasis on closing gap for historically low-performing subgroups.

1. For all groups and subjects, reduce the proficiency gap by one-third over the next six years.
2. For all groups and subgroups, reduce "graduation gap" by 29% over the next six years.

n-size: 20

Indicators and Weights:

With English Learner Subgroup

ESSA Indicators	State Category	Non-High	High
Academic Achievement		40%	33.3%
Academic Progress		25%	20%
English language proficiency		10%	5%
Graduation Rate			5.8%
School Quality or Student Success	Non-High School: Grades 5, 8 Science Chronic Absenteeism High School: Grade 10 Science; Five-Year Graduation Rate; Annual Dropout Rate; Chronic Absenteeism; Success in grade 9 courses; Successful completion of broad & challenging courses	25%	35.8%
		100%	100%

Without English Learner Subgroup

ESSA Indicators	State Category	Non-High	High
Academic Achievement		40%	33.3%
Academic Progress		30%	25%
English language proficiency			
Graduation Rate			5.8%
School Quality or Student Success	Non-High School: Grades 5, 8 Science Chronic Absenteeism High School: Grade 10 Science; Five-Year Graduation Rate; Annual Dropout Rate; Chronic Absenteeism; Success in grade 9 courses; Successful completion of broad & challenging courses	30%	35.8%
		100%	100%

Under Consideration:

Massachusetts "heard strong support from stakeholders for the inclusion of certain input measures, specifically access to a well-round curriculum including the arts, physical education, advance coursework, computer science, career development education, and other offerings. At least in the initial years of the new accountability system, such input measures are better represented as indicators in a school or district report card so that the information is readily accessible to parents, policymakers, and the public, rather than as indicators in an accountability system." (p.23) To be reported and considered:

- Breadth of curriculum (e.g., access to courses beyond ELA, math, science, history and civics, such as the arts, physical education, computer science, and community service)
- School-level financial allocations and expenditures
- School climate surveys
- Enrolment in career-technical education and other pathways (e.g., early college) as data become available
- Percent of high school graduates achieving the competency determination without needing Educational Proficiency Plans
- Preparedness for post-secondary success, including access to advanced coursework
- Percent of 3rd achieving proficiency in reading
- Percent of 6th graders achieving proficiency in mathematics
- Data related to pre-kindergarten experience/readiness for kindergarten

Tennessee

Long-term Goals:

1. Tennessee will rank in the top half of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by 2019.
2. 75 percent of third graders will be proficient in reading by 2025.
3. The average ACT composite score in Tennessee will be a 21 by 2020.
4. The majority of high school graduates from the class of 2020 will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree.

n-size: 30

Indicators and Weights:

ESSA Indicators	State Category	K-8	High
Academic Achievement		30%	23%
Academic Progress		35%	25%
English language proficiency		10%	10%
Graduation Rate			5%
School Quality or Student Success	Science	15%	7%
	Ready Graduate		20%
	Chronically Out of School	10%	10%
		100%	100%

Chronically Out of School – Tennessee will use chronic absenteeism as the metric, defined as a student missing 10 percent or more school days that a student is enrolled. Students who are absent or suspended out of school will also be included in the metrics. Students that serve in school suspension are not included, whereas students suspended out of school are considered absent.

Ready Graduate – This is indicator defines four "checks" for evidence that graduates have demonstrated postsecondary, military, and workforce readiness and is calculated as the Graduation Rate multiplied by the percent of students who:

- Score a 21 or higher on SAT/SAT equivalent **OR**
- Complete 4 Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) **OR**
- Complete 2 EPSOs + earn industry certification (in approved CTE program of study) **OR**
- Complete 2 EPSOs + scoring state-determined designated score on the ASVAB.

Under Consideration:
Tennessee will also incorporate "transparency metrics" to provide additional information to all stakeholders.

- Postsecondary matriculate - % of graduates that matriculate into a postsecondary program (4-year, 2-year or credential) the fall fallowing high school graduation
- Postsecondary completion - % of graduates that complete postsecondary program within 6 years of high school graduation
- Equitable access to highly effective teachers - % of students below levee with access to highly effective teachers compared to the percent of mastered level students with access
- Teacher retention - % of teachers retained/continuing to teach within the district and state
- Types of early postsecondary opportunities offered(EPSO) – Data system is being developed to determine how many students earned: (1) EPSP credit; (2) EPSO course; (3) two or more EPSO courses and earning recognized industry credential; (4) four or more EPSO., etc.
- Students earning industry credential
- Extended cohort graduation (5-years)
- Exclusionary Discipline -% of students not in class due to all exclusionary disciplinary practices (e.g. in school suspension)
- Long-term English learners - % of students identified as long-term English learners

For future years, Tennessee is looking at other metrics: (p.61)

- Teacher chronic absences
- Educator Effectiveness data
- Work based Learning
- Capstone Completion - % of students participating and completing a work-based learning capstone
- Student mobility –number of students entering, reentering withdrawing after the first day of schools
- Students participating in at least one extracurricular activity

Vermont

Long-term Goals:

1. By 2025 100 percent of schools will have 100 percent of students meeting annual progress toward English language proficiency.
2. By 2025, 100 percent of schools will have 100 percent of students graduating in 6 years and 90 percent of students graduating in 4 years.
3. By 2025, 100% of schools will show an average scale score that is the midpoint of proficiency range for each grade level for math and English.
4. By 2025 100 percent of schools will have 100 percent of students in the health score or making progress towards the healthy zone.

n-size: 25 over three years (8 students per year)

Indicators and Weights:

ESSA Indicators	State Category	Non-High	High
Academic Achievement		70%	40%
Academic Progress			
English language proficiency		10%	10%
Graduation Rate			20%
School Quality or Student Success	Science	10%	5%
	College & Career Readiness secondary outcomes		20%
	Physical Education	10%	5%
		100%	100%

College and Career Readiness – Two indicators will be averaged to create a single indicator.

Indicator 1: Based on students' performance in school and on examinations:

- ACT Composite of 21
- SAT of 480 on reading and writing and 530 on mathematics AP score of 3 or higher
- IB Score of 24 points or higher
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Assessments Score of 50 or higher
- ASVAB from 31 to 36
- Industry Recognized Credential

Indicator 2: Are alumni participating in career and college outcomes within 16 months of graduation?

Physical Education – a new assessment is being developed SCALE to measure student's % of students who are assesses as being within a Presidential Youth Fitness Program-aligned "health zone: and parentage of students who are assessed as making sufficient progress towards that "health zone."

Revisions to the ESSA Accountability Plan proposed by the South Carolina Department of Education

Recommendation 1 – Effective 2017-18

Include ALL AP and IB courses in the College and Career Ready metrics. The EOC recommendation only includes AP and IB courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies, which excludes college level courses in the arts, technology, and world languages where students take examinations and earn passing scores that lead to college credit. These courses are not only key facets of the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*, they are also rigorous college-level courses that integrate reading, writing, mathematics, and social science knowledge within the disciplines. They also represent fields of study where students can obtain viable skills that lead to careers in the state, nation, and world.

Recommendation 2 – Effective 2017-18

In the career readiness metric for CATE completers with an industry credential, allow for 1) a national or state-recognized industry certification, or 2) a successful state-approved work-based learning exit evaluation from an employer, or 3) a state-approved end-of-pathway assessment to document career-readiness (Example: *Precision Exams*, *KOSSA* assessments, or other end-of-course assessments across CATE programs that document technical skill attainment). Southern Regional Education Board published *A Blueprint for College Readiness: Incorporating Measures of Career Readiness* where they document and endorse several states' approaches to validating authentic career readiness. All three options listed above were praised and are in use in other states. For example, Georgia allows both national and state-recognized industry certifications as well as work-based learning employee evaluations to document career readiness. Kentucky also uses state-approved, end-of-course exams entitled the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (***KOSSA***). The CATE programs in South Carolina that do not have a nationally-recognized industry credential include Cosmetology and Agriculture.

Recommendation 3 – Effective 2017-18

Include social studies dual credit/enrollment courses in the courses that count for college readiness if a student earns a C or higher. The current EOC recommendation only includes English, mathematics, science, engineering and technology dual credit/enrollment courses to be counted for college-ready. There is no research to support the notion that college-level courses in history/social sciences are less rigorous, valuable, or viable for a student's intellectual development and global awareness. The *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* specifically names the social sciences in the world class knowledge we expect students to attain. Additionally, AP and IB social studies/social science courses are already approved in the college ready metrics.

Recommendation 4 – Effective 2018-19

Include a college and career readiness metric that is aligned to the outcomes of the SC Employability Credential and IDEA for students with moderate to severe disabilities to demonstrate career readiness aligned to their IEP goals and career transition plans. Although these students represent a statistically small population in South Carolina, they should be able to work in ways that are meaningful to them to become career ready. Career preparation is a central part of their high school curriculum, but the appropriate metrics to measure career readiness for these students are not a part of the four "career-ready" metrics in the current EOC proposal. Documentation of career readiness should include:

- ✓ A career portfolio that includes a multimedia presentation project;
- ✓ Work readiness assessment results that demonstrate the student is ready for competitive employment;

- ✓ Work-based learning/training that totals at least 360 hours

Recommendation 5 – Effective 2018-19

Develop a Student Success metric for elementary and middle school that measures student participation, progress and/or mastery in non-tested subjects aligned to the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. ESSA explicitly describes the expectation that students have access to a well-rounded education. The EOC recommendation for elementary and middle schools does not reflect opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and proficiency outside of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. This metric should include:

- ✓ Documented student participation and "meets or exceeds expectations" performance levels in Arts, Technology and/or STEM, World languages, Physical Education, and/or Character Education

Recommendation 6 – Effective 2018-19

Include a School Quality metric that documents continuous improvement initiatives and/or high quality curricular programs (*STEM, STEAM, Arts in Basic Curriculum, Primary Years International Baccalaureate Programme*, etc.) for schools that receive externally-validated scores on national or international program evaluation rubrics. First, schools and districts are intensely involved in continuous improvement initiatives that focus on specific priorities identified within the school and district and externally recommended by external review teams. School quality is documented by an external team on an international rubric across five high leverage standards of quality including mission and vision, governance and leadership, teaching and learning, resource management, continuous improvement which lead to a district Index of Educational Quality (IEQ) Score. Districts with higher IEQ scores indicate that the system is working to create the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning. Second, the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* highlights world class skills (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, collaboration and teamwork, communication, and knowing how to learn) and world class characteristics (integrity, self-direction, global perspective, perseverance, work ethic, interpersonal skills). Student focus groups in South Carolina identified that students gain these skills and dispositions through project-based learning and other engaging curricular programs that are deeply embedded into the school instructional program. Students also gain these skills and dispositions through participation in extra-curricular, co-curricular, and athletic programs. Suggestions for this metric include:

- ✓ Differentiated points could be distributed using accreditation or school improvement scores (Ex. AdvancED rating) that are *at or above the state average*. The district IEQ score, which is a compilation of <u>each</u> school's rating, is compared to the state and national IEQ average.

- ✓ Initiatives, such as STEM certification, Arts in Basic Curriculum, Primary Years and Middle Years International Baccalaureate Programme, Lighthouse Status for Leader in Me, Learning Forward Designation, Partial Immersion Programs, etc. use external teams to validate high levels of curricular implementation in the school.

- ✓ Other student-centered measures of school quality can be obtained by analyzing the unduplicated student participation in a wide range of academic clubs and competitions, service learning programs, sports, and co-curricular programs.

III. Action Item:

Accountability Recommendations:

Written Feedback

November 7, 2017

Dear Members of the Education Oversight Committee,

In reference to the six proposed revisions by the SC Department of Education to South Carolina's ESSA plan, our organization would like to take this opportunity to provide feedback. We support the following revisions to the state's ESSA plan:

Recommendation 1: Include all AP and IB courses in the College and Career Ready metrics.

As one of the 4 core curriculum areas, Social Studies AP and IB courses should definitely be included in the metrics for indicating College and Career Readiness.

Recommendation 3: Include Social Studies dual credit/ enrollment courses in the measure for College Readiness if a student earns a C or higher.

The premise behind offering dual credit enrollment courses for students is to provide them the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school. If students successfully pass dual enrollment courses in the discipline of Social Studies with a "C" or higher, these courses are accepted for and applied as college credit.

We support a well-rounded and more comprehensive educational experience for all South Carolina students. If additional information is needed, please contact Chanda Robinson (chanda.robinson@richlandone.org), President of the SC Social Studies Supervisors Association.

Sincerely,
SCSSSA Members

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Subcommittee: **Academic Standards and Assessments and Public Awareness**

Date: **November 20, 2017**

ACTION:
Design of School Report Card - Implementation of Act 94 of 2017

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
Section 59-19-900 of the Education Accountability Act (EAA) as amended by Act 94 of 2017 requires the Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, to establish the format of the annual State, school and district report cards.

CRITICAL FACTS
EOC staff is working with staff of the South Carolina Department of Education to design the report card.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
An implementation timeline needs to be developed to ensure that the 2018 report cards will be issued by November 15, 2018.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: No fiscal impact beyond current appropriations

Fund/Source:

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**

☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

Design of School Report Card

Statutory Authority:

Pursuant to Act 94 of 2017, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), working with the State Board of Education, is directed to design the format of the annual State, district and school report cards.

> "Section 59-18-900. (A) The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish the format of a comprehensive, web-based, annual report card, to report on the performance for the State and for individual primary, elementary, middle, high schools, career centers, and school districts of the State. The comprehensive report card must be in a reader-friendly format, using graphics whenever possible, published on the state, district, and school website, and, upon request, printed by the school districts. The school's rating must be emphasized and an explanation of its meaning and significance for the school also must be reported. The annual report card must serve at least six purposes:
>
> (1) inform parents and the public about the school's performance including, but not limited to, that on the home page of the report there must be each school's overall performance rating in a font size larger than twenty-six and the total number of points the school achieved on a zero to one hundred scale;
> (2) assist in addressing the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school;
> (3) recognize schools with high performance;
> (4) evaluate and focus resources on schools with low performance;
> (5) meet federal report card requirements; and
> (6) document the preparedness of high school graduates for college and career."

The report card must include a comprehensive set of performance indicators with information on comparisons, trends, needs, and performance over time which is helpful

to parents and the public in evaluating the school. In addition, the comprehensive report card must include indicators that meet federal and state law requirements. Special efforts are to be made to ensure that the information contained in the report card is provided in an easily understood manner and a reader-friendly format. This information should also provide a context for the performance of the school. Where appropriate, the data should yield disaggregated results to schools and districts in planning for improvement. The report card should include information in such areas as programs and curriculum, school leadership, community and parent support, faculty qualifications, evaluations of the school by parents, teachers, and students. In addition, the report card must contain other criteria including, but not limited to, information on promotion and retention ratios, disciplinary climate, dropout ratios, dropout reduction data, dropout retention data, access to technology, student and teacher ratios, and attendance data.

The school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than November fifteenth for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years. To further increase transparency and accountability, for the 2018-2019 School Year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than October first. For the 2019-2020 School Year, and every subsequent year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than September first.

Background

EOC staff person Dana Yow was asked to attend the Council of Chief School State Officers (CCSSO) meeting October 25-26 in Cary, North Carolina by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) staff person, Dan Ralyea. SCDE Chief Communications Officer Ryan Brown attended the meeting as well. The meeting, *Communicating Performance: Reporting in the Age of ESSA,* allowed teams from 40 states and two United States territories to develop state and school-based report cards aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that effectively communicate the performance of schools across the state.

The stated meeting objectives were:

- To convene state teams to develop an action plan for their state to successfully develop and release state and school report cards;
- To support states in engaging stakeholders to inform the development of state and school report cards; and
- To provide state teams with deeper knowledge on how to develop state and school report cards that more effectively communicate with key audiences.

Key takeaways from CCSSO meeting

- State departments of education are moving away from being compliance-driven to becoming a resource for parents and families. Very few states see the report cards as tools for the education community. The parent-friendly report cards discussed at the meeting incorporate many of the elements from parent and community focus groups held in South Carolina: no acronyms; links to information when users want to "go deeper"; and availability of school safety information in a prominent place.

- Because states are required to use online report card portals and dashboards, states *can* create tools that are ESSA-compliant but are also friendly to non-educator users.

- While ESSA has increased flexibility for states, it has also increased accountability and data requirements and forced states to take a "systems view" to approach projects like the publication of the state report card. Now, states must develop report cards that meet the needs of stakeholders rather than meet federal demands.

- States like Oregon and Wisconsin are building parent-friendly pages specifically designed for what parents and community members want to see and know about schools. CCSSO recommends that all states consider this strategy. Oregon is conducting statewide focus groups with already-formed groups to find out what information is meaningful to parents and community members and more importantly, what is actionable. The intent is not to shame schools, but encourage action by producing high interest, high value reports. The report card should be a diagnostic tool, not a "gotcha" tool. Data should not be displayed in a punitive way; it is designed to inform.

- There is a potential danger in creating different audience tabs on a report card site. States must be careful not to create a different narrative for every audience; this strategy could negatively impact trust in the validity of the information.

- The majority of states are contracting out the website design and construction for the school report cards rather than building the system internally. States have instituted protocols that protect any personally identifiable student information. Some states are using private philanthropic money through their involvement with Chiefs for Change, an independent 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Some states

are using SAS; eight states are currently working with Tembo who designed a parent-friendly prototype site for Learning Heroes.

- Branding is important. Oregon has called its plan "The Oregon Plan Under ESSA". Again, it is about taking ownership of your individual state plan.

- CCSSO highlighted Ohio and Indiana as states with exemplar school report card designs. The initial landing page prototype developed by the EOC used Ohio as a model.

- Ongoing feedback is also critical. Some states, Kentucky and Hawaii, have integrated online surveys to determine how to improve their report card model. Iowa is conducting as well as Indiana, which used private foundations to pay for the costs.

- Accessibility is critical. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance specifies that color alone cannot be used to denote performance and tables cannot be used to display data.

- Some states, like Wisconsin, are using data from the report cards to tell stories to communicate effectively with various audiences. Wisconsin has an in-house team that use data points to tell the stories.

- Need to develop a Theory of Action related to public reporting. What do parents need to know in order to advocate? What do you expect parents to do with report cards? What do the activities look like? What is the empowerment and how can parents inform change? How does the student report card fit in with the school report card? TN is doing some work around this.

- Learning Heroes is helping states by researching parent mindsets. From their work, 70 focus groups in 23 states, Learning Heroes has determined the following:
    - Parents are hungry for information to help them talk to teachers and principals. They want hands-on tools as well as information specific to their child. For a parent, n size is their child.
    - 90% of all parents believe that their child is performing well in school, and 75% of all parents think their school is good or excellent.
    - Context is everything. States need to be overt with data.

- Parents do not understand why disaggregated data are published. They believe that the data shame, discriminate, categorize, etc. students. States must find a way to communicate a positive message concerning what disaggregated data show and why the data are important.

EOC Staff Recommendations:

(1) The EOC will continue to work closely with SCDE staff and the State Board of Education to ensure the development and the continuous improvement of the report card data portal, to be published in November 2018.

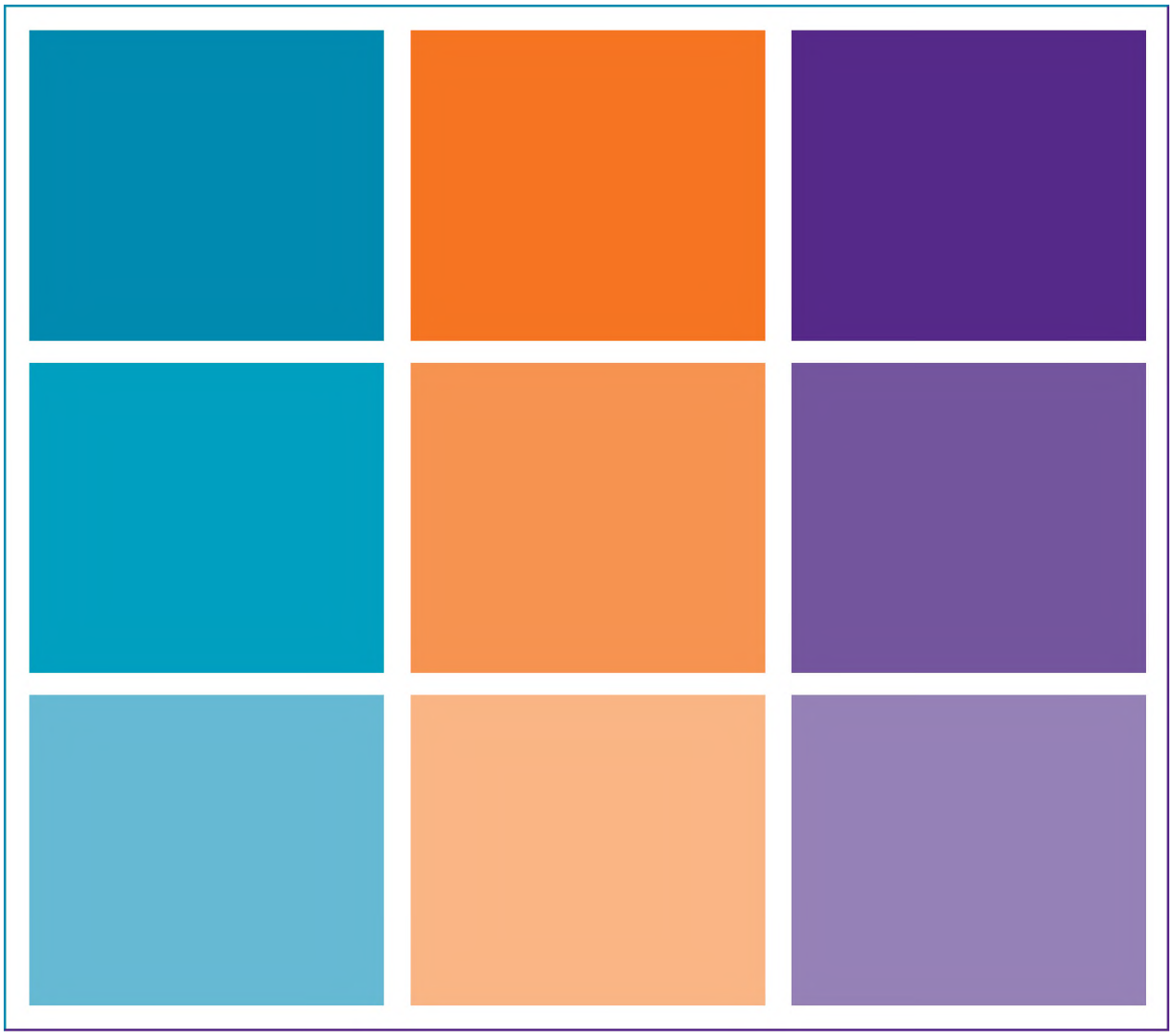
(2) To meet the statutory requirement, the EOC staff recommends that EOC Public Awareness Subcommittee, staff and external assistance, as needed, establish a "parent-friendly" report card and all associated materials. The EOC staff will work with SCDE staff to ensure the data elements are available and accessible. The parent-friendly materials will be available on the comprehensive SC School Report Card website, which will be a separate URL (i.e., www.scschoolreportcard.org), but will be linked to both the EOC and SCDE sites.

(3) The EOC will also work to identify existing stakeholder groups that can help further guide the development of the design and structure of the report card portal as well as help develop a theory of action on the reporting of schools.

(4) The EOC staff, working with the Public Awareness Subcommittee, the SCDE, and the State Board of Education, will develop a design and construction phase along with a timeline for implementation for creation of the new state report card. Using public input, the EOC will be tasked with providing direction on the design and structure of the report cards and the portal they reside on while the SCDE is tasked with ensuring compliance with ESSA and ADA and the creation of the portal itself.

October 2017

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers



Communicating Performance: A Best Practices Resource for Developing State Report Cards

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

Communicating Performance: A Best Practices Resource for Developing State Report Cards

COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State report cards should help families, educators, policymakers, and other critical stakeholders in your state understand and act on education information for schools, school districts, and your state as a whole. While each state finds itself in a different place regarding its own progress in building state report cards with such an impact, emerging research and best practices can inform all states as they engage in continuous improvement for state report cards.

This resource proposes considerations to state education leaders – key questions to ask along with emerging research and best practices that can inform the answers. The considerations encompass the following areas:

- Feedback and engagement strategies,
- Data and content,
- Development and sustainability.

Communicating Performance: A Best Practices Resource for Developing State Report Cards is intended to inform your next steps regardless of where your state is in the journey to build state report cards that deepen understanding and inform action among key stakeholder groups. It is also intended to help states build on progress made through implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to engage diverse stakeholders.

This resource should help your state meet the following the goals:

- Tie the state report card to your state's **theory of action** to improve education outcomes by identifying priority users of the report card and the actions the report card should inform.
- Evolve the way the state report card displays data by moving beyond data tables to visualizations that help tell **stories** that users will remember.
- Build buy-in and use among users by deploying multiple **engagement** mechanisms such as advisory groups, town hall meetings, presentations, and communicating updates through the state's website.
- Improve users' experience with and understanding of the data by gleaning specific **feedback** on current state report cards; draft "wireframes" that show how new report card pages could be structured; draft visualizations including text, colors, and pictograms; and potential elements of functionality.
- Assure users that data included in the state report card are technically defensible and meet the highest standards of **quality,** and that **privacy** is safeguarded.
- **Sustain** momentum to keep improving the state report card – to answer more and better questions, to build in functionality that users need, and to ensure the state has the resources and support to do so.

INTRODUCTION

State leaders invest considerable time and resources in building and enhancing state report cards designed to help parents, educators, policymakers, and other critical stakeholders understand education information for schools, school districts, and for the state as a whole.[1] They do so in the context of their broader strategies for public reporting, communication, and engagement, which include numerous avenues for communicating with parents, educators, policymakers, and other critical stakeholders. Report cards should be one of the most accessible ways for such stakeholders to glean information to make good decisions. Providing information to the public on how all groups of students are performing academically and ensuring all groups of students have access to essential resources for learning are key tools for parents and community groups in making important decisions for their children.

At a minimum, state report cards are meant to ensure basic transparency, providing high-quality education data and information to the public in an accessible format. Report cards inform families, educators, and policymakers of the progress a state, and schools within a state, has made toward the state's goals. They reflect a state's openness to communicate with credible data and information. Report cards should also go beyond this minimum aim of transparency, deepening understanding about the state's public education system and informing actions that serve to improve the education of all students in the state. Report cards can help all stakeholders, especially families, understand what the data mean and why these data are valuable.

In recent years, several states and partner organizations have been taking more intentional steps to find what it takes to build and enhance report cards that meet the dual purposes of transparency and informing actions. With their leadership, they have contributed to a growing research base, lessons learned, and exemplars to inform their own next steps as well as those of states just starting out.

The purpose of this resource is to share emerging research and best practices with state education agency leaders, helping you think through key decisions in all phases of state report card development and continuous improvement. The considerations encompass feedback and engagement strategies, data and content, design and structure, and development and sustainability. They are intended to inform your next steps regardless of where your state is in the journey to build state report cards that deepen understanding and inform action among key stakeholder groups. This resource is intended to complement the State Guide to Building Online School Report Cards, along with other guidance documents for states. Please see the appendix for a full list of resources.

1 This resource is focused on the public, online dynamic, or static "report cards" that state education agencies (SEAs) produce to communicate data and information to the public at the school, school district, and state levels. The best practices it contains may be applicable to other forms of public reporting. They may also be applicable to reporting that is not provided to the public, such as student-level report cards or assessment reports that are accessible by families and educators.

ESSA AND BEYOND: USING REPORT CARDS TO MEET STATE GOALS

State leaders can harness opportunities to make dramatic progress in the effectiveness of state report cards as they implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Implementation can provide an opportunity for you to gain momentum or learn from and continue to act on the specific insights gleaned about effective stakeholder engagement and feedback through recent efforts to engage a wide variety of stakeholders through your state's ESSA development processes. ESSA is a starting point – it should not restrict your commitment to improving your statewide systems of public reporting.

You can learn from ways the public reporting field has evolved to make data indicators actionable, to design for understanding and use, and to optimize the functionality of report cards to help users access the information they need in the way that is most useful for them. As a result, state leaders will not only enhance transparency of information, but will better position state report cards as key levers in each state's theory of action to meet ambitious education goals for all students.

To do so, each state will need to identify within its theory of action, who uses the report cards, what actions they take as a result of the information they find, and how they need to see the information to maximize their understanding and use. Your state may tether the state report card to the overall theory of action driving the state's accountability system, prioritizing a report card that simply communicates accountability indicators and results. You may prefer, however, to devise a theory of action for the state report card that goes well beyond this scope. For example, your state may prioritize building a report card designed to illuminate data and information about key transition points for students across their educational journeys, spurring school and community action to focus on strengthening these critical points to help more students succeed. It is essential to ensure that state leaders have a shared understanding of the theory of action before work to build the report card begins.

Figure 1 provides an example of how a state may specify the primary users for the report card and the priority actions they hope will be taken by each user as a result of the information. In this example, the state has chosen to differentiate each aggregation level of the report card (state, school district [or LEA], and school) by the *primary* users for the information at each level. Following ongoing feedback and engagement with the identified groups, the state will be able to customize the data elements and display to meet the needs of each audience.

This exercise is intended to make sure each level of the state report card has its "best fit" with the primary audience, but doing so should not lead to "information silos." In education, audiences are not easily segmented. Individuals fit within multiple stakeholder groups. For example, the chair of a state legislature's education committee may also be an educator and a parent. As well, we want to make sure different user groups can use the state report card to communicate with one another – teachers need access to the same information that families have, for instance, to facilitate strong communication.

Figure 1: How state report cards can support a state's theory of action

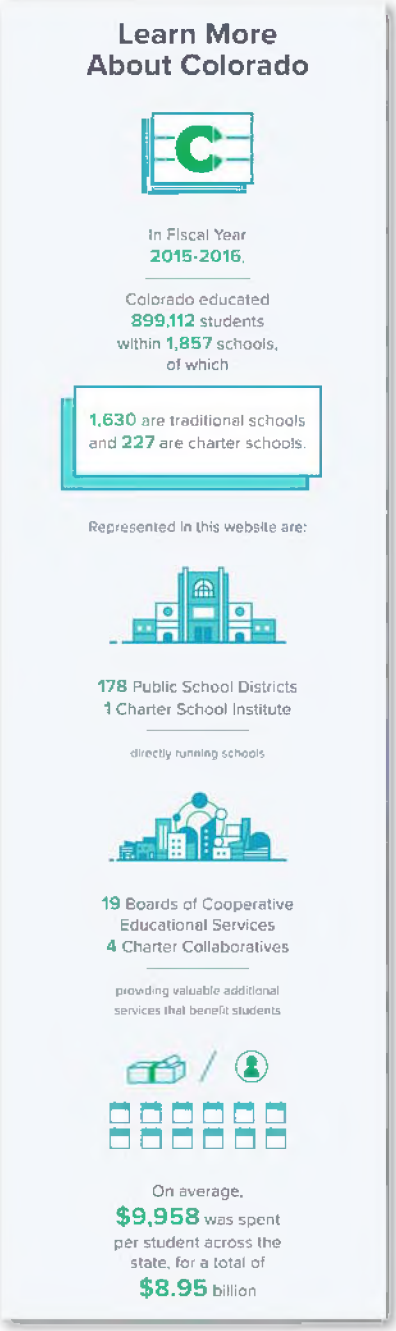
Level of Aggregation	Primary Users	Priority Actions
State	State policy leaders (e.g., state board members, legislators, governor, SEA leaders)	1. Communicate and rally support for state goals for student performance and equity 2. Evaluate progress to meet these state goals and celebrate progress that is made 3. Identify bright spots, emerging trends, and patterns such as gaps among student groups 4. Highlight areas needing improvement or targeted resources 5. Build public capacity to use education data
School district (or LEA)	1. Local policy leaders (e.g., school board, mayor, superintendent) 2. Business, community, faith leaders	1. Evaluate progress to meet state and local goals 2. Identify bright spots and emerging trends, and develop the means to learn and share from districts experiencing success with student groups of concern 3. Prioritize local resources 4. Inform community supports and partnerships 5. Illuminate and address equity issues 6. Mobilize communities to improve education 7. Understand how a district is performing within the state and among districts with similar demographics and establish connections
School	1. Families 2. Educators 3. Community partners	1. Answer priority questions from families about their child's education 2. Benchmark similar or nearby schools 3. Monitor progress to meet goals for overall improvement and equity aims 4. Plan school improvement efforts 5. Help families contact and engage with the school

Given advances in technology and heightened understanding about how to optimize user experience, states also have an opportunity to transform how information is communicated in the report cards. In recent years, the field has made great advancements in evolving beyond tables of data to charts that illuminate patterns and trends, and then to visualizations and infographics that present data in ways that are user-friendly and easy for stakeholders to understand. Ultimately, your state has an opportunity to drive understanding and use of information by using data, words, and pictures to tell stories (Figure 2). Stories have a structure – a beginning, middle, and end – that *people are more likely to learn, remember, and share with others.* Stories have the power to shift perceptions and prompt actions.

Figure 2: Evolution of data presentation

Tables → Charts → Visualizations → Infographics → Telling stories through data

Figure 3: Colorado fiscal reporting infographic



Amended in 2014, the Colorado Public School Financial Transparency Act requires the Colorado Department of Education to publish a financial transparency website that makes user-friendly information about school and district expenditures available to the general public. The public website became available on June 30, 2017. In addition to providing visually-appealing expenditure ("spending") information for schools, and revenue ("funding") and expenditure information for districts, the site includes narratives from district leaders to give context for the school and district. The state also tells its own story through the fiscal reporting infographic in Figure 3 below.

ESSA acknowledges this evolution, encouraging states to raise the bar in how they leverage report cards for educational improvement. The statute sets detailed requirements for state report cards (see appendix). Non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) in January 2017 provides suggestions for both content and the way states engage with their residents.[2] It directs states to engage a broad set of stakeholders in the report card development process, including those who may not traditionally have a seat at the table. It instructs states in ways to ensure accessibility of the information, from use of color to translations. The statute requires states to give users the ability to dive deeper into assessment data through cross-tabulations. Finally, it specifies not only a set of required data elements,[3] but descriptions to help users make sense of the policy context behind the information.

2 The non-regulatory guidance that pertains to ESSA statutory language remains applicable, but portions that pertain to the accountability and State Plan final regulations affected by the resolution of disapproval from Congress are not applicable.

3 ESSA-required data elements include 1) ESSA accountability indicators; 2) state and LEA data collected through the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC); 3) educator qualifications; 4) state performance on NAEP; 5) per-pupil expenditures; and 6) postsecondary enrollment rates by high school.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATES BUILDING AND ENHANCING REPORT CARDS

FEEDBACK AND ENGAGEMENT

When developing their state report card, states should first consider how they will lead with feedback and engagement as an initial and *ongoing* component of their report card development and continuous improvement cycle. Doing so will ensure that the report card is grounded in its purposes to ensure transparency as well as support strategic actions that lead to educational improvements. As states have learned through stakeholder engagement and feedback strategies in developing their ESSA plans, starting engagement early with specific opportunities for feedback builds buy-in and ownership by allowing stakeholders to be part of the process. Too often, feedback and engagement are sought only after there is a solid draft or prototype for potential users to review. While the instinct to wait until there is something to respond to is well-intentioned, it increases the likelihood that the feedback will be too narrow, missing "big picture" insights that should have been surfaced earlier in the process. Engaging users early in the process also creates opportunities for stakeholder ownership and buy-in. They will likely feel more compelled to use and spread the word about the tool if they felt involved in its creation.

Ongoing feedback ensures that the report card focuses on its purpose and the needs of users, encouraging the full range of primary users to take informed action. Feedback from stakeholders[4] and users *at all phases* of development is critical to make sure the report card provides clear and accurate data, effective design and content, and the functionality users need. Clearly, feedback will illuminate how user needs for data, design, and functionality vary, and states will need to consider how to differentiate user experiences to meet those needs. In some cases, technology may make it possible to embed feedback tools into the report card, through back-end analytic reporting on user behavior, but also by encouraging users to comment on what they see.

Engagement ensures that the report card will reach its intended audiences – and, in turn, helps deepen understanding of how to read and use the report card data. By building buy-in among key constituencies, it lays the foundation for sustainability of the state's public reporting strategies. As such, states should engage early and often with state leadership (e.g. governor, legislature, state board of education), local district and school leaders, business and community leaders, and teacher, family, and student groups.

As states craft feedback and engagement plans, they should consider the following questions:

1. ***Who should be involved?*** The plan identifies all those who need to be involved in the process.

Primary users: As outlined on page 3, the priority for states is to identify the primary users of the report cards for initial and ongoing feedback, such as families (who represent a broad range of perspectives), educators, administrators, and state and local policy leaders. In many cases, you will

4 Please see appendix for a list of potential stakeholders within and external to the SEA.

need to build or strengthen new relationships to effectively engage individuals, especially those who have traditionally been disadvantaged or marginalized. It is critical that the engagement plan include outreach to existing partners and champions, like the PTA, but that it also extends beyond that to solicit feedback from those whose voices are not often heard or who don't regularly engage in dialogue with the SEA. In its guidance, USED highlights the need for states to be intentional about engaging those who "traditionally may be left out." As such, you may consider building partnerships with agencies or organizations in your state with reach and credibility with traditionally under-engaged groups. For example, in **Louisiana**, EdNavigators, a non-profit founded by a group of educators and families, is partnering with employers to reach and engage directly with families in New Orleans. It is also providing guidance so that they can make informed decisions about their children's school experiences, including providing assistance in using data included from student and school-level report cards. It has also led family meetings on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Education to vet improvements in the state report card.

- **Champions:** The second priority is to identify those whose ongoing guidance and support are critical for buy-in. In some cases, these will also be primary users. It is likely, however, that some groups that may not rise to the top as primary users could be a high priority to engage to ensure buy-in and sustainability. For example, **Delaware** has benefited from high-level leadership from the governor's office on the redesign of its report card. In other states, district leaders have stepped into the role as champions for the state report card. Finally, some states have cultivated champions from across the SEA, as well as other state agencies (e.g., P-20 longitudinal data system staff, higher education coordinating body, workforce development, health and human services).

- **Technical advisors:** Your state's technical advisory group for assessment and accountability, and other advisors with expertise in educational measurement, will also play a role in evaluating reports to ensure they are technically defensible.

The **District of Columbia** found success in creating a formal reporting partnership across agencies (District of Columbia Public Schools, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board) to develop and deploy its Equity Reports.

2. ***At what points should they be involved?*** State should create a transparent process and timeline for development, clearly highlighting opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the process. It is helpful for states to be explicit about windows of opportunity for feedback during the process. States should involve users and champions **early** and at **multiple points** in the development and continuous improvement cycle of the state report card.

   - **Gathering requirements:** There are many ways to start getting feedback early in the process to develop requirements. The team driving the project should be able to gather feedback through a series of facilitated sessions, and synthesize it into both technical and user requirements. Those can then be tested again, but the work of creating the requirements documentation does not happen with stakeholder groups.

States have an opportunity to begin user research as requirements are being gathered – for instance, they can work to get feedback on the current state report card site or other similar sites. As requirements can be about design, structure, data, content, and functionality, it will be important to differentiate which groups might be best suited to develop which type of requirement. **North Carolina** gathered requirements from state board of education members, legislators, and representatives from stakeholder groups including business, community, families, and educators. They worked with them in small groups with facilitators to get feedback to develop requirements for reporting measures.

- **Design and content development:** States are engaging families, educators, and other users in the process of designing and developing content for state report cards. **New Mexico**, to honor the state's "fundamental belief that our families and taxpayers have a right to know how their children and their schools are doing," led community meetings during the 2015-16 school year to learn about families' understanding of report cards. As a result, the state simplified and clarified language in the report card and has begun a process to update the report cards to enhance understanding and usability. **Michigan** is in the process of developing a transparency dashboard, designed with families as the primary audience. The intent is to use both traditional and non-traditional indicators to provide a more comprehensive picture of schools. The development process has included parent focus groups and surveys to make sure that the data reported are meaningful and understandable to parents.

- **Building, testing, and launch:** Early and frequent engagement and feedback lay the groundwork for launch and outreach. An emerging best practice across states is to keep stakeholders informed throughout the development process. **Delaware** has a webpage with updates about its report card launch. States are also advancing ways to more deeply engage users and champions in the testing process prior to launch. In **Georgia**, state leaders select school districts to test new features of its report card. This strategy not only improves the functionality of the system, it broadens ownership. **Delaware** also engages primary users in testing prior to launch through an actual working website behind a firewall.

The Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with national civil rights, advocacy groups and organizations that represent historically underserved communities, developed "Let's Get this Conversation Started," a comprehensive guide to stakeholder engagement in June 2016. The guide detailed 10 key steps to authentic, meaningful stakeholder engagement:

Getting Started

1. Clarify your goals
2. Work with partner organizations to identify and engage with your stakeholders

Engaging Stakeholders

3. Speak to your audience
4. Use multiple vehicles
5. Identify your best ambassadors
6. Ask for input before decisions are made, and use it
7. Keep your materials simple and brief
8. Communicate early and often
9. Keep your team informed

Sustaining Engagement

10. Turn these new connections into long-term relationships

A report card prototype that Tembo developed with Learning Heroes includes functionality that allows users to submit comments directly into the prototype. In both examples, the building and testing processes are iterative.

- **Sustainability and enhancement:** Feedback and engagement must continue far after launch. States can use a variety of mechanisms to create feedback loops with stakeholders to help continue improving the site to help it meet its goals (see below). It is also an important opportunity to build capacity among primary users at the state and local level.

3. ***How should they be involved?*** The plan should identify a variety of mechanisms for feedback and engagement with careful attention to timing and location to maximize access and convenience for participants.

   - **Selecting mechanisms**: States have a number of options for mechanisms to use for feedback and engagement, and these mechanisms *differ in their potential to heighten engagement and provide precise feedback*. Figure 4 suggests how several common mechanisms vary according to their potential for feedback and engagement. These mechanisms also come with specific benefits and challenges. Some mechanisms will be great opportunities for feedback (1:1 interviews), but would not engage many people, while others (town halls) would engage many people, but would not be great for feedback. States may want to determine the most appropriate balance of these types of engagement mechanisms. Figure 5 addresses several of these, along with considerations for states that choose specific mechanisms.

   - **Planning for access:** For in-person mechanisms such as town halls and focus groups, states should take care to ensure that the time and location lend themselves to wide participation. For example, states should consider offering various times (day, evening, weekend) for family sessions, and offering child care, meals, and translation services. The sessions should also be held at a variety of geographic locations around the state and within large cities. As part of the development process that led to **Ohio's** new report card in 2015, state officials made 23 trips across the state to seek feedback on the Ohio School Report Card, bringing materials tailored to each site. Where possible, neutral, community-based locations should be selected to ensure all participants feel welcome. CCSSO's Let's Keep This Conversation Going Guide offers an array of engagement strategies and successful state examples. All of the strategies represent ways that SEAs can transform their current approach to engagement into a series of impactful efforts to reach, engage and build lasting relationships with all stakeholders.

   - **Preparing for success:** To maximize their impact for the report card process, and ensure participants have positive experiences, state leaders should plan time to prepare fully for feedback and engagement sessions. For sessions seeking feedback, a clear protocol should be developed – and reviewed – in advance.[5] For sessions emphasizing engagement, it is essential to agree on the key messages and the most effective messengers to deliver them. Regardless of the primary purpose of the session, state leaders need to have a solid grounding in the context in which the opportunity will take place. What experiences have participants had to date with report cards? What differences can you anticipate will emerge across participants (e.g., families and educators often have different views on A-F grading

5 See appendix for a sample focus group protocol.

for schools) and how can the feedback process show that all views are valued? What education issues or concerns[6] such as data privacy[7] can you predict will arise – and how can the session be structured to acknowledge them at the outset? State leaders will also need to set expectations about why feedback is being solicited and how it will be used.

Figure 4: Finding a good mix of mechanisms to maximize feedback and engagement

FEEDBACK	ENGAGEMENT: Low	ENGAGEMENT: High
High	*Focus groups* *1:1 interviews* *User testing* *Online surveys*	*Formal advisory group*
Low	*Embedded questions*	*Presentations at existing meetings* *Town halls*

Figure 5: Selecting mechanisms for state report card feedback and engagement[8]

Mechanism	Benefits	Challenges	Considerations
Formal advisory group	1. Members can be selected to represent the range of priority users 2. Advisory group members can serve as ambassadors, champions for the work 3. Flexibility to design working meetings to maximize feedback	1. Anticipating need to make decisions at a point of authority, even if the advisory group has not weighed in 2. Ensuring that members adequately represent the range of users 3. Making sure all participants understand their role and responsibilities and the ultimate goal of the work	1. What norms/protocol will be used to make decisions when there are conflicts in feedback, priorities? 2. How can the advisory group be clear about the *primary* users and their *priority* actions in order to focus discussion and inform decisions and priorities? 3. How will the role of the advisory group shift through phases of the development and continuous improvement process? 4. What is the responsibility of participants to communicate directly with their constituencies?

6 Focus group research from Learning Heroes suggests that parents put the highest priority on information about school safety and educator credentials and often see differences in performance across schools as a result of funding inequity.

7 See Data Quality Campaign for resources on state policy to safeguard data privacy: https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/key-elements-strengthening-state-laws-policies-pertaining-student-data-use-privacy-security-guidance-state-policymakers/.

8 For more information about leveraging feedback and engagement strategies, see CCSSO's *Let's Keep This Conversation Going* guide: http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/LetsKeeptheConversationGoingGuide11022016.pdf.

Mechanism	Benefits	Challenges	Considerations
Town halls (including online town halls)	1. Likelihood of communicating priority messages 2. Potential to engage a broad set of stakeholders in one setting	1. Ensuring diverse participation 2. Difficult to collect detailed feedback 3. Making sure all interested participants are aware of these meetings 4. Making sure these meetings are accessible to all who want to participate	1. How can partnerships and other efforts to build relationships help you get the word out to participate? 2. Who are the right messengers? 3. How can the state record and share the town hall? Can the state host a "virtual" town hall for those who cannot travel? 4. How can the state partner with an organization to host the meeting and encourage more individuals to attend? 5. How can the state collect contact information of participants at these meetings and use that to inform them on how their feedback was used?
Presentations at existing meetings, including those hosted by community organizations	1. Built-in audiences, often those needed to be champions 2. Ability to segment messages and ask for feedback by audience	1. Time limitations 2. Gaining focus and attention of participants if multiple topics are being discussed in addition to the report card	1. How can states leverage existing meetings beyond the "usual suspects" to meetings where families and others from under-engaged groups will be?
Focus groups	1. Feedback can be tailored and precise with open-ended questions, follow-ups to press for understanding 2. Small groups of participants can surface areas of agreement and disagreement	1. Getting the timing right – pulling together a focus group to answer near-term needs for the development process 2. Recruiting participants who reflect the priority users 3. Using a third-party facilitator so participants can feel open in sharing feedback	1. How can focus groups be utilized prior to the data and design/content phases (e.g., sharing existing reports)? 2. What partnerships are needed to recruit a strong set of participants? 3. How can you make sure focus groups include individuals representative of your state's population?

Mechanism	Benefits	Challenges	Considerations
Websites and online surveys	1. Ability to reach stakeholders in a uniform, transparent way 2. Additional information can be shared through the website and email correspondence with survey link	1. Ensuring target audiences view website, respond to survey 2. Inability to press for understanding 3. Survey respondents are sometimes limited to certain demographics	1. What existing websites, surveys, or email lists could be harnessed to glean feedback and reinforce messages? 2. How will results from surveys be shared and to whom? 3. How can you partner with groups, especially community-based organizations, to ensure good participation among diverse populations? 4. How can you make the survey available in multiple languages? 5. Can you ask for demographic information to track who is responding to the survey, and which audiences you may need to target further?
1:1 interviews	1. Depth of discussion can uncover important insights 2. Talking to one individual may illuminate information that would not be shared in a group – such as disconnects between what is on a report card and the message a family member receives from a teacher	1. Insights may not be generalizable 2. Resource, time-intensive	1. Are there particular questions that require deeper conversations? 2. How can you identify individuals who will give you deeper insights necessary to move the work forward?
User testing	1. Observing how users actually interact with the data, design and content, and functionality 2. Ability to target users with precision through services that specialize in user testing	1. Resource, time-intensive	1. What high-priority questions should be asked to test site usability, or particular reporting concepts? 2. How can you make sure you are testing among users with different needs, such as limited English proficiency, literacy skills, or disabilities?
Embedding questions in a live report card	1. Open-ended questions, such as a "Notice anything confusing?" comment box, can pick up important issues that may not otherwise get raised.		1. How will ongoing advisory or governance groups for the report card address information coming through this mechanism?

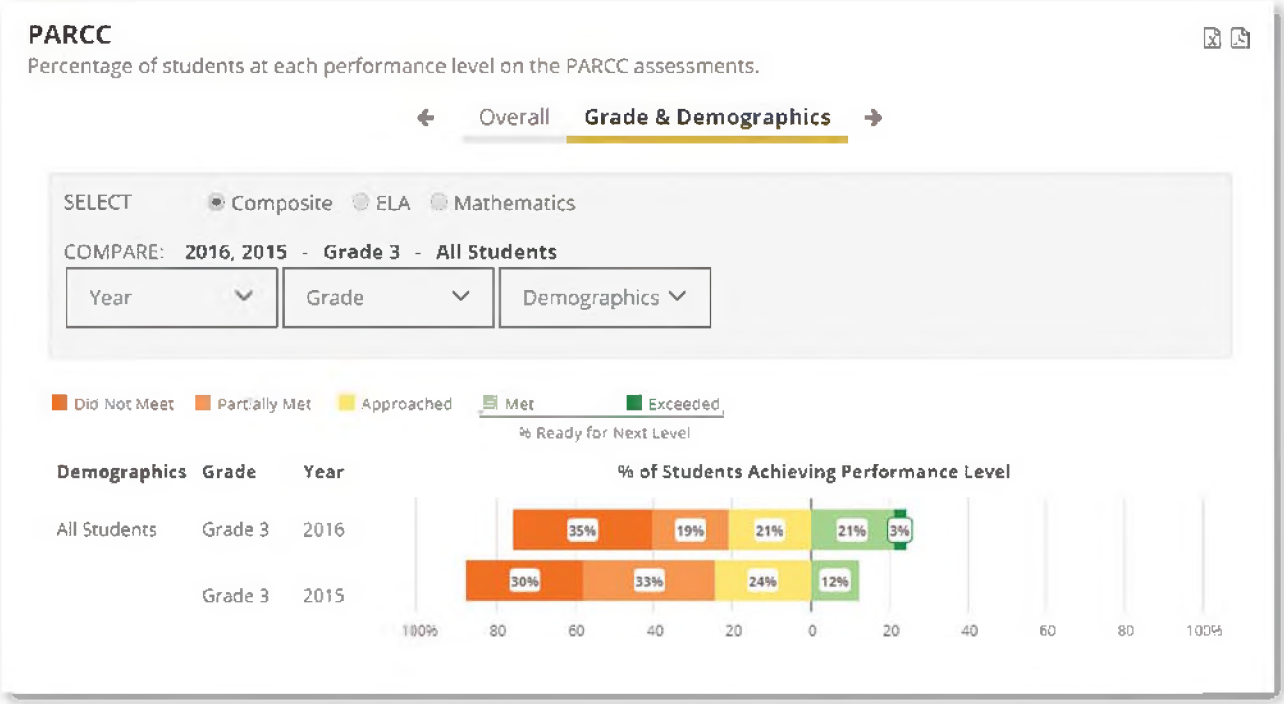
DATA AND CONTENT

Families and other users must have **trust** and **confidence** in the information in state, local, and school report cards. States must ensure that data in state report cards are of the highest quality, that privacy is protected, and that measures are timely, clearly defined, and consistent across different levels (e.g., student-level to school-level) and different reports.

States should consider these questions in all phases of report card development and continuous improvement:

1. ***What data and performance metrics will be reported?***

   - **Meeting minimum requirements:** ESSA and other federal education laws prescribe a set of data and information that states must include on state report cards for schools, districts, and/or the state as a whole. In addition, many states have policies in statute or regulation that require additional data elements to be included in state report cards. Taken together, these requirements set a "floor" – the minimum set of data that a state must include.



2. ***How do we ensure data used in the report card are of the highest quality?*** What is data quality? According to NCES, data quality entails accuracy, completeness, timeliness, validity, and consistency.[9]

   - **Building capacity at the local level**: Given that most data are collected at the local level, it requires coordination and capacity-building from the school building to local education agency to state levels. Kansas has developed a Data Quality Certification program with specialized tracks for LEA data entry personnel, data coordinators, program staff and administrators. The purpose of the program is to build a culture of

9 Institute for Education Sciences, May 2014, Data Quality: Striking a Balance. SLDS Issue Brief.

quality data in the State of Kansas to improve data quality and reduce the negative effects of inaccurate/missing data. Last year KSDE provided both in-person and webinar trainings to individuals in 284 out of 286 public school districts.

- **Involving the right people at the right time in decisions:** Collaboration is essential to developing high-quality data for public reporting. State leaders with responsibility for report cards must involve CIOs, data managers, policy staff, and other experts in decisions about data for report cards.

- **Driving data use at all phases of development and continuous improvement:** Data use and quality are a virtuous cycle – as more reports are developed and used to support and inform work to improve student performance, more people ask more questions of the data, leading to improvements in data quality. States can take steps to encourage use of data beginning in the gathering requirements phase, engaging primary users with real data on proposed measures. They can continue to use feedback and engagement opportunities throughout design and content development, and testing and launch. Questions that primary users pose in these phases can alert states to potential issues with data quality.

- **Deploy quality assurance routines on data after each phase of development:** Similarly, states would benefit from establishing formal quality assurance routines on data elements not just prior to launch, but throughout the process of development and continuous improvement. Given that data quality and use are mutually reinforcing, doing so across the cycle provides more opportunities to catch errors or misunderstandings. Routines must be based on data quality rules and data governance that support the rules, and should leverage a clear, easy to read data dictionary that includes information about how data are used, the frequency of data collections, and what data source is considered the truth if more than one collection is used for the report card. States may consider establishing an agency-wide Quality Assurance and Standards group with broad representation of data analysts and producers.

3. *How do we provide assurance that data on the report card protect privacy?*

- **Establishing and enforcing clear reporting rules to protect privacy:** As states have transitioned to reporting aggregate data to the public based on databases of student-level data, the importance of ensuring data privacy has risen. Privacy is also a primary concern of families and policymakers. State data management leaders should determine policies that ensure consistent use of minimum n sizes, data suppression routines, and other strategies.[10] Each policy decision will involve significant trade-offs. For example, higher n-sizes will improve privacy protections, but will decrease access to data. All decisions should be made with ongoing stakeholder engagement and communicated broadly. Quality assurance routines should check to make sure these policies are followed for all reported data. The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) details its procedures for ensuring the privacy of data in accountability and public reporting in its ESSA plan (pages 10-11), including a minimum n-size of 10, suppressing individual outcome categories, secondary data suppression, and using top and bottom coding for extreme percentages.

10 See Data Quality Campaign resources for state education agencies – Roadmap to Safeguarding Student Data

4. ***What steps can we take to increase the timeliness of data?***

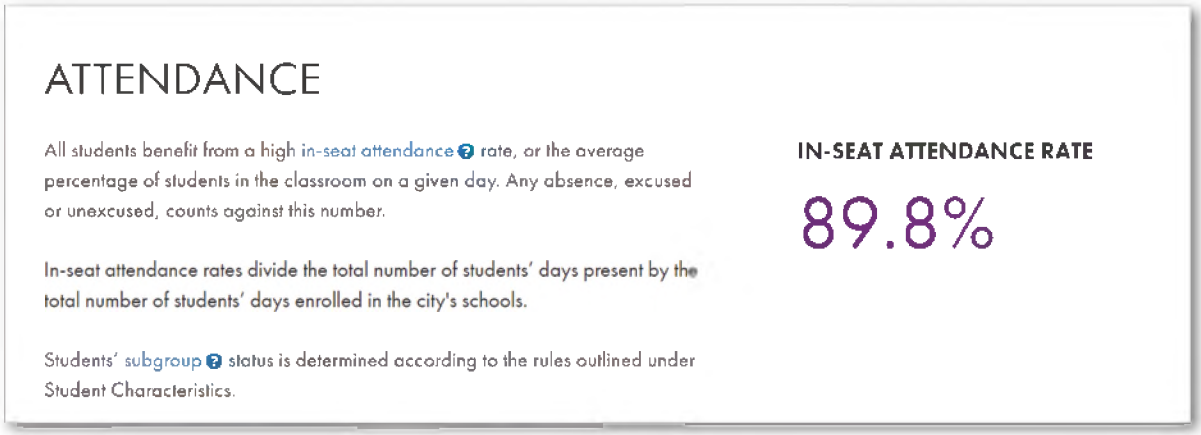
- **Updating report cards throughout the year:** Report cards should be updated at least once a year – at a minimum, along with the release of accountability results. Every update becomes a built-in opportunity for proactive communications. Meanwhile, a range of data that answers important user questions is finalized throughout the year. States should consider opportunities to keep report cards fresh with updated data throughout the year.

5. ***Are the measures defined clearly and consistently?***

- **Simplifying measures:** To support their theory of action for reporting, states should consider how to leverage their report cards to build users' capacity to understand and use the data. Where possible, states should consider ways to simplify data definitions to encourage understanding and use.

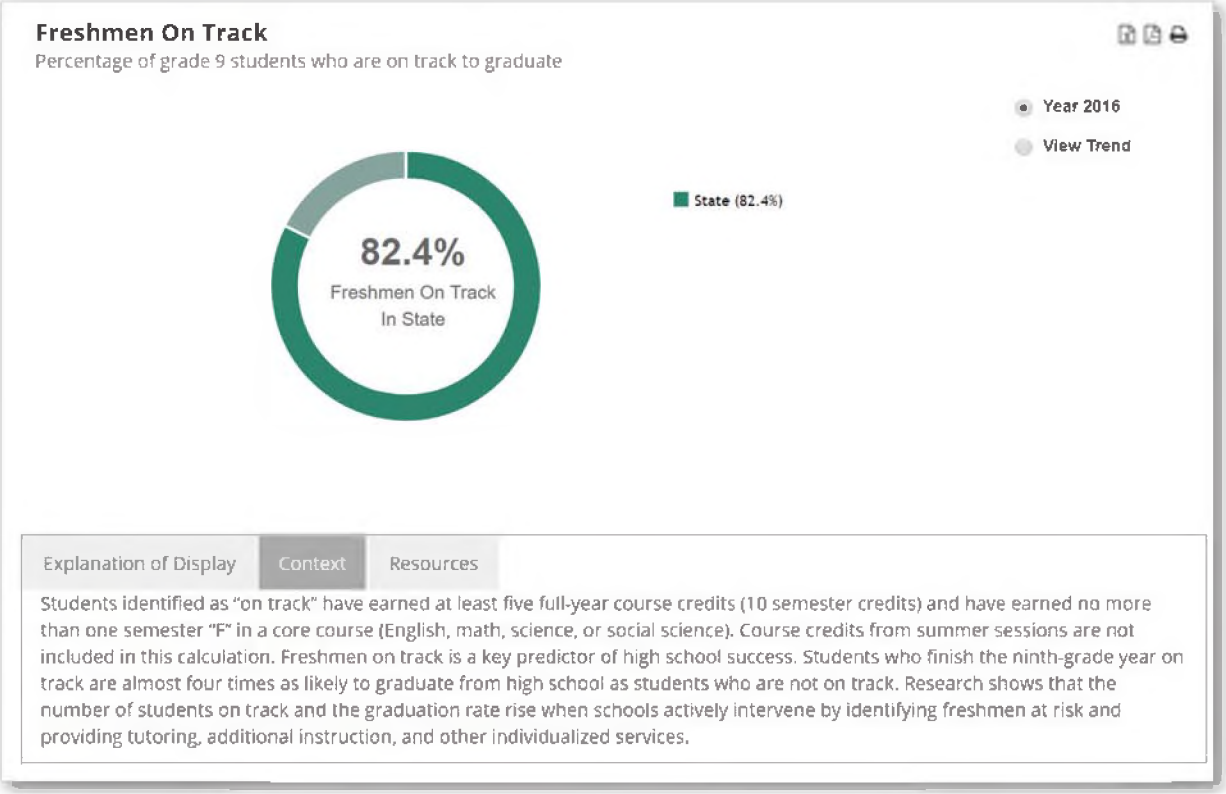
- **Providing definitions near data**: Where possible, states should consider how to report data using familiar terms and avoiding jargon (particularly for family-focused report cards). Learning Heroes has found a number of common words and phrases that have different meanings to families outside of the school or district than they do in the school context. For example, families often take school "climate" to pertain to temperature or weather, and "culture" to pertain to ethnicity or race. Learning Heroes has found that a phrase such as "learning environment" better communicates the intent. In some cases, clarity will require using technical terminology. States should find ways to provide data definitions in an accessible manner, through hover-over features or otherwise nearby the data that are reported. For complex data definitions, states should take opportunities to explain the data in engaging ways. For example, **Georgia** posts a video on its website to explain its growth model in easier to understand language. Virginia has an FAQ and Glossary of terms for their School Quality Profiles.

Exemplar | District of Columbia Equity Reports (defining specialized education words "jargon")



- **Providing narrative context near data:** In some cases, feedback may point out areas where data elements promote misunderstanding or confusion rather than clarity. According to research from Learning Heroes, in these cases, providing narrative information that reinforces the context underlying the data can be helpful.

Exemplar: Illinois (providing context to data)



- **Ensuring consistency across student-level and aggregate reports:** Given questions from users, Delaware has identified a significant need to ensure consistency of data from the student level to aggregate, public reporting. State leaders emphasize the need to be "100% in sync" across the two levels through effective data governance. In addition, states should be aware of where data elements are reported across different aggregate report cards – and ensure data consistency in these cases as well.

6. ***Are there opportunities to streamline reporting?***

- **Taking stock:** States, along with standing advisory groups, should regularly take stock of reports that display similar data, even across agencies, to check for consistency of definitions and business rules. As it does so, **Delaware** asks whether similar reports are still needed, and identifies opportunities to streamline reporting.

- **Serving data where it is used the most:** Some states report a wealth of data (e.g., reporting postsecondary enrollment information on higher education agency websites), but not in the school-level report cards where families and other users are accessing data most often.[11] States may consider reporting some of these data on the state report card, and including a link so users who want additional detail can find the more comprehensive data set.

11 See Data Quality Campaign, A Time to Act 2017.

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

States that position report cards as a part of their overall strategy to improve education for all students will pay considerable attention to design and structure throughout all phases of the development process. Simply, families, teachers, policymakers will not take action based on information in report cards if they see information that is overwhelming, confusing, or unreadable. While states with sufficient capacity can evolve online state report cards to take advantage of new technology and user experience principles, even those with more limited resources can develop static report cards with far greater impact by taking time to engage with users to advance design and content. Effective design requires states to wrestle with a variety of trade-offs – for example, prioritizing among different user needs, balancing simplicity of both design and content with needs to provide opportunities to engage with data in more complex ways, and the like. It also requires a mindset open to learning and adapting based on new knowledge and understanding from users.

States should consider the following questions throughout the report card development and continuous improvement process:

1. ***Who uses the report card? Why and how are they using it?*** The most important aspect of good design is to understand who your users are, why they are there, and the best way to serve the content to them at the right level of granularity.

    - **Identifying priority users:** Very early in the process, states should clearly identify the priority users of the report card, and all decisions about design and functionality should ripple out from this one. Families will be a critical audience for all states. They may be the priority audience for report cards, particularly at the school level.[12] Educators – teachers and administrators – are also critical users of aggregate information at the school and district levels. It is essential for states to ensure that educators have access to and capacity to interpret state report cards to help answer families' questions and proactively frame report cards (such as through a cover letter) in the context of the school's goals and strategies. Educators are also an important audience for aggregate report card information that provides opportunities to "drill down" to more complex or student-level information. As an example of a way a state uses multiple tools for reporting, **Massachusetts** provides extensive data for district and school leaders through its Excel-based District Analysis Review Tools (DART)[13]. Policymakers, business, and community leaders are also important users of aggregate information at the school, district, and state level. Finally, researchers are frequent users of report card information, so providing entry points for them to access files to download should be a consideration for all states. See Figure 1 for an example for how a state may articulate its priority users.

12 Research from Learning Heroes indicates that parents are most interested in questions that concern their own child's schools.

13 Please note that DART is a reporting tool used in Massachusetts but is not used as a report card. Additionally, please not that users can access online DART tools in School and District Profiles. An example is available here.

- **Finding out *why* they use the report card:** You can use feedback and engagement mechanisms to find out more about why families and other stakeholders use report cards. They will likely hear a variety of answers within any particular group, and can use this information to inform design, structure, and functionality. States can also use this insight to design online report cards that adapt based on answers to questions such as, *"Why are you here today – to find a school in your community? Compare schools? Learn more about my child's school?"* States can also plan their report card continuous improvement processes to inform ongoing understanding of the reasons users access report cards, including embedding analytics in online report cards to show the types of information users are accessing most frequently.

- **Designing for *how* they access the report card:** Given that more parents and educators are accessing online report cards through their phones, tablets, and other mobile devices, incorporating responsive design is becoming a far higher priority. States should also consider ways optimize load time, and avoid putting information behind tabs or requiring drop-down menus in the design process. States should leverage feedback and engagement mechanisms to test how parents and other users navigate through online report cards. Many users, meanwhile, want – or need – to access and print a static report such as downloading a .pdf file from a website or receiving a hard copy of a static report from a school or community organization. **New Mexico** has focused efforts on developing informative and engaging static reports at the school level tailored to parents.

- **Giving context:** Without context, data are just numbers without any meaning. States should consider how to design report cards in such a way as to provide the context that users need to understand and act on the information. Showing how the data relate to benchmarks helps build context. In addition, providing the most recent assessment information for a school is important, but families also want to see the most recent data in context of trends or historical information to answer questions such as, "Is the school improving over time and by how much?"[14]

- **Helping families use the report card in conversations with educators:** State report cards could also provide families with suggested questions to ask when meeting with a teacher or administrator or information about who to contact with questions about the information in the report card.

- **Understanding what tools are already available:** To avoid redundant reporting or reinventing the wheel, understand what local systems are reporting and determine how the state report card can add value.

2. ***How should information be prioritized?*** As the active design work progresses, states should begin to make the tough decisions about how content will be structured to drive understanding and use. States and data designers can work together and engage with users through wireframes that show the structure for how information could be prioritized and organized on a specific page.

14 For trend data in which calculation methods change over time, states should normalize the data to ensure the trend shows meaningful information.

- **Letting the story lead:** As discussed earlier with the example from Colorado's financial transparency website, states are learning that people *learn* through stories, *remember* stories, and *take action* based on stories. When someone engages with a state report card, they should be able to weave a story from the data – a story with a beginning, such a compelling question, then data and context through brief narrative, and then a conclusion – a clear answer, a suggestion for action, or a direction to go for other questions or more detailed information. In some cases, however, gaps in data, changes in baselines, or other factors may present significant challenges.

- **Preventing information overload – for users and staff:** Many families and other users get overwhelmed when they see traditional state report cards that provide numerous data points in table format. They often won't find information they need, or worse – will leave frustrated or misinterpret what they see. States are learning how critical it is to give users the information they need the most to prevent information overload. States can start by stating the questions the data are meant to answer, what the data mean, and any benchmarks that help the user interpret the data. User research has shown the benefits of designing with the highest level, most important information at the top, then cascading information down with further details. It also shows the benefits of letting users "opt-in" to details – clicking on a link, scrolling down, or turning a page. Information overload is a risk not just for users, but for staff and others designing state report cards. Today, state agencies collect a great deal of data, not all of which needs to be included on report cards. Staff should be careful not to get lost in the data as they are designing, just as they do not want to let users get lost.

- **Organizing information:** Information presented in state report cards should be organized in a way that reinforces the decisions made for prioritization and story-telling. States are learning that they can organize report cards by compelling questions, or by domains of information, through a site map. Many states are exploring "dashboard" approaches that show a limited set of high-priority data indicators through simple visualizations, with opportunities to then drill-down to more details.

- **Balancing a variety of needs:** State agency leaders and users do not always have the same priorities for information, again reinforcing the need for early and frequent stakeholder engagement. State leaders often prioritize information that reinforces state goals and initiatives, while families tend to be most interested in information about school safety and educator credentials.[15] With this understanding in mind, states should prioritize data that are important to reinforce state goals along with clear explanations for why the data are important. Where appropriate, it's also important to clearly articulate how the information comes together to provide a summative score or rating.

15 For more information please see Overview of Research on Effectively Engaging Parents

Exemplar | Ohio (dashboard organization)

GRADE

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Performance Index

The Performance Index measures the test results of every student, not just those who score proficient or higher. There are six levels on the index and schools receive points for every student in each of these levels. The higher the achievement level, the more the points awarded in the school's index. This rewards schools and districts for improving the performance of all students, regardless of achievement level.

Performance Index

Calculation Pie Chart Trend

75.5%

90.6 of a possible 120.0

A = 90.0 - 100.0%
B = 80.0 - 89.9%
C = 70.0 - 79.9%
D = 50.0 - 69.9%
F = 0.0 - 49.9%

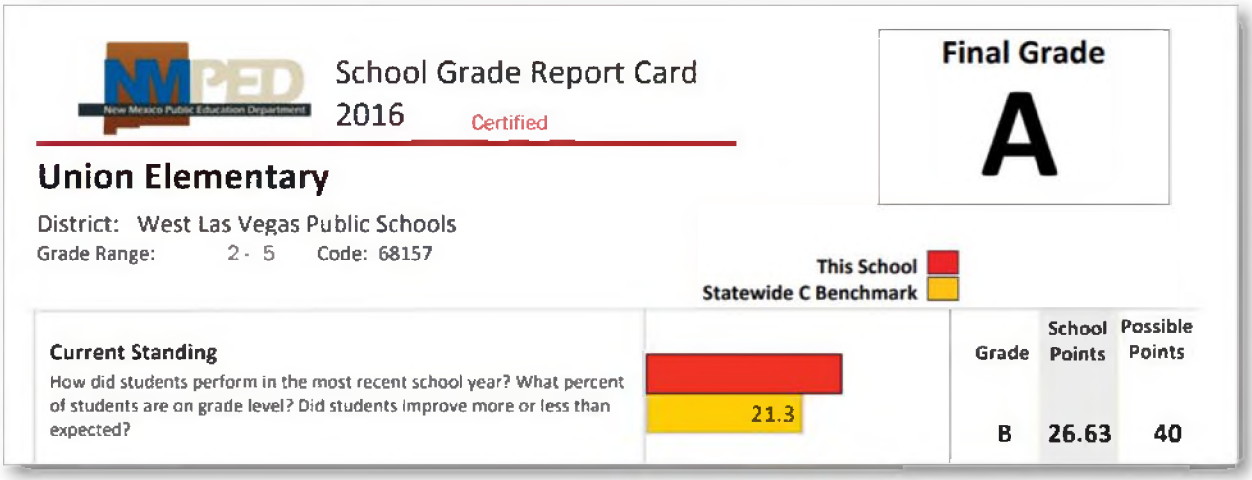
Achievement Level	Pct of Students		Points for this Level		Points Received
Advanced Plus	0.4	x	1.3	=	0.5
Advanced	12.1	x	1.2	=	14.6
Accelerated	24.2	x	1.1	=	26.6
Proficient	34.6	x	1.0	=	34.6
Basic	19.2	x	0.6	=	11.5
Limited	9.5	x	0.3	=	2.9
Untested	0.0	x	0.0	=	0.0
					90.6

3. *How can information be communicated through text?*

- **Refining language:** Families, business and community leaders, and other users prefer simple, familiar words to give context to the data in report cards. Test language through focus groups and other engagement activities with families, educators, legislators, and others – do not assume that words and phrases have consistent meanings across stakeholder groups. Aim to keep the language clear and straightforward (e.g., avoid compound or complex sentences). If states must use specialized words, provide explanations within the narrative. Run report card language through text complexity tools[16] and refine language until it reflects an 8th grade reading level (e.g., use an automatic readability checker and/or check the Lexile level).

16 CCSSO has a Short Guide to quantitative text complexity tools here: http://www.ccsso.org/Navigating_Text_Complexity/Learn_the_Ropes.html.

Exemplar | New Mexico (using narrative to explain meaning of indicators)



4. ***How can information be communicated through visualizations?*** Data visualizations transform data into information that drives understanding and use. *Similar to strong writing, strong visualizations depend on numerous rounds of editing to include only those elements that best convey a story.* Although the data visualization field is always pushing the envelope with innovative techniques, many of the most effective techniques are simply highly-refined versions of traditional tables or graphs.

   - **Keeping visualizations consistent:** Focus on the story with consistent visualizations – keeping visualization techniques, colors, language, directionality, and comparisons among school, district, and state level data consistent allows users to orient themselves and then focus on the story, rather than on understanding a variety of visualization types. When color is used to convey meaning, such as levels of performance where red means low and green means high, make sure the meaning will be helpful to what you are trying to convey, and keep those meanings consistent across visualizations.

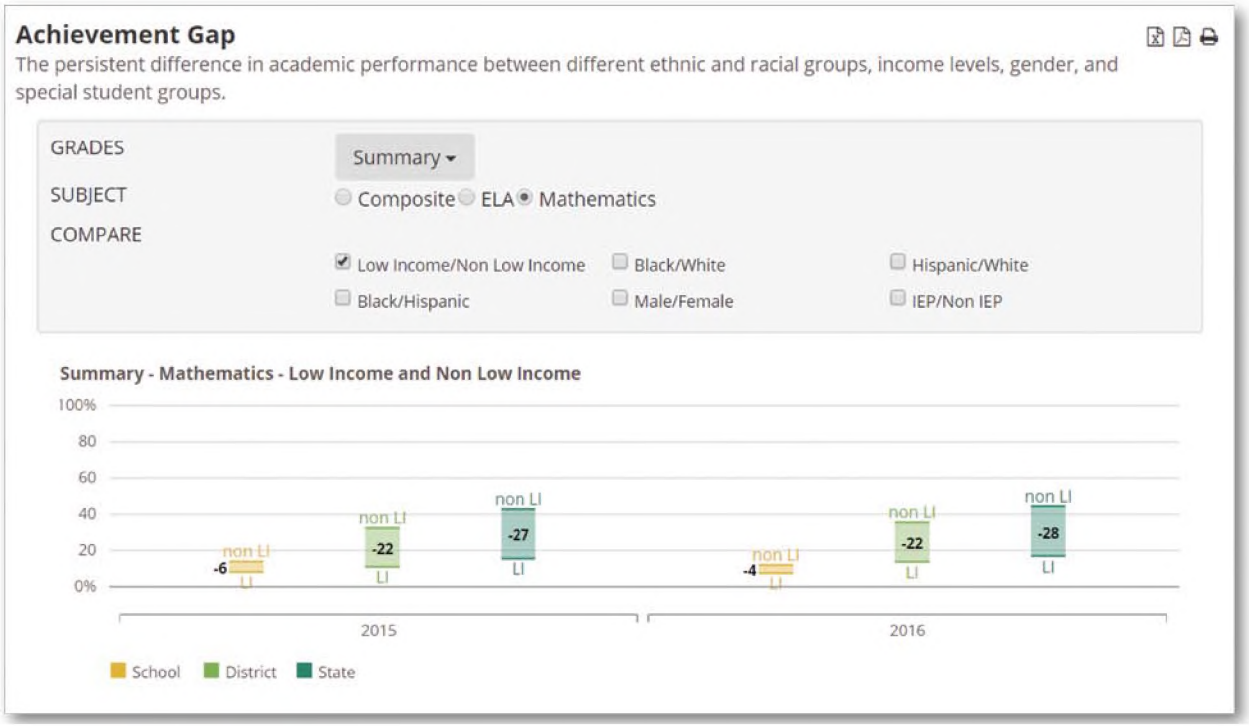
   - **Learning best practices in data visualizations and continuing to learn:** The field of data visualization is continuously innovating and learning about the techniques that drive understanding, and it pays off to dive into current best practices and stay up-to-date on new developments. Websites such as flowingdata.com and data visualization pioneer Edward Tufte's edwardtufte.com contain numerous examples and resources. Digital journalists have been leading many of the innovations in the field of data visualization. Research on data visualization from the Northeastern University School of Journalism suggests that text is highly important

Data Visualization Sites to Follow (recommended by Jonathan Schwabish):

* flowingdata.com
* policyviz.com/blog
* visualizingdata.com
* storytellingwithdata.com
* helpmeviz.com → you can submit visualizations in progress to get feedback

in data visualization, that users remember data presented as pictograms (e.g., icons or logos incorporated into visualizations), and that some redundancy of data helps users remember information.[8] The USED's report card guidance cites Jonathan A. Schwabish's article from 2014, An Economist's Guide to Visualizing Data, as a strong resource on current data visualization techniques. The 2016 NCES Forum Guide to Data Visualization is directed at SEAs and includes detailed guidance on displaying data in ways to support analysis of information and support communication, along with guidance on processes to use to develop visualizations that convey meaning to users.

Exemplar | Illinois (data visualization)



5. ***How can the state report card promote broad accessibility?***

- **Complying with accessibility standards:** For nearly 20 years, SEAs and other public agencies have been required to comply with technical standards to ensure online accessibility for users with physical or cognitive considerations. NCES has published a best practice resource for education data content providers that outlines techniques for addressing the standards.[8] It also addresses standards from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) initiative.

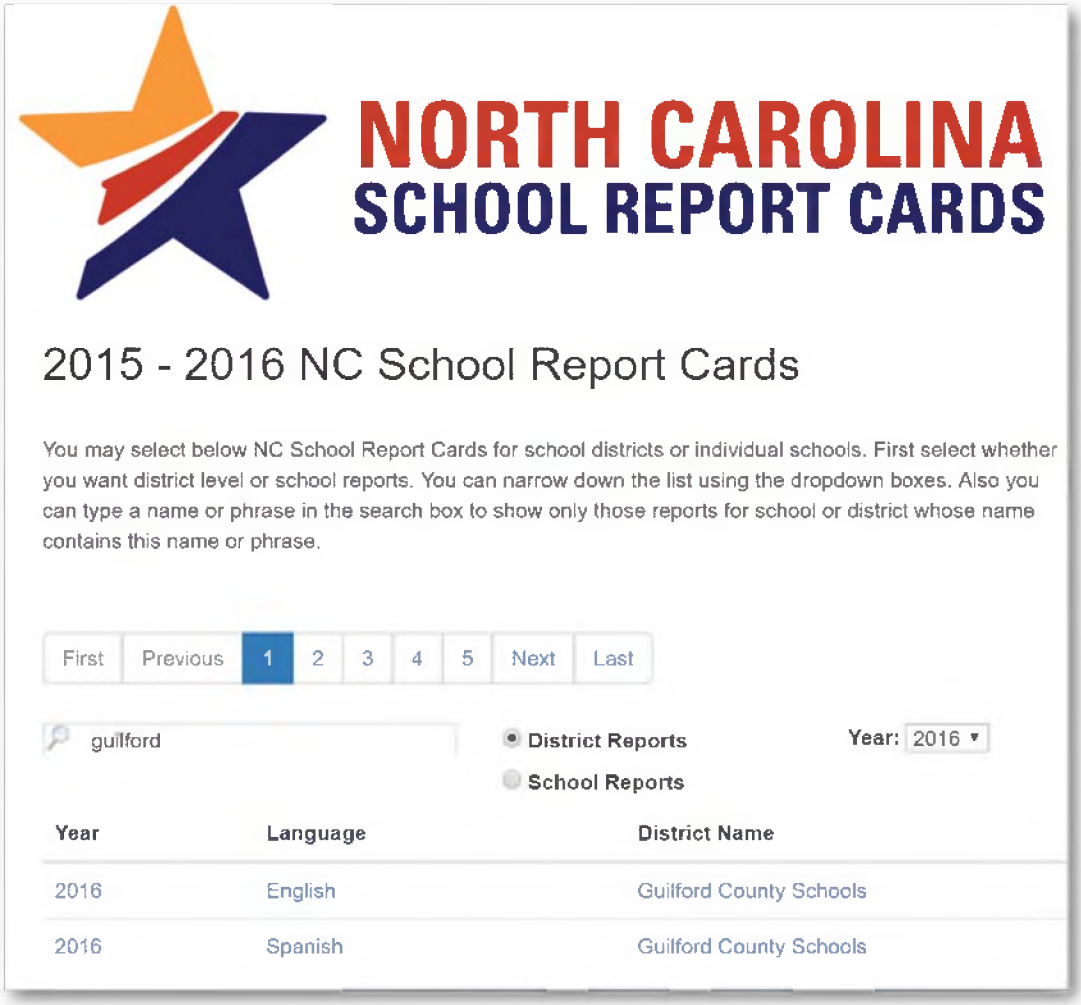
- **Testing color schemes:** Estimates suggest that up to 7 percent of the male population in the United States cannot distinguish between red and green. States can use guides, such as that developed by the Foundation for Excellence in Education, to select colors that are easily distinguishable.[8]

- **Sizing up text:** Text needs to be at a size that it is easily readable – both in narrative or explanatory blocks and within visualizations. User testing has clearly shown that families and other users often struggle with the small text sizes in traditional state report cards.

- **Providing multiple languages:** Today, few states provide report cards and wrap-around materials such as cover letters in languages other than English. As states continue to prioritize equity, consider opportunities to provide families and community leaders information in a variety of languages. See Figure 6 for an example from North Carolina.

- **Putting the report card out front:** Many state report cards are difficult for users to find.[8] They should be easy to find on the state's website, through searches, and on other sites where families or other stakeholders will be (and with the fewest required clicks as possible). **Illinois** (www.illinoisreportcard.com) has gone an extra step by using an easy-to-find URL.

Figure 6: North Carolina (providing multiple languages)



6. ***What functionality does the report card need to support its primary users?***

- **Learning from users:** States will begin mapping their functionality requirements early in the stakeholder feedback process. Do families prefer to search for their child's school by typing in the name of the school, selecting the district and then the school from lists, entering their address, selecting from a map, or other method? Do families want

to see a static .pdf report or engage with interactive features? How might families prefer to "drill down" from higher level to more detailed data? Do educators want to be able to compare performance information for their school with that of schools with similar demographics for benchmarking purposes? State leaders should begin mapping out these questions – and engaging users to answer them through focus groups, 1:1 interviews, and other mechanisms – early in the development process.

DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

States will need to carefully design their report card development and continuous improvement processes to ensure the system supports decisions made about data and content, as well as design and structure. The *State Guide to Building Online School Report Cards* (see appendix) includes key steps and timelines for report card development:

1. ***How will the state manage the development process?***

   - **Outlining decision-making protocols:** Although states will engage and solicit feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders, a sound development process – one with a high likelihood of producing report cards on time and within budget – will identify a project team with an individual leader responsible for final approval of decisions. The project team itself may be comprised of different groups – for instance, a policy group, a technical (e.g., data and accountability) group, and a communications group. A sound process will also include formal change and release management protocols.

   - **Documenting requirements:** It is essential that states formalize a set of data and content, design, and functionality requirements prior to the active design work. Not doing so risks significant production delays due to change orders – along with commensurate cost implications.

   - **Clarifying roles and responsibilities:** States may work with a vendor or multiple vendors throughout the development process. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities, timelines, and review procedures with vendors will be critical for success of the project.

2. ***How will the state plan for continuous improvement of the report card?***

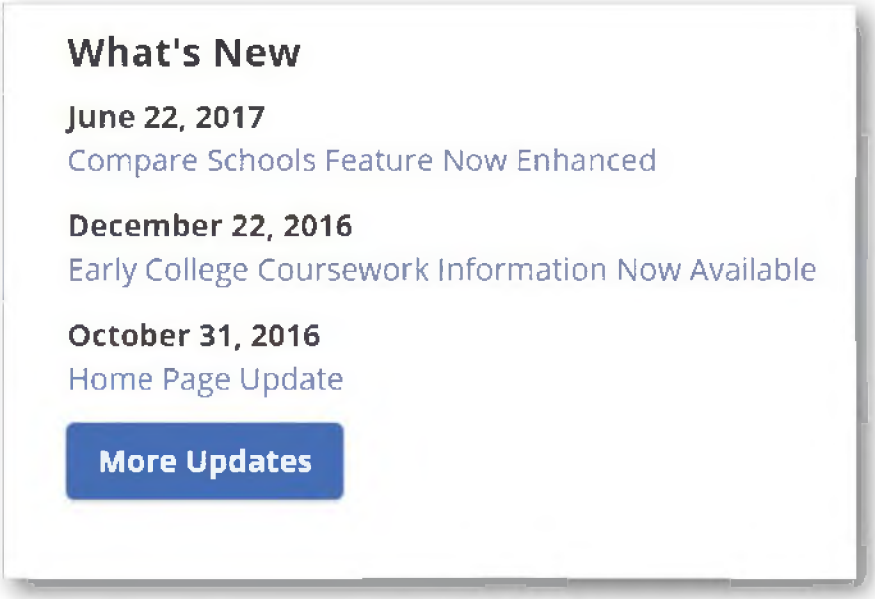
   - **Learning what works – and what doesn't:** In the building and testing phase, states can build an alpha site with limited functionality (even if the data and design are not quite right) to begin testing, followed by a beta version with complete functionality, and then quality assurance testing. After the launch, states can use analytics to find out how users are interacting with the report cards and identify needs to adapt functionality based on the metrics — both traditional metrics, such as the number of unique visitors to the site, repeat visitors, unique downloads, social sharing, mobile vs. desktop device usage, as well as metrics specific to state report cards, such as the popularity of particular school and district report cards and geographic areas requested in search and interaction with specific data exhibits.

   - **Planning for continuous improvement:** Your state may consider planning to release a

version 1.0 of the report card, with expectations to answer new questions over time and enhance functionality in later releases. See below for an example from Illinois on sharing new functionality to compare schools and answering new questions about college-level coursework in high school. You may also consider adding wrap-around materials such as explanatory videos and cover letters to families and other stakeholder groups.

- **Keeping track of requests: Georgia** maintains a running list of enhancement requests that are regularly reviewed and prioritized by the report card governance group.

Illinois: Communicating Updates on Front Page of Report Card Site



CONCLUSION

Today, your state can take the next steps to weave data stories for families, educators, policymakers, and others that go well beyond basic public reporting transparency aims to support actions that improve education for all students. States can signal their commitment to continuous improvement by leveraging meaningful feedback loops and harnessing improvements in technology and design. They can do so with these users as partners in the process, inviting early guidance and building ownership along the way. Ultimately, states can see their state, local, and school report cards as an avenue for ongoing communication with those whose work directly affects students. They can use this feedback loop not only to enhance the report cards over time, but to support overall strategies to build capacity among families, educators, and policymakers to use education data to make informed decisions. States have much to learn from each other as they travel their own journeys to make report cards an integral part of their state's theory of action to improve student achievement, and will benefit from learning communities to share effective practices – and lessons learned.

State Guide to Building Online School Report Cards

A State Guide to Building Online School Report Cards

A 12-month, development to launch guide to creating a next-generation school accountability reporting tool under ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) directs states to create report cards that are easy for parents and the public to access and understand. Additionally, states are required to provide more school-level data than ever before by highlighting multiple indicators of student performance, funding, teacher quality, post-secondary success, and more all in a parent-friendly format.

The timeline below outlines the necessary steps toward creating an ESSA-compliant report card (a full list of ESSA reporting requirements can be found here) that is accessible and quality within a 12-month period. This timeline integrates four streams of interconnected work: feedback and engagement; design and content; data; and functionality and development. Resources are provided below on each stream to look to for advice and information during the development process.

The streams of work are presented in four phases: gathering of requirements; design and content development; building, testing and launch; and sustainability and enhancement. Effective project management is critical for the development of a high-quality report card, and no one team within a state agency can do the work alone. These interconnected streams of work require close coordination of a robust project team of data experts, designers, developers, policy and communications experts, parents and community stakeholders.

What You'll Find in This Tool:

- Step-by-step process for designing a high quality report card.
- Process organized by four streams of interconnected work: Feedback and Engagement; Data; Design and Content; Functionality and Development
- Resources to guide your work.
- Glossary to define and clarify technical terminology.

CCSSO Council of Chief State School Officers · COLLABORATIVE · DQC Data Quality Campaign · ExcelinEd · Learning Heroes · National PTA every child. one voice.

Phase I: Gathering of Requirements

Months 1–3

Feedback and Engagement

- ☐ Identify your user audiences.
- ☐ Look to local pilots that can serve as frameworks for a state platform.
- ☐ Conduct focus groups, deliver surveys, and convene your user audiences to understand what audiences expect, gain credibility with local constituencies, and build institutional knowledge.
- ☐ Announce your intention and goals for the development of new online school report cards; plan and share opportunities for engagement.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff

Resources
Learning Heroes evidence-based parent tools and language.

Learning Heroes, CCSSO, and PTA's Guidelines for SEAs Engaging Parents

Data

- ☐ Determine the scope of the tool (local or statewide).
- ☐ Assess and document the quality and availability of your accountability and other data.
- ☐ Review the SEA's accountability plan and other data that is required or desired on new report cards, data collection methodology, and anticipated data release schedule.
- ☐ Decide the high level categories and specific data indicators to be included and create a data catalog.
- ☐ Format the data and document the business rules for all data indicators that will be included in the tool.

Coordinating Project Partners
Policy Team
Data and Accountability Team
Communications Staff

Resources
DQC's Opportunity to Make Data Work for Students in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

ECS's State Information Request: ESSA Accountability System Requirements

Design and Content

- ☐ Apply knowledge about user audiences to establish criteria for the look and feel of parent-friendly report cards.
- ☐ Use insights from focus groups and interviews to determine the tone and level of content that aligns with user expectations.
- ☐ Begin to prioritize information and develop user journeys through the data and content that will be offered in the tool.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Team

Resources
ExcelinEd's My School Information Design Challenge findings

DQC's Opportunity to Make Data Work for Students in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Functionality and Development

- ☐ Determine website hosting parameters and select an open source content management system (CMS) such as Drupal or WordPress.
- ☐ Determine and document the structure and workflow for the Application Program Interface (API) and how it integrates with the curation, cleaning, verification and uploading of data into the tool.
- ☐ Create detailed technical requirements documenting the scope and functionality of the tool, such as sort, search, comparison and customization features, and presentation in multiple languages.

Coordinating Project Partners
Data and Accountability Team

Phase II: Design & Content Development

Months 4–6

Feedback and Engagement

- ☐ Develop a strategy for engaging local parents, educators, and community members through the design, development, and launch of the tool.
- ☐ Identify national, state, and local stakeholders to support the use of the tool and determine how to partner with them.
- ☐ Test sample content and design concepts with user audiences and refine them based on feedback.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff

Resources
CCSSO's Let's Get This Conversation Started: A Guide on Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

CCSSO's Let's Keep This Conversation Going

Data

- ☐ Confirm different cuts at the data across years (over time) or subgroups.
- ☐ Verify that all original data is "clean" and reconcile any irregularities or incomplete entries.

Coordinating Project Partners
Policy Team
Data and Accountability Team

Design and Content

- ☐ Map data catalog to specific visualizations and content needs within the tool.
- ☐ Develop full color design mock ups showing the look of the tool on desktop and mobile.
- ☐ Determine data visualizations (charts, graphs) and content needed to support each data indicator in the tool.
- ☐ Create parent-friendly content explaining and supporting data displays.
- ☐ Build messages that contextualize the data and empower parents to engage with their school.
- ☐ Identify partners, like district, school, and community members who can amplify the messages and promote the report card launch.

Coordinating Project Partners
Policy Team
Communications Staff
Data and Accountability Team

Resources
ExcelinEd's My School Information Design Challenge findings

DQC's Opportunity to Make Data Work for Students in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Functionality and Development

- ☐ Finalize user experience journeys and create a wireframe and sitemap showing overall tool structure.
- ☐ Set up data repository and establish the Application Program Interface (API).
- ☐ Begin development of the tool, including analytics tracking.

Phase III: Building, Testing & Launch

Months 7–9

Feedback and Engagement

- ☐ Invite users to engage with beta tool prior to public launch.
- ☐ Launch and promote use of the live tool.
- ☐ Engage stakeholders around the live tool to get feedback on design and content ideas.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff
Policy Team

Resources
CCSSO's Let's Get This Conversation Started: A Guide on Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

CCSSO's Let's Keep This Conversation Going

ECS's Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement

Data

- ☐ Load or migrate data into the Application Program Interface (API).
- ☐ Create a plan to accommodate newly released data during development.

Coordinating Project Partners
Data and Accountability Team

Design and Content

- ☐ Finalize all aspects of the design of the tool.
- ☐ Create launch messaging.
- ☐ Design and produce promotional collateral (one-pager, video tutorial, announcement, etc).

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff
Policy Team

Functionality and Development

- ☐ Develop the front end design and underlying back end code needed to connect the data in the Application Program Interface (API) to what users see in the tool.
- ☐ Engage in rigorous quality assurance testing to ensure all data and functionality are working correctly in the tool across environments and website browsers.

Phase IV: Sustainability & Enhancement

Month 10 and Beyond

Feedback and Engagement

- ☐ Continuously promote the report card and use it as a tool to reinforce state priorities; use new data releases as an opportunity to drive users to the site.
- ☐ Thoughtfully review analytics to understand how the tool is being used; apply learning to enhancement of the tool.
- ☐ Continue to engage with stakeholders upon new releases to test enhancements.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff
Policy Team

Data

- ☐ Create a calendar of projected future data for implementation in the tool.
- ☐ Enhance the Application Program Interface (API) to accommodate new data indicators.
- ☐ Update existing data.

Coordinating Project Partners
Data and Accountability Team

Design and Content

- ☐ Enhance how data is prioritized, displayed, and explained based upon user feedback.
- ☐ Create mock ups for new data indicators and changes to data visualizations required to accommodate additional years of data.

Coordinating Project Partners
Communications Staff
Policy Team
Data and Accountability Team

Resources
ExcelinEd's My School Information Design Challenge findings

DQC's Opportunity to Make Data Work for Students in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Functionality and Development

- ☐ Develop new data displays and add or update supporting content.
- ☐ Execute ongoing hosting and maintenance of the tool, such as updating the Content Management System (CMS).
- ☐ Train staff on use of the Content Management System (CMS) and data workflow.
- ☐ Create an annual sustainability plan for future costs to keep the tool live and up to date.

Coordinating Project Partners
Policy Team

Resources
CCSSO's Memo on State Report Card Requirements

ExcelinEd's Know Your School Project

Glossary

Data, design and development terms commonly used in online report card projects.

Application Program Interface (API): An API is a set of instructions for accessing data in a database. APIs provide standardized "building blocks" of data that can be used to build many different types of websites. The use of APIs also makes combining multiple data points easier, exponentially increasing the value of those data sets. For example, Google Maps data is connected to numerous apps and websites via APIs that allow those apps and websites to combine their data with the Google Maps data.

Front End Design: Think of a website or web tool as having two sides. The front end design is what a user or visitor sees. A front end designer makes deliberate decisions, informed by user experience (UX) best practices. These best practices inform where on the page information is displayed, how users navigate from one part of the web page or tool to another, and how information is prioritized.

Back End Code: Think of a website or web tool as having two sides. The back end code is the engine of an online tool or website. This code does all the unseen work of accessing the API, inserting the data into a page and showing that page to the user on the front end.

Beta Tool: A beta tool is like a first draft. Once front end design and back end code are complete, developers test a beta version of a website or tool. The website is not complete, and bugs are to be expected, but the point of a beta is to ensure that the user experience aligns to user expectations. Developing and testing a beta tool is a development best practice.

Content Management System (CMS): A CMS provides a human-friendly way to manage the content that goes into a website, such as text, photos, video, etc. By creating a system that can manage this content, a CMS enables non-developers to update, delete and create new website pages and easily add content throughout the site.

Data Catalog: The written documentation and inventory of the actual data points available to power an API, and how developers can access them, is called a data catalog. A quality data catalog includes business rules that define where data comes from, parameters regarding its content, and how it is computed.

Business Rules: The business rules are the guidelines that describe proper use of data, including when certain data should and shouldn't be used, how data points interact and when data is considered out of date.

Data Repository: A data repository is a collection of multiple, but related databases accessed by an API used to power a website.

Sitemap: A sitemap is a visual flow chart showing the structure of how information will be organized on a website. A sitemap allows developers and designers to work from a common understanding of which pages link from a main page, which pages link from a subpage, and so on.

Wireframe: A wireframe is a visual representation of how a single web page type will be organized. For most websites, three to five wireframes are developed for various page types, such as the homepage, a news page or other interior page. Wireframes are turned into templates by the front end designers, and used repeatedly throughout the site.

ESSA PUBLIC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Section 111(h)(1)(C) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that every state "prepare and disseminate widely to the public" an annual report card. It directs states to ensure the report card is concise, presented in an understandable and user-friendly format, developed along with parents and presented "to the extent practicable" in a language parents understand. The law prescribes a number of "minimum" requirements for data and descriptions that should be included in the state report card. Note: data elements that include the parentheses (cross-tabulation) must be provided in such a way as to allow cross-tabulation at the state level by race/ethnicity, gender, English learner and not English learner, and students with and without disabilities.

Descriptions

- The state's accountability system, including
  - Minimum "n size" for student subgroups
  - Long-term goals and interim measures of progress for all students and each student group
  - Annual indicators
  - System for differentiating school performance, including the weights assigned to each indicator, the methodology for identifying a school as consistently underperforming for any group of students, and the methodology for identifying a school for comprehensive support and improvement
- Names and number of schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement and names and number of schools identified for targeted support and improvement
- Exit criteria for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, and for targeted support and improvement

Data Requirements

- Academic achievement of all students and each student group – including homeless, military dependent, and foster-care students – for each assessment and at each level of achievement (cross-tabulation)
- Performance on the "other academic indicator" for elementary and middle schools, and the four-year adjusted cohort high school graduation rate for all students, all student subgroups, and homeless and foster care students (cross-tabulation)
- Number and percentage of English learners attaining English language proficiency
- Performance on the "other indicator or indicators of school quality and student success" for all students and each student subgroup
- Progress toward meeting the state's long-term goals and interim measures of progress for all students and each student group

- Percentage of students assessed and not assessed, for all students and each student group (including racial and ethnic group, economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged, students with and without disabilities, English learners, male and female, migrant students) (cross-tabulation)
- For the state and each LEA, the measures of school quality, climate, and safety required by the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool programs, the number and percentage of students enrolled in accelerated coursework to earn postsecondary credit and in dual- or concurrent enrollment programs
- Teacher qualifications, disaggregated by high-poverty and low-poverty schools, including the number and percentage of inexperienced teachers, principals, and other school leaders; teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials; and teachers teaching outside of the subject or field of certification
- Per-pupil expenditures of federal, state, and local funds for each LEA and school, including personnel and non-personnel expenditures
- Number and percentage of students with severe cognitive disabilities who take the alternate assessment, by grade and subject
- NAEP results for mathematics and reading for 4th and 8th for the state and as compared to the national averages
- Postsecondary enrollment cohort rate for each high school, where available, for enrollment in public postsecondary institutions in the state, private postsecondary institutions inside the state, or postsecondary institutions outside the state

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Feedback and Engagement

1. Who should be involved?
2. At what points should they be involved?
3. How should they be involved?

Data and Content

1. What data and performance metrics will be reported?
2. How do we ensure data used in the report card are of the highest quality?
3. How do we provide assurance that data on the report card protect privacy?
4. What steps can we take to increase timeliness of data?
5. Are the measures defined clearly and consistently?
6. Are there opportunities to streamline reporting?

Design and Structure

1. Who uses the report card? Why and how are they using it?
2. How should information be prioritized?
3. How can information be communicated through text?
4. How can information be communicated through visualizations?
5. How can the design and content promote accessibility?
6. What functionality does the report card need to support its primary users?

Development and Sustainability

1. How will the state manage the development process?
2. How will the state plan for continuous improvement of the report card?

INTERNAL SEA COLLABORATION

Internal SEA

Executive office: As with any SEA initiative, the vision of the executive office or team should be reflected in the purpose of the state report card. Key considerations: Why is the report card important? What value does it bring to improvement efforts? How does it align with the overall vision of successful schools? By clearly articulating the answers to other teams within and outside the SEA, the communications team can help maintain alignment to the executive office's vision.

Data information office: The information office will be central to the report card effort. They will need to be consulted to ensure the business rules are complete, data flow is clear, sources of relevant data are identified, and the appropriate representatives are included in data transfer and reporting efforts.

Assessment: The assessment office is responsible for statewide summative assessment data that serve as the foundation for much of the state report card. This team will likely own the process for selecting, calculating, and communicating the assessment results. The assessment team will work closely with others in the SEA to ensure internal and external stakeholders understand the data, how it's applied to other initiatives, and how to best use assessment data.

Accountability: For those SEAs that have accountability and assessment teams in the same office, there should be a natural partnership between team members. In places where the offices are distinct, SEAs should foster a close interaction to promote policies and business rules that account for the nuances of the assessment.

Standards/instruction/curriculum: The standards/instruction/curriculum teams understand the techniques that are effective in instructional efforts when using assessment and accountability information. It is important to involve these teams early and often so they can help reflect the perspective of local agencies and schools and serve as an ally for the SEA when contacted by districts and schools. Furthermore, they can help develop resources to facilitate the use of report card data for selecting instructional improvement strategies at the school and district levels.

School improvement/federal programs: These teams will serve a vital role in the ESSA accountability system. Because they help clarify the system of supports and interventions for local agencies and schools, they will need to have a thorough understanding of the data used for accountability determinations and how parents and other vital stakeholders can use the data.

SAMPLE PARENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

This is a sample. If it is helpful, we encourage you to adapt it to reflect your state's context and needs.

Context for Parents: *Before you begin to engage parents in a conversation, be sure to set the context for why you are asking questions and how you plan to use their feedback.*

Introduction: Every year, our state generates school-level report cards to illustrate performance. Our state is committed to sharing information with parents in a timely and easy to use manner. We are interested in your feedback on how to improve our state's report card.

In addition to our state's commitment, in late 2015, a new education law was passed by Congress known as the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA. This law replaces No Child Left Behind and gives states more control and power over their school systems. The goal of ESSA is to make sure that every student in the state has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education. It calls for much of the same work that schools are already doing, such as holding all students to high standards and using quality tests to better understand where students need to improve. ESSA also requires that states publicly share how every school and district in the state performs on an annual report card.

Opening question: In the month of X, our state releases these report cards. Do you remember receiving this report card or information about it?

IF NO:

- Do you remember ever receiving information about the report card?
- What do you know – or have you heard – about the report card?

IF YES:

- How did you receive the reports? When did you receive them?
- Were you given any information about how to read or use the report cards? If so, was this information useful?
- What was the first thing you did once you read the report card?
- What did you look for? Were you able to find it?
- Did reading the report card prompt you to think of additional questions? Did you know who to speak with to get those questions answered? If yes, did you reach out to anyone with those questions?
- Was there any information not included in the report card that you wish had been included?
- After you first read the report card, did you find yourself coming back to it at a later time? If so, for what purpose?

Distribute a copy of the report card to each parent.

Framing: Please spend the next 7 minutes reviewing the report card individually. We will then have a group discussion.

- What are three things that stood out to you?
- What about the report card did you find most appealing? Why?
- What about the report card did you find the most confusing? Why?
- Is the report card missing any information?
- Is there any irrelevant information displayed?
- Does the order of the information help or does it make it more challenging to read the report card?
- Do the charts/graphics help you understand the data or do they make it more challenging to read the report card?

Closing Discussion:

- Is there any other kind of information that you would want to see on the report card that we have not yet discussed?
- How would you like to receive the report card? (i.e., direct mail, e-mail, the backpack channel, in-person during parent/teacher conference)
- Would you rather see a collection of different kinds of data on your child's school? Or an overall rating, like a number or letter grade, so that you could easily rank schools across the state? Or a combination of the two?
- How might our state better use our report card to call attention to places that are making tremendous improvement and/or excelling? How might our state use the report card to call attention to critical equity gaps?

Closing Reminder: Before you adjourn, be sure to thank participants and remind them how you plan to use their feedback.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING PARENTS IN FEEDBACK SESSIONS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents a unique opportunity for state education agencies (SEAs) to meaningfully engage a variety of stakeholders in the development of their state and school-based report cards. Parents are one stakeholder group in particular that SEAs have traditionally faced a challenged in reaching and connecting with in effective and meaningful ways. One of the most common and effective ways of obtaining parent input is through informal feedback sessions. In doing so, there are important guidelines to remember to make the most of parent feedback and to foster sustained, trusting relationships.

The following recommendations build on the Parent Engagement Guidelines for SEAs and Discussion Framework that CCSSO developed with the National PTA and Learning Heroes in November 2016 to support SEAs in better engaging parents as stakeholders in the development of state ESSA plans. These recommendations are based on qualitative research conducted across twenty states and multiple national surveys. It identifies effective strategies for in-person feedback sessions and is designed to help states make the most of these efforts. For additional parent-friendly resources, including FAQs, webinars, and supplemental materials, visit http://www.bealearninghero.org or https://www.pta.org/essastate.

✓ **Include a diverse group of parents.**

- You should ensure you have a diverse set of parents in your feedback session, as there are often different priorities, concerns and opinions among them. It's unrealistic to expect that you will reach a scientifically representative group of parents, but you should try your best to reach as many demographics as possible. You should consider the following characteristics:
    - Race and ethnicity
    - Education levels
    - Income levels
    - Language (you should hold sessions for Spanish speaking parents)
- Hold sessions in various areas of the state so you can reach urban, suburban and rural parents. Depending on the size and population of your state, you should try to have a minimum of three focus groups that cover different geographies.
- To have a meaningful, manageable discussion, try to keep your session between ten and thirty parents. As groups get larger, it's more difficult to get input from everyone present.

- For historically hard to reach populations (including Spanish speaking, low-income, etc.), consider partnering with community or religious organizations, or parent organizations such as the PTA, that have trusted and established relationships with these parents. They can be integral messengers to share information, encourage participation and co-lead sessions.

✓ **Make it convenient.**

- In the literal sense—meet parents where they are! Consider parents in various communities across the state and which locations would be the most convenient for feedback sessions. If a school is not centrally located, consider a location that is, and is also easily accessible via public transportation.
- Hold sessions at different times of day for parents who work different shifts or hold multiple jobs. In addition to the traditional evening meetings, offer a morning or early afternoon session. You may even want to ask parents first what time works best for them.
- Record or livestream in-person meetings and share the link via text and email for parents who are unable to attend.
- Think about amenities parents may need during sessions. Will they need childcare? If it is being held during a meal time, can you serve refreshments? Offering both of these tend to increase parent participation.

✓ **Meet parents where they are.**

- Gauge parents' understanding and perceptions of report cards in order to clarify any disparities or address knowledge gaps in language they understand. Information should be shared in a basic and factual manner. If it is not, it may be perceived as propaganda and therefore not trustworthy. Make every effort to be as specific as possible.

✓ **Leverage effective communication channels.**

- Parents' preferred communications channels are email and text. If districts, schools, or other community organizations have existing list serves, leverage them to share information about the opportunity to attend a feedback session.
- Text messaging can be a useful method in confirming, reminding, and follow up with participants.
- In addition to email and text, you may also consider posting information on a school/district or PTA website, using social media, and sending hard copies home through the mail and/or the backpack channel.
- Consider partnering with community-based organizations that would be willing to lead feedback sessions. In many states, these organizations have more established relationships with parents and may be viewed more positively than the state education agency.

✓ **Make the content relevant.**

- In an effort to create demand for the school level report cards, provide context and explain why they are important for parents—to give them information about how their child's school is performing and where improvement is needed.
- Talk about the report cards as a tool they can use to make more informed decisions and advocate for their child. Parents can use school level report cards much in the same manner they use student report cards: to measure progress and course-correct when necessary.
- Parents do not prioritize the same data policymakers and leaders do.
- They are more interested in information that directly impacts their child and they want multiple measures. To some level, they find every type of information useful. Ask questions to understand how parents prioritize measures, and you may want to consider providing a bank of measures for them to choose from.
- Ask questions designed to provide you with an evidence-base of the following:
    - Information parents want included on a school report card;
    - How they want to access the information;
    - How they will use the school report card; and
    - What language they do and do not understand.

✓ **Use evidence-based parent-friendly language.**

- Internal taxonomy should not be external messaging. Not only does policy language not resonate with parents, it is often misinterpreted, which can perpetuate misinformation.
- Be cautious in assuming parents have a common understanding of 'standard' policy language. Common terms such as growth, proficiency, achievement gap and culture and climate are interpreted differently by parents.
- Only use policy language and technical terms when absolutely necessary, and provide clear definitions to avoid misinterpretation.

✓ **Be transparent about the findings and thoughtful in how they are used.**

- Upon the conclusion of all stakeholder engagement efforts, analyze the feedback to uncover the overwhelming and consistent themes. Determine how it impacts the development and language of your report card. Ask the following questions:
    - What specific information do parents want to see on the report card? What is possible and realistic for us to include?
    - Were there clear recommendations on how parents want to access the report card?
    - What feedback did we receive that we cannot realistically implement?

    - What language resonates with parents?
    - What is parents' current level of knowledge about report cards and accountability? What supplemental information will we need to provide?

- Summarize and publicly share what you've learned and what decisions were made as a result of the learnings. Participants will need to see how their feedback was used in order to feel valued. If there was no clear agreement on a topic or question during discussion, be honest and discuss how a final decision was reached. Be explicit that the work is collaborative and not consensus-based, and therefore not *all* feedback could be implemented, but also be sure to share rationale for why feedback may not have been used.

✓ **View stakeholders as consumers and partners.**

- Do not think of this engagement as an isolated event, but as an opportunity to build sustainable relationships with parents, which can create more positive perceptions about the state's education agency and a more vested interest in the changes taking place.
- Continue to listen to parents. Identify additional opportunities for parent and family engagement to demonstrate that you value their input.

RESOURCES

CCSSO, 2016. Let's Keep This Conversation Going Guide.

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- Georgia Department of Education
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- Kansas State Department of Education
- Learning Heroes
- Michigan Department of Education
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- New Mexico Public Education Department
- Ohio Department of Education
- Oklahoma State Department of Education
- SAS
- Tembo, Inc.
- West Virginia Department of Education
- Wyoming Department of Education

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FYI

EDUCATION WEEK

ESSA Brings User-Friendly Makeover of State Report Cards

By Daarel Burnette II

October 20, 2017

Back to Story

Consumers have long slapped state-issued school report cards with a failing grade. Parents and statisticians alike have lodged complaints about their dizzying, colorless rows of data punctuated with jargon, clauses, and meaningless explainers.

Now, those much agonized-over and politically fraught web portals for conveying how schools stack up are set for a head-to-toe makeover, both in how they look and the information they provide.

The **Every Student Succeeds Act** requires states to visualize in an "easily accessible and user-friendly" way plenty more data points than was required under **No Child Left Behind**, including school-by-school spending, stats on teacher and principal quality, school discipline rates, and preschool, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate offerings —all broken out by more than 10 student subgroups.

In all, states will have to shove into its report card an estimated 2,107 data points about its public school system, the Council of Chief State School Officers predicts.

It's an effort to break away from test dependency, paint a more "holistic" view of schools and jolt local communities into adressing disparities and lagging results.

But how to organize and visually display that taxonomy of school success on departments' websites has sparked a wide-ranging debate over the politics of language, the explicit and implicit meanings of color shades, and what parents want—versus what they need—to know about their local schools.

"People were hurt that the emphasis on school success [under NCLB] was based on a single end-of-the-year test score," said Brennan McMahon Parton, the director of policy and advocacy for the Data Quality Campaign. "Now, under ESSA, there's a requirement for painting a much bigger picture. But this is a real test of prioritization. As a state, you're saying, 'here's what our priorities are and here's how schools are doing based on those priorities. We value and trust this information because we're making it available to you."

State report cards have long been described by parents and educators alike as clunky, confusing and close to impossible to navigate.

Transparency Builds Trust

New ESSA Requirements

The Every Student Succeeds Act requires states to create and publish annual report cards that include a wealth of data broken out by student racial and economic subgroups and, for the first time, for military, foster, and homeless students. Among the key elements:

- A description of the state's accountability system and a definition of its indicators and ranking methodology.

A 2016 study by the Data Quality Campaign found that more than a third of state departments buried their report cards in hard-to-find corners of their websites, 10 states hadn't for years updated test scores and graduation rates, and only four states actually met No Child Left Behind reporting requirements, even though the law was passed 15 years prior.

"This lack of transparency breeds mistrust between families and the education systems serving their children," the organization concluded.

In recent years, startups, local school districts, and companies like Great Schools have replaced state departments' report cards, relying on their own data and ranking methodology. That's helped worsen a gap between parents' perceptions of their local schools' performance and how schools actually perform in states' accountability systems.

While a third of America's students meet state reading and math standards, 90 percent of parents think their child is doing perfectly fine, according to a survey conducted by Learning Heroes.

Community members are sometimes baffled when the state comes in to take over an academically failing school.

"If a parent believes that everything is humming along and going well, and they don't have very specific information of where their child's or school's needs are, they're not taking actions most needed because they don't know what problem needs to be solved," said Bibb Hubbard, the founder and president of Learning Heroes, a nonprofit that consults with states to develop more parent-friendly report cards.

Redesigning report cards is one of the most laborious and tricky tasks under ESSA. States must come up with common definitions for things such as absenteeism and school spending, figure out a way to collect all the new data from its districts, and, most politically vexing, design a way to publicly display all that data in digestible chunks on their (sometimes outdated) websites.

State departments and their boards in the coming months will be tugged in several different directions by business leaders, politicians, and education advocates on what to highlight on report cards and how to highlight it.

Even among parents, the primary report card consumers, needs vary depending on where they live and what they're looking for.

"It's as much politics as it is data availability," said David Stewart, the founder of Tembo, which has been hired to redesign several states' report cards, and the former school accountability director of New York City's Department of

- Where schools rank on the state's accountability system.
- A breakdown for different types of students of schools' standardized test scores and a cross-tabulation of student data.
- The number of inexperienced, ineffective, and out-of-field principals and teachers.
- Graduation rates
- Disciplinary data including student arrest rates, out-of-school and in-school suspensions, and incidences of violence, including violence and harassment.
- The state's results and ranking on the National Assessment of Educational Progress compared with the national average.
- The number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool programs, Advanced Placement courses, and International Baccalaureate courses.
- The per-pupil spending rates by school, with a breakdown of "personnel" versus "non-personnel" costs and how much of that money came from the local, state, and federal government.

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers

State Report Cards

Georgia

Georgia plans to revamp its state report card to include baseline information (with no glossary or explanation of scores) and then a series of tabs to direct consumers to more in-depth data. Its prior report card was criticized for being cluttered, clunky, and hard to understand. Interact with the image below to see key factors.

Education. "How much information do you want to allow parents to know and how refined do you want that information to be?"

State departments this fall have launched statewide tours to survey the public and test different design types, and most plan to release redesigned report cards in late 2018 or the spring of 2019.

Many departments are attempting to strip from their report cards the jargon that has long confused parents (does school climate refer to the discipline or temperature in the school?).

At least four states won't come up with single scores for their schools, allowing the public to draw their own conclusions of school quality using an array of information on the report cards.

And the majority of states indicated in their ESSA plan that they will use a "dashboard" to display school success.

Similar to the dashboard of a car, the style of reporting categorizes indicators of success and lets users dive more deeply into areas they're interested in.

But critics say this style is confusing to parents.

Twelve states will create letter grades calculated with lots of data inputs and a weighted formula.

Detractors say that style is oversimplistic.

A handful of states, including California, Louisiana, Georgia, and Nevada have already redesigned their report cards or plan on launching them in the coming weeks.

Those states' report cards are much more nimble than their previous ones, with spaced out columns, tabs, filters and pie charts; a sort of choose-your-own venture display style. Schools can be compared to other schools with similar demographics or to a states' most successful schools.

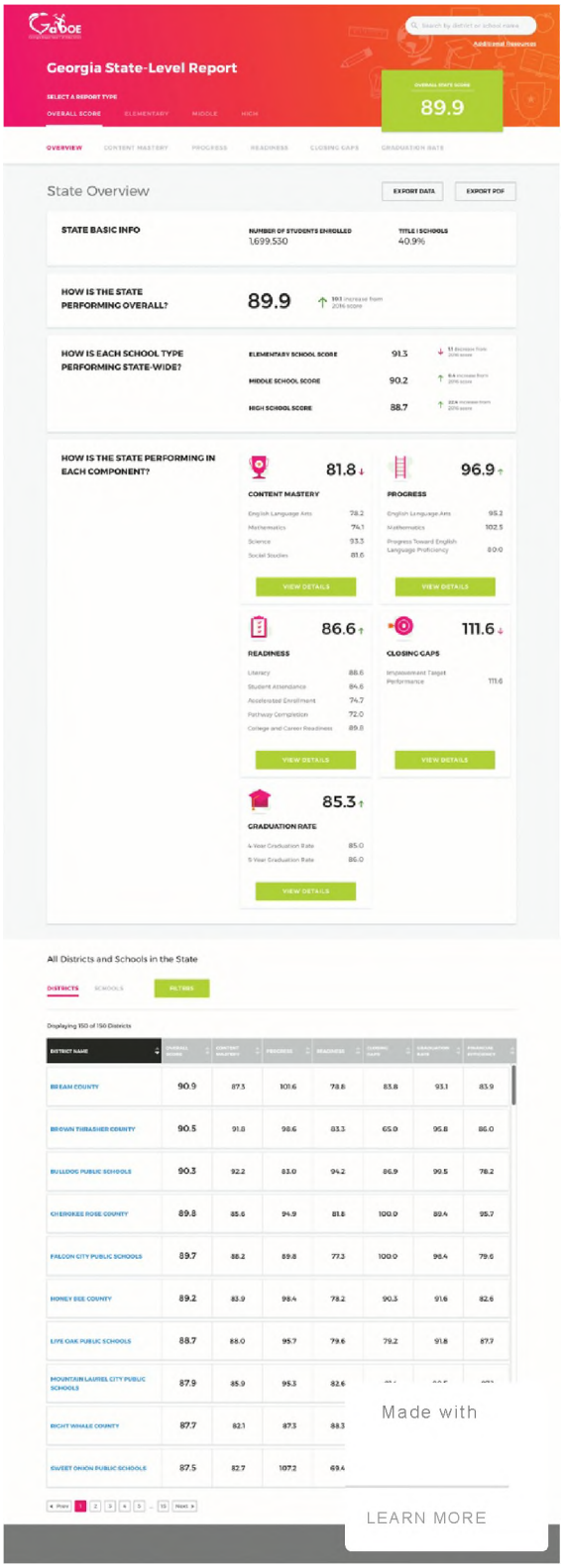
In some states, new report card designs have been highly controversial.

The Los Angeles Times' editorial board referred to California's redesigned report card as an "indecipherable" and a "color-in-the-blank chart."

State board chair Michael Kirst said he was pleased with the outcome.

"I expected a lot of controversy and we got it," he said.

Terri Hodges, Delaware's PTA President said their group got so frustrated with the state's old report card they invited Great



Enlarge this image.

California

The state's redesigned report, like those in many states, is using a dashboard

Schools to the PTA's annual conference to help parents learn how to use the Great Schools report card instead.

The state's department of education has held a series of meetings in the past few weeks asking the public what they'd like to see in the new report card.

"We've seen so many initiatives that have really been nothing more than attempts to label and define our schools, casting most of them in a negative light," Hodges said. "If this is done correctly, this can be a fantastic opportunity for Delaware to guide the conversation."

Louisiana's department of education will release its redesigned report card, funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, next month. The redesign process took more than a year and a half and involved extensive debates over how to display achievement gaps between racial groups, which shades of orange, blue, and red to use for the state's letter grades and whether to prioritize student progress over performance.

"Report cards are only as good as the conversations that go along with them," said Annie Morrison, the state's director of educator communications. "We realize, we're releasing this great new shiny new tool but unless we at the state level are ready to have conversations with leaders and advocates about what this data means, we can still keep parents in the dark."

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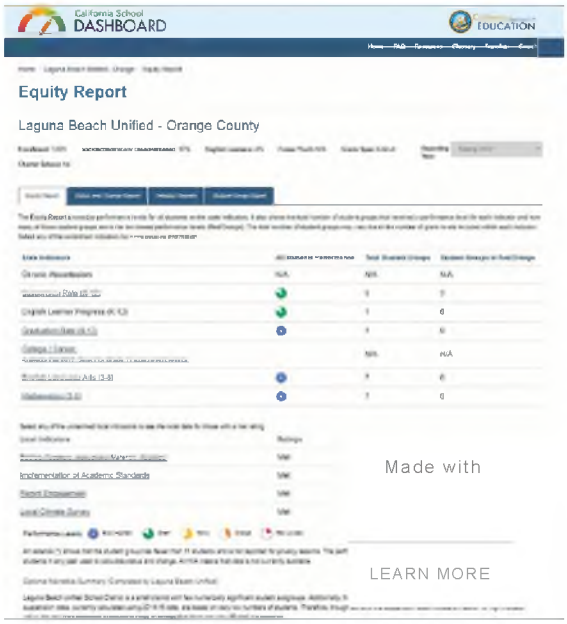
approach to display school quality. Interact with the image below to see key factors. *California does not provide an overall rating.*



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ASCD® ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURE *Examples*

The following measures are some examples of metrics that could be included in accountability systems and are not intended to be an inclusive list. Please note that all data can be analyzed by current performance and performance over time (growth). Also, all data can be disaggregated or presented as opportunity or achievement gap calculations. Finally, academic data (from test scores to course data) can encompass multiple subjects and need not be limited to reading and math.

ACADEMIC LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)	SCHOOL SAFETY/ CULTURE/CLIMATE	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES	FAMILY/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY
Standardized test scores	Student self-reports of SEL skills	Attendance rates	Teacher and leader certification/evaluation/ qualification data	Survey results	Preschool enrollment rate
Subject-specific program reviews/audits	Teacher reports of students' SEL skills	Truancy rates	Teacher satisfaction/ school climate survey results	Volunteer rates	High school readiness rate
Performance-based assessment results	Survey responses related to student SEL skills	Disciplinary incident data	Teacher-student ratio	Expanded learning opportunity data	Graduation rate
Participation rates in rigorous courses (i.e. AP, IB, dual enrollment, early college)	SEL performance assessment results	Suspension and expulsion rates	Counselor-student ratio	Parent-teacher conference attendance	College acceptance rate
Performance in rigorous courses (exam results or course passage rates)	SEL classroom observation results	School climate survey results	Staff retention rates	Community funding/ resource/ donation data	College enrollment and completion rates
College assessment results		Opportunities for student voice/ leadership	Per-pupil funding, instructional expenditures, and/or other resource data	Data on formal partnerships with community-based organizations, businesses, higher education institutions, etc.	Employment status
College/career readiness indicators		Student engagement indicators	Technology/library/ professional development access and quality data		Scholarship data
The percentage of students who have earned industry certifications		Data on bullying incidents	Facilities inspection scores		Data on breadth and quality of curriculum offerings (the arts, technology, career, health and physical education, etc.)
Percentages of students hitting final grade benchmarks in key courses		Updated school safety plan	Staff attendance rates		Extracurricular offerings and participation rates
Percentage of high school graduates requiring college remediation					Dropout recovery rate
Employer satisfaction rates					English language learners redesignation rate*
Progress on individual learning plans					Student with disabilities referral data*

*There are numerous indicators that can track the performance of and opportunities for specific populations of students. These two metrics are provided as examples of such data.

September 2017

Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework:

Opportunities to Integrate Early Childhood in ESSA Toolkit

CEELO
Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers

Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

One of 22 Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) will strengthen the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes. CEELO works in partnership with SEAs, state and local early childhood leaders, and other federal and national technical assistance (TA) providers to promote innovation and accountability.

www.ceelo.org

The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

www.ccsso.org

Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework: Opportunities to Integrate Early Childhood in ESSA Toolkit

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BACKGROUND

In our work with state and local leaders, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO), have seen remarkable progress and momentum around birth to third grade learning. More K-12 education leaders understand the critical effects of children's early years on their future success and growth, and appreciate the potential for high-quality early learning experiences to help close achievement gaps. Increasing access to Pre-K and full-day kindergarten, the spread of quality rating and improvement systems, and increased attention to the early childhood educator workforce are all signs of important progress at the state and local levels.

This increased leadership, commitment, and knowledge is not, however, always reflected in state plans for school improvement. For many years, most states' measures of school performance began with third grade, in accordance with the requirements of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The federal law has now changed, and with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states can seize the opportunity to better align their school improvement plans with what we know about child development and early learning from birth to third grade.

This toolkit provides a framework and research base for states to explore these possibilities. There are concrete steps state education agencies can take in the short- and the long-term to include the early years in state school improvement plans, in pursuit of much larger goals around improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps.

1. INTRODUCTION

The early years of a child's life lay the foundation for his or her later success and long-term outcomes. One powerful illustration of this is third grade literacy: Children who can read fluently by third grade are six times more likely to graduate high school on time than those who cannot.[1] School accountability systems in the United States tend to *start* measuring success at third grade, even though children begin developing critical language, literacy, and numeracy skills and foundational content knowledge long before they reach third grade, ignoring everything that came before. States and school districts across the country are beginning to fix this problem, and focus more of their school improvement and achievement gap closure strategies on the early years.

1 Donald Hernandez, "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation," Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in 2015 and being implemented now, gives states significant flexibility to keep moving in this direction. States have options to include different measures in their school quality rating systems as well as the structures used to support and improve schools. If states seize this opportunity in smart ways, they can reflect a research-based, holistic understanding of the importance of high-quality early childhood education, while encouraging schools and districts to focus more on high-quality learning for young children.

This toolkit helps states identify ways to integrate early learning more fully into their state accountability and school improvement systems. This paper will outline actionable steps for states who have incorporated early learning into their current ESSA state plans and states interested in emphasizing these early years as they implement and revise their ESSA state plans in coming years. Although ESSA requires states to create accountability systems that meaningfully differentiate schools, this paper is meant to help states move beyond a conversation about "accountability" that starts and ends solely with rating schools, and instead include a full spectrum of school improvement supports, interventions, and public reporting tools.

This toolkit is designed to help bridge the gap that too often exists between state policymakers involved in early childhood and K-12 education policy. It is a guide for those individuals tasked with crafting and implementing state plans, including state accountability chiefs, school improvement specialists, early learning directors, and data directors. It can also help advocates and community members understand the range of options available to their states and school districts, and push for early learning to be a key piece of the ESSA conversation.

What do we mean by early learning?

Research on child development and learning trajectories suggest that **birth to age eight**, or birth to third grade, are the pivotal years for child language development and learning. To achieve their full potential, children need high-quality learning experiences throughout these years. This definition bridges the divide between early childhood and K-12 education systems in most states and state education agencies have varying levels of oversight for children below kindergarten age. For this reason, many school-driven opportunities begin when school begins, in Pre-K or kindergarten. But access to high-quality early education before children reach school age is still extremely relevant to states' long-term educational goals. The specific grades and age groups that states choose to prioritize within the birth to age eight continuum may vary in the short term, but in the long term states should build toward an aligned birth through third grade approach that includes Pre-K, Head Start, Early Head Start, child care providers, and elementary schools.

This work is timely as states continue to work with stakeholders to create plans to support and improve schools for the 2017-18 school year and beyond. Over the longer term, states will evaluate, refine, and revise their systems, creating even more opportunities in the coming years. As states begin to implement and modify their plans and flesh out details not required for federal approval, there are other important

opportunities for states and school districts to emphasize early learning outside of the Title I/ School Improvement sections of ESSA state plans,[2] as well as in state and local policies and funding streams beyond the federal law.

The toolkit starts with a review of the evidence supporting an early learning approach to school improvement. Then, we explain how early learning could fit within the framework of state ESSA plans. In particular, we focus on four potential opportunity areas for states to consider:

1. Indicators used in formal school differentiation systems;
2. Interventions and supports for low-performing schools;
3. Transparency and public reporting; and
4. School district accountability and improvement.

Finally, we review a list of potential indicators of access, academics, and engagement in early childhood education. These indicators were drawn from the research and vetted by a CCSSO/ CEELO working group of state education officials and experts on both early childhood education and K-12 school accountability. This sections also outlines the considerations for states to integrate those indicators into their plans.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LEARNING

State education agencies looking to improve long-term student outcomes, accelerate educational progress, and close achievement gaps cannot afford to ignore the years before third grade. Without consideration of the developmentally critical years of birth-grade three, a school accountability system may end up presenting a more limited portrayal of school quality. In addition, it may not provide sufficient information to drive the improvement efforts that are needed to see changes in student outcomes. Multi-decade evaluations have shown that children with access to high-quality early learning see both short-term gains and long-term benefits in terms of educational attainment, health, decreased incarceration rates, and increased earnings.[3] Early skills in math, reading, and attention are predictive of later school achievement,[4] but too often opportunity gaps for disadvantaged students in the early years translate into persistent achievement gaps in third grade and beyond.

2 Laura Bornfreund, Harriet Dichter, Miriam Calderon and Amaya Garcia, "Unlocking ESSA's Potential to Support Early Learning." New America Foundation, 2017.

3 Yoshikawa, Christina Weiland, et.al., "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education," the Foundation for Child Development, 2013, 10-11.

4 Greg Duncan, et. al., "School readiness and later achievement," *Developmental Psychology* v.46 n1, 2008.

While research shows that high-quality early learning has positive effects for students, there are concerns about how to sustain those effects over time.[5] Some studies have shown that impacts of isolated early childhood interventions decrease as students progress through elementary school. This informs the rationale for an aligned and comprehensive birth through third grade approach, where each year of learning builds upon the last. A recent consensus report from leading early education researchers emphasized that the benefits from high-quality Pre-K programs are more likely to last if early elementary grades build upon Pre-K gains with rigorous and engaging educational opportunities.[6]

A focus on early learning, including the early years of elementary school, can jump-start student achievement by targeting resources and attention in the years when children learn the most. As Figure 1 shows, the greatest growth in year-over-year reading scores occurs in kindergarten, followed by first grade and then second grade. Throughout the years from birth to third grade, children are building numeracy and social-emotional skills, executive function, and content knowledge that will serve as a foundation for learning throughout their lives.

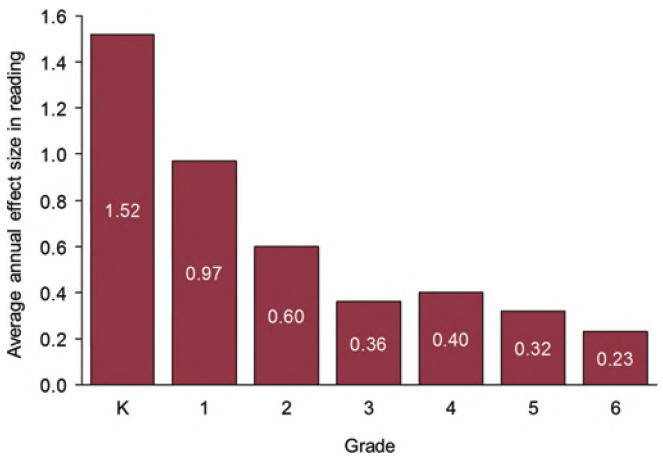


Figure 1: Average Annual Gain in Effect Size, Nationally Normed Reading Tests

Source: Tara Kini and Anne Podolsky, LPI, 2016

Prioritizing early learning also presents an opportunity to limit achievement gaps before they have a chance to grow, and to ensure a higher overall level of student success and well-being. Achievement gaps emerge among children as young as 18 months old,[7] and one-third to one-half of the achievement gap between black and white students that exists at the end of their K-12 education is already present by the start of first grade.[8] Knowledge and skills build on each other over time, and students who start out significantly behind their peers tend to stay behind, absent early interventions. For states unable to shift the needle on persistent

5 Kathryn Tout, Tamara Halle, Sarah Daily, Ladia Alberston-Junkans, and Shannon Moodie, "The Research Base for a Birth to Age Eight State Policy Framework." Alliance for Early Success and Child Trends, 2013, 21.

6 Deborah A. Phillips, Mark W. Lipsey, Kenneth A. Dodge, Ron Haskins, Daphna Bassok, Margaret R. Burchinal, Greg J. Duncan, Mark Dynarski, Katherine A. Magnuson and Christina Weiland, "Puzzling it Out: The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects, A Consensus Statement." *The Brookings Institution*, 2017.

7 Tamara Halle et. al., "Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)," *Council of Chief State School Officers* and *Child Trends*, June 2009.

8 Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, eds., *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

achievement gaps and improve outcomes for disadvantaged students, paying more attention to early childhood may yield long-term dividends.[9]

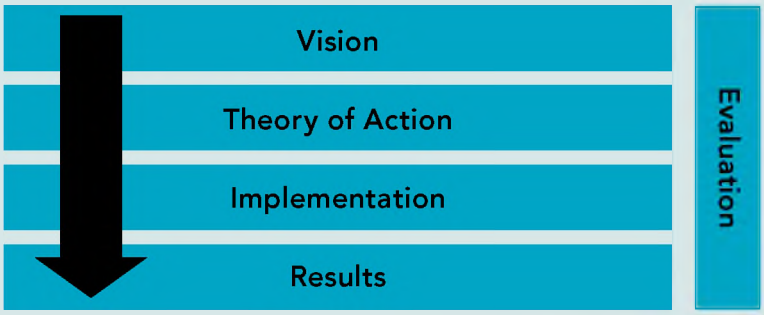
Given all the evidence supporting a focus on early learning, why has it been mostly absent from accountability and school improvement conversations up to this point? The reasons are both technical and policy related, but they can be overcome. First, standardized assessments used by states are not developmentally appropriate for young students, and more appropriate assessments can be prohibitively time-consuming, costly, and less reliable at scale.[10] There is also a risk that tying student outcomes in the early grades to high-stakes school accountability metrics could have

Fitting Early Childhood into a State's Strategic Vision and Theory of Action

If a state is considering emphasizing early learning within its state plan, it is important to first understand how all the components fit together, within a strategic vision for the state's priorities and an aligned theory of action. For a more detailed guide to creating a strategic vision, see CCSSO's recently published *"State Strategic Vision Guide"*. A strategic vision establishes state leaders' top education priorities, independent of ESSA or accountability. A theory of action establishes a plausible chain of events for how that vision will be realized. If part of a state's vision is high-quality early and elementary education, universal third grade literacy, and closing achievement and opportunity gaps for subgroups of students, birth to third grade strategies should be a component of the theory of action.

A theory of action will help states specify how the complex components of an accountability system will come together to create change in schools, and help them navigate the decisions and tradeoffs that arise in pursuit of those goals. States should strive for simplicity, clarity, and fairness across their plan, while providing a holistic and honest picture of school quality across all grades.

Each state's vision and theory of action will be unique, which is why it is impossible to precisely define the ideal pathway for including early childhood in state plans, but decisions should be informed by data, evidence, and research, and continuously monitored and improved throughout implementation via evaluation and monitoring. For an example of a state with an explicit state vision and school improvement theory of action in their ESSA plan, see Tennessee.*



*Tennessee ESSA state plan published April 3, 2017, page 74, available on Tennessee.gov/education

9 See, for example: Allison Friedman-Krauss, W. Steven Barnett, and Milagros Nores, "How Much Can High-Quality Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps?" *Center for American Progress* and *National Institute for Early Education Research*, 2016.

10 W. Steven Barnett, Shannon Riley-Ayers, and Jessica Francis, "Measuring Child Outcomes in the Early Years," *Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes Policy Brief*, v 2015.

harmful effects such as curriculum-narrowing or over-testing. State and local policies have also been a barrier. Limitations placed on accountability systems under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) prevented some information about performance in the early grades to be directly considered. As a result, state systems did little to encourage school leaders to invest time and resources in those years. Worse, researchers have found evidence that schools shifted their best teachers and additional resources into the grades that "counted" for accountability purposes.[11]

While the challenges and risks are real and persistent, the evidence on the importance of early learning is too strong to ignore. In the following sections we show how options for states have opened up, making now the right time to encourage and measure high quality early learning in the context of ESSA.

3. THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

Now is the right time for state accountability decision-makers to expand their school improvement strategies to include early learning. In late 2015, Congress passed ESSA, which calls on states to design a consolidated state plan that must be in place by the 2017-18 school year. States are currently developing and submitting their state plans for federal approval, but that is only the first step; most states will continue to refine and revise their systems as they implement their plans.

ESSA allows—but does not require—states to build on their existing efforts and emphasize the early years as a key systemic piece of educational excellence, which means states do not have to do everything at once. There are both short-term, simple action steps that states can take now, and longer-term, more ambitious opportunities for states to develop over time. For states that have never stressed an early learning approach to school improvement, simply reporting out more performance indicators at birth-grade three levels could be a meaningful step in the right direction. For states looking for a more ambitious, systemic approach, or already implementing a birth to third grade strategy, there are few limitations on what a state can do to embed that strategy throughout state plans.

While much public conversation around ESSA focuses on school ratings systems, ratings are just one of many areas where early learning can be integrated into states' school

11 Jason Grissom, Demtra Kalogrides, and Susanna Loeb, "Strategic Staffing: How Accountability Pressures Affect the Distribution of Teachers with Schools and Resulting Student Achievement," *Vanderbilt University* working paper, 2014.

improvement efforts – specific opportunities for state policymakers to consider are explored in further detail in section four. What's more, ESSA differs from previous federal requirements in that it provides more flexibility for determining how multiple indicators can be combined to produce an overall school rating. Practically speaking, this means early learning indicators and other factors can affect school ratings and encourage systemic change in schools, districts, and states.

While there are benefits to increasing attention to early learning in state accountability systems, there are also real risks, which states should take into account as they design their plans. The perception of high-stakes by leaders and teachers, combined with narrowly defined measures of success, can affect adult incentives and behaviors in ways that are detrimental to students. Poorly designed systems can lead those being held accountable to "game" the system in unproductive ways. For this reason, sections four and five of the toolkit include pros, cons, and key considerations for both broad opportunity areas and specific early learning indicators.

Smart strategies for measuring school success and encouraging improvements in the early years may differ from strategies for older students.

Smart strategies for measuring school success and encouraging improvements in the early years may differ from strategies for older students. This is especially true because reliable and developmentally-appropriate measures of educational quality for younger students are still evolving.[12] But there are still many strong options for states to consider. The next section discusses what ESSA requires and allows, and how high-quality early learning could be embedded within those parameters.

4. HOW TO EMBED EARLY LEARNING IN ESSA STATE PLANS

In this section we explore what ESSA requires and allows, and outline some action steps for states to consider in each of these areas. ESSA state plans should not only design a system to rate school quality, it should set forth a vision for school quality and education improvement for the state, which includes the early years. Four broad areas of state plans present promising opportunities for increasing focus on early learning as a key part of school improvement:

12 Elliot Regenstein and Rio Romero-Jurado, "A Framework for Rethinking State Education Accountability and Support from birth through high school," *The Ounce Policy Conversations* n5, 2016.

1. **Meaningfully differentiating schools**
2. **Interventions and supports for low-performing schools**
3. **Transparency and public reporting**
4. **School district accountability and improvement**

These areas offer a framework for how states can prioritize early learning in their state ESSA plans. Each of the four indicators represent areas (or strategies) of the state plan that are complementary, and to maximize the impact of any one area, states should align their approaches across all four. A state accountability system works, in part, by sending messages to schools, districts, and community members about what a high-quality school looks like. An aligned framework that shows school districts how early learning can be addressed in a way that provides coherence to school differentiation, interventions, and school report cards. District accountability plans should send the message that early learning is a top priority, and encourage schools and districts to take actions that will benefit young students.

After explaining broad areas of state plan opportunities in this section, section five goes into a more granular level of detail by looking at individual indicators of high-quality early learning, the evidence and rationale behind them, and how they might best fit into a state plan.

OPPORTUNITY 1: SCHOOL QUALITY RATINGS

ESSA requires states to develop formal, high-stakes school rating systems to identify low performing schools and schools with large achievement gaps, based on at least five indicators. Those indicators must include:[13] Although all states will have submitted their ESSA state plans, which includes their school quality rating systems, to the US Department of Education for review and approval by September 18, 2017, states will have the opportunity to revise their state plans through the amendment process in the coming years. Many states have articulated in their state plans that they will revisit the configuration and inclusion of indicators in their accountability system in the coming years as states continue to work with stakeholders and implement their systems. States are committed to continuously improving their state accountability systems for the 2017-18 schools year and beyond.

1. Academic achievement as measured by proficiency in state tests in grades 3-8 and once in high school;
2. A measure of student growth or another valid and reliable academic indicator, for elementary and middle schools;
3. High school graduation rate, if applicable;
4. English language proficiency; and
5. At least one indicator of school quality or student success.

13 ESEA§ 1111(c)(4)(B)

While ESSA prescribes some standards and boundaries for these rating systems, the measures are largely left to states. But ESSA clearly signaled that states should move beyond a focus on test scores in reading and math by including other indicators of school quality or student success. States must use their differentiation systems to identify the lowest-performing five percent of schools in the state for "comprehensive support," and schools where one or more groups of students are "consistently underperforming" or low-performing for "targeted support."[14] States have some discretion about how to weigh these indicators, and could elect to include multiple indicators, or an index measure, in their systems.[15] Any indicator included in the accountability system under ESSA must meet a relatively high bar for quality:[16]

While ESSA prescribes some standards and boundaries for these rating systems, the measures are largely left to states.

1. It must be valid and reliable;
2. It must "meaningfully differentiate" across schools;
3. It must be measured consistently statewide within each grade span; and
4. It must be reported annually for all students, and for subgroups of students.

States should take extra care in considering indicators for inclusion in school ratings; not everything educationally important is appropriate for high-stakes ratings. First, any indicator in a school rating system should be something that a school could reasonably work to improve by changing their practices, rather than something external to a schools' control. For instance, kindergarten-readiness is important for students' learning, but is something most schools can only influence indirectly. Second, putting heavy stakes on a single indicator could create incentives to "game" the system to improve ratings without improving students' educational experiences. Those caveats aside, there are some ways that early learning could be better emphasized in formal school rating systems:

The Second Academic Indicator for Elementary and Middle Schools

What ESSA Says: An academic indicator for elementary and middle schools beyond reading and math test proficiency is a required element of school ratings.[17] This could be "a measure of student growth", or "another valid and reliable statewide academic indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance."[18]

14 ESEA§ 1111(c)(4)(C)

15 ESSA requires other indicators to be given a "substantial weight" and "in the aggregate, much greater weight" than the indicator of school quality and student success

16 Erika Hall, "Identifying a School Quality/Student Success Indicator for ESSA: Requirements and Considerations," *Council of Chief State School Officers*, January 2017.

17 ESEA § 1111 (c)(4)(B)

18 ESEA § 1111 (c)(4)(B)

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: A longstanding barrier to including early grades in school improvement systems has been a dearth of developmentally appropriate academic outcomes measurement tools that meet reliability and validity standards for inclusion in school quality ratings, and reflect a well-rounded early learning approach. There are concerns that even valid and reliable measures of academic outcomes in early grades could have adverse effects in a rating context, by encouraging educators to narrow curriculum to fit assessments. States could pilot or explore non-traditional academic indicators for Pre-K through second grade. Current evidence in this category is insufficient to recommend a specific measure, but additional research and investment from states will be critical to advancing the field around this topic.

Indicator of School Quality and Student Success (A.K.A. the fifth indicator)[19]

What ESSA Says: ESSA requires states to include at least one indicator of "school quality or student success," in their formal school rating systems and gives the examples of student engagement, educator engagement, access to advanced coursework, postsecondary-readiness, school climate and safety, or any other indicators that meet the standards above.[20] This indicator, which could incorporate multiple indicators and measures, will require states to go beyond the NCLB-era reliance on assessments and graduation rates as the sole measures of school quality.[21]

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: ESSA sets a high bar for indicators included in school ratings, but several indicators applicable to birth through third grade could be considered for the indicator of school quality or student success, including:

- Any measures that could be easily reportable and applicable at the subgroup level for all grade levels, such as chronic absenteeism or student discipline, if states' are planning to use these measures in later grades. These measures could all be defined similarly across all grades, and there's no reason to exclude grades Pre-K to third.
- For measures that align with later grades, states could consider adding extra weight or "double-counting" the early grades in the ratings system to emphasize their importance.[22]
- Teacher/student interaction measures or observation tools, such as Classroom Observation Scoring System (CLASS), a widely used observational measure primarily used in early childhood and elementary school settings (see further details in the sidebar below and in section 5). Incorporating these measures in state accountability systems could have the dual benefit of aligning quality measures across the birth to third grade continuum and focusing attention on quality of instruction across grades.

19 (c)(4)(B)(v) of Section 1111 of ESSA

20 (c)(4)(B)(v) of Section 1111 of ESSA

21 Hall, 2017

22 Elliot Regenstein, Maia Connors, Rio Romero-Jurado, "Valuing the Early Years in State Accountability Systems Under the Every Student Succeeds Act," *The Ounce Policy Conversations* n5, 2016.

School Quality Ratings Spotlight: Teacher/Student Interaction Measures

Many states use teacher/student interaction measures as quality indicators and improvement tools in early childhood settings. Washington, D.C. and Louisiana have done so in ways that connect to their state plans and overall accountability vision. Both use the Classroom Observation Scoring System (CLASS), an observational measure of teacher/student interaction. CLASS is available in versions designed for infant/toddler programs through high school, but is most frequently used in Pre-K and other early childhood programs (see section 5 for more details on CLASS and other observational measures of teacher quality).

D.C. is unique in that almost every elementary school has Pre-K classrooms for three-and four-year-olds. In D.C., CLASS has been used for several years as a citywide Pre-K performance measure in a representative sample of 3- and 4-year-old classrooms. CLASS for Pre-K is also used as a measure of school environment in the D.C. Public Charter School Board's Performance Management Framework, the accountability tool for charter schools. Now, D.C.'s ESSA state plan includes CLASS for Pre-K as one measure in their indicator of school quality and student success, which they call the school environment indicator. School environment measures make up 25/100 points of a schools' overall rating; CLASS counts for three potential points. The other measures D.C. plans to use in this indicator are attendance/absenteeism, re-enrollment rates, and a measure of access to well-rounded education.

In Louisiana, the state department of education (LADOE) uses CLASS as a quality measure in publicly funded early childhood settings (birth through Pre-K). LADOE chose CLASS as a common statewide measure of early learning quality as part of implementing a 2012 state law focused on early learning and kindergarten-readiness, called Act 3. Every publicly funded early childhood education classroom is observed multiple times per year. Local early childhood education networks coordinate these observations. In 2015-16 the state published CLASS results for the first time after several pilot years. In 2016-17 the state rated Pre-K and childcare programs based on their CLASS scores. Now, Louisiana is continuing to refine the ratings for early learning settings, while exploring and piloting CLASS in early elementary school grades. These scores may eventually be incorporated into elementary school quality ratings.

D.C. and Louisiana are using this same measure in different ways: D.C. will use CLASS as a component of school ratings, while Louisiana will use it as the primary performance measure for Pre-K classes and childcare centers, separate from elementary school ratings. Both took multiple years to implement this tool as a way to measure, emphasize, and improve early childhood instructional practices, and are sharing those results with schools, families, and the community. These examples can show other states how to take their time in implementing new measures of early learning quality, adapt uses to local context and needs, and maintain transparency throughout the process.

OPPORTUNITY 2: INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Once a state rating system identifies schools in need of support, states will oversee school district improvement processes and provide general support to all schools and districts with low-performing schools. In that capacity, states should help schools and districts identify strengths and weaknesses via a comprehensive needs assessment, and then create effective improvement plans. There are ample opportunities throughout this process to integrate and emphasize early learning. Specific elements of state plans include:

Needs Assessments and Improvement Plans for Schools Identified for Support

What ESSA Says: ESSA requires states to identify at least two categories of schools: 1) comprehensive support and improvement schools, which are overall the lowest performing schools in the ratings systems,[23] and 2) targeted support and improvement schools, in which a subgroup of students is consistently underperforming. States must define identification criteria as part of the school ratings system, review school district improvement plans for comprehensive support schools, and require more rigorous actions for identified schools if improvement stalls.[24] While states' ESSA-prescribed roles supporting targeted support schools are more limited, states can shape school improvement via guidance, technical assistance, and support to school districts.[25]

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: When states review and approve improvement plans put forward by comprehensive support schools, they can ask elementary schools to conduct a rigorous and comprehensive needs analysis on their early learning investments and outcomes. Indicators that might not be fair or appropriate in the context of a ratings system could be extremely useful in diagnosing root causes of the schools' challenges and creating a successful plan of action. These indicators might include student health and wellness measures, kindergarten-readiness, formative assessment results, and/or access to extended learning opportunities. States could require their low-performing elementary schools to examine birth to third grade indicators in designing their improvement plans, and share guidance on early learning action steps to consider as part of an evidence-based school improvement plan. For example, schools may realize they need to implement a more rigorous curriculum and teacher coaching in grades K-two, introduce more wraparound health services

When states review and approve improvement plans put forward by comprehensive support schools, they can ask elementary schools to conduct a rigorous and comprehensive needs analysis on their early learning investments and outcomes.

23 ESEA § 1111 (c)(4)(D)

24 ESEA § 1111 (d)(1)

25 ESEA § 1111 (d)(2)

in schools to reduce early absenteeism, or support professional development in local early learning centers to improve kindergarten-readiness.

Exit Criteria for Schools Identified for Comprehensive and Targeted Support

What ESSA Says: Beyond identifying low-performing schools and designing improvement plan guidance, states must determine the criteria and timeline by which schools can demonstrate enough improvement to exit from low-performing status, and specify any restrictions or increased monitoring that might come from continued low performance.[26]

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: Even if states do not include early childhood indicators in their school rating system, states could use these indicators as a progress measure for elementary schools seeking to exit low-performing status. This would encourage low-performing schools to focus on early learning strategies that might not have an immediate test score payoff, but could set the school up for growth and success in the long term. Examples include investing in high-quality Pre-K, or improving classroom observation scores in early grades. States should not use early learning indicators as exit criteria unless the state has validated that exit measures are predictive of later success, and ensured that schools have a strong plan to sustain learning gains.

State Support and Funding for Low-Performing Schools

What ESSA Says: States must reserve seven percent of their Title I allocation to support school improvement efforts in low-performing schools.[27] These funds, known as Section 1003 funds, represent roughly one billion dollars nationwide at present authorization levels. 95 percent of these funds must pass through to schools identified as in need of comprehensive and targeted support,[28] while states can reserve the remaining five percent to support their own statewide school improvement activities.[29] State have discretion over whether they distribute these funds via a competition, a formula, or some combination of both. States must also recommend evidence-based school improvement approaches to schools across the performance spectrum. States must provide various supports, technical assistance, and resource allocation oversight to districts with low-performing schools. Another three percent set-aside for "Direct Student Services" could be used for things like expanding full-day kindergarten or public Pre-K.

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: States can integrate early childhood approaches and indicators in school district grant applications for Section 1003 funds, and other funding streams related to school improvement. Embedding those priorities in grant applications and review criteria would encourage school districts to examine their own data, use evidence-based interventions in early grades, and explain how they are using funds to expand and improve early childhood services. In designing technical assistance and

26 ESEA § 1111 (d)(3)(A)(i)

27 ESEA § 1003

28 ESEA § 1003(h)

29 ESEA § 1003(b)

support delivery systems, states could also guide funding priorities and support activities in support of high-quality early learning. States could use a portion of their Section 1003 funds for state-level early learning professional development opportunities, such as training for elementary school principals on the key competencies and skills around early literacy and child development.

Special School Categories

What It Is: Beyond the minimum requirements of ESSA, states could choose to identify special categories of schools for extra support, attention, and resources focused on improvements in birth to third grade. States could apportion technical assistance and competitive funding opportunities to schools in need of birth to third grade support, which may not necessarily appear in the ESSA-prescribed improvement categories.

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: States could use early learning indicators to identify schools most in need of support and improvement in the early years. For example, schools scoring poorly in a combination of third grade reading, Pre-K access, kindergarten entry assessment, and family surveys could be placed in an "early childhood" improvement cohort, and be given technical assistance, access to supplementary funds, and training around evidence-based interventions.

Transparency and Public Reporting Spotlight: School Report Cards and Early Childhood

ESSA increases data and reporting requirements for states. Redesigning state report cards could be an important opportunity to integrate information that highlights birth to third grade data for families and community members.

For example, Michigan's school report card website, MISchoolData.org, includes an early childhood section with data including early childhood program enrollment, kindergarten-readiness, early childhood special education program enrollment, and K to third grade absenteeism rates. Data are available at the state, district, school, and subgroup level.

The New York City Department of Education, which offers public Pre-K in schools and community-based programs, publishes Pre-K quality snapshots alongside elementary/middle and high school quality snapshots. While Pre-K quality measures differ from other school quality measures, the reports share a common format, organized around the district's "framework for great schools". Families can look at these reports and see the alignment between Pre-K and K-12 quality standards.

OPPORTUNITY 3: TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC REPORTING

ESSA requires states to report a wide variety of data in publicly-available school report cards. These report cards are a crucial vehicle to define school quality and engage the public on the attributes of a high quality school, including high-quality early learning experiences.

School Report Cards

What ESSA Says: ESSA requires states to publish public-facing school "report cards" with specific data points on student performance, demographics, funding, and other metrics. CCSSO's estimate found that each state will need to report thousands of distinct data items.[30] ESSA requires states to include the number and percentage of children enrolled in preschool on report cards, along with school spending.[31] If a state chooses to use any birth to third grade indicators in its ratings system, these must also be included in the report card, and states are free to add other data components as well.

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: Early childhood indicators are particularly well-suited to report cards, as they could be valuable to parents making decisions about where to live and where to send their children to school. For states that want to emphasize early childhood education but feel that currently available data are not ready for high-stakes ratings systems, report cards and other transparency measures are a low-stakes way to encourage schools and school districts to improve their offerings, and emphasize the importance of birth to third grade years. As previously mentioned, reporting out data per grade level could draw attention to disparities and challenges for children in early grades (see the example from Michigan at right). By including school spending data in report cards, there is an opportunity to increase budget and spending transparency around early learning, and encourage resource equity for early grades. There also may be environmental data about schools that are relevant to early learning, such as the availability of community resources, afterschool programs, health and wellness information, or community access to Pre-K. To the extent possible, states should align indicators from Pre-K through later elementary school years in report cards, so parents do not receive conflicting or confusing messages about school quality.

OPPORTUNITY 4: SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT

While ESSA sets a minimum framework for school accountability, states and school districts have the option to look beyond compliance as they design school accountability and improvement systems. One area not required by ESSA, but particularly important for early learning is the role of school districts. Many resource allocation, goal setting, and improvement strategy decisions around early learning are made at the district level, not by individual schools, and state accountability systems could take this into account. Specific district-focused approaches to consider include:

30 Penn Hill Group, "State Report Card Requirements Memorandum," *Council of Chief State School Officers*, 2016.

31 ESEA § 1111(h)(1), (2).

State-Directed School *District* Accountability Systems

What It Is: While ESSA delegates significant responsibilities to states, and it ultimately asks states to hold *schools* accountable for performance. States can surpass ESSA's expectations by designing accountability metrics for school districts, distinct from but aligned to school ratings. If states spotlight quality and equity at the district level, they can address important aspects of schooling that are generally outside of any one schools' direct control.

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: School districts are usually better positioned than individual schools to make budgetary decisions and form partnerships with early childhood education providers working with children ages zero to five. For this reason, it states should think of access to Pre-K and equitable resource allocation as *district* responsibilities. Also, if a state wants to emphasize instructional quality in early grades, but does not have sufficient resources to observe every classroom in every school, observational measures of early learning quality could be sampled at the school district level, and school districts could be rated on early learning quality over a multi-year period.

School District Internal Improvement Efforts

What It Is: All school districts should seek to continuously improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps, regardless of whether the state or federal government directs them to do so. ESSA leaves many school improvement decisions in the hands of school districts, especially around targeted support and improvement (achievement gap) schools. For these reasons, school districts may want to design their own improvement systems and strategies for early learning beyond what ESSA or the state require, customized to their particular schools and communities. The state can provide assistance and guidance to help districts pursue continuous improvement with early learning quality in mind.

It is both appropriate and essential that districts use formative and interim student outcome data from Pre-K through third grade to identify, understand, and respond to patterns of student learning, including strengths and weaknesses.

Opportunity to Embed Early Learning: In addition to taking actions required by the state accountability systems, districts could use more detailed, comprehensive early childhood indicators to guide improvement in schools and make strategic decisions about resources and staffing. It is both appropriate and essential that districts use formative and interim student outcome data from birth through third grade to identify, understand, and respond to patterns of student learning, including strengths and weaknesses. This is substantially different than using these indicators at the state level because the district has direct responsibility and

control over instructional and staffing decisions in their schools. Districts also understand their community landscape better than the state, and can identify opportunities to work in partnership with early learning providers, community organizations, and other local agencies on early childhood strategies that can facilitate out-of-school conditions for student success, such as health and wellness, family engagement, community resources, summer learning opportunities, and more. States can support and encourage districts doing this work in several ways. For example, states could create cohorts or learning communities of district leaders interested in improving early learning systems, encourage districts to use ESSA funding streams to work with community-based early learning providers, and reward districts leading the way on early learning.

5. EARLY LEARNING INDICATORS

There are many indicators available today that states could use to measure and encourage high-quality early learning, some of which would not require additional data collection. Potential early learning indicators states might consider can be grouped into three categories, which represent different aspects of educational quality:

1. **Access indicators**, which measure student access to learning experiences in and out of school;
2. **Academic indicators**, which measure instructional quality or student learning outcomes; and
3. **Engagement indicators**, which measure satisfaction or engagement with school climate, environment, and/or culture.

This section dives deeply into 13 potential early learning indicators that represent all three indicator types, and focus on birth to third grade. Each includes a rationale as to why and how an indicator might be valuable, selected key research and resources, potential measures, and examples of states and school districts already using these indicators in various ways. Not every indicator is appropriate for use in school quality ratings or other high-stakes uses, as explained below, but many could be useful in the context of school support or transparent reporting. It is not necessary or advisable for states to include every single indicator below in their ESSA plans; rather, it is important that each state understands the breadth of options available to measure and encourage improvement in early learning, and consider how they fit in with the states' overall goals, visions, and theories of action.

Early Learning Indicators, by Type of Indicator (click on an indicator name to jump to more detailed information about that indicator)		
ACCESS	ENGAGEMENT	ACADEMIC
Chronic Absenteeism	Chronic Absenteeism	Teacher Qualification/ Effectiveness
Student Discipline	Student Discipline	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results
Teacher Absenteeism	Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)	Teacher Observations, Instructional Quality Reviews, Teacher/student Interaction Measures
Teacher Qualification/ Effectiveness	School Climate Measures	Formative or Diagnostic Assessments of Academic Progress
Access to Resources	Social and Emotional Learning	
Access to Full Day Kindergarten		
Access to Publicly-Funded Pre-K		
Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)		

1. Chronic absenteeism

ESSA Opportunities: School Quality Ratings/Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type: Access/Engagement
Age range: Pre-K through grade 12

Considerations:

- Research points to a strong relationship between absenteeism and learning outcomes, and higher rates of absenteeism for disadvantaged students can widen achievement gaps.
- Chronic absenteeism rates differ from truancy rates and average daily attendance in that they include "excused" and "unexcused" absences as well as suspensions.
- Attendance information is already collected by states.
- States and districts can point schools towards root cause analyses of absences such as discipline policies, family engagement transportation systems, health and wellness.
- Absenteeism should not be so heavily weighted in ratings systems as to create inequitable ratings for schools with high-poverty student populations or significant transportation challenges, which are likely to result in higher rates of absenteeism.
- Absenteeism metrics should be accompanied by supports and resources for schools to address root causes of absenteeism and improve attendance.

Potential measures:

- Vary by state, but must include both excused and unexcused absences from school, and suspensions.
- The most common definition of absenteeism is the percent of students missing ten percent or more of school days to-date; this can be continuously monitored and tracked throughout the year.

Use cases:

- California's CORE School Districts were among the first to incorporate chronic absenteeism into their school rating systems.
- Maryland requires schools to report the percentage of students absent for more than 20 days, and reports data online via their public report cards.

Key research:

- Robert Balfanz and Vaughn Byrnes, "The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools," *Johns Hopkins University Center for the Social Organization of Schools*, 2012.
  - Explains how chronic absenteeism differs from average daily attendance and truancy, and estimates the positive academic impacts of increased attendance, especially for at-risk students.
- Applied Survey Research, "Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes," *Attendance Works*, 2011.
  - Found that students with high attendance in kindergarten and first grade scored better on third grade tests.
- Melissa Dahlin and Jim Squires, "Pre-K Attendance – Why It's Important and How to Support It," *Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)*, 2016.
  - Profiles state and local efforts to improve attendance in Pre-K, and summarizes frequent root causes of absences in early childhood.
- Attendance Works research collection.
  - Collection of briefs and white papers on chronic absenteeism, focused on early grades and including actionable steps for policymakers.

2. Student discipline

ESSA Opportunities: School Quality Ratings/Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access/Engagement
Age range: Pre-K through grade 12

Considerations:

- Research suggests that high rates of suspension and expulsion (together referred to as exclusionary discipline) reduces students' opportunity to learn, increases likelihood of dropping out or becoming disengaged from school, and disproportionately affects black, Latino, and special education students.
- Schools can reduce rates of suspension and expulsion in a relatively short period of time with focused interventions.
- Suspension and expulsion data are already collected by states.
- A blanket ban on suspensions with no other positive resources or training could lead to backlash from educators and families, or safety concerns in extreme instances.

- Without monitoring, a suspension ban could also create incentives for schools/district to game the system, for instance by increasing in-school suspension without improving disciplinary practices.
- Any action should be accompanied by supports and resources to address root causes of misbehavior, implement more effective and equitable disciplinary alternatives, and improve school climate (see below).

Potential Measures:

- Suspension, expulsion, and overall exclusionary discipline rates and numbers of students impacted
- Percent of total instructional time missed
- Behavioral reasons for discipline
- Discipline equity gaps by student subgroup

Use cases:

- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) worked with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), to target and reduce exclusionary discipline rates as part of an overarching strategy to improve social and emotional learning and implement positive behavior support systems and culture-building strategies in schools. In 2014, CPS implemented a policy of no suspensions and expulsions for children in preschool through second grade.
- Connecticut limited out-of-school suspensions for children from Pre-K through second grade and provided one-on-one behavior management support to schools and childcare providers through a program called the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership.
- Washington state collects, analyzes, and reports on a range of school discipline measures in each grade, and requires school districts to use this data to identify and monitor disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline by student subgroups.
- Washington, D.C.'s school equity reports show the percent of students suspended and expelled for every school and charter school, by subgroup, and include grades PreK-12

Key research:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings," December 10, 2014.
    - Summarizes research on negative effects of suspension and expulsion in early childhood settings, and recommends alternative disciplinary strategies.
- Walter Gilliam. "Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Pre-Kindergarten Programs." *Foundation for Child Development*, 2010.
    - Analyzes data on high expulsion rates and lack of behavioral resources in state-funded Pre-K programs—three times the rate for students in K-12 grades, with particularly high rates for black boys.
- Michelle Horowitz, "Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion," *Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)*, 2015.
    - Collects and summarizes research on suspension and expulsion in early childhood settings, and identifies states with specific policies on discipline in early grades.

3. Teacher absenteeism

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access
Age range: Pre-K through grade 12

Considerations:

- High or chronic absenteeism by teachers disrupts students' learning experiences and is associated with lower academic performance.
- School systems in poor, rural areas and major cities are more likely to have high rates of teacher absenteeism.
- Reporting teacher absenteeism at the school district level is required by the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).
- High or chronic absenteeism by teachers can be improved at the school and district level through focused interventions, and by bringing attention to root causes of teacher turnover and absenteeism.
- High or chronic absenteeism by teachers is not focused on students or easily measurable by student subgroup.
- Policies should not encourage teachers to come to work when ill, or discourage fair parental leave (many teachers use sick leave for this purpose)

Potential measures:

- Teacher Chronic Absenteeism: Percentage of teachers missing ten or more days of regular school, per year (required biennially at the school district level by the CRDC).
- Average Teacher Absenteeism: Days and percent of school year missed by homeroom teachers, by school and student subgroups.
- Substitute Time: Percent of student school days and/or learning time taught by a substitute teacher, by grade and subgroup.

Use cases:

- Illinois reports on the percentage of teachers absent 10 days or fewer in each school as part of their state report cards at the state, district, and school level.
- Aldine Independent School District in Texas implemented an incentive program to reduce teacher absenteeism where bonuses tied to retirement plans were given to teachers with high attendance rates.

Key research:

- Nithya Joseph, Nancy Waymack and Daniel Zielaski, "Roll Call: The importance of teacher attendance," *National Council on Teacher Quality,* June 2014.
    - Using data from 40 large metropolitan areas, finds that teachers have an average 94% attendance rate, 16% of teachers were chronically absent, and many typical attendance incentive programs did not have a significant effect.
- Charles T. Clotfelter, Helen F. Ladd, and Jacob L. Vigdor, "Are teacher absences worth worrying about in the United States?" *Education Finance and Policy* v4 n2 (2009): 115-149.
    - Finds that teacher absences are associated with lower elementary school performance, and high-poverty schools are likely to have higher teacher absenteeism rates. Recommends higher teacher salaries combined with financial penalties for absences.

4. Teacher qualifications and/or teacher effectiveness

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access/Academic
Age range: Pre-K through grade 12

Considerations:

- Teachers are the most important in-school factor in student learning, and too often, the least effective and least qualified teachers are concentrated in high-poverty schools.
- Early childhood education has increasingly focused on workforce training, development, and credentialing.
- States, schools, and districts could increase equitable access to highly-effective teachers, and work to raise the overall level of teacher quality in schools and early childhood programs.
- Teacher quality/effectiveness is not focused on students or easily measurable by student subgroup; effectiveness data may be unreliable depending on state or local definitions.
- Teacher quality/effectiveness is difficult to reliably measure in early grades; many states are retreating from statewide teacher evaluation systems, and these systems are rarely designed for teachers in early grades.
- Degree-based qualifications or years in the classroom, while easier to measure, are not equivalent to teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

Potential measures:

- Percent highly effective teachers, as measured by the state or local teacher evaluation system

Use cases:

- Kentucky requires schools to conduct K to third grade program reviews. Indicators of effective teaching make up the majority of the review rubric, encouraging schools to reflect and improve upon teaching practice in early grades.
- DC Public Schools' IMPACT teacher evaluation system has different frameworks designed for teachers in Pre-K to K, grades one to two, and grade three and beyond.

Key research:

- Council of Chief State School Officers, "Principles for Teacher Support and Evaluation Systems," 2016.
  - Identifies principles for states to create effective and fair teacher evaluation and professional development systems that emphasize continuous improvement.
- Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica* v. 73, no. 2 (2005): 417-458.
  - Estimates teachers' significant impact on student learning, and shows that improving overall teacher quality would have a greater impact on student achievement than reducing class sizes by ten students each.
- National Academies of Medicine and the National Research Council. Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2015.
  - Examines the challenges and opportunities in improving the early childhood education workforce, and blueprint for action in higher education, qualifications, and evaluation. While much is known about what educators of young children should know and be able to do, this knowledge is rarely reflected in preparation and training for early childhood educators or in state and local policies.

5. Access to resources

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access
Age range: Birth through grade 12

Considerations:

- Access to resources that enable great teaching and learning is an important condition for student success in early grades. This can include overall funding levels as well as specific resources such as high-quality, well-rounded curricula (including access to arts, science, and foreign language instruction), facilities, transportation systems, libraries and books, and equitable access to effective teachers.
- Measures should be tailored to community and school contexts.
- In early childhood especially, an engaging and enriching classroom environment; comprehensive, research-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum; and schoolwide resources can facilitate learning growth.
- ESSA requires new school spending on reporting, which could focus public attention and school district actions on equitable access to resources.
- Resource allocation decisions are not always actionable at the individual school level, and cannot be easily disaggregated at the student level.
- States should not penalize innovative or specialized schools via overly prescriptive input requirements.

Potential measures:

- School finance equity
- Curriculum quality audits
- Distance to school and average student travel time
- Access to arts education and/or well-rounded curriculum

Use cases:

- In the March 2017 draft of their state ESSA plan, Massachusetts included a priority area for "increasing student access to an ambitious, engaging, well rounded curriculum," across all grades, with a focus on technical assistance, professional learning, and updated state curriculum frameworks. The state will also add an indicator of curriculum breadth to public state and district report cards.

Key research:

- Linda Darling-Hammond, Soung Bae, Channa M. Cook-Harvey, Livia Lam, Charmaine Mercer, Anne Podolsky, and Elizabeth Stosich, Pathways to New Accountability Through the Every Student Succeeds Act (Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute, 2016).
    - Emphasizes federal, state, and district educational responsibilities in addition to school responsibilities, especially in building system capacity to support high-quality education, and providing adequate, equitable resources to support meaningful learning outcomes.
- Kristie Kauerz and Julia Coffman, "Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches," *University of Washington*, 2013.
    - Lays out the systemic components of an integrated Pre-K to third grade approach, including high-quality instructional tools, and a healthy physical and emotional learning environment, with example indicators.

- C. Kirabo Jackson, Rucker C. Johnson and Claudia Persico, "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* vol 131 n1 (2016): 157-218.
    - Examines school finance reforms and finds that a ten percent increase in per-pupil spending results in more completed years of education and greater economic stability in adulthood, especially for students from low income families.

6. Access to full day kindergarten

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access
Age range: Kindergarten

Considerations:

- While the vast majority of students in the U.S. attend full-day kindergarten (over 75 percent in 2014), in some communities it remains unavailable, or only available on certain days.
- States could encourage districts to offer full-day kindergarten if they have not already done so.
- If most or all school districts in the state offer full-day kindergarten, this measure would not differentiate between schools or districts, and thus would not be useful.
- Offering full-day kindergarten is not always actionable at the school level, as school districts typically make most decisions in this area.
- Providing access to full-day kindergarten does account for the quality of those kindergarten programs.

Potential measures:

- Percent of entering first-graders who previously attended full-day kindergarten
- Percent of schools and/or districts offering full-day kindergarten

Use cases:

- Nebraska reports the percent of districts offering kindergarten programs that are half-day, full-day, every other day, or another configuration on its state report card website.
- Massachusetts offers targeted state incentive grants for districts transitioning half-day kindergarten classrooms to full-day classrooms, as well as full-day kindergarten quality enhancement grants to help schools use that time effectively.

Key research:

- Chloe R. Gibbs, "Experimental Evidence of Early Intervention: The Impact of Full-Day Kindergarten," *University of Virginia Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy*, 2014.
    - Randomized trial found full-day kindergarten had substantial positive academic effects, especially for students with low literacy skills upon kindergarten entry.
- Elizabeth Votruba-Drzal, Christine P. Li-Grining, and Carolina Maldonado-Carreno, "A Development Perspective on Full-day vs. Part-day Kindergarten and Children's Academic Trajectories through Fifth Grade." *Child Development* v.79 n.4 (2008).
    - Full-day kindergarten was associated with greater growth of reading and math skills during kindergarten, but faded soon after. This is in part explained by differences in the children who attend part- and full-day kindergarten as well as school characteristics.
- Education Commission of the States. "50-State Comparison: State Kindergarten Policies." 2014.
    - Summarizes kindergarten funding, entry, and attendance policies by state.

7. Access to publicly funded Pre-K

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access
Age range: Pre-K

Considerations:

- About 40% of American four-year-olds attend publicly-funded Pre-K. Over 43 states have state-funded Pre-K programs and Head Start programs serve Pre-K age children and their families in all 50 states.
- Reporting Pre-K access on state report cards is newly required under ESSA; states and districts could use this data to encourage further improvements in access and quality.
- States could encourage school district investment in Pre-K and collaboration with local Head Start and Pre-K providers, and greater attention to school-readiness overall.
- This is not always actionable at the school level; school districts typically make most decisions in this area.
- Providing access to Pre-K does not measure quality within Pre-K classrooms, and some have argued that targeted, high-quality programs are a better use of limited resources than access for all without a significant investment in improving program quality.

Potential measures:

- Percent of three-year-olds and/or percent of four-year-olds enrolled in publicly funded Pre-K in a district
- Percent of low-income three-year-olds and/or four-year-olds enrolled in publicly funded Pre-K in a district
- Number of Pre-K seats offered vs. kindergarten class size

Use cases:

- Georgia's state report card on Pre-K includes total enrollment and at-risk student enrollment percentages, and disaggregates enrollment by Head Start and state programs, for every county in the state.
- See "Transparency and Public Reporting Spotlight: School Report Cards and Early Childhood," above.

Key research:

- Hirokazu Yoshigawa, Christina Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinoza, Williams T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow, "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool," *Foundation for Child Development*, 2013.
- National Institute for Early Education Research, "The State of Preschool 2015."
- W. Steven Barnett, "Expanding Access to Quality Pre-K is Sound Public Policy," National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013.

8. Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS)

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Access/Engagement
Age range: Birth to age five

Considerations:

- Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) combine financial incentives, quality ratings, and professional development services with the goal of improving quality in early care and education.
- QRIS are not a single indicator; they are separate state systems for early childhood programs, which can overlap with school-based systems in the case of school-operated Pre-K, though some states exempt this type of program from QRIS.
- State QRIS standards vary in the degree to which they measure effective school-readiness or teaching and learning quality. QRIS standards tend to favor observable inputs, such as health and safety measures and staff credentials, but newer QRIS in states that received Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants often include classroom observation measures such as Classroom Assessment Scoring System CLASS or Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale ECERS.
- QRIS ratings for community-operated and school-operated early childhood programs could serve different purposes in the context of state plans:
    - In states where school-based preschool programs are included in QRIS, incorporating QRIS in school ratings or school improvement efforts could help to align accountability across early childhood and K-12 systems and encourage schools to improve quality in preschool classrooms they operate.
    - Community-operated preschool program ratings could be used as part of a community needs assessment, and could inform strategy for a district-wide kindergarten-readiness improvement effort or school and district partnerships with community early childhood programs.

Potential measures:

- Access to top-rated early childhood programs in the school community
- QRIS ratings for school-based Pre-K programs

Use cases:

- In New York, field testing for the QUALITYstarsNY QRIS prioritized school districts with low-performing schools.
- Washington state's QRIS, called Early Achievers, requires all state Pre-K and childcare programs receiving a public subsidy to meet a certain quality standard.

Key research:

- James Elicker and Kathy R. Thornburg, "Evaluation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for Early Childhood Programs and School-Age Care." Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2011-11c, *Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, April, 2011.
    - Summarizes key measurement and design considerations for effective QRIS.
- BUILD Initiative, Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families, 2015.
    - Uses interview from state leaders to profile lessons from early QRIS efforts, including systems-building at the state and local level, integrated data systems, and trends in workforce improvement.

9. School climate measures

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/School District Improvement

Type of indicator: Engagement
Age range: Pre-K through grade 12

Considerations:

- School climate is an overarching term for the experience of students and staff in a school beyond explicit academic offerings and outcomes, including five key dimensions: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, institutional environment, and school improvement processes.
- Research indicates that strong performance on school climate measures is positively associated with a range of academic and behavioral outcomes.
- School climate measures usually involve staff, student, and/or family surveys, and may integrate other measures such as discipline and attendance.
- Measuring school climate could balance out perceived over-emphasis on assessments, focus on student and family engagement, and encourage holistic approach to school improvement.
- Most student surveys are designed for grades three and up; Pre-K to second grade surveys must be administered one-on-one or in small groups. Parent or staff surveys, or other measures, could be used in early grades.
- Survey responses could be altered if high-stakes are applied, and measures may not be sufficiently reliable for public reporting, school-to-school comparison, or disaggregation by student subgroup.

Potential measures:

- There are several survey instruments publicly available or on the market that measure school climate, varying in time, cost, and design. Most are designed for third grade and up. Additionally, some states and districts have designed their own surveys or composite measures of school climate.

Use cases:

- As part of its Maine Schools for Excellence initiatives, Maine developed its own school climate survey tools. These include a K to grade two student survey component and K to grade two school climate resources.

Key research:

- Amrit Thapa, Jonathan Cohen, Shawn Guffy, and Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro, "A Review of School Climate Research." *Review of Educational Research* v83 n3, (2013).
    - Reviews 206 studies on school climate and recommends a whole-school approach to improvement plans for low-performing schools aligned to multiple measures of school climate quality.
- Ming-Te Wang and Jessica L. Degol, "School Climate: A Review of the Construct, Measurement and Impact on Student Outcomes." *Educational Psychology Review* v28 n2, (2016)
    - Proposes a multidimensional school climate framework focused on how school climate impacts student outcomes, and reviews research and available measures of school climate.

10. Social and emotional learning (SEL)

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/School District Improvement

Type of indicator: Engagement
Age range: Birth through grade 12

Considerations:

- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning identifies five core social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
- Research indicates that students with strong SEL skills do well in other academic and long-term life outcomes. SEL development is particularly crucial for students during early childhood, when brain development is most rapid and students build foundations for future learning.
- SEL in interrelated with school climate.
- Research in this area is emerging; comparable, reliable measures of SEL skills and knowledge are still in development. Measures may not be sufficiently reliable for public reporting, school-to-school comparison, or disaggregation by student subgroup. In addition, many existing measures are time-consuming and labor-intensive to administer.

Potential measures: There are many measurement tools available for SEL skills (see Denham, below), but most are designed to measure one or more specific social-emotional skills or domains of social-emotional skills, rather than "social-emotional learning" as a broad concept. As such, schools, districts, or states would need to select measures aligned with students' age groups, as well as with intervention and specific skills they are focused on building/improving among students.

Use cases:

- States could encourage schools to include SEL interventions in their school improvement plans, and offer a recommended list of evidence-based interventions and measures of progress by age group.
- School districts, like the CASEL partner districts, could conduct SEL needs assessments in their schools and design a comprehensive SEL plan focused on early grades. This could include specific SEL curriculum changes, professional development, out of school time offerings, school climate initiatives, counseling services, etc.

Key research:

- Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, Allison B. Dymnicki, Rebecca D. Taylor, and Kriston B. Schellinger, "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions." *Child Development* v.82 n. 1. (2011): 405-432.
    - Meta-analysis of 213 different schoolwide SEL initiatives from K-12 students finds improved SEL skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance.
- Joseph Durlak, Celene Domitrovich, Roger Weissberg, and Thomas Gullotta (Eds.), Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice. New York: Guilford Press, 2015.
    - In-depth book examines conceptual, scientific basis for SEL, and provides guidance on implementing and evaluating school and district SEL approaches.

- Susanne A. Denham, Peter Ji, and Bridget Hamre, "Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary School Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures," *University of Illinois at Chicago and CASEL*, 2010.
    - Summarizes available measurement tools for SEL in early grades, aligned to various SEL skills and competencies.

11. Kindergarten-readiness assessment results

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Improvement

Type of indicator: Academic/Access
Age range: Administered in kindergarten, measures Pre-K and early childhood

Considerations:

- Most states are in some stage of development or implementation of a kindergarten-readiness assessment (KRA, also called kindergarten entry assessments or school-readiness assessments).
- Generally these assessments are intended to inform kindergarten teachers and schools about the skills of incoming kindergarteners and provide information to families and policymakers at a community and system level about early childhood system performance.
- Most tools have not been validated or designed to hold schools, early childhood programs, or teachers accountable for student-readiness skills. Measures may not be sufficiently reliable for public reporting, school-to-school comparison, or disaggregating by student subgroup.
- In the context of school improvement efforts, KRA results could inform school leaders about the incoming skills of their students, encourage the use of resources on Pre-K quality and other early childhood efforts, and inform professional development and resources allocation decisions.

Potential measures: KRA assessment tools across states are included in this CEELO Fast Fact publication. They include commercially-available assessments, interstate consortia, and state-created assessments.

Use case examples:

- In New Jersey, KRA participation is voluntary for school districts, and results are not aggregated or publicly reported. Instead, the state emphasizes using results as a formative tool in classrooms and as a professional development tool for principals and teachers.
- In Maryland, a KRA has been in place since 2001. KRA results are reported at a state level, and are used to drive improvement; inform families and teachers about students' skills; and advise early learning programs, community leaders, and policymakers on achievement gaps and trends.

Key research:

- Elliot Regenstein, Maia Connors, Rio Romero-Jurado, and Joyce Weiner, "Uses and Misuses of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results," *The Ounce Policy Conversations*, February 2017.
- GG Weisenfeld, "Implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) System." *Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes*, January 2017.
- National Research Council, Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2008.

12. Teacher observations, instructional quality reviews, teacher/student interaction measures

ESSA Opportunities: School Quality Ratings/Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/Transparency and Public Reporting/School District Accountability and Improvement

Type of indicator: Academic
Age range: Birth through grade 12

Considerations:

- Some teacher observations, instructional quality reviews, teacher/student interaction measures have a strong research base linking them to teacher quality and student achievement, and evidence of reliability and validity at the classroom or program level.
- These indicators emphasize instructional quality and teacher-student interaction, which are particularly important domains in early grades, where learning outcomes are harder to measure.
- Instructional quality and teacher-student interaction is under direct school control.
- These indicators could be used to measure and improve teacher quality equity between grades.
- They are not appropriate for public reporting or school quality ratings unless rigorously implemented using valid and reliable measurement tools.
- Rigorous, widespread implementation could be costly and time consuming.

Potential measures:

- The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a widely used observational measure of teacher-student interaction. CLASS is available for infant through secondary grades, but it is primarily used in early childhood and elementary school settings. CLASS measures three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Unlike other popular teacher observation models, CLASS has been validated for use in early childhood education settings.
- Several states have designed their own evaluation rubrics and frameworks for Pre-K through third grade teaching, aligned to state teaching standards.

Use case examples:

- See Louisiana and DC examples on in spotlight, above
- Head Start uses CLASS scores as a framework for high-quality classroom teaching practices and instructional quality, to guide professional development and coaching for grantees, and as a performance measure in the monitoring review process for grantees.

Key research:

- Jeff Archer, Steven Cantrell, Steven L. Holtzman, Jilliam N. Joe, Cynthia M. Tocci, and Jess Wood, Better feedback for better teaching: a practical guide to improving classroom observations, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016.
- Andrew D. Ho and Thomas J. Kane, "The Reliability of Classroom Observations by School Personnel," Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013.
- Jana Martella and Lori Connors-Tadros, "Evaluating Early Childhood Educators: Prekindergarten through Third Grade." *Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research*, 2014.

13. Formative or diagnostic assessments of academic progress

ESSA Opportunities: Interventions and Supports for Low-Performing Schools/School District Improvement

Type of indicator: Academic
Age range: Birth through grade 12

Considerations:

- Formative assessments are designed to give immediate feedback to students and teachers on specific goals or lessons. Diagnostic assessments can screen for delays or disabilities, and give educators a sense of students' incoming skills and knowledge in a certain academic area. A comprehensive system of assessments could include informal teacher-designed tasks, as well as formal, standardized assessments.
- Assessments should be developmentally appropriate and use established norms and standards to determine whether a student is on-track.
- Assessments can provide valuable information to educators and help screen for difficulties, identify trends, inform instruction, and track progress.
- Putting too much weight or stakes on formative tests can undermine their purpose in the classroom.

Potential measures:

- There are many interim, diagnostic, and formative assessment tools available on the market. Some commonly used tools include NWEA MAP, SAT-10, and i-Ready.
- Teachers can also develop their own formative assessment tools, and some states have made their own tools and assessments aimed at Pre-K to third grade.

Use case examples:

North Carolina created a system of K to third grade formative assessments to inform instruction, starting with a kindergarten entry assessment and progressing through third grade. The kindergarten entry assessment launched in 2015-16, and the full system of formative assessments was piloted in 2016-17. The assessments will primarily be used to enhance teacher practice and classroom instruction; results will also be used to guide support, professional development, and targeted funding.

Key research:

- National Research Council, Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2008.
    - An in-depth and comprehensive publication on developmentally-appropriate early childhood assessments and their uses.
- Gregory J. Cizek, "An introduction to formative assessment: History, characteristics, and challenges" in *Handbook of Formative Assessment*, eds. Heidi Andrade and Gregory J. Cizek (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3–17.
    - Defines formative assessment and its role in supporting teaching and learning as identifying students' strengths and weakness, assisting instruction, aiding students in reflecting and revising on their work, and fostering responsibility for learning among students.
- Robert Linquanti, "Supporting Formative Assessment for Deeper Learning: A Primer for Policymakers," *Council of Chief State School Officers*, 2014.
    - Provides recommendations for policymakers to encourage the effective use of high-quality formative assessments without punitive measures or accountability consequences.

CONCLUSION

The early years of child development offer a still-untapped lever for states to address achievement gaps before children start to grow, and to accelerate school improvement efforts with evidence-based interventions. Depending on the state, there may be political and technical challenges that currently exist, but there are a variety of steps that every state can take today, aided by the flexibility and opportunities presented by ESSA.

ESSA presents few barriers for states, and they could use it as an opportunity to take small steps towards emphasizing early grades in school report cards and improvement plans, to pursue more ambitious, fully aligned birth to third grade strategies. No matter the level states are on as they embark on this work, they should design plans that carefully add elements over time, only after these elements have been piloted and monitored. Building in checks around data quality and stakeholder engagement will help ensure that states can make progress without letting policy efforts outpace implementation capacity or public support.

States should recognize the real opportunities for advancing early learning, school readiness, and creating a durable foundation for educational excellence that ESSA presents. Beyond federally mandated school improvement systems, a plethora of other state policies could also benefit from alignment with a statewide vision for high-quality early childhood education, such as educator licensure, quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) for early childcare and education providers, school funding, and more. While this publication does not address these areas in depth, they are no less important and valuable. States have the flexibility to think creatively within and between state and local entities to build bridges and enhance alignment between early education providers and K-12 schools, and create more high-quality learning opportunities for all children, regardless of age. CCSSO and CEELO look forward to supporting states throughout this process.

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EDUCATION WEEK

No State Will Measure Social-Emotional Learning Under ESSA. Will That Slow Its Momentum?

By Evie Blad

October 4, 2017

Back to Story

When the **Every Student Succeeds Act** was enacted, speculation swirled that states might use it as a launching pad to use measures of students' social and emotional competencies to determine whether their schools are successful.

Nearly two years later, not a single state's **plan to comply with the federal education law**—and its broader vision for judging school performance—calls for inclusion of such measures in its school accountability system.

That raises some new questions: Did backers of social-emotional learning miss a chance to encourage wider adoption of its strategies? Or did they avoid the concerns and pitfalls that would have come with attaching it to high-stakes accountability?

Schools that adopt social-emotional learning seek to nurture students' development in areas like self-management and responsible decisionmaking alongside traditional academics. Doing so helps to deepen students' learning experiences and prepares them for interpersonal situations they will later face in the workplace, educators say.

As the U.S. Department of Education works to approve state's ESSA plans, some of social-emotional learning's biggest boosters are expressing relief that states are steering clear of trying to measure such personal skills for accountability.

Existing measures of social and emotional development, which largely rely on students' responses to surveys about their own character traits, are not sophisticated and consistent enough to be used for such purposes, they have long argued.

"There is a groundswell of recognition that the **academic, social, and emotional development of children** are intertwined in all experiences of learning," said Tim Shriver, the co-founder of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL. "I think that's booming... Someone might say, 'Why aren't you holding states accountable for teaching it?' The answer to that is we are not ready for it yet."

At the same time, several of ESSA's other provisions will serve as incentives for schools to consider "the whole child" as they comply with the law, said Shriver, who is also the co-chair of the Aspen Institute's Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development.

Broad Latitude for States

In addition to traditional measures of success like student test scores, ESSA requires states to use at least one additional "indicator of school quality or student success," such as measures of student engagement or access to advanced coursework.

The law gave states broad latitude in which factors they selected, requiring that those measures allow for "meaningful differentiation in school performance" and are "valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide."

Schools must also be able to disaggregate data related to that indicator to show how it affects students in different groups, such as racial and ethnic groups and students with disabilities.

After *Education Week* reported on early drafts of the law in 2015, a flurry of policy watchers and district leaders who had experimented with measuring social-emotional learning wondered if its inclusion as a **school quality indicator** would give schools an incentive to more meaningfully integrate it into their daily work.

Many pointed to **a group of large California districts** that had worked under a 2013 waiver from the previous federal education law, No Child Left Behind, to include social-emotional learning survey results in a complicated system they designed to measure school quality.

Leaders of that effort said the data would serve as a "flashlight, not a hammer," meant to identify and spread successful school strategies. They committed to tweaking and replacing social-emotional learning measures as researchers perfected them.

And there's a public interest in broader accountability as well. In an annual poll released by Phi Delta Kappa International in August, 8 in 10 respondents rated "the extent to which schools help students develop interpersonal skills, such as cooperation, respect, and persistence," as extremely or very important in school quality.

But some of the researchers who've popularized social-emotional learning also said measures of that work are prone to biases that make them unreliable and unusable for accountability purposes.

Currently, "perfectly unbiased, unfakeable, and **error-free measures are an ideal, not a reality**," researchers Angela Duckworth and David Yeager wrote in a 2015 essay published in Educational Researcher that detailed an array of flaws with current measures.

Not Ready for 'Prime Time'

States appear to have responded to those concerns.

Louisiana State Superintendent John White said that social-emotional learning, growth mindsets, and other non-cognitive factors were never under consideration as part of Louisiana's new accountability plan under ESSA.

"The instruments for measuring are not ready for prime time," he said, "but that's not to say that [social-emotional learning] doesn't have value in schools."

An *Education Week* analysis of state ESSA plans—including those that have not yet been approved by the Education Department—found that most opted to rely on data many districts already collect in their accountability systems. Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia chose to include a measure of chronic absenteeism in their plans. Six chose to include school climate surveys—which ask students questions about how safe and supported they feel at school.

A better measure of social-emotional learning "could very well be developed in the future," and states could revise their plans to include it, said Deborah Temkin, the education research director for Child Trends, a non-profit research organization that focuses on children's issues. For now, schools may be motivated to use some social-emotional strategies, like teaching students how to resolve conflicts and manage their emotions, to meet other non-academic goals and to improve academic achievement. And

those strategies could help decrease chronic absenteeism by promoting self-discipline and reducing situations that make students feel unsafe at school, she said. ESSA also increases schools' reporting requirements in areas like bullying and discipline, which can both be affected by a "whole child" approach, Temkin said.

Roger Weissberg, a professor of psychology and education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and CASEL's chief knowledge officer, said a group of 20 states that are cooperating to explore social-emotional-learning plans largely favor allowing districts to select and design their own measures to ensure they fit into their strategies. Some districts, for example, have adopted grade-by-grade standards that outline how to incorporate students' social and emotional development into classroom work. In those districts, **student surveys can help teachers** track if their strategies are working on a broader level, but they aren't used for accountability purposes.

"First and foremost, measurements have got to be meaningful to the teachers and the kids and families," Weissberg said.

CASEL also has a measurement working group, which asks researchers and educators to tackle the challenges associated with measuring non-cognitive skills and to experiment with creative alternatives, like video games that track students' engagement.

Shriver said he's confident schools will continue to express interest in approaches that recognize the value of social and emotional development, regardless of state and federal policies.

"This horse is out of the barn," he said. "It's policymakers who are trying to catch up."

Assistant Managing Editor Lesli A. Maxwell contributed to this report.

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Valuing Both Cs in College- and Career-Readiness Accountability Systems

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“College and career readiness.”

It’s a phrase those of us in education often hear used to describe college readiness alone.

When we undervalue the career readiness component of college and career readiness, we sell our young people dangerously short. In this document, we explore how state accountability systems currently address *college readiness* and *academic and technical career readiness* and offer recommendations and examples of policies and practices that incentivize and reward districts and schools for preparing more students to earn credentials and degrees in high-demand career fields.

Valuing Both Cs — What’s at Stake

The nation’s long-term economic competitiveness depends on our ability to close critical credential attainment and skills gaps. By 2025, two out of every three jobs in the U.S. and in the Southern Regional Education Board’s 16 member states (visit sreb.org/about to learn more) will require some postsecondary education and training, according to economists at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. What’s more, demand for individuals with an advanced credential or degree at the associate level or higher may outstrip supply by as many as 11 million people. Right now, a high percentage of youth and a growing number of older adults, particularly men, are chronically unemployed or underemployed because they lack the credentials needed to get a job.

The nation’s long-term economic competitiveness depends on our ability to close critical credential attainment and skills gaps.

Despite rising graduation rates, far too many students — especially low-income and minority students and young men — are graduating without the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to earn a credential or degree. In the SREB region, less than 40 percent of students meet their states’ college- and career-readiness benchmarks. Nationwide, only 27 percent of students in the class of 2017 who took the ACT met all four of ACT’s college-readiness benchmarks in English, reading, math and science.

Underpreparedness in high school may hobble young people for the rest of their lives. On average, research shows that between 40 percent and 60 percent of first-year college students are required to take one or more remedial courses in English or math — a rate that SREB’s Community College Commission found rises to 70 percent in some Southern community colleges. Few students who require remediation go on to complete their programs. In a study conducted by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, *less than a quarter of students* who required remediation earned a credential within eight years.

Many of our youth also lack basic workplace knowledge and skills. Leading employers in every industry say they struggle to find qualified workers who can pass a drug test and possess the broad mix of workplace skills described by the Business Roundtable — industry-specific *technical skills*, all-purpose *STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills*, and essential *employability skills* like the ability to use math, communicate well, read technical manuals, work in teams and solve complex problems.

Career pathways have the power to close these readiness gaps. Career pathways that connect to a college-ready academic core curriculum, postsecondary studies and career opportunities don’t just teach the broad mix of skills employers need — they also keep students engaged and achieving at higher levels, prevent dropout and promote transitions to college and the workplace.

Researchers at the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education at SREB have found that career pathway programs of study can benefit all students without detracting from a college-preparatory focus. Their studies also show that CTE offers strong benefits to students from low-income families, minority students and young men. SREB's 2015 *Credentials for All* report illustrates how career pathway programs connect high-quality CTE with college-preparatory academics. High-quality pathway programs offer students early opportunities to earn college credits and engage in experiential learning and equip youth with the lifelong learning skills they need to earn credentials, secure good jobs and sustain a middle-class life. Rigorous pathway curricula also help students master academic, technical, cognitive and workplace skills and gain a clearer understanding of their interests, aptitudes and career goals.

Career pathways equip young people with the lifelong learning skills they need to earn credentials and degrees, secure good jobs and sustain a middle-class life.

Most state accountability and funding systems do not incorporate all of the elements needed to incentivize districts and schools to develop and implement career pathway programs that truly prepare more students for a **double purpose — college and careers.** (See Page 6.) In fact, some of our accountability systems that promote separate college- and career-preparatory tracks or separate diplomas may actively work against preparing students for that double purpose.

Our reviews of states' preliminary Every Student Succeeds Act plans have found that some of these plans offer schools a menu of readiness options that may deepen the divide between college readiness and career readiness — with the latter positioned as a "lesser-than" option. Few states have defined academic college readiness and academic and technical career readiness in their accountability models in ways that not only equally value both, but also reward students who demonstrate both. Few preliminary ESSA plans explicitly address workforce demand or the mix of skills needed to advance in high-demand, high-wage career fields, particularly those that require strong STEM knowledge and skills.

Building Accountability Systems That Value Career Readiness

SREB has long advocated that states set a goal that 80 percent or more of students will graduate college ready, career ready or both. States that set such a goal are taking a strong first step on the path to increasing postsecondary credential attainment. SREB helps states meet this bold goal by providing action-oriented guidance on how they can prepare students for a broad range of postsecondary options. Reports like *The Next Generation of School Accountability* (2009) and *Credentials for All*, for example, offer evidence-based recommendations derived from SREB's many decades of experience conducting research and providing direct services to thousands of schools.

In this document, we expand on the recommendations contained in these reports and in SREB's readiness agenda, which urges states to:

- Set K-12 readiness standards in literacy and math.
- Implement junior-year progress assessments.
- Provide senior-year readiness courses in literacy and math.
- Align K-12 standards and assessments with postsecondary programs.
- Hold K-12 and postsecondary education accountable for high school students' readiness for college and careers.

Spotlight State: Tennessee

Tennessee's Drive to 55 initiative seeks to help 55 percent of Tennesseans obtain a postsecondary credential or degree by 2025. Starting with the class of 2015, all Tennessee high school graduates can secure two years of free tuition at a Tennessee community college, college of applied technology or other associate degree program.

The Tennessee Promise scholarship not only pays for any tuition and fees not covered by other scholarships or grants, but also builds in a process of required individual guidance and mentoring. Tennessee ensures that students are on track for postsecondary studies by requiring those who don't meet readiness benchmarks to take transitional readiness courses during their senior year.

Whatever readiness goals your state sets, we encourage you to ensure that your accountability system not only assesses students' academic and technical readiness for college and careers, but also reports the percentage of students, by district and school, who complete a career pathway *and* meet benchmarks for college readiness, career readiness or both. To help your state meet its goals, this document outlines:

- College readiness and how states can measure it
- Academic career readiness and how states can measure it
- Technical career readiness and how states can measure it
- Essential elements of an ideal college- and career-readiness accountability system
- Policies and practices that support college and career readiness

Defining and Measuring College Readiness

SREB's ongoing reviews of state college- and career-readiness policies and practices show that many states define college readiness in state policy as high school students being academically prepared to enroll in credit-bearing postsecondary courses without the need for remediation in English or math. In reality, however, we have found that parents and students are receiving mixed messages regarding what it means to be college ready, in no small part because college readiness benchmarks are not widely advertised and may differ, sometimes greatly, from the college admissions requirements set by regional two- and four-year institutions. Students, parents and schools deserve clarity on what it means to be college ready.

Students, parents and schools deserve clarity on what it means to be college ready.

We encourage states to conduct empirical research on the contexts and conditions that might influence their college-readiness benchmarks and the assessments or indicators used to capture them. In addition to considering nationally recognized benchmarks on the **ACT, SAT or NAEP** (National Assessment of Educational Progress) assessments, states may wish to measure college readiness using:

- **State-specific benchmarks** on the ACT, SAT or NAEP assessments
- A **high school grade-point average** on select courses that predicts success in college
- Completion of **end-of-course exams** in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or academic dual credit courses
- Completion of **math pathways** that prepare students for STEM and non-STEM postsecondary programs

State benchmarks on national assessments. States may find that they need to use multiple measures of readiness or adopt different benchmarks than those set on the ACT, SAT or NAEP. Oklahoma and Kentucky conducted research on their students' ACT scores and used that research to set readiness benchmarks for non-STEM postsecondary programs. **Oklahoma** uses ACT subtest scores of 19 — which predict a 50 percent chance of earning a grade of C or better — as a first assessment of college readiness in English, reading, math and science. ACT's own benchmarks predict a 50 percent chance of earning a B or better. **Kentucky** postsecondary institutions agreed that ACT subtest scores of 18 in English, 19 in math and 20 in reading would indicate college readiness. These scores are not used for college admissions.

As workplace requirements continue to rise, states that set lower benchmarks on assessments like the ACT should consider whether those lower benchmarks may place their students at a disadvantage compared to students in other states.

GPA. An unweighted high school GPA of 2.6 is just one of several readiness indicators the **North Carolina Community College System** includes in its multi-measure system. The NCCCS drew upon research conducted by the Community College Research Center that examined the validity of college placement tests and high school GPA in predicting postsecondary success.

Spotlight State: North Carolina

To address the issue of over-placement in remedial college math, the North Carolina Community College System used research from the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin to create a series of **four differentiated math pathways** that acknowledge that not every student needs calculus to be successful. The four pathways include a *vocational pathway* for some diploma and Associate in Applied Science programs; an *applied technologies pathway* for Applied Science and engineering technologies programs; a *calculus pathway* for Associate in Science programs; and a *quantitative literacy pathway* for Associate in Arts and select Associate in Applied Science programs.

Researchers examined student transcripts and focused on 11th- and 12th-grade data, counting the total number of courses taken, the number of honors or advanced courses taken, the number of college-level courses taken, the number of high school math and English courses taken, the number of courses failed, and the total number of secondary credits earned. Results showed that the GPA was significantly more predictive of a student's college success than placement tests like the COMPASS or ACCUPLACER. According to the Hunt Institute, by using a GPA of 2.6 to determine students' readiness for college, the NCCCS could expect to halve the number of students misplaced in remedial education from 30 percent to 15 percent.

End-of-course exams. End-of-course exams that carry college credit are an important indicator of college readiness. Many state postsecondary institutions accept end-of-course AP and IB exams for credit. Students' successful completion of end-of-course exams in academic dual credit courses can also serve as a measure of college readiness, provided that dual credit courses are taught with the same rigor as on a college campus and guaranteed to shorten students' time to a postsecondary credential or degree.

Completion of math pathways that prepare students for STEM and non-STEM postsecondary programs. States can ensure that the math and science instruction students receive in high school helps them succeed in the postsecondary programs they choose to pursue. SREB advocates that high school students benefit from three years of lab-based science courses and four years of rigorous math courses. Whereas many students may benefit from taking Algebra II and higher math — especially those interested in credentials and careers in STEM fields — others may benefit from taking four math courses that include algebra, geometry, statistics and higher math related to a non-STEM career field.

Defining and Measuring College Readiness

We hold that an academically career-ready person has the foundational literacy and math skills needed to thrive in any form of advanced education and training and adapt in an ever-changing economy. States that define and measure academic career readiness in their accountability systems generate the data they need to locate readiness gaps and identify strategies for closing them.

Like college readiness, academic career readiness should be measured using valid and reliable assessments. Any student who meets college-readiness benchmarks on an assessment like the ACT or SAT should be considered academically career ready. Other academic career-readiness measures include:

- A WorkKeys score of Silver or higher
- Cut scores on the ASVAB (the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) that align with military careers and high-demand public-sector jobs
- Completion of academic and technical dual-credit courses that shorten students' time to a credential or degree

WorkKeys and ASVAB scores. Most SREB states give ACT's WorkKeys assessment at the high school or postsecondary level. According to ACT, a score of Silver on the WorkKeys' Applied Math, Locating Information, and Reading for Information subtests indicates that an individual possesses the foundational literacy and math skills required for 69 percent of jobs.

The ASVAB assesses individuals' academic and occupational readiness for military service. The Pentagon recommends a cut score set at the 50th percentile for individuals planning a military career. States can also set cut scores on the ASVAB that align with high-demand public sector jobs.

- **Kentucky*** students demonstrate academic career readiness with either a Silver on the WorkKeys or a score of 50 on the Armed Forces Qualification portion of the ASVAB, which measures paragraph comprehension, word knowledge, math knowledge and math reasoning. (*Kentucky's accountability system is currently under review.)

- The **"Profile of the South Carolina Graduate"** — a statement of college- and career-ready knowledge, skills and personal characteristics adopted in 2015 by South Carolina's Department of Education, State Board of Education, Education Oversight Committee, Council on Competitiveness, Chamber of Commerce and a host of other organizations — includes the percentage of students who achieve Platinum, Gold or Silver on the WorkKeys, participation in work-based learning and co-curricular organizations, and success in dual enrollment courses.

Dual credit courses. Nationwide, 14 states include dual credit participation or success in their accountability measures. Students who complete an academic or technical dual credit course that shortens their time to a credential or degree should be considered academically career ready; however, quality is key. Dual credit courses offered in the high school should be taught at the same level of rigor as on the college campus, on the same schedule, and using the same syllabi, assignments and assessments.

Defining and Measuring Technical Career Readiness

SREB has found that although states are more likely to define technical career readiness than academic career readiness in their accountability systems, they vary greatly in how they measure it. Some assess technical readiness solely to satisfy federal reporting requirements but do not include it in their state accountability systems. **We have found that district and school leaders pay attention to technical readiness when it counts in the state accountability system or is tied to real dollars.**

Technically career-ready students have job- and industry-specific skills and personal attributes that make them good employees and help them advance in their careers, like the ability to think critically, find and use information, solve problems, communicate effectively, work on a team and adapt to new technology.

States can use a range of valid, reliable measures to assess technical career readiness, like:

- Completing a **college-ready academic core** plus at least four career pathway courses in a coherent sequence
- Passing a **state licensure exam**
- Earning an externally vetted **industry-recognized credential** that carries college credit and confers a hiring preference
- Completing **technical dual credit courses** that shorten students' time to a credential or degree
- Passing state-approved **end-of-course exams** in career pathway courses for college credit
- Participating in a high-quality, structured **work-based learning experience** or completing a complex, long-term **capstone project** that integrates academic, technical, cognitive and workplace readiness skills and may involve work in the community or at a job site

Industry-recognized credentials. One of the best measures of technical readiness is industry-recognized credentials or passing an industry certification exam. SREB holds that these credentials must be recognized as being of value to the state or regional economy, offer those who hold them a hiring preference, carry college credits and lead in time to good jobs paying at least $32,000 to $52,000 a year.

Spotlight State: Louisiana

To be included in Louisiana's Jump Start career pathways, industry exams must:

- be recognized at the state, national or international level
- not be tied to a specific third-party industry certifying body except in special cases
- receive support from at least three Louisiana employers
- lead to entry-level employment in occupations recognized by the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council as offering the best opportunities to job seekers

Choosing the right credentials can be challenging because many advanced credentials exceed the time, resources and scope of the typical high school curriculum. As a result, states may choose lower-level credentials that do not confer a hiring preference, carry college credits or open the door to a job. States also lack good information on industry credentials because not all third-party industry exam developers share data.

Tennessee is one of the few states in the SREB region that has created a rigorous credential vetting process that involves stakeholders from industry, postsecondary and economic and workforce development agencies. Industry credentials must be vetted by career advisory councils composed of Tennessee industry representatives; aligned with CTE programs of study as part of a system of stackable credentials or capstones; be accepted for credit or hours by postsecondary institutions; and translate into job opportunities above the entry level. Tennessee also requires third-party exam developers to share students' scores with the state.

Dual credit courses and end-of-course exams that carry college credit are an important indicator of career readiness. States need to ensure that the college credits students earn in their career pathways are guaranteed to transfer to their credential or degree of choice and help shorten students' time to completion.

Tennessee's Statewide Dual Credit program aligns learning objectives and exams in certain high school courses with courses at a local postsecondary institution. Students who pass a required online exam can earn credit at any state postsecondary institution. **Beginning in 2015-16, the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology began piloting a dual enrollment program that links high school CTE programs with TCAT courses and allows high school students to earn postsecondary credit in fields like diesel technology, cosmetology and mechatronics.** Lottery-funded grants pay the full cost of tuition and fees for a student's first two courses at a community college and partly cover tuition beyond the first two courses. Students taking TCAT courses can receive up to $600 per semester or $100 per hour.

Work-based learning experiences. Some states are considering work-based or experiential learning as a measure of technical readiness. In *Credentials for All*, we recommend that schools and employers partner to design structured work-based learning experiences that blend classroom learning with hands-on worksite experiences. Schools and employers should frequently monitor the quality of students' worksite experiences — for example, by evaluating students' on-site performance or the quality of the work-related capstone projects they complete — and generate feedback on readiness gaps that students should address in their school work.

- **Georgia** includes in its multi-measure accountability model the percentage of students who complete career-related work-based learning experiences. High schools can earn bonus points in the state accountability system for these indicators.
- **West Virginia**'s more than 1,200 simulated workplaces transform high schools into business environments. The state collects data on these workplaces to meet federal reporting requirements and provide technical assistance. This fall, the state will begin conducting six-point business and industry reviews that will be included in the Balanced Scorecard being developed by the Board of Education. Simulated workplace sites will also begin random drug testing — a move embraced by parents and employers, according to an August 2017 article in The New York Times.

Essential Elements of College- and Career-Readiness Accountability Systems

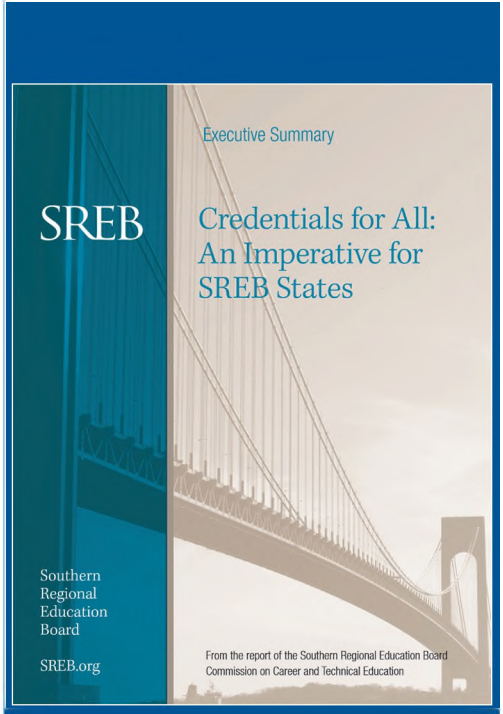
Pacesetting states like **Kentucky** and **Louisiana** have incorporated indicators in their accountability systems that send a clear message to district and school leaders that college readiness and career readiness are being equally valued and measured over time. Other SREB states are promoting the development of career pathways in high-wage, high-demand fields by including those fields in their accountability and funding systems.

At present, however, no single state accountability system currently incorporates all of the indicators needed to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge, skills and dispositions demanded by postsecondary credential and degree programs and employers.

Below, we build on the recommendations made in SREB's *Tenets of State Accountability for Increased College and Career Readiness* document by outlining essential elements of accountability systems that equally value both Cs in college and career readiness. We also offer examples of exemplary state policies and practices. In making these recommendations, we encourage states to embrace simplicity and focus only on those elements that fully prepare students to take advantage of the opportunities available to them after graduation.

In college- and career-readiness accountability systems, states:

- Establish definitions of **college readiness** and **academic and technical career readiness.**
- Set **long-term student achievement and credential attainment goals** — including for the percentage of students who graduate college-ready, career-ready or both — and measure growth toward those goals annually and over time.
- Value **college readiness and career readiness equally.**
- Award **extra weight** — for example, a bonus point or points — for each student who:
  - Demonstrates both college readiness *and* career readiness.
  - Completes a four-course career pathway sequence in a priority industry and earns a passing score on approved end-of-course exams or industry certification exams in those courses.
  - Completes a four-course sequence of AP, IB or AC courses in a targeted STEM field — like advanced manufacturing, clean energy technology or informatics — and scores at the proficient level or above on approved end-of-course exams in those courses.
  - Earns a college- and career-readiness diploma endorsement for completing a college-ready academic core curriculum and a career pathway program of study.
  - Earns an advanced credential or a significant number of credits toward a credential or degree in a priority industry or STEM field.



Learn how to design intellectually demanding career pathway programs spanning grades nine-14 in *Credentials for All* (2015).

sreb.org/cte-commission

State Spotlight: Delaware

The Delaware Promise initiative seeks to ensure that 65 percent of the state's workforce holds a college degree or professional certificate by 2025. Delaware is also using funds from its JP Morgan Chase New Skills for Youth grant to develop and expand career pathways in such high-demand fields as computer science, engineering, finance, health science, information technology and the biomedical sciences. Districts can either adopt one of the state's career pathways or develop their own, provided that their pathways meet labor market demand and align with credential and degree programs. A statewide memorandum of understanding ensures that the credits students earn in a state pathway will transfer to a credential or degree program.

- Use **earmarked funds and bonus points** to incentivize districts and schools to work with two- and four-year postsecondary institutions and employers to develop career pathways in high-demand fields that span grades nine to 14 and include opportunities for students to participate in work-based learning and earn up to 30 college credits before graduating.

Kentucky has had one of the most effective accountability systems in the country. In the state's accountability model, which is currently under review, schools receive one point in the accountability system for each student who meets college-readiness benchmarks or academic and technical career-readiness benchmarks, plus a bonus half-point for each student who meets both. **Since adopting career-readiness measures and the bonus half-point, Kentucky has seen steady increases in the percentage of students who earn three or more CTE credits *and* achieve college and career readiness — from 34 percent in 2010 to 76 percent in 2016.**

Louisiana awards more points in its accountability system for students who graduate with a Jump Start advanced industry credential leading to high-wage jobs in a high-demand industry than for those who graduate with only a basic credential — and awards the most points for students who earn both an advanced credential and a qualifying AP, IB or College Level Examination Program score.

Georgia's HOPE Career Grant helps students earn credentials and degrees in high-demand industries like computer programming, health science and precision manufacturing. To qualify for a HOPE Career Grant, students must be eligible to receive the state's HOPE Grant, which serves residents pursuing a certificate or diploma at a college or university in Georgia. When combined, the HOPE Career Grant and HOPE Grant fully cover tuition in any of 12 programs of study in high-demand industries. There are no high school GPA requirements or age restrictions for either grant. The state's dual enrollment policies also allow eligible high school students to earn credit toward high school and college requirements.

North Carolina's Career and College Promise program allows high school students to earn free college credits via three pathways: a *college transfer pathway* for traditional college students, an *innovative high school pathway* for early college students, and a *CTE pathway* for students pursuing careers in fields like STEM, manufacturing, health science, information technology and transportation, distribution and logistics.

Meeting the goal of helping at least 80 percent of students achieve readiness, complete pathways and secure well-paying jobs will take effort. We will need to improve the quality of what we teach and how we teach. We will need to develop new kinds of courses and provide professional development that empowers school leaders and teachers to transform instruction.

Learn how on the next page.

How SREB Helps States Support College and Career Readiness

SREB has many years of experience partnering with states and districts to create policies and identify and implement practices that raise the quality of instruction and assignments and improve student achievement. Our professional development providers, instructional coaches and content specialists have successfully supported school reform efforts and served long tenures as school leaders and teacher-leaders. By taking the steps described below with support from SREB, states can meet their accountability goals and increase the percentages of students who graduate college ready, career ready or both.

- **Implement college readiness courses that help high school seniors master the literacy and math skills they need in postsecondary education and the workplace.** SREB's *Literacy Ready* and *Math Ready* courses help students get on track for success (sreb.org/ready). With SREB support, schools use state-approved readiness assessments to identify juniors whose scores fall within a few points of benchmarks and enroll them in one or both courses during their senior year.
- **Identify seventh- or eighth-graders who are not on track to meet readiness benchmarks and enroll them in literacy and math readiness courses in the eighth or ninth grade.** SREB's *Ready for High School Literacy* and *Ready for High School Math* courses help struggling middle grades students get on track to complete a college-ready core and pursue career pathways in high school (sreb.org/ready).
- **Help high schools adopt more rigorous academic and career pathway curricula like AP, IB and Advanced Career courses.** Each course in SREB's four-course AC pathways (sreb.org/ac) uses project-based assignments to connect academic and technical knowledge and skills with students' career interests. In surveys, nearly 90 percent of AC students said that AC projects were challenging and exciting. Nearly three-quarters said that AC helped them form a career goal.
- **Redesign the senior year of high school to erase the lines between secondary, postsecondary and workplace learning.** In schools that adopt SREB's senior-year redesign (sreb.org/SeniorYearRedesign), seniors who meet college-readiness benchmarks can earn up to 30 hours of credit toward an advanced credential or degree. Seniors whose 11th-grade assessment scores fall shy of benchmarks take special readiness courses that prepare them for credit-bearing postsecondary studies. Seniors whose scores fall well below benchmarks receive services that enhance their skills, help them make good education and career choices, and prepare them to transition to employment, military service or advanced education and training.
- **Invest in career pathways spanning grades nine to 14 that prepare students for well-paid, highly skilled jobs.** SREB spent a year partnering with Kentucky educators and the Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Louisville to develop a 120-credit hour nursing pathway leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (learn more at sreb.org/nursing-career-pathways). This pathway allows high school students to complete college-level nursing prerequisite and foundational courses — up to 30 hours of dual credit — and obtain a nurse's aide certification. After graduation, students continue their studies in seamlessly aligned programs leading to careers as licensed practical nurses, registered nurses with associate degrees and registered nurses with bachelor's degrees. States may find that grant funds encourage districts to develop pathways in high-skill, high-demand sectors that blend college-ready academics with high-quality pathway curricula like AC.
- **Provide professional development that helps teachers in every discipline use literacy-based strategies and assignments to increase student achievement.** SREB's literacy professional development helps teachers in grades three through 12 engage students in reading, understanding, writing and speaking about grade-level texts (sreb.org/literacy).
- **Show math teachers how to use powerful math practices and formative assessment lessons to advance students' math understanding and reasoning skills.** SREB's math professional development helps math teachers shift their instruction from a procedural, test-prep approach to a balanced approach in which students learn how to apply math concepts to solve complex abstract and real-world problems (sreb.org/mathematics).
- **Adopt classroom observation tools that empower teachers and school leaders to better integrate literacy and math strategies in their classrooms.** SREB shows principals how to use these tools to identify effective instruction and provide teachers with feedback.
- **Prepare CTE teachers to design standards-driven, project-based assignments** that require students to think creatively, work in teams and apply academic, technical, technological and soft skills to solve workplace problems. SREB offers professional development, coaching and support on how to design project-based assignments. SREB's Teaching to Lead teacher preparation program builds new CTE teachers' capacity to plan instruction, engage students, manage classrooms and design standards-driven instruction and assessments (sreb.org/teaching-lead).

Next Steps

As workplace requirements continue to rise, more jobs will require individuals to possess advanced credentials and degrees and the broad mix of academic, technical and workplace skills employers prefer. Our nation's economic growth and security rest on our ability to close critical credential attainment and skills gaps and prepare more students for success after high school.

The truth is, for a third or more of our young people, high school may be their last best chance to get a head start on an advanced credential that helps them enter the labor market and pursue additional education. Career pathways are a common-sense, evidence-based approach to helping more youth not only secure good jobs and launch fulfilling careers, but also develop a purpose and plan for their postsecondary studies. That's because high-quality career pathway programs offer a different approach to learning — one in which students apply academic skills and hands-on technical know-how to solve real-world problems. The overwhelming majority of American parents want their children to have educational experiences that prepare them for both careers and postsecondary studies, according to Phi Delta Kappa's 2017 national poll.

With this document, we hope to spark ongoing conversations among policymakers, educators, employers and parents regarding how we can refine our state accountability systems to reward districts and schools for building pathways that truly prepare students for a **double purpose — college and careers.** SREB will be here to help. Contact gene.bottoms@sreb.org or call (404) 879-5529.

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