

STATE PLAN CONSIDERATIONS: ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the biggest changes the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) brings to education policy is a requirement that states include a broader range of measures in their accountability systems for student learning and school success, with the intent that states will create a coherent system where information collected is thoughtfully and deliberately tied to outcomes desired, based on the state’s unique context. Designing such an accountability system should first start with key questions of purpose, including: what are the outcomes you are hoping to achieve for students in your state, what needs to change to achieve those outcomes, and what information do you need to inform that change? As part of this effort, state leaders will likely want to analyze current accountability systems in the context of your state’s vision to determine what elements you want your state to maintain and how you want your state system to evolve.

The plan considerations below are intended to identify ESSA Requirements (things each state **MUST** do within the context of the new law); opportunities for state leadership (things each state **COULD** do; and examples of deeper dive questions that merit additional national attention, specific state consideration, or both. It is meant to guide immediate decisions required under the law for the 2017-18 school year, as well as continuous improvement to accountability, supports, and intervention systems over the coming years.

Key Considerations in Accountability Design

1. College- and Career-Ready Alignment: Align accountability system goals with the broader goal of helping all students master the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and careers.	
ESSA Requirements <i>Each state MUST...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set challenging state academic standards aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework in the state’s system of public higher education and relevant career and technical education state standards. ▪ Use those standards to carry out systems of assessment, accountability, and school improvement.

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<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish <i>college- and career-ready state standards</i>, and align accountability system goals with college and career-ready performance. ▪ <i>Define college and career readiness</i> from early learning through K-12 grades to include the full range of deeper learning knowledge, skills, and dispositions – academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal – that evidence shows are necessary for success in college, careers, and life. ▪ Use this robust definition of college and career readiness to <i>create a clear line of sight</i> for all state policies and practices including accountability and supports.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do we know about the range of knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and careers, and how do they align from early learning through K-12 education?
2. Annual Determinations: Make annual accountability determinations for all public schools/districts based on clear goals to advance continuous improvement.	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a system for meaningfully differentiating on an annual basis all public schools in the state (based on accountability indicators, as described in section 3), and identify for support and improvement the lowest-performing schools and schools that have low-performing subgroups. ▪ Establish ambitious, state-defined long-term goals, including measurements of interim progress, on academic achievement, graduation, and English language proficiency for all students and subgroups (with the exception of the English language proficiency goal, which must be for English learners).
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a clear, shared <i>vision for the role of accountability</i> and how it connects – as a process – to meaningful supports and continuous improvement for all public schools/districts. ▪ Make and report on <i>annual accountability determinations</i> for all public schools and districts that are valid, meaningful, and understandable, including through index systems and/or data dashboards (as described in section 3), and consider how you will address school classifications (including lowest-performing as well as highest-performing and/or the full range of schools, as appropriate).

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<p><i>Continued.</i></p> <p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider different ways to ensure meaningful accountability goals for performance and improvement for all public schools and subgroups, such that all students are on track to college and career readiness.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What could it mean to “meaningfully differentiate” schools across the full range of performance? What does that mean for classifications, and/or for data dashboards and/or index models given the state’s strategic vision? ▪ What information is important for all purposes and stakeholders, and how do you distill that to be meaningful while not overwhelming? ▪ What are options/models for setting long-term and interim goals? ▪ How could a state system best integrate early learning, K-12, and higher education?

3. Focus on Outcomes: Base accountability determinations on multiple, high-quality measures that are aligned with advancing college- and career-ready goals.	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each state’s accountability system must be based on multiple indicators and measure annual performance on those indicators (including status and/or growth as determined by the state). ▪ The required indicators include (1) academic achievement (which may include growth) as measured by state assessments in math and reading/language arts (3-8 and once in high school), (2) one other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools, (3) graduation rates for high schools, (4) English proficiency for ELLs, and (5) at least one other indicator that is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide (such as measures of student engagement, educator engagement, advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, or school climate and safety). ▪ In making annual determinations, indicators 1-4 above must each be given “substantial weight” and “in the aggregate, much greater weight” than the other indicator(s) in 5. ▪ Systems must annually measure the achievement of at least 95% of all students (and students in each subgroup), and states will likely determine how this factors into accountability.

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<p><i>Continued.</i> ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ESSA requires state high-quality assessments in reading/language arts and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school (and grade-span tests in science) and establishes a range of assessment pilots and programs, including a pilot for innovative assessment models (up to 7 states in the first 3 years); providing for locally-selected, nationally- recognized high school assessments (see ESEA § 1111(b)(2)(H)); and a use of funds to audit assessment systems (for quality and burden).
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include multiple measures in the state’s accountability system to make initial accountability determinations (and as part of deeper data reporting and diagnostics), including but not limited to high-quality assessments and accurate graduation rates, based on both status and growth in performance, as appropriate. ▪ Ensure that all metrics are meaningful, measurable, and teachable and learnable with regard to the goal of improving college- and career-ready student outcomes and closing achievement gaps (connected by evidence and/or researched-based presumptions). ▪ Consider additional measures of the full range of college- and career- ready student outcomes, including the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that result in college, career, and civic readiness, such as additional college- and career-ready measures⁶ (e.g., advanced course taking, students “on track,” college credit, college entrance without remediation, workforce certificates, other indicators of postsecondary opportunities); measures of engagement and/or higher-order/social- emotional skills; and those best measured through performance-based demonstrations of learning. ▪ Consider additional measures of school quality and equity, including for example, opportunity for student learning and access to critical resources (e.g., curriculum access, access to early learning, provision and accessibility to high-quality teaching/leading, funding, staffing, facilities, and technology); and school climate/environment and conditions of learning (e.g. school discipline, attendance, etc.) ▪ Determine how to weigh measures and how to present measures for initial accountability determinations – whether as a data dashboard, index system, or both, across multiple measures.

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<p><i>Continued.</i></p> <p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the value of and mechanism for including a mix of state and local measures to spur innovation and authenticity, where there is sufficient validity, capacity, scale, etc. Consider efforts to improve quality and utility in the state’s system of assessments, including the number and mix of interim and summative assessments, the inclusion of performance-based assessments, and the number and mix of state and local assessments, so that essential diagnostic, instructional, and accountability purposes are met with the minimum number of assessments needed, assessments are clearly being used for their intended purposes, and assessments meet criteria of high- quality, individually and as a system.⁷ ▪ Consider how all accountability measures and their combination advance the shifts in teaching and learning necessary to advance college- and career-ready student outcomes (such as personalized, competency- based approaches) – for example by valuing student progress toward mastery of key knowledge and skills. ▪ Consider any unintended consequences of different indicators and/or accountability designs.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do we know about the array of metrics that are meaningful, measurable, and able to be impacted with regard to advancing college- and career-ready teaching, learning, and student outcomes? ▪ What do educators and other stakeholders believe is most valuable? ▪ Within that, are you specifically thinking about non-academic indicators related to school quality? ▪ What might be most important for accountability versus deeper data analysis and diagnostic review? ▪ What are the implications and opportunities associated with incorporating English proficiency in school accountability systems? ▪ What are the viable options (including under ESSA) for data dashboards and/or index models for initial accountability determinations? Is there a distinction in what you would want to use to identify lowest-performing schools versus and what’s reported as part of your school/district report cards? ▪ How can states leverage ESSA assessment provisions to best advance a system of high-quality assessments for accountability and broader, deeper purposes? How should the state address “opt-out” issues in that regard?

4. Disaggregating data: Continue commitment to disaggregation of data – for reporting and accountability – and to closing achievement gaps in education opportunity and outcomes.	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ESSA requires that each state set long-term and interim accountability goals disaggregated by subgroup. ▪ ESSA requires that states annually measure and make accountability determinations for each school based on data for the school overall and for each subgroup. ▪ ESSA requires that each state/district annually report accountability data for each school overall and for each subgroup, as well as other data points. ▪ ESSA requires that states set a statistically-sound “minimum number” for subgroup data reporting and accountability, in consultation with key stakeholders. ESEA § 1111(c)(3)(A).
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not only continue to disaggregate data for each measure in the state’s accountability system (discussed above) but also for additional data for improvement – by at least the subgroups including race, ethnicity, poverty, disability, and limited English proficiency. ▪ Use disaggregated data in school accountability determinations/classifications, as required, and in targeting supports and interventions, as appropriate (including schools with lowest- performing subgroups and/or greatest gaps). ▪ Ensure that any “super” subgroups promote inclusion rather than masking certain subgroups. ▪ Establish a minimum number for subgroup reporting and accountability that is as inclusive as possible and appropriate given context, validity, need to protect student privacy, etc. ▪ Consider how best to publicly report disaggregated data for all subgroups.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How can states best incorporate subgroup performance into school accountability determinations? ▪ What do we know about “super” subgroups and how they can promote inclusion versus exclusion? What factors do stakeholders feel are important with regard to determining a “minimum number” for subgroup size and with regard to “super” subgroups? ▪ How will you disaggregate data by subgroup for your non-academic indicators?

5. Reporting State/District Data: Report data in a manner that is rich, timely, accessible, and actionable to a range of critical stakeholders.	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ESSA requires that each state and district produce annual report cards and report data – overall and by subgroup, as appropriate – with regard to accountability determinations, measures used in accountability systems, and other key variables (including at a minimum, for example, preschool enrollment, access to high-quality teachers and leaders, etc.). ▪ ESSA requires that these report cards be clear, concise, understandable, accessible, and developed with input from stakeholders.
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider more effective ways to produce (at least) annual state and local report cards that present key accountability data and determinations, including disaggregated data as appropriate (as in the “data dashboard” discussed in section 3). ▪ Include as appropriate additional data beyond those used in initial accountability determinations to further inform data analysis and continuous school improvement, including other data related to, for example, social-emotional skills; school climate; and access to resources. ▪ Design report cards to be most useful to key stakeholders (including teachers, principals, parents, policymakers) in terms of format, design, substance, and distribution. ▪ Consider aligning report cards with processes for continuous improvement by incorporating data gathered through diagnostic/school quality review processes.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What accountability and other data are most important to advance excellence, equity, and continuous improvement? ▪ What models of data reporting are most effective for the array of key stakeholders and purposes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you want state, district and school leaders to be able to use the information? ○ How do you want parents to be able to use the information? ○ How do you want teachers and students to be able to use the information? ▪ What impact do your decisions about data inclusion have on your data collection and reporting infrastructure?