



## ESSA: IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUITY IN ILLINOIS - A VIDEO PANEL

SUMMARY – WEBINAR EVENT, JUNE 14, 2016

On June 14, 2016, organizations from across the national education community participated in a live online conversation to explore the implications for equity and the role of stakeholders in the implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).

ESSA calls for the engagement of all Illinois stakeholders - educators, community based organizations and non-profits, state, district, and school leaders, early education and child care providers, faith-based organizations, families, advocates, and elected officials - in developing and implementing changes to Illinois' accountability system, providing resources and supports for our most vulnerable student populations, and determining the most appropriate interventions and supports to ensure equity and excellence for all students. This is an opportunity for all stakeholders to look at the systems in place in Illinois and help to make needed changes.



During this webinar we heard from a broad set of national and Illinois education leaders on important aspects of the law and the ways that stakeholders can and should engage with the process. In this summary you will find a brief overview of the panel and highlights from the conversation.



The **webinar read ahead** (left) serves as an introductory resource for understanding ESSA in Illinois. This material explores the evolution of No Child Left Behind to Waivers to ESSA with an understanding of current Illinois systems. This document also includes links to additional ESSA information and resources. You can also find the read ahead at [partnersforeachandeverychild.org](http://partnersforeachandeverychild.org).

## PANEL & ATTENDEES

The conversation included updates from **Tony Smith**, State Superintendent of Education, [Illinois State Board of Education](#), on the state's current and planned engagement of stakeholders. We also heard from **Christopher Edley, Jr.**, President of [The Opportunity Institute](#) on the importance of stakeholder engagement and the state role in building a robust engagement strategy. The panel conversation was moderated by **Ralph Martire**, Executive Director, [Center for Tax and Budget Accountability](#) and included:

- **Donna Harris-Aikens** - Director, Education Policy & Practice Department, [National Education Association](#)
- **Beth Antunez** - Deputy Director, Government Relations, [American Federation of Teachers](#)
- **Susie Saavedra** - Senior Director for Policy and Legislative Affairs, [National Urban League](#)
- **Sylvia Puente** - Executive Director, [Latino Policy Forum](#)
- **Claire Voorhees** - Director for K-12 Reform, [Foundation for Excellence in Education](#)
- **Leslie Finnan** - Senior Legislative Analyst, [American Association of School Administrators](#)

The webinar was attended by 70 participants from across the state and country, mainly representing district and school leaders and educators, but also community-based organizations, philanthropists, researchers, families, and others. Areas of highest interest among those who attended were teaching and learning, vulnerable populations, and accountability systems. We are grateful to all who participated.

## CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS:

The panelists led a lively conversation about the promise of the new federal law, especially highlighting:

- *To make progress on equity, we will have to build strong relationships between stakeholders, advocates and the public.*
- *There are several decision points within ESSA that call for public engagement. All stakeholders must have an opportunity to participate and engage in the process to improve equity for all of our children.*
- *Most effective engagement will those opportunities in which stakeholders are well prepared and knowledgeable to constructively engage with education officials.*
- *Stakeholder engagement opportunities should be at times and places that are convenient to all stakeholder groups including educators, community groups, parents and those unavailable during traditional business hours. Conveners should consult with district, local union, and community leaders, parent and student groups to get their input at places and times that allow for their specific participation. Education officials should enlist their help in increasing awareness and participation.*

"We believe, deeply, that local wisdom and insight that resides in communities is critical to drafting a new state plan. The opportunities in ESSA are not to just re-think the state role, but to rethink local authority and local autonomy."

- *Tony Smith, State Superintendent of Education, [Illinois State Board of Education](#)*

“There needs to be a concerted effort to go beyond the choir, if you will, to really get to the voices and communities that may not have been traditionally organized and do not necessarily have a process to get organized and to provide stakeholder input.”

- Sylvia Puente, [\*Latino Policy Forum\*](#)

“To have meaningful stakeholder engagement states must ensure that all communities have a seat at the table...[Decision making] really hasn’t represented community leaders, parents, students, and families from historically underserved communities. ESSA provides an opportunity to change this culture and mindset.”

- Susie Saavedra, [\*National Urban League\*](#)

“Feedback must be early, must be ongoing, and must be taken into account. We need to move from transactional to transformational.”

- Susie Saavedra, [\*National Urban League\*](#)

“For Tony’s troops in the field, and for community groups and advocacy groups, and parents, this statute asks for a lot, asks for a new way of doing business. We are not going to get the most out of the statute unless we are willing to take on that challenge.”

- Christopher Edley, Jr., [\*The Opportunity Institute\*](#)

“It’s a small thing, but the language on buy-in is different from commitment...We can be committed to a new accountability system that takes a fuller account of the whole child, that pays attention to what it means to be a more engaged citizen of the world... The ability to hold the well-being of every child and the access to quality, that is what our accountability system should be built around.”

- Tony Smith, [\*Illinois State Board of Education\*](#)

“For far too long, report cards have been an afterthought...we want to see a report card that does not just check the box but is really a living breathing tool.”

- Claire Voorhees, [\*Foundation for Excellence in Education\*](#)