

MEANINGFUL LOCAL ENGAGEMENT UNDER ESSA

A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders

July, 2017





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.

A project of The Opportunity Institute, Partners for Each and Every Child (Partners for) is a collaborative, nonpartisan network of education researchers, advocacy organizations, and policy experts who are committed to educational excellence for each and every child. The network grew out of the work of the Congressionally chartered national Commission for Equity and Excellence in Education. Our mission is to build an infrastructure of interconnected work that will encourage a growing portion of the education policy community to break down barriers to advance sound educational policies, attentive to matters of equity and responsive to the needs of at-risk, under-served, and politically underrepresented students.

Why Us?

Partners for Each and Every Child (Partners for) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)—both separately and together—have been working at the state and national level around The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation and stakeholder engagement.

In the spring of 2016, CCSSO worked closely with other national organizations to create [Let's Get This Conversation Started](#) and [Let's Keep this Conversation Going](#)—comprehensive guides to help states engage stakeholders and keep them engaged.

Partners for worked with national and local groups to develop the [District Guide to ESSA and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement](#) to support schools and districts as they participated in state-level decision-making and began their own processes to implement ESSA.

Now, as state ESSA plans are well underway and being submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED), CCSSO and Partners for have developed this guide, with the support of [Education First](#), national organizations, and district leaders, to assist local education agency (LEA) and school leaders as they engage stakeholders to effectively implement ESSA at the local level.

Thank You

This Handbook is based on the collaborative efforts of Partners for and CCSSO, with support from several local leaders and the following contributors:

- AASA: The School Superintendents Association
- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Federation of Teachers
- Coalition for Community Schools
- Dignity in Schools Campaign, including member organizations:
 - Activists With A Purpose
 - Action Communication and Education Reform, Inc.
 - Citizens for a Better Greenville
 - Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children
 - Gwinnett SToPP
 - Nollie Jenkins Family Center
 - Parent Education Organizing Council
 - Patterson Education Fund
 - Racial Justice NOW!
 - Southern Echo
 - Sunflower County Parents and Students United
 - Student Advocacy Center of Michigan
 - Tunica Teens in Action
 - Woman of God’s Design
- Education Counsel
- Education First
- Education Resource Strategies
- Institute for Educational Leadership
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Migration Policy Institute
- NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
- National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Education Association
- National Indian Education Association
- National PTA
- National School Boards Association
- National Urban League
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund
- Parents for Public Schools
- Rural School and Community Trust

Meaningful Engagement Under ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers state and local education leaders an opportunity to shape their state’s education policy agenda. These leaders, together with the help of stakeholders who represent the core beliefs and needs of the communities and students they serve, can play a greater role in ensuring educational equity.

ESSA requires each state, district, and school to consult with an array of stakeholders on issues ranging from how best to disburse federal funds, to how to support schools that serve struggling or high-need students. The specific consultation requirements vary across the programs, but the focus on engagement across ESSA is consistent. This gives states and districts a chance to commit to engagement with all stakeholders in an ongoing and meaningful way.

What Do We Mean By “Stakeholder Engagement”?

In the context of education policy and decision-making, *stakeholders* are community members who are involved and invested in districts, schools, programs, and outcomes for students. Stakeholders include students, families, educators, leaders, and the many partners who support them.

Engagement is the process of communicating to, learning from, and partnering with stakeholders that acknowledges the unique needs and strengths of the stakeholders involved.

We believe that stakeholder engagement should be *meaningful*: it should be inclusive, clear, effective and ongoing in order to best support educational equity and excellence.

Engaging stakeholders is not only required under the law, but is a strong best practice to effectively improve schools.

Making decisions on education policy in an inclusive and transparent way leads to better decisions and encourages stakeholders to contribute and become partners in achieving the goals in the state and local community. Communities will support improvement strategies that they help to develop. Partnerships with outside stakeholders, including parents, philanthropy, community-based organizations, and others will build local capacity to implement innovative and ambitious strategies for meeting the needs of all students.

Advancing Equity and Excellence

Informed and inclusive decision-making to advance equity and excellence for all students requires input and support from a broad and politically diverse set of stakeholders. This responsibility should not be taken lightly, and requires intentional commitment and explicit work on a regular and ongoing basis.

State education agencies (SEAs), school districts, and schools need to develop necessary background information and offer preliminary thoughts about key decision points and implications for programs, resource allocation, assessment, and accountability, to name a few, and then turn to their stakeholders for input to inform their decision-making.

- **At the state level**, voices representing the opinions, issues, expertise, and perspectives of stakeholder groups should be heard to inform the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of the state ESSA plan.
- **And at the local level**, community leaders, diverse families (including families of color, non-English speakers and families of students with disabilities), advocates and others should be engaged to ensure that the state ESSA plan effectively meets the unique needs of the community to prepare all students for success in college and career. These stakeholders should be re-engaged at least annually as districts resubmit their plans for state funding.

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Using This Handbook

Who Should Use This Handbook?

This handbook is intended to support and provide helpful guidance to local education agencies (LEAs)—including school districts, county offices of education, regional education offices, and charter schools—and school leaders as they engage with stakeholders to think about how ESSA can be best leveraged locally. This guide can also help state education leaders to support local leaders in their transition to the new federal law.

- **State education leaders** can use this tool as they transition from plan development to implementation and continuous improvement to focus on engagement with, and support for, district and school leaders.
- **School and district leaders** can use this handbook as a source of strategies to employ as they build their comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy.
- **Advocates** can use this to engage with their local political and education leaders.

How Should Local Leaders Use This Handbook?

This handbook is the first of two resources to support local engagement under ESSA. This document focuses on engagement strategies and ideas with specific groups, as part of your planning processes. The second part will be out fall 2017, and will focus on engagement on school improvement strategy.

We hope that local leaders will use this handbook to build or bolster engagement efforts to better and more collaboratively include students, families, educators, and partners into the policymaking and implementation process.

How Might States Use this Handbook?

This handbook is intended for a broad audience, and will be more useful if used in tandem with state-specific resources. As districts and schools begin their local plan development and implementation of ESSA, we hope that this tool is a first step to help state, district and school leaders think collaboratively about how to permanently strengthen, build, and maintain a culture of ongoing, meaningful stakeholder engagement.

We recommend that SEAs work with state and local leaders and advocates to create a “toolkit” that includes specific decisions made in the state ESSA plan, as well as state-specific tools for districts (e.g. ESSA plan summary, needs assessments, evidence-based resources). For a sample outline of what a state toolkit might look like, see page 44.

State, district, and school leaders can work together and with partners around developing and using stakeholder engagement resources through meetings, learning sessions, videos, webinars, and other methods that encourage a back-and-forth exchange.



Coming Soon! Additional Resources to Support Local Engagement

Later in 2017 we will be releasing additional guidance on how LEAs can make the most of specific issue areas and opportunities within ESSA, including engaging with stakeholders around school improvement and resource allocation.

PART 1:

LEA & School Planning: Why Local Engagement?

The ESSA Opportunity: ESSA's frequent and consistent call for stakeholder engagement provides a significant opportunity for local school districts to consider their own contexts, needs and priorities, and the voices and experiences of families, students, and communities in shaping the potential and efficacy of ESSA. Part 1 connects engagement around local planning to new state systems under ESSA, aligning engagement with local decision-making.

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Why Local Engagement?

Why This Moment?

Following the passage of ESSA in December 2015, state leaders and national advocates began to learn about the specifics of the law before embarking on a year-long process to develop consolidated state plans aligned with ESSA (state ESSA plans). As of May 2017, 16 states and the District of Columbia have submitted their state ESSA plans and are awaiting approval from the U.S. Department of Education (US ED). The remaining 34 states will submit their plans in September 2017. These plans include information about how the state will use federal funding to comply with federal requirements, and describes the state's new system of accountability and how the state plans on implementing other federal programs like supporting teachers and school leaders. Moving forward, local leaders will need to understand the new accountability systems and other state implementation specifics.

Local Engagement and State Systems

As states submit their state ESSA plans, local education agencies (LEAs) and schools will need to consult with their stakeholders to inform local ESSA implementation, including the development of their local consolidated and support and improvement plans. Going forward, LEAs will need to maintain that level of engagement as they re-submit their applications for ESSA funds each year.

Locally, ESSA offers LEAs and schools opportunities to rethink their programs and spending to better support student outcomes, particularly in low-performing schools. Local leaders should outline their strategic priorities, informed by their state's ESSA plan, in order to understand how to best take advantage of these opportunities. As LEAs determine their strategic priorities, they must include meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

Spotlight on Dolton School District, Illinois: Engagement Around School Improvement Planning

As part of their school improvement planning process, Dolton's district leaders have made many efforts to engage with stakeholders. **Some highlights include:**

Partnership—Once identified by the Illinois State Board of Education for priority services, Dolton partnered with the Illinois Center for School Improvement (Illinois CSI). This partnership supported their work to re-evaluate student and school performance, areas of strength and areas for growth, and the needs of the community. Dolton also partnered with the Superintendent's Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity to provide parental engagement.

Improvement Plan Listening Tour—Taking their lead from ISBE's listening sessions conducted in 2016 for the development of the Illinois state ESSA plan, district leaders conducted a tour to school sites to share and answer questions about their district improvement plan. The tour reached teachers, school leaders, paraprofessionals, students and families, non-profit organizations from the community, coursework assistants, and program leaders.

Local Information-Sharing with Families and Communities—District and school leaders often use existing events for families and educators such as the Parent University educational meetings, holidays, student conferences, and sporting events to communicate updates, ask for input of local decisions, and learn more about the community. These events nearly always include a meal, childcare, and some sort of raffle or giveaway to encourage attendance.

Watch Illinois CSI's Voices from the Districts to learn more about how district partnerships with CSI are making a difference in Illinois.

When To Engage

LEA and School Planning: Engagement in Action

Over the coming year and throughout implementation of ESSA, districts and schools each play a vital role in ensuring educational equity for all students.



LEAs

What Is an LEA?

A **local education agency (LEA)** might be a single- or multi-school district, a vocational program, a charter operator, a regional or county office of education, an alternative education program, or other office of education supporting schools and students in a particular region. In this document we use the terms “LEA” and “district” interchangeably, noting that we intend to include all of the above LEA types.

LEA Planning:

Under ESSA, LEAs must engage in planning processes around issues impacting their schools, including:

- Title I LEA Plans (or Consolidated LEA Plans) for all Title I Schools, to be reviewed by the state. Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans for all schools identified under the accountability system (those in the bottom 5% of schools and those high schools with graduation rates at or below 67%) to be reviewed by the state.
- Additional district planning as required by the state (e.g. California’s Local Control Accountability Plans and planning processes for all districts).
- LEAs and schools can coordinate some activities across multiple funding sources. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement can illustrate how various programs connect to one another.
- Districts must specify the planning process for those schools identified under the accountability system as in need of Targeted Support and Improvement.

When To Engage *(cont.)*



Schools

Which Schools Are Impacted By ESSA?

All **schools** are impacted by ESSA, but the particulars of how they might be affected vary from state to state. For most states, the greatest impact will be for schools eligible for Title I federal funding (schools serving large populations of low-income families and their children) and for schools that receive specific federal program funds, such as rural schools or schools serving Native youth. However, since states generally have a large percentage of Title I-eligible schools, state systems are usually run to support all public schools, including alternative education programs, private institutions accepting vouchers, or online course providers. Thus, changes under ESSA have a significant impact on state leaders, and in turn, all of their schools.

School Planning:

Schools will be required to develop and implement site-specific plans, including:

- Targeted Support and Improvement Plans for all schools with underperforming subgroups, as identified under the state accountability system.
- Parent engagement plans.
- Working with districts to write and implement Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans for schools identified under the accountability system.
- Local strategic planning, as required by the state or district.

Highlighted Resource: The School Improvement Process

Students Can't Wait has developed a fact sheet with additional resources, including a sample timeline for school improvement planning. Find this resource at:

edtrust.org/students-cant-wait

Local Context: Finding Your Starting Point

District and school leaders will be coming to the ESSA table with very different experiences and levels of readiness. Many of the districts and schools that will be most affected by ESSA have experience with the complex and collaborative planning processes that were required under No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—the predecessor to ESSA. On the other hand, many charter operators and early childhood care providers might be coming to the ESSA table having little to no experience with the new requirements or the K-12 accountability systems.

Communities may have an even more diverse set of experiences. Some schools have experienced decades of reform movements and changes. Other schools will be newly identified for additional support under ESSA, and may have little knowledge of what will be expected of them, or how they will respond.

Clarify your vision

We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity presented by ESSA to examine your local vision and priorities to ensure they continue to represent the work that will be expected under new state systems. Local leaders should engage with their stakeholders to create unified and collaborative leadership around their vision, and to realign priorities with the evolving needs of their community. Questions to consider in beginning this process include:

- Do your existing vision and key priorities adequately describe what you are trying to achieve for all students?
- Does your theory of action clearly define what needs to be done to achieve your goals? (If X, then Y will occur?)
- Are the strategies presently in place sufficient to achieve your vision for all students?
- Is your district effectively structured to implement and achieve your vision?
- Is the day-to-day work of your staff driven and defined by your vision? If not, what adjustments need to be made?
- Have you defined a clear measure of success?
- How will you know when you have achieved your vision?



PART 2:

Making Engagement More Effective

The Community: ESSA provides SEAs and LEAs with a unique opportunity to redefine the way they engage with their stakeholders. Engagement practices in the past have varied widely across states and districts, with some more intentional than others, leaving many groups feeling disconnected and unheard. ESSA’s focus on engaging all stakeholders provides state and district leaders with a chance to change their cultures and practices of engagement of all stakeholders—with particular attention to those who have been historically less connected to their work—as a key priority throughout ESSA planning, implementation and beyond.

Recognizing the differing information, participation, and engagement needs and assets of various stakeholder groups, this section offers a compiled set of engagement resources, tailored to meet the needs of specific constituent groups. These resources are not exhaustive, nor necessarily specific to ESSA conversations. Rather, they provide suggestions to LEAs on how to best plan, organize and implement effective stakeholder conversations to encourage meaningful participation and feedback, and create a sense of shared responsibility to achieve equity goals.

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Framing Meaningful Engagement

Specific engagement methods can vary across different groups based on their unique conditions and needs, but the basic principles and broad strategies and elements remain the same. District leaders can **use the guidance detailed on these pages** from CCSSO and Partners *for* to begin to formulate their overall engagement strategy.

For more, see page 36: CCSSO's 10 Steps—Questions to Consider, and Partners for's full Checklist for Effective Engagement Around Local Planning.

Guiding Principles



Principle 1:

Hold stakeholder engagement and the pursuit of equity and excellence as inseparable endeavors



Principle 2:

Include diverse groups of stakeholders, with a commitment to engaging historically excluded voices



Principle 3:

Ensure stakeholder engagement is well informed



Principle 4:

Focus on continuous improvement as an essential paradigm/framework for engagement



Principle 5:

Seek to build consensus pragmatically; effective collaboration doesn't always mean full consensus

Key Steps to Meaningful Engagement

1. Clarify your goals
2. Work with partner organizations to identify and engage with your 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
10. Turn these new connections into long-term relationships

Implementation Checklist

- Identify a leadership team*
- Build a strategic vision
- Dedicate resources
- Foster collaborative relationships
- Develop an online platform
- Establish a location where stakeholders can go to learn and provide feedback (e.g. library, parent information center)
- Identify ways to measure progress
- Develop a robust LEA planning process
- Engage a diverse group who represent the community
- Learn what issues matter most
- Collaborate with partners
- Use accessible/inclusive methods
- Clarify how feedback is incorporated
- Inform stakeholders through distributed leadership and accessible materials
- Use multiple vehicles/mechanisms
- Strategically engage stakeholders on all issues
- Use feedback loops
- Regularly inform leadership
- Measure progress/improvement
- Use information systems to track engagement
- Regularly update public timelines
- Maintain partnerships and structures for continued engagement
- Commit to ongoing engagement

Planning

Engagement

Moving Forward

**Leadership teams could include internal staff dedicated to engagement as well as key stakeholders. One best practice is to include a community ambassador, such as a parent or a family member of a current student in a historically underserved group.*

The Local Stakeholder Community

LEAs and schools should use the opportunity presented under ESSA to invest in engagement, beginning with efforts to more fully understand and connect with your specific community. This might include training for internal staff or community leaders in cultural competency, language skill, meeting facilitation, use of technology, and resource development or financial support. The planning process and determined strategies for school improvement will be most effective if they are tailored to the needs of your community and measured by their ability to improve equitable access to educational success for all students and families.

As LEAs and schools begin to plan around local implementation of ESSA, developing an effective and meaningful engagement strategy—including an outreach, communications and evaluation strategy—will be essential for community support and buy-in on new, strengthened, or eliminated programs. To make this most effective, LEAs should emphasize collaboration across internal staff and include select stakeholders as part of the engagement strategy team.

Effective and Meaningful Engagement Strategies

LEAs and schools have a responsibility to ensure all stakeholders are able to engage in a process that is well-defined and enables them to inform efforts to ensure educational equity. This means extending beyond the usual people, processes, and practices (e.g. public comment at district meetings, reliance on already formed advisory groups). Instead, ESSA creates an opportunity for LEAs to consider how the norms and habits of stakeholder engagement can be strengthened to allow new perspectives and voices to be reflected in decision-making circles—especially important in conversations about accountability for equity for all students.

Strategies might include:

- **Online Engagement or Written Responses** through web-, written-, or email-based feedback or discussion
- **Mass Surveys** of whole stakeholder groups (e.g. superintendents) or a representative sample (e.g. school-based personnel) conducted online, by telephone, or in-person, vetted by stakeholders
- **Focus Groups or Small Group Meetings** to elicit feedback on a particular issue, typically facilitated or monitored by a third party (See the Accessible Meetings Checklist, page 20)
- **Large-Scale Public Meetings or Multi-Stakeholder Forums** (open to the public, representatives of different stakeholder groups) for dissemination of information, sharing opinions, and discussion; occasional or ongoing dialogue focused around an issue of mutual concern. Consider using interactive technology at meetings like this to capture feedback and provide real-time information to attendees (See the Accessible Meetings Checklist, page 20)
- **Direct Involvement of Stakeholder Experts** (e.g. a commission) to investigate issues, draft reports and policies or collaborate with the school, LEA, and/or SEA
- **Stakeholder Advisory Panels** to offer advice and comments on a particular project or ongoing set of issues
- **Multi-stakeholder Alliances, Cross-sector Partnerships, Voluntary Initiatives, or Joint Projects** that might include long-term commitments by individuals to make progress on equity, including reforming existing regulations, developing new policies, or creating opportunities for informal, but meaningful action

- **Webinars or Recorded Videos** can be helpful to distill complex information and reach people across geographic areas and with different language abilities. Outreach should focus on diversity and live sessions should be offered at a couple of different times of the day to accommodate various work schedules. Webinars can also be recorded and posted online for stakeholders to view at any time
- **Meet People Where They Are** by going out into the community, such as places of worship, to ask for feedback. This includes accessible places to find accurate and up-to-date information—online and in community spaces (e.g. libraries, health centers)
- **Connect with Ethnic and Bilingual Media Outlets**
- **Designate Family or Community Liaisons/Leaders** to support engagement efforts, including educational events and dissemination of various communications
- **Use Social Media** for input and networking efforts among families and school community members, including students

Spotlight on Georgia: School Councils

In Georgia, all public schools must form a “school council,” which acts as a policy advisory board and includes the principal, superintendent, and local stakeholders, including teachers and families.

The [Georgia School Council Institute](http://gsci.org) (gsci.org) has produced a series of materials to support these councils.



Top Resources for Engagement

- ▶ [Let’s Get this Conversation Started](#) and [Let’s Keep this Conversation Going](#) (CCSSO)
- ▶ [District Guide to ESSA and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement](#) (Partners for)
- ▶ [Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works](#) (Coalition for Community Schools, NASSP, NAESP)
- ▶ [Every Student Succeeds Act Guide for Advocates](#) (The Leadership Conference Education Fund/LCCHR)

Online Engagement Tools

Funding/Transparency

- **OpenGov:** opengov.com
- **Budget Simulator:** www.budgetsimulator.com

Community Input

- **Bang The Table:** www.bangthetable.com
- **Peak Democracy:** www.peakdemocracy.co/clients

Building and Sharing Surveys

- **All Our Ideas:** allourideas.org
- **CrowdGauge:** crowdgauge.org

For more, check out [Broadening Public Participation Using Online Engagement Tools](#) from ICMA



Looking for More Resources?

Check out pages 40-43 for additional resources, by section.

Stakeholder Meetings Checklist:

To Ensure Meetings Are Inclusive and Accessible to A Diverse Group of Stakeholders

Checklist

- Target outreach to historically underserved stakeholders
- Financially support travel
- Make informative materials made available:
 - Ahead of the meeting (including questions to consider)
 - In multiple languages and formats in consideration of varied levels of literacy and proficiency
 - In a format that is easy for all stakeholders to understand
 - Online
- Host events in a central, ADA-accessible location, with transportation assistance
- Invite interpreters, including ASL
- Provide food, and include options for those with dietary restrictions
- Hold multiple meetings, held at times when families and teachers can attend
- Provide childcare
- Provide access to homework help at the meeting
- Send out multiple reminders via email, text and on paper
- Record and/or live-stream the event
- Ensure that multiple experts on the issues present, with time for Q&A
- Provide a platform to continue to engage with the issues following the meeting (e.g. a website and email for questions)
- Provide a physical place for stakeholders to go to provide ongoing input (e.g. Parent Center)

Learn more

- [**Facilitator's Guide to Making Meetings Accessible**](#) (Seeds for Change)
- [**A Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings**](#) (ADA)
- [**Ten Tips for Inclusive Meetings**](#) (University of Michigan)
- [**Be Responsive and Engage with Your Community**](#) (Code for America)
- [**Inclusive Meetings**](#) (Online Leadership Tools)

Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Meaningful Engagement with Diverse Stakeholder Groups

Shifts in policy or practice as a result of ESSA will impact all student groups, including historically underserved students, such as students of color, English learners, Native students, those with disabilities, students in low-income families, and students experiencing homelessness or foster care. Each of these populations should be represented, in addition to families/guardians, teachers, school building and district leaders, district staff, food service and transportation staff, higher education institutions, specialized instructional support personnel, community-based organizations, faith-based community partners, and the business community. It is also important that district and school leaders see themselves as stakeholders—meaningful engagement requires feedback loops and collaborative leadership.

Stakeholders to Engage:*

While all community stakeholders should be engaged in the planning process, it is important to make extra efforts to engage with underrepresented and historically marginalized stakeholders. It is important to include voices representing students who are more difficult to reach, including those with unique needs, students in low-income families, students with disabilities, students of color, English learners, migrant students, military-connected students, students who are homeless, foster youth, and students with trauma histories.

The following pages offer specific tips and resources for engaging with some of these groups.

- **Students and Youth**
- **Parents, Families, and Communities**
- **District- and School-Level Educators**
- **Elected Officials**
- **Agencies and Governmental Bodies**
- **Advocacy Organizations**
- **Civil/Human Rights Organizations**
- **Early Learning Leaders**
- **Philanthropy**
- **Higher Ed, Certification, Research**
- **Professional Leadership and Associations**
- **Physical and Mental Health Professionals**
- **Outside Organizations/Business Community**

“In impoverished communities, we have to be very deliberate about how we engage our poor, low-income, rural families, and communities of color. We believe that the delivery of a first-rate quality public education and effective parental, community, and stakeholder engagement is critical to transforming the culture and charting pathways out of poverty for Mississippi’s most vulnerable students and families.”

– Joyce Parker, Southern Echo, Inc.

Southern Echo, Inc. and the members of the Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable focus on addressing the institutionalized and systemic racism that permeates our education, political, environmental, and economic systems, and that perpetuates extreme poverty and oppressive public policies throughout most of Mississippi.

**See page 55 for a more complete list of stakeholders to be engaged.*

Students and Youth



Engagement should begin with students; it is essential that local leaders know and understand the communities they serve, starting with the children they serve. In particular, it is important that local leaders engage with students of color, students with different abilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness or foster care, students in low-income families, students involved in the juvenile justice system, opportunity and disconnected youth, students who have graduated or transitioned, formerly incarcerated students or students with incarcerated families, and students who have been suspended and/or expelled.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Engage with students directly through in-school opportunities like homeroom periods, civics course units, or extracurricular activities. Use family and educator ambassadors to engage with young people, work with youth-led organizations, youth groups, alumni groups, and community college or university students, and use social media where appropriate. Local leaders should also proactively address past habits & cultures that may have excluded students and/or led to distrust or miscommunication.



Top Resources

- ▶ [Student Engagement: Resource Roundup](#) (Edutopia)
- ▶ [Raising Student Voice and Participation](#) (National Association of Student Councils)
- ▶ [Video: ESSA and What Students Need to Know](#) (National Association of Secondary School Principals)

Spotlight on Montgomery County: Study Circles Program

MCPS' [Equity Initiatives Unit](#) uses the Study Circle Program to provide a structure for effective dialogue and action addressing the practices and policies that limit a district's ability to close the racial achievement gap.

Study circle teams include families, students, educators, and facilitators. These conversations take place on school sites and include all students.

Learn more at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/clusteradmin/equity/

Parents, Guardians and Families



Children and youth grow up in many different family structures, and those structures often change over time. One of the most important tasks for educators and decision-makers is to recognize each student's family as a valuable asset, and realize that different families face different issues, and have different needs, strengths and values. Educators and the school community should recognize and engage the central figures in a student's life—including those who may not be legal parents or guardians—and involve them as appropriate. This may include welcoming whole families, step-parents, grandparents, parental partners (regardless of gender) or other extended family members.

Engage with families of all students being served in your schools. Be sure to engage with underserved groups, including families of students with a variety of disabilities (e.g. learning and behavioral), families of English learners, families who are homeless, families serving foster youth, and families of students of color.

Engaging with families can be the most effective way to understand student needs, particularly to support innovative ideas for students and classrooms, determine out-of-school or community resources, or build resources for school and family relationship building.

Effective Engagement Strategies

There are numerous proven strategies that schools can use to strengthen their relationships with parents and guardians and engage them in meaningful discussions around ESSA and equity. Some examples, suggested by the National PTA, include:

- **Invite families to participate:** Many families do not feel welcomed or know that ESSA requires that states and districts involve them in the development of the new education plans. Education leaders should utilize a variety of communication channels to reach out to parents and share with them ways they can get involved. Education leaders can also rely on a trusted messenger—such as the PTA, or other local, community-based education advocate—to share information about the ESSA implementation process with families. Ways to engage families might include home visiting, family workshops, and training and empowerment activities. Where possible, use existing family engagement opportunities such as parent-teacher conferences, advisory nights, or student events where families are invited. Additionally, take home supports can promote literacy, critical thinking, numeracy, creativity, and parent involvement.
- **Make messages to parents easy to digest:** ESSA-related materials must be provided in simple and relatable terms. At the most basic level, parents want to know how ESSA affects their child, their education and school, and what they can do. Resources should be no longer than 3 pages, however 1–2 pages are ideal. Other mediums should be used to provide clear and concise information to parents and families. Consider the messenger; use community leadership and family ambassadors to engage with families to build trust and foster ongoing relationships.

“ESSA recognizes the critical expertise and firsthand knowledge that parents, educators, practitioners and other stakeholders can bring to the table to help improve our nation’s schools and make sure every child has the opportunity to reach his/her full potential. This is a much-needed change in education policymaking.”

- *Laura Bay*
Immediate President, National PTA

- **Translate materials to reach all families:** It is essential that ESSA-related materials are translated into at least one of the most commonly spoken languages other than English in a school community; materials should also be made accessible to reach parents with a disability. Although these extra steps take time and resources, doing so demonstrates a commitment to ensuring all parents and families have access to the information they need to support their child’s learning and development.
- **Demonstrate why family participation matters:** If families are included in all stages of the ESSA implementation process, they will understand how it relates not only to their child, but to every child in the community, the state and the nation. Mechanisms need to be put in place for parents to provide regular, ongoing feedback, and whether or not they agree, education decision-makers need to show that they are listening when parents share their thoughts.



Top Resources

- ▶ [6 Keys to Engaging Families in ESSA](#) (National PTA)
- ▶ [District Family Engagement Policy Toolkit](#) (Scholastic Family and Community Engagement)
- ▶ [ESSA Bootcamp: Parent and Community Engagement Deep Dive](#) (National Center for Learning Disabilities)
- ▶ [Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning](#) (Priority Schools Campaign, NEA)
- ▶ [Family Engagement in ESSA](#) (En Español) (National PTA)

State Spotlights:

Ohio: Building Family Partnerships

Ohio’s [Framework for Building Partnerships Among Schools, Families and Communities](#) is a toolkit designed to help schools develop effective and lasting relationships with families. It provides districts and schools with guidance for developing family engagement plans within their existing continuous improvement plans. It includes assessment tools, strategies and descriptions of action steps that educators, families and community members can take to strengthen the connection between home and school.

Learn more at education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community-Engagement

Delaware: PTA Engagement

In October, 2016, the Delaware Department of Education and the Delaware PTA hosted a forum for families to provide input into the state ESSA plan. They provided materials to inform invitees, and invited input at the meeting and via email through a feedback form with open-ended questions.

Learn more at delawarepta.org/event/essa-community-conversations-3

Alaska: Supporting Homeless Youth

“With a school change, every time a child transitions from one home to another they lose between four to six months of academic progress. We try to keep kids in their school of origin, the place they were living at the time they became homeless.”

—Kay Streecher, Homeless Program Manager, State Department of Early Education and Development.

Alaska supports a higher percentage of homeless students than any other state. Learn more: education.alaska.gov/esea/titlex-c

Meaningful Engagement With Families With Specific Needs

Engaging with Families of Students with Disabilities

Work with the head of the special education office and local advocates to identify the best methods to reach the families of students with disabilities in your community. Consider using a variety of strategies, such as holding small group meetings with LEA or district representatives and families/parents/guardians of students with similar disabilities. This will allow the LEA or school staff to step back and have a two-way conversation with parents, instead of serving as the main presenters.

Engaging the Families of English Learners

Consider the specific needs of the English learner and his/her family. English learners include all youth and families that are not proficient speaking, reading, and writing in English, which includes Native American, international and migrant youth and families, and youth and families who live in a home where English is not the primary spoken or written language. Given the additional cultural assets and differences of many English learner youth and families, it is important for local leaders to be sensitive to more than one language. For example:

- A school site is not always a safe place for undocumented families—consider meeting in a community center or training a family ambassador to meet directly with families.
- Materials cannot be translated to languages without a writing system—consider using a video recording or in-person engagement methods.
- Students and families of different faiths may not be able to attend weekend events or may be absent for long parts of the school year to observe holidays—schedule events with this in mind, and consider data collection systems that take into account these differences.
- Policy structures all over the country and world are different, as are cultural norms about the role of education leaders. Ensure that translation is community vetted and accurate, and hire and train community or family leaders to support engagement.

Meaningful Engagement With Families With Specific Needs (cont.)

Strategies to Support Families with School Transition

Transition strategies help parents prepare and set expectations for their new school and students, and help families and students to feel welcome in a new school environment:

- Invite families and school staff to participate in focus groups or information sessions to explore families' and the school's expectations and goals for students, as well as an initial informal discussion of student needs and school supports. Ask family members of older elementary or secondary school students to share their insights into how to prepare children for school, including ways that families can support classroom instruction.
- Make direct contact with families by phone or at community activities in order to share grade-level expectations and school contact information. Be aware of varied literacy levels among families.
- Provide home visits, open houses, and parent orientation sessions off the school grounds at community centers or local churches, and pamphlets in multiple languages.

These strategies can be used to support all transitioning students, including migrant, military-involved, formerly incarcerated, foster and homeless youth, young parents, youth reengaging in more traditional or alternative education programs, and families of students entering kindergarten.

Highlighted Resource: Transition to Kindergarten

New America has released a report focusing on strategies for supporting transition to kindergarten:

[Connecting the Steps: State Strategies to Ease the Transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten](#)

Engaging Families and Peers Experiencing Homelessness

A homeless liaison can represent the voice of students and families, and support families in locating the proper resources. Liaisons can provide sensitivity training to staff, collaborate with staff to identify students and provide services to families, locate resources, advocate, and meet with families to plan with and support them.

Educators (Teachers and Leaders)



Educators are central to ESSA planning and implementation and can be instrumental to success, especially when engagement is early and ongoing. Educators can help identify gaps in talent pipelines, quality instruction in high-needs schools and other areas. School leaders and educators offer perspectives that are vital to conversations around educator training, development and evaluation, non-academic challenges and support, and reporting on progress. Early education providers, including those who work with children from birth to age 3, should also be at the table to ensure that preschoolers are well-prepared to meet kindergarten expectations when they enter the K-12 system.

While it is essential to engage with current classroom teachers, keep in mind that the broad category of “educators” reflects an array of groups that can represent educator interests, and should be included as key voices on ESSA issues, including:

- Professional and advocacy organizations (National Education Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, American Federation of Teachers, Association of School Business Officers International, American School Counselor Association, National PTA, National Association of School Psychologists)
- Infant-toddler early education and care providers (including both preschool and birth to age 3)
- Principals and other building leaders in urban, suburban, rural and frontier schools; principals and other building leaders of charter schools
- Paraprofessionals, including intervention specialists
- School psychologists, school counselors and other specialists
- Other school staff including librarians, custodians, cafeteria workers and teacher’s aides
- State Indian Education Associations
- Pre-school, elementary and secondary school teachers; core and special course instructors; curriculum specialists; English learner teachers; student support staff; special education teachers; and out-of-school time staff
- Higher education faculty and staff in educator training and professional development programs

Effective Engagement Strategies

LEAs and schools should build in ESSA-specific engagement discussions into the agendas of existing required meetings or trainings, and ensure that meetings are held during times of the year and day that are available to educators and school leaders. Educators, including school leaders, are often more likely to participate when their peers are in leadership positions for an engagement event or initiative, and when leaders have made a concerted effort to restructure their classroom time to support engagement. Administrators should ensure that educators have funding to attend professional development or planning meetings necessary to support ESSA-related programs, such as whole child strategies and new performance assessments. In addition to in-person engagements, LEAs can reach many educators on social media, online forums, school newsletters or bulletins and other listservs. It will also be important to find ways to create safe spaces for educator feedback, including ways to receive anonymous feedback. Principals must also be engaged by district leaders, and can be very useful as peer leaders.



Top Resources

- ▶ [ESSA Toolkit for Principals \(NASSP\)](#)
- ▶ [Teacher Engagement and Perspectives On ESSA: An Eagerness To Engage and Be Heard \(Educators for High Standards\)](#)

Rural Communities



About one-third of all public schools are located in rural areas, while about one-quarter of all public school students are enrolled in rural schools. These districts are spread across the country and face unique issues, including high levels of poverty, difficulty in attracting high quality teachers and transportation challenges, as well as issues specific to geography, primary industry, and access to infrastructure (e.g. internet). The people who know the challenges facing rural districts best are the ones who live and work there. Key stakeholders to engage include parents, business leaders, educators and elected officials who can influence the development of budget and policy decisions.

Rural districts should also reach out to representatives from national organizations that focus on rural education, such as Battelle for Kids, the National Rural Education Association, the School Superintendents Association (AASA), and the Rural School and Community Trust.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Many rural stakeholders will need to travel long distances to participate in face-to-face discussions, so LEAs should offer different ways to engage and provide support for travel. These can include online discussions, use of social media, surveys, webinars and video conference calls, and regional or virtual focus groups. For in-person events, consider planning far in advance, scheduling at locations that people can easily reach using public transportation, and providing resources to help families and community partners participate (e.g. transportation). Also consider holding engagement events in formal and informal centers of the community, such as libraries or faith-based centers.



Top Resources

- ▶ [Community Engagement in Rural Areas](#)
(Chief Education Office)
- ▶ [Making ESSA Work for Rural Students, Schools and Communities](#)
(Battelle for Kids)

Tribal Leadership and Native Communities



ESSA provides local governments the opportunity to engage tribal leadership—including Native community organizations, and families of Native students—that best support Native students. LEAs are required to consult with Indian tribes or tribal organizations before submitting a plan for a program under ESSA (e.g. Comprehensive Improvement Plans). Districts that receive more than \$40,000 for Title VI or have over 50% American Indian enrollment must include tribal consultation in planning and implementation processes.

Effective Engagement Strategies

To best support Native students, it is important to integrate tribal communities and show respect for tribal traditions. For example, tribal leadership might initiate a partnership with tangible or intangible acts of giving. In exchange for their time, cultural gifts and information provided, Native communities will expect in return a commitment of time, recognition, respect, understanding, and gift giving. Adhering to this exchange protocol, state and school district agencies acknowledge and respect the community's needs and ways of being. Moreover, acting in a spirit of respect ensures that all voices are heard, assumptions and misgivings are relinquished, and a more inclusive decision-making approach is applied to overcome the longstanding mistrust and wariness between stakeholders.



Top Resources

- ▶ [Building Relationships With Tribes: A Native Process for Local Consultation Under ESSA](#) (National Indian Education Association)
- ▶ [A Native Process for Evaluation of State and Local Plans for Native Education Under ESSA](#) (National Indian Education Association)
- ▶ [National Association of Federally Impacted Schools](#) (NAFIS)
- ▶ [10 Ways to Engage Rural Communities, Families and Schools in Education](#) (Indian Country Today)

“Tribes have been driven to establish a trusting relationship with public school leadership before engaging with the state leadership. Jemez Pueblo tribal education leadership entered into a collaborative relationship with the public and Bureau of Indian Education schools located on Jemez Pueblo land. The education collaborative jointly planned professional development calendars to align with each other. Collaborative meetings are held for all staff and leadership to come together, share successes, discuss challenges, and learn from one another.”

- Ahniwake Rose, NIEA
Giving Native Communities a Seat at the Education Policy Table

Policymakers



LEAs should consider engaging with local policymakers who represent their districts, neighborhoods and schools. These include local legislators, elected members of the local school board or City Council, and other appointed or elected decision-makers. This regular communication helps to ensure that superintendents and teachers are able to share their concerns, challenges and successes directly with their representatives. This also helps policymakers stay informed of the implementation process and quickly respond to the needs of the educators in their district. This open line of communication will help

to inform the work of policymakers, and enable them to have their questions answered, make adjustments to statutes, lobby for change or advocate for additional funding if necessary. Open communication between policymakers and local educators can only work to improve implementation of ESSA and ultimately make the state more successful in reaching the goals of its plan.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Effective methods for engagement with policymakers—including local school boards, state and local legislators, and others—include:

- Invite policymakers and/or their staff to attend meetings where school officials discuss implementation
- Develop and share briefing material to inform their thinking
- Invite policymakers to a meeting or event at district offices
- Include policymakers in any trainings or briefings that are offered to district staff
- Meet informally with individual policymakers and/or their staff to answer their questions



Top Resources

- ▶ [ESSA Digital Kit for Governors](#)
(NGA)
- ▶ [America's Legislators Back to School](#)
(NCSL)
- ▶ [Community Engagement and Education Advocacy by School Boards](#)
(Hanover Research)

Leveraging Community Partnerships



LEAs and schools are best positioned to identify their own needs and assets, but don't always have the staffing, expertise, or funding to address them. Proactively reaching out to like-minded outside groups can add capacity, bolster existing resources and address gaps in service or support. Possible partnerships to explore could include:

- **Community-based organizations**, including social and civic organizations, centers of the community, faith-based organizations, and libraries, can serve to provide helpful information about families and students and can support engagement by providing event space, material development, on-site partnerships, and—in some cases—additional financial support.
- **Hospitals and other healthcare organizations**, including care-givers/social workers/occupational therapists can support community school and whole child strategies for school improvement through on-site clinics, family workshops (e.g. preparing for college, understanding school report cards), integrated support services for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and additional resources (e.g. translation and interpretation, out-of-school time enrichment opportunities, family engagement, early childhood programs, college and career, and comprehensive health and wellness services available to youth and families).
- **Philanthropic or grant-making organizations** can fund ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement, implementation efforts, professional learning, data infrastructure, and data analysis.
- **Business community representatives** can support job training programs, internships for students, and professional learning resources for teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school and youth-serving staff.
- **Peer districts/schools**, including those with similar needs and challenges and/or charter organizations, can work with neighboring and feeder schools to support and implement scalable strategies.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Engaging with partners can be an excellent way to build school and district capacity, but can be tricky with organizations or partners who do not share a common vision. In order to build meaningful partnerships, school and district leaders must have a clear understanding of their needs, a plan for determining best-fit partners, and staff capacity to support partnership development and to oversee the ongoing relationship.



Top Resources

- ▶ [Strengthening Partnerships: Community School Assessment Checklist](#) (Coalition for Community Schools (CCS), The Finance Project)
- ▶ [Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works](#) (NASSP, CCS, NAESP, and the MetLife Foundation)



Top Resources (cont.)

- ▶ [Sharing Stories of Collaborative Leadership—District Examples](#) (AIR, Technology in Education)
- ▶ [Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness](#) (CCS and the National Association of School Psychologists)

Highlight on California: Peer Collaboration

The California Collaborative for District Reform is a promising practice for cross-district networking and collaboration. Rather than operate in silos, districts can adapt promising ideas from other K-12 systems to meet their own local needs, and develop shared products that enrich their learning and accelerate their growth in the service of improved student outcomes.

Learn more through AIR's Webinar: <http://www.cacollaborative.org/topics/district-collaboration>

Highlight on Illinois: Bloom Township School District's Inclusive Leadership Practices

The Bloom Township “District Leadership Team” includes the president of the teacher’s union, paraprofessionals, the school board president, family representatives, and school and district officials. This committee is responsible for supporting implementation of all district-level programming, and will play a significant role in ESSA implementation, particularly with regard to engagement with local stakeholders—many of whom are their constituents or peers.

Find out more at www.sd206.org

Highlighted Resources: The Dignity in Schools Campaign

The Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC) has developed resources for families and communities to successfully engage in ESSA implementation efforts with their state and district stakeholders, found at www.dignityinschools.org/content/dignity-schools-campaign-fact-sheets.

The DSC is a national multi-stakeholder coalition made up of youth, parents, educators, grassroots groups, and policy and legal advocacy groups in 29 states, which challenges the systemic problem of pushout in our nation’s schools and works to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. DSC actively campaigned for the inclusion of student and parent voices and provisions that address exclusionary school discipline practices and other school climate indicators in ESSA.

The DSC has also compiled resources focused on family and community participation in school efforts to change discipline practices. These resources can be found at www.dignityinschools.org/content/parent-and-community-participation.

PART 3:

Tools For Building an Engagement Strategy

Getting Started On the Work: Part 3 includes four resources to begin understanding and strategizing around engagement at the local level.

What's In This Part?

- ▶ **Ten Steps to Meaningful Engagement: Questions for Consideration and Discussion** 36
- ▶ **Designing a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy: A Checklist** 38
- ▶ **Additional Resources and Tools From National and Local Experts:**
 - ▶ *General Engagement Methods* 40
 - ▶ *Engagement with Specific Groups* 40
- ▶ **How States Might Use This Handbook: Developing A Toolkit** 44

10 Steps: Questions for Consideration and Discussion

These questions align to CCSSO's **10 Steps to Meaningful Engagement**, and should be used to drive discussion as you evaluate and strengthen your school or district's engagement strategy.

10 STEPS TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION
1. Clarify your goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your state's strategic vision, and how do your district's engagement goals connect to it? • What do you want to learn through the engagement of your local stakeholders? • What do you want your stakeholders to understand, do or say as a result of this engagement? • How will you know your engagement plan is working? • Who on your staff will be responsible for managing this work?
2. Work with partner organizations to identify and engage with your stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stakeholder groups do you intend to engage? • What are some stakeholder groups that you have not engaged in the past? • How can you ensure that you are reaching people who truly represent your specific groups of stakeholders? • With whom can you partner to broaden your reach and ensure you are able to engage with a more diverse group of stakeholders? • How can you work in collaboration with your partners to ensure that their outreach remains consistent with yours?
3. Speak to your audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key issues that matter most to your local stakeholders? • What are the questions they are most likely to ask related to the state's implementation of ESSA and what that will mean locally? • Are there questions related to ESSA implementation that certain stakeholder groups are uniquely positioned to answer?
4. Use multiple vehicles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which vehicle or vehicles are your stakeholders currently using to communicate? • Which vehicle or vehicles have proven most effective in the past? • What new outreach vehicles can you incorporate into your strategy to complement your existing approach? • What additional capacity and/or training would your team need to use new outreach vehicles?
5. Identify your best ambassadors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What partners do you work with who are closely tied to specific stakeholder groups and could potentially serve as district ambassadors? • How can you recruit additional ambassadors to connect with stakeholder groups with whom the district leadership is not closely tied? • What can you do to ensure your ambassadors are successful in their engagement efforts?

10 Steps: Questions for Consideration and Discussion (Cont.)

10 STEPS TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION
<p>6. Ask for input before decisions are made, and use it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the ESSA timeline and other issues that require attention in your community, when should you engage stakeholders to provide input on possible policy changes? When should outreach begin to ensure that a representative sampling of stakeholders can be engaged? How will you provide feedback to stakeholders on how their input was integrated in your decision-making?
<p>7. Keep your materials simple and brief.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which groups will be most responsive to the more in-the-weeds discussions? How can you gain valuable input from other stakeholders without delving into too much detail? Who can help to ensure your materials are clear and concise and appropriate for your stakeholders?
<p>8. Communicate early and often.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would be the best way to provide your stakeholders with an ongoing source of reliable information? What existing tools can you use? What new ones could you create? What tools are your stakeholders already using? Who will lead this work within your state agency, or serve as a point of contact for stakeholder groups? What additional capacity and/or training would your team need to do this well?
<p>9. Keep your team informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What internal structures currently exist to gather input from your central office staff and/or leadership team? What would be the best way to provide your internal staff with an ongoing source of reliable information? How can your leadership team support this across the agency? Who will lead this internal communications and engagement work?
<p>10. Turn these new connections into long-term relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What other opportunities exist or are on the horizon that could be informed by stakeholder input? How else can you keep these stakeholders engaged and informed once ESSA planning and implementation is complete? Who on your staff can be tasked with building and maintaining these relationships? How will you know if this effort has been successful?

Designing a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy: A Checklist

Planning

High Capacity for Collaboration and Engagement

- Identify a leadership team to project manage stakeholder engagement efforts.
- Dedicate resources, including funding stream(s), staff, and capacity for material development and distribution.
- Foster collaborative relationships with other local leadership, including peer districts, community-based organizations, and philanthropy.
- Engage with national, state, and community organizations to better understand the needs of historically underrepresented and/or underserved constituencies.
- Develop a robust web presence for housing information, including a timeline, resources and tools, and any supporting materials.

Robust LEA Planning Process

- Develop a process that includes strategies to ensure that LEA plans include collection and use of data, alignment with the unique needs/context of the LEA, and compliance with ESSA statute.
- Develop a timeline for local plan development, approval, and implementation, including time for meaningful engagement of local stakeholders at each step.
- Make processes and procedures for plan development publicly available and accessible to all stakeholders—including when and how stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage.

Engagement

Diverse Group of Engaged Stakeholders

- Engage with a broad range of stakeholders (See Stakeholders to Engage, page 55), ensuring participation of historically underrepresented and/or underserved groups.
- Collaborate with strong partners to support broad engagement.

Accessible/Inclusive Methods of Engagement

- Employ ongoing strategies that ensure engagement mechanisms are accessible (see Checklist, page 20).
- Ensure that all materials are written and distributed in a way that is easily understood and accessible, including for parents and families, and in languages other than English, where appropriate.
- Employ multiple formal procedures to gather input from a diverse range of stakeholders (see Methods, below) in ways likely to result in timely and meaningful feedback.
- Regularly clarify how stakeholder feedback is incorporated, on which issues, and why.

Designing a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy: A Checklist

Engagement (cont.)

Engagement Around the Issues: Informed Stakeholders

- Inform local leadership to serve as ambassadors for state-level decision-making.
- Engage with a diverse group of stakeholders around the design and development of *all* local plan components.
- Provide accessible materials for different stakeholder groups aligned to their interests and need (e.g. language, geographic relevance).
- Prepare materials in consultation with advocacy or community organizations.
- Conduct issue-specific consultation on a recurring basis in partnership with NGOs/CBOs with specific expertise or representing specific constituencies.

Moving Forward

Continuous Improvement and Implementation

- Draw from best practices for promoting continuous improvement around engagement: use feedback loops, analyze effectiveness and reflect on outcomes, and identify challenges and potential solutions.
- Develop data and information systems to track attendance at public events and for organizing stakeholder feedback, including how stakeholder input has shaped actions/decisions, the rationale behind decisions, and how decisions have been modified over time.
- Regularly update a public timeline for continuous improvement that is ambitious and actionable.
- Engage relevant stakeholders at regular intervals to improve implementation.
- Use information gathered from engagement efforts to improve the effectiveness of future efforts.
- Commit to convene regularly around implementation, including evaluation of efficacy/progress.

Local Engagement Resources



Engagement Vehicles/Mechanisms

- **Let's Get this Conversation Started** and **Let's Keep this Conversation Going**
(CCSSO)
- **The Partnership Way Resources**
(The IDEA Partnership)
- **Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement**
(in collaboration with the US Office of Special Education Programs, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.)
- **Using Technology to Support Family Engagement**
(Kaplan)
- **5 Steps to Better School/Community Collaboration**
(Edutopia)
- **Additional Resources for Community Partnerships**
(includes examples)
- **Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works**
(Coalition for Community Schools, NASSP, NAESP)
- **Principles on Stakeholder Engagement**
(Learning First Alliance)
- **Every Student Succeeds Act Guide for Advocates**
(The Leadership Conference Education Fund/The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights)

Engagement with Specific Groups

Students and Youth

- **Opportunity Youth Network**
- Video: **ESSA and What Students Need to Know**
(National Association of Student Councils, a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals)
- **Raising Student Voice & Participation**
(National Association of Student Councils, a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals)
- **Student Engagement: Resource Roundup**
(Edutopia)

Resources (cont.)

Engagement with Specific Groups

Parents, Guardians, and Families

- **Brief on Family Engagement in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015**
(National Education Association)
- **District Family Engagement Policy Toolkit**
(Scholastic Family and Community Engagement)
- **ESSA Bootcamp: Parent and Community Engagement Deep Dive**
(National Center for Learning Disabilities)
- **Guidelines for SEAs Engaging Parents**
(CCSSO, National PTA, and Learning Heroes) and accompanying Webinar: Engaging Parents and Families on ESSA
- **Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships**
(US ED, SEDL at AIR)
- **Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning**
(Priority Schools Campaign, NEA)
- **Policy Statement on Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades**
(US ED and HHS)
- **A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders**
(Colorín Colorado)
- **What's the Difference? No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act**
(National PTA)
- **Family Engagement in ESSA**
(En Español) (National PTA)
- **Statewide Family Engagement Centers**
(National PTA)
- **ESSA: What Does This New Law Mean for my Child?** (En Español)
(National PTA)
- **Overview: How to Engage Underrepresented Groups**
(National PTA)
- **Engaging Underrepresented Communities in Planning**
(Place Matters, Ford Foundation)
- **The New Education Majority Poll**
(LCCHR)
- **Primer on Parent and Community Engagement in the Every Student Succeeds Act**
(Alliance for Excellent Education and NAACP)
- **Parent Power BootCamp ESSA Toolkit**
(National Black Child Development Institute)

Resources (cont.)

Engagement with Specific Groups

Rural Communities

- **Community Engagement in Rural Areas**
(Chief Education Office)
- **Making ESSA Work for Rural Students, Schools and Communities**
(Battelle for Kids)
- **Educating Students in Rural America: Capitalizing on Strengths, Overcoming Barriers**
(NASBE)
- **Rural Education Resource Center**
(US ED)

Tribal Leadership and Native Communities

- **Building Relationships With Tribes: A Native Process for ESSA Consultation**
(National Indian Education Association)
- **National Association of Federally Impacted Schools**
(NAFIS)
- **10 Ways to Engage Rural Communities, Families and Schools in Education**
(Indian Country Today)

Educators

- **ESSA Toolkit for Principals**
(NASSP)
- **When Teachers and Administrators Collaborate**
(Edutopia)
- **Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts**
(The Reform Network)
- **ESSA for Educators: Resource List**
(Educators for High Standards)
- **Teacher Engagement and Perspectives On ESSA: An Eagerness To Engage and Be Heard**
(Educators for High Standards)

Policymakers

- **ESSA Digital Kit for Governors**
(NGA)
- **America's Legislators Back to School**
(NCSL)
- **Community Engagement and Education Advocacy by School Boards**
(Hanover Research)

Resources (cont.)

Leveraging Community Partnerships

- **A How-To Guide for School-Business Partnerships**
(The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships)
- **Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works**
(NASSP, CCS, NAESP, and the MetLife Foundation)
- **Strengthening Partnerships: Community School Assessment Checklist**
(CCS, The Finance Project)
- **School-Community Learning Partnerships: Essential to Expanded Learning Success**
(The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project)
- **“Four Simple Questions” for Engagement**
(National Center for Systemic Improvement)
- **Sharing Stories of Collaborative Leadership—District Examples**
(AIR, Technology in Education)
- **Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness**
(CCS and the National Association of School Psychologists)

How States Might Use This Handbook: Developing A Toolkit

Each state will need to develop materials for local leaders and community members to support local engagement based on state context. Below is a rough outline of the kinds of resources that might be most useful to district and school leaders as they begin their planning process.

These toolkits will be most useful if developed in collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders. Include families, local leaders, advocates, and others early and often to determine which resources will be most useful, and rely on stakeholder leadership in the development of individual resources. Local leaders, including advocates, will rarely—if ever—be starting from scratch, and can offer existing tools and resources to supplement new materials.

Local Engagement Around ESSA—An Outline for The State Toolkit:

- ***Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders***
- Re-packaged ESSA Consolidated Plan—for example:
 - Written plan in accessible format/language, including translation into languages other than English
 - Video and/or interactive website that guides stakeholders through decisions made
 - Explicit communication about the most significant changes to state education policy/systems, including new responsibilities for local leaders
 - Summary of requirements under the law that is accessible to all stakeholders (for example, that LEAs could share with families)
- Resources for Local Leaders Around Accountability Systems—for example:
 - Timeline for the next five years of ESSA implementation, including application deadlines and Identification and implementation for schools in need of support and improvement
 - Library of evidence-based practices for school improvement strategies
 - National, state, and local partners that are available to support school improvement
 - Guidance on using data systems to support new data collection and representation
 - Self-assessment forms, including needs assessments, resource audit materials, etc.
 - Translation services providers list
 - Sample school/district report card with guide for understanding how to interpret it
 - Communications materials and talking points for local districts and schools communication to families in understanding the school identification system
- Samples/Examples—for example:
 - Highlights for what local leaders are already doing around local planning and engagement
 - Practitioner workspace for networking

Spotlight on New Mexico: An Engagement Toolkit

The New Mexico Public Education Department worked with the Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations at the New Mexico Highlands University to produce A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities, a set of resources to support schools and families and communities as they engage around local planning and implementation of local strategic priorities.

Learn more at www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/index.asp

PART 4:

Reference

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ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Requirements*

Summary of Engagement Requirements

ESSA requires that districts engage with—at minimum—the stakeholders checked below across the different Titles in developing and implementing the local plan.

Stakeholders	Title IA	Title IIA	Title III	Title IVA
CITATION	1112(a)(1)(A), 1112(b)(7-10)	2102(b)(3)(A) & 2102(b)(2)(D)	3116(b)(4)(C)	4106(c)(1&2)
Teachers	X	X	X	X
Principals	X	X	X	X
Other school leaders	X	X	X	X
Parents/family members	X	X	X	X
Paraprofessionals	X	X		
Specialized instructional support personnel	X	X		X
Administrators	X		X	
Other Appropriate School Personnel	X	X		
Non-Public Schools	X	X	X	X
Community Partners/Community-Based Organizations/Community Members	X	X	X	X
Researchers			X	
Early childhood education programs (where applicable)	X			
Institutions of higher education (where applicable)	X		X	
Employers (where applicable)	X			
Local government representatives (which may include a local law enforcement agency, local juvenile court, local child welfare agency, or local public housing agency)				X
Indian tribes or tribal organizations (where applicable)				X
Other stakeholders/other organizations with relevant experience		X	X	
Public or private entities			X	

*Adapted from the New Jersey Department of Education

State Requirements

State ESSA Plans (Title I)

- Development: Requirement that to receive grant funds plan must be developed by SEA with timely and meaningful consultation with the Governor, members of the State legislature and the State board of education, LEAs, representatives of Indian tribes located in the State, teachers, principals, other school leaders, charter school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, other staff, and parents [Sec. 1111(a)(1)(A)].
- Public Comment: Requirement that each state shall make the State plan publicly available for comment for no less than 30 days. Must be available electronically in an easily accessible format. Must happen before submission of the plan to the Secretary. Assurances must be provided in the plan that this has taken place.
- Determining 'N' size: States must demonstrate how it determined N size, including how it collaborated with teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders when determining the minimum number [Sec. 1111(c)(3)(A)(ii)].
- Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans: For each Comprehensive school identified by the state, and in partnership with stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, principals, school leaders) locally develop and implement a Comprehensive plan for the school to improve student outcomes [Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)].
- Targeted Support and Improvement Plans: For each Targeted school identified by the district, and in partnership with stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, principals, school leaders), shall develop and implement school-level Targeted plans [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(B)].
- Assurances—Parent/Family Engagement: Each SEA plan shall include assurances that the SEA will support the collection and dissemination to LEAs and schools of effective parent and family engagement strategies, including those in the parent and family engagement policy under section 1116 [Sec. 1111(g)(2)(F)].
- State Report Card: Must be presented in an understandable and uniform format that is developed in consultation with parents, and to the extent practicable, in a language parents can understand (Sec. 1111(h)(1)(B)(ii)).

LEA Plans (Title I)

- LEA subgrants: May only be received by the LEA if it has on file with the SEA an SEA-approved plan that is developed with timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and charter school leaders, administrators, other appropriate school personnel, and with parents of children in Title I schools [Sec. 1112(a)(1)(A)].
- LEA plans: In its plan, each LEA shall describe the strategy it will use to implement effective parent and family engagement under section 1116 ... and how teachers and school leaders, in consultation with parents, administrators, paraprofessionals, and specialized instructional support personnel, in schools operating a targeted assistance school program under section 1115, will identify the eligible children most in need of Title I services [Sec. 1112 (b)(9)].

State Requirements

State Option to Conduct Assessment System Audit (Title I)

- Application: Applications for state assessment audit grants must include information on the stakeholder feedback the State will seek in designing the audit [Sec. 1202(d)(1)(B)].
- State assessment system audit: Each State assessment system audit shall include feedback on the system from stakeholders including, for example—how teachers, principals, other school leaders, and administrators use assessment data to improve and differentiate instruction; the timing of release of assessment data; the extent to which assessment data is presented in an accessible and understandable format for all stakeholders [Sec. 1202(e)(3)(C)].

Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority (Title I)

- Application: Applications for innovative assessments must demonstrate that the innovative assessment system will be developed in collaboration with stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, and other vulnerable children; teachers, principals, and other school leaders; LEAs; parents; and civil rights organizations in the State [Sec. 1204(e)(2)(A)(v)]. The application shall also include a description of how the SEA will inform parents about the system at the beginning of each year of implementation [Sec. 1204(e)(2)(B)(v)], and engage and support teachers in developing and scoring assessments that are part of the innovative assessment system [Sec. 1204(e)(2)(B)(v)].

Flexibility for Equitable Per-Pupil Funding (Title I)

- Assurances: LEAs interested in applying for the weighted student funding flexibility pilot shall include in the application an assurance that the LEA developed and will implement the pilot in collaboration with teachers, principals, other school leaders, administrators of Federal programs impacted by the agreement, parents, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders [Sec. 1501(d)(1)(G)].

Formula Grants to States (Title II)

- Application: Each SEA shall meaningfully consult with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instruction support personnel, charter school leaders, parents, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise, and seek advice regarding how to best improve the State's activities to meet the purpose of this title [Sec. 2101(d)(3)(A)].

Subgrants to LEAs (Title II)

- Application: In developing the application LEAs shall meaningfully consult with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders, parents, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise and seek advice regarding how to best improve the State's activities to meet the purpose of this title [Sec. 2102(b)(3)].

State Requirements

English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement (Title III)

- Assurances: SEA and specifically qualified agency plans must provide an assurance that the plan has been developed in consultation with LEAs, teachers, administrators of programs implemented under this subpart, parents of English learners, and other relevant stakeholders.

Subgrants to Eligible Entities (Title III)

- Local Plans: Local grants must describe how the eligible entity will promote parent, family, and community engagement in the education of English learners and contain assurances that the eligible entity consulted with teachers, researchers, school administrators, parents and family members, community members, public or private entities, and institutions of higher education in developing the plan.

National Professional Development Project (Title III)

- Grant use: Grants awarded under this section may be used to support strategies that strengthen and increase parent, family and community member engagement in the education of English learners [[Sec. 3131\(3\)](#)].

LEA Applications (Title IV)

- Applications: an LEA, or consortium of LEAs, shall develop its application through consultation with parents, teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, students, community based organizations, local government representatives (including law enforcement, local juvenile court, local child welfare agency, or local public housing agency), Indian tribes or tribal organizations, charter school teachers, principals, and other school leaders, and others with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of this subpart. The LEA or consortium shall engage in continued consultation with the entities described above [[Sec. 4106\(c\)\(1\)](#)].

State Application (Title IV)

- Applications: SEAs shall submit an assurance that the application was developed in consultation and coordination with appropriate State officials, including the Chief State school officer, and other State agencies administering before and after school programs and activities, heads of the State health and mental health agencies or their designees, statewide after-school networks and representatives of teachers, LEAs, and community based organizations and a description of any other representatives of teachers, parents, students, or the business community that the State has selected to assist in the development of the application if applicable [[Sec. 4203\(a\)\(13\)](#)].

State Requirements

Promise Neighborhoods (Title IV)

- Application: Eligible entities desiring a grant under this part must include in their application an analysis of the needs assets of the neighborhood identified including a description of the process through which the needs analysis was produced including a description of how parents, families, and community members were engaged [Sec. 4624(a)(4)(B)], and an explanation of the process the eligible entity will use to establish and maintain family and community engagement including how a representative of the members of such neighborhood will be involved in the planning and implementation of the activities of each award granted [Sec. 4624(a)(9)(A)].

Full Service Community Schools (Title IV)

- Grant awards: in awarding grants under this subpart, the Secretary shall prioritize eligible entities that are consortiums comprised of a broad representation of stakeholders or consortiums demonstrating a history of effectiveness [Sec. 4625(b)(2)].

Programs for Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Students (Title VI)

- Grant Applications: the local educational agency will ensure that the program for which assistance is sought will be operated and evaluated in consultation with, and with the involvement of, parents and family members of the children, and representatives of the area, to be served [Sec. 6114(f)(3)(8)]. The Secretary may approve an application submitted by an eligible applicant under this subsection if the application, including any documentation submitted with the application demonstrates that the eligible applicant has consulted with other education entities, if any, within the territorial jurisdiction of the applicant that will be affected by the activities to be conducted under the grant [Sec. 6132(c)(3)(A)] and provides for consultation with such other education entities in the operation and evaluation of the activities conducted under the grant [Sec. 6132(c)(3)(B)].

Local Requirements

Consolidated Plans (Title I)

- LEAs must engage a variety of stakeholders in developing their Consolidated LEA Plan, and must periodically review and revise this plan [\[Section 1112\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)\]](#).
- The Consolidated LEA Plan must describe strategies to be used to effectively transition students to postsecondary education and career, which could include coordination with institutions of higher education, employers, or other local partners. The plan must also describe how the LEA will coordinate with early childhood education programs [\[Section 1112\(b\)\(6\)\]](#).

School Improvement (Title I)

Schools Identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement

LEAs must:

- develop Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans for all schools identified by the State and must partner with stakeholders to develop and implement these plans [\[Section 1111\(d\)\(1\)\(A\)\]](#).

Schools Identified for Targeted Support and Improvement

LEAs must:

- monitor each Targeted Support and Improvement Plan developed by identified schools and relevant stakeholders [\[Section 1111\(d\)\(2\)\(B\)\]](#) and these plan provisions to ensure that, among other requirements, schools identify eligible children most in need of services under targeted support and improvement [\[Section 1112\(b\)\(7\)\]](#).

LEA plan provisions must include strategies for implementing effective parent and family engagement strategies; supporting, coordinating, and integrating with early childhood education programs; and facilitating effective transitions to high school and postsecondary institutions [\[Section 1112\(b\)\(7\)\]](#). LEAs must also support participating schools in planning and implementing family engagement strategies, potentially collaborating with other stakeholders with expertise in this area [\[Section 1116\]](#).

Weighted Funding Flexibility Pilot (Title I)

With regard to Flexibility for Equitable Per-Pupil Funding, LEAs must consult with stakeholders in developing and implementing the local flexibility demonstration for weighted per-pupil funding [\[Section 1501\(d\)\(1\)\(G\)\]](#).

Teachers and Leaders (Title II)

LEAs must consult with a range of stakeholders in developing applications for Title II formula funds, seek advice on how to improve activities, and describe how data and ongoing consultation will be used to continuously improve Title II local activities [\[Section 2101\(b\)\(2\)\]](#).

Local Requirements

English Learners (Title III)

LEAs must use Title III funds for parent and family engagement activities related to English learners, among other required uses of funds [\[Section 3115\(c\)\(3\)\(A\)\]](#).

For subgrants serving immigrant students, LEAs (and other eligible entities) must also describe how they will promote parent, family, and community engagement, and how they consulted with stakeholders in developing their Title III plans [\[Section 3115\(g\)\(3\)\]](#).

Supporting 21st Century Schools (Title IV)

LEAs must consult stakeholders in developing a Title IV plan for Safe and Healthy Schools and Well-Rounded Education, and consult them on an ongoing basis while implementing strategies and programs under Title IV [\[Section 4106\(c\)\(1\)\]](#), and LEAs may receive training in all family engagement policies, programs, and activities through partnerships with family engagement centers [\[Section 4501\(1\)\]](#).

An LEA may:

- use Safe and Healthy Schools funds to designate a coordinator to engage the community by building partnerships and strengthening relationships and supports between schools and communities [\[Section 4108\(5\)\(H\)\]](#);
- be consulted in the development of needs and assets analysis for the Promise Neighborhoods Program [\[Section 4624\(a\)\(4\)\(B\)\]](#); and/or
- be included in an applicant’s explanation of how a Promise Neighborhood will establish and continue family and community engagement including involving representative participation from the neighborhood, among other activities [\[Section 4624\(a\)\(9\)\(A\)\]](#).

Additionally, Full Service Community Schools applications that include broad stakeholders—which may include LEAs—receive priority [\[Section 4625\(b\)\(2\)\]](#).

Stakeholders to Engage

Students and Youth

- Alumni associations
- Student mentors
- Juvenile justice programs, youth court
- Youth groups or leadership programs, including faith-based youth groups (e.g. Boys & Girls Club)
- Youth-led initiatives or organizations
- Student subgroups and students with specific needs and assets (English learners, LGBTQ students, students with an IEP, opportunity youth, students of color)

Is This List Exhaustive?

This list includes a number of stakeholders that you might consider engaging or partnering with, but does not include everyone. Stakeholder communities vary greatly and will nearly always include stakeholders that are not listed here.

Parents, Families, and Communities

- Family and community organizers
- Local parent/family advocacy groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Parents, guardians, and families, including those of students with disabilities, English learners, and other underrepresented students
- Indian Parent Advisory Groups
- Families and advocates for students in the foster system or youth experiencing homelessness

District-Level Educators

- Local union chapters
- Labor-management alliances
- District leadership
- LEA staff
- Charter Management Operators (CMOs)
- Alternative and transitional education providers

School-Level Educators

- Principals
- Charter teacher alliances
- Special education teachers
- English language/bilingual education teachers
- School personnel, including social/emotional support staff
- Classroom management groups, leaders, experts
- School employed physical and mental health providers (e.g. school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers)
- Alternative Education program leaders
- Homeless/foster care liaisons
- Out-of-school time program staff
- School resource officers

Elected Officials

- Mayors
- City/County Council members
- School boards
- Tribal Leaders
- Regional Offices of Education

Agencies and Governmental Bodies

- Representatives from Indian Tribes/First Nations, housing, health/human services
- Charter Management Operators (CMOs)
- Public service agencies
- Planning and development districts (e.g. metro planning organizations)
- Local workforce development boards
- Economic councils
- Chamber of Commerce
- Homeless shelters/providers
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Foster care services
- Law enforcement

Advocacy Organizations

- Community-based organizations
- Early learning advocates
- Organizations representing school-based personnel
- Community coalitions focused on public education
- Disability advocates
- Homeless and foster care advocates

Civil/Human Rights Organizations

- Organizations that expressly support or advocate for underserved students
- Local affiliates (e.g. Urban League affiliates, NAACP) or alliances
- School-based support centers/providers
- Youth development organizations
- Fair housing organizations

Early Learning Leaders

- Head Start providers
- Community and faith-based preschool providers
- Center-based child care providers
- Home-based child care providers
- Local early childhood collaboratives
- Home visiting programs
- Title I, Part C providers for Migrant Youth
- IDEA, Part C Early Intervention providers for infants and toddlers
- SNAP and WIC providers

Philanthropy

- Local, state and national-level foundations or collaborative organizations with interest in school, district, or policy-based funding
- Community, corporate, and family foundations
- Local United Way
- Local or state universities

Higher Ed, Certification, Research

- Accreditation institutions for K-12 and higher education
- Teacher preparation and certification programs, including traditional and alternative programs, TFA, and teaching fellowships
- Students enrolled in teacher preparation programs
- Faculty teaching in teacher preparation programs
- Local and state university systems
- Childhood development experts
- Historically black colleges and universities
- Post-secondary minority institutions
- Community college systems
- Faculty in university education departments

Professional Leadership and Associations

- School business officials
- Principals and other school leaders
- Superintendents
- Management alliances
- Alternative teacher organizations (e.g. Educators for Excellence)

Physical and Mental Health Professionals

- Mental and physical health providers (e.g. clinics, teacher consultancies, trauma-informed)
- School counselors
- School nurses
- Psychologists and social workers
- Social and emotional learning (SEL) Leaders
- EL and LGBTQ organizations
- Racial Healing organizations
- Substance abuse treatment programs

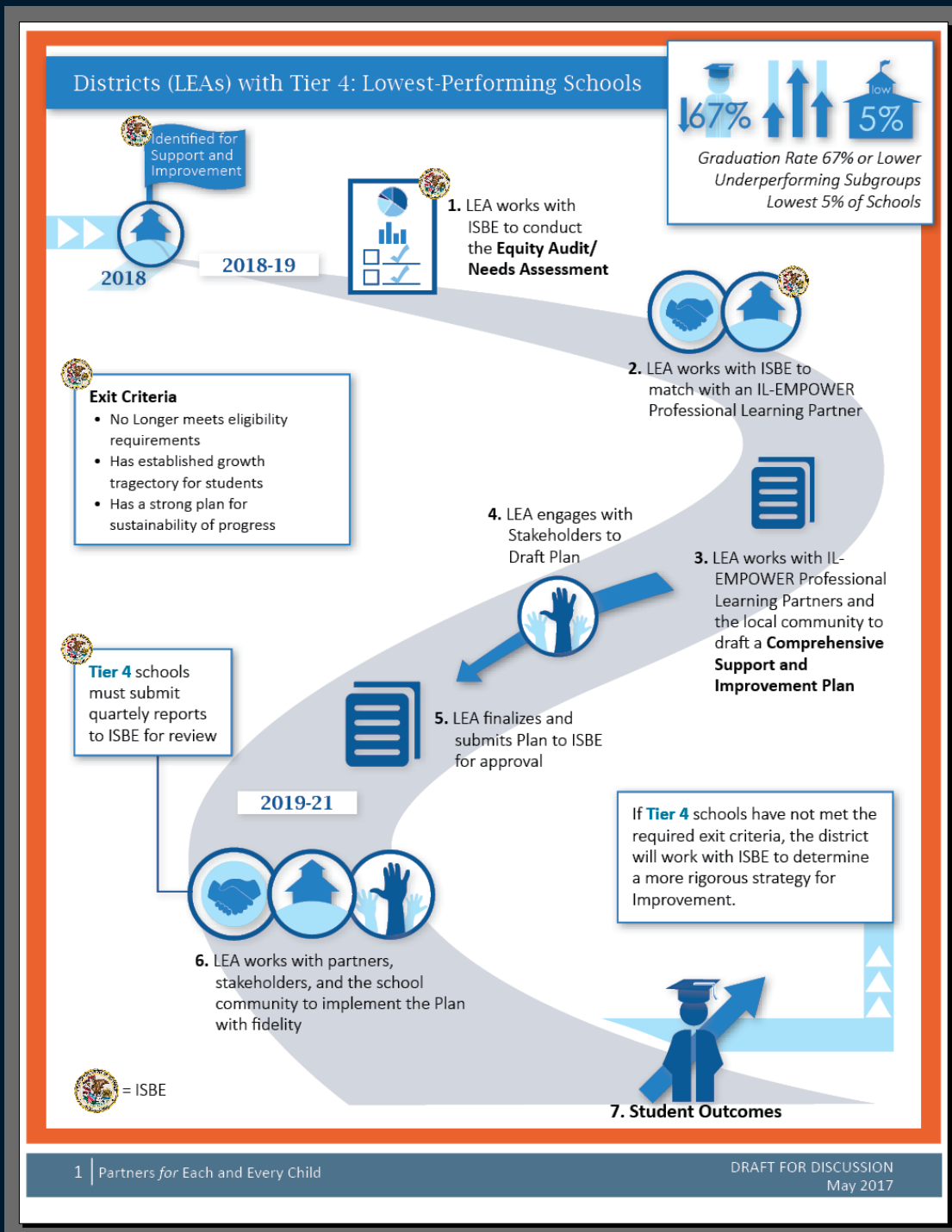
Outside Organizations/Business Community

- Corporations, health and social service providers
- Local business organizations and private industry councils
- GED and workforce programs
- Greek systems, social or civil organizations
- Libraries
- Community centers
- First responders (e.g. fire department)

School Improvement Planning

Example: Illinois

The Illinois State Board of Education and Partners for Each and Every Child, along with several advocates and district and school leaders, have been working to support local planning efforts. The following page is from the ISBE state ESSA plan—Reader’s Guide to Accountability, under development spring 2017:



Glossary of Key Stakeholder Engagement Terms

Access: The ways in which educational institutions and policies strive to ensure that students have equal opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Factors such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special-education status, English-language ability, and family income or educational-attainment levels—in addition to factors such as relative community affluence, geographical location, or school facilities—often contribute to barriers to “access” to educational opportunities.^{iv}

Accommodations: Changes made to classroom instruction or assessment as required by law for students with disabilities or English learners. These changes allow a student to participate in class and demonstrate their knowledge on assessments just as their native English speaking peers or those who do not have a disability. Examples include extended time to take a test, larger print on a classroom assignment, or a seat closer to the teacher. Students and other stakeholders may require accommodations inside and outside the school building.ⁱ

Additional targeted support and improvement schools: These are schools that have been identified for additional targeted support and improvement under new state accountability systems because one or more subgroups of students in the school are performing at the same level as the lowest performing 5% of schools in the state. These schools must develop an improvement plan in consultation with stakeholders that is approved by the district.ⁱ

Adjusted cohort graduation rate: The percent of students who graduate from a high school with a diploma four years after entering, excluding those who transferred to another school.ⁱ

Chronic absenteeism: Missing at least 10% of school days in a school year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism is a cause of low academic achievement and is considered a powerful predictor of students who may eventually drop out of school.ⁱⁱ

Comment period: A period of time following the release of draft regulations or guidance when any person, organization, or group of organizations can send in comments, questions and/or concerns to influence what is included in the final regulation or guidance. Comment periods are often iterative, and typically open for 60 or 90 days.ⁱ

Comprehensive support and improvement schools: Schools in which a large share of students are not meeting state goals. These include schools in the bottom 5% of all schools in the state, schools with graduation rates below 67%, and targeted support and improvement schools that have not improved over a period of years. These schools must design and implement a support and improvement plan which is comprehensive and designed to raise achievement for all students in the school.ⁱ

Consolidated state plan: A state’s plan for complying with the requirements of ESSA. A state has the option of submitting plans separately for each title (e.g. Title I plan, Title III plan) or for submitting a plan which describes what the state intends to do to comply with the requirements of the entire law. These plans must be developed in consultation with stakeholders, be available for public comment, and be submitted to and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. ESSA includes various requirements for the information included in a state’s plan such as the plan for publicly reporting graduation rates for students in foster care, the statewide accountability system which must be in place, and the state’s strategy for reducing the use of seclusion and restraint. This plan must be revisited and revised periodically. ⁱⁱⁱ

Curriculum: The lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. An individual teacher’s curriculum, for example, would be the specific lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course. ⁱ

Direct Student Services: A provision in ESSA that allows states to set aside 3% of Title I funding and award these funds to districts with a high number of schools identified for improvement. To receive funding from the states, schools must demonstrate commitment to offering more meaningful learning opportunities, activities, courses and services not otherwise available to students. ^{iv} More generally, direct student services include programming or services that directly impact student health, learning, or engagement, such as access to a computer, additional course or staff, or after-school programs.

Educational Equity: The condition under which every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite race, gender, ethnicity language, disability, family background, or family income. Meaningful progress toward equity in education does not often mean equal resources for all, since many students from historically disadvantaged students start with less than their peers, and require additional resources to achieve the same level of success as a result. In an equitable system, all individuals attain sufficient knowledge and skill to pursue the college and career path of their choice and become active and contributing members of their communities. ^v

English learner (EL): A student between the ages of 3-21 in elementary or secondary school who was not born in the U.S. and/or whose native language is a language other than English, and who has not yet achieved proficiency or fluency in English. EL students might also be migrant, Native American or Alaska Native, multi-lingual or have difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language. ⁱ

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015: The latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which replaces No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. ESSA provides federal funding to schools, districts, and states to raise achievement for low-income students and other historically disadvantaged students, and to implement various specific programs. Funds allocated to schools, districts, and states must be spent in accordance with the law.

High-needs students: Students in need of special or multiple forms of assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners. ^{vi}

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): A law ensuring services to children with disabilities across the country. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. Funding for IDEA is authorized under ESSA.^{vii}

Local educational agency (LEA): The formal name for governmental bodies that are legally sanctioned by the state to administer elementary or secondary schools (e.g. school district, charter school that is also a district) in a community.ⁱ

Low-performing schools: Schools that have demonstrated poor performance over time on any of a number of indicators, including student performance on standardized assessments. This also includes schools with persistent or significant achievement gaps.

“Meaningful” stakeholder engagement: The process used by an organization to engage individuals and/or groups in a way that acknowledges their unique needs and creates value for both the organization and all the stakeholders involved.

Needs assessment: A systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases. Needs Assessment focuses on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be attained, rather than the means (i.e., process).^x

Personalized learning (also personalization, differentiated, or student-centered learning): A diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.ⁱ

Rigor: Instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. Rigorous learning experiences, for example, help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and they help students acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives.ⁱ

School culture: Generally, the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity.ⁱ School Culture is often impacted by behavioral norms of students and school personnel, including discipline codes or practices.

Stakeholder: Individuals or collective entities who are invested (has a “stake”) in the welfare and success of a group or policy. In the case of a school and its students, all members of a community should be considered stakeholders. ESSA requires that states and districts engage specific stakeholders among state policymakers and agencies, district and school staff and families and communities during plan development. Under the law, LEAs must engage teachers, principals, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, English learner administrators, charter school leaders, parents/families, students, community partners/organizations, Tribal organizations, researchers, educator preparation programs and researchers.^{ix}

State educational agency (SEA): The formal name for governmental bodies that are legally sanctioned by the state to provide information, resources, and technical assistance to schools, districts, and people in the community served by schools (e.g. state department of education).ⁱ

Student attendance: During the regular school year, the average percentage of days that students are present for school. Students should not be considered present for excused absences, unexcused absences, or any period of time that they are out of their regularly assigned classrooms due to discipline measures (i.e., in- or out-of-school suspension).^{vi}

Student engagement: The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education.ⁱ

Targeted support and improvement schools: Schools that are identified through the state rating system because they have one or more groups of students who are consistently underperforming. These schools must design and implement a targeted support and improvement plan which is approved by the district and is designed to raise achievement for the group(s) of students that is (are) consistently underperforming.ⁱ

Notes:

- i. <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/2016-07-25-Education-Policy-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf>
- ii. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html>
- iii. <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>
- iv. <http://chiefsforchange.org/dss-resources/>
- v. <http://www.ccsso.org/equity>
- vi. <https://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition/definitions>
- vii. <http://idea.ed.gov/>
- viii. <http://edglossary.org/student-engagement/>
- ix. <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSOStakeholderEngagementGuideFINAL.pdf>
- x. <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/compneedsassessment.pdf>

