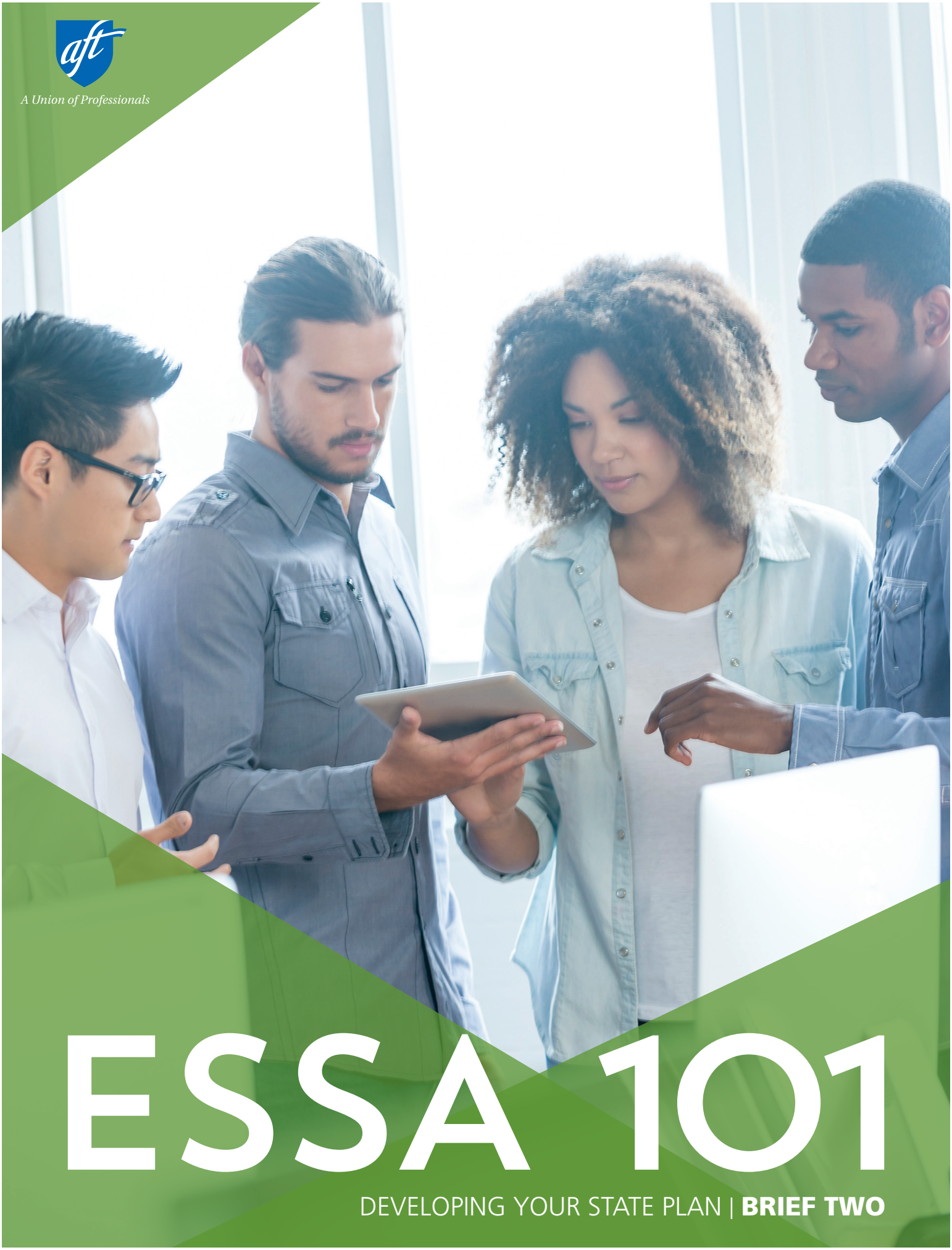
A Union of Professionals



ESSA 101

DEVELOPING YOUR STATE PLAN | **BRIEF TWO**

A Union of Professionals

Our Mission

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

INTRODUCTION

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, each state education agency (SEA) must submit a consolidated state plan. **This document reflects the revised template, which was released by the U.S. Department of Education on March 13.** The revised template, along with a fact sheet, a letter from DeVos and additional information is available at http://bit.ly/revisedESSAtemplate.

Although the revised template under the new administration no longer requires states to describe their stakeholder engagement, the SEA is required by law to engage in timely and meaningful consultation with stakeholders in developing its consolidated state plan.

Each SEA can choose to submit its plan by the **April 3, 2017** or **Sept. 18, 2017** deadline. Any state submitting a plan for the spring deadline can submit it by May 3 to give its governor the required 30-day review period. For a list of when states have told the Department of Education they will submit, go to http://bit.ly/ESSAdeadline.

What follows is not a comprehensive document for all ESSA decision-making; rather it highlights some of the major decision points that SEAs, in consultation with stakeholders, must make. This document can be used to help guide your state in the development of its plan, or to help understand your state's already-drafted plan. There are many aspects of ESSA implementation that, while important, do not have to be included in the state consolidated plan.

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders consulted must include the governor, the state legislature, the state board of education, local education agencies, teachers and paraprofessionals, parents, representatives of Indian tribes located in the state, community and civil rights organizations.

AFT'S TAKE

Deadlines: States should take the time to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and a strong consolidated plan that takes into account important equity and accountability decisions in an innovative way. The decision of when to submit should be based on the progress the state has already made in crafting its plan with stakeholder input, as well as external factors like the direction of federal initiatives.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Academic Achievement

☑ Interim and long-term goals for academic **achievement** (*performance on state tests for reading/language arts and mathematics*) for the "all students" group and separately for each subgroup of students

Guiding questions

- What should the measure of achievement be?

ACHIEVEMENT

While elementary schools must offer the same assessments to all public school students statewide, states may choose to offer a nationally recognized local assessment at the high school level (SAT or ACT, for example), as long as assessments are reliable, valid and comparable.

AFT'S TAKE

Academic Achievement: Assessments should align to high-quality standards and curriculum; be developed through collaborative efforts; be focused on measuring growth and continuous development; and rely on diverse, authentic and multiple indicators of student performance that can inform teaching and learning.

AFT'S TAKE

Graduation Rate: Using the extended-year cohort in addition to the four-year rate, as allowed by law, is the right approach; it creates positive incentives for schools to admit, keep and support students with challenges that prevent them from graduating in the standard four years.

INDICATORS

Each indicator must be valid, reliable and comparable across all LEAs in the state. The measures included within the indicators of academic progress and school quality or student success must aid in meaningful differentiation of schools and be supported by research that high performance or improvement on such measures is likely to increase student learning (e.g., for high schools, that the measure is likely to increase student learning, graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, persistence, completion or career readiness).

AFT'S TAKE

Indicators: Although ESSA requires only one indicator of school quality or success, states should consider incorporating multiple measures to give a better view of how schools are doing. For a framework of indicators for school success, go to **http://bit.ly/ESSA-indicators**. The AFT believes it is wise to wait on a social and emotional learning (SEL) indicator until there is more conclusive research in this area. However, the AFT encourages states to include a wide variety of indicators on report cards, even if they are not considered for accountability purposes.

- Should the types of tests administered by the state be reconsidered? Should common performance assessments be considered?
- Taking into account longitudinal or trend data, what targets for achievement and growth would be ambitious but achievable?
- Should subjects other than English language arts, math and English language proficiency be incorporated?
- How should the weight be determined for academic achievement?
- How should growth be accounted for?

Graduation Rate

☑ Interim and long-term goals for graduation rates for the "all students" group and separately for each subgroup of students

Guiding questions

- Should there be other persistence measures?
- Should an extended-year cohort graduation rate be used?
- Should dropout rates be measured? What about the rate at which schools re-engage dropouts?
- What about the percentage of students meeting a certain target beyond minimum graduation requirements (an additional certification, graduation from a particular program, another sort of distinguished achievement)?

English Language Proficiency

☑ Interim and long-term goals for English proficiency rates of English language learners

ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT

Accountability System

Indicators

☑ Types of measure(s) included in each of the following indicators: academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rate, progress in achieving English language proficiency, and school quality or student success indicators

Guiding questions

- What are the most important things to know about a school's performance?

- Do the current school, district and state report cards accurately reflect what is happening in our schools? What is misleading or missing?
- Is there a process for revising the accountability system based on iterative feedback and examination of data?
- Will the indicators be piloted locally and/or reported on before incorporating them into the statewide system? If so, how will these be incorporated into the accountability determinations?

Subgroups

☑

Consider modeling an indicator of school quality or student success on California's CORE Districts. Their accountability system includes a high school readiness rate, which is the percent of students who meet the below criteria: eighth-grade GPA of 2.5 or better, eighth-grade attendance of 96 percent or better, no Ds or Fs in eighth-grade English language arts or math, and no suspensions in eighth grade.

Subgroups of students from each major and racial ethnic group in the state, and any additional subgroups of students used in the accountability system

Minimum Number of Students

☑ Minimum number of students for purposes of accountability that the state determines is necessary to be included in each of the subgroups of students

Guiding questions

- Looking at longitudinal and trend data, what n-size is small enough to effectively include as many traditionally underserved students as possible in the accountability system while still protecting student privacy? Is that a large enough n-size that any single student cannot have an outsized effect on the school's overall rating?

Annual Meaningful Differentiation

☑ Distinct and discrete levels of school performance, and how they are calculated on each indicator in the statewide system

☑ Weighting of each **indicator**

☑ Summative determinations, including how they are calculated

Participation Rate

☑ How the requirement for 95 percent student **participation** in assessments is incorporated into the system of annual meaningful differentiation.

INDICATORS

State-developed accountability systems must include each of these indicators:

1. Proficiency in reading and math
2. High school graduation rates
3. Another academic indicator for elementary and middle schools (growth or another indicator that is valid, reliable and statewide)
4. English language proficiency
5. At least one other indicator of school quality or success

Indicators 1-4 must each have substantial weight and in aggregate must weigh more than indicator 5.

AFT'S TAKE

Participation: Schools that do not meet the 95 percent threshold should receive support, not punishment.

Identification: Three years is a reasonable time period.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Districts have the responsibility of developing improvement plans for these schools. Plans must be:

- Developed in consultation with local stakeholders;
- Informed by all of the accountability indicators;
- Evidence-based;
- Based on a school-level needs assessment;
- Approved by the school, district and state;
- Monitored and periodically reviewed by the state; and
- Designed with strategies to remedy all identified resource inequities.

IDENTIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

Comprehensive Support and Improvement

- ☑ Will the state identify schools for improvement every year or every three years?
- ☑ Methodology to identify the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools
- ☑ Methodology to identify schools with a graduation rate below 67 percent
- ☑ Methodology to identify schools with chronically low-performing subgroups
- ☑ Criteria to exit the comprehensive support and improvement status

Targeted Support and Improvement Schools

- ☑ Methodology to identify "consistently underperforming" schools, including the length of time a school can be consistently underperforming before more rigorous interventions must be taken (*maximum allowed is four years*)
- ☑ Timeline for identifying schools with low-performing subgroups that must receive additional support
- ☑ Criteria to exit the targeted support and improvement status

State Support and Improvement for Low-Performing Schools

- ☑ Process to award school improvement funds to local education agencies (LEAs) and monitor and evaluate the use of funds by LEAs
- ☑ Describe the technical assistance the SEA will provide to each LEA in the state serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, including how the SEA will provide technical assistance to LEAs to ensure the effective implementation of evidence-based interventions

Guiding questions

- What kinds of interventions are based in evidence? (For an overview of four evidence-based interventions go to: **http://bit.ly/ESSAevidence**.)
- Are there any school sites or districts to hold up as models?
- What is the theory of action? What will leading indicators be? Lagging indicators? Will midcourse corrections be possible?

- ☑ Describe the more rigorous interventions required for schools

identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the state's exit criteria within a state-determined number of years (*the law allows for a maximum of four years*)

☑ How will the SEA periodically review, identify and address inequities in resources?

SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Educator Development, Retention and Advancement

☑ Will the SEA use Title II, Part A funds or funds from other included programs for any of the activities below (*and if so, how*)?

- Certifying and licensing teachers and principals or other school leaders;
- Improving educator preparation programs; and
- Providing professional growth and improvement opportunities for educators.

Educator Equity

☑ Describe your strategy to address the most significant differences in access to effective, in-field, experienced teachers

Guiding questions

- What school teaching conditions would help recruit and retain teachers?
- How can professional development be part of an equity strategy?

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

☑ Will the SEA use funds from Title IV, Part A or other included programs to support LEAs in their strategies to do any of the following (*and if so, how*)?

- Improve school conditions for student learning, including activities that create safe, healthy and affirming school environments inclusive of all students to reduce bullying and harassment, discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, and aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety;
- Use technology to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students; and
- Engage parents, families and communities.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

on Accountability Plans Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

ADAPTED FROM A CONVERSATION WITH LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, PRESIDENT OF THE LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE

Q: ESSA requires that all indicators used for federal accountability purposes be disaggregated by student subgroup. If results from a particular survey cannot be disaggregated in this manner, is there still a role for them in state accountability and improvement systems?

A: Although indicators in the accountability and improvement system that states utilize under ESSA are required to be disaggregated by student subgroup, a school may use additional surveys for diagnostic purposes to help improve learning and the school environment. For example, in addition to the possible student surveys used in state accountability systems, the state, district and school could utilize teacher and/or parent survey results on an aggregated basis to assess aspects of school climate or functioning.

Q: How is the different weight distribution of indicators within the state accountability and improvement system determined?

A: ESSA allows states to establish their own weightings among the indicators that are required to be part of each state's accountability and improvement system. However, there are some parameters. ESSA requires that student performance on assessments, graduation rates and English language proficiency each carry "substantial weight" and collectively carry "much greater weight" than the indicator(s) of school quality or student success. States also have the flexibility to use growth on assessments as part of their accountability system and determine how growth is weighted in their system. With any weighting, states should take into account how the indicators of school quality or student success will have enough influence so that districts and schools are incentivized to, and acknowledged for, improved performance on them. For example, the CORE districts in California, which secured a federal flexibility waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), weight the combined set of academic indicators at 60 percent and the combined set of school climate/culture indicators at 40 percent.

Although it is not yet known how DOE will evaluate this aspect of state plans, it is worth noting that states have a number of options: They may use a single weighted score for school identification purposes, or they may propose a means to categorize schools that weigh indicators in a different way. For example, if a school is found to be low-performing and non-improving on some number of individual indicators, with academic indicators counting most heavily, it would be identified as eligible for comprehensive or targeted improvement and support. It is also important to note that states must seek public input on how they construct their accountability systems under the new ESSA. This includes public input and hopefully discussion with key stakeholders such as parents and teachers on how different indicators will be weighted.

Q: What does Title II afford in terms of opportunities to meet the needs of low-performing schools?

A: Funding under Title II can be used to increase student access to effective, in-field and experienced teachers, and to address the root causes of inequities in access for students of color and those from low-income families. States and districts can extend these efforts to include access for English learners and students with disabilities. Title II funding can be used for states and school districts to provide professional development activities that support improving teacher and school leader effectiveness in helping students meet state standards; utilizing teacher surveys to help with identifying professional development needs in low-performing schools; reforming teacher/leader certification requirements; providing induction, residency and mentoring programs; implementing strategies to increase recruitment and retention; using data and assessments to improve classroom practice; and developing and implementing instructional practices that support dual or concurrent enrollment programs. Title II remains a flexible program and allows states to reserve 3 percent of funding for professional development for school leaders.

Q: What are some examples of promising state accountability and improvement systems?

A: According to a report [**https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/redesigning-school-accountability-and-support-progress-pioneering-states**] from the Learning Policy Institute on accountability systems, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia are developing promising models. Here are some examples from the report on what these states are doing:

California combines a more equitable system of funding with locally designed accountability plans that hold all schools and systems responsible for improving the learning opportunities and outcomes of all students. The state's newly adopted local control accountability plans meet the requirements of ESSA and are designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of school performance and progress than the previous system.

Colorado has developed a plan to ensure students are college and career ready upon graduation by gathering input from a variety of stakeholders through several different initiatives, councils and working groups. The state has also endorsed the use of performance assessments by providing support to schools as they develop assessments for use in determining educator effectiveness. This includes helping teachers integrate performance assessments into sample curriculum units spanning all grade levels and subjects.

Iowa is redesigning the state system of accountability and focusing largely on adopting ambitious expectations for college and career readiness, supporting innovation through the adoption of competency-based models for learning and assessment, and growing the capacity of educators by creating opportunities for teachers to lead professional learning in schools. The state also has taken steps toward developing a multiple-measures data dashboard system that can serve as a tool to inform and differentiate support for school improvement efforts.

Kentucky is redesigning its system to include a definition of college and career readiness, as well as multiple initiatives and opportunities for developing innovative learning models to support students in meeting these expectations. Kentucky is also using a multiple-measures data dashboard to highlight school success, identify areas for improvement and deploy focused support based on local needs.

New Hampshire is focused on an "improvement-to-innovation continuum" that reflects a move toward a collaborative, support-based approach aimed at ensuring that students are able to demonstrate learning and mastery of skills on the path to college and career readiness. Central to this approach are the state's efforts to integrate performance assessments as part of its competency-based model.

Oregon has defined college and career readiness by the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind required for postsecondary success. The state raised graduation requirements and is encouraging the use of performance assessments to measure and support student progress in meeting these comprehensive expectations. Oregon's efforts to support innovation and school improvement have focused on proficiency-based learning models and early steps toward creating multiple-measures data dashboards.

South Carolina has a redesign that focuses on adopting a comprehensive vision for high school graduates and creating opportunities for innovative approaches to learning that will support students in meeting these expectations, including career-based learning experiences, personalized learning, proficiency-based learning models, and other novel programs and courses. In addition, the state has redesigned its educator evaluation system to draw on multiple forms of evidence of student learning and is taking steps to develop a multiple-measures accountability system for schools and districts.

Vermont is taking a proficiency-based approach to system redesign that emphasizes personalized learning. The state provides educators with flexibility to design learning experiences and assessments that require students to demonstrate what they know and can do. A key mechanism for determining the effectiveness of this proficiency-based system is the use of education quality reviews that incorporate quantitative and qualitative data in five dimensions of school quality: academic achievement, personalization, safety and school climate, high-quality staffing and financial efficiencies.

Virginia has reduced high-stakes testing and shifted toward a system of assessments, including

performance-based assessments, aimed at informing instruction. School divisions (districts) have the freedom to design and administer assessments that are aligned to state-determined levels of quality and standards of learning. In addition, the state has multiple initiatives in place to support students in meeting expectations for college and career readiness, including early college programs and career and technical education programs.

West Virginia has adopted college- and career-readiness standards and assessments. The state employs a diagnostic review process to improve the capacity of schools to meet these expectations. In addition, the state has taken comprehensive steps toward growing professional capacity by redesigning its approach to professional learning and teacher evaluation.

Q: What are some of the specifics of the California model?

A: California does not contain a single summative rating. Instead, its proposed accountability system offers a varied set of data on school performance to support educators and allow educators and other stakeholders to integrate their own values in determining school performance. The model establishes a set of "state indicators" and provides information both on the status of and change in performance.

California also will report data that are aligned with its local control funding formula on some aspects, such as implementation of state standards and parent engagement. For each of the local measures, the state has proposed a common standard and suggested evidence for assessing progress in meeting that standard. Each district determines whether the standard has been met, and that information will be displayed on the school report card. To identify low-performing schools, the state may use a process that analyzes a number of measures, using low- and non-improving performance on one or more of the indicators as the basis for identification and a flag for the kind of assistance that may be needed to improve in the area(s) noted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Guidance on stakeholder engagement and developing state plans

A Handbook for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement
http://bit.ly/PartnersMeaningfulEngagement

Let's Get This Conversation Started
http://bit.ly/ConversationStarted

Let's Keep This Conversation Going
http:/bit.ly/ConversationGoing

State Template for the Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act
http://bit.ly/StatePlanTemplate

Accountability

A Framework of Indicators for School Success
http://bit.ly/ESSA-indicators

Pathways to New Accountability Through the Every Student Succeeds Act
http://bit.ly/AccountabilityPathways

Interventions

Evidence-Based Interventions: A Guide for States
http://bit.ly/ESSAevidence

What Works Clearinghouse
http://bit.ly/WhatWorksClearinghouse

More information on ESSA

Council of Chief State School Officers
http://bit.ly/CCSSOESSA

Equity and ESSA: Leveraging Educational Opportunity Through the Every Student Succeeds Act
http://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/equity-essa-report

Partners for Each and Every Child
https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/StateEngagement.html

U.S. Department of Education
http://bit.ly/USEDESSA

A Union of Professionals

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-4400

Item number: 39-0117002