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How some states are using their new accountability systems to leverage equity in education

New report provides information on which states are using provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act to address students' needs and ensure schools provide educational opportunity to all students, and how these efforts can be maximized.

WASHINGTON, DC—It is well-documented that students of color, and other historically underserved students, have had less access to an equitable and supportive learning environment, perpetuating school failure and, too often, a school-to-prison pipeline that is difficult to escape. The inequalities have included exclusionary and discriminatory discipline practices that have pushed students out of school and on a pathway to dropping out, unsupportive school environments, and less access to high-quality curriculum that would prepare students for college and productive careers.

Now, a new report from the Learning Policy Institute shows how a number of states are taking advantage of opportunities in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to address these disparities, make schools more inclusive, and help all students succeed.

The report, [*Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real: State Strategies to Close the Opportunity Gap*](#), provides information on which states have committed in their ESSA accountability plans and school improvement efforts to use one or more of [five measures](#) (or “indicators”) to diagnose and address sources of inequity and school failure and to support the success of all students.

They are:

1. suspension rates;
2. school climate;
3. chronic absenteeism;
4. extended-year graduation rate; and
5. access to a college- and career-ready curriculum.

The report explains how the data can be used to inform efforts to improve schools, highlights selected state approaches, and is accompanied by a series of [online interactive maps](#) that show

which states are using which indicators and how they are measuring student performance on that indicator.

Under ESSA, in addition to the required indicators of schools' performance, states can select indicators to measure schools' efforts to support students and provide equitable opportunities or to identify places where additional investments need to be made to improve education and support underserved students. *Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real* provides resources to help policymakers, educators, community members, and others effectively use the information from these indicators to identify policies and practices that can close gaps in opportunity and outcomes.

"The Every Student Succeeds Act provides a unique opportunity for states to take serious action to support students who are at the greatest risk of leaving or being removed from school and create more equitable and inclusive schools where all students have opportunities to succeed," said LPI President Linda Darling-Hammond. "We are pleased that a number of states have included measures that advance equity in their accountability plans. We hope that others will continue to follow suit and take advantage of this opportunity. Now, the states that have already made this commitment are seeking to combine those measures with appropriate and effective policies and strategies to close the opportunity gaps that keep so many students from underserved groups from reaching their full potential."

According to the [report](#) and [interactive](#):

- Nine states have committed to measuring suspension rates;
- Twenty-four states have committed to using a measure of school climate. Ten of those states explicitly mention providing resources and support to schools to improve students' social and emotional learning;
- Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have committed to measuring chronic absenteeism;
- Thirty-five states have committed to using extended-year graduation rates;
- Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have committed to using information regarding students' access to a college- and career-ready curriculum; and
- Five states are using all of the measures for either identification or school improvement.

Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real includes research-based recommendations regarding the most effective ways to measure and improve performance on the indicators, and resources to support policymakers, educators, advocates, and others in their efforts to support continuous school improvement. The report is accompanied by an interactive map that illustrates what each state is doing with regard to each of these indicators—both for accountability reporting and for ongoing school improvement efforts.

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About the Learning Policy Institute

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.

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