



Revised School Climate Checklist for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plans



The Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC) is a national coalition of over 100 organizations in 30 states dedicated to dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. DSC fights for the human right of every young person to a quality education and to be treated with dignity.

In December 2015, Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*ⁱ, which replaces the No Child Left Behind Act. DSC members were actively engaged in the development of ESSA, which includes several important provisions relating to school climate and discipline. States are now in the process of developing their ESSA plans to submit to the U.S. Department of Education on April 3 or September 18, 2017. These plans will take effect at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

This tool, co-authored by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), outlines key elements that a strong state plan should include in order to promote positive school climates, reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices and the disproportionate impact of these practices on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who identify as LGBTQ. This checklist can assist advocates as they analyze their state's draft ESSA plan and develop recommendations for improvement.

I. TITLE I, PART A: IMPROVING BASIC PROGRAMS OPERATED BY LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES (LEAs)

- Subgroups
ESSA requires states to capture and report the performance of all students and student subgroups (e.g. major racial groups and economically disadvantaged students). - §1111(c)(2)
Did your state:
 - ✓ Also include students who self-identify as LGBTQ as a subgroup the state uses in its accountability system?
- Minimum N-Size for Accountability
ESSA requires states to determine the minimum number of students (N-size) a subgroup must have to be included for accountability purposes. - §1111(c)(3)(A)
Did your state:
 - ✓ Set an n-size as small as possible (ideally 10 or less) to ensure that students in subgroups are not excluded from accountability systems? There is research supporting an n-size of 10, and several states (e.g. Maryland, Florida, Mississippi, and Utah) have previously had an N-size of 10 or less.ⁱⁱ
- School Quality or Student Success Indicator(s)
ESSA requires states to use a minimum of four indicators, including a measure of school quality or student success, in their accountability systems. One way that states can demonstrate school quality is by measuring "school climate and safety". - §1111(c)(4)(B)
Did your state:
 - ✓ Include school climate as an accountability indicator?
 - ✓ Include a definition for positive school climate that was developed in consultation with community stakeholders in the state plan?ⁱⁱⁱ
 - ✓ Include school discipline data (e.g. suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement) and school climate surveys as measures of school quality? (e.g. Georgia and a consortium of school districts in California currently use school discipline data in their accountability systems.^{iv})

- School Conditions

ESSA requires states to describe how they will support districts to improve conditions for student learning (including by reducing the overuse of exclusionary discipline practices). - §1111(g)(1)(C)

Did your state:

- ✓ Describe how it will use ESSA funds to provide meaningful supports to districts to assist them with improving school conditions for student learning? (e.g. providing monitoring and technical assistance to support the effective implementation of restorative practices, SWPBIS, and school-based mental health services, etc.)?
- ✓ Include a plan to encourage districts to:
 - Consider school climate indicators (e.g. discipline data, student surveys, school climate walkthroughs, etc.) in needs assessments for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement; and
 - Include strategies to reduce exclusionary discipline practices and disparities across student subgroups and request funds for restorative practices and SWPBIS in improvement plans?

II. TITLE I, PART D: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE NEGLECTED, DELINQUENT, OR AT-RISK

- Transitions Between Correctional Facilities and Local Programs

ESSA requires states requesting Title I, Part D funds to establish procedures to ensure the timely re-enrollment of students who become involved in the juvenile justice system. - §1414(a)(1)(E)

Did your state:

- ✓ Apply for Title I, Part D funds?
- ✓ Describe policies for improving the quality of coursework offered in facilities and ensure alignment with challenging state academic standards?

III. Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

- Use of Funds

ESSA requires states to describe how they will use funds received under Title IV, Part A for state-level activities. – §4103(c)(2)(A)

Did your state:

- ✓ Describe effective strategies to be implemented with these funds (e.g. providing monitoring and technical assistance to reduce discipline disparities and support the effective implementation of restorative practices, SWPBIS, and school-based mental health services, etc.)?

IV. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

States may, but are not required to, include supplemental information in their state plan, such as their overall vision for improving outcomes for all students and its efforts to consult with and engage stakeholders when developing its state plan.

- Outreach and Input

ESSA requires state education departments to engage in timely and meaningful consultation with community stakeholders as they develop their state plans. - §1111(a)(1)(A)

Did your state:

- ✓ Describe how the state conducted outreach to, and solicited input from, historically underrepresented groups (e.g. low-income communities of color)?
- ✓ Describe multiple methods for collecting community feedback (e.g. focus groups, surveys following stakeholder meetings and posted online, and written comments submitted after meetings)?
- ✓ Describe strategies the state used to ensure meetings were accessible to a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g. holding meetings in the evening in geographically diverse communities)?

V. LOCAL PRIORITIES

- Include priorities specific to local community needs and campaigns below:
Did your state:

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

✓ _____

ⁱ Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law No. 114.95, S. 1177, 114th Cong. (Dec. 10, 2015).

ⁱⁱ Jessica Cardichon, Ensuring Equity in ESSA: The Role of N-Size in Subgroup Accountability, Alliance for Excellent Education, 7 (June 2016).
<http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NSize.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *DSC's Model Code on Education and Dignity urges states and districts to create a climate where students feel socially, emotionally and physically safe, there is mutual respect between teachers, students, parents or guardians, and students' self-expression and self-esteem are supported*, The Dignity in Schools Campaign, A Model Code on Education and Dignity, Revised October 2013, at 18,
www.dignityinschools.org/files/Model_Code_2013.pdf.

^{iv} See, Georgia Department of Education, School Climate, <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/School-Climate.aspx>; and The CORE Districts, Data Collaborative, <http://coredistricts.org/>.