ESSA Implementation Oversight Opportunities

Dignity in Schools Campaign Federal Strategies Call
May 23, 2019

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- ESSA is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
  - ESEA was a civil rights bill created in the 1960s as part of LBJ's Great Society
    - Part of the logic: "In for a penny, in for a pound": If you accept federal money, you have to comply with federal civil rights laws
  - Main source of federal $$ for K-12 education
- ESSA became law in December 2015
  - Previous reauthorization known as "No Child Left Behind"
  - ESSA is already in full effect: US ED has approved all state plans

ESSA Financial Guide

Title I of ESSA
The first major chapter of the law, which includes the bulk of funding for school districts and schools and which contains the majority of the law's accountability and reporting requirements. Title I funding is targeted to serve low-income students.

Title II of ESSA
This chapter is focused on teacher quality and support for teachers.

Title III of ESSA
This chapter provides funding and requirements related to English learners.

Title IV of ESSA
This chapter provides funding and requirements for other areas of student support, including extended learning, afterschool programs, supportive school climate, well-rounded education, charter schools, and magnet schools.

Title V of ESSA
This chapter provides additional requirements and limitations of the U.S. Secretary of Education, funding for rural schools, and rules governing the combining of federal funding.

Title VI of ESSA
This chapter provides funding and requirements related to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.

Title VII of ESSA
This chapter provides funding and requirements for the Impact Aid program, which compensates districts for lost review due to federal lands.

Title VIII of ESSA
This chapter includes general requirements which govern the law overall, including which provisions may be waived by the U.S. Department of Education and restrictions on the U.S. Secretary of Education's authority.

What Has Happened Since ESSA's Passage

- Without offering anything new, Congress wiped out all rules for how US ED was going to interpret ESSA
- US ED has not offered much new guidance, but has taken back guidance on civil rights
- US ED approved state ESSA plans even when they did not meet legal requirements

This Means States Have a lot of Power to:

- Decide what parts of ESSA they are or are not going to comply with
  - For example, “subgroup accountability”
- Decide if they need to ask ED to approve revisions to state ESSA Plans
  - Every state has to make a plan publicly available that says how that state is going to use federal funds under ESSA. All of these plans need to be approved by ED.
  - “Major changes” to the plan require re-approval. What is a “major change”?
- Figure out what kind of support to provide to districts and schools
  - For example, on how to calculate “per-pupil funding”

Some Trends Becoming Clear

- ESSA Plans vary in quality and value
- Some states use n-size to mask how student subgroups are doing
  - “Targeted Support and Improvement” (TSI) means “underperforming student group,” not “among worst in state.”
  - Indiana may replace letter grades for schools and districts with: "exceeds expectations," "meets expectations," "approaches expectations," "does not meet expectations."
- There are big differences among states on:
  - Calculating and reporting “per-pupil funding,” and helping districts and schools
  - Report card data and public reporting of data in general
  - Stakeholder engagement

The Basics of School Improvement

- "A right with no remedy is no right at all."
- Remember ESEA's origins in 1960s civil rights movement, and Brown v. Board of Ed:
  - ***Separate***: racially isolated
  - ***Unequal***: better/worse conditions; more/less money
  - ***Indifferent***: what happens when local school districts or states don't care?
- Taxpayer money

The Three to Know CSI; TSI; ATSI

Core Federal Requirements for CSI, TSI, and ATSI School Identification	
Level of Support	Core Requirement
Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)	Bottom 5% of Title I Schools in the state
Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)	Consistently underperforming student group
Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)	At least one student group performing as low as the bottom 5th percentile school

Table 1: Core federal requirements for CSI, TSI, and ATSI school identification, from the Center for Assessment: https://www.nciea.org/blog/whats-next-state-accountability

For schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), the district must develop and implement a school improvement plan that is based on a school-level NA (Title I, Part A).

An LEA is not required to conduct an NA for schools identified for targeted support and improvement (TSI), but many SEAs may choose to either require or strongly encourage the completion of an NA for those identified schools.

Needs Assessments Are Complex:

Figure Out What Applies

Under ESSA, a few additional Title areas also require an NA. In some cases, the same NA, or a very similar one, can be used to meet more than one requirement.

Some SEAs may also choose to have all schools (and LEAs) that have been identified for improvement complete an NA.

To streamline efforts and lessen the burden on schools and LEAs, some SEAs may choose to develop a template for a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) that meets of their department-specific requirements for local NAs.

Local Educational Agency Plans - Selected Provisions

- How the LEA will monitor students' progress in meeting State academic standards;
- How the LEA will identify and address any disparities that result in low-income students and minority students being taught at higher rates by ineffective or inexperienced teachers;
- How the LEA will carry out the state plan;
- How the LEA will implement effective parent and family engagement; and
- How the LEA will support efforts to reduce the overuse of exclusionary discipline practices.

LEA Plans - Parents Right-to-Know and Engagement

- At the beginning of each school year, an LEA has to notify all parents that they can request information regarding the professional qualifications of their children's teachers.
- Schools must provide for parents information on the achievement and academic growth of their children.
- LEAs must also make public information on State-required assessments.
- To receive ESSA funding, LEAs must conduct outreach to parents and family members and implement programs, activities, and procedures for parent and family involvement; and conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the family and parent engagement policy in improving academic quality.

Local Applications for ESSA Funds

- Each summer, local education agencies (LEAs) apply to state education agencies (SEAs) for ESSA funds.
- The SEAs design the applications, and review and approve each submitted LEA application.
- Example: Georgia has posted information for LEAs to file a Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP): https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/LEA-Consolidated-Application.aspx
- The LEAs must “afford a reasonable opportunity for public comment” and consider those comments for their applications.

Report Cards

- What's required?
- What needs to be on them?
- Where can you find them?
- The Big Deal about Per-Pupil Funding

Report Cards: Who and When?

Every year, every state must publish:

- a ***statewide report card*** with results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), compared with national averages.

Every year, every district must publish:

- a ***district report card***, with information for the district as a whole;
- A ***report card for every school*** in the district

Best way to find your report card:

- Google "[your state or district] ESSA report card."

Report Cards: What?

These report cards must, at least:

- Describe the ***state's school improvement system***, including CSI, TSI, ATSI

- Give info on the ***performance of every student group for every indicator*** in the system, including state tests and and graduation rates.

- Give numbers for each student group about:
  - ***discipline rates***
  - ***chronic absenteeism*** rates;
  - ***access to resources*** like advanced classes, experienced teachers, and out-of-field teachers.

- Detail, on a ***per-student basis***, the revenues of ***state, local, and federal funds***, and actual expenditures for each school, not just district averages.

Questions to Ask/Info to Look For

- Is this report card in language that is easy for me to read and understand?
- English is not my first language—how will I understand the report card?
- How does the state measure academic performance and other indicators of student performance?
- I want to know more than math and reading performance. Are there other measures that show me how students perform? If so, what are they?
- How much are students learning during a school year? Are students progressing and growing?
- Do students go on to college (two year or four year) after they graduate?
- How do I know students are ready for college/career?

Per-Pupil Funding: What the What?

- **Definition**: A number, on a per-student basis, that shows how much state, local, and federal money is going into a school/district, and how much is actually spent by the districts and schools per student.
- **Not an entirely new idea**:
  - RI, WA have required calculations of school-level spending for years, but the data are hard to find & mostly used by practitioners and politicians.
  - Seattle, Memphis have required this for years;
  - CA has school-by-school spending & teacher salaries on state report card
- **Civil rights implications**:
  - Resource equity and educator equity
  - Transportation and district boundaries
  - Efficiency and evidence
  - Comparability/Transparency

Per-Pupil Funding: Beware!

But Beware!

- No guidance from US ED; this looks really different in different states (some are hard to understand, others are hard to find)
- Many superintendents don't have previous experience with these calculations:
  - How to calculate bus costs when they stop at different schools?
- How can you compare if districts and states are doing it differently?
- Pay close attention to "Superintendent Discretionary funds," etc.

The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: Per-Pupil Spending

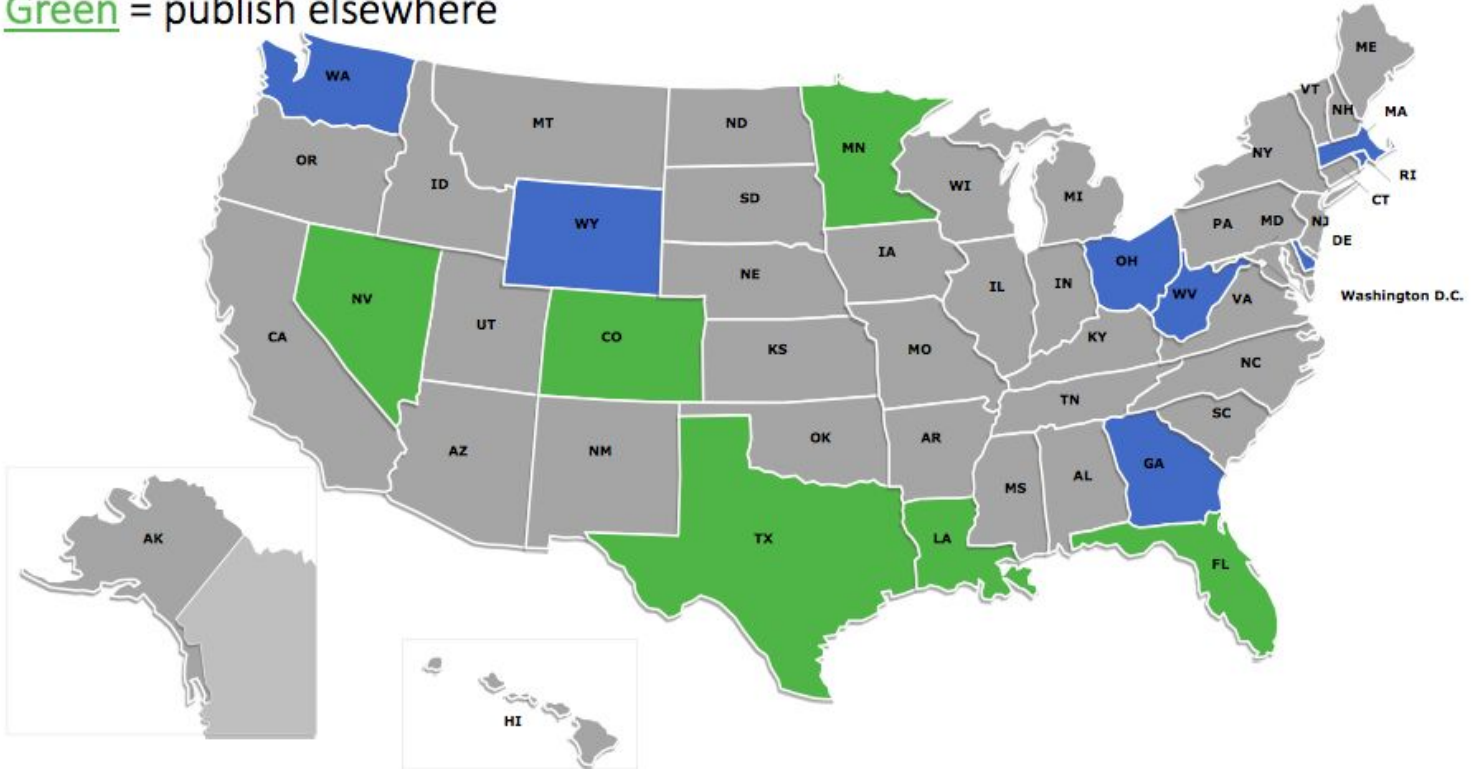
- The Good:
  - Improved transparency
  - Raises questions about:
    - educator equity
    - transportation
    - district boundaries
- The Bad:
  - Lack of consistency can make it hard to make comparisons
  - Most states are not fully reporting this yet
  - Some state reporting is comprehensive, not not easy to read/access
- The Ugly:
  - Reporting says how much (more or less), but doesn't say how (discretionary)
  - Having to "follow the breadcrumbs" across state websites to get all of the relevant info

From Edunomics Lab (as of March 9, 2019): https://edunomicslab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FiTWiG-March-7_final.pdf

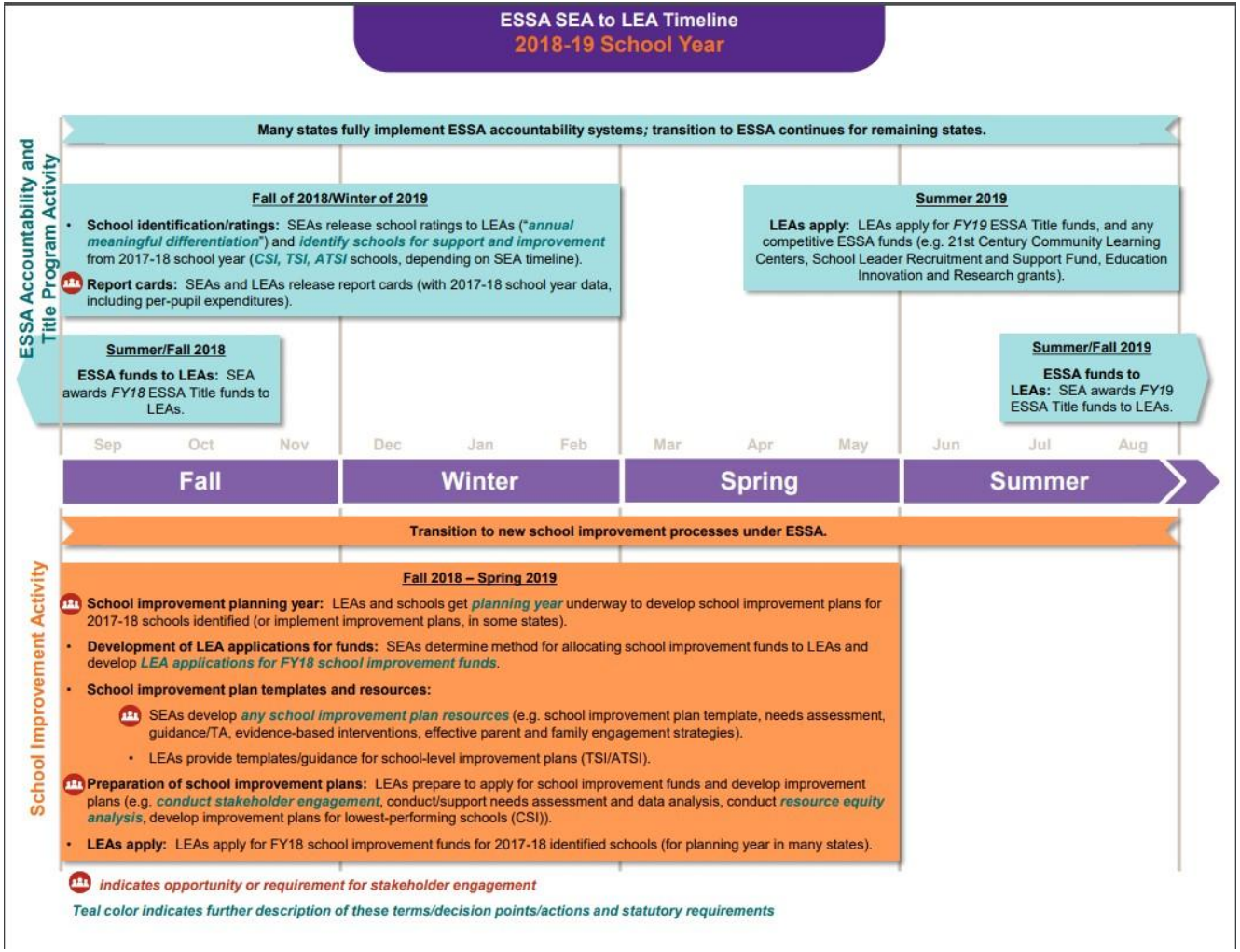
States already reporting school by school spending:

BLUE = on report cards (meeting ESSA)

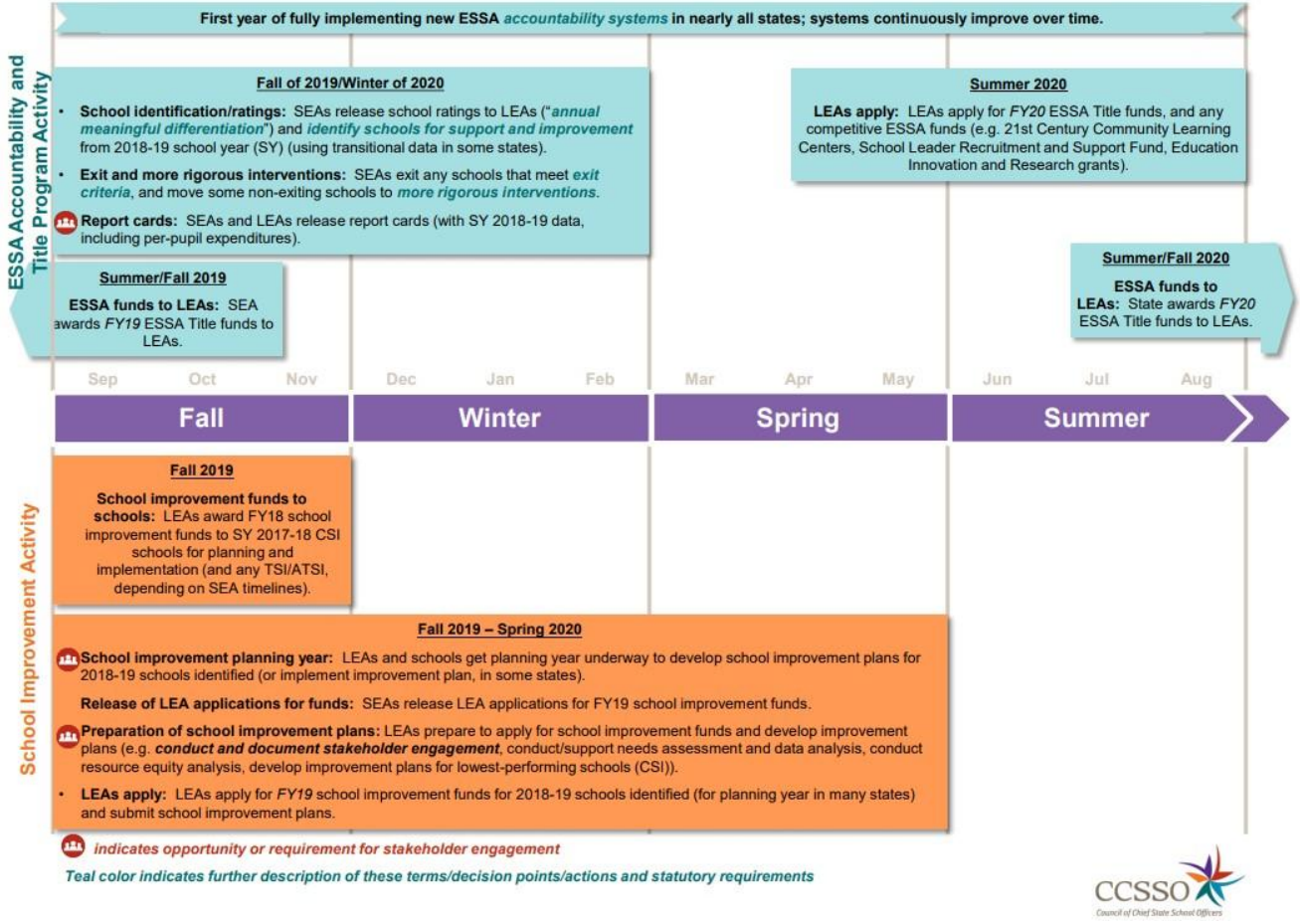
Green = publish elsewhere



Bringing It All Together: Summary of Oversight Opportunities


ESSA SEA to LEA Timeline
2018-19 School Year
ESSA Accountability and Title Program Activity
Many states fully implement ESSA accountability systems; transition to ESSA continues for remaining states.
Fall of 2018/Winter of 2019
School identification/ratings: SEAs release school ratings to LEAs ("annual meaningful differentiation") and identify schools for support and improvement from 2017-18 school year (CSI, TSI, ATSI schools, depending on SEA timeline).
Report cards: SEAs and LEAs release report cards (with 2017-18 school year data, including per-pupil expenditures).
Summer 2019
LEAs apply: LEAs apply for FY19 ESSA Title funds, and any competitive ESSA funds (e.g. 21st Century Community Learning Centers, School Leader Recruitment and Support Fund, Education Innovation and Research grants).
Summer/Fall 2018
ESSA funds to LEAs: SEA awards FY18 ESSA Title funds to LEAs.
Summer/Fall 2019
ESSA funds to LEAs: SEA awards FY19 ESSA Title funds to LEAs.
Sep
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Aug
Fall
Winter
Spring
Summer
Transition to new school improvement processes under ESSA.
School Improvement Activity
Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
School improvement planning year: LEAs and schools get planning year underway to develop school improvement plans for 2017-18 schools identified (or implement improvement plans, in some states).
Development of LEA applications for funds: SEAs determine method for allocating school improvement funds to LEAs and develop LEA applications for FY18 school improvement funds.
School improvement plan templates and resources:
SEAs develop any school improvement plan resources (e.g. school improvement plan template, needs assessment, guidance/TA, evidence-based interventions, effective parent and family engagement strategies).
LEAs provide templates/guidance for school-level improvement plans (TSI/ATSI).
Preparation of school improvement plans: LEAs prepare to apply for school improvement funds and develop improvement plans (e.g. conduct stakeholder engagement, conduct/support needs assessment and data analysis, conduct resource equity analysis, develop improvement plans for lowest-performing schools (CSI)).
LEAs apply: LEAs apply for FY18 school improvement funds for 2017-18 identified schools (for planning year in many states).
indicates opportunity or requirement for stakeholder engagement
Teal color indicates further description of these terms/decision points/actions and statutory requirements

ESSA SEA to LEA Timeline
2019-20 School Year



CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers

Two Approaches to Advocacy

Turn the Lights On (legal compliance) →

- Focus on compliance with the specific language in ESSA to:
  - make implementation better
  - support specific change where needed
  - create a record now for when US ED or Congress cares about oversight again

← Grow the Roots (organizing)

- Focus on local change
- Start building informed dialogue
- Creating sustainable growth/progress

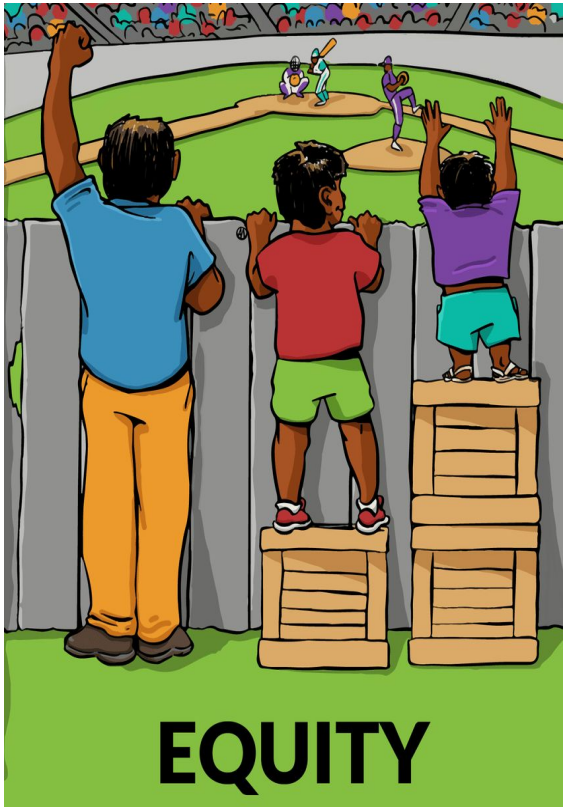
A “Questions to Frequently Ask” Approach

General

- In practice, what do terms like ““stakeholder engagement” and “consultation” and “partnership” mean in my state/district/school”?
- Who decides?
- What are the deadlines?

Specific

- What’s being done to standardize per-pupil reporting requirements across districts?



Brainstorming to Ensure Public Participation (Part I)

1. When and **how** is my state identifying schools in need of improvement (start with ESSA plan)?

2. What is the implementation timeline and **what questions do I still have**?

Brainstorming to Ensure Public Participation (Part II)

1. What is the data saying about the students I advocate for (report cards, stories)?

2. Putting the information together, **what are some of the initial school improvement areas you can ID for advocacy in your work**?

Brainstorming to Ensure Public Participation (Part III)

1. What has my district put in its application for ESSA funds? Does it address the areas of improvement I see?

2. How is my school board allocating/budgeting the money it receives? How should it be allocating it differently?

*See It's a School Board Thing (https://xqsuperschool.org/school-board-thing) for more information on school boards

Brainstorming to Ensure Public Participation (Part IV)

1. Is my state changing its statewide plan for ESSA implementation? Did it consider public input first?

2. What process or criteria is my state using to review and approve district applications for ESSA funds? Are they aimed at ensuring that the districts will be using the funds to address equity and improve performance for all students?

Additional Resources

- The Engage for Education Equity toolkit: https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/project/engageforedequity/
- Using Data to Effect Change: https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/EfEE_DataWorksheet_PACKET.pdf
- DSC's ESSA page: https://dignityinschools.org/take-action/every-student-succeeds-act-essa/; can also search "ESSA" from the search box on DSC's main page.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers has put together several reports on ESSA (use search box to look for particular topics): https://ccsso.org/

Questions?