# State Planning Tool for Standards-Based Accountability Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) presents states with the opportunity to broaden their visions for college and career readiness (CCR). Under ESSA, statewide accountability systems must include multiple measures that can serve as benchmarks for the varied pathways that students take to CCR. States are required to use multiple measures to differentiate among all public schools annually and to periodically identify low-performing schools for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement. ESSA expands the federally required school accountability indicators to include academic achievement status (which embeds statewide assessment participation rate), achievement growth or another academic indicator (for elementary and middle schools), graduation rates (for high schools), progress toward English language proficiency, and an additional indicator of school quality or student success.[[1]](#footnote-2)

This planning resource is designed to support state educational agency (SEA) leaders and staff as they modify state accountability systems to align with CCR goals in the context of ESSA requirements. It does so by:

* Building capacity regarding ESSA’s standards-based accountability requirements by summarizing relevant ESSA statutory requirements[[2]](#footnote-3) in a concise, understandable format; and
* Providing the tools for states to identify and respond to gaps between ESSA requirements and current state policies and implementation efforts.

It is recommended that SEA staff who lead or are deeply engaged in each of the policy areas addressed by this tool use it collaboratively and also consider consulting with other stakeholders who bring critical information and diverse perspectives to the process of developing the consolidated state plan.[[3]](#footnote-4)

## Using the ESSA Accountability Planning Tool

This tool is organized into two parts:

**Part A (Accountability Gap Analysis Template)** provides a deliberate space for states to identify and plan next steps to respond to policy and implementation gaps in the following ESSA accountability-related policy areas:

[I. Academic Standards](#_I._ACADEMIC_STANDARDS)

[II. Statewide Assessments](#_II._STATEWIDE_ASSESSMENTS)[[4]](#footnote-5)

[III. Accountability Indicators and Determinations](#_III._ACCOUNTABILITY_INDICATORS)

[IV. School Improvement](#_IV._SCHOOL_IMPROVEMENT)

[V. Public Reporting](#_V._REPORTING)

A concise itemization of requirements from the statute is provided, as well as prompts for collecting and analyzing current policy and implementation status information to identify next steps for closing gaps.

**Part B (Accountability Requirements Close-Up)** is an optional section that supports the gap analysis by describing the requirements in depth, explaining policy shifts from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and providing links to resources for integrating efforts to promote college and career readiness.

### Step-by-Step Gap Analysis Using Part A

For optimal use of the ESSA Accountability Planning Tool, refer to the **sample completion text on page four** and complete the following steps to identify and address policy and implementation gaps at the state level, using the blank gap analysis template provided in Part A:

1. **ESSA Requirements for States.** Build your understanding of the accountability-related ESSA requirements by reviewing the itemized statutory requirements for states. For additional context, review in-depth descriptions of the requirements and policy shifts from NCLB in corresponding sections of Part B.
2. **Current State Policy*.*** Describe current state policy related to the ESSA requirements described in Step 1. This description may include new policy intended to comply with ESSA or older noncompliant policy that results in a policy gap with ESSA. Consult with policy area leaders and technical experts for accuracy. Review, collect, and summarize policy information from:

* State legislation or code;
* State accountability and assessment guidelines or manuals;
* Annual state, district, and school report cards;
* Previous Title I plans for NCLB and [ESEA flexibility](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html) (if applicable); and the
* [Federal accountability workbook](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplans03/index.html)

1. **ESSA Implementation Status and/or Supporting Data.**Describe the implementation status of state policy supporting ESSA and/or any relevant supporting data.Your state may have already developed policy aligned with ESSA, but full implementation with fidelity may not be complete, resulting in an implementation gap. Consult with state and district leaders where applicable to describe implementation status in districts and schools, including whether infrastructure or key resources are in place. Incorporate evaluation data or research-based background data that are meaningful. Consider:

* For state policy that does not meet ESSA requirements, what efforts are ongoing or have been planned to develop aligned policy? Have relevant stakeholders been identified and contacted? Have necessary meetings been planned?
* For state policy thatalready meets ESSA requirements:
  + What is the implementation timeline?
  + Has the state embedded the policy content in resources to support districts and otherwise communicated the policy to districts?
  + Has state infrastructure (e.g., systems and processes) been updated to incorporate new policy?
  + If applicable, to what extent have schools and classrooms adopted and implemented required policies? What evidence or data support this?

1. **Gap Analysis.** Analyze and describe the gaps between ESSA requirements (Step 1) and the state’s current policy (Step 2) and efforts to support ESSA implementation (Step 3), in sufficient detail to support further action planning. Provide an overall rating for quick reference regarding whether ESSA provisions are fully met (“Met”), partially met (“Partial”), or require significant attention (“Gap”). Consider:

* Do the current policies and implementation efforts fulfill the requirements of ESSA?
* Are there ways in which current policy or implementation efforts need to be enhanced to more *meaningfully* align with ESSA? To improve the *coherence* of state policy?
* Are there any areas of uncertainty regarding ESSA requirements that should be clarified to better evaluate the gap?

1. **Next Steps**. Finally, describe concrete next steps that state staff should take to close the identified gaps. Consider:

* What specific policy conversations need to be initiated?
* What supporting, *policy-specific* actions need to be taken, such as meetings to make specific decisions or capacity building related to policy implementation efforts?
* What system-level actions that *cut across policies* need to be taken, such as improving data infrastructure, communicating policy, identifying personnel, formulating overall strategies, making funding decisions, or allocating other resources?
* How should strategies to promote college and career readiness be embedded in next steps? (See Part B for resources that address the intersection of college and career readiness and ESSA policy areas.)

## Sample Text for Completion of the Accountability Gap Analysis Template (Part A)

See "Using the ESSA Accountability Planning Tool” (pp. 2–3) to complete the Accountability Gap Analysis Template (Part A). The following is an example of a completed portion of the template.

Provide an overall rating of whether ESSA requirements are met, partially met, or if a significant gap remains.

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| I. ACADEMIC STANDARDS | | | | |
|  | I. A. Aligned Content Standards | | | |
| I. A. Adopt **challenging academic content standards** in   * Mathematics; * Reading or English language arts (ELA); and * Science.   Each set of standards must:   * Be aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing college coursework; * Be aligned with relevant state career and technical education (CTE) standards; and * Include at least three levels of academic achievement. | | | | |
|  | * **Current State Policy** |  |  | **Gap Analysis** |
| Our state joined the Progressive English and Math Standards (PEMS) consortium in 2013, which adopted math and ELA standards aligned with college entrance requirements. We joined the Millennial Science Standards (MSS) consortium in 2014, which uses college-entrance-aligned standards.  Each consortium has stated its intent to align with CTE standards by the end of school year 2017. | | Summarize current state policy that relates to ESSA requirements. | 🞏 Met 🗹 Partial 🞏 Not Met  Policies are in place to comply with ESSA requirements by 2017; however, a number of districts have not fully implemented standards, and some alignment work remains.  Provide an actionable summary of policy and implementation gap(s) by comparing how steps 2 and 3 meet the requirements of step 1. | |
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|  | **ESSA Implementation Status and/or Supporting Data** |  |
| The PEMS and MSS consortiums have held the first meetings in the process of aligning respective standards with national CTE standards by 2017.  Evaluation results indicate that 90% of districts “agree” or “strongly agree” that math and ELA teachers have successfully implemented standards in their classrooms (State PEMS Evaluation, 2016). | | Describe efforts to implement policies that fulfill ESSA requirements, including supporting data (evaluation results, research, etc.). Reference data sources when appropriate. |
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|  | **Next Steps** | | | |
| State content experts will convene in February 2017 to continue work on analyzing standards’ alignment.  State leaders will meet with LEAs to determine local needs to increase classroom-level implementation.  Identify concrete next steps for addressing the gaps by either driving additional policymaking or promoting implementation with fidelity. | | | | |

## **State Planning Tool for Standards-Based Accountability Under ESSA**

## PART A: Accountability Gap Analysis Template

**Instructions:** Use Part A of the ESSA Accountability Planning Tool (1) as a quick reference guide to ESSA accountability provisions and to indicate (2) current state policy, (3) implementation status and supporting data, (4) the gap between ESSA policy and state policy and implementation, and (5) concrete next steps to close the gap. See Part B for detailed descriptions of requirements, key policy shifts from NLCB, and links to helpful resources for moving state college- and career-ready support efforts forward.

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| I. ACADEMIC STANDARDS | | | | | |
|  | I. A. Aligned Content Standards | | | | |
| Adopt **challenging academic content standards** in   * Mathematics; * Reading or English language arts (ELA); and * Science.   Each set of standards must:   * Be aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing college coursework; * Be aligned with relevant state career and technical education (CTE) standards; and * Include at least three levels of academic achievement. | | | | | |
|  | | **Current State Policy** |  |  | **Gap Analysis** | |
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|  | I. B. English Language Proficiency Standards | | | | |
| Adopt **English language proficiency** (**ELP) standards** that:   * Are derived from the four domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing; * Address the different proficiency levels of English learners (ELs); and * Align with the challenging state academic standards. | | | | | |
|  | | * **Current State Policy** |  |  | **Gap Analysis** |
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|  | I. C. Alternate Academic Achievement Standards | | | |
| May adopt **alternate academic achievement standards** for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that:  All provisions are required unless “may” is used to indicate optional provisions.   * Are aligned with the challenging state academic standards; * Promote access to the general education curriculum; * Are the highest possible standards achievable by such students; * Are noted in individualized education programs (IEPs) of such students; and * Ensure that students are on track to pursue postsecondary education or employment. | | | | |
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| II. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS | | | | | |
|  | II. A. High-Quality Statewide Assessments | | | | |
| Implement **high-quality statewide assessments,** consistent with the technical/administrative requirements described in Part B of this tool:   * For mathematics and reading or ELA (reading/ELA), administered in Grades 3–8 and at least once in Grades 9–12; and * For science, administered at least once in each of the grade spans 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12. | | | | | |
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|  | II. B. Native Language Assessments | | | | |
| Identify **non-English languages** present to a significantextent and make every effort to develop required statewide tests using them. | | | | | |
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|  | II. C. English Language Proficiency Assessments | | | | |
| Administer **ELP assessments** aligned to ELP standards to all ELs annually. | | | | | |
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|  | II. D. Assessments Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards | | | | |
| May administer **alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards** that:   * Are aligned with alternate achievement standards and consistent with the technical and administrative requirements described in Part B of this tool, and * Are administered to no more than 1% of the overall participating population for a particular subject (or request that this cap be waived). | | | | | |
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|  | II. E.Eighth-Grade Mathematics Exception | | | | |
| May**exempt any eighth-grader from grade-level math test** if:   * Student takes the high school math test in eighth grade and the score is used for accountability purposes in the same year, and * In high school, the student takes a higher level statewide math test used for accountability that year. | | | | | |
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|  | II. F.Inclusion of Recently Arrived English Learners | | | | |
| May*,* for a **recently arrived EL**, either:   * Exclude the student from participation in the first-year reading/ELA assessment, and count proficiency results toward accountability in the second year and growth results in the third year, or * Assess and report results in the first year and count growth results toward accountability in the second year and proficiency results in the third year. | | | | | |
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|  | II. G. Inclusion of Exited English Learners | | | | |
| May include math and reading/ELA results of **previous ELs,** in EL subgroup accountability results, for up to 4 years after exiting EL status. | | | | | |
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| III. ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS AND DETERMINATIONS | | | | | |
|  | III. A. Subgroup Definition and *N*-Size | | | | |
| Set statistically sound ***N*-size** for accountability and reporting, for each of the following **disaggregated subgroups**:   * Students from each major racial and ethnic group; * Economically disadvantaged students; * Students with disabilities; and * English learners. | | | | | |
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|  | III. B. Long-Term and Interim Goals | | | | |
| Set ambitious **long-term and interim goals** for all students and all subgroups, for each of the following measures:   * Mathematics proficiency on statewide tests; * Reading/ELA proficiency on statewide tests; * Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate; and * Percentage of ELs making progress toward ELP (ELs only). | | | | | |
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|  | III. C. Accountability Indicators | | | | |
| Include the following **accountability indicators**, for all students and for each subgroup in each school:   * Academic achievement in mathematics and ELA (Grades 3–8 and once in high school), including participation below 95% where applicable; * Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and, optionally, extended-year graduation rate (high schools); * Student growth or another academic indicator (elementary and middle schools); * Progress in attaining English language proficiency (ELs only); and * An additional indicator of school quality or student success. | | | | | |
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|  | III. D. Annual Differentiation |
| **Annually differentiate** among all public schools based on all accountability indicators, such that:   * Substantial weighting is assigned to each of the indicators except the indicator of school quality or student success, and * Much greater weight is assigned to the required academic indicators in aggregate than the additional indicator. | |

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|  | III. E. Comprehensive Support Schools |
| Identify, at least once every 3 years, schools for **comprehensive support**,in the following categories:   * The lowest performing 5% of Title I schools (based on all accountability indicators); * All public high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students; and * Title I schools that fail to exit “additional targeted” status after a state-determined number of years. | |

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|  | III. F. Targeted Support Schools |
| Identify schools for **targeted support** in which a subgroup is consistently underperforming overa number of years based on all required accountability indicators and the system of annual differentiation. | |

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|  | III. G. Schools Receiving Additional Targeted Support |
| Identify schools for **additional targeted support** in which a subgroup has performed, on its own, at a level below the performance of all students in any of the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools based on all indicators*.* | |

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|  | III. H. Participation Rate |
| Identify actions to take for schools that fail to meet the **95%** **participation rate** for statewide mathematics, reading/ELA, or science assessments. | |

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| IV. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT | | | | | | |
|  | IV. A. Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans | | | | | |
| For each **comprehensive support school**, approve its local educational agency (LEA)-developed **improvement plan,** if the plan:   * Is informed by all accountability indicators, including performance against long-term goals; * Includes one or more interventions based on statistically significant evidence from a well-designed, well-implemented study; * Is based on a school-level needs assessment; * Identifies and addresses resource inequities across schools; and * Is monitored and periodically reviewed by the SEA. | | | | | | |
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|  | IV. B. Required State Technical Assistance |
| Provide **technical assistance** (TA) to LEAs by:   * Providing TA to each LEA with a significant number of comprehensive support or targeted support schools, and * Periodically reviewing resource allocation to support school improvement in any LEA with a significant number of comprehensive support and targeted support schools. | |

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|  | IV. C. Optional State Technical Assistance |
| May provide **additional TA** by:   * Initiating additional improvement in any LEA with— * A significant number of schools that are consistently identified for comprehensive support and not meeting exit criteria, or * A significant number of schools identified for targeted support; and * Establishing alternative, evidence-based strategies for comprehensive support and targeted support status schools. | |

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|  | IV. D. Exit Criteria for Low-Performing Schools |
| Establish **exit criteria** for:   * Comprehensive support schools, not to exceed 4 years, otherwise resulting in more rigorous state-determined action, and * Additional targeted support schools, not to exceed a state-determined number of years, otherwise resulting in identification for comprehensive support. | |

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| V. PUBLIC REPORTING | | | | | | |
|  | V. A. Annual State Report Card | | | | | |
| Disseminate annually and widely **to the public**:   * The state report card; * All LEA annual report cards (including school report cards); and * Annual report to the Secretary.   The annual state report card must contain all elements detailed in Part B. | | | | | | |
|  | | * **Current State Policy** |  |  | **Gap Analysis** | | |
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|  | V. B. Annual Federal Reporting |
| Report annually **to the Secretary**:   * Information on the achievement of all students and subgroups on state tests; * Information on ELP attainment; * Schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support; and * Teacher qualifications, including number and percentage of inexperienced, out-of-subject, or out-of-field teachers, and teachers with emergency credentials. | |

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|  | **ESSA Implementation Status and/or Supporting Data** |  |
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|  | **Next Steps** | | | |
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**If you have any questions** about this resource or regarding the integration of college and career readiness goals and supports into state accountability and assessment systems, please contact us at [ccrscenter@air.org](mailto:ccrscenter@air.org).

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1. This additional indicator may include nonacademic factors, such as student engagement or school climate. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. All citations in the format “Sec. 1111(c)” refer to sections of the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by ESSA](https://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. State plans under ESSA are required to incorporate timely and meaningful consultation with the state governor; state legislature; state board of education, if applicable; local educational agencies (LEAs), including some in rural areas; representatives of Indian tribes; teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, and specialized instructional support personnel; charter school leaders, if applicable; administrators; other staff; and parents (Sec. 1111(a)(1)(A)). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Assessment-related provisions that relate directly to standards-based accountability are presented here. See the ESSA statute and [final regulations on academic assessments Parts A and B](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html) for comprehensive assessment requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)