



**National  
Urban League**

**State:** Massachusetts

## **ESSA State Plan Equity Report Card**

As part of our Equity & Excellence Project (EEP), the National Urban League has reviewed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plans for 36 states and the District of Columbia where we have Urban League affiliates. Under ESSA, the U.S. Department of Education tasked each state with developing a consolidated, streamlined set of requirements for states to address in their plans and submit for federal approval. All plans were approved as of September 2018. These plans provide a preliminary indicator of how states intend to implement the new law and represent a blueprint for state- and district-level decisions that will work to move each state from promise to practice during implementation.

During our analysis, we assessed how well states incorporated equity into their plans and developed a series of report cards that use a green-yellow-red highlight system to rate the plans on 12 Equity Indicators including: early childhood learning, supports for struggling schools, and resource equity. These indicators were selected based on the evidence demonstrating their effectiveness for advancing equity and excellence for vulnerable students in our nation's public schools.

These report cards do not constitute an assessment or analysis of a state's school system. Rather, they identify the extent to which states have included the 12 equity indicators in their ESSA plans. Each state's ranking was determined based on its weighted average performances across each of our 12 equity indicators. Extra weight was placed on those areas that the National Urban League believes are especially critical to advancing equity—subgroup performance, supports, and interventions for struggling schools and for resource equity.

We believe these Consolidated State Plans are a reflection of each state's priorities and represent a road map that will guide a state's investments in districts, schools and communities. We hope that the absence of information in a state's plan is not an indication of its commitment to these education equity priorities and we remain optimistic that states and districts will continue to adopt these 12 equity levers into their plans as they move into implementation.

For more information on our findings, please read our executive summary and full report on [naturbanleague.org](http://naturbanleague.org).



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Plan Approved: September 15, 2017; Link to full text can be found [here](#)

| Equity Indicators  | NUL Score   |
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| <p><b>1. Goals and Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts’ plan commits to reducing the proficiency gap by one-third over the course of six years (before 2022). The state has set similarly ambitious goals for all subgroups.</li> <li>Massachusetts’ chosen School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicators are: chronic absenteeism, grade 10 science, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scale, extended engagement rate, success in grade 9 courses, and successful completion of broad and challenging coursework.</li> <li>Future iterations of Massachusetts’ plan should discuss how chosen indicators will help to meet interim and long term goals.</li> </ul>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>2. Subgroup Performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state’s plan has a set of indicators flagged as “gap closing for high-need students” that are promoted as equity focused. Massachusetts is, however, using a super subgroup called “high-need students” made up of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English-language learners.</li> <li>Massachusetts is using an N-size of 20.</li> </ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>3. Supports &amp; Interventions for Struggling Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Massachusetts plan definition of "targeted support" is not meaningfully different from “additional targeted support” and is unlikely to identify additional schools for support.</li> <li>Massachusetts’ plan can improve by differentiating the criteria to identify both groups of schools as well as describing tiered supports and assistance guaranteed to and interventions required of each set.</li> </ul>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>4. Resource Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts’ plan includes an indicator in their accountability system called “successful completion of broad and challenging coursework” that includes credit for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), honors, dual enrollment and other challenging coursework.</li> <li>The state’s plan articulates that it will oversee mandatory resource allocation reviews, but should add more detail about that process. It is not clear that Massachusetts will conduct a review of its own resource allocation at the state level.</li> <li>Massachusetts’ plan could move to excellent by designating funds from the state portion of its Title I set-aside to efforts that remedy resource inequities among and within districts, describing their plan to incorporate school level spending on its report cards.</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>5. Educator Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts’ plan develops documentation and tools for educating the whole child and identified an effectiveness gap especially for ELLs, student with disabilities (SWDs), etc.</li> <li>Massachusetts’s plan was vague on details regarding how cultural competence is integrated as a teaching and learning component. However, more information can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Massachusetts makes calculations using a definition for out of field teacher, while leaving ineffective and inexperienced undefined in its plan. Although its plan reports data on teachers with less than three years experience, teachers who receive an unsatisfactory or needs improvement rating and teachers without professional status or who are long-term substitutes, Massachusetts should clearly and publicly define what it considers inexperienced and ineffective in its Consolidated State Plan. More information can be found on the state's definitions in their <a href="#">equity plan</a>.</li><li>Beyond the development of the student level experience report, Massachusetts' plan should describe in greater detail how districts will be supported and expected to identify and address disparities in access to teachers, both in the planning and implementation stages.</li><li>Massachusetts commendably looks at disparities in teacher access across all schools, rather than simply those receiving Title I dollars.</li><li>Massachusetts should strengthen its commitment to equity by tying professional learning dollars, technical assistance and support to indications of inequitable access to effective and in-field teachers.</li><li>Massachusetts can further improve by stating strategies for increased pipeline diversity and incorporating a focus on diversity into its induction and school leader development and evaluation activities. The state employed an equity plan in 2015 that ends in the 2018-19 school year. The state has an opportunity to renew this effort with a focus on cultural competency and teacher/principal pipeline diversity.</li></ul> |  |
| <p><b>6. Stakeholder Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Massachusetts developed their state plan in conjunction with a myriad of stakeholders and took much of that feedback into consideration for plan development.</li><li>The state should consider articulating in more detail their plan for continuous improvement and how they intend to continue to make sure all stakeholder voices are heard in that process.</li><li>Massachusetts could move to excellent by elaborating on their plans to proactively engage stakeholders in implementation, including the development and execution of local needs assessments, improvement plans and evaluation and refinement efforts.</li></ul>   | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br/><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p> |
| <p><b>7. Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The state's Rethinking Discipline initiative is one that Massachusetts is using to reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom.</li><li>Massachusetts has an opportunity to expand this initiative across the state in addition to considering an accountability indicator that measures discipline.</li><li>Massachusetts could move to excellent by aligning positive discipline supports, requirements and resources with the needs assessments and improvement efforts at identified schools, incorporating comprehensive support and improvement efforts to positive discipline interventions and incorporating positive discipline in their examination, measurement and initiatives to improve school climate and culture.</li></ul>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br/><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p> |
| <p><b>8. Equitable Access to Early Childhood Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Massachusetts' plan articulated a use of Title I funds to create and expand early childhood learning opportunities.</li><li>In addition, the state articulated a use of Title II funds for professional development for early learning capacity building.</li></ul>   | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p> |



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| <p><b>9. Equitable Implementation of College and Career Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts has an indicator in their accountability system called “successful completion of broad and challenging coursework” that includes credit for AP, IB, honors, dual enrollment and other challenging coursework.</li> <li>Massachusetts also historically partners with districts to leverage federal funds to subsidize the cost of AP exams for low-income students.</li> <li>Massachusetts lowers summative performance for less than 95% participation on assessments.</li> </ul>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>10. Out of School Time Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts articulates the use of Title IV funds for this purpose, especially in the case of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers. MA should also consider adding how they could leverage Title I in their state plan for this purpose.</li> </ul>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>11. Equitable Access to High Quality Curricula</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts has robust science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) programming including newly adopted STEM standards (2016), and providing credit-bearing college coursework and academic supports to those who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education.</li> <li>The state report card will include school climate surveys and CTE enrollment, while MA explicitly says it will support districts in their use of Title IV for CTE.</li> <li>The state also has robust social-emotional learning (SEL) programming including participation in the Collaborating States Initiative facilitated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).</li> <li>Massachusetts has linked SEL with its accountability system by requiring it as a strategy to improve identified schools and supporting districts with requirements in plans, implementation guidance, TA, monitoring and professional development.</li> <li>Massachusetts explicitly says it will use state level Title IV funds to support efforts to advance SEL and support districts and schools.</li> </ul> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>12. Clear Reporting and Transparent Data Systems That Are Easy to Understand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts is using a six-tier rating system, based on 1-100 index.</li> <li>The state has various tools for reporting including the District Action and Research Tools, Resource Allocation and District Action Reports, and Educator Preparation Profiles.</li> <li>Massachusetts should consider providing more details about the state’s intended report card and how parents and other stakeholders intend to use it. For instance, Massachusetts discusses how it will expand the per pupil spending data already being collected statewide this year, but it is unclear whether they will be publicly available or connected to the report card.</li> </ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
| <p><b>Overall Rating</b></p>   | <p><b>Sufficient</b></p>  |