National Urban League

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.

State: Pennsylvania

Plan Approved: January 12, 2018; Link to full text can be found here.

Equity Indicators	NUL Score
1. Goals and Indicators • The Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) proposed long-term goal is to reduce the percentage of non-proficient students by half by the 2029-30 school year, which applies all students and all subgroups of students. • The state is using chronic absenteeism and a career readiness indicator as their School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) accountability indicators. • Pennsylvania's inclusion of chronic absenteeism, as one of the state's accountability indicators for annual meaningful differentiation under ESSA, will be defined to include both excused and unexcused absences, such as those that result from out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. This is a promising approach to breaking the school to prison pipeline.	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
2. Subgroup Performance • The PDE uses subgroup performance to identify schools for "targeted support and improvement" (TSI); however, it does not otherwise rate schools. Instead of adopting a summative rating, PDE uses a dashboard to report data on student success. Doing so places the PDE at risk for obscuring or confusing student subgroup performance in its reporting • While Pennsylvania is making progress for purposes of federal accountability reporting by reducing its n-size from 40 to 20, it should consider lowering the n-size to 10 so that more subgroups of students can be counted at each school.	☐ Excellent ☒ Sufficient ☐ Poor
3. Supports & Interventions for Struggling Schools • The definition PDE uses to identify schools for "targeted support and improvement (TSI)" is not meaningfully different than the one used to identify schools needing "additional targeted support and improvement" (ATS) except that TSI uses at least two years of data and ATS uses three. • The plan is overly vague about how schools will exit from support status and is not clear how this will be different from efforts of the past.	☐ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☒ Poor
4. Resource Equity • The PDE's Future Ready PA index provides useful data disaggregated by student subgroups on the number of high school students participating in advanced coursework, as well as the number of students earning industry-recognized credentials and postsecondary outcomes, among other measures. • The PDE describes how it will support LEAs in identifying resource inequities and/or funding gaps as required for school improvement under ESSA. • However, it makes no mention of how it intends to use set asides to address resource inequities nor how it will report per-pupil expenditures as required by law.	☐ Excellent ☒ Sufficient ☐ Poor
5. Educator Equity • The PDE is working to include culturally responsive and trauma informed concepts and competencies in their professional development programs and resources available for Pennsylvania educators. Implementation of these resources will begin in the 2018-19	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor

school year, and is expected to reach at least 2,000 educators and administrators yearly. We look forward to an update from the state in the 2019-2020 school year.

- The PDE's plan describes efforts to enhance the quality and diversity of the commonwealth's educator pipeline, including "exploring how alternate pathways can serve as sources for diverse teacher candidates, teacher and principal residency programs as well as 'grow your own' models, among other strategies." PDE is working with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh among other advocacy groups to identify research-based strategies to support the educator leader pipeline under ESSA.
- The PDE is working to finalize a new definition for "effective teachers" and to update its 2015 Teacher Equity Plan.

6. Stakeholder Engagement • The PDE's plan describes the state's efforts to meaningfully engage with parents, families, and communities including civil rights organizations such as the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Urban League of Philadelphia, the Shenango Valley Urban League and other community-based organizations representing underserved communities. • The state outlines a plan for continuous improvement and engagement during implementation.	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
7. Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline • The PDE plans to define the chronic absenteeism accountability indicator to include both excused and unexcused absences, such as those that result from out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. This is a promising approach to breaking the school to prison pipeline as measuring and holding schools accountable for these discipline rates will help to reduce the use of exclusionary disciplinary practices. • The PDE's plan describes efforts to reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom including through Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the Student Access Program and a Bullying Prevention Toolkit. • The PDE is also working to embed concepts of equity, culturally responsive instruction, and trauma-informed discipline and response into its professional development offerings.	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
8. Equitable Access to Early Childhood Learning • The PDE's plan adopts flexibility given under ESSA to use Title I dollars for the purpose of expanding equitable access to early childhood education. • The PDE's plan also adopts flexibility to use Title II funds to support effective instruction for early childhood education.	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
9. Equitable Implementation of College and Career Standards • Pennsylvania has identified Career Ready Benchmarks as one of its ESSA SQSS indicators, which tracks the number of high school students earning industry recognized credentials and postsecondary credits. • The state plan's "Career Readiness" indicator examines the percentage of students in grade 11 who satisfy state-mandated "Career Education and Work" (CEW) Academic Standards, as measured by implementation of an individualized career plan (through ongoing development of a career portfolio) and participation in career preparation activities aligned to the CEW standards. • School-level assessment participation rates will be included in the state's annual reports and schools with participation below 95% will be required to submit an improvement plan.	☒ Excellent ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor

10. Out of School Time Learning • The PDE's plan strongly encourages LEAs to consider using Title IV, Part A and funds from other programs, such as Title I, Part A, Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers), and Title IV, Part F funds (Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community School Programs), to develop and implement the Community Schools Framework.	☒ <mark>Excellent</mark> ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
11. Equitable Access to High Quality Curricula • The PDE's plan describes efforts to expand Social and Emotional Learning including through a state initiative and reporting of school climate data to inform future curricula development. • The PDE describes efforts to prioritize federal funding to enhance equitable access to a high quality education that includes career and technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math (STEAM) education.	☒ <mark>Excellent</mark> ☐ Sufficient ☐ Poor
12. Clear Reporting and Transparent Data Systems That Are Easy to Understand • The PDE publicly reports data on all elements of the state's school accountability and improvement system through a dashboard called the Future Ready PA Index. • The PDE should adopt a summative rating system as a part of its plan for continuous improvement in addition to a dashboard of data to explain student success and school quality metrics to parents, teachers and communities in a clear and transparent way.	☐ Excellent ☒ <mark>Sufficient</mark> ☐ Poor
Overall Rating	**Sufficient**