



JUMPSTART ESSA

A guide for State Departments of Education

The power to genuinely shift the educational landscape is now in SDE hands.

The Power & Potential of ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) creates a real opportunity to shift the educational landscape in positive ways for all learners.

State Departments of Education (SDEs) now have more flexibility to design locally responsive and innovative support, assessment, evaluation, and accountability systems.

The time is now to gear up for three big ESSA challenges.

Three Challenges for SDEs

With that opportunity come three big challenges:

1. A proven way for districts to lift the performance of struggling schools.
2. A school rating system that is fair and valid, simple but not simplistic.
3. Crystal clear assessment with a synthesis of different measures, but that gives clear, trackable progress rather than a confusing dashboard of metrics.

No need to go it alone; put The Learner First's global experience to work.

Partner with The Learner First

These challenges are new territory for SDEs; most simply don't have the in-house capacity to make such major changes happen in a short timeframe.

Take these three challenges off your To Do List and into capable hands. The Learner First has global experience in whole-system change and a proven track record in multiple states, succeeding with precisely the challenges ESSA raises.

Tap into a practical, proven methodology for whole-system lift.

#1. Lift Struggling Schools

Get a jump start on whole-system lift. The Learner First has a proven system to help SDEs:

- a. Identify the where, who, and why of the struggling subgroups in your state.
- b. Help districts pinpoint where to start, with a Rapid Evaluative Snapshot.
- c. Coach state, district, and school leaders in a systematic methodology to design locally responsive, evidence-based approaches to accelerate struggling subgroups.

#2. A School Rating System that Measures what Matters

Pool local expertise to define what a “good school” really looks like in your state.

States are required to “meaningfully differentiate” on an annual basis the effectiveness of its public schools. Existing school report card systems tend to [invalidly] reward schools lucky enough to be located in high socioeconomic zones.

Student growth methodologies such as Value Added Modeling are based on test scores alone (and therefore not in alignment with ESSA). They have also been successfully challenged in court.

But there is such a thing as school quality and performance. Define it together.

The Learner First can help SDEs to:

- a. Work with local stakeholders to define what school and system quality looks like for the learners in your state.
- b. Create a valid, evidence-based, nuanced system for meaningfully differentiating the effectiveness of schools in meeting the needs of all learners.

#3. Rich Metrics to Focus the Efforts

What gets measured gets focused on.

Your assessment system will make or break your entire system change efforts.

Under ESSA, states must adopt “challenging” academic standards in reading, math, and science. States are required to use multiple indicators to gauge student, school, and system success. There is a right way and a wrong way to do this.

The Learner First can help SDEs to:

- a. Work with local stakeholders to devise challenging academic standards that are both nationally and globally relevant and locally responsive.
- b. Create a comprehensive Authentic Mixed Method Assessment (AMMA) system for the state that allows districts to select the constellation of evidence that is right for them, while providing a broad shared language for state academic standards.
- c. Provide an innovative, easy-to-use system for tracking student and system success using AMMA for state standards.
- d. Provide clear and simple results reporting, disaggregated by subgroup.

The magic is not in multiple indicators, but in authentic, rich, synthesized metrics.

HERE’S THE KEY: Student achievement should be a synthesis of multiple pieces of evidence, not multiple indicators left disaggregated. This is the real power and potential behind the intent of ESSA. Not sure how? The Learner First has you covered.

For more information

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