

# THE EQUITY SCORECARD – AUGUST UPDATE

## An Initial Review of New York State’s Revised ESSA Plan

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity to advance equity by defining what it means to be a successful school, setting clear expectations that schools must raise achievement for all of their students — not just some, and helping schools and school districts by targeting attention, resources, and support to the places where students are struggling. This is a critical moment for the future of accountability and school support and improvement in New York.

Our coalition’s initial review of the revised state ESSA plan follows.

### Overall Rating: **POSITIVE STEPS, BUT STILL NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**

We believe that there are several positive elements in the plan — including a strong focus on academics, a commitment to empowering parents, a new emphasis on college and career readiness, attention to chronic absenteeism, and a path to holding schools accountable for reducing suspensions. However, before New York’s plan is finalized in September, we seek improvements in important areas, including:

1. Every school should have an overall school rating to provide transparency to parents.
2. Indicator ratings should maintain consistent expectations for all groups of students.
3. Test participation should be taken more seriously so that every student counts.
4. There should be stronger provisions for schools that are underperforming for historically underserved groups of students.

| Issue                    | Rating | The Bottom Line   |
|--------------------------|--------|---|
| PRIORITIZING ACHIEVEMENT |        | New York’s revised plan shows a commitment to strong academic standards and makes English language arts (ELA) and math proficiency driving factors in identifying schools for support and improvement.  |
|                          |        | However, the revised plan does not do enough to hold schools accountable for assessing all students. As a result, schools may encourage lower-performing students to stay home when state assessments are given – meaning the students most in need of support might not count at all. In addition, the plan would assess certain students with disabilities on below-grade level assessment, which would institutionalize lower expectations for students with disabilities. |
| LONG-TERM GOALS          |        | New York deserves credit for setting consistent “end goals” for <u>all groups of students</u> . The <i>intermediary</i> “long-term” goals – which are the ones that matter for accountability – would improve the trajectory of historically underserved groups of students.  |
| ADDITIONAL INDICATORS    |        | New York wisely <u>limits the total number of accountability indicators</u> while adding three important ones: a <u>high school success index</u> , a measure of chronic absenteeism, and – planned for the accountability system’s second year – an indicator focused on reducing student suspensions.   |



| Issue   | Rating  | The Bottom Line   |
|---|---|---|
| ENGLISH LEARNERS                              |    | The revised plan wisely takes into account initial English proficiency and a measurement of expected growth against actual growth to determine if a student is making sufficient progress toward English proficiency. The state also plans to translate a number of assessments for English learners and provides specific attention to how ELs are supported in schools identified for support.  |
| TRANSPARENCY                                  |    | Without meaningful ratings at the indicator or school level, the revised plan demonstrates a lack of transparency about whether schools are meeting expectations. The revised plan does not include clear signals for parents or schools about how their school is doing overall and for all groups of children, and it communicates different expectations for different groups of students.   |
| IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS FOR SUPPORT & IMPROVEMENT |    | The state's school identification criteria are both too low and different for some groups of students. As a result, the revised plan fails to provide urgency, resources, and support to hundreds of schools with extraordinarily low achievement levels for low-income students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. It also sets far too low a bar for schools to exit improvement status – which could deny schools needed support and assistance.  |
| HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES                  |    | The law is intended to identify traditional high schools for improvement if they have a 4-year graduation rate below 67%, while giving the state flexibility to use an extended 5- or 6-year graduation rate for special circumstances, such as schools that serve newly arrived immigrant students and dropout recovery programs. Instead, New York's revised plan would require even traditional high schools to have a graduation rate under 67% on their 4-, 5- <u>and</u> 6-year graduation rates before being identified – meaning dozens of low-performing traditional high schools would not be identified and receive attention. |
| SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT                            |   | The revised plan includes an emphasis on assessing a school's strengths and needs, focuses on job-embedded ongoing professional development, and calls for resource audits that examine the use of time, space, and staff. In an important improvement, the revised plan ensures that parents and the community are involved in all steps of the process in meaningful ways and commits to reject plans that do not demonstrate sufficient engagement.  |
|   |  | The revised plan does not commit to providing earlier notification to schools that are identified for improvement, so that they have adequate time for planning. It also does not do enough to ensure that improvement funds will be allocated and invested better than is currently the case. Our <a href="#">fact sheet</a> provides the coalition's specific recommendations.  |
| RESOURCE EQUITY                               |  | The revised plan sets out a process of annual resource allocation reviews that incorporate fiscal, human resource, opportunity to learn, and other data. Data would be published and used in needs assessments.   |
|   |  | The revised plan does not indicate how New York will establish a consistent definition of school-level expenditures and how many school districts will be required to undergo a review of resource allocations.   |
| EDUCATOR EQUITY                               |  | The state will publish an annual district-level report examining equitable access to effective teachers and help districts to use the data. The revised plan also indicates an ongoing commitment to teacher leadership through career ladders. The revised plan includes some steps to ensure that students in low-performing schools have access to the most effective educators.   |

### Guide to the Responses



Heading in the right direction



Heading in the wrong direction

For additional information, please see the coalition's [background memo](#) and Closer Look [fact sheets](#).

Learn more at [www.EquityInEdNY.org](http://www.EquityInEdNY.org).