



Since the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) became law in 2015, states across the country have been using the flexibility and authority the law offers to design plans that ensure a quality education for all kids.

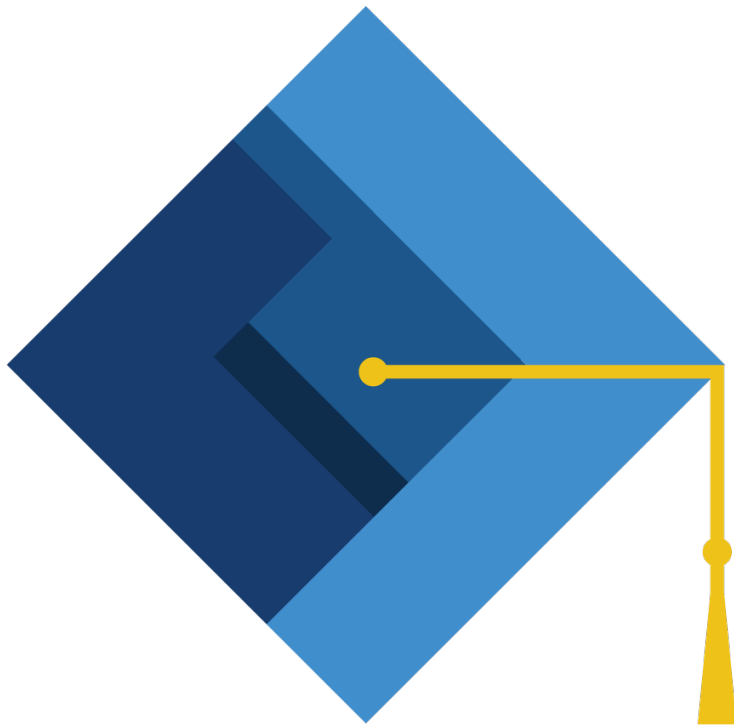
This week, we highlight states' work to improve their education systems in innovative ways through one piece of the puzzle, ESSA.

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We are pleased to welcome the National Governors Association (NGA) as a lead partner in the States Leading Campaign!

Visit StatesLeading.org and follow [#StatesLeading](https://twitter.com/StatesLeading) on social media to learn more and join the conversation.

State Spotlights



OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

— CHAMPION EXCELLENCE —

Oklahoma's Champions of Excellence program will invest in schools seeking to advance student achievement by addressing well-rounded education, safe and healthy schools, and effective use of technology.

This program will establish rubrics for Programs of Excellence that will supplement the existing accountability system by providing schools the option to celebrate aspects of their school programs. Competitive grants will be awarded to programs that support access to one or more of six focus areas: fine arts, mathematics, science, social studies and civics, world language, and safe and healthy schools.

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Louisiana approved 19 local improvement plans to transform underperforming schools into productive learning environments. These plans are tailored to each community's needs and align with the state's vision for school improvement.

State Superintendent John White calls these plans an "encouraging milestone for those who have hope for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)."

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ESSA is, in the words of *The Wall Street Journal*, “the biggest devolution of federal power in a quarter-century.”

States are stepping up— not only by meeting ESSA requirements but, in many cases, moving beyond them to realize a better vision of education for all students.

Kristen J. Amundson, CEO of NASBE, and Carissa Moffat Miller, Executive Director of CCSSO, explain how **Rhode Island, Georgia, DC, Louisiana**, and other states are making a difference in equitable education.

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Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.

Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, wrote in *Education Week* about her state's ESSA plan - and some of the innovative work the state is doing outside of its ESSA plan.

Baesler describes a program in **North Dakota** created to give schools greater control over practices, allowing them to focus on personalized learning, social-emotional skills, college and career readiness, and training for educators to carry out this work.

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Must Read

ESSA has presented an opportunity for states to rethink their education systems, including how they classify and improve school performance.

But beyond accountability, ESSA plans encourage states to highlight a variety of policies and programs to improve conditions for student learning, particularly around school climate.

Samantha Batel explores how states like **Texas, New Hampshire, and Ohio** have incorporated school climate initiatives into their ESSA plans.

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Tools & Resources



States are hard at work implementing their plans to ensure equitable education for all children.

This issue of NASBE's award-winning journal, *The State Education Standard*, looks at ways states can build upon ESSA plans to ensure all students receive an excellent education.

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The Education Commission of the States' ESSA Thinkers Meeting captured big-picture ideas state leaders can utilize throughout their work to improve education in their state. This special report summarizes those ideas, state examples, and additional ESSA resources.

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Need a quick guide to ESSA? This Education Commission of the States' report breaks down the top issues facing education leaders and policymakers as they prepare to implement this new law.

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We want to hear from you!

Send your state's stories or organization's resources to communications@ccsso.org



The States Leading campaign celebrates the progress states are making toward providing equitable education for all students through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and innovative policies in other key areas of education, such as early childhood education, teacher preparation, and career readiness, among others.

Thank you to our proud partners:

The Council of Chief State School Officers

Education Commission of the States

The National Association of State Boards of Education

National Conference of State Legislatures

National Governors Association

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