

## **Communicating the Every Student Succeeds Act: Digital Communications Toolkit**

The following guide is designed to provide an overview of tip and strategies for expanding your state's digital communications efforts around the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

In this toolkit, you'll find:

- [Digital Guidance](#) on how to most effectively use your state's digital platforms to communicate important information on ESSA
- [Sample Website Copy](#) and suggested content for you to incorporate into your SEA website when communicating on ESSA
- [Sample Social Content](#) for Twitter and Facebook, along with appropriately-sized photos you can use for both platforms

## Communicating The Every Student Succeeds Act: *Digital Guidance*

Digital communications have greatly expanded how SEAs can reach stakeholders with important information on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and opportunities for involvement. Traditional media is no longer the primary vehicle; SEAs can now leverage their website, social media and other tools to reach stakeholders on their laptops or hand-held devices. We've identified a few key strategies that will help strengthen your communication efforts. This document also contains sample language you can use on your state website and sample social media content, all of which can be used as is, or tailored to be more specific to the unique needs of your state.

### 1. Put ESSA Front & Center

When stakeholders look at your SEA website, what do they see? Finding ESSA information shouldn't be a scavenger hunt. The longer stakeholders search for information, the more likely they are to leave your site and get their information elsewhere. **Prominently display a link to your ESSA page on your website homepage so stakeholders can quickly access key information.** Your state ESSA pages should also explain the new law, your state timeline and opportunities for involvement. It's important to remember that stakeholders likely will not be as familiar as you are with the law, so limit the use of jargon and keep text accessible to everyone. *(See page 4 for suggested website content)*

**State Spotlight:** The [New Jersey Department of Education](#) includes a link to their state ESSA page as a rotating header on their website.

### 2. Take Advantage of #ESSAHashtags

Hashtags are a great way to continue the ESSA conversation on Twitter and Facebook. This not only makes it easier for people to search for announcements on social media, but it also helps spread the conversation to new audiences. Consider #ESSAinYOURSTATE or a hashtag that reflects your state vision. *(See page 7 for suggested social media content)*

**State Spotlight:** [Georgia](#) uses the hashtag #ESSAinGA to label ESSA announcements and conversations, and the hashtag #ESSAChatGA for Twitter chats on ESSA, where SEA staff can answer stakeholder questions.

### 3. Be Transparent

The more you invite stakeholders into the process, the more likely they are to be supportive of education policies. Between your SEA website and social media accounts, there are ample opportunities to invite the public into decision-making. In addition to advertising upcoming opportunities for stakeholder engagement, many states have posted agendas and minutes from ESSA meetings on their websites, used Twitter to provide real-time updates, live-streamed the meetings so those who could not attend can watch, and/or posted audio and/or recordings of the events. States have also posted timelines of their state ESSA process so that stakeholders are up-to-date on when decisions will be made, when meetings will be held, and when they can engage.

**State Spotlights:** The Oregon Department of Education posts agendas, presentations and notes from [Advisory Committee](#) and [Work Group](#) meetings and [community forums](#).

The [Idaho](#) State Department of Education has a detailed timeline for its ESSA process linked on their ESSA page for stakeholders.

Once your state's draft plan has been released, be sure to release annotated versions of your plan to share how your state has incorporated feedback into its draft plan.

#### 4. Think Outside of the Box

Education policy can be dense, but your communication efforts don't have to be. There are many ways to create engaging content. Through social media, you can host a

Facebook Live session, post video messages from your state chief or stakeholders and share photos from events. In addition to hosting webinars, consider placing a recording on your website for those unable to attend. Routine e-newsletters can also keep stakeholders updated on the process and on upcoming opportunities for engagement, and a designated ESSA email addresses can give stakeholders a way to submit input and have their questions answered.

**State Spotlights:** [Louisiana](#) posted a video of their statewide ESSA meeting to their YouTube page so those who missed the meeting could stay informed.

## Website Copy

### Homepage

A link to more information on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) should be prominently placed on your website homepage. There are many ways to fit ESSA into the existing design of your homepage, such as adding buttons, clickable images or a new drop down menu item. Whatever option you choose, it is important for the route to information on ESSA be clearly marked and easy for visitors to find. Some examples include:

- [Kentucky](#) includes a graphic on its sidebar, linking to its ESSA page.
- [New Jersey](#) highlights ESSA as one of their scrolling headers.
- [Montana](#) linked its ESSA page as a “Hot Topic.”

#### Kentucky



#### New Jersey



#### Montana

### Current Events



### Your ESSA Page

This is your space to showcase all of the great work your state is doing around ESSA. Like with ESSA state plans, no two state websites will be the same, but there are common elements you can include to help stakeholders stay informed and involved. If you don't already have a webpage dedicated to ESSA in your state, the CCSSO customizable [one-pager](#) is a great starting point for content. Here are some key points from the one-pager that your state can customize for the website.

#### A brief, user-friendly introduction to the new law.

- **The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** is a bipartisan education policy that guides how our state, local districts and schools work to support the needs of all of our students.

#### A high-level overview of ESSA.

- **ESSA brings new responsibilities for states in k-12 education policy.** States have greater flexibility and authority in decision-making around accountability, funding, school improvement, grant-making systems and other key policy areas.
- ESSA provides an opportunity for states to further engage stakeholder groups — including parents, educators and community members — in the planning and implementation process.
- [STATE] will [Insert key areas of policy revision under ESSA or topline initiatives your state is taking to adapt to ESSA].

### **A timeline of state ESSA activities.**

- **[Our state]’s ESSA Timeline:**
  - **2016-17:** Programs as authorized under NCLB will remain in effect for the 2016-17 school year. School funding will be allocated under NCLB rules.
  - **[Date – Date]:** Parents, educators and all other community members are encouraged to provide feedback on ESSA planning through [Insert opportunities for stakeholder engagement, e.g., town halls, online forms; be specific with upcoming dates].
  - **[Date]:** [State] will release draft ESSA plan based on community input.
  - **[Date]:** Parents, educators and community members will be able to provide feedback on the draft plan [Insert opportunities for feedback, e.g., through website, board meetings].
  - **[Date]:** Board of Education meeting to approve ESSA plan.
  - **[Date]:** [State] plan submit to U.S. Department of Education (USED).
  - **Beginning of 2017 School Year:** [State] will fully implement ESSA for 2017-18 schoolyear.

### **Include Opportunities for Involvement.**

One of the unique features of ESSA is its emphasis on stakeholder engagement. Use your website as a hub to keep stakeholders informed on the ESSA process, and opportunities for feedback.

These could include, but are not limited to:

- A list of upcoming stakeholder meetings
- Link to an online survey
- Minutes or recordings from previous meetings
- Summary of input that has been received to date and how it has been used
- A state-specific email address for stakeholders to use in order to ask questions
- Newsletter subscription
- A list of committee members or stakeholder representation

Below are a few examples from your peers:

**Ohio:** [Ohio’s ESSA homepage](#) includes several touch points for stakeholders to get informed and involved. These included a sidebar on opportunities to keep the conversation going, a list of webinar recordings and a pop-up subscription for email updates.

**Ohio** | Department of Education | Sign up for Email Updates 

Sign up for our Education Updates

Email Address

**SUBSCRIBE**

No Thanks Remind Me Later

**THE CONVERSATION GOING.**

- » Share with your network #ESSAOhio
- » Share your ideas: [essa@education.ohio.gov](mailto:essa@education.ohio.gov)
- »  Sign up to Receive Updates (select **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** from the dropdown list)

**WEBINARS**

Links of all webinars are available below for viewing

num subgroup (N) size for accountability purposes   <a href="#">Watch the webinar</a>   <a href="#">Topic Discussion Guide</a>	<b>July 27   1:30 p.m.</b>
Assessments using nationally-recognized high school assessments (SAT)   <a href="#">Watch the webinar</a>   <a href="#">Topic Discussion Guide</a>	<b>Aug. 3   3:30 p.m.</b>
academic/quality report card indicator   <a href="#">Watch the webinar</a>   <a href="#">Topic Discussion Guide</a>	<b>Aug. 10   9:30 a.m.</b>

**Delaware:** Delaware devotes an entire [webpage](#) to stakeholder involvement. The page highlights the state’s ESSA email address, opportunities for involvement and notes from previous discussions.

**Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement**

**GET INVOLVED!**

State Secretary of Education Steven H. Godowsky is inviting stakeholders from across the state to discuss ESSA implementation and provide us with input on issues such as how the state uses federal education dollars to help ensure that all students have equitable access to a high-quality education. These forms are one way in which we are soliciting feedback to inform our state plan.

To share your questions and comments about the ESSA, please email: [ESSAStatePlan@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:ESSAStatePlan@doe.k12.de.us)

**Community Conversations**

Thank you to those who attended our September Community Conversations. Round 2 Community Conversations will be facilitated to collect feedback on the first draft of our ESSA state plan.

**Round 2**

- November 16, 2016: 6:00p, Wilmington [Register here!](#)
- November 21, 2016: 6:00p, Cape Henlopen [Register here!](#)
- November 29, 2016: 6:00p, Seaford [Register here!](#)
- December 1, 2016: 6:00p, Dover [Register here!](#)

**Community Conversations**

**Discussion Groups**

The department will engage representatives of stakeholder groups in ESSA discussion groups. Stakeholder groups nominated participants for these topical discussion groups. The first group will focus discussions on technical topics related to **measures of school success and public reporting (measures)**. The second group will focus discussions on provisions for **student and school supports (supports)**. The discussion groups will provide information to the department and the Advisory group created by Executive Order 62.

Group membership: [Measures](#) [Supports](#)

Discussion group meetings will take place from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Collette Education Resource Center in Dover on the following dates:

- October 5 - [Meeting Minutes](#)
- October 10 - [Measures Mtg Minutes](#)
- October 10 - [Supports Mtg Minutes](#)

**Consider adding links to additional ESSA resources.**

Beyond the SEA website, many state-based and national advocacy groups have resources on ESSA that can be helpful for parents and community members. This could include your State Board of Education,

local PTA, civil rights groups, or other in-state coalitions. Below are a few CCSSO favorites that you can add to your state's webpage.

For more information on ESSA, check-out these helpful links:

- [The Council of Chief state School Officers' ESSA Resource Page](#)
- [PTA Parent FAQ \(English\)](#)
- [PTA Parent FAQ \(Spanish\)](#)
- [The White House's ESSA fact sheet](#)
- [National Council of La Raza ESSA Factsheet](#)
- [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Accountability Primers](#)

## **Sample Social Media Content**

Social media is a great tool for reaching stakeholders – especially because it allows for posts to be easily shared.

**Twitter** is ideal for quick updates (140 characters or less) and linkable content. You can also embed photos and short video clips on Twitter. Be sure to include hashtags, which connect your post with larger conversations on Twitter and helps spread content among users.

**Facebook** does not have a character limit for posts, and is therefore a good place to share more information, such as quotes from participants at stakeholder meetings, longer video clips or photos. While some users include hashtags, they're frequently not used for Facebook searches.

On both platforms, users are looking for **compelling content**.

**Photos and videos increase the likelihood that users will interact with your content** – especially photos of cute kids! We've included a few photos below — sized for both Twitter and Facebook — that you can post, along with sample tweets. Be sure to customize the hashtags and language as needed for your state.

### **Twitter**

**Note:** Please see photo files for sized images for Twitter.

**Tweet One:** Help bring learning to life for all students. Share your ideas. <http://StateESSAWebsite.us>  
#ESSAinSTATE



**Post Two:** Engage now on #ESSAinSTATE to help all kids succeed. Learn more at <http://StateESSAWebsite.us>



**Tweet Three:** Parents, educators, community members - your voice matters in [STATE]'s ESSA plan. Learn more: <http://StateESSAWebsite.us> #ESSAinSTATE



## Facebook

**Note:** Please see photo files for sized images for Facebook.

**Post One:** Want to help bring learning to life for all students? Share your feedback on the Every Student Succeeds Act to help [STATE] make sure that all of our students get a high-quality education that prepares them for success after high school. #ESSAinSTATE

Click here to submit your thoughts: <http://StateESSAWebsite.us>



**Post Two:** You can help all kids have a brighter future. Share your ideas for improving education in our state. #ESSAinSTATE <http://StateESSAWebsite.us>



**Post three:** Whether you're a parent, educator or community member, we all have a responsibility to the students of our community to make sure they're getting the best education possible.

Learn more about the new Every Student Succeeds Act and share what you think our students need to succeed. #ESSAinSTATE <http://StateESSAWebsite.us>

