



**Engaging Around State
Accountability Systems:**

***How to Prepare for and Support the
Release of State Accountability Decisions***

June 2018



The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

Engaging Around State Accountability Systems:

How to Prepare for and Support the Release of State Accountability Decisions

COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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We are grateful to our partners at [Education First](#) for their help in developing this guide.

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Overview

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 provides each state with the opportunity to develop or refine their own state-specific strategic vision for education. ESSA provides education leaders and stakeholders the opportunity to reimagine their local systems; in particular, the law provides flexibility for states to develop their own accountability systems that incorporate measures of student success that go well beyond test scores.

This flexibility means that each state's accountability system under ESSA will be unique. As a result, each state education agency (SEA) will need a proactive communications strategy to build **awareness of** and **support for** the system itself, as well as **understanding of** what the accountability data means for each school and the students in that school.

This guide provides an overview of statewide accountability system options and school identification requirements under ESSA. This document also includes tools to help inform communication and engagement efforts in the months leading up to and immediately following the release of schoolwide accountability determinations, such as:

- Clear details about the different types of accountability systems and reports.
- Suggested talking points.
- Suggested rollout strategy components.
- Sample timeline and action plan.

Talking Points:

Why does accountability matter?



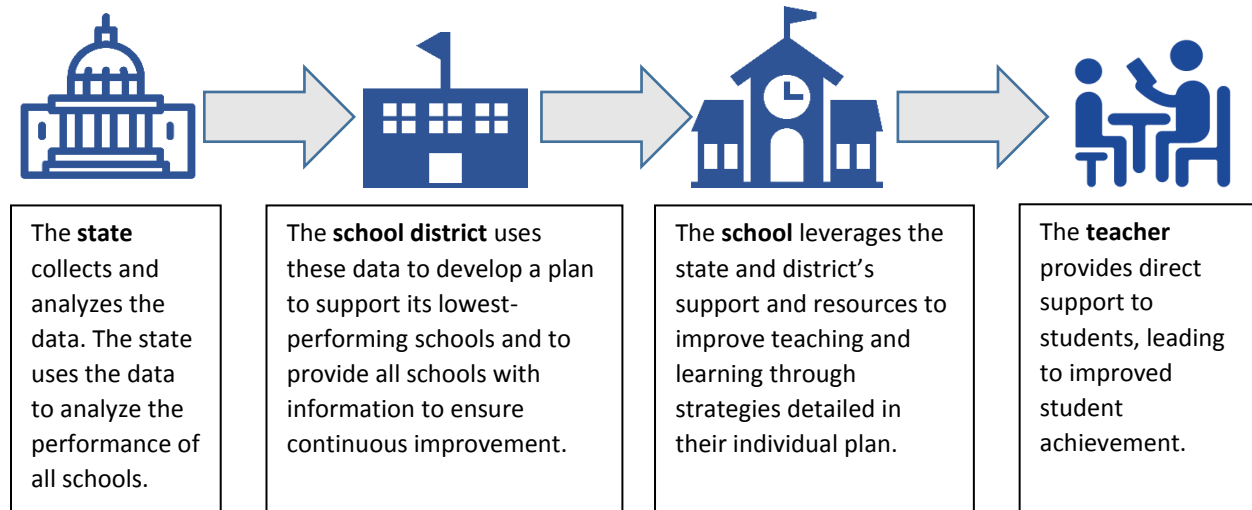
- *Every element of our education system, including our expectations for students, how we understand if students are meeting those expectations, and how we are working with and supporting teachers and leaders, work toward the goal of ensuring all students are prepared for success after high school. Accountability is one element of that system.*
- *Accountability systems are intended to help us focus on what matters most, give us a better understanding what is working well, and determine where we need to make improvements so we can help all students succeed.*
- *Just as state standards and assessments set expectations for what students should know and be able to do, state accountability systems set expectations for school performance.*
- *Accountability ratings make it possible to compare a school or district to others in the state.*
- *Statewide accountability systems set out goals for achievement or growth for all schools to reach, across race, income and zip code.*

What is an accountability system? Why is it important?

Statewide accountability systems are designed to celebrate success and identify areas where additional support is needed, with the goal of increasing achievement for all students. A common misunderstanding is that accountability systems are intended to be punitive, but that is not the case. Just as state standards and assessments set expectations for what students should know and be able to do, state accountability systems set expectations for school performance. These systems allow each state to:

- Articulate their goals for student achievement, growth and success;
- Collect, analyze, and report on school performance on a regular basis;
- Identify high-performing or rapidly improving schools for recognition and low-performing schools for support; and
- Direct additional support and assistance to schools identified for continued low performance.

Accountability and reporting systems provide valuable data to spur action at all levels:



ESSA provides parameters for statewide accountability systems and the identification of low-performing schools and allows states to adjust these measures and set goals based on their local context. See Appendix G for additional information about ESSA's accountability requirements.

Communications, Engagement and Rollout

Statewide accountability decisions and annual school determinations present states with a communications challenge: Accountability systems are complex and can be difficult to understand. If results are not rolled out and messaged clearly and carefully, school identifications and ratings can lead to confusion, misinformation and uncertainty.

This calls for a thoughtful, proactive approach, similar to how states prepared stakeholders for new assessment results after transitioning to more rigorous state assessments in prior years. Stakeholders in states that establish and implement a strategic communications and engagement rollout plan well in advance of the release of the actual ratings will be more likely to understand what the ratings mean and are less likely to misinterpret the results.

High level talking points can be found throughout this document:



1. *Why does accountability matter?* (See page 4)
2. *What do accountability determinations mean for a school?* (See page 6)
3. *What is the impact of an accountability determination?* (See pages 14 and 17)
4. *Why are some schools identified for improvement?* (See page 20)

This guide builds on previous resources published by CCSSO about stakeholder engagement, including [Let's Get this Conversation Started](#), [Let's Keep this Conversation Going](#), and [Let's Continue this Conversation](#). These documents articulate 10 key principles that can be applied to any stakeholder engagement and communications effort. See Appendix D for questions for consideration and things to remember when applying these principles to the release of accountability determinations:



States should begin their planning well in advance of the accountability rollout by developing and using clear messages to build understanding around: (1) why accountability matters; (2) what accountability determinations mean for a school; (3) the impact of accountability determinations (based on the type of system the state uses). Proactive communication in advance of the release will reinforce the state's ongoing interest in collaboration with state and local leaders to improve student outcomes.

Parents, advocates, educators, members of the media, and state and local elected officials are likely to have questions when accountability determinations are released and schools are identified for recognition and support.

Talking Points:

What do accountability determinations mean for a school?



- *Accountability determinations are a method to convey a broad picture of school performance over time, incorporating outcomes for all students. They are designed to provide highlight each school's strengths and areas where they can improve.*
- *Schools that are identified for support did not achieve one or more of the expectations set in the accountability system. These schools will receive additional support from the state and are eligible for federal funds to help them improve.*
- *Parents and community members of schools that are identified will have the opportunity to participate in the development of an improvement plan.*
- *Schools that are not identified deserve credit for their accomplishments, and the lessons they have learned need to be shared so other schools can benefit.*

Some of the questions¹ SEAs should be prepared to answer include:

- How did the state decide to use this system? Were stakeholders involved in designing the system?
- What does this rating or these measures mean for my school or my child?
- On what are these ratings or measures based in addition to test scores?
- Do the ratings mean some schools are “good” and others are “bad?”
- If my school is identified for support or interventions, what will happen to it?
- What are my options for my student?
- If my school is highlighted for “good” performance, will it receive additional funding? How does that recognition benefit my school?
- What is the state going to do with this data? What actions will the state take to make sure these schools improve?
- What happened to priority and focus schools? How is the new system different?

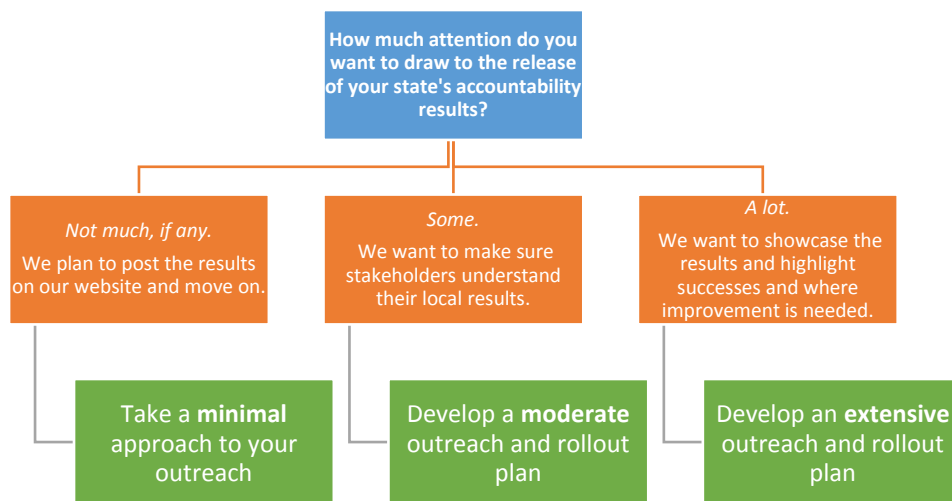
Over the last several months, leading up to each state’s submission of its ESSA plan to the U.S. Department of Education, each state engaged a wide variety of stakeholders to develop its statewide accountability system and school identification requirements. You should be aware of prior engagement efforts in this area and have information about how stakeholder input was used to develop the accountability system and/or ratings as you plan for the release of accountability decisions. We encourage states to work closely with any stakeholders who were involved in the ESSA planning process because they are likely to be the best advocates for the accountability system. They can help ensure accurate information gets out to the public.

¹ *Draft responses to these and other frequently asked questions that states can tailor are included in Appendix A.*

Rolling out Your Results

Each state's accountability results and school improvement decisions will be made publicly available, but it will be up to the state education agency to determine just how proactively to engage stakeholders and the public in the release. This section of the guide is designed to help states determine how to roll out results, in alignment with their overall state strategic vision. This section also includes guidance on different levels of public releases as well as audiences to engage, what to say, and when.

Before the accountability results have even been determined, states should take time to prepare to discuss the system itself and how it is aligned with the state's overall strategic vision. Consider how the accountability system ties into the overall state goals, the state's ESSA plan and the performance and achievement goals that have been set for students.



As planning for the rollout gets underway, states should decide how much attention they want to draw to the release, and whether they should ultimately take a **minimal**, **moderate** or **extensive** approach to their outreach, rollout and follow up.

There are pros and cons to each approach. Taking the **minimal** approach means doing little more than just making the information available online; an **extensive** outreach and rollout plan allows the state to control its own message rather than letting others tell and define the story of what the accountability results really mean.

When deciding what approach to take, consider these questions:

- Who will be your primary audiences? Who will care most about these results and have questions that need to be answered?
- How will stakeholders react to these results, particularly in schools and districts that are identified for additional support?

Keep in mind:



Even in states that take the minimal approach the results may still be communicated extensively, **just by someone else**. Once the results are released, the news media and stakeholder groups may choose to talk about them publicly, whether or not the state chooses to do so.

- What can be done in advance to build understanding around what the results mean?
- What does each stakeholder group need to know? How can we best get them that information in advance?
- How will we use these results to inform ongoing school improvement efforts?
- What other communications issues are likely to arise just before, during or immediately after the rollout of these results that might complicate the message, such as the release of statewide assessment results?
- What can be done proactively to prevent the accountability results from becoming a political issue, especially in states with gubernatorial or other legislative races?

Regardless of the approach states choose, it will be important to start planning early, and to develop a plan that includes pre-release (1–3 months ahead), the actual release and immediate follow-up (week prior to release to the day after release), and post-release (starting the day after release and beyond). The charts below map out potential strategies for each type of approach at every stage; see Appendix C for a template you can use to map out your plan.

Pre-Release Activities (3 months in advance)		
Minimal	Moderate	Extensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List out the details of the accountability system you consider to be most important or that represent the biggest changes from the previous system. • Develop a basic communications plan, including key activities, parties responsible, and timeline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of the portions of the plan that were developed as a result of stakeholder consultation. • Develop a robust communications plan, including key activities, parties responsible, and timeline. • Make a list of stakeholders you want to communicate with about the accountability results and schedule meetings in the weeks leading up to the rollout date. Consider parents, educators, school districts, schools, non-profit organizations, teacher preparation programs, civil rights groups, state legislators, civil rights leaders, community organizations, and the state’s congressional delegation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data to identify results that will result in the most dramatic actions. Develop individual communication and engagement strategies to handle each one. • Work with partners to identify the likely questions stakeholders will have; work with internal staff to develop answers to have available and use for informational materials. • Begin to brainstorm ways the information can be communicated using infographics and/or using video. • Schedule a series of proactive informational meetings with key stakeholder groups. • Add robust social media component to communications plan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and prioritize key messages and talking points for state leaders to use to begin publicly discussing the accountability system and what to expect. • Begin sharing basic information on social media. • Ask district leaders what type of materials would be most helpful to them to support their own communication efforts, and be prepared for negative responses, particularly in districts with schools that will be identified. • Identify validators who can step out and say positive things about the impact of the new accountability system and how the results will lead to improved opportunities for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work internally to ensure all key staff fully understand the process by which the state's accountability system was developed, and how stakeholder input informed its development. • Provide all staff with talking points and have key messages they can use to describe how the system works, all of its components and what supports are offered to schools that are identified. • Identify validators by success area and/or pain point to ensure they are able to promote the most important elements within the results, and that their voices will be heard by critics. • Work with validators to begin planning videos and longer-form communications they can sign, such as OpEds that can be published in regional media.
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Pre-Release Activities (2 months in advance)		
Minimal	Moderate	Extensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide districts with preliminary results to review and confirm. • Develop a page on the state's website to post accountability results and related materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create materials and fact sheets that detail what supports and resources will be made available to schools and districts identified for improvement. • Enhance the page on the state's website where the results will be posted to enable users to compare results from multiple districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to begin to widely disseminate information about the benefits of the new accountability system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly discuss how the goals of your accountability system is aligned to your state's strategic vision. Develop a communications toolkit for districts including talking points, a letter for parents, sharable graphics they can customize, a PowerPoint template with some basic informational slides, and a Q&A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to regularly share information about key elements of the state's accountability system on social media to generate a buzz and build understanding and prepare for the rollout of results. Create and use a social media hashtag; encourage all validators and external partners to use it.
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Pre-Release Activities (1 month in advance)		
Minimal	Moderate	Extensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share final embargoed results with districts. Translate materials into multiple languages. Identify and leverage opportunities to have ambassadors help build support with their members; seek opportunities to speak to their members, have messages posted in their newsletters, etc. Draft a basic press release. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide districts with template PowerPoints, FAQs and other materials to share results with their stakeholders. Develop a series of short videos with explanations about what parents can expect when their child's school is identified for improvement. Draft multiple versions of a detailed press release that includes quotes from regional superintendents. Begin planning public event for day of release. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate the short video series into multiple languages; work with partner organizations to widely disseminate. Set up an email account for stakeholders to use to submit questions that is staffed by someone who can monitor and respond within 24 hours before, during and after release. Add all unique questions and answers to a FAQ posted online that can be regularly updated.

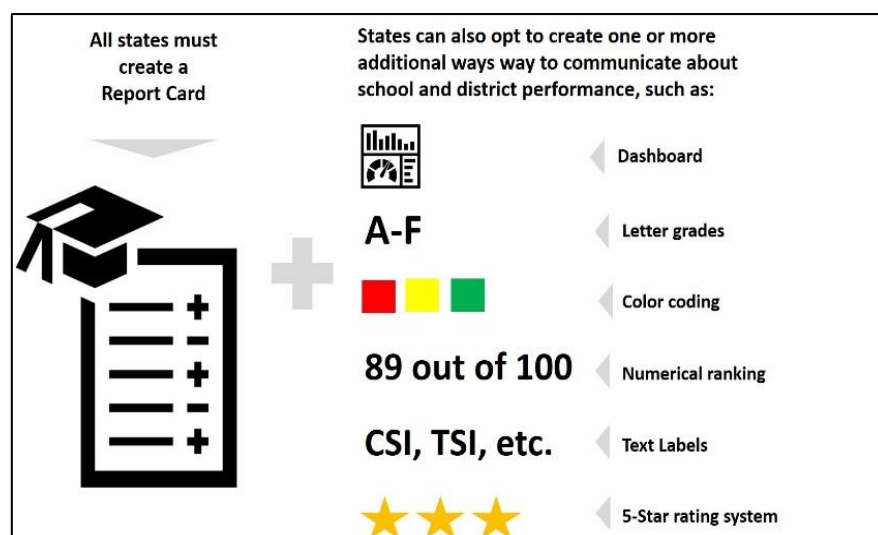
Release Activities (Week prior to day of release)		
Minimal	Moderate	Extensive
Week prior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with key legislators and Governor's staff to review results. Hold stakeholder meetings with key partners. Finalize press release. Day before	Week prior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold an off-the-record briefing with key members of the media to explain the accountability system and answer their questions. Provide materials to local legislators with a summary and explanation of their region's results. 	Week Prior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavily promote and share videos and preview materials on social media. Hold a conference call with superintendents to discuss the release plan and provide them with guidance on their local release plans. Review and update media outreach list.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize website to publish results. <p>Day of release</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post results online. • Post press release summarizing results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize details for press conference. • Schedule a post-release media tour including meetings with regional editorial boards, appearances on local talk shows and the publication of OpEds in local papers. <p>Day before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out media advisory. • Share embargoed results with the media and answer questions; make key state leaders available for comment. • Provide embargoed results and talking points to key stakeholders (i.e., Association and union leaders, etc.). • Share final press release and talking points with superintendents. <p>Day of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a press conference in a district that was identified for support, highlighting the supports that will be provided to that school and district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to legislators and other key partners and validators to encourage them to attend the release day press conference. • Identify local validators to join the Chief on the post-release media tour. <p>Day before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share suggested media plan with local districts; offer support as needed. <p>Day of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Chief available for individual interviews with local and regional media. • Share media event on Facebook Live. • Record and post video of release on website. • Host a live Twitter chat to discuss results.
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Post-Release Activities		
Minimal	Moderate	Extensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post regular updates to the website. • Conduct outreach to high-performing and low-performing schools identified to discuss next steps and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold quarterly meetings with superintendents to discuss feedback, immediate results. • Document changes made in schools identified for improvement in videos and/or narrative case studies that can be released every quarter. • Launch post-release media tour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a series of public forums in districts identified for improvement to discuss outcomes, generate feedback, and share information along the way. • Meet with validators to identify ways they can continue to support the state's accountability system over time. • Schedule visits with the Chief to every school identified for improvement; hold meetings with local media after every visit to discuss the vision for the school and/or district.

Summative and Non-Summative Accountability Systems

Each state has developed a unique statewide accountability system under ESSA that will present information in different ways. Some states will take a non-summative approach and provide “dashboards” to display school performance on a wide variety of indicators; others will opt to combine performance on these indicators to provide schools with a summative or overall rating.



Regardless of whether a state has chosen to take the summative or non-summative approach, each state must use its system to identify the state's lowest performing schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and Additional TSI (see additional information on School Identification on page 19).

While the majority of schools in a state will not be identified for support and improvement, all schools are included in the annual accountability system. Therefore, it is essential that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the information provided by statewide accountability and school identification systems, as well as the limitations of these data. The accountability system “looks backwards” to performance from prior year(s) to guide future planning.

Often, stakeholders assume that these systems are used only to identify schools for support and intervention, but they are also used to recognize high performing or quickly improving schools and should be used by all schools to inform continuous improvement. In general, states have established one of two types of accountability systems:

Don't forget:



ESSA requires annual accountability determinations, but states need only identify schools for CSI every three years.

- **Summative rating systems:** These states provide a rating (e.g., A-F letter grades, five stars, color-coding, index score) or descriptive label for each school.
- **Non-summative, or “dashboard” systems:** these states do not provide an overall, or summative, rating for each school. They use a “dashboard” to report on school performance on each accountability indicator, disaggregated for each student subgroup, and may provide data on other measures. Dashboards may be updated or released separately from state or report cards because those report cards require a broader set of data.

The table in Appendix F provides a list showing which system each state has proposed or adopted.

Please remember that these options are not mutually exclusive—even if a state chooses to provide each school with a summative rating, it will also publish school performance on each indicator on its annual state and local report cards which will allow for stakeholders to look at a school’s performance based on specific indicators or data points. The sections below provide an overview of each type of system, including:

- High level talking points.
- A list of questions that states are likely to receive when accountability determinations are released.
- Examples of efforts already underway in some states that have adopted each approach.
- Benefits and challenges for each type of system.

Summative ratings or labels for all schools

Some states provide each school with a label or rating (e.g., A-F letter grades, stars, color-coding, school labels beyond CSI and TSI). Much of this section has been adapted from *ExcelinEd's Communications Toolkit: A-F School Grading* to address A-F letter grading systems, as well as other summative labels or ratings.

Benefits and Challenges to using a Summative Rating System	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are often popular with parents because they are easy to understand and transparent. • When clearly explained by the state, summative ratings help establish clear incentives for schools—they know exactly which label they are seeking. • <i>A-F letter grades</i>: Using A-F systems to identify schools are easier to explain to the public because they are simplistic and inherently familiar to a broad audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the language used, labels may not be transparent or understandable for all stakeholders. • It can be complicated to explain how the state determines which label will apply to each school. • Grades, ratings, or labels may oversimplify the complex nature of school performance or may leave out some critical contextual information. • The complicated method used to produce a summative score is not always transparent (e.g., a score of 90 percent does not always equal an “A”). • The public may perceive summative ratings as mutually exclusive to dashboards because summative ratings seem to get the public’s attention. • Using scaled ratings or labels requires states to draw lines between schools that may not actually mean much is different about the schools’ performance, but the public perception will be that they are different (e.g., a school earning a score of 79 that is classified as a “C” school or “3 star school”, while a school earning a score of 80 receives a “B” or “two stars”).

Talking Points:

Summative ratings illustrate the overall performance of a school.

- Letter grades allow us to provide an easily understandable way to illustrate the overall performance of a school.
- Behind the simplicity of an overall rating is an objective, data-driven system.
- Parents and other stakeholders can use the school grade, in addition to performance on each indicator, to understand how well each school is serving its students.
- The purpose of a summative rating system is not to encapsulate everything that makes a school great, rather it holds schools accountable for their core mission.

Summative ratings provide transparency and engagement.

- School rating systems hold all schools to the same high expectations and clearly communicate the results to parents.
- Using clear and transparent ratings and descriptors ensures that everyone understands how a school is performing.
- Having a scale that parents, teachers and administrators clearly understand draws them into the accountability conversation. Once engaged and interacting with the school grading website, they will find additional information about the school that is understandable and relevant to foster student learning.

Summative ratings can provide inspiration and encouragement.

- School ratings bring a consistent focus on learning because stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and parents, all understand the system.
- Unlike data dashboards that may be overwhelming, clear rating and grading systems let schools and communities know exactly how they can improve.

Questions to Anticipate:

States with a summative system should be prepared to respond to the questions below, in addition to the questions on page 6. As a best practice, keep each question simple and each answer short and focused on a single topic.

- How did the state decide to use this system? Were stakeholders involved in designing the system?
- Why do we grade or label schools?
- How does [state] grade or label schools?
- Isn't it unfair to label a school as failing?
- How many schools receive each grade or label?
- What supports does the state give the lowest rated (e.g., "D" or "F", "one star," "red") schools?
- What rewards does the state give to the highest rated (e.g., "A," "five star," "green") schools?
- How can a parent/educator/community member help a school if it earns a low rating?
- How can my school earn a better rating?
- Why are we changing how schools graded or rated now? Wasn't it working fine?
- What if my child attends school with the lowest rating?

Examples:

Several states provide an overall, or summative, letter grade (e.g., A-F) rating for each school. It is worth noting that these schools also often provide a "dashboard" as well to show school and district performance on each component of the A-F grading system.

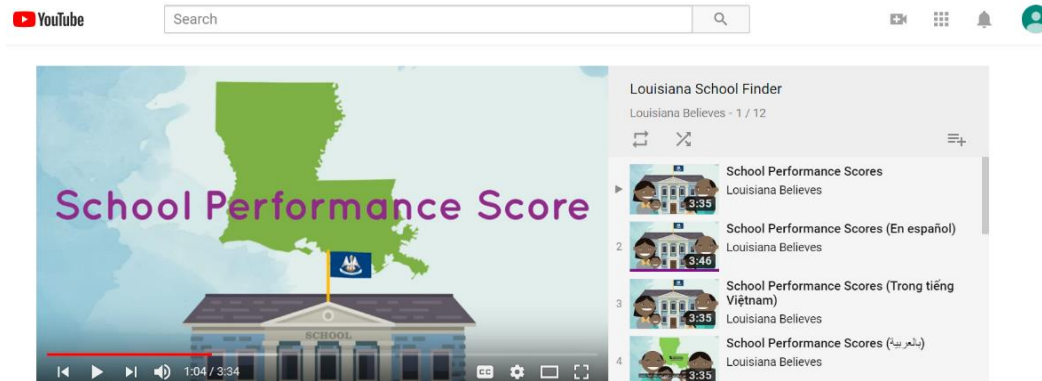
- **Louisiana²:** Each school in Louisiana receives a School Performance Score of 0–150, based on student performance on statewide assessments, student growth, ELP progress, closing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college- and career-readiness. These scores are then translated into an A to F letter grade. Louisiana has developed brief [videos](#) in a variety of languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic) to explain its School Performance Scores. The states [encourage](#) schools and early childhood education centers to host parent nights to discuss results and has released customizable PowerPoint presentations for the [K–12 schools](#) and [early childhood centers](#).

Keep in mind:



A-F letter grade systems present a unique messaging opportunity. For specific messaging tools related to A-F letter grades, review the [Communications Toolkit: A-F School Grading](#) put together by ExcelinEd.

² For more information about the best practice strategies Louisiana implemented as they developed a reporting tool that would meet the needs of their stakeholders as well as lessons learned from the experience, please see "[A School Finder to Empower: Case Study of Louisiana's New School Report Card](#)" (CCSSO).



Beyond A-F letter grades, states have developed a wide variety of summative rating or label systems.

- Hawaii:** Hawaii's [Strive HI System](#) measures school performance on a set of indicators. Schools can earn points on each indicator for the all students group for a total of up to 100 points. Beyond calculating a total score for the school based on the all students group, Hawaii also calculates a total score for each subgroup in each school. The state then ranks all schools based on their final score. The state identifies the schools whose overall score falls into the lowest five percent for CSI. In addition, the state identifies schools with subgroups that are in the lowest five percent for TSI. Unlike letter grading systems, Hawaii does not provide a descriptive label to each school based on their score out of 100, but the state does publish the numerical score for each school. Hawaii provides a succinct [factsheet](#) for stakeholders that demonstrates how the Strive HI System is aligned with the state's strategic plan and how it is used to identify schools for support and improvement.

FACTSHEET

Strive HI System

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE OF HAWAII

- ✓ Our state accountability system is built on the Strategic Plan's Goal 1: Student Success, driven by our local priorities, and can be found in the plan's Statewide Indicators.
- ✓ Some measures are used for federal accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- ✓ This update allows for local flexibility, giving schools and complex areas the opportunity (starting fall 2018) to propose their own indicators for inclusion in their schools' performance report.
- ✓ The system is best viewed as a K-12 construct in alignment with the Strategic Plan — there are indicators to reflect unique stages of the grade spans, but most measures are shared.
- ✓ Strive HI school reports reflecting these updates are being designed with input of principals and district staff. Reports with 2016-17 results will be released in fall 2017.

ELEMENTARY	INTERMEDIATE	HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-track to English language proficiency for English Learners (ELs),* using the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 assessment. Proficiency: Language Arts/Literacy, Math & Science,* using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) for English Language Arts/Literacy & Math, grades 3-8 and 11. the Kālequani Assessment for Educational Outcomes (KAEQO) for Hawaiian immersion students, grades 3 & 4. the Hawaii State Assessment (HSA) for Science, grades 4, 8 and Biology I End of Course exam in high school. the HSA-Ait for ELA, Math & Science for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Achievement Gap: Language Arts/Literacy & Math, measuring the difference in performance between high-needs and non-high-needs students using the SBA, KAEQO and HSA-Ait. Chronic Absenteeism, noting the percentage of students absent 15 or more days in a school year.* School Climate, noting the percentage of students reporting positively in the safety dimension of the School Quality Survey. Inclusion Rate, noting the percentage of students receiving special education services who are in general education classes for 80% or more of the school day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth: Language Arts/Literacy & Math, noting how students are performing in comparison with their academic peers, using SBA* 3rd grade literacy, as measured by SBA reading claim, Level 2 or 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9th grade promotion Career & Technical Education Concentrator On-time graduation rate* College enrollment rate

CSI & TSI

ESSA requires public schools to be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), once every three years, using the indicators marked above.* See how it's calculated (below, for ESSA purposes only) and categorized (right). States must provide additional support to these schools.

Elementary & Middle		High	
ELA proficiency rate	20 pts	ELA proficiency rate	15 pts
Math proficiency rate	20 pts	Math proficiency rate	15 pts
ELA Growth	20 pts	Graduation Rate	50 pts
Math Growth	20 pts	EL On-Track	10 pts
EL On-Track	10 pts	Chronic Absenteeism	10 pts
Chronic Absenteeism	10 pts	Chronic Absenteeism	10 pts
Total Unit Score	100 pts	Total Unit Score	100 pts

CSI (every 3 years)	TSI
TITLE I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any high school with a graduation rate less than 67% The lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools Schools with subgroups* receiving additional targeted support that do not improve after implementing their plan NON-TITLE I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any high school with a graduation rate less than 67% 	Additional Targeted Support (3 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student subgroup** performance at any school is in the lowest-performing 5% A Title I school with a subgroup* that received Additional Targeted Support which, after three years, did not meet the exit criteria will be identified for CSI Consistently Underperforming (Annually) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A subgroup** is designated Consistently Underperforming if it does not meet the state-determined performance threshold for two consecutive years; threshold to be based on SY 2016-17 data

Non-summative or “dashboard only” systems

A handful of states do not provide an overall, or summative, ratings or labels for each school. Instead, they report on school and subgroup performance on each indicator; this is often done through a “dashboard” system. To identify schools for support and improvement under ESSA, they often use a series of decision points to determine how to factor in performance on individual indicators.

Key Talking Points:

The suggested talking points below reflect an overall summary of why a state has chosen the non-summative approach, generally

what the dashboard means and how it can be used. States should develop their own talking points to complement these in response to the state-specific questions below.

Benefits and Challenges to using a <u>Non-Summative Rating System</u>	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders will be able to quickly identify subgroup performance on each indicator. By not combining performance on different indicators, the state may prevent high performance on one indicator from “hiding” low performance on another indicator. The system may be perceived as more transparent because it provides detailed performance data, as opposed to a single grade or rating without the underlying data. A non-summative system provides the public with the opportunity to interpret the information on its own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders may find the presentation of the data too complex or difficult to understand. The system may be perceived as lacking transparency if stakeholders are overwhelmed by the dashboard. Without a clear summative rating tied to school identification, it may make it more difficult to explain to stakeholders how schools are identified for recognition or support. Requires the state to make the information very accessible to help the public interpret the information accurately.

Dashboards provide important information about the overall performance of a school.

- School performance includes a variety of different measures and is too complicated to be narrowed down to a single number or letter grade.
- Parents and other stakeholders can use the data about the school’s performance on each indicator to understand how well each school is serving its students.

Dashboards provide maximum transparency.

- Dashboards provide an overall picture as well as more detailed information about specific areas of achievement, making it easier to pinpoint where schools are doing well, and where there is room for improvement.
- Unlike letter grades, dashboards provide all stakeholders with a full picture of each school’s performance to provide a higher level of detail for parents, educators and communities.

Dashboards can be conversation starters.

- Parents and other stakeholders can use the school and subgroup performance on each indicator to understand how well each school is serving its students.

- Having information that is detailed, but clearly understandable, draws parents, teachers and administrators into the accountability conversation, and will provide them with the basic information they need to ask more pointed questions.

Questions to anticipate:

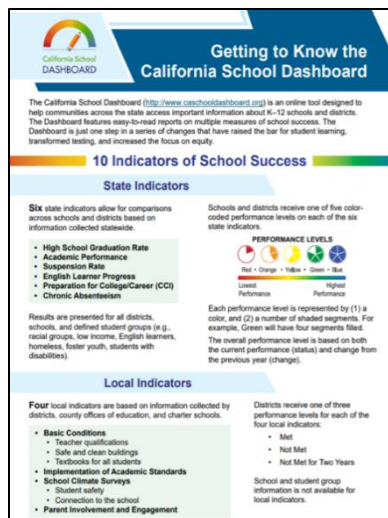
We encourage each state to develop a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document to introduce stakeholders to the state’s accountability system. In addition to providing an accessible introduction to of a complicated subject, states can use FAQs to highlight specific points and to respond preemptively to criticism or myths. This type of document will prepare a state to face immediate questions from reporters and other stakeholders. This can be easily updated over time by adding questions.³

States with a dashboard rating system are likely to receive some variation on the questions below, in addition to the questions on page 6. As a best practice, keep each question and answer short and focused on a single topic.

- Why doesn’t [state] just give each school a rating or grade? Wouldn’t that be easier to understand?
- How does the state use all these indicators to grade or label schools?
- Does the state consider subgroup performance on each indicator, or just the all students subgroup?
- Why are we changing our state’s accountability system now? Wasn’t it working fine?
- My school is lower performing on some indicators than others. What does that mean? How can I help?

Examples:

- **California⁴:** [California’s School Dashboard Report](#) displays performance of LEAs, schools, and student subgroups on a variety of state and locally-developed measures (e.g., high school graduation rates,



college/career readiness, student test scores, English learner progress, suspension rates, and parent engagement). Performance on state indicators is based on current performance (i.e., Status) and progress over time (i.e., Change). Combining Status and Change results in a performance level for each state indicator for LEAs, schools, and student subgroups. There are five performance levels, and each is assigned a different color. The five color-coded performance levels in order are: blue (highest performance), green, yellow, orange, and red (lowest performance).

³ For more information about the purpose of FAQs, as well as examples, please see ExcelinEd’s [Communications Toolkit: A-F School Grading](#).

⁴ Please note that as of May 1, 2018, California’s ESSA plan has not been approved by the U.S. Department of Education. This is based on the draft plan submitted on September 18, 2017.

California has developed several resources to provide information to the public about its dashboard, including a ["Get to Know the Dashboard" two-page guide](#), a [short video introducing the dashboard](#), a [parent guide](#), and a [one-page reference guide](#). Beyond these resources, California has created a [Communications Toolkit](#) designed to support districts and schools with community engagement efforts. The materials can be customized for local needs and use and include several one to two page flyers, a set of core messages/talking points, and a sample letter for parents.

School Identification

	How are these schools identified?	What supports will be provided?
Comprehensive Support & Improvement (CSI)	Title I schools that are very low-performing (in the bottom 5 percent), any public school with a graduation rate of 67% or less, or any additional TSI school that does not improve	School districts are responsible for developing and implementing a school-level plan, in partnership with stakeholders, that includes at least one evidence-based intervention and a resource equity review. The state must approve the plan.
Targeted Support & Improvement (TSI)	Any school with one or more consistently underperforming subgroup of students	School districts are responsible for developing and implementing a school-level plan for improvement in partnership with stakeholders that includes at least one evidence-based intervention. The district approves and monitors the plan.
Additional Targeted Support & Improvement (Additional TSI)	Any school with one or more subgroups of students performing as low as the bottom 5 percent of schools in the state identified for CSI	Schools districts take the same action as they do in TSI schools, but these schools must also complete a resource equity review and they may be identified for CSI if they do not improve.

ESSA requires that each state identify three types of schools for support and improvement (see graphic above for a full description). Prior to implementation of new or updated systems under ESSA, the majority of states identified priority and focus schools for support and improvement. Comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools are similar to priority schools—the lowest performing 5 percent of all schools across the state. Additionally, just as states considered the performance of individual subgroups to identify schools for targeted support and improvement (TSI), focus schools were identified based on the performance of student subgroups.

Each school identified under these criteria must develop a plan, in conjunction with stakeholders, and undertake interventions to improve student performance. States will approve and monitor these plans for CSI schools, while districts will approve and monitor these plans for TSI and additional TSI schools.

If a Title I school identified for additional TSI does not improve after a state-determined number of years, the school will be identified for CSI. If a school identified for CSI does not improve after a state-determined number of years (not to exceed four years, the state must undertake more rigorous action in these schools.

Key Talking Points:

The suggested talking points below reflect an overall summary of how a State identifies schools for support and improvement under ESSA, as well as the supports offered to those schools. States should develop their own talking points to complement these in response to the state-specific questions below. Consider also incorporating talking points from page 4 about why accountability matters.

Identified schools will receive additional assistance and support from the state and their districts.

- These schools are identified for additional assistance and support through the [State Department of Education] including professional development, additional academic coaching, and other support [list additional state interventions].

Schools are identified for CSI or TSI because of persistently low performance.

- Based on our state accountability system, we identify the schools that need the most assistance, support, and direction for their students to have the same opportunities for growth and success that exist for students in other schools.
- If [State] does not identify schools that need additional assistance and support, we would be failing the students attending those schools and their communities.
- [State] identifies TSI schools based on consistent underperformance of student groups. We define consistent underperformance as [insert state specific language].

Using a wide variety of indicators, [state] identifies schools for CSI when they are low performing overall.

- [State] is identifying five percent of our schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI).
- The state uses performance on a wide variety of indicators, including measures of achievement, English language proficiency, graduation rates, and other measures of school quality or student success, to identify these schools.
- We will also identify any school that is failing to graduate at least one third of its' students.
- These schools are similar to schools that were previously identified as Priority schools.
- Generally, we identify these schools because they need additional assistance and support based on the performance of the entire student population. This allows us to provide comprehensive supports to accelerate improvement schoolwide.

Using a wide variety of indicators, [state] identifies schools for TSI when they have low performing subgroups of students.

- [State] is identifying any schools with a consistently underperforming subgroup of students for targeted support and improvement (TSI).
- We look at performance for the following subgroups: [insert state specific list; at a minimum, this will include racial and ethnic subgroups, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.]

- This means that these schools have at least one subgroup of students that has had low performance for more than one year; in our state, that means [insert state specific language].
- The state uses performance on a wide variety of indicators, including measures of achievement, English language proficiency, graduation rates, and other measures of school quality or student success, to identify these schools.
- These schools are similar to schools that were previously identified as Focus schools; however, [state] only identified 10 percent of its schools as focus schools. Under ESSA, we now must identify any school with a consistently underperforming subgroup of students, even if that is more or less than 10 percent of our schools.
- Beyond identifying schools for TSI: [state should select the appropriate response below]
 - [State] will identify a set of the schools with the lowest performing subgroups for additional TSI from the pool of all TSI schools in the state; OR
 - [State] will identify a set of schools with the lowest performing subgroups for additional TSI in conjunction with identifying TSI schools.
- We will identify additional TSI schools (A-TSI) every [insert state specific number] years.
- These additional TSI schools will be required to do a resource analysis and may become CSI schools if they do not improve.
- Generally, we identify these schools because they need additional assistance and support based on the performance of at least one student subgroup. This allows us to support districts to provide targeted supports to accelerate improvement schoolwide.

Questions to Anticipate:

Similar to statewide accountability determinations, there is wide variation in how states identify schools for support and improvement. To support proactive communications and to be prepared to answer immediate questions from stakeholders, state communications staff should be prepared to respond to the following questions:⁵

- How are CSI schools identified?
- How are schools with low-performing subgroups identified for TSI and additional TSI (A-TSI)? Are these the same or different?
- How is the method of identification the same or different than before? Are these the same as priority and focus schools?
- Where are these schools located? Are they concentrated in one or two districts within the state? Are there other commonalities (e.g., demographics, previous identification) among the identified schools?
- If my school is identified as CSI or TSI, what will happen? What kind of support will it receive? Does that mean it is “bad school?”
- What are my options for my student?
- If my school is identified as CSI or TSI, will it be given additional funding to support improvement? How does that differ from a school being identified as A-TSI?

⁵ General responses are provided in Appendix A but should be customized for each state.

Appendices

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions about Statewide Accountability Systems

The answers below are suggestions for how states could respond. All responses should be customized.

Statewide Accountability Systems

How did the state decide to use this system? Were stakeholders involved in designing the system?

- The state engaged a wide variety of stakeholders, including parents, administrators, educators, and other community members, to develop its accountability system under ESSA.

What does this rating or label mean?

- Accountability ratings and labels are one way that states and school districts provide information about how each school is supporting its students.
- They help stakeholders know where schools are excelling and where they have room to grow.
- But, they aren't the only thing that matters. Beyond these ratings, parents, educators, and other stakeholders know a great deal about how their schools are performing.

What are these ratings and labels based on? Only test scores?

- These ratings and labels are not only based on test scores.
- They are based on multiple measures of student success, including graduation rates, progress for English learners in learning English, and other measures of school quality and student success.
- Many stakeholders provided input on the selection of these indicators through the ESSA planning process, and we look forward to continued engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders throughout implementation.

Do the ratings mean some schools are "good" and others are "bad?"

- Schools that have lower ratings are not "bad schools," but they are schools that need help and support from the state.
- Through conversation sparked by the accountability ratings, these schools and districts have the opportunity to engage parents and the community in developing a plan to improve the school's performance.
- Schools that receive high ratings deserve credit for their accomplishments, and the lessons they have learned need to be shared so that other schools can benefit.

If my school is identified for support or interventions, what will happen to it?

- Schools that are identified for support are eligible for additional funds, have the opportunity to engage parents and the community in developing a plan for improvement, and will receive additional support from the state and their district.
- These schools have room to improve but they are not "bad schools."

What are my options for my student?

- Accountability ratings provide you with information about how your school and subgroups in that school are performing.

- You can use that information to engage with your school’s administrator or your student’s teachers to see what supports are available for individual students.

If my school is not identified, does that mean it is a “good school?”

- Schools that are not identified for support have demonstrated that they are not among the lowest performing schools in the state.
- Just as we know that all students, even those that are high performing, can keep growing, our schools can grow too.
- These schools should celebrate their performance while continuing to seek gains for all students.

If my school is highlighted for “good” performance, will it receive additional funding? How does that recognition benefit my school?

- Your school should be congratulated for its performance and we encourage you to celebrate this success in your local community.
- While the school may not be rewarded monetarily, the state is enormously proud of each school’s success.
- The state will highlight the work of this school so that others may learn from its example.

What happened to priority and focus schools?

- Before ESSA was passed, states identified their lowest performing schools as priority schools and schools where there were subgroups that were lower performing as focus schools.
- Under ESSA, states identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement, or “CSI” schools, and targeted support and improvement, or “TSI” schools.
- CSI schools are similar to priority schools and TSI schools are similar to focus schools.

School Identification

How are CSI schools identified?

- In general, CSI schools are schools with overall low performance or very low graduation rates.
- The state considers performance on a wide variety of indicators, including those beyond test scores, to identify these schools.

How are schools with low-performing subgroups identified for TSI and additional TSI?

- TSI schools and additional TSI schools may not have the overall low performance, but they have subgroups of students that are falling behind.
- The state considers performance on a wide variety of indicators, including those beyond test scores, to identify these schools

How is the method of identification the same or different than before? Are these the same as priority and focus schools?

- Before ESSA was passed, states identified five percent of their lowest performing schools as priority schools and ten percent of schools where there were subgroups that were lower performing as focus schools.

- Under ESSA, states identify five percent of schools for comprehensive support and improvement, or “CSI” schools, and any school with an underperforming subgroup for targeted support and improvement, or “TSI” schools.
- CSI schools are similar to priority schools were and TSI schools are similar to focus schools.
- States determine what constitutes a “consistently underperforming subgroup” for the purpose of identifying schools for TSI.

Where are these schools located? Are they concentrated in one or two districts within the state? Are there other commonalities (e.g., demographics, previous identification) among the identified schools?

- *[These answers will vary widely from state to state.]*

If my school is identified as CSI or TSI, what will happen to it? What kind of support will it receive? Does that mean it is “bad school?” What are my options for my student?

- Schools that are identified for support are eligible for additional federal funds, have the opportunity to engage parents and the community in developing a plan for improvement, and will receive additional support from the state and their district.
- These schools have room to improve but they are not necessarily “bad schools.”

What are my options for my student?

- [This answer will vary widely by state, but states should identify individual support services that are provided to students in identified schools, and if applicable, whether students have the option to transfer schools.]

If my school is identified as CSI or TSI, will it be given additional funding to support improvement?

- Schools that are identified for support are eligible for additional federal funds and may be eligible for additional state or local funding.
- It will be important for your school to think about how it can align the funds it currently receives with its school improvement plan.

Appendix B: Talking Points

This appendix includes all draft talking points from the preceding documents in one place; it does not include new material.

Why does accountability matter? (page 4)

- Every element of our education system, including our expectations for students, how we understand if students are meeting those expectations, and how we are working with and supporting teachers and leaders, work toward the goal of ensuring all students are prepared for success after high school. **Accountability is one piece of that system.**
- Accountability systems are intended to help us focus on what matters most, give us a better understanding what is working well, and determine where we need to make improvements so we can help all students succeed.
- Just as state standards and assessments set expectations for what students should know and be able to do, **state accountability systems set expectations for school performance.**
- Accountability ratings make it possible to compare a school or district to others in the state.
- Statewide accountability systems set goals for achievement or growth for all schools to reach across race, income and zip code.

What do accountability determinations mean for a school? (page 6)

- Accountability determinations are a method to **convey a broad picture of school performance over time**, incorporating outcomes for all students. They are designed to highlight each school's strengths and areas where they can improve.
- Schools that are identified for support **did not achieve one or more of the expectations set in the accountability system.** These schools will receive additional support from the state and are eligible for federal funds to help them improve.
- Parents and community members of schools that are identified will have the **opportunity to participate in the development of an improvement plan** for their school.
- Schools that are not identified deserve credit for their accomplishments, and the lessons they have learned need to be shared so other schools can benefit.

Summative Rating Systems (page 14)

Summative ratings illustrate the overall performance of a school.

- Letter grades allow us to provide an easily understandable way to illustrate the overall performance of a school.
- Behind the simplicity of an overall rating is an objective, data-driven system.
- Parents and other stakeholders can use the school grade, in addition to performance on each indicator, to understand how well each school is serving its students.
- The purpose of a summative rating system is not to encapsulate everything that makes a school great, rather it holds schools accountable for their core mission.

Summative ratings provide transparency and engagement.

- School rating systems hold all schools to the same high expectations and clearly communicate the results to parents.
- Using clear and transparent ratings and descriptors ensures that everyone understands how a school is performing.
- Having a scale that parents, teachers and administrators clearly understand draws them into the accountability conversation. Once engaged and interacting with the school grading website, they will find additional information about the school that is understandable and relevant to foster student learning.

Summative ratings can provide inspiration and encouragement.

- School ratings bring a consistent focus on learning because stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and parents, all understand the system.
- Unlike data dashboards that may be overwhelming, clear rating and grading systems let schools and communities know exactly how they can improve.

Non-Summative Dashboard Only Systems (page 17)

Dashboards provide important information about the overall performance of a school.

- School performance includes a variety of different measures and is too complicated to be narrowed down to a single number or letter grade.
- Parents and other stakeholders can use the data about the school's performance on each indicator to understand how well each school is serving its students.

Dashboards provide maximum transparency.

- Dashboards provide an overall picture as well as more detailed information about specific areas of achievement, making it easier to pinpoint where schools are doing well, and where there is room for improvement.
- Unlike letter grades, dashboards provide all stakeholders with a full picture of each school's performance to provide a higher level of detail for parents, educators and communities.

Dashboards can be conversation-starters.

- Parents and other stakeholders can use the school and subgroup performance on each indicator to understand how well each school is serving its students.
- Having information that is detailed, but clearly understandable, draws parents, teachers and administrators into the accountability conversation, and will provide them with the basic information they need to ask more pointed questions.

School Identification (page 20)

Identified schools will receive additional assistance and support from the state and their districts.

- These schools are identified for additional assistance and support through the [State Department of Education] including professional development, additional academic coaching, and other support [list additional state interventions].

Schools are identified for CSI or TSI because of persistently low performance.

- Based on our state accountability system, we identify the schools that need the most assistance, support, and direction for their students to have the same opportunities for growth and success that exist for students in other schools.
- If [State] does not identify schools that need additional assistance and support, we would be failing the students attending those schools and their communities.
- [State] identifies TSI schools based on consistent underperformance of student groups. We define consistent underperformance as [insert state specific language].

Using a wide variety of indicators, [state] identifies schools for CSI when they are low performing overall.

- [State] is identifying five percent of our schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI).
- The state uses performance on a wide variety of indicators, including measures of achievement, English language proficiency, graduation rates, and other measures of school quality or student success, to identify these schools.
- We will also identify any school that is failing to graduate at least one third of its' students.
- These schools are similar to schools that were previously identified as Priority schools.
- Generally, we identify these schools because they need additional assistance and support based on the performance of the entire student population. This allows us to provide comprehensive supports to accelerate improvement schoolwide.

Using a wide variety of indicators, [state] identifies schools for TSI when they have low performing subgroups of students.

- [State] is identifying any schools with a consistently underperforming subgroup of students for targeted support and improvement (TSI).
- We look at performance for the following subgroups: [insert state specific list; at a minimum, this will include racial and ethnic subgroups, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities].
- This means that these schools have at least one subgroup of students that has had low performance for more than one year; in our state, that means [insert state specific language].
- The state uses performance on a wide variety of indicators, including measures of achievement, English language proficiency, graduation rates, and other measures of school quality or student success, to identify these schools.

- These schools are similar to schools that were previously identified as Focus schools; however, [state] only identified 10 percent of its schools as focus schools. Under ESSA, we now must identify any school with a consistently underperforming subgroup of students, even if that is more or less than 10 percent of our schools.
- Beyond identifying schools for TSI: [state should select the appropriate response below]
 - [State] will identify a set of the schools with the lowest performing subgroups for additional TSI from the pool of all TSI schools in the state; OR
 - [State] will identify a set of schools with the lowest performing subgroups for additional TSI in conjunction with identifying TSI schools.
- We will identify additional TSI schools (A-TSI) every [insert state specific number] years.
- These additional TSI schools will be required to do a resource analysis and may become CSI schools if they do not improve.
- Generally, we identify these schools because they need additional assistance and support based on the performance of at least one student subgroup. This allows us to support districts to provide targeted supports to accelerate improvement schoolwide.

Appendix C: Template Plan and Timeline

Adapted from: [ESSA Plan Rollout: Taking the Right Approach for Your State](#), CCSSO.

The templates below can be used to map out your roll-out strategy. The possible actions summarize some of the detailed strategies on page 7 – review that section closely for additional suggestions.

Pre-release activities (1-3 months in advance of release)					
Possible actions:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Build website					
<input type="checkbox"/> Engage with stakeholders					
<input type="checkbox"/> Begin developing talking points and materials					
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep internal staff informed					
When	Owner	Action Steps	Primary Message	Vehicle	Stakeholder

Release activities (Day of to 1 month prior to release)

Possible actions:

- ☐ Translate materials into multiple languages
- ☐ Develop and disseminate videos
- ☐ Share information on social media
- ☐ Hold public meetings
- ☐ Provide superintendents with outreach planning support
- ☐ Release results via press release and/or press conference
- ☐ Hold briefings with media

When	Owner	Action Steps	Primary Message	Vehicle	Stakeholder

Post release activities (Day after release and beyond)

Possible actions:

- ☐ Meet with stakeholders
- ☐ Share updates via email and/or website
- ☐ Visit schools that were identified for improvement
- ☐ Highlight and publicly celebrate improvements as they occur

When	Owner	Action Steps	Primary Message	Vehicle	Stakeholder

Appendix D: Stakeholder Engagement Considerations

Adapted from: [Let's Get this Conversation Started](#), [Let's Keep this Conversation Going](#), and [Let's Continue this Conversation](#). The steps highlighted under “Engagement Best Practices” are referenced on page 6 and detailed below:



Principles	Questions to Consider	Things to Remember
Clarify your goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the accountability system fit into your state’s theory of action? How can it serve your strategic plan? What do you want stakeholders to know after school ratings and identifications are released? What actions would you like them to take? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The format and timing for the release of annual school determinations should be driven by its primary users—school districts, schools, and parents. Parents will often go directly to districts and schools when they see their school’s rating. The state should make sure the districts and schools have a clear understanding of the release timeline and are prepared to answer questions. To capture stakeholder insights and questions, states should plan opportunities for feedback before <i>and after</i> accountability information is released. (See <i>Rolling Out Your Results</i>, page 7)
Work with partner organizations to identify and engage with your stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are your historically underrepresented parents and other stakeholders? Which organizations work directly with these stakeholders? How can you partner with these organizations to collect feedback on the statewide accountability system? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States should seek to engage parents who represent their student body in multiple locations across the state. Parents and other stakeholders may be more inclined to share feedback and ask questions in sessions led by a trusted community group and held at a neutral location, outside of work hours. Parents and other stakeholders may be more inclined to attend a session with translation services are made available.

Principles	Questions to Consider	Things to Remember
Speak to your audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge, experiences and priorities do your stakeholders bring? • What concerns might they raise about the school ratings or school identification? • What context will they need? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stakeholders won't know the reasoning behind the inclusion of certain indicators. Give context. • At the same time, not all parents want every last detail. Tell them what's important for them and their children.
Use multiple vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you reach your stakeholders where they are? • Where and how do your stakeholders get their information? • How can your meetings be made inviting for families from diverse backgrounds? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a combination of vehicles—including community forums, listservs, social media, direct mail, text messaging and radio—to reach the widest audience. • Families may need certain accommodations to participate in meetings, such as childcare, translation services, and transportation.
Identify your best ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who do key stakeholders trust, and could they serve as ambassadors to champion your accountability system? • How can ambassadors help you reach more stakeholders, answer questions and collect feedback? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A senior level representative from the SEA is not always the best messenger for every audience. • Trusted community members can help to get buy-in from stakeholders. • Keep ambassadors on the same page and using the same message by providing them with talking points, slides and FAQs to use on the SEA's behalf.
Ask for input before decisions are made, and use it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions do you need stakeholders to answer? • How will you report back to them on how you used their feedback? • How will you address feedback that you did not incorporate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make materials available in advance and give enough time to respond. • Build trust by showing how the state revised its report card using stakeholder feedback.
Keep your materials simple and brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which materials does each type of stakeholder need to review most? Least? • Which community partners can review your materials? • Which details can be saved for hyperlinks or appendices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are likely most interested in school-level ratings and identifications (not district). • Leave enough time to have materials reviewed, translated, and made accessible for people with disabilities.
Communicate early and often	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How frequently will you give progress updates? • What existing vehicles (newsletters, etc.) can you leverage to provide these updates? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States should step back at the end of each phase to assess whether they're using the right communication vehicles with the right frequency. • With each round of input, publish a summary.

Principles	Questions to Consider	Things to Remember
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other opportunities do you have to communicate with your stakeholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign at least one person to “own” the regular communications with stakeholders to create consistency and give people a reliable contact for questions.
Keep your team informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do all agency staff need to know about the state’s accountability system? • Which agency staff spend the most time in districts and schools? • Which agency staff can serve as ambassadors to external stakeholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAs should provide all internal staff with basic information about the accountability system (e.g., indicators, high-level process to identify schools) so there is a common understanding and message. • States should share any outreach materials and more detailed information with externally facing staff in case they receive questions.
Turn these new connections into long-term relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders have you connected with who could help with future implementation efforts? • Who do you still need to reach? • What long-term role can these stakeholders play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders can inform efforts to continuously improve the state accountability system after initial determinations are released in 2018. • Consider roles stakeholders can play on existing or new advisory groups so their voices continue to be heard.

Appendix E: Glossary of Accountability Terms⁶

Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools: These are schools that have been identified for additional targeted support and improvement because one or more subgroups of students in the school are performing at the same level as the lowest performing 5 percent of schools in the state.

Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools: These include schools in the bottom 5 percent of all schools in the state, schools with graduation rates below 67 percent, and targeted support and improvement schools that have not improved over a period of years.

Dashboard: A visual tool that shows how states, school districts or schools are performing on a variety of measures. Similar to a student's report card, a dashboard may use scores, ratings, colors or another system to capture performance for each student subgroup on each measure.

Indicator: Indicators are measures of different aspects of the education system that provide information about school performance. ESSA requires that each State include at least five indicators in its accountability system: academic achievement, another academic indicator (for elementary and middle schools only), graduation rates (for high schools only), progress in achieving English language proficiency, and school quality or student success.

Long-Term Goal: The level of performance that each subgroup is expected to demonstrate based on a state-determined timeline.

Measure: A component of an indicator used to determine student progress in a specific area. Multiple measures may inform a single indicator. For example, the four-year and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates are the measures that may be used in the Graduation Rate indicator. A State could choose just one measure to serve as the indicator (e.g., including only the four-year ACGR within the Graduation Rate indicator).

Measurement of Interim Progress: An annual target aligned with a state's long-term goals in English language arts, mathematics and English language proficiency.

School Quality or Student Success: A required indicator in each statewide accountability system. This indicator may measure student engagement; educator engagement; student access to and completion of advanced coursework; postsecondary readiness; school climate and safety; or any other valid, reliable indicator the State chooses that meets ESSA requirements. It can differ by grade level.

Subgroup: A group of students for whom the state must report performance on statewide indicators. The ESSA requires the state to use the following groups for accountability purposes: economically disadvantaged students; students from each major racial and ethnic group; children with disabilities; and English learners.

Summative rating: A single rating for a whole school that reflects the performance of all students on all indicators within the state school rating system (e.g., a letter grade, color code or index points).

⁶ These definitions have been adapted from the following sources: [Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and Stakeholder Engagement](#), CCSSO; [ESSA Guide for Advocates](#), The Leadership Conference Education Fund; and [U.S. Department of Education - Accountability Under Title I of the ESEA: Frequently Asked Questions \(rescinded\)](#).

These differ from a dashboard, which presents data on multiple measures and doesn't combine the data into a single rating for the school as a whole.

Targeted support and improvement: Schools that are identified through the state rating system because they have one or more groups of students who are consistently underperforming.

Title I school: A school eligible to receive funding under Title I of the ESSA because it primarily serves low-income students.

Appendix F: Accountability Approach by State⁷

Reminder: All states and districts must release annual report cards that include school and subgroup performance.

	Plan approved as of May 15, 2018? ⁸	Summative Rating or Label	“Dashboard” only
Alabama	Yes	✓	
Alaska	No	✓	
Arizona	Yes	✓	
Arkansas	Yes	✓	
California	No		✓
Colorado	Yes	✓	
Connecticut	Yes	✓	
Delaware	Yes	✓	
District of Columbia	Yes	✓	
Florida	No	✓	
Georgia	Yes	✓	
Hawaii	Yes	✓	
Idaho	Yes		✓
Illinois	Yes	✓	
Indiana	Yes	✓	
Iowa	No	✓	
Kansas	Yes	✓	
Kentucky	Yes	✓	
Louisiana	Yes	✓	
Maine	Yes	✓	
Maryland	Yes	✓	
Massachusetts	Yes	✓	
Michigan	Yes	✓	
Minnesota	Yes	✓	
Mississippi	Yes	✓	
Missouri	Yes	✓	
Montana	Yes	✓	
Nebraska	No	✓	
Nevada	Yes	✓	
New Hampshire	Yes		✓
New Jersey	Yes	✓	
New Mexico	Yes	✓	
New York	Yes	✓	
North Carolina	No	✓	
North Dakota	Yes		✓
Ohio	Yes	✓	
Oklahoma	No	✓	

⁷ This table includes only states or entities required to submit a consolidated State plan under the ESSA; therefore, it does not include the other commonwealths and territories that may receive some funding under the ESSA.

⁸ Data is based on state plans approved as of May 1, 2018 and draft state plans submitted, but not yet approved as of May 1, 2018.

	Plan approved as of May 15, 2018? ⁹	Summative Rating or Label	“Dashboard” only
Oregon	Yes	✓	
Pennsylvania	Yes		✓
Puerto Rico	Yes	✓	
Rhode Island	Yes	✓	
South Carolina	Yes	✓	
South Dakota	Yes	✓	
Tennessee	Yes	✓	
Texas	Yes	✓	
Utah	No	✓	
Vermont	Yes	✓	
Virginia	Yes	✓	
Washington	Yes	✓	
West Virginia	Yes		✓
Wisconsin	Yes	✓	
Wyoming	Yes	✓	
TOTAL		46	6

⁹ Data is based on state plans approved as of May 1, 2018 and draft state plans submitted, but not yet approved as of May 1, 2018.

Appendix G: ESSA Accountability Requirements

	What does ESSA require ?	What flexibility do states have?
Long-Term Goals and Measurements of Interim Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States must establish statewide long-term goals and measurement of interim progress (MIPs), or targets, for all students and each subgroup of students. These must include goals and MIPs based on statewide assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and graduation rates. In addition, the state must set goals and MIPs for English learners (ELs) to measure progress in achieving English language proficiency (ELP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States can set their own numerical goals. States can set their own timelines for meeting those goals. States can set goals at the state, district and school level(s).
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States must establish indicators of student progress. For Elementary and Middle Schools, indicators include those based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic achievement as measured on statewide ELA and mathematics tests; Another academic indicator such as student growth on statewide assessments; For English learners: Progress in achieving ELP (based on a state-determined timeline for students to attain proficiency); and An indicator of school quality or student success (e.g., school climate and safety, student engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework). For High Schools, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic achievement as measured on statewide ELA and mathematics tests; Graduation rate; For English learners: Progress in achieving ELP (based on a state-determined timeline for students to attain proficiency); and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States can include student growth on the academic achievement indicator for high schools. States can include student growth or performance on assessments in other subjects (e.g., science, social studies) within the other academic indicator. States can include any extended year cohort graduation rates (e.g., five-year rate, six-year rate) in the Graduation Rate indicator. States can set their own timeline for how long they expect it will take an EL to attain ELP. States can establish their own unique indicators of school quality and student success for each grade span (e.g., chronic absenteeism, college- and career-readiness). States can use data from multiple years of school and student performance to calculate performance on each indicator.

	What does ESSA require ?	What flexibility do states have?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An indicator of school quality or student success (e.g., school climate and safety, student engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework). • Performance on each indicator must be measured and reported on an annual basis for all students and disaggregated for each subgroup. • All indicators must be valid, reliable and statewide. 	
Overall Statewide Accountability Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In identifying schools, academic indicators must be weighted more heavily in these decisions than other indicators of school quality or student success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States can choose to combine performance on individual indicators to produce a summative or overall rating, for each school or subgroup.
Reporting¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States must issue state and local report cards on school performance annually, including disaggregated performance for individual subgroups of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States may design their own public reporting systems to share school performance data with stakeholders. • States may include additional data (e.g., class sizes, additional indicators of school success, etc.) within their system of annual reporting.
School Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States must use the statewide accountability system to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) at least every three years and for targeted support and improvement (TSI) annually. • States must identify Title I schools that are in the bottom five percent statewide, as well as any public high school with a graduation rate less than 67 percent for CSI. • States must identify schools that have at least one consistently underperforming subgroup of students for TSI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States must establish their own criteria for how the state's indicators will be used to identify schools in need of support. • States may identify schools for CSI every year, every two years, or every three years. • States may use the four-year graduation rate or extended graduation rates (e.g., the five-year or six-year rates) to identify high schools with graduation rates less than 67 percent for CSI. • States define what "consistently underperforming" means for the purpose of identify schools for TSI.

¹⁰ For additional information on state and local report cards, please see: "[Communicating Performance: A Best Practices Resource for Developing State Report Cards](#)", CCSSO.

	What does ESSA require ?	What flexibility do states have?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States must also identify any school with as subgroup performing as low as the bottom five percent of schools for additional TSI. 	
School Improvement Activities: Comprehensive Support and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each state is required to notify each LEA of any schools identified for CSI or TSI. School districts must conduct a needs assessment for each CSI school. School districts are responsible for developing and implementing a school-level plan, in partnership with stakeholders, for improvement that includes at least one evidence-based intervention. The plan must identify resource inequities. The plan must be approved by the district and state. States will monitor and periodically review progress made by LEAs toward improving CSI schools. Any school identified for CSI that fails to improve within a state-determined number of years (not to exceed four years) shall be faced with more rigorous state-determined action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each state may determine the method and timing to notify each LEA of any schools identified for CSI or TSI. States may develop a statewide needs assessment template that includes a wide variety of measures. States may develop lists of evidence-based interventions. States may determine which resources (e.g., funding, access to effective educators, access to high quality preschool) are included in resource equity reviews. States will determine which more rigorous actions schools that do not exit CSI status must undertake.
School Improvement Activities: Targeted Support and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School districts are responsible for developing and implementing a school-level plan for improvement in partnership with stakeholders that includes at least one evidence-based intervention. The district must approve, monitor and periodically review the plan and the school's progress. Schools identified for additional TSI must conduct a review of resource inequities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States and school districts may require schools identified for TSI and additional TSI to complete needs assessments.

Appendix H: Additional Resources

Communicating about Accountability

[CCSSO Accountability and Reporting Resource Library](#) , CCSSO

[ESSA and Accountability Frequently Asked Questions](#), ASCD

[Video: What grade would your school earn?](#), ExcelinEd

[A-F School Grading: Communications Toolkit](#), ExcelinEd

[Slides: School Accountability: Effectively communicating A, B, C, D and F school letter grades results](#),
ExcelinEd

Stakeholder Engagement

[Let's Get this Conversation Started](#), CCSSO

[Let's Keep this Conversation Going](#), CCSSO

[Let's Continue this Conversation](#), CCSSO

[A Handbook for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement](#), Partners for Each and Every Child

[Six Keys to Engaging Families in ESSA](#), PTA

[Overview of the New Law](#), PTA