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States Leading:

Promising Practices Advancing the Equity Commitments 2019

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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, Bureau of Indian Education, 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.

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COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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A Preface from the Executive Director

Two years ago when state school chiefs united around the the 10 [Leading for Equity](#) commitments, they coalesced around a common goal: to ensure that every child receives the right educational resources at the right moment in his or her education.



It was an ambitious vow, but it is one that continues to drive each one of our chiefs and anchors all our work at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Our commitment was not fleeting. We have held ourselves accountable to take vigorous action to advance equity for all kids.

It has not been easy. We have pushed ourselves alongside our states. Two years later, I am proud when I look at the work undertaken by our chiefs across the country. This is a lifetime of work and while every step forward matters, we know there is much more to do.

It is clear that equity is front and center for our chiefs as they tackle the commitments in specific and meaningful ways. This work has impacted how states define and measure student success, support and elevate teachers, provide schools the resources they need to support every child, and create conditions that help students enter the classroom ready to learn and thrive.

CCSSO also has had the privilege to support states as they tackle longstanding inequities in teacher diversity and cultural responsiveness, special education instruction and achievement, and access and opportunity around career pathways.

- Ten states joined the Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative, working to diversify the teacher workforce and promote culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Each of the states involved in the initiative has committed to establishing a clear long-term vision to meet specific goals and develop an actionable plan to sustain progress.
- Five states have joined the Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership State Initiative and are crafting plans that will deepen and refine their principal development efforts to ensure focus on supporting the academic and social success of students with disabilities. Additionally, 19 states are engaged in strengthening school leadership as a means of fostering positive school culture and supporting high quality instruction.
- Ten states are participating in the New Skills for Youth Initiative. These states are charting critical ground on equitable access to quality career pathways and are well positioned to leverage Perkins to further advance their efforts. Additionally, CCSSO is supporting a broader group of states to examine their career-readiness needs and quickly transition to strategic planning as they work to finalize their Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act plans.

One of the 10 equity commitments calls for states to “Start from Within” and consider how state education agency structures contribute to existing inequities or create barriers to more effectively tackling educational equity.

CCSSO took on this commitment along with states. We looked hard at our own equity challenges and exploring how we would address them. In the past year we launched an internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) task force and hired the organization's first-ever chief equity officer. In addition, CCSSO is providing ongoing training to all staff on how to foster a more diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment. As executive director, I also joined CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion, a growing coalition of more than 450 CEOs who have pledged to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

I am honored to lead this organization of state leaders that has not let these commitments sit on a shelf. These early efforts by CCSSO and our state chiefs are being noticed. CCSSO was recently selected by the Profiles in Diversity Journal to receive its 11th Annual Diversity Leader Award. The award is given to organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to expanding and improving diversity, inclusion, and equity in the workplace and beyond. This recognition is a testament to the work CCSSO is doing as an organization, and to the nation's state school chiefs and their education agencies.

We are proud of the progress we have made to date. We recognize we have a long way to go, but we must keep the momentum going. Our commitment remains strong and our enthusiasm undiminished. Thank you for joining us on this critical journey. I know together we can achieve a more just and equitable future for each and every child.

Carissa Moffat Miller

Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers

A Preface from the Chief Equity Officer

"It is important to understand that the system of advantage is perpetuated when we do not acknowledge its existence." – Beverly Daniel Tatum

The Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) intentional and explicit commitment to ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students is now in its third year and increasingly focused on strengthening action to benefit all students. States continue to drive efforts that will ensure students have access to high-quality learning environments where they can thrive.



In August 2018, I began as CCSSO's first chief equity officer tasked with providing strategic leadership and content expertise to drive our equity agenda forward. I joined the Council with enthusiasm upon seeing the ways states have identified actionable strategies to carry out the Leading for Equity commitments. Recognizing the identities and characteristics of our students across this nation is integral in valuing and engaging diverse learners across the educational system. When we can see diverse identities as assets to the learning environment, we will be better positioned to address the systemic barriers and issues that inhibit success and cease to observe equity through a deficit lens. Applying an equity lens to education requires that we continuously identify the impact of decisions on underrepresented, vulnerable, and at-risk communities.

The states highlighted in this updated report are just a sample of states that are *"Leading for Equity"* through actions and initiatives that will have a long-lasting impact on all students. Providing equitable opportunities from a systemic level benefits all students, teachers, and leaders.

In order for state chiefs to lead on equity, they must plan, develop and implement a multifaceted strategic approach. State education agencies (SEAs) are leading strategies at the state level that inform practices and policies internal to the SEA, as well as for local education agencies (LEAs), school leadership, and teachers with the ultimate beneficiary being students. By adopting more equitable stakeholder engagement practices and strategies, some states have expanded their decision-making process by including voices of students, families, and community leaders to inform educational policies. Other states have identified fiscal resources along with identifying equitable funding distribution strategies to improve services and support for underserved communities. Several states are acting on the need to promote more equitable interactions in learning environments for students by providing high-quality instructional materials, strengthening the teacher workforce and fostering inclusive policies and practices that validate diverse identities. This report provides detailed examples of the work states are doing to align equity for greater impact.

Annie Holmes

Chief Equity Officer, Council of Chief State School Officers

INTRODUCTION

State chiefs across the country are pursuing bold work to ensure equitable education opportunities for each and every child in their state.

It's been two years since the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program developed and released ***Leading for Equity:***

Opportunities for State Education Chiefs, ten actions state education leaders can take to make sure that each student across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and family income have access to the right educational resources at the right moment in their education.

In that time, states have made progress against each of the actions highlighted in the report and this publication, ***States Leading: Promising Practices Advancing the Equity Commitments 2019***, provides brief snapshots of practices and policies states are currently engaging in to provide a more equitable education for all students.

This compilation is just a sampling of the broad array of work going on and the examples outlined in this update are not intended to advocate for one approach over another. Our state chiefs know that the journey towards equity in education is just beginning and this document marks yet another celebration of positive starts along that path.

Educational Equity

Educational equity means that every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/ or family income.

1. PRIORITIZE EQUITY: SET AND COMMUNICATE AN EQUITY VISION AND MEASURABLE TARGETS

As the highest-ranking education official in the state, chief state school officers have committed to prioritize the equity mission of public education. As part of setting the strategic vision and plan for states' education systems—and in collaboration with state boards of education, state legislatures, and governors—chiefs and their teams must analyze data to determine where the greatest gaps and equity challenges are, and how to focus efforts and allocate limited resources to address those gaps and their root causes. The chief is uniquely positioned to create urgency, galvanize state action, and instill optimism in educators and other stakeholders that significant process can be accomplished through their collective efforts. This requires trade-offs, clear communication, and a call to stakeholders at all levels of the system to prioritize this work.

Promising Practice: Utah

Over the past year, the Utah State Board of Education and the state education agency engaged in a strategic planning effort to set a clear and compelling vision for K12 education in Utah and to clearly articulate the Board's role in advancing that vision.

As a result of that process, the Board adopted the following mission statement, affirming that advancing equity is foundational to the Board's mission:

**The USBE leads by creating equitable conditions for student success:
Advocating for necessary resources, developing policy, and providing effective oversight and support.**

This work was informed by the state's Advisory Committee on Equity and Educational Services for Students (ACEESS). Created in 2016 by the Board, the 15-member committee advises the Board on efforts to support equity in student educational services. Thanks to a memo from the committee, the Board included the word "equity" in their adopted mission statement and strategic plan.



In addition to including explicit references to equity in the mission statement, equity serves as the foundation for the goals and strategies articulated in the plan. For example, strategies aligned to the goal of early learning, including expanding access to pre-school and extended-day kindergarten options, address opportunity gaps in the early years. Additionally, strategies aligned to the goal of personalized teaching and learning address equity by creating the system-level conditions necessary to personalize learning experiences based on student need.

Promising Practice: Rhode Island

Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Ken Wagner presented his 2018 State of Education address which was grounded in educational equity. His speech identified including student and community voice as a strategy to answer questions facing educators today: “Equity in education makes us strong as an economy, as a state, and as a people.” The state endorsed social and emotional learning standards and implemented coaching for students, teachers, and families on the principles of nonviolence. In an effort to provide equitable access to college and career pathways (see Commitment 10 for details), Rhode Island ensured that career pathways are not dictated by zip code.

Promising Practice: Washington

The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Plan is centered around providing equitable educational opportunities to all of Washington’s students. The plan outlines initiatives to attract and retain effective educators, especially for students of color and students experiencing poverty, who are disproportionately taught by teachers who are inexperienced or teaching subjects in which they are not trained. In addition, the plan directs the superintendent to identify more schools that have gaps in performance between student groups. This disaggregation of data brings those gaps to the forefront and allows for targeted funding and other supports.

2. START FROM WITHIN: FOCUS ON THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY

State education agencies (SEAs) can strategically reallocate funding and staff resources to further their mission of advancing equity. Historically, SEAs have been resourced to administer and monitor how the state spends federal and state education funds, and many SEAs are still structured with divisions that reflect these different funding streams. While a complete reorganization is not necessary, state leaders should consider how current SEA structures contribute to existing inequities and/or create barriers to more effectively tackling educational equity. The authority of state chiefs and the agencies they oversee varies by state. Even with limited authority, state chiefs can better equip SEA staff to be leaders for educational equity.

Promising Practice: Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) believes providing meaningful and enriching professional learning opportunities for staff can promote educational equity. Through the DPI’s *Embracing Equity* training program, staff learn about topics such as color blindness, unconscious bias, and microaggressions and are challenged to self-reflect and address how these issues might impact their work. The DPI also offers the *Perspectives on Equity*



series utilizing speakers, videos, and books to facilitate rich discussion and support open dialogue about racial, cultural, and physical-based inequities impacting the work of agency staff and the field of education. Additionally, the DPI created an Equity Decision and Policy Tool for use by all agency staff. The tool is designed to integrate explicit consideration of equity in decisions related to policies, practices, programs, and budgets and was developed to support staff in embedding these considerations into their everyday work.

Promising Practice: Kansas

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) thoughtfully uses cross-collaboration strategies across agency teams so districts receive customized and comprehensive support when developing improvement strategies for under-performing schools. For a number of years, Kansas has been analyzing multiple district-reported data sources as an approach to providing technical assistance as a result of risk factors in a given district. This risk analysis is referred to as Youth Outcomes Driven Accountability (YODA) and is implemented and overseen by the Special Education and Title Services team at KSDE and carried out by utilizing expertise from multiple teams within the KSDE. Kansas uses this risk analysis to provide intensive technical assistance to districts most at risk and have collaborative conversations across multiple data sources to improve outcomes and results for all students. Kansas utilizes this approach across the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) plans at the state and district level to integrate supports for students.

Promising Practice: Hawaii

The Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) received policy support from the State Board of Education to implement multiple language policies to recognize the important role of multilingualism in providing a meaningful and equitable education. A leadership team for the World Languages Program, which offers instruction in 11 languages including American Sign Language and Hawaiian, was established to build capacity in teaching languages for communication and cultural competence. Additionally, a task force was convened to improve English learner programs and access to English learner services statewide. HIDOE also hosted its inaugural multilingualism symposium titled *"Our Languages, Our Future"* in March 2019 to foster collaboration across the state agency and to create dialogue around understanding the linguistic diversity in the state and innovation to drive the work forward.

Promising Practice: Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) officially added a cross-agency equity team as part of its organizational structure. Internally, a staff-driven effort has led committees to look at important issues like defining equity as an agency, facilitating equity conversations in agency-wide meetings, evaluating hiring practices, and working to bring professional development opportunities to staff. As part of that professional learning community, RIDE has teamed up with outside groups and experts to get feedback and receive training, including the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) and parent groups like Parents Leading for Educational Equity.

3. MEASURE WHAT MATTERS: CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EQUITY

Designing and administering accountability systems is a core state responsibility with profound implications for equity. Accountability has multiple dimensions under state and federal law, including the design of school performance rating systems and oversight of evidence-based interventions in low-performing schools and schools with persistent and significant achievement gaps. In addition, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires greater transparency and public reporting so the public can hold system leaders accountable for equity. While there are both federally- and state-imposed timelines for the development and implementation of new statewide accountability systems, state leaders should not let an ESSA-compliance mentality drive their accountability design; instead, chiefs should consider their broader vision for the state education system and the state's equity goals.

Promising Practice: Massachusetts

The state of Massachusetts has implemented the Views of Instruction, State Standards, Teaching, and Assessment (VISTA) survey sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The annual survey, which is administered to superintendents and principals, asks leadership to share their views on educator effectiveness, curriculum frameworks, and social and emotional learning practices. Once the data from the survey is compiled, the Office of Planning and Research publishes one-page documents, entitled *The Voice*, to provide resource snapshots for school systems. The VISTA survey also provides the state commissioner of education with a summary of feedback from the survey results to inform state accountability strategies.

Promising Practice: Alabama

Earlier this year, the Alabama Department of Education released its list of low-performing schools across the state. Since that time, staff from the Office of School Improvement (OSI) have visited leaders in every school system to explain firsthand the support and assistance they can expect from the Alabama State Department of Education. This support includes individuals tasked with supporting specific schools and their individual, targeted needs. The state recognizes many of these schools are struggling to meet the needs of subgroups of students and are working to improve that. Members of the OSI team will work with the school and its community to develop a service plan tailor-made for that specific school, and continue to check back with the school regularly. The State Department of Education will monitor progress in these schools monthly to ensure they are making improvements.



Promising Practice: Nebraska

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is committed to achieving educational equity by making community-wide commitments to yield stronger schools. While the agency is setting a strategic vision, goals, and policy direction, among other valuable strategies, NDE is also being intentional about engaging accountability systems as a driver for educational equity. NDE added a new component to its accountability system, Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT). This new component, the [Nebraska Education Profile](#), is a web tool designed and developed by NDE to disseminate education data through multiple formats to reach multiple audiences. Community stakeholders across the state are urged to work together to use this transparent accountability system, which examines school performance.

Promising Practice: New York

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has displayed its commitment to equity in its ESSA plan strategies for supporting the professional development of educators. The plan emphasizes access to culturally responsive and sustaining instruction that supports academic and social-emotional development for all students, including multilingual learners/English learners, immigrant students, migratory youth, students with disabilities, homeless youth, and neglected and delinquent youth.

The NYSED created The ESSA Think Tank, consisting of representatives from more than 100 organizations, to support development of the state's ESSA plan.

4. GO LOCAL: ENGAGE LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES (LEAS) AND PROVIDE TAILORED AND DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT

Education is largely a local enterprise, with local education agencies (LEAs)—districts, charters, or charter management organizations—leading education strategy, administration, and resource allocation. While governance structures and authority vary by state, state education leaders can provide guidance, support, funding, public pressure, and incentives to help LEAs close achievement and opportunity gaps based on local context. Accountability, monitoring, compliance, and oversight will always be necessary state (and federal) functions, but state leaders should take the lead to find common ground with local superintendents, local school board members, and other leaders to make sure all actors recognize their power and responsibility to advance equity. Closing opportunity and achievement gaps can only happen if state and local leaders understand and embrace their respective roles.



Promising Practice: Washington

The Washington State Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is hosting a community forum on “Defining Inclusion” this year. The advisory council advises the state superintendent on matters pertaining to special education and its connected services. The SEAC consists of individuals appointed by the superintendent with varying areas of expertise and interest; more than half of the council are parents of students with disabilities. The “Defining Inclusion” forum engages stakeholders by providing differentiated support around the SEAC, expanding understanding of the advisory council’s role in the state of Washington, and working to establish a shared understanding of the meaning of inclusion across the state with parents, families, educators, and leaders. The community forum offers an opportunity to share information and resources, discuss trends and concerns, and supports the SEAC in determining priorities to address with the Superintendent.

Promising Practice: Louisiana

The state produced “The School System Planning Framework” as the primary planning tool for LEAs. The state has organized the frameworks into four domains, all of which prioritize equity. The domains are as follows:

- **Core academics:** aligned curriculum, assessment, and teacher professional development.
- **Students with diverse needs:** early and accurate identification, intervention, and instruction for English learners and students with disabilities
- **Workforce talent:** recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining top talent.
- **Local education agency systems:** organizational structures that support struggling schools, such as school systems with five or more struggling schools creating an improvement zone.

Promising Practice: Rhode Island

Rhode Island is providing funding, technical assistance and capacity building support to establish Community Advisory Boards (CABs) in LEAs that are home to schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Intervention (CSI). The Rhode Island State Plan hopes to create CABs in order to:

- Provide a dedicated seat at the table to members of the communities directly served by CSI schools;
- Empower these community members with real decision-making and oversight authority at every stage of the school improvement process; and
- Commit to promoting equity and shared responsibility within the context of school improvement to offer different perspectives throughout the state.

Beyond identified schools, Rhode Island is working alongside Ed Reports and with a growing number of LEAs statewide to evaluate curriculum and help communities to select culturally-relevant materials. The state has also brought on a group of English learner ambassadors from the field to help inform state policy and provide additional support for LEAs that are working to improve services for EL students.

Promising Practice: Utah

While Utah believes that each child is entitled to an effective teacher, it recognizes there are differences regarding access to effective teachers among disadvantaged student groups. The Teaching and Learning Section of the Utah State Board of Education Agency conducted a Human Capital Equity Lab with LEAs from across the state. The Equity Labs provide LEAs the opportunity to examine their local data on access to effective teachers by student group, identify root causes for any inequities, and develop a theory of action and concrete strategies to address the inequities. As a result of the Equity Lab, many LEAs have made changes to hiring practices, adjusted their strategic plans, developed a pathway to recruit and hire more local teachers, established home visiting programs, and developed more intentional supports for principals in making teacher placement decisions.

5. FOLLOW THE MONEY: ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE FISCAL EQUITY

Funding for public education is a foundational state responsibility. Over the last several decades, many states have increased their share of public education funding, minimizing reliance on local funds that are distributed unevenly and exacerbate inequality. In some states, funding has become more equitable in recent years, but states and districts still often invest less in educating low-income students and students of color than they do in educating affluent and white students. These funding gaps occur across districts, at different schools within the same district, and even within the same school.

Promising Practice: Michigan

In efforts to solve the talent gap, Michigan has invested \$3 million in programs that create access to positions within the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields. These funds are being distributed to public and non-public schools across Michigan. The programs are designed to strengthen the talent pipeline and equip Michigan's young people with the 21st Century skills needed to compete in a global economy. The programs are tailored to give students skills they can use no matter their post-secondary trajectory, fostering greater levels of equity.

Promising Practice: Illinois

Illinois lawmakers enacted the state's landmark school funding reform law, "Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act," in late 2017. The Act restructures the education funding system such that any new money appropriated for K-12 goes directly to districts requiring the most resources to meet their student needs. The Act sets distinct "Adequacy Targets" for every district in the state that focus on equity and recognize



that different students and schools need different levels of resources for opportunities to succeed. Illinois included districts' Adequacy Targets and Percentages of Adequacy, or how their current state and local funding compares to their Adequacy Targets, on the [state's Report Card](#) in October 2018. Illinois also advanced the values of financial transparency, fiscal equity, and fiscal and academic solvency in its supports for school districts to implement site-based expenditure reporting. The State Board engaged an advisory group of critical stakeholders to create guidance and resources and to inform the visual display of the data on the state's Report Card in October 2019.

Promising Practice: Wyoming

The Wyoming School Foundation Program provides a guaranteed level of funding to every Wyoming public school district, and is designed to ensure that every student in the state has equitable resources. This "guarantee" is essentially a block grant and is based on a number of factors, the most important of which is the number of students enrolled in the district in the prior year. Other components that have a significant impact on a district's guarantee include special education and pupil transportation costs incurred in the prior year and the number, size, and location of certain statutorily defined "small schools" operated by the district. Very small school districts meeting certain enrollment criteria may qualify for additional funding. Once a district's guarantee is established, that funding level is compared to the district's available local revenue sources. If a district's local revenues turn out to be less than its guarantee, the state of Wyoming makes up the difference through a series of entitlement payments distributed to the district throughout the school year. A few school districts, on the other hand, have access to local revenues in excess of their guarantees. These districts must rebate the excess to the state of Wyoming—a process known as recapture. All recaptured monies flow into a Foundation Program fund and are eventually redistributed to those districts receiving entitlement payments from the state.

6. START EARLY: INVEST IN THE YOUNGEST LEARNERS

Many low-income students and students of color are already academically behind their peers when they start kindergarten. A developmentally-appropriate, high-quality early learning experience aligned to standards uses play to help prepare young children to learn. State chiefs can make the case that equity requires expanding and targeting access to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs, and closing opportunity gaps for children growing up in low-income families; this is a critical strategy for improving the quality of K-12 education with a high return on investment.



Promising Practice: Virginia

The Virginia Department of Education, in partnership with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF), advances its equity mission to invest directly in young learners and working families by awarding six grants to local communities with innovative approaches to expand access to high-quality pre-school programs. Each awardee has one thing in common—they all see the critical importance of increasing access to early childhood education programs to working families. The innovative approaches received in proposals for the grant include the commitment to collaborate with community-based early childhood programs. These approaches also reflect the unique needs of the communities in which the grantees are based while widening access to optimal early childhood programs.

Promising Practice: New Jersey

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) continues to make long-term investments in the next generation of leaders. In January 2019, the department announced a second round of state funding to create or expand preschool programs in 33 school districts. The \$26.9 million in Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA) ensures that 2,320 children will start the 2019-20 school year in a high-quality preschool classroom. That money is in addition to the \$20.6 million awarded to eligible districts last year used to create 2,239 new seats.

7. ENGAGE MORE DEEPLY: MONITOR EQUITABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

While most states are not directly responsible for running schools or hiring educators, they do have an important role to monitor and oversee local actions. However, what happens in classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds has the greatest impact on students; chiefs must ensure all students receive an equitable education without micromanaging or overextending themselves.

Promising Practice: Ohio

The Ohio Department of Education is working on an in-depth Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tool to assist stakeholders in planning their career-focused programming and work-based learning initiatives. The tool allows stakeholders to see how career-focused programming is distributed in communities across the state, as well as how tightly aligned the programming options are to local labor market needs. Ohio hopes the results from the GIS mapping will facilitate strategic decisions about where to invest resources, build out and expand CTE programs, and ultimately foster more equitable access and engagement in the state's career-focused options.



Promising Practice: Delaware

Delaware outlined a goal that by 2019, 80% of new instructional material adoptions in seven “focus” (i.e., high-needs) districts would be high-quality and standards-aligned. So far, six of the seven focus districts have adopted high-quality instructional material (HQIM) in at least one grade band, surpassing the state’s initial goal. For subgroups, Delaware has seen the following progress:

- 58 percent of students of color and 51 percent of low-income students in elementary school have access to HQIM in mathematics.
- 65 percent of students of color and 67 percent of low-income students in middle school have access to HQIM in mathematics.
- 61 percent of students of color and 43 percent of low-income students in high school have access to HQIM in mathematics.

Promising Practice: Nebraska

Every student deserves the opportunity to learn from high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials to prepare for success in college, career, and civic life. This includes learning the content outlined in Nebraska’s content area standards, but also includes opportunities for students to discover and explore their passions within the context of their postsecondary interests. Through the [Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative](#), the Nebraska Department of Education and key partners are committed to providing statewide leadership that informs and supports local decisions related to curriculum and instructional materials.

Promising Practice: Rhode Island

Rhode Island has implemented a specific strategy for supporting Providence, its largest district, where it educates most of its low-income populations and students of color. So far, Rhode Island has seen the following progress in Providence schools:

- 22 elementary schools (76% of schools) are using HQIM in math and 14 elementary schools (48%) are using HQIM in English Language Arts (ELA).

Beyond Providence, the state has included in its budget funds to support other LEAs in identifying and implementing high-quality curriculum. Its series of quarterly “District Meetings” have been focused on curriculum, bringing all communities to the table to talk about why investing in quality is valuable for improving student outcomes. In some cases, the state has gone even further to invest in curriculum, helping to implement the Focus on K2 Kindergarten curriculum in more than 70 classrooms, with plans for further expansion.

Promising Practice: Wisconsin

Wisconsin’s High-Quality Instructional Materials & Professional Learning (IMPL) initiative is one of the state’s strategies for advancing its equity agenda and improving outcomes for all students in Wisconsin. This initiative is a cross-agency project involving agency staff from the areas of special education, educator effectiveness, literacy, mathematics, and Title I. The process of examining

instructional materials and the professional learning offered to teachers, and identifying areas for improvement fits within the state's larger focus on continuous improvement and can be utilized by districts to address deficiencies in these areas identified through root cause analysis. The IMPL initiative aims to improve support for all teachers by providing districts with information they need to select high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials in English language arts and mathematics and provide the corresponding professional learning that supports effective implementation of those materials. The goal of this continuous improvement strategy is to ensure all students have equitable access to the education necessary to achieve their full potential. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has partnered with external organizations to provide support to districts in the state through grants to assist them with further development in these areas. The Department of Public Instruction continues to engage with districts across the state and offer support as districts improve their instructional materials and professional learning as part of their overall continuous improvement plan.

8. VALUE PEOPLE: FOCUS ON TEACHERS AND LEADERS

In response to federal law, state chiefs have provided written assurance that low-income students and students of color will no longer be taught disproportionately by ineffective, inexperienced, or out-of-field teachers. Each state has already developed a plan to meet this assurance, but these plans can be strengthened. Implementation must be supported and aggressively monitored to ensure equitable access to effective teaching, and teachers must be prepared to teach our increasingly diverse student population. State leaders should focus on hiring more diverse teachers, principals, and system leaders to reflect changing student demographics; while most students in our schools now are children of color, the same is true for relatively few of our teachers and principals.

Promising Practice: Tennessee

The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is a professional development approach for teachers and principals to work together toward enhanced instruction to meet the needs of today's students through observation, constructive feedback, and student data. The model has been implemented statewide and focuses specifically on student growth to provide differentiated support for teachers and leaders within the system and make determinations about what actually happens inside the classroom. Subsequently, the model is continuously evaluated and assessed to improve upon its design and impact. The state's laser focus on what happens in the classroom, the results of teaching and learning between students and teachers, and the expectations and support provided by the leaders in the state are key contributors to the success of teaching quality in Tennessee.

Promising Practice: Delaware

Since about half of Delaware's novice educators are prepared by Delaware Educator Preparation Programs, the state launched Educator Preparation Program Reports after several years of deliberation to improve the quality and transparency of teacher preparation. These reports hold great implications and focus on teacher preparedness and strengthening the effectiveness of

classroom instruction. The 2018 biennial report shows progress made as a result of these efforts. Most notable are the findings related to efforts made by institutes of higher education to train and foster a more diverse class of future educators.

Promising Practice: Illinois

Ensuring that all students are taught by educators engaging in effective, culturally-responsive practice is mandatory in order to achieve educational equity. Beginning in April 2018, Illinois participated as one of ten states in CCSSO's Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers (DLRT) Initiative. Through a statewide application process, Illinois convened a 22-member DLRT Network, including representatives from K-12 teaching and administration, education policy, higher education, and current students. The new Illinois DLRT Network will develop standards for culturally-responsive teaching as its first project. The Illinois State Board of Education will partner with Westat to cultivate and manage its statewide DLRT Network which, alongside its work to formalize culturally-responsive practice, will engage members and stakeholders to support policies and programs to recruit, prepare, and induct more teachers of color.



Promising Practice: Kentucky

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has identified four priorities in its strategic plan: equity, achievement, collaboration, and integrity. Providing all students with equitable access to effective, experienced, and diverse educators is key to their achievement and success as members of a global society. Recruitment, development, and retention of an effective, diverse, and culturally-competent educator workforce is an urgent goal for the success of each Kentucky student, educator, school/district, and community.

Recognizing the state's pressing need for a more diverse teacher workforce, the KDE announced in January 2019 the creation of the [Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching](#) (KAET), a program designed to identify, support, and prepare a more diverse teacher candidate pool.

Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be a member of an underrepresented ethnic minority group;
- Be a graduate of Kentucky School for the Blind or Kentucky School for the Deaf;
- Be a former migratory agricultural worker or the child of a migratory agricultural worker;
- Be a current or former English learner;
- Be a first-generation college student;
- Demonstrate financial need through an expected family contribution within Pell eligibility; or
- Be a U.S. military veteran.

Through the program, KAET participants receive financial support and complete an Education Professional Standards Board-approved teacher education program in conjunction with ongoing mentorship by experienced Kentucky educators. The program is funded by a \$1 million per year allocation in the 2018 Kentucky state budget for educator quality and diversity through the teacher recruitment and retention program.

Participants of the program agree to teach one semester for each semester or summer term funded by a KAET award in one of Kentucky's public schools or a non-public school certified through the Kentucky Board of Education. If the students don't end up teaching in a public or certified non-public school in Kentucky, the amount they received through KAET will be converted into a loan.

Promising Practice: Virginia

In February 2019 the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) [awarded grants](#) to seven school districts to assist minority teachers with provisional licenses with tutoring and exam fees for the assessments required for full state licensure. The grants were authorized by the 2018 General Assembly in response to the August 2017 report of the Taskforce to Diversify Virginia's Educator Pipeline. The task force's recommendations included state assistance to help provisionally-licensed minority teachers attain full state certification.

9. IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING: FOCUS ON SCHOOL CULTURE, CLIMATE, AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Achieving equity means meeting the needs of every child, which includes providing a safe and supportive school environment, access to a well-rounded curriculum and appropriate technology, and regular examination of additional unmet needs. In addition to general culture and climate, there is a particular need to prioritize this work because students who are growing up in poverty are disproportionately exposed to trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACE) that affect their readiness to learn. Schools and staff responsible for educating these students need training and resources to create a level playing field in which students can achieve to their potential. School Improvement Grant plans and allocations are one way for states to start addressing these needs. Chiefs should communicate proactively about the lessons learned when addressing students with multiple ACE factors. Schools cannot and should not try to displace families or faith communities as sources of value and character development. However, schools must ensure students can learn in environments that are conducive to developing the skills, habits, and dispositions that support success in school and beyond. Without stifling local control or innovation, SEAs can elevate these issues and the crucial equity implications.

Promising Practice: Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Human Services partner on health and mental health funding and service initiatives throughout the commonwealth. The Office of Social Programs within the state of Pennsylvania operates the Medicaid School-Based ACCESS Program

(SBAP) in partnership with the Department of Education. Since 1992, the ACCESS program provides local education agencies with the opportunity to receive federal reimbursement through the Medicaid program for health-related services that are documented within the Individual Education Program (IEP) plans for students enrolled in Medicaid. Funds may be used to support the education of any special education student, not only those who are Medicaid eligible. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has partnered with the Department of Education to identify and support the use of funds to be utilized onsite within schools, including funding for services such as school-based mental health clinicians, community health workers, school-based health clinics, and innovative behavioral health programs designed to meet local school and community needs.

Promising Practice: Montana

The Montana Office of Public Instruction has created [Teacher Learning HUB](#) courses on trauma and trauma-informed practices as well as child sexual abuse and mental health. This provides all Montana educators with free professional development opportunities regardless of where they live in the state. The office is running a high school forum for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS)/Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) implementation in the fall of 2019, partnering on a statewide school safety summit in August, and has launched the formation of a workgroup to build a comprehensive school behavioral threat assessment process. In addition, the office has partnered with the University of Montana to create a 3-credit post-graduate course for new administrators focused on school safety which encompasses physical and emotional safety topics such as school climate.



Additionally, the office's school improvement teams have been fully up and running during the 2018-2019 school year assisting Montana's comprehensive support schools with implementing their individualized school improvement plans. Most of these schools are on American Indian reservations, which are rural and isolated, and where students have experienced unique challenges related to historical trauma, violence, and human and drug trafficking.

Promising Practice: Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Department of Education hosted a statewide summit on trauma-informed instruction. The workshop provided an overview of trauma's impact on learning and a focus on CARE (Child-Adult Relationship Enhancement) training that can be effectively implemented in a classroom setting and contribute to positive relationships across the entire school environment. The summit also addressed how teachers and other school staff affected by student experiences can improve personal resilience and decrease compassion fatigue.

Promising Practice: New Jersey

During his time at the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet has emphasized the importance of educating the whole child and how social-emotional learning, or SEL, helps educators achieve that.

SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

In spring 2019, the NJDOE will host an SEL conference at the Rutgers University-New Brunswick campus where teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, and educational leaders throughout the state can share best practices on how to help students succeed and learn practical applications of SEL and positive school climate strategies, initiatives, programs, and resources.

In addition, NJDOE has released comprehensive guidance to help school districts ensure a supportive and nondiscriminatory environment for transgender students. The guidance addresses the following areas: developing definitions and terms, maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment, use of facilities and participation in activities.

Promising Practice: Wisconsin

Wisconsin recognizes that school mental health services and supports are important for addressing the mental health needs of students and improving the learning environment. To be college- and career-ready, students need to be both academically prepared and socially and emotionally competent.

As a support for schools, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) developed the School Mental Health Framework which provides key elements to implement comprehensive school mental health systems in districts and schools across Wisconsin. The Framework is designed to be integrated into districts' multi-level systems of support, which are rooted in equity. Additionally, the DPI collaborated with representatives from school districts, state agencies, advocacy groups, professional organizations, and community mental health organizations during each stage of the development process to produce Wisconsin's PK-Adult Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies, which provide educators and youth service professionals with essential tools and resources for implementing a comprehensive approach to SEL. The Social and Emotional Learning Competencies Guide addresses why SEL in schools is essential to student success and provides comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate benchmarks to educators and youth service professionals.

Another significant way Wisconsin supports districts and schools in focusing on school culture and climate is through the Online Professional Learning System which was designed to support schools as they embark on the transformative process of becoming Trauma-Sensitive Schools. The

DPI recognizes that schools can become a protective factor for students who have been exposed to trauma and the agency has developed resources aimed at increasing the social, emotional, and academic skills of the entire student body.

Promising Practice: Wyoming

The Wyoming Department of Education administers [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (21CCLC) program grants to:

- Create community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools;
- Meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects;
- Offer a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement the regular academic programs of students and;
- Offer literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Grantees received priority points for computer science (having measurable outcomes), integrating college, career, and military ready activities. Points were also given for looping in effective family engagement strategies around those activities.

Additionally, ESSA provides flexibility to principals in an applicant district or community-based organization to determine if a school should be served based on particular needs (drop-outs, graduation rate, or lack of opportunity for youth development), even if the issues are not schoolwide or identified through accountability. This provides more opportunities to address all the faces of equity for student success.

10. EMPOWER STUDENT OPTIONS: ENSURE FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS THAT ALIGN TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

Student and parent agency are an important part of achieving educational equity. All students, regardless of their background, should have options regarding how and where they go to school, considering the needs of local communities. Regardless of where they live, students should have access to advanced coursework and a variety of educational choices that meet their learning needs.

Promising Practice: Florida

In Florida, state policy requires mandatory intra-district and inter-district choice. School districts and charter schools must enroll any student subject to capacity, and must identify school capacity determinations on their websites. Participating districts must adhere to federal desegregation requirements and must maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance.

Preferential treatment via the state's policy is given to the following groups:

- Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders
- Children relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone
- Children who move because of a court-ordered custody change
- Students residing in the school district

In addition, each school district must do the following:

- Allow parents to declare school preferences, especially for placing siblings in the same school
- Provide a lottery for school placement that includes an appeals process for hardship cases
- Maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance
- Provide parents of students in multiple session schools priority access
- Address the availability of transportation
- Allow transfer students to be immediately eligible to participate in extracurricular activities

Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship program also provides low-income families a \$750 transportation scholarship to attend a public school or a lab school outside the family's district of residence.

Additionally, Florida created a high-performing designation for charter schools that achieve academic and financial excellence and allows those charter schools to replicate under a streamlined process.

Promising Practice: District of Columbia

The District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), has institutionalized the way school districts accept students through the District's unified lottery, known as My School DC. The lottery policy enables intra-district choice for all students and families; it also provides students the ability to apply in one place for nearly any of the District's 200+ public schools. Students submit a rank-ordered list of schools they like, and My School DC determines matches based on a random lottery number and any preferences a student has at the desired school, such as a sibling already attending.



Promising Practice: Rhode Island

Rhode Island in 2016 launched the [PrepareRI](#) career readiness initiative with support from the Governor's Workforce Board the state's Career Technical Education (CTE) Board of Trustees, which was formed in 2014 to provide oversight and quality control for CTE.

PrepareRI brings together multiple state and local programs for career pathways development and expansion. With the help of educators and employers throughout the state, PrepareRI aims to achieve four goals by 2020:

- Ensure that all students have access to career and technical education programs;
- Ensure that all high school students graduate with college credit or an industry credential;
- Ensure all high school students have access to work-based learning opportunities; and
- Ensure alignment of state investments in career pathway programs.

The early success of the PrepareRI initiative is attributable in part to Rhode Island's statewide course choice policy. Course choice enables students to earn college credit or industry-recognized credentials through dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), or work-based learning (WBL) opportunities at any school district, postsecondary institution, or other eligible provider across the state. This policy significantly expands learners' access to advanced coursework and other high-quality learning experiences.

Prior to launching the New Skills for Youth initiative statewide, Rhode Island engaged local employers to review course offerings and established standards for student achievement, laying the foundation for a strong career preparation system. With the help of these local employers and PrepareRI ambassadors, Rhode Island has significantly expanded its WBL and CTE opportunities, and refined best practices to ensure equitable access for students throughout the state. Additionally, by repurposing funds that were previously used to start new CTE programs, Rhode Island has awarded \$1 million in CTE Innovation and Equity Grants for new or existing programs designed to address equity gaps in particular programs and/or with targeted student sub-groups.

CONCLUSION

This set of promising practices, while not exhaustive, shows the progress states are making toward creating a more equitable education system for each and every child. The work reflects the unique context and opportunities in each state. As an organization, CCSSO is deeply committed to supporting chiefs as they advance these equity commitments through concrete action, and we will continue to share the work to advance educational opportunities for students across the country.



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