



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Dear DC community,

DC has made tremendous progress in educational outcomes for students. One guiding element of our work is the state plan that the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) submits to the US Department of Education that outlines statewide plans for education, including how the District of Columbia will support specific groups of students and define quality schools. From Jan. 30 to March 3, OSSE will launch a public comment period, including a [series of community-based discussions](#) about DC's new State Education Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed ESSA into law. The new legislation, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, builds on key areas of educational progress achieved in recent years with the intention of ensuring that all students have equitable access to a high-quality education. ESSA offers new flexibilities to states and opportunities for DC regarding supports for students and schools, teacher and leader training and evaluations, and statewide student assessment. DC's plan will include these areas, and a major component will address a common system for rating and reporting on all DC public schools and public charter schools.

Providing consistent and clear information about all schools will help meet the needs of families in the DC. Common reporting allows us to learn from successful schools, and provide supports to our struggling schools so we can help them improve. We believe this approach will ensure better outcomes for our students, by accelerating progress for those who are furthest behind.

As a requirement of the law, all states must submit a State Education Plan that outlines how its schools will put ESSA's requirements into action. OSSE is preparing this plan and soliciting public comment prior to submission to the US Department of Education in early April. The public comment period on the District of Columbia's draft State Education Plan will open Jan. 30 and close March 3. During this time, OSSE will host a series of community engagement sessions in each of the eight wards of the city to gather public feedback on the state plan.

We look forward to seeing you and sharing more about our State Education Plan at an upcoming community engagement session. With your input, we are confident that the DC will be guided by a plan that will help us reach our goal of **being the fastest improving state and city in the nation in student achievement outcomes.**

To read the draft DC State Education Plan and find more information on the development of the plan during the last year, visit OSSE's ESSA webpage at [OSSE.dc.gov/essa](https://osse.dc.gov/essa). Public

comment may be submitted by emailing OSSE.ESSA@dc.gov or completing the survey available on OSSE.dc.gov/essa by midnight on March 3, 2017.

See below for more information on:

- I. Upcoming Community Engagement Opportunities
- II. Context on the STAR – School Transparency and Reporting - System of School Accountability
- III. Guide to the Overall DC State Education Plan

Sincerely,
 Hanseul Kang
 State Superintendent

I. Upcoming Community Engagement Opportunities

Ward	Date	Time	Location	Registration Link
1& 2	Feb. 7	7-8:30 p.m.	Cardozo High School 1200 Clifton St. NW	http://bit.ly/2j1zR6d
3	Feb. 8	7-8:30 p.m.	Wilson High School 3950 Chesapeake St. NW	http://bit.ly/2kowBIV
4	Feb. 16	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Barnard Elementary School 430 Decatur St. NW	http://bit.ly/2j1Gtlf
5	Feb. 22	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Brookland Middle School 1150 Michigan Ave. NE	http://bit.ly/2koK113
6	Feb. 27	6-8 p.m.	Capitol Hill Arts Workshop 545 Seventh St. SE	http://bit.ly/2jZx6C1
7	Feb. 23	6-7:30 p.m.	Department of Employment Services 4058 Minnesota Ave. NE	http://bit.ly/2koLx3a
8	Feb. 28	6-8 p.m.	Anacostia Neighborhood Library 1800 Good Hope Road SE	http://bit.ly/2jOkMct

OSSE has already hosted more than 50 meetings with participation by more than 100 organizations. If you are interested in learning more about ESSA and OSSE’s engagement and development efforts to date, visit OSSE’s ESSA webpage at OSSE.dc.gov/essa.

II. Context on the STAR – School Transparency and Reporting – System of School Accountability

Having a common accountability system will allow us to provide consistent and clear information to parents, families, and community members about school options and the quality of schools. Just as importantly, a common accountability system helps us identify our highest performing schools that are best serving our students so that we can recognize, learn from, and emulate them, while also identifying our schools that are struggling the

most and need greater supports and interventions. This collective understanding of the performance of our schools will set the foundation for informed collaboration and meaningful learning and improvement among our educators and leaders across DC. We believe that a common accountability system will create the foundation for and drive the progress in student outcomes that we know is possible and that our students need and deserve, through these two key avenues, by 1) providing parents and families with the choices they need to make informed decisions for their children, and 2) providing educators, leaders and policymakers with a collective understanding of our schools' outcomes, including our highest- and lowest-performing schools, to form the basis for real collaboration and learning, as well as focused supports and interventions.

The STAR—School Transparency and Reporting—system of school accountability described in this plan will serve both of these purposes, and is based on thoughtful, purposeful design choices made after engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and conducting substantial research and analysis. Among its key features are:

- An **overall rating** for each school, ranging from one star (lowest) to five stars (highest), based on multiple measures. This annual, overall rating will be calculated primarily by looking at the overall performance of all students in the school, but also by placing substantial weight on the performance of specific groups of students. If there are gaps for certain groups of students, schools can use this information to understand how they can better serve them to ensure all students receive a high-quality education.
- A focus on the academic outcomes we want for our students, with a **balanced view of academic progress and achievement**. We believe our collective mission in education is to ensure students graduate from our schools with the skills they will need to succeed in college, career, and life. Given that, we believe it's essential to understand and gauge the extent to which students within a school have attained foundational academic skills such as the ability to understand and analyze literary and technical texts. Our system incorporates multiple ways to recognize and value the progress schools are making with students, including two different measures of school-level growth in academic outcomes. At the same time, we balance this with a clear focus on the extent to which schools are preparing students to achieve at the performance level that will ultimately position them to succeed after their pre-K-12 educations.
- A recognition of the **importance of the school environment**, and concrete measurements of that environment. Many of these measures already exist in current reporting and accountability systems used in DC and serve as additional important indications of how schools are serving students. For example, reenrollment gives schools credit for establishing an environment in which students and families want to remain at the school the following year. In addition, given the strong correlation between attendance and student

outcomes, our system rewards schools with students accessing as much instructional time as possible.

- **Additional indicators that broaden our view of school performance** and seek to capture the many ways that schools support students. For example, we have included in the system the extent to which high schools make Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate options available to students and help them succeed in these challenging programs; a new alternate graduation metric that credits schools that support students in graduating from high school even when they need some additional time to do so; and CLASS measures that assess the extent to which pre-Kindergarten classrooms provide high-quality interactions between teachers and students in the areas of classroom organization, instructional support, and emotional support.
- For the launch of the STAR system, a focus primarily on **currently available and established measures**, with a commitment to continuing to explore additional measures in future years. Given current data availability, some measures that could be valuable are not included in the system at this time, and may be explored in the future pending further data, analysis, and policy consideration. Specifically, we will conduct further review and engagement with stakeholders by the 2018-19 school year for possible inclusion of additional measures (see 4.1A for additional detail). In particular, we are deeply committed to incorporating academic progress/growth on academic assessments into our high school framework in the future.

We will publicly report on the results of our new STAR system for school accountability and issue new school report cards in fall 2018, based on data from the 2017-18 school year. Based on the results of these ratings, we plan to celebrate and recognize schools that are showing exemplary results—e.g., we may highlight schools making outstanding academic progress, or those that are best supporting their English learners in language acquisition—and help other schools learn from and replicate their success. At the same time, for those schools that are struggling in their current outcomes for students, we will provide additional resources and supports to help them improve. Specifically, ESSA requires that we identify certain schools for comprehensive support and for targeted support. See sections 4.2 and 4.3 for additional detail. Over the course of the next year, we will also be seeking community input on the design and development of the new school report card. The report card will include additional reporting required under ESSA as well as other points of information on schools that families may find valuable beyond what is included in the STAR system.

Designing and implementing a common accountability system is a challenging and ambitious task. But it is one that we believe is essential to furthering the progress that has been taking place in DC. As in so many other areas, we believe DC can lead the nation in creating a system that better supports our parents and families in making knowledgeable choices for their children, that allows our schools to improve faster than ever, and most

importantly that has the best possible chance of providing all of our students with the incredible education they deserve.

III. Guide to the Overall DC State Education Plan

In addition to discussion of a common accountability model to enable a citywide view of how all of our schools are doing, our plan includes five other main sections that provide responses to the following key questions:

- Long-term goals: *Where do we want to go?*

As discussed above, while there has been much progress in student performance in DC, the reality is that we currently have deep and persistent gaps between specific groups of students. We believe that every child is capable of learning and achieving at high levels, and yet our current results as an education system do not yet reflect this core belief and truth. Our goals chart out an ambitious, yet feasible path toward ensuring every child in every corner of the city is successful. We will work persistently and urgently toward cutting gaps in half over 10 years by setting an ambitious growth trajectory, particularly for the students who are furthest behind. At the same time, our interim progress goals for the short-term recognize where our schools are currently performing while pushing for substantial improvement year over year. Under No Child Left Behind, we saw how goals could lose their meaning if they were perceived as unrealistic and unattainable. Setting ambitious, yet achievable goals will help ensure buy-in from schools and educators as they engage in the hard, day-to-day work of improving outcomes for all students. Above all, we will maintain a relentless belief that each individual student can achieve at high levels and work toward a system that supports each and every student in doing so.

- Consultation and performance management: *How are we hearing from the community and making sure we are on track?*

Our DC State Education Plan could not have been drafted without the input of a dynamic and broad range of stakeholders. Community surveys and more than 50 meetings attended by more than 100 organizations contributed to the strategies and decisions reflected in this plan.

Our approach to performance management continues to build on efforts underway to streamline the process by which LEAs apply for and receive federal funding. For monitoring, a “risk-based approach” that reviews fiscal, programmatic, and other factors to differentiate the frequency and depth of review both reduces burden for LEAs and allows the state, LEAs, and schools to direct time and resources on oversight for those that need it most while providing greater flexibilities and opportunities for LEAs that are on track.

- Academic assessments: *How can we measure student progress?*

OSSE believes that it is important to measure our students’ progress annually with assessments aligned to academic standards that help us determine how well our students

across the city are being prepared for college and careers after high school. ESSA maintains the requirement for students to take statewide assessments in English language arts and mathematics, in grades 3-8, and for one assessment in high school. In DC, we have been implementing a suite of next generation assessments that are designed to measure the knowledge and skills that matter most for our students, including PARCC in English language arts and math, as well as the DC Science assessment to measure students' science content mastery. In our ESSA plan, we plan to continue with the momentum around implementation of these assessments that better align to the expectations of how our students need to be performing in order to be ready for college and careers. No new assessments are proposed in our state plan, and we plan to continue to support schools to integrate implementation of statewide assessments in the least burdensome way possible (e.g., through testing window options and business rules).

- Supporting excellent educators: *How can we make sure every child has a great teacher?*

Research shows that effective teaching is the most critical in-school factor for school improvement and student success. Therefore, DC's plan includes a number of strategies to attract, keep, and grow excellent educators. Our state plan builds on DC's initial plan for ensuring that all children have access to excellent educators, which was finalized in 2015. Key strategies of this work include the creation of multiple pathways to certification, streamlined licensure procedures, innovative educator policies and opt-in evaluation tools, strategic analysis of school staffing patterns, and high-quality professional development.

- Supporting all students: *How do we make sure the students who need the most help are getting it?*

In addition to educators, our plan describes how the state and schools will work to ensure specific groups of students – students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, students who are in foster care, neglected, delinquent or at-risk – receive the support they need to be successful. In addition to ensuring that schools are clear regarding the policies, procedures, and practices they need to have in place to support students, as required under ESSA, we will work with LEAs to implement additional reporting on the outcomes of specific groups of students. This data will help OSSE support schools through providing technical assistance and high-quality professional development in areas where they are struggling and ensure that all children have access to the help they need.