



## Stakeholder Engagement in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

### “People Support What They Help Create”<sup>1</sup>

#### *Guidance for Chief State School Officers and Local Superintendents and their potential allies at the state and local level*

**Purpose:** To outline best practices for planning for ESSA implementation at the state and local level

**Defining Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholder engagement is a vehicle for bringing together key organizations and institutions that represent educators and families as well as representatives of the community who have a stake in the law and also bring particular assets and expertise that can support the education of our young people.

**What the Law Requires and What This Means:** ESSA names the following groups to be consulted for ESSA plans:

A) State Title I planning: Governor, members of the State legislature and State board of education, local educational agencies (including those located in rural areas), representatives of Indian tribes located in the State, teachers, principals, other school leaders, charter school leaders (if the State has charter schools), specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, other staff, and parents.

B) Local Title I planning: teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (in a local educational agency that has charter schools), administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), other appropriate school personnel, and parents.

C) Local Title IV planning: parents, teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, students, community-based organizations, local government representatives, Indian tribes or tribal organizations (where applicable), charter school teachers, principals, and other school leaders, and others with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of this subpart.

What This Means:

- ESSA emphasizes the role of educators and parents as important stakeholders to engage.
- While the law only requires engagement of community/community partners in Title IV plans, we believe that community partners bring a wealth of assets and expertise in their work with young people and as such are essential to addressing new required indicators in the law like chronic absence and school discipline that impact student outcomes.
- There is a requirement that the state plan be coordinated with programs supported under other federal laws (IDEA, Perkins Career and Technical Education, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Head Start, etc.). This may open a window of opportunity for groups working in this space.
- We urge leaders at the state and local levels to model for districts and schools strong and continuous family and community stakeholder engagement that will contribute greatly to your state and district’s academic goals.

**What we advocate:** From the community schools perspective state and local leaders are best served by designing a consultation process that casts a wide net. This includes the following kinds of groups: educators, parents/families, young people, local government, United Ways, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, philanthropy, private sector, and faith-based institutions, among others.

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<sup>1</sup> From Margaret Wheatley’s [“Ten Principles for Supporting Healthy Communities”](#)



Here are three principles that should guide stakeholder engagement:

- **Inclusiveness:** Engaging a wide range of people and organizations with a stake in the education of young people.
- **Sustained Consultation:** Seeing stakeholder engagement as a sustained process leading to partnership and continuing support -- not a one-time only proposition.
- **Results-Focused Partnerships:** Engagement is the first step in the process of building long-term partnerships with key institutions and individuals that can help the school systems deal with challenging issues that affect its ability to prepare its young people to be ready for college, career and citizenship.

## Take Action

### At the State and Local Levels:

- 1) **Follow your vision, not the letter of the law:** You are not limited by what the law says about who to consult with to develop your state and local plans. Think about other agencies like health, housing, and child welfare you may want to include, as well as community school stakeholders including nonprofits like educators, parents/families, young people, local government, United Ways, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, teacher unions, philanthropy, private sector, faith-based institutions and others, who will bring expertise and different perspectives on how to ensure student success.
- 2) **Look at your data and consider who can contribute to dealing with tough issues,** e.g. trauma, health issues, chronic absence, disparate discipline rates. These are issues that must be tackled together by school and community stakeholders.
- 3) **Listen to parents and families:** Ensure that parent/family stakeholder engagement is robust. Invite as stakeholders parents/families who reflect the demographics of your state/district to ensure equitable representation of demographics. Include but look beyond parents associated with traditional organizations like the PTA; engage parents who are affiliated with education organizing groups, parent leadership programs, and disability groups representing parents.
- 4) **Include in ESSA planning individuals who are representative of an array of community school stakeholders and who have access to a wide constituency.** These include community school stakeholders listed above and in particular teacher unions, United Ways, and state and local advocacy groups.
- 5) **Lay out a process that will allow stakeholders who are not formally at the planning table to be heard:** Schedule listening tours, public forums, and other types of events to give the public a chance to weigh in. Allow people to post their input/comments on your website for public review.

### At the State Level:

Through this process, **establish a collaborative leadership group** (e.g. children's cabinet, inter-agency council, ) that brings together various agencies (Education, health, labor, housing, etc.) and the other stakeholders involved in your ESSA planning process to identify common outcomes and agree on a plan to pursue them collectively by aligning resources and strategies. In this way, you can **model the partnerships at the state/local level that are emblematic of local community school initiatives.**

### At the local level:

**Make this stakeholder engagement ongoing,** not just for ESSA planning. Convene this group of community and inter-agency stakeholders regularly to get input and feedback on ESSA implementation and to pursue deeper partnerships. This will encourage your peers at the school level to create the same kind of collaborative leadership structure.

## Resources:

- [Engaging All Leaders Infographic](#), [Community Schools Collaborative Leadership Structure Graphic](#)
- Community school infographics that illustrate the community school strategy: from [Baltimore, MD](#); [Oakland, CA](#); and the [United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley](#)