Goals for today

• Discuss why what states choose to measure matters
• Talk about things to keep in mind as you’re thinking about indicators, and some questions to ask
• Share resources you can use in your advocacy
• Talk with two of our partners about why this work is so important
In designing their accountability systems, states will have to wrestle with many big questions...

- What goals will we set for our schools?
- How will states and districts support struggling schools?
- How do we decide which schools are doing well and which ones aren’t?
The very first question that states will have to answer, however, is...

What information will we use to measure school performance?
There’s a lot of excitement right now about the possibility of including more measures in school ratings.

But as with a lot of things in ESSA, where there is opportunity, there is also peril.
Decisions about what to measure matter, a lot.
States have the opportunity to select measures that really matter for student success – and that would incentivize schools to improve achievement for all groups of students.
One of the most important things that accountability systems can do is set expectations

• If we measure the wrong things, we risk setting the wrong expectations;

• If we measure too many things, we risk setting too many expectations – and so having none of them matter;

• And, if we put pressure on measures that are weak, we risk letting schools look like they are meeting expectations, even when they’re not serving their students.
So what do you need to keep in mind as your state works to decide what to measure – and especially, what to include in school ratings?
What does ESSA require?
Under ESSA, states have to continue to measure proficiency rates on state assessments and graduation rates.

But the law also requires some new indicators.
The law requires states to rate schools each year based on the following measures, all of which (except for progress toward English language proficiency) have to be disaggregated by student group:

- **Academic achievement**: How proficiency rates in reading/language arts and math for all students and each student group compare with state-set goals. For high schools, states can also include student growth as part of this indicator.

- **Another academic indicator**:
  - **For high schools**, a measure of how graduation rates for all students and each student group compare with state-set goals.
  - **For elementary and middle schools**, this measure may include individual student growth or another statewide, valid, and reliable indicator of student learning.

- **English-language proficiency**: A measure of the progress that a school’s English learners are making toward English proficiency.

- **Additional indicator of school quality or academic success**: Another valid, reliable, and statewide indicator of school quality or student success.
Additional indicator of school quality or student success.

Note how nothing, NOTHING, in the law says that this indicator has to be “non-academic”
All indicators have to...

Be measureable by student group

Meaningfully differentiate between schools
What school ratings can do... and what they can’t
School ratings can do some really important things. They can:

- **Communicate expectations** for preparing all groups of students for college or a meaningful career;
- Communicate to educators, parents, and the public how **schools are performing against these expectations**, both overall and for each group of students; and
- They **signal that improvement is needed** whenever outcomes for any group consistently do not meet expectations.
But what school ratings CAN’T do is just as important.

• A school rating, on its own, can’t tell schools how to improve student outcomes
• A school rating, on its own, can’t tell parents everything they need to know about a school.
• And a rating, on its own, can’t tell us everything we want to know about what students experience in school.
We have to keep what ratings can and can’t do in mind – otherwise, it’s tempting to try to put everything into a rating.
If we try to measure everything, we wind up measuring nothing.
The more things we try to measure, the less each one counts...
That’s a concern in general...

But it’s an even bigger concern if we care — as we all do — about how schools are doing on each thing we measure for each group of students that they serve.
School ratings are not the only “bite at the apple.”
There are other ways to measure and report on things we all care about…

- Needs Assessment or Diagnostic
- School Report Card
Just because something is important doesn’t mean it has to be part of a school’s rating – and the fact that it’s not in the rating doesn’t mean it’s not important.
There are things we all care about that just don’t belong in a school rating...

• Measures that schools cannot control – like school funding or quality of facilities.
• Measures that cannot be disaggregated by student group, like teacher quality.
• Measures that could be easily gamed or corrupted – like incidence of violence, and potentially, survey results.
Minimum Parameters for Including an Indicator in School Ratings

When deciding whether to include an indicator in school ratings, ask yourself these five questions.
1. Is the indicator focused on students?

- A school’s rating should reflect how schools are serving their students.
- While measures of staff satisfaction or teacher absenteeism may be important for a school’s needs assessment, for example, they should not affect a school’s rating.
2. Can it be measured by student group?

- Under ESSA, all indicators that go into a school rating have to be disaggregated by student group.

  **CANNOT be disaggregated:**
  - Number of AP classes

  **CAN be disaggregated:**
  - Percent of students enrolling in AP classes

- Indicators that **cannot** be disaggregated can be part of a school’s needs assessment and/or report card, but cannot be part of its rating.
3. Is the indicator aligned with readiness for post high-school success?

• A key goal of accountability is to push schools to focus on preparing all students for success beyond high school, particularly readiness for college and/or a meaningful career.

• All states should be able to show that any indicator included in school ratings is aligned with that ultimate goal.
4. Does the indicator differentiate between schools?

- This means that an indicator can’t make all schools look the same.

**DOES NOT differentiate between schools**

- Average Daily Attendance

**DOES differentiate between schools**

- Chronic absenteeism
5. Can the indicator hold the weight of accountability?

• When an indicator gets included in a school’s rating, schools have a strong incentive to look good on that measure.

• That’s generally a good thing – but some measures can be “improved” without making meaningful changes for students.

• To ensure that ratings reflect how well schools are serving their students, they should be based on indicators that are difficult to game.
Resources you can use in your advocacy

Indicators: What to include in school ratings

Indicator “Traffic Light” Table

Indicator-Specific Factsheets
Indicator-specific factsheets...

Summarize what research and data tell us about an indicator, and highlight benefits and considerations related to rating schools on that indicator

Raise questions to ask if your state is considering including the indicator in school ratings
Our Panelists

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