

Standards, Assessments and Definitions of Well-Rounded Education

ESSA requires schools to provide all students with a well-rounded education, and allows the use of ESSA funding to do so. The definition of a well-rounded education is broad, and can include health, PE and any other subject the state or LEA determines will provide an enriching academic experience. This replaces the concept of core subjects as described in NCLB.

Each state plan must provide an assurance that the state has adopted challenging academic content standards for math, reading or language arts and science — but states can develop and implement standards and assessments for content areas such as social and emotional learning (SEL), health education and physical education, or to refine existing standards to make deliberate connections to human health and well-being, such as thorough science standards. Developing standards and assessments on these content areas will also support the collection of statewide data on these issues and their possible inclusion in state accountability systems.

Best Practices

- SEAs use best practices and evidence to guide the development of developmentally-appropriate standards for health-related subject matter, including SEL, physical education, and health education.
- SEAs provide guidance and technical assistance to LEAs to support implementation, and create benchmarks, curricular guidance, and other support as needed.

- LEAs develop partnerships with state and local agencies to connect to ongoing efforts to help students connect to career competencies and pathways.
- SEAs and LEAs identify, collect, and disseminate examples of best practices and “what works” in their state, and create opportunities for state education policymakers to share and exchange ideas.

Resources

The [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL) offers a range of resources for developing social emotional learning [standards, frameworks, and competencies](#), as well as [assessment of standards](#).

State Spotlight: New York

New York State’s ESSA plan includes a significant emphasis on SEL and overall student wellbeing. The New York State Department of Education worked with the New York State Safe Schools Task Force to develop a School Climate Index in 2018, and increased the available resources for providing educational components on mental health and SEL. New York also has associated [benchmarks](#) provided for voluntary use at the early elementary (K-3), late elementary (4-5), middle school (6-8), early high school (9-10), and late high school (11-12) levels.