

State Accountability Systems to Support the Health and Learning Connection

Accountability systems are used by SEAs to determine how LEAs are serving their students and meeting the state's priorities. The systems essentially create a ranked list of schools, where the lowest performers are put into a group that receives intense support from the SEA through a plan for improvement that is informed by a needs assessment. By including health and wellness indicators connected to learning in the accountability systems, states explicitly validate the importance of these issues and require that districts and schools address identified needs. Choosing the most meaningful and appropriate measures is an essential part of ESSA implementation. There should be a particular focus on what schools, administrators, and teachers actually have the ability to control and affect; conversely, indicators that are easy to accomplish without making significant improvements in the school health environment may not result in actual impact.

Best Practices

- State education plans incorporate clearly defined measures that provide meaningful, actionable data for improving achievement and increasing equity.
- SEAs provide support to districts to understand,

collect, and analyze accountability data.

- SEAs engage stakeholders to consider what additional measures of student success and school quality might be included in future years, and assess how these could be used and applied.
- SEAs collaborate with other state agencies, such as state health departments and state departments of mental health, which might collect complementary data.
- SEAs work to understand and analyze any unintended consequences of including a measure in the accountability system.
- SEAs seek guidance from national experts, partners and stakeholders, and provide technical assistance to LEAs as they integrate health and wellbeing into their practice.

Resources

HSC and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation created guides to help states consider different metrics, including: [Chronic Absenteeism](#), [School Climate](#), [Social and Emotional Learning](#), [School Connectedness](#) and [School Discipline](#).

State Spotlight: Connecticut

Since 2011, Connecticut has been reforming its education system with an emphasis on targeting resources to areas of greatest need, culminating in the state's five year strategic education plan, [Ensuring Equity: Excellence for all Connecticut Students](#). In addition to learning goals, the state's plan prioritizes meeting student's non-academic needs — including mental health, nutrition and physical activity — so they are healthy and ready to learn. The state's accountability system incorporates data that districts were already collecting, and includes measures of both chronic absenteeism and physical fitness. The strategic plan was developed with extensive stakeholder input, including families, educators, business leaders and community members representing a diverse array of the state's residents and organizations.

Connecticut used this strategic plan and planning process to help define its ESSA plan, including policies that address attendance and chronic absenteeism, discipline and trauma. The state's ESSA plan also includes an Early Indication Tool that creates district- and school-level dashboards with specific information about students at risk, such as students in special education, alternative school students or English Language Learners. For schools identified for improvement, the state provides support to the districts to create plans with strategic focus areas, which may include chronic absenteeism and lead to health-related interventions.