

2016 Washington Policy Seminar: Presidential Politics and Education Policy

3:05-3:40 National Forum on Education: Rethinking Accountability

Directions: At your table, designate a facilitator who will keep track of the time, keep the group on task, and take down key discussion points in your group to share with the entire EPFP community during the debriefing portion of the program (3:40-3:55).

Background: How does federal policy on accountability and push for equity affect the states? In addition to indicators of academic success, the new federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires states to use at least one "indicator of school quality or student success" that "allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance" and "is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide," in their accountability systems. Schools must also be able to disaggregate data related to that indicator to show how it affects students in different subpopulations: those from all racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, children from low-income families, and English-language learners. The law lists a few examples of possible indicators that states may consider:

1. Student engagement
2. Educator (teacher) engagement
3. Student completion of advanced coursework
4. Postsecondary readiness
5. School climate and safety
6. School attendance (Chronic Absence)

Activity: Which non-academic indicator will you pick from these 6 options? Think about:

- Which indicator you would select and why? Which indicator is most likely to also drive school improvement?
- How would you measure the indicator? How would this indicator better inform the state on the individual student performance and that of schools and districts?
- Who are the diverse stakeholders who will be affected by this decision and how will they be affected?
- Why is the selected indicator the most appropriate for your state?

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4:10-4:40 National Forum on Education: Addressing Equity

Directions: At your table, designate a facilitator (cannot be a person who served in that role during the first activity) who will keep track of the time, keep the group on task, and take down key discussion points in your group to share with the entire EPFP community during the debriefing portion of the program (4:40-4:50).

Background: The 2013 National Equity and Excellence Commission report, [*For Each and Every Child*](#), recommends:

1. Improving school finance and efficiency via federal and state roles (recommendations include, for example):
 - a. Adopt and implement a school finance system that provides equitable and sufficient funding for all students to achieve state content and performance standards
 - b. Develop performance evidence and update their finance systems to respond to changes in academic standards, student demographics, program research, costs, and other factors
 - c. Ensure that funding is equitable and publicly reported for all public schools in the state and district
 - d. Promote the development of high-quality programs for special-needs students
 - e. Fund systems that use technology to enhance instruction and deliver high-quality education
2. Attracting and training top talent in schools (recommendations include, for example):
 - a. Ensure that teachers and teaching teams have the knowledge, time and teaching resources to develop strategies and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of each student and accelerate student improvement and achievement
 - b. Ensure that teacher training and professional development programs are tailored to meet the needs of today's contemporary classrooms
3. Ensuring access to high-quality early childhood education (recommendations include, for example):
 - a. Head Start, Early Head Start, etc. are aligned to the research on effective practices in early education
 - b. Ensuring that all children receive high-quality care and early education is as much about best practice as it is about efficient use of resources

4. Meeting the needs of students in high-poverty communities (recommendations include, for example):
 - a. States, in developing their finance formulas, should support implementation of dropout-prevention programs and high-quality alternative education to provide appropriate educational settings for those students who have not been successful in traditional learning environments
 - b. States should be encouraged to reform their rules pertaining to school discipline
 - c. Local school boards should ensure that enrollment and assignment policies promote equity.
5. Governance and accountability to improve equity and excellence (recommendations include, for example):
 - a. Develop mechanisms—along with increased organizational capacity and expertise—to intervene when districts and schools are in fiscal crisis or when they chronically and consistently fail to provide quality educational resources to ensure students graduate from high school ready for college and careers
 - b. Establish a process for replacing chronically ineffective school boards with oversight boards or special masters when weak governance is clearly contributing to a district’s persistent underperformance

Activity: Pick one equity recommendation to focus on. Think about:

- Why did you make this selection?
- How are your states currently addressing the selected issue?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in realizing the selection?