



**District of Columbia State Board of Education
Every Student Succeeds Act Task Force**

Final Report
June 19, 2019

Executive Summary

In May 2017, the D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE) approved the creation of a task force comprised of District of Columbia residents, education experts, and other community stakeholders that would work to advise SBOE’s elected representatives and the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. The task force met on a monthly basis for nearly two years, from August 2017 through June 2019. This report contains a brief overview of the activities of the ESSA Task Force over that time frame, and remarks and recommendations from each of the task force’s three committees.

The ESSA state plan and the formation of the task force

Signed into law by President Obama in December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, replacing the previous 2002 authorization known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).¹ ESSA returned substantial authority to state education agencies with provisions intended to advance equity, promote educational opportunity, and improve outcomes for students, and it required every state and the District of Columbia to develop a “state plan” that detailed how it would implement the federal law.

OSSE developed a draft ESSA state plan and released it to the public in January 2017 for feedback. After a public comment period and revisions, OSSE submitted a final draft of its state accountability plan to SBOE in March 2017; SBOE voted to approve the state plan on March 22, 2017.² The approved plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in April 2017 and approved in August of the same year.^{3 4}

In May 2017, two months after the approval of the District’s ESSA state plan, SBOE passed a resolution approving the creation of an “ESSA Task Force” that would “enhance the involvement and engagement of the community in the development of State Board policy in relation to the Every Student Succeeds Act.”⁵ The task force was chaired by Dr. Lannette Woodruff, who at the time was serving as SBOE’s Ward 4 Representative.

SBOE created a public application process for task force membership, and the application opened in July 2017. Fifty-five District residents applied for the task force, and their applications were reviewed by SBOE’s Educational Excellence and Equity Committee. In August 2017, SBOE

¹ [U.S. Department of Education. “Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\).”](#)

² [ED. “District of Columbia Consolidated State Plan.”](#)

³ [DC SBOE, SR17-6 “To Approve the District of Columbia’s State Accountability Plan.”](#)

⁴ [ED, “Letter to District of Columbia from Secretary DeVos,” August 30, 2017.](#)

⁵ [DC SBOE, SR17-7 “To Approve the Creation of ESSA Task Force.”](#)





announced its selection of 29 applicants to become members of the task force, representing a diverse array of community stakeholders and education leaders from all eight wards of the city.

Year one: school report card engagement and equity considerations

ESSA Task Force members committed to meet as a group on a monthly basis for a two-year period beginning in August 2017 and continuing through June 2019—a series of 21 meetings. The goals of the task force, outlined by Dr. Woodruff at the group’s first meeting, were to come to a consensus on a series of recommendations to SBOE on the DC School Report Card, equity strategies and access to opportunities for children and families, measures of high school growth, and potentially recommendations on future amendments to the ESSA State Plan.⁶

The immediate priority for the ESSA Task Force was its work with OSSE on the development of [the DC School Report Card](#) that would provide information on school characteristics, performance, and other features; the District’s ESSA state plan called on OSSE to develop this system in time to implement it during the 2018–19 school year. The task force researched the current landscape of report card and dashboard materials to get a sense of what information was currently available, and representatives from the state agency worked closely with the group to get feedback from task force members on what they would like to see and what would be most useful to include on the DC School Report Card.

Over the first year of the task force’s work, OSSE met with the group to present plans for public engagement and shared a draft of the school report card design; they also shared a community engagement toolkit with task force members that they could use to conduct focus groups on the draft report card language in their communities, with all feedback going to OSSE.

In addition to the work with OSSE on the school report card, the ESSA Task Force began working in December 2017 on the development of a definition of equity in education. The task force voted to finalize the following statement in April 2018:

The D.C. State Board of Education defines equity in education as ensuring that every student, inclusive of race, religion, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic standing, immigration status, and disability status, has the supports and resources to be successful in school.

We believe these supports and resources must be child-centered, evidence-based, and reflective of the social-emotional and academic needs of the student. Progressing toward the goal of success for every student and reducing disparities will include monitoring student progress on standardized assessments and relevant academic and non-academic measures included in the ESSA STAR Framework and Report Cards.

⁶ [ESSA Task Force Meeting 1, August 22, 2017.](#)





By pursuing multiple measures of accountability, this system will hold all schools, school leaders, and staff to the same high expectations for progress and success for all students.

The desired outcome will be that all D.C. students will graduate from high school fully prepared for college and career opportunities, as engaged and active residents who are prepared to thoughtfully participate in society.

At a public meeting in May 2018, SBOE adopted the ESSA Task Force’s equity statement as a set of “guiding principles” and is, alongside the agency’s bylaws and mission and vision statements, considered a guiding SBOE document.⁷

At the April 2018 meeting, Dr. Woodruff split the task force into four proposed “committee” subgroups, assigning each member to one group. The committees—originally titled Academic Rigor, Equal Resources and Funding Equity, Leadership, and School Climate—were designed to more intensively examine specific issue areas related to ESSA, with the intention of issuing recommendations in these issue areas.

Year two: leadership transition and committees

In July 2018, Dr. Woodruff resigned her position as SBOE’s Ward 4 Representative and as the chair of the ESSA Task Force; she asked Karen Williams, SBOE’s Ward 7 Representative and a member of the ESSA Task Force, to take over the leadership of the body in its second year.

Given the shared interests and goals between some of the existing committees, Ms. Williams retooled the four committees into three: Academic Equity, School Resources and Funding Equity, and Leading for Equity. These groups met over the course of the second year to further discuss and develop recommendations to deliver to SBOE; their final recommendations can be found in the next section.

In September 2018, the Task Force reconvened under Ms. Williams’ leadership for the first time. Over the next few meetings, the Task Force continued to work closely with OSSE on its ESSA implementation efforts as the state agency prepared to launch the DC School Report Card for the first time. The tool, which launched in December 2018, incorporated substantial public feedback from the community engagement process, including the feedback generated by ESSA Task Force members conducting focus groups and from the task force meetings themselves.

Following the launch of the school report card, the ESSA Task Force continued to meet with OSSE on their continuing school report card public engagement process, discussing updates and additions to the accountability system, including the incorporation of a proposed Access to Opportunities metric that seeks to measure the richness of curricular opportunity at a given school and is scheduled to be included in the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) Framework. Task Force members also discussed the ESSA-required Comprehensive Support and Targeted Support

⁷ [DC SBOE Public Meeting, May 16, 2018.](#)





grants that would be made available to the lowest-performing schools in the accountability framework.

Reflections and recommendations of the committees

Throughout the task force’s second year, three separate committees met to discuss the challenges related to achieving equity as defined by the task force in year one, ESSA implementation in the District, and to develop the following information for SBOE. Under the guidance of SBOE staff, the following committees formed to explore equity through three different lenses: academic, resources and funding, and leadership. Committee members explored issues related to equity and independently developed a set of possible next steps District leaders should consider as all education stakeholders pursue high-quality, equitable learning opportunities for all students in the District of Columbia.

The following sections contain observations, reflections, and considerations developed by these groups for future work in these areas. While members were able to communicate and share document versions online, the task force’s monthly meeting structure limited the extent to which these ideas could be debated and evolved as an entire group, but each of the three committees worked to achieve consensus with respect to the final content included in their sections. Where applicable, we have also included language that attempts to capture the diversity of thought present in each of the groups and the breadth of the issues and concerns the committees sought to address, but each content section here should be understood as representing the general sense of the group based on its discussions over the second year of task force meetings.

Academic Equity

The Academic Equity Committee acknowledges the progress our city public schools have made in improving outcomes for low-income and minority students across the city over the last two decades. However, there continues to be an achievement gap between our low-income students and students of color compared to their more affluent peers across the District and the country. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress Trial Urban District Assessment, black District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) 4th graders improved proficiency rates to 18 percent in math in 2017; nationally, white students achieved at 51 percent on average. In 8th grade, the District’s black students in 2017 were just 9 percent proficient in math, compared to 72 percent of their white peers in DCPS.⁸

On the District’s Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, 2018 results showed that in English, 82 percent of white students were proficient, compared with 25 percent of black students and 32 percent of Hispanic students (see Table 1). In math, 79 percent of white students were proficient on the PARCC, compared with 21 percent of black students and 28 percent of Hispanic students. At-risk students were just 18 percent proficient on average, while their more affluent peers were 44 percent proficient.

⁸ National Assessment of Educational Progress. “[The Nation’s Report Card Data Explorer.](#)”





Table 1. PARCC Assessment, percent meeting or exceeding expectations by demographic subgroup, 2018

	English Language Arts	Mathematics
All Groups	33.3	29.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	41.9	38.1
Asian	71.6	69.8
Black/African American	24.7	20.7
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	32.0	8.2
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	51.5	35.5
Two or More Races	65.7	63.9
White/Caucasian	82.1	78.8

Source: OSSE, [“2017–18 PARCC Results and Resources”](#)

From the beginning of the Academic Equity Committee meetings, members struggled with what guidance our committee could provide given the complexity and long-standing nature of the problem. Many members felt impaired by limited research and data available on District schools, so initial ideas for recommendations centered around city leadership striving to better understand the challenges facing the lowest performing schools (i.e., all schools earning a one- or two-star rating, and especially the ten schools designated Comprehensive Support 1 by OSSE).

Given ongoing progress related to the committee’s primary concerns, we offer the following thoughts on possible next steps:

- **Support additional targeted research to ensure equitable outcomes:** Ultimately, committee members believe the combination of comprehensive research conducted by the new D.C. Education Research Practice Partnership (RPP) and smaller networks of schools focused on utilizing improvement science to solve unique student challenges can illuminate best practices most likely to bend the student achievement curve upward. Please accept committee member ideas for key research questions in Appendix A that responders to the forthcoming RPP application should craft a plan to address.
- **Recognize that there is limited funding available to improve comprehensive support schools:** The committee feels it is important that city leadership recognize the \$11 million in OSSE grants for the 10 comprehensive support schools over the next three years insufficiently addresses the challenges these schools face, especially given that our city has yet to commit to adequately funding the base per pupil and at-risk student funding formulas for all schools. We encourage the Council to memorialize, via legislation, a plan to adequately fund schools within three years.
- **Develop a comprehensive citywide “equity action plan”:** We recommend the DME draft a comprehensive “equity action plan” that includes analysis of all educational inputs and outcomes to reduce gaps in academic rigor, growth, and achievement between different student groups. The plan should include high-leverage research questions and macro-level ideas for sharing information and maximizing existing resources for the benefit of all





schools and students. The plan should also include funding opportunities for community-based organizations to work with schools to better address children and family needs.

School Resources and Funding Equity

Every student in the District of Columbia deserves access to equitable opportunities. The School Resources and Funding Equity Committee understands that there is limited comprehensive citywide information about the resources currently available at all schools. Further, the city does not collect nor rigorously analyze standardized school budget data and tie it student outcomes. It should be noted that any addition to the existing reporting requirements would necessitate consideration of whether the District has the requisite authority to do so under current law, and whether such data collection is actually feasible.

To better support local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and broader community stakeholders improve the utilization of funds to education all students, the School Resources and Funding Equity Committee recommends the following:

- **Engage in activities that support a more standardized implementation of best school income and expense coding practices:** Potentially through the RPP or in collaboration with an external organization, the city should conduct a local landscape analysis of school budget coding practices and identify best practices already in place in other American cities, with a specific emphasis on budget line items (see Appendix B). The landscape analysis should offer recommendations to improve consistent coding of similar income and expenses. OSSE should offer technical assistance to LEAs to support standardized coding practices.
- **Identify high-leverage budget line items tied to equitable outcomes:** There is limited research literature that identifies which educational budget practices are more likely to lead to equitable learning opportunities for all students. After LEAs have implemented best coding practices, OSSE should analyze correlational links between budget line items and STAR Framework outcomes for all student groups.
- **Publicly report additional budget data on the DC School Report Card:** Upon implementation of more standardized budget coding practices to ensure the possibility of a high quality, accurate budget data collection and completion of the “high leverage” analysis mentioned above, committee members recommend that OSSE report additional line item budget under a separate tab in the report card. Please see Appendix B for a list of line items discussed by the committee that should be addressed in the landscape analysis and included in the research phase.

Some task force members felt that adding additional financial reporting requirements to the school report card would not produce the desired outcome of greater transparency and understanding of school budgets, because some proposed expenditure categories are not consistently collected across all District LEAs. Further, incomplete reporting of financial data might have the unintended consequence of skewing public perceptions of schools’ comparative expenditure patterns.





Leading for Equity

The Leading for Equity Committee focused its work on school leadership, the challenges and opportunities faced by educators and school administrators, and how the Every Student Succeeds Act and its accountability provisions affect school climate on the ground. The committee believes that effective instructional leadership is a key driver necessary to achieve equitable learning opportunities across all schools. The goal of our committee’s recommendations is to provide the following ideas for further exploration by District education agencies:

- **Offer additional support to lower-rated schools not already eligible for support:** Schools scoring in the bottom five percent of all schools on the STAR Framework as well as high schools with graduation rates below 67 percent are designated for Comprehensive Support, and any school with one or more student subgroups performing below the Comprehensive Support threshold is eligible for Targeted Support. However, this represents a relatively small fraction of District schools—just 23 schools in 2018. We recommend District leadership explore options to provide support to administrators and teachers in the 51 schools that were rated one or two stars on the STAR Framework but are not eligible for support services or funds.
- **Promote partnerships with external organizations to build capacity and enhance the capabilities of school leadership:** the committee discussed a model where organizations in the District of Columbia partner with schools to increase the capacity and skills of school leadership. Committee members suggest that District leaders identify funding sources to expand school partnerships that complement LEA activities focused on increasing school leadership capacity.
- **Support rigorous research that identifies cost-effective policies and programs:** Committee members felt that there is little quality guidance for schools that links financial decisions and programs and policies that promote equitable learning opportunities. Research-practice partnerships can offer technical assistance to LEAs and schools on creative uses of funding.
- **Provide additional targeted technical assistance to LEAs and schools regarding creative uses of at-risk and other federal resources.** The goal of this technical assistance should be to increase the the impact of schools’ at-risk funds.





Acknowledgements

SBOE is grateful to former Ward 4 Representative **Lannette Woodruff** and Ward 7 Representative **Karen Williams** for their work chairing the ESSA Task Force.

SBOE wishes to thank all of the members who served on the task force at any point between August 2017 and June 2019 for their time and efforts in the service of the group:

Josh Boots, Founder and Executive Director, EmpowerK12

Samantha Brown, Special Education and Reading Teacher, Calvin Coolidge High School

Tumeka Coleman, Teacher, Walker-Jones Education Campus (since September 2018)

Yolanda Corbett, Co-Chair, Parent Advocate Leaders Group

Allyson Criner Brown, Associate Director, Teaching for Change

Deborah Dantzler Williams, Head of School, Inspired Teaching Demonstration Public Charter School (through March 2019)

Hannah Dunn, Student, Woodrow Wilson High School

Ramona Edelin, Executive Director, DC Association of Chartered Public Schools (through July 2018)

Laura Fuchs, Board Member, Washington Teachers' Union/Teacher, HD Woodson High School

Faith Gibson Hubbard, Chief Student Advocate, Office of the Student Advocate (through April 2019)

Julie Anne Green, Executive Director, New Futures (through November 2017)

Donald L. Hense, Chairman, Friendship Public Charter Schools (through July 2018)

Juliana Herman, Deputy Chief of Policy, DC Public Schools (through February 2019)

Anne Herr, Director of School Quality, FOCUS DC

Erica Hwang, Instructional Coach, DC Public Schools (through July 2018)

Jack Jacobson, Ward 2 Representative, DC State Board of Education

Erin Kupferberg, Senior Manager – School Quality, DC Public Charter School Board

Beverly Lucas, Director of Continuing Education, University of the District of Columbia Community College (since October 2018)

Maya Martin Cadogan, Executive Director, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education

Zachary Parker, Ward 5 Representative, DC State Board of Education (since March 2019)

Jacque Patterson, Chief Community Engagement and Growth Officer, KIPP DC

Amon Payne, Student, Columbia Heights Education Campus (through January 2018)

Richard Pohlman, Executive Director, Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School

Elizabeth V. Primas, ESSA Program Manager, National Newspaper Managers' Association

Daniel Rodriguez, Student, Benjamin Banneker Academic High School

Alex Rose-Henig, Director of Academic Programs, BASIS DC Public Charter School

Sheila Strain Clark, Chief of Programs, Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Jhonna Turner, Parent Engagement Program Coordinator, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs

Joe Weedon, former Ward 6 Representative, DC State Board of Education

Suzanne Wells, Founder, Ward 6 Public Schools Parent Association





Shana Young, Chief of Staff, OSSE

SBOE would like to thank OSSE and its task force representatives for their efforts over the two-year span of the task force: Donna Johnson, Justin Tooley, Naomi Watson, and Chloe Woodward-Magrane.

Finally, SBOE thanks its staff and fellows that worked to coordinate the task force and support its meetings: John-Paul Hayworth, Miguel Aguero, Rhoma Battle, Dan Davis, Christopher Faiella, Dyvor Gibson, Sabrina Hernandez, Alex Jue, Jamikka Kendrick, Lanita Logan, Paul Negron, Abby Ragan, Matt Repka, Brian Robinson, Alex Smith, and Maria Salciccioli.





Appendix A

Academic Equity Committee

Research Questions

*The Academic Equity Committee recommends the following **research questions** be considered as this work moves forward.*

- What are the specific challenges that comprehensive support schools face? How are these challenges similar to and different from other schools across the city?
 - Are the challenges and solutions different at different grade levels?
 - Are there best practices and principles we could implement at the elementary and/or early childhood level that ensure students are prepared for middle school?
 - Given that students are leaving middle school unprepared for high school, how do we intervene in high school to recover lost ground?
- What does existing research demonstrate that could help these schools?
- What research based supports must be provided to the lowest performing schools? Access to higher curriculum classes? Vocational classes? Access to updated technology? Computers?
- What are highly effective schools doing to further the co-academic and social-emotional development of all students (i.e., empathy, restorative justice practices, growth mindsets)?
- Can city social services be better targeted to support all students? What do we understand about the stress of poverty? How do we address chronic absenteeism?

Appendix B

School Resources and Funding Equity Committee

Budget Line Items for the Landscape Analysis

The School Resources and Funding Equity Committee identifies the following budget line items as potential data points of interest meriting further exploration, though the committee recognizes that any addition to the existing reporting requirements would necessitate a review of what data collection is feasible and permissible under current District law.

- School leadership personnel
- Teachers/instructional personnel
- Social-emotional learning supports
- LEA administration
- At-Risk funding and expenditures
- Special Education funding and expenditures: This should include the budgeted amount as well as actual expenditures.
- Private donations/grants
- PTO/PTA 990 revenue
- LEA level professional development
- Extracurricular/programs/OST
- Partnerships/special programs

