

# Parents & Families: Your Community Needs You!



## Get Involved in ESSA!

### What is ESSA?

- The *Every Student Succeeds Act* is the United States' national policy for public education from pre-K through grade 12.
- This law is the main way that the federal government provides education funding to states - specifically to support students from low-income families.
- ESSA also provides states with funding to support students, teachers, and schools [e.g. parent engagement, services for low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities (and/or students with Individualized Education Plans, or IEPs)].
- ALL families can affect what ESSA means for kids by getting involved in school improvement planning!

### Now you know!

ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2015.

2015

ESSA Passed

2016-17

States wrote ESSA Plans

Starting Summer 2018

School Improvement Planning



### A Civil Rights Legacy

ESSA is an updated version (re-authorization) of a law passed during the Civil Rights Movement in 1965. This law, which gives federal funding to schools for children in low-income families, **exists today because parents, families, and communities organized to advocate for better support and protection for our nation's children.**

The law began in the living rooms, community centers, churches, and school houses of communities like yours. **We hope you will join us to continue the tradition of local involvement in support of our kids.**

# A Vision for Our Children



**Every parent wants the best possible education for their child.** Our school communities have the potential to make sure every child has everything they need to succeed: great teachers, principals, and mentors and access to excellent services and educational opportunities.

## What You Need to Know About ESSA:

### What does ESSA do?

- ESSA is a set of requirements that states, districts, and schools must follow in exchange for federal funding.

ALL public schools, including charters, must follow ESSA!

### What is different?

- ESSA gives education system leaders, like superintendents and school principals, more flexibility than they had before, on the condition that they engage with families and communities when they make decisions.

### What can ESSA do for your child?

- For all schools in all states, ESSA impacts how we improve schools. Each state has submitted an “ESSA Plan” to the federal government that will tell you more. ESSA is just one tool that we can use to make sure that each child gets what they need.

Find your state’s ESSA Plan at [www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html)

### What is “School Improvement”?

- School improvement is the process of learning about a school community and working to make it better by changing how money is spent, what programs are available, and who teaches, counsels, and mentors your child. District and school administrators lead the school improvement process, but they must engage with parents and families. This process happens in cycles (every year or every three years).

### How can you get involved?

- Under ESSA, parents and families must be involved in school improvement. In other words, regardless of whether you have been included in the past, and regardless of citizenship status, language, guardianship, or ability, YOU have every right to be involved in making your schools better. Your school and district leaders are required to make that possible. *See the next page for more!*



Check out [Improve Your School: What to Advocate For](#) for more!



This is a Tool from the **Engage for Education Equity Toolkit**. Find more at [partnersforeachandeverychild.org/engageforequity](http://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/engageforequity)

# Take Action for School Improvement!

## Your district and school are responsible for these steps:

**1. Learn More** about your community



**2. Set Goals** informed by what your community cares about



**3. Make a Plan\*** based on community priorities



**4. Write it Down** to be accountable to the plan



**5. Make it Happen** by working hard and involving your community



**6. Evaluate** and share how things are going so that we can all get better over time



## Parents and families can:

**1. Share your story** with other families & find common ground



**2. Inform the goals:** What is success for your child? What kind of school do you want for your child?



**3. Help set priorities** for student supports and programs



**4. Help to write the plan down** in all the places it can go!\* (e.g. the district budget, Local ESSA Plan, school handbook, bulletin, or newsletter)



**5. Organize, volunteer, & show up!** This is your community & You have a right to be involved!



**6. Give feedback to your school:** Is your child doing better? Has your school gotten better? How can we keep getting better?



 \*Your school has to write a “School Improvement Plan.” Learn more by contacting your district administrators.

 \*For more information about what you can help to write, check out our resource, [Where to “Write it Down”](#)

## Questions to Get Started:

Is your child struggling? How? How can your school support them? Are programs in place to support all students?

Do you know who in your school community can help you advocate for your child (e.g. other parents, teachers, a family liaison, community organizer, minister, coach, or nurse)?

What other parents/families and organizers want the same change? How can you work together?

Learn more about school improvement in the [Organizer’s Packet](#)



This is a Tool from the **Engage for Education Equity Toolkit**. Find more at [partnersforeachandeverychild.org/engageforequity](https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/engageforequity)

# Learn More



## You are not alone!

Look to other parents and local community organizations to support you as you learn more, organize, and take action!

Find more information about who can help you advocate for your child and all children at your local community center, health organization, or **community organization**.

You can also find information from **national advocates** like the Dignity in Schools Campaign, whose resources you can find at [dignityinschools.org](https://dignityinschools.org).

For information about your school and the decisions your state has made about ESSA, check out your **state education agency website**, like your state department of education, for a summary of your state's ESSA Plan and your school's "report card," which has information about your school's performance.

(**For Organizers:** Put information about local resources here — e.g. contact information for school site council)