The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, is the United States’ national law for public education from pre-K through grade 12.

ESSA impacts school improvement, which is the process of learning about a school community and working toward equity for all students.

District and school administrators lead the school improvement process, but you can take a leadership role and affect their decisions!

What is Equity?
Equity means ensuring that students have access to the things they need in order to succeed.

Students are leading inspiring actions to promote equity in schools. You can too!

- Revise your school’s or district’s disciplinary rules to focus on restorative practices, empathy, and relationship-building, rather than suspension or other harsh punishment.
- Organize your district or your entire state to have student feedback inform teacher evaluation and school curriculum.
- Work with your adult allies to edit your school’s needs assessment. A needs assessment is your school’s way of finding out what their community needs — like a questionnaire or survey. Make sure that it includes student voices!
Get Involved! Take Action to Improve your School

1. Research

→ **Talk to peers, family and school leaders** about the issue to get their perspective. Do online research to see what others have done across the country. Conduct a formal survey.

→ **Visit your school’s principal** and/or office administrators, teachers, counselors, or aides. Find out what the timeline is for local planning – who is making decisions about the school vision, programs, and budget and when?

2. Take Initiative

→ **Use your research to request meetings** with community members in and outside of schools — like principals, legislators, and officials in the school district.

→ **Present your findings** at a town hall or school committee meeting, or through a school newspaper or bulletin.

3. Grow Your Impact

→ **Ask for a seat and voting power** on leadership committees or teams that have decision-making power on these issues (e.g. school improvement plan team, local school board, or student government).

→ **Educate and involve your peers** through fliers, social media, petitions, position statements and events. Work with adult allies who are willing to support your work.

→ **Host an event, meeting, or class** to share your experiences as a student and what change you envision, or educate policy makers in person (e.g. your superintendent or school board) about the issues.

4. Refine

→ **Keep fine-tuning your action plan** until there is a win! Never hesitate to dive into the continuous cycle of researching, taking initiative, growing your impact and refining your efforts.

Make sure to read your state’s ESSA plan to know what may work best for your school!
Find your state’s plan at [www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html)
Your Action Plan!

ESSA Timeline:

Dec. 2015
ESSA was signed into law

Since Then
States wrote “ESSA Plans” explaining state decisions

Spring 2018
States will identify which schools need additional support to improve

Summer 2018
Schools and districts start to plan for “school improvement” - a process you can be involved in!

Going Forward
School improvement is a continuous process. Stay involved!

→ What matters most to you about your school, and what is one thing about your school that you want to change?

→ Who is affected by this issue and why is it a problem?

→ Who are adult allies that can help you think through this change you want to see and/or point you in the right direction? What will you ask them?

→ What are three concrete next steps you will take to get involved and how will you do them?
1.
2.
3.

→ How will your efforts benefit future students? What legacy do you want to leave behind?

This is a Tool from the Engage for Education Equity Toolkit. Find more at partnersforeachandeverychild.org/engageforedequity