

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT



Delaware
Department of Education

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A Framework for Delaware's ESSA Plan

In December 2015, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the main federal law governing funding of public education, as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA gives states more flexibility and provides more state and local control over the accountability process. The ESSA also requires states to have a plan for spending federal funds, for measuring the skills students learn and for supporting students in making academic progress. Delaware's ESSA plan is an important component of Delaware's overall education system. With the second draft of the ESSA plan, we are providing a broad context for the overall education system and an understanding of how submitting the ESSA plan to the federal government fits into the overall plan for Delaware's education system.

Delaware is committed to improving the education of all of its students. The First State has a long tradition of setting ambitious goals and working collaboratively to achieve those the goals. There are ongoing efforts to work together to improve the education system for all Delaware students, such as [Sustaining Early Success Delaware’s Strategic Plan for a Comprehensive Early Childhood System](#), [Learning to Work Delaware Pathways](#), [Student Success 2025](#), [Delaware’s Equity Plan for Providing Access to Excellent Educators for All](#), [English Learner Strategic Plan](#), and the Special Education Strategic Plan (currently being developed). At the Department, we are taking the opportunity to pull these efforts together, along with our plan for the Every Students Succeeds Act, to create a cohesive vision for our Delaware Public Education System.

Delaware’s education community values high-quality education for all of our students and wants each student to reach his or her highest level of achievement. Our community wants all students to graduate with the skills to prepare them for life. The Delaware education system needs to have standards and curricula that will prepare students for success in college, career and life; assessments to measure their progress along the way; an accountability system that provides families and educators on how well schools and local education agencies (LEAs) are educating their students; and what supports for students and schools help achieve their goals along the way.

Delaware Department of Education

As an initial step in this process, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) refined its vision, mission, and priorities. This work prepared DDOE for the opportunities available through ESSA.

Our vision: Every learner ready for success in college, career and life.

Our mission: To empower every learner with the highest quality education through shared leadership, innovative practices and exemplary services.

Our priorities:

- Engaged and informed families, schools, districts, communities, and other agencies
- Rigorous standards, instruction, and assessments
- High-quality early learning opportunities
- Equitable access to excellent educators
- Safe and healthy environments conducive to learning



Every Student Succeeds Act

Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December 2015. ESSA provides federal funding for elementary and secondary education programs. The act emphasizes rigorous academic standards, accountability, and equal access to college- and career-ready education programs for all students. ESSA requires states to have a plan for spending federal funds, for measuring the skills students learn, and for supporting students in making academic progress. Delaware’s ESSA plan is an important component of Delaware’s overall education system. With the second draft of the ESSA plan, we are providing a broad context for the overall education system and an understanding of how the ESSA plan being submitted to the federal government fits into the overall plan for our education system. The ESSA plan is intentionally high level to allow for flexibility and refinement through implementation. Overall, ESSA provides the state with greater flexibility, especially in the area of accountability and school improvement, while maintaining an emphasis on student achievement for all students.

Delaware has chosen to submit a consolidated state plan to the US Department of Education to achieve greater flexibility, efficiency, and collaboration across federal programs to support equity and excellence for all students. Submitting a consolidated state plan enables Delaware to do this holistically by allocating and designing support services for the LEAs, and it is a single state plan covering all program areas instead of multiple plans for each individual federal program area. Delaware’s ESSA plan focuses on all students and meeting their needs to achieve the best possible educational outcomes. DDOE used its identified priorities as a way to outline this framework.

This framework document provides to our stakeholder a general education system overview with how DDOE sees the opportunities within ESSA fitting into the education system. This document does not describe all of the responsibilities and work of the DDOE.

ENGAGED AND INFORMED FAMILIES, SCHOOL, DISTRICTS, COMMUNITIES, AND OTHER AGENCIES

Evidence supports that gaps in educational opportunity and achievement will only be fully remedied when those closest to low-income students, such as parents, families, and communities, are meaningfully engaged by their teachers, schools, and districts. The DDOE is proposing to use the family engagement definition developed in 2010 by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (now the NAFSCE Policy Council) as a guide for establishing meaningful, impactful guidelines for parent and family engagement within our state's public schools. NAFSCE's definition (<http://nafsce.org/who-we-are/#dfe>) is:

- Family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and provide them with the supports they need to be actively included in supporting their children's learning and development.
- Family engagement is continuous across a child's life and entails enduring commitment by changing parent roles as children mature into young adulthood.
- Effective family engagement cuts across and reinforces learning in the multiple settings where children learn—at home, in early learning settings, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community.

The DDOE will promote high-impact parent, family, and community engagement that is collaborative, culturally competent, trauma-informed, and focused on supporting the whole child academically, socially and emotionally.

In addition, educators and their partners need clear statewide goals, measures, and data and effective supports to continue improving outcomes for all Delaware students. The following sections provide information on DDOE resources and supports for informing and engaging our families, schools, districts, communities, and other agencies in this important work.

The DDOE has developed long-term goals to allow educators and stakeholders, including parents and community members, to view DDOE long-term goals and other measures we are trying to accomplish. The establishment of goals in the area of academic achievement, graduation rates, and language proficiency are required under ESSA. These goals are lofty and ambitious and support the notion that all students should be reaching high levels of achievement. Schools, LEAs, and the state will annually report performance outcomes compared to these goals as well as the Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF) and annual reporting through School Profiles.

Long-Term Goals

As part of the ESSA plan, Delaware has set long-term state goals for English language arts (ELA)/math academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency (ELP). Delaware's goals are ambitious but achievable. Delaware has chosen to use 2030 as the target year for the long-term goals. This timeframe will allow for three to four cycles of identifying schools for targeted supports and comprehensive school supports. In addition to the three-year cycle for identification of schools for

targeted and comprehensive supports, performance on the statewide accountability test will be reported annually for each tested grade within each school for all students, for students with disabilities (SWDs), English learners (ELs), economically disadvantaged students, and students by race and ethnicity. Graduation rates will also be reported annually for all students, for students with disabilities, English learners, economically disadvantaged students and students by race and ethnicity.

DDOE, with input from stakeholder groups, is considering the methodology for the long-term goals. Currently under consideration is an approach to reduce the achievement gap by either 40% or 50% for student subgroups. There is a balance between creating urgency versus creating realistic, achievable goals.

Under the current multiple measures accountability system, schools and districts receive ratings based on performance in each metric area (e.g., Academic Achievement, Growth, On Track to Graduation, and College and Career Preparation). With the proposed refinements to the DSSF, there are five indicators (Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, School Quality/Student Success, Graduation Rate, and Progress toward English Language Proficiency). Individual student data is aggregated at the school and district levels to generate a numeric score for each metric and metric area. Each of the metrics contributes a weighted value toward the numeric score, which is then converted into a star value of one to five for each of the metric areas. The DDOE proposes to continue this approach as this system meets the requirement to include at least three levels of performance for each indicator. In addition to providing a summative determination, over 50% of feedback received from stakeholders indicated an interest in reporting school performance through an overall numeric score at the school level; this will be converted into an overall star value of one to five. There is also an interest to provide details related to how performance in each metric area contributed to the overall score. The DDOE seeks to provide both an overall star rating as well as a summative determination to provide a comprehensive picture of school performance.

LEAs will also have goals using the same methodology that was used for determining state goals. As with the state goals, the LEA goals will be set based on their current achievement levels, and their progress will be monitored against their long-term goals for ELA/math academic achievement, graduation rates, and ELP.

Accountability System to Measure How Schools and Districts are Educating the Students.

Starting in summer 2014, the DDOE engaged with stakeholders across the state to devise a comprehensive and authentic structure for school and LEA performance that incorporates multiple academic and non-academic measures related to college and career readiness for all students. The DDOE will continue to implement the accountability system, known as the [Delaware Schools Success Framework](#) (DSSF), described above to differentiate performance of all LEAs including charter schools, elementary schools, and secondary schools. To aid in meaningful differentiation, ratings will be assigned at both the school level and the LEA level, and are based on performance in each of five metric areas (Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, School Quality/Student Success, Graduation Rate, and Progress toward English Language Proficiency). Student data for each metric will be individually reported at the school and LEA levels and aggregated to generate a numeric score for each metric category. The numeric score will be translated into a rating of one to five stars based on total points available for each metric area. Overall school ratings based on performance in the DSSF will be used to identify schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), while subgroup performance will be

used to identify schools for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI). Schools that do not fall into one of these two categories will be identified as “Other”. Multiple tiers of support will be provided to LEAs based on their performance and the school’s needs in order to foster continuous improvement. While the DSSF applies to all Delaware charter schools as they are considered LEAs and, therefore, will be included in the annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools, they are also held to additional levels of standards of accountability and transparency. The rigorous standards to which charter schools are held are established at the point of application, continue through annual reporting of charter school performance, and are enforced through both the formal review and five-year renewal processes as mandated by Delaware’s charter school law. Charter school performance is reported for each charter school and collectively for all charter schools annually.

The system must also identify the lowest-performing schools and schools that have low-performing subgroups for CSI and/or TSI. Implementation of the new accountability system under ESSA is expected during the 2017-2018 school year.

Feedback from community conversations, surveys, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), the Governor’s Advisory Committee, and the Measures of School Success and Public Reporting discussion group highlights the importance of weighting student growth more than absolute proficiency in order to capture progress at the school level, as well as the importance of providing considerable weight to learning conditions such as school quality and student learning opportunities. Based on this feedback, combined with the ESSA requirement that academic factors, in the aggregate, be given more “substantial weight” than nonacademic indicators, the DDOE seeks to utilize the following weights at the metric area level:

- Academic Achievement – 25%
- Academic Progress – 30%
- School Quality/Student Success – 25%
- Graduation Rate – 10%
- Progress Toward English Language Proficiency – 10%

With the proposed weights above, the DDOE’s accountability system meets the requirements of the ESSA law.

ESSA has given the DDOE the opportunity to revisit the indicators included in its multiple measures accountability system, developed with extensive stakeholder feedback during 2014 and 2015. The resulting list of proposed DSSF indicators reflects the feedback we have received from our stakeholders over the last few months. Proposed changes include:

- *Growth methodology:* Extensive stakeholder feedback indicates that we should calculate and report on growth at the student level rather than at the aggregated school level. Our current growth methodology does not support this approach. Therefore, we are proposing a growth-to-standard index methodology. This methodology would measure the average percentage of growth target achieved for all students, based on the vertical scale scores of the state assessment. With this approach, students get “credit” for any growth up to and beyond the target, accounting for performance that exceeds the expectation.
- *Growth to Proficiency has been removed:* An analysis of the DSSF metrics indicated that proficiency and growth to proficiency are highly correlated with one another. When comparing ELA Proficiency with ELA Growth to Proficiency, the correlation was 0.92. For context, a 0 (zero) would indicate there is no correlation or connection whatsoever, while a 1 would indicate an absolute correlation. When comparing math proficiency with math Growth to Proficiency, the correlation was 0.86. Further analysis showed that a combined index of proficiency and growth

(as opposed to Growth to Proficiency) was even more highly correlated with growth to proficiency for both ELA and math. In short, these analyses indicate that once proficiency and growth have been included in the DSSF, calculating and including Growth to Proficiency adds no further value and does not contribute to the meaningful differentiation of school performance. It simply measures the same thing that the proficiency and growth have already measured.

- *Why attendance has been removed:* This metric was found not to be research-based and did not contribute to the meaningful differentiation of schools. Rather, the majority of the feedback received by our stakeholders indicated that a measure of chronic absenteeism is a more meaningful, research-based measure that better reflects school quality and student success.
- *New metrics have been recommended for inclusion in the DSSF based on stakeholder feedback and are currently being investigated:*
 - K-3 Literacy
 - Chronic Absenteeism
 - Refined College and Career Preparedness options—to acknowledge the different paths students may successfully take beyond high school and align to our values
 - Equitable Access to Effective Teachers
 - Educator/School Administrator Retention
 - Specialist-to-Student Ratio—including library/media specialists, counselors, school psychologists, etc.
 - Well Rounded Curriculum

Additional metrics have been recommended for reporting purposes to provide a more comprehensive picture of school success, rather than relying on academic measures alone.

Comprehensive Support and Improvement

Identification of public schools for CSI will be calculated by rank ordering the lowest 5% of Title I public schools as measured by the overall score on the accountability system. The identification of public schools for TSI will be calculated by comparing the performance of individual subgroups of students to the performance of the “All Students” subgroup in CSI schools.

The DDOE will identify CSI schools by the beginning of the SY 2018-2019 per ESSA requirements. LEAs will assist schools in conducting a needs assessment, analyzing the data, and developing school improvement plans. The DDOE will provide support and assistance to LEAs in the form of:

- Planning tools and templates
- Sample needs assessment tools
- Root cause analysis
- Fiscal and plan monitoring
- Identify evidence-based resources/strategies
- Assist in plan development and grant application
- Deploy the DDOE experts for ongoing support

LEAs will not be required to use the DDOE identified tools and resources; however, if an LEA elects to utilize a local template, it must meet DDOE requirements aligned to ESSA requirements.

The majority of individuals across all the stakeholder groups agreed that the exit criteria for schools identified for CSI status should be the same as the criteria for which the school was identified. Similarly, the stakeholder groups agreed that schools should have up to four years to exit CSI status. When asked, “If a school meets its exit criteria early (less than four years), what should be the next step,” once again

most stakeholders (survey, Community Meetings, Governor’s Advisory Committee), conveyed that the state should require schools to meet targets for a second year in order to validate and sustain outcomes for students. In that regard, the stakeholders also indicated that schools should develop a “sustainability plan” while receiving additional funding as well as ongoing monitoring and technical assistance from the DDOE.

Schools identified for CSI status will be identified every three years. LEAs will have up to one year for improvement planning and up to three years to exit CSI status—not exceeding four years in total. The DDOE will identify schools for CSI between November 1, 2017, and January 15, 2018, per ESSA prior to the beginning of 2018-2019 school year.

Any charter school identified for CSI will be placed on the formal charter review process as outlined in 14 Del. Code §515 and follow the charter formal review process in lieu of the CSI process. Once schools are identified, the DDOE will negotiate with LEAs to determine CSI exit targets based on the data from 2016-2017 school year. The DDOE in collaboration with the LEAs will establish ambitious but achievable targets that will improve outcomes for students as indicated by the DSSF. The intent will be to cooperatively set targets that are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the individual school communities and that are reasonable to the extent that the school will not be immediately re-identified in the next identification cycle.

Targeted Support and Improvement

The identification of TSI Low-Performing Subgroup schools will be determined based on an index for each subgroup across all indicators of the DSSF. This subgroup “summative determination” will allow the DDOE to identify the lowest-performing schools by subgroup in relation to the identified CSI schools. Using this methodology, the DDOE will identify TSI Low-Performing Subgroup schools every three years starting in 2018-2019.

Schools identified for TSI Low-Performing Subgroup status will be identified every three years. LEAs will have up to one year for improvement planning and up to three years to exit TSI status—not exceeding four years in total. The DDOE will identify schools for TSI Low-Performing Subgroup between November 1, 2017, and January 15, 2018, per ESSA prior to the beginning of 2018-2019 school year.

Once identified, the DDOE will negotiate with LEAs to determine TSI exit targets based on the data from 2016-2017 school year. The DDOE in collaboration with the LEAs will established ambitious but achievable targets that will improve outcomes for students as indicated by the DSSF. The intent will be to cooperatively set targets that are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the individual school communities and that are reasonable to the extent that the school will not be immediately identified as CSI in the next identification cycle.

Targeted Support and Improvement–Consistently Underperforming Subgroups Schools (TSI-CUP) will be identified annually beginning in 2019-2020 using two years of data based on an index for each subgroup. Schools with one or more “consistently underperforming” subgroup will be identified for targeted support. The LEA will help schools develop and monitor a plan for targeted support and improvement. The DDOE will consider TSI-CUP schools as “watch list” schools and will provide technical assistance to support LEAs in this process. If TSI-CUP schools do not make sufficient progress they may be identified for TSI Low-Performing Subgroup.

Minimum Number of Students for Accountability

Accountability systems often use a minimum n-size for determining whether to include a measure in a school's accountability rating. The rationale is that when the number of students for which a measure is calculated is too small, the measure is likely to be a less reliable measure of school performance. If the number of students for which a measure is calculated meets or exceeds the minimum n-size, the measure is included in the rating. If the minimum n-size is not met, the measure is excluded. The majority of feedback received from multiple stakeholder groups, including the National Downs Syndrome Congress and The Advocacy Institute, indicated a strong desire to decrease the current n-size of 30 in order to address the academic needs of all subgroups of students. The DDOE has decided to lower its n-size to 15, which is consistent with current reporting rules and eliminates the disparity between what is currently the n-size for accountability (30) and reporting (15).

Annual Reporting

In addition to annually reporting the DSSF for all LEAs and schools, there will be annual reports to provide a greater level of detail. These reports will include demographic data by school and district, grade-level achievement data by school and by subgroups including foster care, homeless, and military connected students, financial information by school, narrative information on each school, and other opportunities of school success. These opportunities will include the number of specialists for the school, the minutes of physical education offered to students, the number of school librarians, etc. Much of the data currently on School Profiles will be the core of these reports. The content and formatting of these reports will be developed in 2017.

The DDOE is committed to using high-quality data to drive strategic decision-making. Using data, Delaware can determine which policies improve educator performance and student outcomes, thus further investing efforts and resources into expanding "what works." One way in which the DDOE hopes to lead the nation in ensuring equitable access to all educators is through effective establishment and usage of educator effectiveness data. Delaware was one of the first states to institute a statewide educator evaluation system, and one of the first to establish statewide data platforms. This has enabled the DDOE to examine educator effectiveness, evaluate the efficacy of existing programs, and drive toward equity in the quality of education that students are receiving.

LEA Plans

In the same manor that Delaware is required to submit an ESSA plan to the US Department of Education to access federal funds, LEAs are required to submit a plan to the DDOE to access their federal funds. The DDOE will utilize a streamlined, consolidated, and continuous improvement planning process to support the development, review, and approval of LEA plans that meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

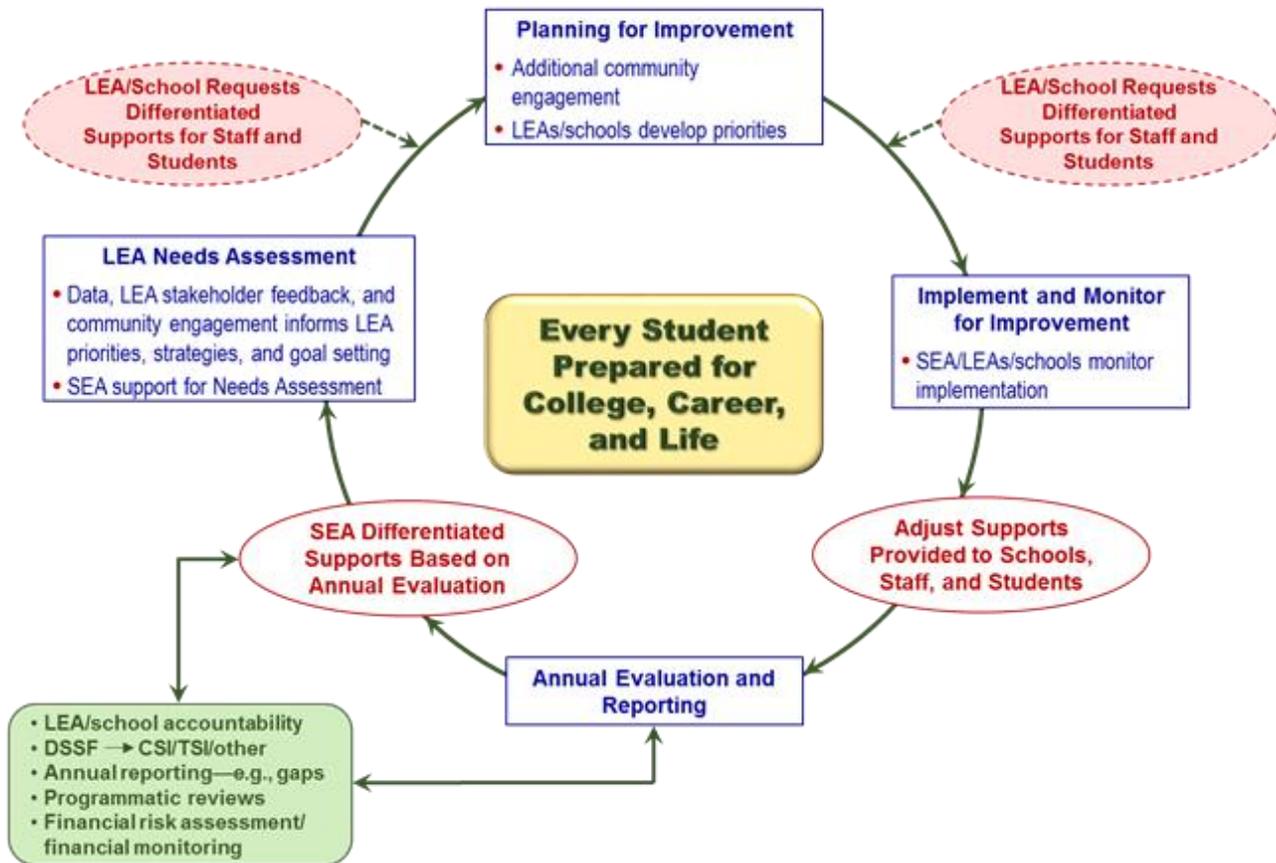
The development process will be driven by LEA analysis of a broad range of data, including but not limited to performance as measured by the statewide accountability system as captured by the report card, Educator Equity Dashboard, financial risk assessments, program analysis, as well as community input. The LEA is required to consult with educators, stakeholders, and the community on the development and implementation of their plan. An LEA will then identify areas of need as well as prioritize action items and targeted funding.

To support the development, review, and approval of the LEA plan, the DDOE proposes to:

- Provide state accountability metrics by which LEAs can assess performance;
- Provide LEAs with a needs assessment template and technical assistance in analyzing LEA data to determine gaps and identify root causes;
- Provide a suite of options for targeted technical assistance (including but not limited to resources for how program funds can be used, program guidance documents, on-site assistance, program webinars, and statewide trainings); and
- Consolidate plan review efforts within the DDOE to reduce duplicative information provided by the LEA—e.g., setting review and approval expectations for DDOE reviewers and providing internal training to calibrate and unify DDOE guidance to LEAs.

Specific and more targeted technical assistance may be provided to an LEA based on a tiered system of support.

DDOE Continuous Improvement Model (ESSA)



Continuous Improvement Process

As part of the continuous improvement cycle, the DDOE will provide technical assistance and guidance to LEAs to assist in completing a comprehensive needs assessment, which will be required as part of the consolidated grant application process. Support will also be given to guide LEAs in identifying and prioritizing their greatest needs as well as planning long-term and short-term implementation strategies.

The DDOE may monitor implementation of targeted strategies through the year and provide evidence-based best practices, supporting resources, on-demand guidance, and technical assistance documents to support effective execution and implementation.

To build on the first year ESSA is implemented, year two of the application cycle will have a strong emphasis on improvement from baseline data. Targeted supports will be provided to LEAs during the needs assessment process and plan development based on data from the previous year, which may include performance as measured by the statewide accountability system and captured by the report card, Educator Equity Dashboard, financial risk assessments, program analysis, as well as community input.

The DDOE will implement a system of supports to provide LEAs with differentiated technical assistance to support effective implementation of LEA strategies. The DDOE plans to offer availability of all supports to any requesting LEA or school; however, the degree of the DDOE-guided support will be based on data that may include performance as measured by the statewide accountability system and captured by annual reports, Educator Equity Dashboard, financial risk assessments, program analysis, as well as educator and community input.

The DDOE will continue to develop and enhance a suite of technical assistance options for LEAs regarding identifying LEA school and student needs through analyzing data in a comprehensive needs assessment and determining root causes as well as aligning priorities, supports, and funding.

Monitoring

The DDOE plans to monitor all LEAs at a minimum once every five years. Additional monitoring frequency may be based on the annual results of program analysis, financial risk assessment, single-state audit determinations, performance as measured by the statewide accountability system, and captured by the report card, educator data, and/or additional data provided by the LEA.

Monitoring efforts will be coordinated by one workgroup within the DDOE and will be a consolidated effort of the programs included for monitoring. This process will be used to maximize DDOE and LEA staff time and resources. By having a consolidated approach, this will enable the SEA to determine if specific targeted assistance may be needed. In addition, targeted assistance can be provided to an LEA that may not need assistance in every area evaluated for monitoring.

RIGOROUS STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Establishing rigorous, internationally benchmarked college- and career-ready standards has been a central component of Delaware's education system. These standards set the foundation for high expectations for what Delaware students must know and be able to do, and the DDOE believes that its students will rise to meet these expectations. Delaware is fully committed to not just adopting high standards but also to implementing enhanced standards in collaboration with our LEAs by providing responsive technical assistance and professional learning.

By conducting a thorough examination of Delaware's previous standards, the DDOE rewrote several benchmarks in early elementary ELA and middle school mathematics and performed an alignment study in the spring 2010. Subsequently, the DDOE proposed new college- and-career ready standards in 2010 and the Delaware State Board of Education (SBE) approved the standards (14 DE Admin Code 501) in August 2010.

In 2011, Delaware joined 26 additional states to develop K-12 science standards known as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Delaware helped to develop these standards with the assistance of several leading voices in science and science education in Delaware (scientists, administrators, teachers, and business leaders). NGSS provides a complete science foundation to prepare Delaware students to be college and career ready. DDOE proposed NGSS as the new science standards for Delaware and the SBE adopted them in the fall of 2013.

In 2015, the DDOE began an initiative to update Delaware's arts standards to align to college and career expectations. Over 300 arts educators signed a petition asking Delaware to adopt a new set of standards that would help elevate academic achievement and prepare students for college, career, and citizenship readiness. Using a national framework, the SBE adopted the new, teacher-developed standards in the spring of 2016. In addition, revisions to social studies and world language standards were proposed by DDOE to better align with college and career expectations, and were approved by the SBE in 2016.

Dissemination of Resources and Professional Learning for College and Career Standards

After the Delaware SBE adopted new college- and career-ready standards, Delaware launched plans for professional development to assist LEA personnel and teachers. DDOE used cadre groups composed of ELA and mathematics practitioners and trained statewide data coaches on these standards through Delaware's professional learning community initiative. In addition to this systems-building approach for sustained professional learning, a standards steering committee consisting of the DDOE, LEAs, institute of higher education (IHE) representatives, and business and parent representatives agreed that a significant effort focused on learning the new standards was necessary. The steering committee called for school-based guiding teams to take a significant role in implementing the new standards.

Additionally, Common Ground for the Common Core launched in the spring of 2013. It was targeted to LEA needs and supported with school-specific implementation plans that were led by principals and guiding teams of teacher leaders and partner organizations. Common Ground was available to LEAs for three school years. The DDOE now provides competitive grants on Common Core implementation, which is built off the work of Common Ground and allows school-based leaders to continue the implementation work of these standards in their LEAs.

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the DDOE, with the support of the LEAs, began participating in standards-based site visits to focus on how the standards are being implemented for all students, and DDOE started to measure the quality of instructional supports and professional learning systems. In conducting these yearly site visits, the DDOE continues to provide ongoing support for full implementation of the standards while also gathering information to be shared with schools and LEAs so that the state and LEAs work together to better support implementation of these standards.

The DDOE, in collaboration with the Delaware Science Coalition (a partnership of LEAs), have invested in professional learning for hundreds of teacher leaders over the past three years. Teachers have been trained in science and engineering practices, creating NGSS student performances, and designing three-dimensional NGSS assessments. Parallel to this work, a smaller group of dedicated teachers and specialists are making modifications and developing NGSS-aligned units for dissemination across the state.

The Social Studies Coalition of Delaware has worked with the DDOE to provide significant professional learning and instructional resources to Delaware teachers for over a decade. In addition, the Delaware World Language Teacher Leader network meets regularly to conduct deep, engaging, professional

learning for educators. Finally, significant collaboration has occurred for all Delaware arts educators in public schools as well as in community and cultural institutions that have aligned classroom instruction to Delaware's new arts standards.

Assessments

Developing fair, valid, and reliable assessments to measure attainment of rigorous college- and career-ready Delaware standards has been a central focus of the assessment system in Delaware. Following industry best practices, the Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA) is the statewide system of assessments used to measure student achievement of state standards. This system includes general assessments measuring student achievement based on grade-level academic standards, alternate assessments based on alternate achievement academic standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, an assessment for ELs, and a norm-referenced assessment administered or required as determined by the US Department of Education for use in Delaware public schools.

Smarter Assessment

The Smarter assessments measure the progress of Delaware students in ELA/literacy and mathematics standards in grades 3-8. The first Delaware operational administration of the Smarter assessments in grades 3-8 occurred during spring 2015. These assessments require deeper thinking and application of real-world skills in ELA/literacy and mathematics.

SAT

Delaware has been administering a nationally recognized high school assessment, the SAT, since the 2011-2012 school year. In 2014-2015, Delaware administered both the SAT and the Smarter assessment in high school, with the Smarter assessment being used for accountability purposes. In 2015-2016, Delaware eliminated the Smarter assessment in high school and transitioned to the SAT as its accountability assessment in an effort to streamline assessments. The DDOE is currently using the SAT for the purposes of state accountability in ELA and mathematics at the high school level and will continue this practice in the future. The SAT administration occurs in the junior year of high school for all students taking part in the general assessment.

DCAS Science

The Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System Science (DCAS-Science) assessment is a statewide assessment that is administered to students at grades 5, 8, and high school annually. The test is designed to measure student achievement toward the Delaware content standards in science. The assessment provides a total score and three sub-scores in physical science, biology, and earth science as well as the performance level.

The DDOE is currently in the process of developing a new assessment in science, working closely with the Delaware Science Coalition. DDOE envisions a comprehensive science assessment system in grades 3 to 10, consisting of three distinct types of assessment. Under this system, throughout the academic year, students will take teacher-developed, embedded classroom assessments to provide information on learning in real time. Primarily formative in nature, these embedded classroom assessments will be administered at the discretion of each teacher.

Students will also take end-of-unit assessments shortly after the completion of each instructional unit. In each grade, the academic school year is divided into three to four units, each of which is aligned to a specific content area. Each end-of-unit assessment is meant to provide information on student learning of the content in each unit for the purposes of instruction and evaluation at classroom, school, district, and state levels. Finally, students in grades 5, 8, and biology will also take a transfer assessment. These transfer assessments are meant to capture students' learning of the content instructed during the entire year, in greater depth than on the end-of-unit assessments. That is, the transfer assessments are meant to capture the ways that students integrate, transfer, and apply science knowledge and skills. For each grade, the results from end-of-unit and/or transfer assessments may be used to meet federal requirements under the ESSA.

DCAS-Alt1 and DCAS-Alt1 Science

DCAS–Alt1 assessments measure academic progress from the Delaware content standards grade band extensions in reading and mathematics. DCAS–Alt1 Science measures academic progress of all eight standard areas from the science Delaware content standards grade band extensions. The purpose of these Alt1 assessments includes maximizing access to the general education curriculum for students with significant intellectual disabilities, ensure that all SWDs are included in DDOE's statewide assessment and accountability programs, and direct instruction in the classroom by providing important pedagogical expectations and data that guide classroom decisions. The DCAS–Alt1 is only for those students with documented significant intellectual disabilities and adaptive behavior deficits who require extensive support across multiple settings (such as home, school, and community).

Delaware is currently completing and beginning implementation of the Delaware Communication Portfolio Summary (DCPS). The DCPS is designed for students who—even with accommodations—cannot participate in a meaningful way in the DCAS-Alt1, because they do not have a consistent and reliable means of communication that is understood by others. This portfolio is designed to be embedded in the instructional process during the school year.

PSAT

Delaware students participate in the PSAT at grade 10. The test is composed of three sections: math, critical reading, and writing skills. Each of the three sections is scored on a scale of 20 to 80 points, which add up to a maximum composite score of 240 points. This parallels the SAT, which is graded on a scale of 200 to 800.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

A sample of Delaware's fourth and eighth grade students participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and mathematics on a biannual basis. NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. Paper-and-pencil assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and technology and engineering literacy. Beginning in 2017, NAEP will begin administering technology-based assessments for mathematics, reading, and writing, with additional subjects added in 2018 and 2019.

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for ELs

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for ELs 2.0 is a secure large-scale English language proficiency (ELP) assessment administered to kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as ELs. It is given annually in Delaware to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. The assessment helps students and families understand students' current level of ELP along the language proficiency continuum. ACCESS for ELs 2.0 also serves as one of multiple measures used to help schools and districts determine whether students have the language proficiency they need to participate meaningfully in content area classrooms without additional language supports.

Social Studies

As previously stated, Delaware currently assesses mathematics, ELA, and science. The state-required social studies assessment was paused for the 2016-2017 school year as an updated assessment is under development to align with the new social studies standards.

A Cycle of Review

Pursuant to [Senate Joint Resolution 2](#), Delaware recently completed an Assessment Inventory process at both the local and state levels to ensure that the state addresses instances where students spend too much time taking standardized tests, as well as instances where such tests are redundant or fail to provide useful information. Assessments administered at the state level combine with locally selected assessments to form a streamlined assessment system with the goal of supporting student growth toward college and career readiness. The DDOE will continue to provide this support in the coming years.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

One important priority of the DDOE is to provide each of Delaware's students equal access to effective and well-prepared teachers and leaders. Realization of this requires implementation of a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy ranging from the top-quality educator preparation and support for enhancing leadership pathways to retain our best educators. The following strategies are a result of DDOE's engagement with diverse stakeholders-to develop the plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators. The DDOE recognizes that high-quality education comes from great teachers, educators, and school leaders. Delaware's commitment to strengthening educator effectiveness spans the last several decades, and increased attention from the federal government and student advocacy groups has made this even more of a priority.

According to multiple studies conducted by organizations such as the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institute for Research, low socioeconomic status and students of color frequently have access to fewer quality educators and educational resources than their non-minority and more affluent peers. Delaware has long focused on closing educator equity gaps because as a state, we believe that the achievement gap closes for our highest-need students only when all students have equitable access to the most capable and well-prepared educators. While some schools or LEAs in Delaware have closed educator equity gaps, data collected in 2015 reveals that, on average, schools in Delaware with higher than median rates of low socioeconomic status and students of color are more likely to have a higher percentage of inexperienced and/or out-of-field teachers, higher teacher turnover, and fewer

teachers rated as highly effective. With increased federal and stakeholder attention on equity, the urgency to spread these pockets of success across the state has never been higher.

As a result of efforts to date, Delaware's equity gaps have been closed in small pockets; however, these issues persist at-scale, requiring a more focused approach. Fortunately, increased access to actionable data has renewed local energy for this work and enabled more productive conversations among stakeholders than ever before.

Educator Preparation

To promote increased learning and effective teaching, Delaware must strive for all of the educators working in our schools to be well prepared to assume the critical job of supporting and challenging all of our students. Research shows that well-prepared educators are more likely to stay in the classroom achieving strong student outcomes accelerated at a faster rate than less-prepared peers. The DDOE believes that improved teacher preparation will result in stronger teachers. Strong educator preparation is a strategy that Delaware has been investing in for several years. As the State Education Agency (SEA), Delaware is committed to the preparation of teachers in well-designed and competitive professional development programs and to supporting those educators in their early years in the classroom.

Recruitment and Selection

Research shows that teachers are the most important school-based factor that affects a student's achievement. The initiatives relating to teacher recruitment and selection are designed to improve equitable access to high-quality educators by ensuring that large and small as well as rural and urban districts are on a level playing field in terms of recruitment and hiring. Consistent with these ideals, DDOE seeks to reduce equity gaps by increasing marketing efforts for new educators, promote early hiring and build pipelines in the profession to assist in attracting the best teachers in Delaware's schools. DDOE will also support recruitment efforts with the LEAs to hire more teachers of color to better reflect the students they are educating.

Induction, Mentoring and Professional Learning

Current research highlights the need to provide greater support for Delaware's newest educators to ensure all of Delaware's students receive a quality education and are college and/or career ready. By providing comprehensive support to novice educators, the DDOE and the LEAs, can work toward increasing educator retention rates; improving teaching practices of both new and veteran staff members; and most importantly, having positive effects on student achievement. The DDOE has focused resources on induction and mentoring since 1994 and has recently helped LEAs advance this work by offering competitive grant opportunities that allow LEAs to submit proposals to the DDOE for the development and/or delivery of innovative induction program models for new educators, establishing new teacher and mentor academies to offer high-quality targeted support, and incorporating an online ethics course into the statewide mentoring and induction program, which offers educators techniques and strategies to balance the sometimes contradictory professional expectations they encounter on a daily basis. In addition, Delaware's commitment to educator equity includes programs designed to create continuous and effective professional learning opportunities for educators at all stages of the profession-

Career Pathways and Compensation

Retention rates among high-performing employees are increased when opportunities for advancement are available. Research also shows that high-performing employees are more attracted to promotion opportunities compared with low-performing employees, and they also are more likely to leave a position because of a lack of opportunity for advancement. These opportunities for educators too often lead out of the classroom. This research was confirmed by our stakeholders, who mentioned the importance of opportunities for educator professional growth while keeping strong teachers the classroom where they can positively impact students. DDOE provides opportunities through the Teacher-Leader Pilot program in selected LEAs, which is designed to develop teacher leadership opportunities and identify best practices to spread throughout the state.

Educator Evaluation

DDOE's commitment to meaningful educator evaluation is both well-established and amongst the most discussed and debated educator effectiveness initiatives statewide. However, the state's educator evaluation system has not always yielded differential observation data at-scale or consistent educator sentiment about the importance of accountability. Several LEAs, numerous education leaders, and DDOE officials have consistently noted that all parties must work together to bring greater integrity to educator evaluation—that it must provide the individualized feedback/coaching, the accurate ratings, and the overall integration of multiple measures of student growth and teacher effectiveness.

Licensure and Certification

DDOE believes a rigorous and reliable state licensure system should provide reasonable assurance that all fully licensed educators have the basic knowledge and skills necessary to be successful. Beyond minimum requirements, such a system should also distinguish between educators who meet the minimum standards for licensure and those with outstanding subject knowledge and teaching ability. DDOE recognizes rigorous educator licensing and certification requirements are necessary for ultimate effectiveness. DDOE works collaboratively with the Professional Standards Board (PSB) to set these requirements and standards for educators and leaders.

School Leadership

Effective school leadership and ensuring that high-quality principals remain in schools are two critical factors in addressing identified teacher equity gaps. Stakeholders consistently note and data confirm that instability and ineffectiveness in leadership lead to equity gaps, and without correcting these two areas, it will be difficult to overcome these gaps. Focusing on one area of school leader effectiveness will not affect the system overall, so the DDOE's approach is multifaceted and includes strategies from preparation to professional learning to evaluation. Delaware's school leadership strategies build on our existing strengths while deepening the focus on schools and districts where there is a greater need.

HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The DDOE and Delaware Early Childhood Council promotes the development of a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system, birth to eight years old, which provides the highest-quality services and learning environment for Delaware's children and their families. [Delaware Early Childhood](#)

[Council's Strategic Plan](#) delineates four goals, with correlating objectives and strategies, to accomplish this mission. Delaware's vision for a sustainable, comprehensive early childhood system is driven by a statewide commitment to continual improvement and includes the following goals and outcomes:

Goal 1: A Healthy Start for All Children: Delaware children will become the healthiest in the nation—physically, emotionally, and behaviorally.

- All children will have high-quality developmental screening and services.
- All children will have support for healthy social-emotional development, including access to mental health services.
- All children will have family-centered health and preventive care, including oral health, healthy eating and lifestyles, and immunizations.
- All families will have access to home visiting services and improved family health practices.

Goal 2: High-Quality Early Childhood Programs and Professionals: All Delaware children will have access to high-quality early childhood programs and professionals.

- All Delaware early childhood providers will be top-tier Stars programs.
- All Delaware early childhood providers will facilitate family engagement and support inclusionary practices.
- Delaware will have among the nation's most highly skilled and best-supported early childhood workforces.
- Delaware's early childhood workforce will be engaged in professional development that supports continual improvement.

Goal 3: An Aligned and Effective Early Learning System, Birth Through Third Grade: Delaware will create an early learning system that enables all children to arrive at school ready and eager to succeed and that prepares K-12 schools to further enrich children's early learning, guided by the "Readiness Equation:" Successful Children = Ready Families + Ready Early Education + Ready Communities + Ready Schools.

- Family, community, and school engagement in early learning will be supported statewide by Delaware Readiness Teams and by enhanced resources to support school readiness.
- Early learning educators and families will have access to data to support their teaching and parenting.
- Delaware will have unified learning standards and assessments and will engage early childhood and elementary school teachers in shared programs of teacher preparation and professional development.

Goal 4: Sustained System Improvement: Delaware will develop and sustain policies, programs, and partnerships that generate continual improvement in addressing all children's developmental needs.

- Delaware will be among the nation's leaders in implementing best practices in early childhood governance, service integration, and effective and efficient public financing.

- The State will implement continual improvement programs for all early childhood services.
- The State will regularly review the impacts of agency programs on the overall performance of the early childhood system.
- Delaware will lead the nation in the scope and magnitude of community partnership and public commitment to early childhood success.

Through these initiatives, Delaware’s earliest learners will enter kindergarten better prepared for success.

While all goals are necessary for a comprehensive early childhood system, Goal Two and Goal Three outcomes affect the transition from pre-K to kindergarten. Feedback from community conversations and individual stakeholders reinforces that many factors contribute to a child’s healthy development early on in life; children’s holistic social, emotional, and physical well-being are critical to their success in school and in life. This necessitates a shift to a PK-12 system.

Feedback from community conversations verifies investing in early learning opportunities at a young age with increased funding and committing to quality accreditation and oversight, is needed to support our youngest learners for school. Continued investment in Delaware Stars for Early Success, the DDOE’s quality rating and improvement system, increases the number of top-tier Stars programs and thus the number of at-risk children enrolled in these programs. Feedback emphasizes that a skilled and stable early childhood educators’ workforce is critical to attaining this goal. The DDOE must also support its early childhood educators through financial and educational incentives, which requires alignment of early learning and K-12 professional development and educator preparation.

Feedback from community conversations also highlights a need for linkage between early learning and elementary programs that reflects consistency, continuity, and high quality from birth through third grade. This requires strategies to support families in making the transition from early learning programs to their children’s elementary school, increased understanding of the developmental needs of children by all stakeholders across the early learning and K-12 systems, coordination of services across multiple state agencies serving children and families, and smooth transition of data between programs, including the integration of data systems and the systematic assessment of programs.

SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING

Our vision is to graduate all students ready for college and/or careers. This requires a strong focus on rigorous standards and assessments, while also providing a comprehensive support system for students along the continuum of pre-K to career. Data shows that student proficiency levels start to decrease at key transition points in this continuum such as kindergarten readiness and transition from elementary to middle school. (Statewide performance on Smarter math shows that our proficiency rates max out at 55% in 3rd grade math with a steady decline particularly in 6th-8th and 11th grade. A similar trend occurs in ELA proficiency with students achieving 60% proficiency in 5th grade, while middle school and high school hover around the 50% mark {<http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3014>}).

The DDOE and the LEAs need to provide supports to students through transitions and for the challenges, students may face throughout their lives. Educators also need to be trained to meet each student where they are to provide individualized support. The DDOE is committed to supporting partnerships with schools, LEAs, communities, non- profits and other state agencies that can provide resources to students in these critical transitions.

Family and Community Engagement

Evidence supports that gaps in educational opportunity and achievement will only be fully remedied when those closest to low-income students—parents, families, and communities—are meaningfully engaged by their teachers, schools, and districts. Therefore, the DDOE intends to use funds from a variety of federal and state sources to promote high-impact parent, family, and community engagement that is collaborative, culturally competent, trauma-informed, and focused on supporting the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally.

Social Emotional Supports

Research literature indicates that multi-tiered systems of positive behavioral support create safe and caring learning environments that promote the positive social-emotional and academic development of all children. Additional research on zero-tolerance discipline policies have concluded that such policies are ineffective at changing student maladaptive behavior and do not promote student/school connectedness essential for student learning and achievement to occur.

To support LEAs and schools to implement multi-tiered systems of behavior support, the DDOE partners with the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project (DE-PBS) to provide professional development, coaching, and technical assistance. Efforts focus on building the capacity of the LEA Coaches (DE-PBS Cadre), LEA Leadership teams, and school based teams and team leaders to create safe and caring learning environments that promote the social-emotional and academic development of all children.

By concentrating on relationships and the social-emotional well-being of individuals, a sense of community and caring is fostered within the classroom that helps to build positive teacher/student and student/student rapport, which contribute to an overall school climate in which trust, communication, and a sense of belonging supports student learning. This type of learning environment must also be free of incidents of bullying and harassment, which is shown to negatively impact student attendance and academic performance as well as traumatizing students who may have difficulty coping with such peer behavior. To effectively combat bullying, parents, students and school staff must all be aware of the signs of bullying, its negative effects, and the processes in place for addressing these incidents within the school environment. Solutions which leverage peer empathy as part of the resolution process and addressing root causes will be more effective than simply suspending an offender from school for a few days.

In addition to the traumatization that can occur within the school environment due to bullying, other adverse childhood experiences such as witnessing violence, being abused, parental divorce, or death can alter the physical development of a child's brain causing behavioral issues such as impulsivity, lack of self-regulation, and physically inappropriate responses. Preventative measures in the form of a strong social-emotional curriculum can empower students to self-identify behavior triggers and avert misbehaving by using learned self-regulation skills. School psychologists, school counselors and trained behavioral health professionals need to be utilized to their fullest professional capacity to help deliver these social-emotional supports, trainings and services to individual students.

The use of aversive behavioral interventions does not foster positive student/teacher relations. Teacher preparation in the area of effective, evidenced-based classroom management techniques, including those for students with mild or severe disabilities, is paramount to not escalating developmentally normal student behaviors to the point in which a student has to be removed from school. Understanding how things such as chronic poverty or, exposure to violent acts, or how a disability affects student behavior can be the difference in a teacher having to use an aversive behavioral intervention such as a physical restraint or not. Furthermore, effective bully prevention and intervention techniques are learned

responses that require a deeper level of training than traditional conflict resolution for a teacher to understand the short- and long-term effects of the behavior on the target and the motivation of the bully. Targeted trainings in these specific areas should be a part of teacher preparation programs at the undergraduate level.

Stakeholder feedback has clearly identified the need for improved wrap-around services, especially for low-income students, homeless students, students in foster care, students with disabilities, and English learners. The DDOE will increase the level and intensity of interagency coordination and cooperation leading to improve delivery of services. Furthermore, the DDOE will implement a variety of additional wrap-around support strategies to meet the needs of students who are most at risk.

School Health Services

School Health Services is an essential component of the overall school program that supports the individual health and well-being of each student through quality nursing services provided by professional school nurses. The DDOE recognizes the critical link between health and academic success. The health needs of students with chronic health conditions or at risk for injury/disease are met through School Health Services and collaboration with community agencies. Delaware public schools are required by law to provide a full-time school nurse in every school, which means caseloads vary significantly across the state. The Delaware school nurse is a highly qualified professional, who minimally holds a bachelor's degree in nursing, is a Registered Nurse (R.N.), has three years of clinical experience, and obtains Delaware certification in school nursing.

School nurses work closely with educators, through Individual Education Plans (IEPs), 504s, and Individualized Healthcare Plans, to identify ways to meet students' health needs with minimal interruption to the classroom learning time. School nurses also work closely with students, their families, staff, and community partners to help students fully participate in school and its varied activities. The goal of School Health Services is to assist students to enter the classroom ready to learn. The DDOE strives to support school nurses and students through the [School Nurse Certification Program](#), the online [School Nurse Manual](#), the [Lead School Nurse Program](#), the Mentoring Program, the [Delaware School Health Services](#) website, professional development, monitoring, collaboration with the Delaware School Nurses Association, and direct technical assistance.

In addition to requiring nursing staff in each public school, Delaware operates wellness centers in its school district high schools. The plan is for all school district high school to have a wellness center by 2018. Delaware provides 51 Family Crisis Therapists for the K-5 Early Intervention program to work with children and families that are at risk.

All students need to develop the knowledge and skills to be healthy throughout their lifetime. This is particularly critical for adolescents. The DDOE currently has a cooperative agreement grant with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to support adolescents, maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and avoid or reduce health-related risk behaviors.

Nutrition Services

Health and education go hand in hand. We know that a child who is hungry struggles to pay attention in class. The DDOE Nutrition Program administers several programs that provide healthy food to children including the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care

Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Special Milk Program. Each of these programs helps fight hunger and obesity by reimbursing organizations, such as schools, childcare centers, after-school programs, and nonprofit organizations, for providing healthy meals to children. Currently all LEAs, with the exception of one charter school, participate in the National School Lunch Programs. Additionally, our School Breakfast Program and Summer Food Service Program have grown significantly over the past several years. Our goal is to continue to expand all programs. The DDOE supports these programs through Quarterly Meetings, technical reviews and monitoring, direct assistance, ServSafe courses, classes at a local community college, direct technical assistance, and grants when available through USDA.

School Counseling Services

Studies show that students who enter school healthy and safe are better prepared to learn, school connectedness increases the likelihood that they will stay in school, and access to challenging and engaging programs will prepare them for life. Focusing on a whole-child approach to learning will result in increased student success. For example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning found that students who were engaged in school-based social-emotional learning earned higher grades and scored 11 percent higher on academic achievement tests than their peers who did not engage in this type of learning.

School counselors are trained to focus on the whole child and are, therefore, an important part of the educational team. They are uniquely qualified to address students' academic, career, and social-emotional needs through their implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. They maximize student success by analyzing school data, developing goals, and then re-evaluating their programs. School counselors promote equity and access to educational programs and resources for all students through their leadership, advocacy, and collaboration with others. They support school climate and safety within the school by implementing prevention and intervention programming.

There are approximately 300 school counselors tasked with meeting the academic, social-emotional, and career needs of students in Delaware at a ratio of 436:1. To ensure that these school counselors are providing the most comprehensive programming possible, the DDOE strives to support them and their students by offering relevant professional learning opportunities, providing technical assistance, continuously monitoring and updating applicable regulations, and maintaining and sharing access to resources and technology.

Psychology Services

Currently working in Delaware schools every day, school psychologists are often an untapped resource with diverse, multi-faceted expertise. When utilized appropriately, they can help schools and districts use limited dollars more effectively while simultaneously improving school and student outcomes. As Delaware and individual LEAs begin to develop systems of learning supports, school psychologists can offer significant skills in consultation, leadership, and technical assistance.

To ensure the most constructive impact on the academic and wellness outcomes of students, it is imperative that schools and communities work together through a collaborative and comprehensive approach. School psychologists are integrally involved in the school-community partnerships to improve student learning. School psychologists can help implement wellness promotion programs, such as mental health first aid and social-emotional learning in classrooms and can provide professional development in-

services to school staff and families addressing student mental and behavioral health. School psychologists can help implement wellness promotion programs, such as mental health first aid and social-emotional learning in classrooms and can provide professional development in-services to school staff and families addressing student mental and behavioral health. School psychologists enhance coordination of efforts to improve school safety, including crisis prevention, intervention, and rapid in-school response to school climate issues.

Well Rounded Education

The DDOE will support LEAs to provide equitable access to a well-rounded education and rigorous coursework in subjects in which female students, minority students, English learners, children with disabilities, or low-income students are underrepresented. Such subjects could include English, reading/language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, or physical education.

[14 DE Admin. Code 503](#) outlines required courses and course opportunities for all students, and [14 DE Admin. Code 505](#) outlines graduation requirements for all high school students. Delaware has focused on a well-rounded education for all its students as evidenced by its graduation requirements. Graduation requirements include (4) credits in English Language Arts, four (4) credits in mathematics; three (3) credits in science, three (3) credits in social studies, one (1) credit in physical education, one half (1/2) credit in health education, three (3) credits in a career pathway, two (2) credits world language and three and one half (3 ½) credits in elective courses. However, these regulations do not guarantee that all students will have equitable access to the broad range of courses offered within a school. The DDOE will develop technical assistance, resources, and training/professional learning modules to promote equitable access to a well-rounded curriculum for all students.

The DDOE will support access and participation in rigorous academic standards through a comprehensive approach that includes a focus on professional learning, monitoring and site visits, creating feedback loops, and state funding. The DDOE will provide supports for local innovation and deep professional learning for educators. Additionally, the DDOE will provide targeted professional learning to coaches and LEA leaders to support implementation of Delaware state standards.

The DDOE will continue to support the BRINC (initially formed by Brandywine, Indian River, New Castle County Vocational Technical and Colonial school districts) coalition's work in personalized learning. This LEA lead initiative, using technology to personalize the learning for students, continues to expand across LEAs and will lead to increased achievement for students.

English Learners Gaining Access to a to Well-rounded Curriculum

Delaware's English learner population is growing and we value the cultural richness this provides to our communities and schools. The DDOE's English Learner Strategic Plan will serve as the catalyst to propel statewide revisions and improvements to the English learner program. Goals within the plan are:

1. Engage every English learner in high-quality instruction and assessment designed to meet individual needs
2. Foster highly-effective educators of English learners
3. Mobilize the community and engage the public to support English learners
4. Continue to refine English learner education through intentional analysis of data

This plan will be published during the 2016-17 school year and implementation will begin in 2017-18.

Students with Disabilities Gaining Access to Well-rounded Curriculum

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) 2004 states that students with disabilities should have access to the same curriculum as their nondisabled peers. After identifying needs and gaining input from stakeholders throughout the state regarding the academic performance of students with disabilities, a State Personnel Development Grant was obtained. Through the Standards-Based IEP initiative, LEAs have received professional learning and coaching in developing IEPs that provide meaningful access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. When developing a standards-based IEP, the IEP team reviews data and present levels of performance to identify specific skills, services, and supports that a student needs in order to access and make progress in the general curriculum.

Based on stakeholder input involving educators, community members, business partners and the Governor's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, the DDOE has established the Delaware Early Literacy Initiative to implement Delaware's IDEA State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The SSIP is one requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) designed to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

The goals of the Delaware Early Literacy Initiative are:

1. Improve literacy achievement of all students, preschool through third grade, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
2. To support LEAs in providing a robust Multi-Tiered System of Academic Supports.
3. Decrease the percent of students with disabilities scoring below proficiency on the state assessment.

A national study released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers (Hernandez, 2012). Educators know that students need the foundational skills of reading in order to succeed in later schooling and be college and career ready. This initiative was designed specifically for Delaware schools to build resources for priorities that already exist such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and literacy professional learning. In addition, this Initiative will strengthen schools' abilities to deliver effective literacy interventions to all students, preschool through grade three, in order to close achievement gaps and increase literacy proficiency.

Career and College Readiness and Success

When students participate, in early career and college experiences, and schools connect college and career success measures, then students will engage in learning to master academic, technical, and career skills that prepare them for high school graduation, postsecondary education, and competitive employment in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand careers. The DDOE has created a structure to support students in grades 7th-12th and into post-secondary education.

In alignment with the Delaware Pathways to Prosperity Strategic Plan, career and technical education offers career preparation and continuing education that spans the secondary and postsecondary education system. These efforts support a diverse group of students as they enroll in career programs that reflect the needs of the state and regional economies and lead to an industry-recognized creditable, certificate or license that holds value at the professional or postsecondary level. In addition, work-based learning

activities enrich and advance school-based instruction for all students through career awareness, career exploration, and career immersion experiences. Career support services, job placement services, and postsecondary programming are provided for all youth, with specific attention to youth who are at-risk of not completing high school.

In addition to career supports the DDOE provides supports for college going students including three key focus areas:

1. State-wide supports such as College Application Month, student and parent focused communication tools (in multiple languages and vehicles includes text, social media platforms and mailers) as well as resources to support local program development to strengthen college-going culture (www.delawaregoestocollege.org)
2. Targeted resources to strengthen professional learning for educators of advanced placement courses, increased funding to scale dual enrollment partnerships with high schools and colleges, regular reporting for high schools and LEAs on student participation and success data in college-level courses, funding to reduce cost of Advanced Placement exams for students who are low-income. In addition to aligning our academic standards to the higher education entrance requirements, the DDOE is co-developing a plan with our higher education institutions and LEAs to make certain all Delaware students have a common bar for entry into credit bearing coursework at the college-level upon enrollment. This will provide structures and supports to reduce remediation rates for all Delaware graduates.
3. FAFSA completion efforts for all high schools, state scholarships to provide free community college to students with a 2.5 GPA and reduce overall cost of attendance for Delaware high school graduates enrolling in college.

Specific Services for Students in Foster Care

Students in foster care face unique educational challenges. They often lack educational stability, have poor attendance, fewer peer and adult connections, increased behavioral problems, and an increased risk of academic failure, dropping out, and juvenile delinquency. To help schools address some of these concerns, Delaware Code expanded the phrase “awaiting foster care” in the McKinney-Vento Act to include all students in foster care. This definition expansion allowed students in foster care to receive the same protections as students who are experiencing homelessness. Protections included educational stability, immediate enrollment, school of origin transportation, and other resources.

The adoption of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the removal of the phrase “awaiting foster care” from the McKinney-Vento definition. Starting December 10, 2017 students in foster care in Delaware will no longer be eligible to receive protections under McKinney-Vento. Instead, students in foster care will receive “McKinney-Vento-like” rights and protections through a new Title I, Part A assurance.

Each year there are approximately 550 foster care youth attending Delaware’s LEAs. It is the state’s desire to continue and improve upon the services and protections these students were receiving as a part of the McKinney-Vento Act. A group of stakeholders, including representatives from the LEAs, the DDOE, Division of Family Services, Office of the Child Advocate, and Parent Information Center of Delaware, has been convened to discuss a plan for moving forward. It is expected that increased coordination of support will result in better educational outcomes for students in foster care.

Additional Supports for Students with Disabilities

The DDOE has targeted supports for our Students with Disabilities through: 1) improving the preparation of middle school students for high school as well as exploration of postsecondary education/training and career options; 2) providing professional learning opportunities for all educators and partners serving students with disabilities; and 3) ensuring interagency collaboration.

The DDOE envisions a 4-course-sequence Transition Career Pathway – starting in middle school – being offered to all Delaware youth with disabilities. Many of these students are at-risk of dropping out, making them highly susceptible to a lifetime of significant challenges including chronic unemployment or underemployment, and dependency on public assistance. The DDOE knows from national studies that with high expectations, rigorous coursework (including CTE and authentic work-based learning) -- and appropriate supports to both educators and students – successful transition to desired post high school outcomes is possible for this population. We are also mindful of the many other students in our State who do not have disabilities, but are also struggling in school and at-risk of dropping out. This proposed Pathway might be of benefit to youth in this group as well.

This initial course would focus on self-determination (documented in the literature as a key evidence-based practice that is missing for the vast majority of youth with disabilities), career exploration, orientation to the expectations/culture/course offerings of high school, leadership skills, and exploration of post-secondary education and training options. Students will learn about Delaware labor market information, particularly high-demand occupations in the State. They will be encouraged to identify two emerging career fields of interest, one of which will be in a Delaware high demand field. They would receive guidance on the CTE course offerings that would match their emerging career field interests. All students in the Transition Career Pathway would take this course.

Students and their families would then have the option of selecting an existing Delaware-approved Career Pathway for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 – or continuing on with the new Transition Career Pathway courses. Both options will provide opportunities for all students to explore their fields of career interest -- through extensive career assessments and guidance, work- based learning (WBL) experiences connecting them with local employers (e.g., job shadowing and sampling; internships; apprenticeships, cooperative work experiences), with the goal of achieving industry-recognized skill certifications, enrolling and succeeding in post-secondary education and training – and ultimately obtaining competitive jobs that match their interests and talents.

Interagency Collaboration

The DDOE has an extensive history of working in collaboration with the Departments of Labor, Services for Children, Youth and the Families, Health and Social Services and Correction. Current initiatives include Early Start to Supported Employment, Pathways to Employment (related to Employment First), Project SEARCH, Start on Success, Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Prison Education, Adult Education support workforce development initiatives, and mental health services for school aged children. These collaboration activities allow Delaware to maximize resources and best practices to educating students and preparing them for the work force. The DDOE will continue to improve these collaborate efforts as well as expanding opportunities to include community partners.

A particular focus of the DDOE State plan is to support a continuum of services in LEAs and schools. These efforts will include partnering with other organizations, such as the Department of Services for

Children, Youth and their Families, Department of Health and Social Services, United Way, and other service agencies in the state. Strategies include

- Defining a common language regarding parent and family engagement, making sure to identify how it is the same/different based upon varying developmental stages/grade spans.
- Developing and promoting a statewide definition of parent and family engagement by convening SEA and LEA experts and by engaging key community partners.
- Promoting cultural competency and trauma-informed practice among teachers and administrators.
- Developing a webpage for the DDOE website that specifically targets the parent, family, and community audience, and provides them a central, user-friendly place to access the information they need, in plain language, and fully accessible.
- Updating LEA school planning, consolidated grant application, monitoring, and guidance with a focus on integrating state and federal programs and community programs.
- Developing evidence-based technical assistance and guidance through a trauma-informed and culturally competent lens.

Developing best practice guides for effective and meaningful communication-for educators, administrators and parents will serve a useful purpose. These guides will include culturally competent, and trauma-informed language, and effective tools. Feedback from stakeholders participating in the Student and School Supports Discussion Group highlighted the following areas where the DDOE can support effective parent, family, and community engagement:

- Support school-based programs to serve children and their families such as: certificate programs, wellness centers, food bank, laundromat, computer labs, physical and mental health services coordinators
- Provide the DDOE community outreach support and encourage LEAs and schools to employ community outreach coordinators
- Support for LEAs and schools to conduct home visitations
- Support opportunities for students to engage in community service

Next Steps

Delaware's ESSA plan fits into the state's overall work to improve the educational opportunities for all students in our public school system. This work spans from the youngest learners in our early childhood education programs to supports to ensure postsecondary and career success. Our goals are ambitious but achievable if we continue to work collaboratively with our educators, families, and community and business partners.

The input of our stakeholders was critical to the development of Delaware's ESSA plan, and we must continue to work together to ensure we provide our LEAs, schools, educators, students and families with the information, supports and resources they need to succeed. The development of this plan provided the opportunity for meaningful engagement and new relationships that we must continue to foster. We have the same goal: all students graduating with the skills to prepare them for life. Together, we will achieve

this by creating a system that has: standards and curricula that will prepare students for success in college, career and life; assessments to measure their progress over time; an accountability system that provides families and educators with information on how well schools and LEAs are educating their students; and supports for students and schools to help achieve their ambitious goals along the way.