Alternative Education in ESSA State Plans: A Review of 38 States

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About the American Youth Policy Forum

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC that provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on education, youth, and workforce issues at the national, state, and local levels.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary................................................................. 1
Introduction ............................................................................. 2
What is Alternative Education? .................................................. 2
ESSA and Accountability for Alternative Settings ....................... 3
Methodology........................................................................... 4
Review Findings ....................................................................... 4
  Accountability Systems.......................................................... 4
  Measures ............................................................................. 5
  N-Size and School Size ........................................................ 8
  Mention of Alternative Education in ESSA State Plans .......... 9
  States’ Future Plans for Alternative Education ...................... 10
Areas for Further Consideration................................................ 11
  Using ESSA as a Lever to Ensure High-Quality Alternative Settings ........................................ 11
  Continuous Improvement and Support of Alternative Settings ........................................... 11
  Appropriate Measures and Data to Assess Alternative Settings ........................................ 12
Conclusion............................................................................... 13
Acknowledgements................................................................... 13
References .............................................................................. 14
Appendices .............................................................................. 15
  Appendix A........................................................................... 15
  Appendix B........................................................................... 21
  Appendix C........................................................................... 23
  Appendix D........................................................................... 25
  Appendix E........................................................................... 27
Executive Summary

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides states with tools to strengthen accountability and ensure high-quality educational opportunities for all students, including those served in alternative schools and programs. The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) conducted a review of 38 ESSA state plans to better understand how states are approaching federal accountability for alternative settings. The review focused on five key areas: inclusion of alternative settings in accountability systems and potential modifications to those systems, measures used in accountability systems, N-size and school size, where alternative education is mentioned in state plans, and descriptions of future plans or inquiry related to alternative education. This publication shares key findings and areas for future consideration.

The review demonstrated that the majority of states used the same accountability system for traditional and alternative settings for federal accountability purposes. Eight states included modifications in their accountability systems, and nine other states included additional information or clarification about alternative settings. With regard to accountability measures, the majority of states reviewed included extended-year graduation rates, only three states included completer rates, and approximately half of states included a measure of growth for high schools. The majority of states set an N-size of 10 or 20 for accountability purposes, as the minimum number of students necessary to create a subgroup. Each of these elements, accountability system, measures, and N-size, have implications for alternative settings which states should be aware of as they implement their new accountability systems. The publication explores the different sections of the plan in which states discuss alternative education and states future plans to address accountability for alternative settings to demonstrate how this issue intersects with a variety of other education issue areas.

The publication concludes with three areas of consideration for states: how ESSA can be used as a lever to ensure high-quality alternative settings, what continuous improvement and support can look like for these settings, and the importance of appropriate measures and data when holding alternative settings accountable.
Introduction

For students who are not successful in a traditional school setting, attending an alternative education program or school can be a game changer. High-quality alternative settings can provide students the opportunity to attend a smaller school with greater personalization, caring culture, opportunity for credit recovery and acceleration, meaningful relationships with caring adults, flexible scheduling and curriculum, and opportunity for youth voice and leadership, which can have a positive impact on student outcomes.\(^1\)\(^2\) Alternative education programs and schools, or as referred to in this publication, alternative settings, are an important part of the K-12 education system, and helping state and local education agencies support and improve them can lead to greater success for students.\(^3\)

The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in 2015, provides state education agencies (SEAs) with tools to strengthen accountability and improve school performance, and alternative settings should be fully included in those efforts. In order to better understand how states are planning to hold alternative settings accountable under the federal accountability requirements of ESSA, AYPF reviewed 38 approved ESSA state plans to gather information on the following:

1. Inclusion of alternative settings in accountability systems and potential modifications to those systems
2. Measures used in the accountability system
3. N-Size and school size
4. Where alternative education is mentioned in the state plan
5. Description of future plans or inquiry related to alternative education

Throughout the past few years, the education field has analyzed ESSA state plans through various lenses, including equity, personalized learning, career readiness, and specific subpopulations. Alternative education intersects with many of these other aspects of state plans, and this publication can add to the knowledge of the field about how ESSA can improve accountability and outcomes for all students.

What is Alternative Education?

Definitions of alternative education differ across the United States. The primary criteria that states currently use to define alternative settings include: 1) the student populations served; 2) the setting type; and 3) the instructional or environmental characteristics.\(^4\) Alternative settings typically serve “at-risk”

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students who are often classified as chronically absent, overage and under-credited, re-engaging with school, having disciplinary infractions, or pregnant and/or parenting. The diversity in needs and circumstances of these students is indicative of the fact that, although all of these students may be educated in alternative settings, there is still a need for nuanced instruction and services. Additionally, the setting type (i.e., program, school, short-term, long-term) varies greatly across alternative settings, as do the environmental characteristics and instructional methods of these institutions. Within a state or school district, there can also be diversity among alternative settings.

Given that states can define and structure alternative education in many ways, it is important to understand each state’s context when considering how accountability for alternative education is addressed in the ESSA state plan.

**ESSA and Accountability for Alternative Settings**

A primary focus of this review is to assess how states are treating alternative settings as part of the statewide accountability systems established within ESSA state plans. ESSA requires that states hold all public schools accountable for providing high-quality education to their students and developing a state plan that describes a statewide accountability system to identify schools needing support and improvement. In designing their ESSA state plans, states “have the opportunity to ensure that their accountability systems meaningfully measure success in alternative settings and are instructive to the state and to the federal government on how to better serve students in alternative settings.”

Developing accountability for alternative settings is complex, given the diversity and variation among alternative schools and due to the fact that traditional measures of accountability, such as academic achievement or graduation rates, may not fully demonstrate the quality of the alternative setting. For example, alternative settings typically serve students who are at risk of dropping out or have already disengaged with school and therefore may be behind in credits or require extended graduation timelines. In acknowledgement of the unique circumstances of the student population served, states have taken a variety of approaches in developing their accountability systems, such as weighting measures differently or including measures such as reengagement rates or extended-year graduation rates.

Accountability systems are not only a tool for identifying schools that are successful and those that need improvement, but also a strategy for allocating resources, attention, and support for both institutional and systematic improvement. Federal, state, and public accountability mechanisms can be used to hold alternative settings accountable, and states have approached accountability for alternative settings in a variety of ways. For the purpose of this review, AYPF focused on accountability at the federal level under ESSA state plans. However, it is important to acknowledge that states have and can develop systems, policies, and other mechanisms of accountability for alternative settings apart from their ESSA state plans, and thus this review of ESSA state plans likely does not represent all the state efforts related to

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alternative education. ESSA is only one mechanism within the larger ecosystem of policy and tools that can be leveraged to support students in alternative settings.

For more information about how states and districts are approaching accountability for alternative settings, refer to *Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education*.

**Methodology**

AYPF staff reviewed approved ESSA state plans between September 2017-March 2018 and October 2018-January 2019. Given the timeframe and staff capacity, this publication is a review of 38 approved ESSA state plans, inclusive of the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.\(^8\) AYPF staff reviewed each state plan to:

1) Determine if the accountability system was inclusive of alternative settings and if there were any modifications for alternative settings; 2) Examine the measures used in their accountability system; 3) Identify the N-size for subgroup accountability; 4) Identify any additional mention of alternative settings or students served in those settings throughout the plan; and 5) Identify the state’s future plans related to alternative education. Each of these items is discussed in greater detail below.

**Review Findings**

**Accountability Systems**

AYPF examined the statewide accountability systems described in ESSA state plans to learn if states mentioned alternative settings and any potential variation or modification for those settings. The review demonstrated two primary ways in which states are approaching accountability for alternative settings:

- **Same Accountability**: Accountability is the same for traditional and alternative settings. Please note, for the purposes of the designations in Appendix A, Figure 1 the reviewers assumed that the primary ESSA indicators listed in state plans are applicable to alternative settings unless otherwise stated.

- **Modified Accountability**: Accountability systems, as described in the state plan, have modifications for alternative settings. The reviewers observed these modifications in a few key areas:
  - Modifications in measures or indicators.
  - Modifications in intervention and support once identified as in need of comprehensive support and improvement.
  - Modifications in the process of how the alternative setting is held accountable and mention of where the student accountability information is reported (district or state).

Of the 38 states, 30 states had the same accountability for traditional and alternative settings for federal purposes, nine of which included additional information or clarification about alternative education settings. Among those nine states, one key piece of clarifying information was that although accountability

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\(^8\) Approved state plans can be found at the Department of Education’s website, found here: https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html
was the same for federal purposes, additional strategies and mechanisms were being used at the state level to provide more nuanced accountability for state purposes. Only eight states included modifications in their accountability system for alternative settings within their state plan. Please see Figure 1 in Appendix A for each state’s classification of same or modified accountability for alternative settings, specific language from the state plans, and links to the state plan for further reference.

Accountability Beyond State Plans

While ESSA requires that states hold all public schools accountable and develop a plan for the identification and improvement of schools, states can also develop methods of accountability and identification outside of their state ESSA plans. Some states included details about how they plan to address alternative settings, while others rarely mentioned or addressed alternative education at all. If a state did not mention an accountability mechanism for alternative education in their ESSA plans, it does not necessarily indicate that these states are not holding these settings accountable. Rather, states may have accountability mechanisms for alternative settings through state or local processes. It is important that whether incorporated in the ESSA state plan or through other accountability mechanisms, states ensure there are processes in place to identify which alternative settings are serving students well and which are in need of improvement.

Measures

Extended-Year Graduation Rate (EYGR)

ESSA requires states to include a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for all students and subgroups. States may also choose to include an extended-year graduation rate (EYGR) such as five-, six- and seven-year rates. These EYGRs can be given different weights within the graduation rate indicator. Alternative

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settings typically serve students who are at-risk of dropping out or have disconnected from school. The inclusion of EYGRs is crucial for alternative settings because they provide more flexibility for students who are progressing towards graduation on an extended timeline and can act as an incentive for schools and programs to reengage students.

The review focused on the graduation rate(s) used for accountability purposes in each state plan. Of the 38 states, 16 used four-year graduation rates, and 22 states included a four-year rate, as well as a combination of either five-, six-, or seven-year rates. For a state-by-state breakdown, reference Figure 2 in Appendix B.

Completer Rate

Completion rates are another measure, in addition to graduation rates, of secondary credential attainment. A completer rate includes students who have earned a GED, another form of high-school equivalency, or an alternative diploma in addition to students that have earned a traditional diploma. Of the states that did include a completer rate, they mention reporting upon and collecting completion rates for accountability purposes. Figure 3 below displays information from three of the states that include a completer rate in their state plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Completer Rate Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>North Dakota’s plan includes the GED completion as an indicator in their accountability system, separate from the graduation rate. A dropout who completes a North Dakota GED prior to 22 years of age (within three graduation cohorts) will be credited to the school administering the GED program as a graduate. GED graduates will account for up to 8 percent in the accountability system’s index for high schools. If there are no students eligible, then index values are applied equally to the College and Career Readiness and School Quality indicators. For more information, reference pages 51-52 of North Dakota state plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Oregon has three School Quality and Student Success indicators in its accountability system, one of which is a five-year completer rate. Oregon has a goal that all students will earn a high school diploma or equivalent and measures progress toward this goal using a five-year high school completion rate, which is the percentage of students earning a regular or modified diploma or an extended diploma, GED, or adult high school diploma. Oregon has been calculating the five-year high school completer rate since 2009-2010.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The plan explicitly calls out alternative settings stating, “In addition, the completer rate more appropriately includes successful outcomes for students enrolled in alternative programs or alternative schools, who often serve students that arrive off-track for graduation within four years” (51). For more information, reference pages 51-52 of Oregon state plan.

**South Dakota**

|                    | Within their School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator, South Dakota has included a measure of high school completion. The High School Completion Rate is the percent of students in the most recently completed school year who have attained a diploma or high school equivalency. The rate will be calculated for every school, district, the state, and for every subgroup at each level. The plan states “Utilizing both the Four-Year Cohort and High School Completion rates in the state’s overall accountability system fulfills federal accountability provisions, while also recognizing the work many high schools are accomplishing throughout the state ... By incorporating a High School Completion rate schools will be rewarded for getting students across the finish line, however that may happen.” (32). For more information, reference page 32 of South Dakota state plan. |

While only a few states include a completer rate in their accountability systems, other states made mention of requirements to report the number of students earning a GED or equivalent. For example, Hawaii’s state plan for Title I, Part D mentions that state agencies receiving funds through that program will need to collect and report the number of students who have earned a GED or equivalent to the Hawaii Department of Education annually as part of their Consolidated State Performance Report. To learn more, reference page 85 of Hawaii’s state plan.

Additionally, other states include GED completion as an outcome that can receive points or weight within a college and career readiness indicator. For example, New York’s plan includes a College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index as a measure of school quality and student success. Within this index, schools earn credit for students that earn a high school equivalency diploma. For more information, reference pages 64-66 of New York’s state plan. Similarly, Louisiana’s plan includes a Strength of Diploma Index that informs two indicators for high schools: Graduation Rate and Student Success. The Index includes the HiSet as a high school equivalency credential, and schools can earn points within the index for students who earn that credential. For more information, reference page 57 of Louisiana’s state plan. Additionally, AYPF featured Louisiana’s Strength of Diploma Index in *Innovations in Accountability Measures & Processes: Three Case Studies for Alternative Education*.

To learn more about other potential measures that states can use for postsecondary and workforce readiness, refer to page 15 in *Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education*.

**Growth**

Under ESSA, states must include an Academic Achievement Indicator that measures academic proficiency on annual statewide reading and mathematics assessments. States also have the option to include measures of academic growth for high school students.
The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) defines growth in a recent publication as the “academic performance of the same student or same collection of students over two or more points in time.” By including academic growth in accountability systems, states can report on student progress over time, in contrast to proficiency measures, which demonstrate how many students meet academic benchmarks.

Given that alternative settings typically serve students behind academic benchmarks, growth measures provide an opportunity to measure progress, can allow states to more meaningfully differentiate between high- and low-quality settings, and incentivize improvement of all students. Of the 38 states, 18 included a measure of student growth within their accountability system for high schools. The growth measures were either their own indicator or a component or measure within an indicator. For a state-by-state breakdown, reference Figure 4 in Appendix C.

N-size and School Size

ESSA requires that “each State shall describe, with respect to any provisions under this part that require disaggregation of information by each subgroup of students, the minimum number of students that the State determines are necessary to be included to carry out such requirements and how that number is statistically sound, which shall be the same State-determined number for all students and for each subgroup of students in the State.” In other words, states are required to set the minimum number of students needed to form a subgroup for accountability and reporting purposes, also referred to as N-size. If a school does not have enough students in a particular subgroup to meet the N-size, then the school does not need to report for that subgroup or disaggregate them when determining performance and the need for targeted support and improvement efforts.

While in some states the N-size for accountability and reporting is different, the reviewers focused on the N-size only for accountability purposes. Of the 38 states, 12 states use 10 students as their N-size, four states use 15, 14 states use 20, two states use 25, and six states use 30. For a state-by-state breakdown, reference Figure 5 in Appendix D.

Additionally, ESSA allows local education agencies to forgo implementing improvement efforts for poor performance in schools that serve fewer than 100 students. Many alternative programs or schools are often small and enroll few students, which could mean that some programs or schools are not subject to the same improvement requirements or do not benefit from those services. South Dakota, in the annual meaningful differentiation section of their plan, references how they will address accountability and evaluation for small and special schools in the state.

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Mention of Alternative Education in ESSA State Plans

For states that did mention alternative education in their state plans, we observed the references in the various sections noted below.

- **Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies**
  This section addresses improving basic programs operated by local education agencies. In it, states must identify their statewide accountability systems and school support and improvement activities. States that mentioned alternative education in Title 1, Part A often included the information in sections 4.v. Annual Meaningful Differentiation, 4.vi. Identification of Schools, and 7. School Transitions.

- **Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children**
  This section addresses the needs of migratory children and coordination of services to address those needs. Often, alternative settings are mentioned as a means to help migrant students recover credits and assist in continuing to progress academically, especially those who are at risk of dropping out.

- **Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk**
  This section addresses the prevention and intervention efforts for children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at-risk, primarily focused on youth involved in the juvenile justice system. States mention alternative settings as an academic pathway for youth transitioning from a correctional facility. In some states, juvenile justice schools are also considered alternative education schools or programs.

- **Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction**
  This section addresses how the state will support teachers and school leaders and improve processes related to teacher preparation, certification, and licensing. Title II, Part A also asks states to address how they will improve equitable access to effective teachers. One state described how they provide support to alternative settings by providing program specialists to schools throughout the state.

- **Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants**
  This section addresses how the state will use federal funds to improve academic achievement by providing all students access to a well-rounded education and improving school conditions and the use of technology. For example, one state described how they intend to use the funds to support work associated with student behavior, discipline, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). They analyzed data related to school discipline and concluded that additional supports and resources were needed to effectively implement behavioral interventions and disciplinary practices, particularly related to students attending alternative settings.
• **Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program**
  
  This section addresses how the state will support the academic success of youth experiencing homelessness. This includes how the state plans to improve processes to identify homeless youth, remove barriers for youth to access academic and extracurricular programming and accrue credit, improve readiness for college, and support school personnel who serve homeless youth. Often, alternative settings are mentioned as a means for students experiencing homelessness to recover credits and continue their education, especially for students who may have disengaged from school.

• **Appendices**
  
  A few states also mentioned alternative education in their appendices, such as attaching materials from the stakeholder engagement and feedback sessions that were required during the ESSA plan drafting process. Two states had materials in their appendices that discussed alternative accountability and alternative settings and how they relate to the educational success of Native American students.

Identifying which sections of the state plans mention alternative settings offers an indication of how states are conceptualizing alternative education and how these settings can be utilized and improved. ESSA requires states to establish a system of annual meaningful differentiation of schools. Title I Part A (4)(v)(c) of the Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan, released in March 2017 by the U.S. Department of Education, asks states to describe if they will use different methodologies for annual meaningful differentiation of schools for which an accountability determination cannot be made and to indicate the type of schools that would apply. Some states used this opportunity to discuss different accountability methods for alternative settings. Additionally, given that alternative settings often serve at-risk students, it is no surprise that states mention alternative education in sections of the plan that describe support to underserved subpopulations such as youth involved in the juvenile justice system, migratory children, and youth experiencing homelessness. Very few states mentioned alternative settings in relation to effective instruction, Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, and in their appendices.

**States’ Future Plans for Alternative Education**

During the review of each state plan, the reviewer examined if the state included plans to incorporate other elements or mechanisms to hold alternative settings accountable. Of the 38 plans reviewed, 13 state plans indicated future plans and made explicit call-outs about alternative education (See Figure 6 in Appendix E.) These future plans include creating modified mechanisms of accountability for alternative settings, expanding alternative education options for students, reviewing data and trends related to student dropout and transition, and focusing on effective practices and improvement strategies for alternative settings.

In addition to the 13 states that made explicit references to alternative education, other states not included in Figure 6 mentioned possible future actions that could have an impact on youth served in alternative settings, such as developing early warning systems for students at-risk of disengaging from school, implementing new growth measures, and including tools to measure school climate and culture.
Areas for Further Consideration

This review of 38 ESSA state plans provides valuable insight into how states are thinking about alternative education and including alternative settings in their federal accountability system. The review raises a number of issues that state leaders should consider as they seek to improve educational outcomes for all students, particularly through their alternative settings, such as using ESSA as a lever to ensure high-quality alternative settings, continuous improvement and support of alternative settings, and appropriate measures and data to assess alternative settings.

Using ESSA as a Lever to Ensure High-Quality Alternative Settings

The accountability systems developed under ESSA provide an opportunity for states to evaluate how they are serving students in alternative settings and how they are holding those settings accountable. As demonstrated in the Accountability Systems section, some states have dedicated time and resources to understanding how annual meaningful differentiation and identification of schools for improvement efforts will affect alternative schools, and some have adjusted their accountability systems to reflect the unique needs of alternative education. But many states have not addressed these issues in their ESSA plans in any great detail. As implementation of ESSA continues, states should revisit their state plans to focus on strategies to support and improve their alternative education as part of their overall accountability systems.

Questions to Consider

- Is alternative education mentioned in my state’s ESSA state plan?
- How are alternative settings held accountable for federal purposes?
- Are there additional mechanisms of accountability at the state and/or local level for alternative settings?
- Is accountability modified or differentiated for alternative settings, compared to traditional settings? What are the implications of the same or modified accountability?

Continuous Improvement and Support of Alternative Settings

Ultimately, the accountability systems under ESSA identify schools for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement. ESSA provides an opportunity for states to hold alternative settings accountable, meaningfully identify which settings are in need of improvement, and develop and implement plans for continuous improvement. However, in our review of the state ESSA plans, we observed that most states do not explicitly mention alternative education or alternative settings in their identification and improvement plans for underperforming schools.

States must also think about what evidence-based improvement efforts for these settings will look like if and when these settings are identified. As stated by Deeds and DePaoli, “ESSA permits the use of differentiated evidence-based interventions in schools that predominantly serve students who are returning after having exited without receiving a diploma or who, based on grade or age, are significantly
off-track to meeting high school graduation requirements.”\(^{14}\) While ESSA requires that interventions for school improvement be evidence-based, there is little evidence about effective interventions in alternative settings. More research is needed about which interventions work and for which student populations and to help states determine the most effective strategies for improvement.

### Questions to Consider

- What school improvement processes are currently in place for alternative schools?
- How are these processes, if at all, differentiated from ones offered to traditional schools that have been identified for improvement?
- Are these improvement processes included in the ESSA state plan? Are there other improvement processes for alternative settings in place at the state or local level?

### Appropriate Measures and Data to Assess Alternative Settings

The measures used in an accountability system and the weights assigned to those measures can have implications for how many alternative settings are identified for improvement. According to the 2018 *Building a Grad Nation* report, alternative schools are over-represented among low-graduation-rate high schools,\(^ {15}\) often because of the educational challenges facing their students and because a single indicator like a four-year graduation rate may not holistically represent the success of a student or school. Given the value and priority typically given to measuring graduation rates in accountability systems, there is a likelihood that many alternative settings will be identified as in need of improvement under ESSA, while a more complex assessment may yield different outcomes. It is also important to ensure that the measures provide enough data to meaningfully differentiate among alternative settings.

For more information about how states and districts are using other measures for alternative settings, refer to *Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education* and *Innovations in Accountability Measures: Three Case Studies for Alternative Education*.

The minimum number of students that states determine are necessary to require disaggregated information for a subgroup and the size of a school are also important considerations when considering accountability for alternative settings. If the N-size limits reporting on subgroups in alternative settings, it will be difficult for the state, school district, and public to examine students’ performance, which could have negative consequences for some groups of students. If alternative education programs or schools have fewer than 100 students, they may not be identified for improvement and the resources and supports that follow.

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\(^{14}\) Deeds & DePaoli, 2017. Pg. 18.

Questions to Consider

- What measures are used to hold alternative settings accountable? Do they align with the goal and purpose of the alternative setting?
- Are there alternative schools and programs in my state that serve less than 100 students? If so, are there mechanisms in place to ensure quality and support improvement?
- How is my state meaningfully differentiating performance among alternative settings?

Conclusion

The state plans offer a wealth of knowledge about how each state is supporting their student population, including students in alternative settings. While the plans are complex, often very long documents, they provide evidence of how some states are addressing this issue and areas that deserve more attention. Various states also noted in their state plans the importance of engaging the full range of educational stakeholders to continue to think about alternative education.

Accountability is one way to ensure that students served in alternative settings have access to high-quality educational opportunities and that those settings have the resources needed to improve. The Every Student Succeeds Act is an opportunity and lever, among many others, that can and should be utilized by states to better serve students whose needs are not met in traditional education settings. This publication provides an overview of how states plan to address federal accountability requirements and how it impacts students served in alternative settings. We hope that states and school districts will be able to use this publication to learn from their peers and colleagues and to place more emphasis on strategies for supporting alternative education, now and in the future.

Acknowledgements

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References


APPENDIX A

Figure 1 includes the 38 states with approved plans that were reviewed to assess if accountability for alternative settings was the same or modified compared to traditional settings and additional notes or mention of alternative education stated in reference to the statewide accountability system established under ESSA.

*Figure 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Same or Modified Accountability?</th>
<th>State Plan Language</th>
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</table>
| Arizona     | Same, but mention of modification at the state level. | “Though the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education’s vision was to create a unified state and federal system of accountability for all Arizona public schools and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), the interpretation of ESSA law related to accountability contradicts the requirements of Arizona State law related to the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System required by Arizona Revised Statutes §15-241...As a result, Arizona’s system of meaningful differentiation of schools under ESSA will vary slightly from Arizona’s A-F Accountability system in that alternative schools are required to be included within the traditional schools’ model for the purposes of accountability under ESSA while remaining separate for the purposes of accountability under state law” (pg. 17 of Arizona state plan).  
“As described above, alternative schools, for the purposes of ESSA, will be included in one system of annual meaningful differentiation. Within this federal system, schools that are designated as alternative will be noted so that stakeholders will clearly understand these schools’ mission as it relates to a comprehensive system of education for all Arizona children. Though unable to provide a separate accountability for alternative schools via ESSA, the State Board of Education must also balance the requirements of state law. Therefore, in compliance with A.R.S. §15-241, the State Board of Education has developed procedures for ensuring annual meaningful differentiation for those schools that have been determined to be an alternative school. Below is the proposed model for 9-12 Alternative Schools. At this time, this model is not yet approved by the State Board of Education and is still being modified.” (pg. 32 of Arizona state plan)  
For more information, reference pages 17 and 30-35 of Arizona state plan. |
| Arkansas    | Same                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| California  | Same, but modification at the state level. | “California’s accountability system will be applied to all schools, including charter schools, and all student groups with 30 or more students.” (page 21 of California state plan)  
In the state plan, there is a link to the CDE California Accountability Model & School Dashboard Web page, further describing California’s accountability model. On the website, there are resources about California’s modified methods of accountability for alternative schools, including the Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS) program. |
<p>| Connecticut | Same                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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| Delaware          | Modified     | “All public schools that are identified as ‘accountability schools’... under State policy will receive overall text-based summative ratings annually, in addition to text-based ratings for each indicator in the DSSF [Delaware School Success Framework] where applicable...There are two categories used to identify the accountability status of a school, including schools that serve special populations:
  - Category 1 – Schools that are Title I schools for the given year.
  - Category 2 – Schools that are not Title I schools for the given year but have enrolled students generated through the unit count process. If a school falls within either of these two categories, the school receives an accountability rating. However, some schools serving special populations are not considered accountability schools. In this case, students are reassigned back to an appropriate accountability school. As such, the DOE [Delaware Department of Education] accountability system captures all students regardless of the school they attend. Charter schools that are identified as serving “at-risk” students are governed under state charter school law and may have alternate measures above and beyond the measures included in the statewide accountability system.” (pages 54-55 of Delaware state plan) |
| District of Columbia | Same, but modifications may be made by the state. | “For those schools for which an accountability determination based on the system of annual meaningful differentiation cannot appropriately be made based on the implementation of the statewide system (because of grade configuration, student population, or another factor), OSSE [Office of the State Superintendent of Education] may develop an alternative methodology which will ensure meaningful differentiation and will allow the ability to identify such schools for Comprehensive Support or Targeted Support as applicable.” (page 30 of District of Columbia state plan) |
| Florida           | Same         | “...alternative schools and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) center schools will receive a federal percent of points index and the component information will be reported on the school report card required under ESSA. Each DJJ [Department of Juvenile Justice] education program will receive a federal percent of points index and these components will be reported in the school report card required under ESSA. The federal percent of points index will be used to determine whether these schools (K-3, alternative, ESE, and DJJ) are identified for CS&I [Comprehensive Support and Improvement] or TS&I [Targeted Support and Improvement].” (page 23 of Florida state plan) |
| Georgia           | Same         | “All schools, including primary and alternative schools, are eligible to receive a summative CCRPI [College and Career Ready Performance Index] score. Schools, however, must have a Content Mastery score in order to be assigned a summative rating. When a school does not have a Content Mastery component score, an overall score will not be calculated; however, available indicator and component data will be reported.” (pages 39-40 of Georgia state plan) |
| Hawaii            | Same         | |
| Illinois          | Same         | “Historically, many students receiving alternative programming in alternative educational settings fell outside the administration of the ISBE [Illinois State Board of Education] and these students were either represented within the system or not based on their specific placement at the time assessments were administered. ISBE is in ongoing dialogue with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) to more fully integrate these students into the accountability system. As appropriate, this section of the application will be amended to reflect changes in practice.” (page 86 of Illinois state plan) |
| Indiana           | Modified     | “Indiana has a separate accountability system for adult high schools that predominantly serve a population that belongs to a graduation cohort that has already graduated; or are over the age of eighteen at the time the student was enrolled at the school. The
annual summative A-F letter grade for an adult high school is based on a Graduation Rate Indicator and a College and Career Readiness Indicator. The Graduation Rate Indicator is comprised of a graduation to enrollment percentage metric (number of students graduating during the school year / within-year average number of students enrolled), and the graduation rate metric used in the general statewide accountability system. The College and Career Readiness Indicator is the same metric used in the general statewide accountability system; however, the goal for adult high schools is for at least 80 percent of its graduates to demonstrate college or career readiness.” (page 55 of Indiana state plan)

### Kansas

| Same |

“All public schools within the State, Title I and non-Title I, will be reported on the building report card and receive an annual meaningful differentiation designation. This includes virtual and alternative stand-alone schools.” (page 34 of Kansas state plan)

### Kentucky

| Modified accountability for alternative education programs |

“DSS [Division of Student Success] monitors compliance and quality in alternative education programs, including annual identification of Alternative Programs of Distinction that can be a model to other alternative education programs. These programs are recognized annually by the Kentucky Board of Education.” (page 112 of Kentucky state plan). For more information about alternative education, reference the Kentucky Department of Education website.

### Louisiana

| Same, but mention of identifying quality indicators for alternative schools |

“ESSA provides an opportunity for states to reconsider the way they measure and report on the performance of alternative schools that serve traditionally disadvantaged student populations with unique needs. Quality alternative education can provide students who are struggling or who have left their traditional school an opportunity to achieve in a new learning environment. The LDE [Louisiana Department of Education] will convene a study group of key external stakeholders representing local school systems, student and family advocacy organizations, student behavior and discipline experts, and juvenile justice stakeholders during spring 2017 in order to identify quality indicators of effective alternative education and to recommend accountability measures appropriate for such schools.” (page 64 of Louisiana state plan)

### Maine

| Same |

### Maryland

| Same |

### Massachusetts

| Same, but mention of the potential for differentiation in the future |

“Massachusetts does not currently differentiate between schools whose mission is to serve alternative populations, but plans to explore a protocol to do so for the first time following the 2017-18 school year.” (page 61 of Massachusetts state plan)

### Michigan

| Same, but will seek a waiver and explain a parallel system of accountability in development for the future |

“Traditional accountability systems may be insensitive to the challenges faced by many alternative education-focused entities. In response, Michigan has committed to developing a new, voluntary, parallel system of accountability for alternative education programs based on an application and relevant school demographics. Due to the limitation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, Michigan will seek a waiver for the system that has been in development for the last two years. At this time, Michigan will include alternative education-focused entities in its index-based identification system. The following description is provided in the interest of transparency, and to continue the development process of this parallel system. This will be a fully separate opt-in alternative to Michigan’s identification system, where all schools that qualify are eligible to choose this parallel path. Over the past two years, MDE [Michigan Department of Education] has convened external stakeholder in order to identify quality indicators of effective alternative education and to recommend accountability measures appropriate for such schools. Accountability for alternative schools would begin with a one-year pilot followed by full implementation. The student population
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Comprising these alternative schools will exclusively contribute to the alternative accountability system.” (pages 40-41 of Michigan state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>“New Jersey’s alternative schools are constituted as separate schools subject to the same state accountability provisions as any other school within a LEA and the state. Alternative schools serve specific student groups across one or more LEA and include: magnet schools; theme high schools; vocational education programs; schools for students housed in state facilities; and other alternative schools. Although some alternative programs are constituted as small schools within larger school entities, they are included as part of the regularly constituted school’s accountability system.” (page 76 of New Jersey state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>Schools that serve special populations are likely to fall under the Supplemental Accountability Measures/Model (SAM). Page 65 of the state plan links to School Grading website, which provides more information about SAM schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>“New York will handle alternative high schools that are identified as among the lowest performing in the State for more than three years slightly differently from how it will handle other schools. Rather than automatically placing these schools into Receivership, the Commissioner will partner with the district to determine the most appropriate interventions for that school. The interventions under consideration may still include Receivership.” (page 79 of New York state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>“Alternative schools (e.g., Transfer high schools and Special Act schools) will not be automatically placed into Receivership; instead, the Commissioner will work with the district, should any alternative school be identified as among the lowest-performing for more than three consecutive years, to determine the most appropriate interventions for that school.” (page 101 of New York state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>“North Dakota stipulates that all public schools, regardless of grade configuration or service population, will participate in the state accountability system. State law defines any public school to include any educational institution supported through State funding and administered through a public school board. North Dakota’s accountability system will include all public schools identified as K-12, all alternative public schools, the North Dakota School for the Deaf and the North Dakota State Youth Correctional Center.” (page 72 of North Dakota state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>For more specifics on schools serving special populations, reference pages 73-75 in the state plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Same, but modifications at the state level.</td>
<td>Pages 44-45 of Ohio’s state plan describe that “Ohio has accountability rules to ensure that students who attend specialized schools are included in the state’s accountability system and are treated the same as any other public school student.” In this section, the plan describes how special student populations, students served outside a district, students attending state agency schools, and those attending Dropout Prevention and Recovery Community (Charter) Schools are served and how those institutions are held accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Same, but modifications at the state level.</td>
<td>In regards to special student populations, the plan explains, “For accountability purposes, Ohio does not differentiate between public schools that serve special populations of students and those that serve traditional populations.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In regards to Dropout Prevention and Recovery Community (Charter) Schools, the plan explains these schools “...typically serve a unique student body that is much different than traditional high schools. These students often are several years behind in educational credits and courses taken, older than traditional high school students and, in some cases, attempting to earn credit several years after their four-year cohort has graduated. Ohio uses the same standards, data, and calculations to identify schools as Priority (Comprehensive) or Focus (Targeted Support). There are no separate accountability standards for these schools for the purpose of federal accountability and identification. At the same time, as part of the state’s accountability system, these schools also receive Ohio’s Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DOPR) Report Card. It can be a challenge to apply traditional measures to the progress of these students, thereby limiting the state’s ability to evaluate schools using traditional measures. The traditional measures may apply to some students, but only a subset of students will meet accountability rules. The traditional measures may not necessarily reflect the performance of the entire student population of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery school. Therefore, these schools will also receive Ohio’s Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DOPR) Report Card.” To learn more about Ohio’s DOPR Report Card, reference pages 44-45 of the state plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Modification Level</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>“Alternative schools and youth corrections schools will be included in the accountability systems; however, the indicators used for their designation for comprehensive support or targeted improvement will be based on their five-year completion rate, rather than the four-year graduation rate. Many of these students are not on track when entering these schools, and basing accountability determinations on the five-year high school completion rate will provide a better measure of the effectiveness of these schools. In addition, Oregon’s system of supports and interventions will look at the unique circumstances for each of these schools (local data on credit recovery and increased attendance/engagement) in order to make final accountability determinations and recommend supports and interventions.” (page 55 of Oregon state plan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>“Pennsylvania does not plan to institute distinct accountability or annual meaningful differentiation rules for schools designed to serve special populations.” (page 56 of Pennsylvania state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>In the annual meaningful differentiation section of South Dakota’s state plan, there is description of how the state addresses students attending unique facilities, and small and special schools. In regards to unique facilities in which the institution’s mission is not primary education, but rather unique needs a student might have, the student will either remain accountable to his or her resident district, or in the case of state placement, will remain accountable at the state level. For more information, reference page 38 of the state plan. In regards to small and special schools, the plan describes that “...schools scattered throughout the state meet unique needs and challenges of students beyond a student’s education...it is inappropriate or even impossible to apply the rules of the SPI [School Performance Index] process as laid out above to these schools. Yet SD DOE [South Dakota Department of Education] continues to ensure that these schools are not forgotten in overall accountability through the Small and Special School Audit process, a process run annually.” For more information about how schools are determined “special” and how they are held accountable, reference pages 37-38 of the state plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>“ESSA requires that states establish alternative protocols for assessing student performance when a public school exists for a specific population: for example, students receiving programming in non-traditional educational settings, students attending juvenile rehabilitation centers, students enrolled in state public schools for the blind, or schools exclusively serving recently arrived English learners. Currently Vermont does not have public schools that meet these descriptions; however, all Vermont students who attend these types of independent institutions inside of Vermont must take Vermont’s state assessments, and their data is linked back to the Supervisory Union/Supervisory District (SU/SD) that pays their educational tuition. By creating the second tier of accountability at the SU/SD level, Vermont is able to include a larger number of these students when making accountability determinations.” (page 62 of Vermont state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>“All public schools are included in the state’s accountability system, but the support for some school types may be approached differently. OSPI [Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction], in partnership with the SBE [State Board of Education] shall consider whether there ought to be an alternate accountability framework for some school types, such as re-engagement schools. OSPI staff will provide guidance to these schools based on nationally recognized and state identified best practices that support each special population.” (page 44 of Washington state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>“Wisconsin already has an alternate accountability process under Wisconsin’s separate state authorized accountability system to assign an alternate rating to those schools that cannot be assigned a regular accountability score. This applies to schools having no tested grades, schools with fewer than 20 full academic year students enrolled in tested grades, new schools, and schools exclusively serving at-risk students… alternate accountability only applies to schools for which there is insufficient data to calculate a score.” (page 44 of Wisconsin state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Same, but alternative process for schools which cannot be assigned an accountability score.</td>
<td>The plan further describes the accountability process and how it relates to ESSA: “The Alternate Accountability process involves a district-supervised school self-evaluation designed around specific performance indicators (which have included academic performance, growth, attendance, and graduation rates). Schools must report performance relative to the performance indicators, resulting in an overall summative rating, either “Satisfactory Progress” or “Needs Improvement.” Wisconsin will continue to use this same process, which has been in place in the state for five years, to meet requirements outlined in ESSA. DPI [Department of Public Instruction] is committed to work with Alternate Accountability schools to align the alternate accountability process, performance indicators, and identifications with federal ESSA requirements. Specifically, the summative alternate ratings named above will correspond to ESSA identifications. Any school in the alternate accountability process with the “Needs Improvement” rating in the current year and in either of the previous two school years will be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI).” (page 44 of Wisconsin state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2 displays the graduation rate(s) used for accountability purposes in the state plans reviewed. Figure 2 is not intended to indicate the graduation rate that is used to determine which schools are identified as failing to graduate one-third or more of their students for purposes of comprehensive support and improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Graduation Rate or Extended Year Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>4, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>4, 5</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
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<td>Oregon*</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>4,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>4,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

States with an asterisk indicate that an extended-year graduation rate is included as part of the state’s School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator. While these states use a four-year graduation rate for their graduation rate indicator, within their SQSS indicator, they have chosen to include extended-year graduation rates.
APPENDIX C

Of the 38 state plans reviewed, Figure 4 displays the states that have included a measure of student growth for high schools within their accountability system, whether it be its own indicator or as a component or measure within an indicator.

Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Student Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>✓*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
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<td>Nevada</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>North Dakota</td>
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<td>Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The inclusion of growth in the Academic Achievement Indicator for high school will cease after the 2019-2020 school year with the 2022 graduation cohort.
APPENDIX D

Figure 5 displays the N-size used for accountability purposes in the 38 state plans. In some states, the N-size for accountability purposes and for reporting is different. If there is a difference in N-size for accountability and reporting, it is indicated in section ii.e. of the state plan.

Figure 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>N-size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
<td>10*</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>25**</td>
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<td>Vermont</td>
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<td>State</td>
<td>N-size</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
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<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The N-size for the graduation indicator will be 30.

**To ensure small schools and districts are held accountable, the All Students group minimum size is 10 students, while the student subgroup N-size is 25.
APPENDIX E

Figure 6 includes information from 13 of the 38 state plans reviewed that focus on future plans for alternative education accountability.

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State Plan Language and Notes Related to Future Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Arizona  | “There will be two accountability systems. One system will meet the requirements of ESSA to create a system of meaningful differentiation which includes all schools on the same system of measurement: traditional and alternative. This federal system compares schools against each other regardless of the school’s mission resulting in a comprehensive look at all schools against one set of measures. The federal system will identify schools for both Comprehensive and Targeted Supports and Improvements as required by ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D).

The second system for state accountability, based on stakeholder feedback and reflective of state statute, employs a separate methodology for traditional and alternative schools...Cut scores have not yet been established by the State Board of Education. In order to determine cut scores, all the points a school earned in each indicator is totaled and then divided by the total number of points for which a school is eligible in order to calculate a percentage earned. Once FY17 school data is finalized such that the percentage earned is available for each school, the Board will evaluate the results and determine the categories (i.e., X% to x% = “A”) that define an “A” school, “B” school, etc.” (pages 30-31)

“...in compliance with A.R.S. §1S-241, the State Board of Education has developed procedures for ensuring annual meaningful differentiation for those schools that have been determined to be an alternative school...At this time, this model is not yet approved by the State Board of Education and is still being modified.” (page 32) To learn more about Arizona’s proposed model for K-8 and 9-12 Alternative Schools, reference pages 33-35 of Arizona state plan. |
<p>| Hawaii   | “To provide alternative education settings for secondary students who continue to struggle in the traditional schools, Hawaii is exploring alternative high school programs. HIDOE [Hawaii Department of Education] currently provides alternative education programs through its Storefront/High Core program, Olomana School, and two Community Schools for Adults. The Storefront program and Olomana School are alternative education settings aimed at reforming (sic) at-risk students. Storefront students graduate with a high school diploma from their home school; Olomana’s students earn a high school diploma from Olomana. The Community Schools for Adults, which receive federal funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, provide a competency-based program and a high school equivalency preparation program and issue a community school diploma upon the successful completion of these programs. HIDOE will expand our alternative education opportunities by creating innovative learning options for students to earn a high school diploma within our K-12 structure.” (pages 71-72 of Hawaii state plan) |
| Illinois | “ISBE [Illinois State Board of Education] is in ongoing dialogue with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) to more fully integrate these students into the accountability system.” (page 86 of Illinois state plan) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>In the plan’s section addressing the Disproportionate Access to Educators, Kentucky describes the development of a consolidating monitoring process. As described in the plan “Consolidated Monitoring,” it will identify districts through a risk-based assessment that is currently being developed by KDE [Kentucky Department of Education]. Consolidated Monitoring provides districts an opportunity to review state (e.g., alternative programs, career and technical education, preschool) and federal programs (e.g., Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, Title V, IDEA, McKinney-Vento) with an eye toward effective implementation and collaboration. Aside from individual program reports, districts are provided consolidated reports that represent an opportunity for collaboration among the programs. Program monitors note effective practices identified during the monitoring visit as well as provide recommendations and corrective action plans for addressing noted common concerns and findings of noncompliance under federal and state law. Thus, Consolidated Monitoring provides for the identification and sharing of best practices, along with the remediation of deficiencies. These reports provide opportunities for programs to collaborate, streamline implementation and increase success.” (pages 103-104 of Kentucky state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>As mentioned in Figure 4, the Louisiana Department of Education will convene a study group of stakeholders to identify quality indicators for effective alternative education. Other sections of the plan made references to additional changes in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“During the June 2017 meeting of the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and following several meetings with diverse stakeholders and site visits to alternative education settings, the board approved changes to its regulations in order to implement a specialized accountability system for schools operated within Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) secure care centers. While these educational sites will continue to be subject to accountability in terms of a performance score, letter grade, and reporting in the same manner as traditional schools, additional expectations have been added to ensure that the needs of this unique student population are addressed. (page 110 of Louisiana state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>“The above enhancements [referring to Title I, Part D program objectives and outcomes] specific to OJJ secure care schools will also inform related improvements in the educational accountability of non-secure care schools and alternative education in LEAs. The LDE is in the process of working with a group of diverse stakeholders to present regulatory recommendations to the state education board later this year. (page 111 of Louisiana state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>The SEA’s Office of Truancy, Dropout Prevention, and Alternative Education will review and make available to SAUs [school administrative unit] data regarding academic and attendance trends at educational transition points. The Office will provide technical assistance to LEAs to address transition issues that may contribute to students’ dropping out. Maine LEAs are mandated to appoint Dropout Prevention Committees with broad community, youth, and school participation at every individual school unit. The SEA can support local districts in revising their dropout prevention plans to specifically address transition issues.” (pages 85-86 of Maine state plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>As mentioned in Figure 4, Massachusetts plans to explore a protocol to differentiate alternative schools following the 2017-18 school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>As mentioned in Figure 4, Michigan is in the process of developing a parallel accountability system for alternative settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>To assist schools and districts with identifying evidence-based interventions, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is developing a list of evidence-based practices at the three tiers defined in ESSA from which districts and schools can choose. Stakeholders in Minnesota indicated that in creating this list, MDE should also include, if available, evidence-based practices that demonstrated success in alternative learning center and credit recovery settings. Additionally, in the Differentiated Supports for High Schools and Schools Serving Primarily Credit Recovery and Dropout Recovery Students, the plan states “… MDE is differentiating comprehensive</td>
</tr>
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</table>
needs assessment processes and tools for high schools to reflect relevant secondary data (e.g., course offerings, credit accumulation, MEIRS [Minnesota Early Intervention and Response System]). This will include graduation data, college career readiness data, and other indicators of student success that MDE and districts have available.

Minnesota is convening a stakeholder group representing alternative learning center and credit- and dropout recovery schools. This group’s purpose will be to provide recommendations for differentiated services, materials, and other supports for alternative learning centers and credit recovery schools identified for support and improvement.” (page 18 of Minnesota state plan)

| New Mexico | “...the charter school community and PED [Public Education Department] have agreed that the criteria to become a SAM [Supplemental Accountability Model] school and the school grade modifications for such schools are incomplete. PED will convene a group of stakeholders that will produce recommendations for a new state regulation. This will provide more clarity for all interested stakeholders and provide a sustainable path forward.” (page 96 of New Mexico state plan) |
| Ohio | The Ohio Department of Education proposes strategies to provide successful transition of students from middle to high school, reduce dropouts, and improve graduation rates. One strategy includes the Alternative Education Challenge Grants, in which “Ohio will leverage the existing Alternative Education Challenge Grants to improve outcomes for at-risk students, including more aligned coordination with required school improvement plans.” (page 73). Focus areas for the grants include improvement in school climate and transition of students into and out of alternative programs. Another strategy addresses Dropout Recovery Schools, stating that “Using recommendations from the State Superintendent’s Dropout Prevention and Recovery Advisory Committee, Ohio is working to develop a specifically-designed, evidence-based improvement protocol for Ohio dropout recovery charter schools...identified for comprehensive or targeted support.” To learn more about these strategies, reference page 73 of Ohio state plan. |
| Washington | As mentioned in Figure 4, the State of Washington’s Office of Public Instruction, in partnership with the State Board of Education, is considering whether there should be an alternate accountability framework for some school types. |
Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education

A Report by the American Youth Policy Forum and Civic Enterprises

Authored by Carinne Deeds and Jennifer DePaoli, PhD

POLICY BRIEF
ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), founded in 1993, is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC that provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF’s goal is to enable policymakers to become more effective in the development and enactment of sound policies affecting the nation’s young people, and for education leaders and administrators to have the information they need to implement those policies effectively in order to better serve youth. AYPF achieves this mission by providing information, insights, and networking opportunities to federal, state, and local stakeholders on a range of education and youth topics, such as college access and success, career and technical education, dropout prevention and recovery, alternative education, youth employment, civic engagement, social and emotional learning, and after-school and expanded learning opportunities. This breadth of knowledge allows AYPF to bridge fields and sectors and supports our view of the need for integrated, holistic, and comprehensive academic and support services to help every young person thrive. AYPF conducts an average of 40 annual events such as Capitol Hill forums, out-of-town study tours, webinars, and discussion groups, reaching thousands of policymakers and leaders nationwide. AYPF also publishes a variety of policy reports and briefs, available at www.aypf.org.

Civic Enterprises is a social enterprise firm that works with corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities and governments to develop innovative initiatives and public policies in the fields of education, national service, civic engagement, conservation, public health and more. We work with organizations that seek to challenge the status quo and grow their impact for the greater good. Working closely with clients to determine what they need to better engage with their stakeholders and serve their constituents, we specialize in research and policy development, strategy and coalition building, state and federal policy analysis, and strategic communications. Each year, Civic Enterprises co-authors the annual Building a Grad Nation report, which examines both progress and challenges toward reaching the GradNation campaign goal of a national on-time graduation rate of 90 percent by the Class of 2020.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 3
Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 4
Methodology ......................................................................................................................... 5
I. Defining Alternative Education ......................................................................................... 6
II. Accountability Systems for Alternative Settings ............................................................... 9
III. Accountability Measures ................................................................................................. 13
   Table 1: Potential Measures for Inclusion within ESSA Indicators .................................... 14
   Table 2: Potential Measures for Inclusion within SQSS Indicator ...................................... 15
IV. Continuous Improvement ................................................................................................. 17
Areas for Further Exploration .............................................................................................. 19
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ 20
Bibliography .......................................................................................................................... 21
Executive Summary

Discussion of alternative education is growing across the country as states and districts look for ways to better serve students whose needs are not met in traditional high school settings. Alternative settings, however, vary greatly in how they operate, whom they aim to enroll, and the methods they use to educate students. The variation of approaches taken in alternative settings has led to significant differences in the quality of these settings and presents challenges in how to best hold alternative schools accountable. Though many innovative and effective alternative models exist, according to the 2017 Building a Grad Nation report, alternative schools are overrepresented in identified low-graduation-rate high schools. If these schools intend to offer a high-quality educational pathway for students at the greatest risk for dropping out – or in some cases, students who have already disconnected from school – it is critical that meaningful accountability measures are put in place for alternative settings to ensure they are serving their purpose and are provided with necessary support and resources. Ultimately, accountability for alternative settings provides an opportunity to focus on the continuous improvement of these settings to better ensure that every student is given the chance to thrive.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides states the chance to establish robust accountability systems for this growing sector of schools and programs. This brief aims to address four key opportunities states have both within and outside of ESSA to better understand and ultimately improve alternative education:

I. Definition: What is alternative education?

II. Accountability System: What structures can states put into place to ensure alternative settings are appropriately held accountable?

III. Accountability Measures: What measures can states consider that accurately reflect the quality of alternative settings?

IV. Continuous Improvement: How can states use accountability for alternative settings as a tool for continuous improvement?
Introduction

According to the 2017 *Building a Grad Nation Report*, our current national four-year graduation rate of 83.2 percent is an all-time high, and analysis shows that when including five- and six-year graduation rates, the national rate is closer to 87 percent. However, there is still a troubling number of low-graduation-rate high schools,¹ and data shows that alternative high schools are overrepresented on this list.²

Among these schools, there is also great variation in their intent, purpose, and quality. These differences pose significant challenges to holding these schools accountable while still providing an appropriate level of flexibility given the student populations they serve. The implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an important opportunity for states and education stakeholders to examine the role alternative settings play in ensuring that all students have a pathway to a secondary credential and are ultimately prepared for postsecondary education, careers, and life.

It is also an important time for states to reflect on the general purpose of accountability and its role in ensuring quality and continuous improvement of educational institutions, including alternative settings. Although significant attention to accountability over the past decade has made positive impacts on school performance overall, uniform standards have meant a lack of effective assessment for schools serving students with unique needs. Ultimately, states must provide a sufficiently nuanced and specialized approach to accountability for alternative settings that accurately reflects the extent to which those institutions are effectively serving their unique student populations, while ensuring that those settings are held to equally rigorous standards of quality as traditional settings.

This brief aims to address four key opportunities states have both within and outside of ESSA to better understand and ultimately improve alternative education:

I. **Definition:** What is alternative education?

II. **Accountability System:** What structures can states put into place to ensure alternative settings are appropriately held accountable?

III. **Accountability Measures:** What measures can states consider that accurately reflect the quality of alternative settings?

IV. **Continuous Improvement:** How can states use accountability for alternative settings as a tool for continuous improvement?

¹ The Every Student Succeeds Act designates any public high school in a state that fails to graduate one-third or more of its students as a school that qualifies for comprehensive support and improvement. These schools are commonly referred to as “low-graduation-rate high schools.”

² According to data from the 2014-15 school year, as presented in the 2017 Building a Grad Nation report, 12 percent of all high schools would be identified as low-graduation-rate high schools, compared to 60 percent of alternative high schools. These data are explored further in Section IV of this report.
Methodology

The American Youth Policy Form (AYPF) and Civic Enterprises have, for many years, sought to understand how to better serve the nation’s most traditionally underserved students. To that end, AYPF has worked with numerous states across the country, along with national, state, and local experts in the alternative education field, to develop a robust knowledge base on many of the challenges and opportunities presented to alternative settings. Civic Enterprises, through their role in the development of the annual Building a Grad Nation report, aims to provide accurate data and analysis to better understand the issues surrounding high school graduation, address issues of equity, and contribute to the evidence base on best practices and policy for keeping young people in school and on track to graduate. Together, AYPF and Civic Enterprises have harnessed a shared knowledge of and mutual commitment to the nation’s traditionally underserved youth in developing this policy brief. Specifically, AYPF and Civic Enterprises have hosted two stakeholder input sessions to help guide the formulation of this brief: one session with national leaders in alternative education, and one session with state leaders with varying degrees of involvement with alternative education and ESSA implementation.

In addition to direct work with state leaders, AYPF recently conducted a scan of all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to learn about the ways in which alternative education is handled around the country (referred to in this brief as “pre-ESSA scan”). In this scan, AYPF staff and consultants reviewed state definitions of alternative education and the ways in which states have been holding alternative settings accountable before the implementation of ESSA. The preliminary results of this scan were analyzed to inform the development of this policy brief. The final results from the scan will be available by the end of 2017.

Additionally, AYPF is currently in the process of scanning every state plan under ESSA to better understand how alternative settings will be held accountable for federal purposes. The final results from that scan will be available in the spring of 2018. Analysis of the state plans that were currently available at the time of writing were used to inform the development of this policy brief.

Although the 2017 Building a Grad Nation report does not exclusively address alternative education, much of the data used in this policy brief was drawn from that report, which predominantly utilized high school data from the 2014-2015 school year.

Policy Context

For more than a decade, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers have been working to understand how to better serve vulnerable student populations and advance best practices and effective policies for alternative education settings. This report follows in a line of research starting nearly two decades ago, including: work by The Urban Institute to define and understand alternative education and the students it serves; Jobs for the Future’s analysis of state alternative education policies; the National Governor’s Association’s work to create a more holistic framework for high school accountability; the National Youth Employment Coalition’s research and federal policy efforts to reconnect opportunity youth to education and the workforce; the ongoing discussions coming out of the annual Alternative Accountability Policy Forum; the work of the practitioners, policy analysts, and young people who contributed to Reengagement: Bringing Students Back to America’s Schools; and many others who are working to create high-quality pathways for at-risk and disconnected youth and accountability mechanisms for alternative settings.
I. Defining Alternative Education

There is currently no federal definition of alternative education, other than the designation for data collection purposes put forth by the National Center for Education Statistics, which states that an alternative school is a public elementary/secondary school that:

- Addresses the needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school,
- Provides nontraditional education,
- Serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or
- Falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education.

Not all states have an official definition of alternative education, and there is significant variation among those that do. In the absence of a federally codified definition, states should first define what they mean by alternative education in their own contexts, and then ensure that definition is codified in order to be actionable. Given the significant diversity of alternative education environments, definition and codification are important to ensure that states capture the purpose, needs, and progress of educational institutions that are truly different from traditional schools.

Considerations for the Definition of Alternative Education

A clear definition of alternative education is an important first step to designing a meaningful accountability system for alternative education settings. The fact that alternative education is defined differently across states indicates that various rationales exist for creating a separate classification for alternative schools, however, ideally any definition will be reflective of the populations those schools serve. Although most states generally associate alternative education with serving “at-risk” youth in some capacity, states have taken a range of approaches in selecting criteria for classifying alternative education settings. Ultimately, clear definitions can help states determine if alternative schools should be examined separately, receive special attention in evaluation, receive differentiated services, or even be held accountable via a separate accountability system. Below are a few examples of criteria states currently use to classify alternative settings.

Population Served

Alternative education settings typically are designed to serve the students listed below, or students whose needs are unlikely to be met in traditional schools. Students in alternative settings generally meet one or more of the following “at-risk” criteria:

- Chronically absent
- Pregnant/parenting
- Primary caregivers
- Have disciplinary infractions
- Re-engaging with school
- Returning from incarceration/adjudicated
- Wards of the state (youth in foster care/homeless youth)
- In need of extra assistance (overage/under-credited)
- Newcomer/refugee
- Mental health needs

ESSA requires that states provide “all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education” and specifically allows state agency discretion with regard to schools that predominantly serve students who are “returning to education after having exited secondary school without a regular high school diploma” and students “who, based on their grade or age, are significantly off track to accumulate sufficient academic credits to meet high-school graduation requirements.”

Setting Type

States may further classify alternative education based upon the type of setting in which those students are served. The two primary setting types are 1) programs, which are typically subsets of other, larger schools, and 2) schools, which are independent institutions, generally within the school district and/or a charter school. Some states, like Connecticut, are inclusive of both programs and schools in their definition of alternative education. Others are exclusive to one or the other. For example,

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3 Students with mental health needs are not necessarily classified as students with disabilities.
4 ESSA Sec 1001.
5 ESSA Sec 1005(d)(1)(C)(i)
6 There is now an NCES code for programs for research purposes, but the code is rarely used.
**Kentucky** state statute defines alternative settings as programs. Offsite or standalone alternative programs in Kentucky are counted as schools for federal reporting purposes and have their own school report cards available to the public. Onsite alternative programs housed within larger traditional schools, however, are not counted as schools for federal reporting or public accountability purposes.

It is important to note that ESSA requires states to hold all public schools accountable, but many institutions classified as programs are not considered schools and therefore may not be held accountable under ESSA. Additionally, in many states, a “program” designation means that there is not a school report card or similar form of public-facing accountability, and many programs are therefore part of a loophole that leaves them exempt from a meaningful accountability system. Given the complexity of the program/school issue, it is important that states are clear in their definitions of alternative education which setting types are included and, ultimately, how those settings will be held accountable for the outcomes of their students at various levels.

Additionally, in defining the parameters of different alternative education setting types, it is important for states to consider the length of time students typically spend within various alternative settings in the state. For example, many alternative schools are designed to provide a long-term education for students, whereas others may be designed for students in the short term (e.g., for newcomer English learners, credit recovery, discipline, or other immediate services). Even alternative schools that are not designed to be short-term placements and that would like to retain students through graduation also see considerable student mobility. Although not necessarily the fault of the school, student mobility does speak to the need to better fit alternative education to students’ needs, rather than cycle students, who are often already experiencing instability, through multiple placements. States should consider students’ length of stay in alternative settings as they seek to define the purpose of alternative education and the parameters of defining those institutions. Like school/program classifications, the amount of time students spend in alternative settings will have implications for how those settings are held accountable for the outcomes of those students.7

**Instructional/Environmental Characteristics**

States also may include parameters about learning environments in their classifications of alternative schools. Characteristics of alternative school learning environments typically include:

- Online or virtual learning environment
- Flexible schedule
- Small student-teacher ratio
- Specific mission
- Career-oriented themes
- Reengagement functions
- Additional supports and/or connection to outside services or other systems8

These three categories – population served, setting type, and environmental characteristics – are not mutually exclusive, meaning state definitions may be based on one or multiple of the above criteria. For example, **Massachusetts** includes the population served and setting type in its definition of alternative education and clearly defines instructional/environmental characteristics of alternative settings under a subsection of the definition (“Common Elements”). The variety in state definitions reflects the vast diversity within alternative schools around the country. From academies for newcomer English learners, to reengagement centers, to schools for pregnant or parenting students, there is certainly not a “one size fits all” approach to education for at-risk students. It is critical, however, that states are clear about who alternative education is meant to serve and its functional parameters so that alternative settings within the state can be held accountable in a meaningful way for providing a high-quality education to their students.

**Policy Mechanisms for Codifying Definition**

States with official definitions of alternative education have historically codified those definitions using one of two policy mechanisms: legislation or state regulations. **Colorado**, for example, has had statewide legislation since 2002 that includes a specific definition of alternative education. The parameters of alternative education have evolved since then, but the definition has remained the same and has been operationalized throughout the state. Instead of legislation, some states codify definitions by way of the state education agency (SEA). In **Nebraska**, for instance, alternative schools, classes, or educational programs are statutorily required, but the definition of alternative education is not included in state law. The Nebraska Department of Education has instead decided to produce a formal definition of alternative education through administrative code. Finally, states may codify definitions through rules or regulations of the State Board of Education, as **Idaho** and several other states have done. Regardless of the method, it is important for states to codify their definitions of alternative education if those definitions are to be actionable for accountability and continuous improvement purposes.

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7 ESSA Sec 1005(c)(4)(F) specifies that the performance of students who have not attended the same school within a local educational agency for at least half of a school year may not be used in the system of meaningful differentiation of schools.

8 According to an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) scan of alternative education definitions, 39 states include guidance on services that should or might be provided (as of 2014). Services and supports include remedial education, content area instruction, tutoring, counseling services, behavior supports, and several others.
Key Considerations for States under ESSA: Definitions

In establishing a clear definition of alternative education, states should consider the following:

- The student population alternative education is intended to serve.
- The educational setting types encompassed within the definition and how those various settings will be held accountable for the outcomes of their students.
- The length of time students typically spend within various alternative settings.
- The instructional and environmental characteristics of alternative settings.
- The ways in which the definition of alternative education can be codified in order to be actionable.
II. Accountability Systems for Alternative Settings

This section primarily focuses on opportunities for states to develop robust systems of accountability for alternative settings as they construct their ESSA state plans (described below as a federal accountability mechanism). It is important to acknowledge, however, that states may develop relevant models of evaluation and accountability for alternative settings at various levels, within and apart from ESSA state plans. Lessons gleaned from this brief can and should be considered broadly and are not limited solely to ESSA state plans. Ultimately, accountability can be more than an assessment of which schools are successful and which need work. Rather, effective and responsive accountability systems can and should be used as a tool for institutional and systemic improvement.

Accountability Mechanisms

Below are the mechanisms typically used to hold alternative settings accountable at various levels.

- **Federal accountability mechanisms:** Accountability at the federal level is tied to the allocation of federal dollars used for school improvement purposes. Under ESSA, states must develop a plan to hold all schools accountable (referred to in this brief as “ESSA state plans”). The accountability system(s) under ESSA state plans are designed to help states identify the schools most in need of improvement. Although ESSA holds schools accountable to the federal government, ESSA state plans are developed and data are processed at the state level, as ESSA aims to give states more responsibility and control. In designing their required ESSA state plans, or revising them in the future, states have the opportunity to ensure that their accountability systems meaningfully measure success in alternative settings and are instructive to the state and to the federal government on how to better serve students in alternative settings. ESSA also specifies a number of federal reporting requirements outside of ESSA state plans, however those reporting requirements are not discussed in this brief. The remainder of this brief will focus on the federal accountability systems and measures states include in their ESSA state plans, as well as additional accountability mechanisms for alternative education at the state level.

- **Public accountability mechanisms:** ESSA specifies that schools must make certain information available to the public. Whereas federal and state accountability mechanisms are tied to funding, school report cards and other public accountability mechanisms exist in order to provide clear and concise information to the public that specifically helps parents better understand school performance. This public reporting is required under ESSA, but states have some leeway in determining how the required information is presented. Ultimately, the law indicates the information should be presented in an understandable form and be widely accessible to the public.

Many alternative settings serve young people starting in K-8, but the vast majority of schools and programs serve youth in grades 9-12. The subsequent discussion of accountability will focus specifically on alternative high schools/programs.

**States should use accountability systems as a mechanism for identification and allocation of attention to the schools and programs with the greatest need for improvement.**

**Why ESSA Accountability Matters for Alternative Education**

ESSA provides the opportunity for states to ensure that all schools are held accountable for providing a high-quality education to their students. According to the law, states must “establish a system of meaningfully differentiating, on an annual basis, all public schools in the State, which shall be based on all indicators in the state level.”

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9 The law notes that states may periodically review and revise ESSA state plans as necessary to reflect changes in the states’ strategies and programs.

10 As mentioned in Section I, this information is not required for programs under ESSA.
State’s accountability system.” This means that, as states develop systems of accountability under their ESSA state plans, they should consider how those systems will help them meaningfully differentiate between schools so those that are most in need of improvement can be identified. ESSA requires states to use their accountability systems, as indicated in their ESSA state plans, to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement in two ways:

- States must identify no less than the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools receiving Title I funds.
- States must identify all high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students (i.e., low-graduation-rate high schools).

Both of these methods of identification will likely have a profound effect on alternative settings, which may not demonstrate success in the same way or on the same timeline as traditional schools. Data analyzed in the 2017 Building a Grad Nation report shows that alternative schools are overrepresented in low-graduation-rate high schools. If all, or nearly all, alternative schools in a state fail to graduate one-third or more of their students, it will be difficult to meaningfully differentiate between alternative schools of high quality versus low quality. Additionally, alternative settings may show success on a variety of different metrics that may or may not be included in accountability systems for traditional schools. To accommodate the unique nature of alternative schools and ensure that progress is adequately reflected for these settings, some states have developed distinct accountability systems and/or measures to help them meaningfully differentiate between alternative schools. This can help ensure that the additional attention and support for schools identified under ESSA is allocated to the schools that need it the most. Ultimately, states must develop sufficiently nuanced and specialized approaches to accountability for alternative settings that accurately reflect the extent to which those institutions effectively serve their unique student populations, while also ensuring that those settings are held to equally rigorous standards of quality as traditional settings.

### Approaches to Accountability for Alternative Schools: ESSA State Plans and Beyond

According to AYPF’s pre-ESSA scan of alternative education, states have been taking a variety of approaches to accountability for alternative settings. Although the scan was conducted prior to the submission of ESSA state plans, there continues to be significant diversity in the ways in which states plan to hold alternative settings accountable according to those ESSA state plans that have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education thus far. In some states, both prior to ESSA and within their ESSA state plans, alternative settings are held accountable to the same system (comprised of the same measures) as traditional settings. In other states, alternative settings fall under their own, separate accountability system. Many states fall somewhere in between, either having some sort of modifications in the measures used to identify alternative settings, or using the same system and the same measures for all schools, but identifying alternative schools separately from traditional schools.

Title I Part A(4)(v)(c) of the Template for the Consolidated State Plan, issued in March 2017 by the U.S. Department of Education, provides a space for states to indicate a different methodology for annual meaningful differentiation for schools for which an accountability determination cannot be made. Some states have used that opportunity to explain the ways in which they will differentiate alternative schools in a different way than they differentiate traditional schools.

This section primarily focuses on how states are proposing to hold alternative settings accountable for federal purposes, as indicated in their ESSA state plans. However, some examples below are illustrative of the fact that states may have ways of measuring and ensuring the quality of alternative settings outside of their ESSA state plans, as all levels of accountability can facilitate continuous improvement. Note that in this section, “single accountability system in ESSA state plan” means that the state has one system of accountability with the same set of measures that applies to all schools – traditional and alternative – in their ESSA state plan. One state featured in this section (Colorado) includes a separate system of accountability for alterna-

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11 ESSA Sec 1005 (c)(4)(C)
12 At the time of publication, not all of the plans referenced in this brief had been approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Some of the approaches to accountability for alternative settings exemplified in this report are subject to change if the Secretary of Education does not approve of the submitted plans.
tive settings in their ESSA state plan, which may affect how alternative schools in the state are identified for improvement. Below are several examples of states that have developed innovative systems of accountability in a variety of different ways, all of which are, to varying degrees, relevant to alternative settings.

**Single accountability system in ESSA state plan, but inclusion of measures that are particularly relevant to alternative settings.**

Example: **Massachusetts**

Massachusetts uses a single system of accountability under their approved ESSA state plan, but makes considerable efforts to foster high-quality alternative settings through the inclusion of tailored accountability measures. These measures apply to all schools in the state, but are particularly relevant to alternative settings. For example, Massachusetts includes an “extended engagement rate” measure in their submitted accountability system under ESSA, which is equal to the sum of the percentage of students who graduate within five years plus the percentage of students who are still enrolled in school after five years. This measure is intended to incentivize welcoming students back into the school environment regardless of whether they are on track to graduate in four or five years. According to the plan, “many high schools now have alternative programming designed for off-track students and an accountability system should reward these types of programs rather than negatively impacting schools with a traditional five-year graduation rate calculation.” Massachusetts plans to explore a protocol to differentiate alternative schools for accountability following the 2017-18 school year.

**Single accountability system in ESSA state plan, but identify alternative and traditional schools separately.** Example: **Idaho**

Idaho has one single system of accountability for all schools under their submitted ESSA state plan, but the bottom 5 percent of traditional schools and the bottom 5 percent of alternative schools will be identified separately for improvement. The state affords all schools some flexibility in that they may use the more favorable option of proficiency or growth rates, and state leaders anticipate that many alternative schools will have more favorable growth rates. This means that, although all schools in the state will be measured against the same accountability measures, alternative schools will not be overrepresented in the bottom 5 percent of schools, as they are identified separately. This can allow the state to better differentiate between alternative schools of varying quality. However, alternative schools may still be overrepresented in low-graduation-rate high schools in Idaho, as is the case with many other states.

**Single accountability system in ESSA state plan, separate system of differentiating alternative schools outside of ESSA state plan.**

Examples: **Wyoming, Arkansas, Arizona**

For the 2017-2018 school year, Wyoming, Arkansas, and Arizona (among others) will use one single system of accountability to identify all schools in the state, as indicated in their ESSA state plans. Wyoming, however, is piloting the use of a separate accountability system for alternative schools that is not currently included in their submitted ESSA state plan and will not affect how schools are identified for the 2017-2018 year. This system includes different measures that more accurately reflect progress made in alternative settings. The pilot system is currently used to collect information at the state level, but may be incorporated into the state’s ESSA plan in the future. Arkansas and Arizona also have distinct accountability models for alternative schools but, like Wyoming, those systems will not affect how alternative schools are identified under ESSA. All three of these alternative accountability systems were developed in consultation with a wide array of relevant stakeholders and are reflective of the alternative education context within each state. Although neither state is ready to incorporate their distinct system into their ESSA state plans, they currently utilize these systems to evaluate and meaningfully differentiate between alternative schools so those most in need of support can receive extra attention.

It is worth noting that **California** also currently uses one single accountability system for all schools in their submitted ESSA state plan, but the plan notes that they will use a separate system for alternative schools beginning in 2018-2019. This separate system is not currently used for state purposes, like it is in Wyoming and Arizona, but is in the process of development. The inclusion of this separate system in the ESSA state plan in the future will affect how alternative schools are identified for improvement under ESSA, as the measures used in the alternative system will be different from those used in the traditional system. According to the state’s currently submitted ESSA state plan, “California will produce an accountability report for every public school in the state. Traditional schools’ reports will be based on the indicators described in this document and alternative schools’ reports will be based on comparable indicators that are more appropriate for their school mission.”

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13 Arizona’s approved ESSA state plan mentions that there is a separate evaluation framework for alternative schools and that framework is included in the plan for reference, but the plan notes that this framework will not affect how alternative schools will be identified under ESSA.
Single accountability system in ESSA state plan, but close monitoring and evaluation of alternative schools and programs.
Example: Kentucky

Although Kentucky’s submitted ESSA state plan includes one single system of accountability for all schools, the state has gone to great lengths to ensure that alternative settings are of high quality. The state currently has mostly alternative programs rather than schools. As outlined in Section I of this brief, those programs that exist within a traditional school could be exempt from accountability under ESSA as they are not classified as schools themselves. To promote quality practices in alternative settings and to prevent alternative programs from falling into an accountability loophole, the state has developed robust monitoring processes so that all alternative settings are evaluated and receive attention if they need extra support. Additionally, in an effort to promote and share effective practices from alternative programs around the state, Kentucky recognizes a number of alternative programs of distinction each year, based on multiple criteria. These criteria are aligned with the Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation developed by the National Alternative Education Association.\(^ \text{14} \)

Separate system of accountability for alternative schools in ESSA state plan, which will likely affect the identification of alternative schools.
Example: Colorado

Colorado includes a separate system of accountability for alternative settings in their submitted ESSA state plan, which may be used to differentiate alternative schools separately from traditional schools. According to the plan, “Alternative Education Campuses (AECs), as designated by Colorado state law (C.R.S. 22-7-604.5) will first be evaluated according to the same measures and indicators as all other schools. If the general statewide accountability system will not meaningfully differentiate among AECs, as has been the case historically, we will implement an additional system of specific measures to further differentiate them into those needing Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, or ‘neither’ based on state law for alternative accountability measures for these schools.” The measures used in the alternative accountability system will include elements that are particularly relevant to AEC programs and outcomes, such as specific local measures of academic achievement and progress, high school completion, attendance, and truancy rates. This separate system\(^ \text{15} \) will aid in the meaningful differentiation of alternative schools and will be used to allocate resources and support rather than the initial rating received on the single statewide accountability system. In many states, it is likely that using one single system could result in most or all alternative settings being identified as “failing” or in need of improvement. Colorado’s approach allows the state to meaningfully differentiate alternative schools in order to appropriately allocate attention and support for improvement.

It is important for each state to consider its own landscape of alternative education in designing a comprehensive accountability system that is reflective of the needs and progress of alternative settings and their students. These systems can help states fully and accurately understand the extent to which alternative settings are providing a high-quality education to their students.

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Key Considerations for States under ESSA: Accountability Systems

In establishing a system of accountability for alternative education, states should consider the following:

- States must provide a sufficiently nuanced and specialized approach to accountability for alternative education settings that accurately reflects the extent to which those institutions effectively serve their unique student populations, while also ensuring that those settings are held to equally rigorous standards of quality as traditional settings.
- Accountability systems should serve as a mechanism for identification and allocation of resources and support to the schools and programs with the greatest need for improvement.
- States may develop a separate and distinct system of accountability for alternative settings that may or may not be used for federal accountability purposes (i.e., ESSA state plans). These distinct systems can allow states to meaningfully differentiate alternative schools in order to allocate attention and support for improvement appropriately.
- As illustrated by the examples above, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to accountability for alternative education. States may utilize a variety of methods to ensure that alternative settings receive the appropriate amount of attention and support for improvement.

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\(^ {14} \) National Alternative Education Association, Exemplary Practices 2.0: Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation.

\(^ {15} \) It was important for Colorado to develop and codify a clear definition of alternative education campuses (AECs) in order to inform the development of this separate accountability system. This clear definition is particularly important to avoid potential loopholes through which struggling schools could be considered “alternative” without actually serving the requisite populations.
Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education

III. Accountability Measures

Regardless of the approach states take in developing accountability systems for alternative settings, there is significant opportunity within ESSA's required indicators to be responsive to the unique conditions of alternative education. Although this section is organized based on the four indicators required under ESSA for high schools, the discussion is not meant to be limited to ESSA state plans. Before the passage of ESSA, many states and districts used various accountability measures to determine areas of strength and to identify areas of improvement specifically for alternative schools. The measures discussed in this section are drawn from many different accountability systems (local, state, and federal), including longstanding accountability systems as well as newly developed ESSA state plans. The tables and subsequent discussions are meant to: 1) illustrate that state and local entities have been measuring the success of alternative settings in myriad ways preceding ESSA state plans, and many will continue to do so under ESSA, and 2) provide states and other stakeholders with a range of measures that could be included in ESSA state plans or other accountability mechanisms. Although these measures are particularly relevant to alternative settings, they can also be useful for assessing the quality of all educational settings, including traditional high schools.

Example Measures

Table 1 describes the first three of the four required indicators for high schools under ESSA: academic achievement, graduation rate, and English-learner progress. The table also outlines opportunities within each of those indicators to include measures that adequately reflect progress made in alternative settings.

These measures acknowledge the differing trajectories of students served in alternative settings and offer flexibility for measuring student achievement, progress, and readiness. It is important to note that student growth, in general, can be a useful metric for all educational settings, as absolute proficiency may not paint a sufficient picture of the progress students are making. It is especially important, however, to prioritize student growth when assessing alternative settings, as students in alternative settings often come to those settings already behind standard proficiency targets.

In addition to academic achievement, graduation rate, and English-learner progress, states are also required to include an indicator of school quality or student success (SQSS). ESSA requires that states choose at least one SQSS indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance that is “valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide.” This indicator is to be given less weight than the academic measures in accountability calculations.

Table 2 includes potential categories of measures states can use within the SQSS indicator to meaningfully differentiate schools’ “nonacademic” success. Although ESSA mentions five potential categories of measures states may want to consider for inclusion within the SQSS indicator – student engagement, postsecondary readiness, student access to/completion of advanced coursework, school climate and safety, and educator engagement – this table combines the categories of postsecondary readiness and student access to/completion of advanced coursework, as many states incorporate the latter into their measures of postsecondary readiness. Additionally, the postsecondary readiness category has been amended in this table to include postsecondary and workforce readiness, as many states have included combined measures for both.

States may consider the measures in Table 2 for inclusion within the SQSS indicator in their ESSA state plans. Additionally, given that states hold alternative settings accountable in a variety of ways and using various mechanisms, including but not limited to federal accountability under ESSA, states and other stakeholders may also consider these example measures for inclusion in any system of evaluation or accountability for alternative settings. Please note that at the time of publication, almost all states appear to include some measure of chronic absenteeism in their ESSA state plans as part of their SQSS indicator. In order to showcase other, lesser known measures, this table does not include chronic absenteeism as a measure of student engagement.

16 Sec 1005(c)(4)(B)(v)(I)
17 Sec 1005(c)(4)(B)(v)(II)
18 AYPF and Civic Enterprises suggest the consideration of the inclusion of these measures on a case-by-case basis but are unable to verify that each of these measures would be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
### Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education

#### POTENTIAL MEASURES WITHIN REQUIRED INDICATOR RELEVANCE TO ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS

- **Academically off-track or behind traditional benchmarks.**
  - Mean scale score will be used in Colorado for all settings, but can be students far below proficiency as students who are close to proficiency.
  
- **Academic progress is particularly relevant to alternative settings.**
  - Many states are using similar measures for all schools in college readiness or workforce training, and work-based learning programs. Funding for programs is based on the extent to which indicators of academic progress to evaluate their dropout reengagement programs.

#### Academic Credit Growth

A credit growth indicator tracks the amount or percentage of students who complete a number of courses or credits over a given period of time, at various baselines, to account for growth rather than absolute credit accumulation. The New York City public school system measures average credit accumulation for students at different baselines (0–11 credits, 11.01–22 credits, 22.01–33 credits, and 33.01–38 credits) for alternative or “transfer” schools. This approach differs from that used by traditional schools in New York City, which measures whether students earn a certain number of credits in a given year. Academic credit growth can be a useful accountability measure for all settings, but particularly for alternative settings, as it allows for growth to be recognized even if it takes students in alternative settings longer to accumulate credits.

#### Academic Progress

Academic progress measures allow for the demonstration of various types of academic progress apart from standardized test scores. Washington State’s Open Doors system of alternative programs uses indicators of academic progress to evaluate their dropout reengagement programs. Funding for programs is based on the extent to which students meet certain benchmarks, including earning high school or college credit, passing high school equivalency subject tests, completing college readiness or workforce training, and work-based learning experiences. Many states are using similar measures for all schools under their School Quality or Student Success indicator in their ESSA state plans, but academic progress is particularly relevant to alternative settings whose students often demonstrate academic achievement in multiple ways.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POTENTIAL MEASURES FOR INCLUSION WITHIN ESSA INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Achievement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSA requires states to measure academic proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics, based on students’ performance on state assessments. States may also choose to measure academic growth in these subjects over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Scale Score (or Average Scale Score)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean scale score measures the average score of all students within a school on a given assessment. Colorado has shifted to using mean scale score as the metric for accountability reporting within their Academic Achievement indicator in their submitted ESSA state plan. This measure is reflective of the performance of all students, including those very behind traditional benchmarks. This method of measuring academic achievement is an incentive to focus just as much on students far below proficiency as students who are close to proficiency. Mean scale score will be used in Colorado for all settings, but can be particularly useful for alternative settings whose students are primarily academically off-track or behind traditional benchmarks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Credit Growth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A credit growth indicator tracks the amount or percentage of students who complete a number of courses or credits over a given period of time, at various baselines, to account for growth rather than absolute credit accumulation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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TABLE 1

#### POTENTIAL MEASURES WITHIN REQUIRED INDICATOR RELEVANCE TO ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS

- Students in alternative settings are historically less likely to graduate in four years due to mobility, transfer, and other external factors. Under ESSA, graduation rates must include all students who have attended the same school within a Local Education Agency for at least half of the school year. States should consider how to account for alternative settings that are intended to be short-term placements or credit recovery options that do not intend to graduate students. This particularly affects youth who transfer in and out of the juvenile justice system.

| POTENTIAL MEASURES WITHIN REQUIRED INDICATOR RELEVANCE TO ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS |

- **More research is necessary on the extent to which English learners participate in alternative education and how to best serve them. Quality of ESL instruction, access to ESL teachers, and participation of alternative schools in ELP assessments could be important metrics in the future.**

- **Extended-Year Cohort Graduation Rate (EYGR)**

  - EYGRs (five-, six-, and seven-year rates) may be included and given different weights within the graduation rate indicator.

- **English learner Growth**

  - Oregon will use two indicators for English learner progress toward proficiency under its approved ESSA state plan. One will measure the percentage of English learners on track to English proficiency, and the other will measure growth as measured by median growth percentiles. The use of growth measures to demonstrate progress toward English learner reclassification may be a particularly important metric for alternative settings, as student timelines and trajectories vary.
**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Engagement</th>
<th>Postsecondary/Workforce Readiness</th>
<th>School Climate &amp; Safety</th>
<th>Educator Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reengagement Rate</td>
<td>College Credits or Industry Certificates/Credential Earned</td>
<td>Climate Surveys</td>
<td>Teacher Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Colorado’s accountability system for alternative settings (“AECs”), required by the state’s Education Accountability Act of 2009, reengagement is an optional measure to reward AECs that keep students who previously dropped out enrolled once they have reengaged.</td>
<td>Louisiana’s submitted ESSA state plan includes a Strength of Diploma measure, which awards points for attainment of a diploma as well as post-secondary credit and/or workforce or industry credentials. Points are also given when students complete a high school equivalency (HiSET) diploma.</td>
<td>Wyoming’s pilot accountability system for alternative schools includes a measure of school climate, measured by a mandatory student survey. The survey aims to measure students’ feelings of support, trust, high expectations, and respect from peers and staff.</td>
<td>Teacher attendance plays a critical role in creating a positive school climate and ensuring quality instructional time. Though no state with an approved ESSA plan is using teacher attendance in their accountability system, Tennessee will be collecting and studying data on student days of missed instruction due to teacher attendance over the next three years and will potentially include this as an accountability measure in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Improvement</td>
<td>Preparation for Postsecondary and Career Readiness Coursework</td>
<td>Suspension/Expulsion Rate</td>
<td>Educator Attrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Denver Public School system uses the flexibility allowed by Colorado’s statewide alternative accountability system to measure the extent to which an alternative setting’s student body makes some improvement in attendance from the previous year.</td>
<td>Connecticut’s approved ESSA state plan includes a measure of the percentage of 11th and 12th grade students who participate in at least one of the following during high school: two courses in advanced placement (AP)/international baccalaureate (IB)/dual enrollment; two courses in one of 17 career and technical education (CTE) categories; or two workplace experience courses.</td>
<td>California’s submitted ESSA state plan includes a suspension rate measure, which includes both in-school and out-of-school suspension incidences. This will include both the current suspension rate (or “status”) as well as the change in suspension rate from the previous year.</td>
<td>High turnover of teachers and administrators strain school resources and hurt student learning. No state with a currently approved ESSA plan is factoring educator retention into their accountability system, but Delaware is planning on reporting on it as a measure of school climate in their Excellent Educator Dashboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Stabilization Rate</td>
<td>Completion Rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For years, the Chicago Public School (CPS) system has allowed its alternative settings to use an annual stabilization rate as part of its School Quality Rating. This rate measures the percent of students enrolled for at least 45 days who stay enrolled until the end of the school year, completed the program, or successfully transitioned to another CPS school.</td>
<td>South Dakota’s submitted ESSA state plan uses a Completer Rate as one of their SQSS indicators, defined as the percent of students who, in the current school year, have obtained either a high school equivalency (GED) or a traditional diploma. The completor rate does not take the place of the state’s graduation rate indicator (a four-year rate), but allows for schools to get credit within the overall accountability system for all students who graduate high school or earn a GED.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Dropout Rate</td>
<td>Graduation Rate Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts’s approved ESSA state plan includes an annual dropout rate measure because “it is often difficult to make large gains in a graduation rate calculation in one year because much of the rate has been determined in grades 9-11.” The inclusion of the annual dropout rate allows for a more actionable indicator for high schools on an annual basis.</td>
<td>New Mexico’s submitted ESSA state plan includes a measure for graduation rate growth over three years. This measure incentivizes schools that work with underserved populations (e.g., alternative schools) to work toward timely graduation goals, aligned with New Mexico’s long-term goals for graduation rates. This measure applies to all settings.</td>
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</table>
Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education

Important Concepts in Measuring Success in Alternative Settings

Regardless of the measures states choose to assess the quality of alternative settings, the following general concepts are important to keep in mind when considering how best to hold alternative settings accountable:

- **Growth:** Because most alternative schools are designed to serve students who are already behind academic benchmarks, measures of growth may allow states to more meaningfully differentiate between high quality and low quality alternative settings. Additionally, growth measures take into account the progress of all students, rather than focusing only on those students at or on the cusp of achieving proficiency. Research indicates that leaning too heavily on proficiency rates can unfairly target schools for intervention even though they are making significant progress, while ignoring or failing to identify schools where student learning is stagnant.

- **Extended timelines to graduation:** All states are required to include four-year graduation rates within the graduation rate indicator under ESSA. However, many states emphasize other rates in addition to four-year graduation rates to reflect the various trajectories and timelines of students who attain a secondary credential. States can consider including extended-year graduation rates within the graduation rate indicator and completion rates within the SQSS indicator, as four-year graduation rates alone may not paint a complete picture of success in alternative settings. Utilizing multiple measures in addition to four-year graduation rates allows states to acknowledge the ultimate goal of a four-year graduation timeline while recognizing that schools can still be rewarded for getting students across the finish line, however and whenever that may happen.

- **Equal emphasis on career preparation:** States across the country have recognized that, in addition to postsecondary readiness, it is important to ensure all students are ready for the workforce as well. This is especially important for alternative settings, which often have career-oriented themes or specific missions related to workforce preparation. Measures of postsecondary and workforce readiness can ensure that preparation for future success is recognized in multiple forms, not just in the form of a postsecondary education pathway.

- **Weights:** Regardless of the measures used, states may assign different weights to measures in their accountability systems for alternative schools. For instance, Arizona’s SQSS indicator (college and career readiness) is worth much more in the accountability framework for alternative education than it is in the traditional accountability framework (35% and 20%, respectively). Although the alternative accountability framework is not used to identify schools under ESSA, Arizona has nevertheless recognized that the “non-academic” measures are especially important in assessing the quality of alternative schools. Additionally, many accountability frameworks for alternative settings assign greater weight to growth, rather than proficiency. These approaches to the weighting of measures help ensure that states can meaningfully differentiate alternative schools.

Key Considerations for States under ESSA: Measures

In establishing appropriate measures for holding alternative education settings accountable under ESSA, states should consider the following:

- Regardless of their systems of accountability, states should consider flexibility within ESSA’s required indicators – both with the measures themselves and the weighting of those measures – as they develop their ESSA state plans.

- ESSA’s required SQSS indicator is an important opportunity to consider measures that reflect the progress and success of schools outside of traditional academic benchmarks.

- In general, accountability for alternative settings should emphasize growth, completion, and the importance of career preparation so as to more comprehensively reflect the progress made in alternative settings.

- Many measures used by states to measure success in alternative settings can have applicable lessons for all settings.

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19 Under current federal requirements, students who earn a high school equivalency diploma such as a GED are counted as dropouts, even though they have completed high school.
IV. Continuous Improvement

ESSA state plans must reflect ESSA’s mission to provide a high-quality education to all students and should therefore exist to identify schools that are not adequately educating their students, for the purpose of continuous improvement. Although continuous improvement can happen at many levels, this section will focus on the continuous improvement structure as outlined in ESSA: the identification of schools and interventions for improvement.

Identification

Under ESSA, states must identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement\(^{20}\) no less than every three years. Schools are identified for comprehensive support and improvement in two ways, both of which have implications for alternative settings:

- Using their accountability systems as outlined in their ESSA state plans, states must identify no less than the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools receiving Title I funds.
- States must also identify all high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students.\(^ {21}\)

Both of these methods of identification could potentially affect alternative settings. For instance, if proficiency measures are weighted more heavily than growth measures, alternative settings will likely be disproportionately identified, as these settings are designed to serve students who are already off track to meet academic proficiency targets. Similarly, four-year graduation rates alone do not sufficiently reflect the progress toward graduation that students make in alternative settings, and states that only include four-year rates in their required Graduation Rate indicator may risk the over-identification of alternative schools.

According to the 2017 Building a Grad Nation report, which uses federal graduation data from the 2014-2015 school year, alternative schools are overrepresented among low-graduation-rate high schools (defined in the report as “ESSA schools”). The report takes a deep dive into the makeup of ESSA schools and closely examines alternative schools in that context. According to the data from the report, based on the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate:

- 6 percent of all high schools are alternative, but 30 percent of ESSA schools are alternative.
- 12 percent of all high schools would be identified as in need of support and intervention under ESSA, but 60 percent of alternative schools would be identified (Figure 1).

The overrepresentation of alternative schools in low-graduation-rate or “ESSA schools” means either that these alternative schools are not high quality and are not doing enough to get young people to graduation, or that these mechanisms for measurement are not reflective of the progress actually made within alternative schools. This is an important opportunity for states to strategically focus attention on the schools that truly need the most support, and to use multiple, relevant measures to determine where and how best to intervene.

For instance, many alternative schools are not designed to lead students to graduation. Rather, they are institutions to which students are assigned for a specified, short-term window of time allowing them to temporarily enroll while they reconnect with a traditional school. Additionally, alternative schools in general are not positioned to graduate a large majority of students in a four-year time frame, as the students served in those

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\(^{20}\) States must also identify schools for targeted support and improvement, which is distinct from comprehensive support and improvement. These processes are not discussed in this brief.

\(^{21}\) The law does not specify that states must use the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate to make this determination.
settings are often already behind academically and in many cases have previously withdrawn from school. States can use this moment as an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which alternative schools will be impacted based upon these mechanisms for identification and the ways in which interventions can be developed or selected accordingly.

**Intervention**

Although schools will not be identified for improvement until the 2018-19 school year, states should keep a few considerations in mind when planning for appropriate interventions for improvement of alternative settings. First, ESSA permits the use of differentiated evidence-based interventions in schools that predominantly serve students who are returning after having exited without receiving a diploma or who, based on grade or age, are significantly off-track to meeting high school graduation requirements. Second, the law notes that states may permit local education agencies to forego the implementation of improvement activities in schools that serve fewer than 100 students. This caveat may affect a large number of alternative schools, as alternative schools more commonly enroll fewer students. Finally, ESSA requires interventions for school improvement to meet one of the established levels of “evidence-based” based on the following categories:

- **Strong evidence**: At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study
- **Moderate evidence**: At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study
- **Promising evidence**: At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for bias

ESSA’s evidence-based requirement raises the bar from the standard set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), so many of the interventions that were acceptable under NCLB may not meet the definition of evidence-based laid out in the new law. To help schools and districts choose appropriate evidence-based interventions, states can set clear parameters on acceptable interventions, work with thought leaders to develop a list of evidence-based interventions, and approve only those partners/vendors whose interventions meet ESSA criteria. The What Works Clearinghouse, Evidence for ESSA, and tools and resources from the Regional Education Labs can be useful as states consider interventions that are most likely to improve student outcomes. It will be important for states to consider the differences between the needs of and interventions designed for alternative schools versus evidence-based interventions in traditional schools, although little research has been done to this level of specificity. Ultimately, interventions should be selected based upon the needs of the learners in order to better ensure that meaningful improvement occurs. This is true for all settings, but is particularly important in alternative settings who serve unique student populations.

Creating a system of continuous improvement is an often overlooked but critically important piece of the continuum in ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education. These considerations can help build states’ capacity to function as continuous learning organizations that are ultimately better positioned to effectively serve all students.

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**Key Considerations for States under ESSA: Continuous Improvement**

In developing a robust and effective system of continuous improvement for alternative settings, states should keep in mind that:

- **Alternative settings will likely be disproportionately represented in low-graduation-rate high schools and the bottom 5% of high schools identified for improvement under ESSA.**
- **Whether embedded within an ESSA state plan or provided through a separate system of accountability within a state, states should ensure that there is a mechanism in place to appropriately identify which alternative schools are serving their students well and which are not, for the purposes of providing an improvement strategy to ineffective alternative settings.**
- **It is important to consider the differences between the needs of and interventions designed for alternative schools versus evidence-based interventions in traditional schools, although little research has been done to this level of specificity.**
- **Systems of continuous improvement can help build states’ capacity to function as continuous learning organizations that are ultimately better positioned to effectively serve all students.**

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22 Sec 1005(d)(1)(C)
Areas for Further Exploration

AYPF and Civic Enterprises have harnessed a shared knowledge of and mutual commitment to youth educated in alternative settings to inform this policy brief. A number of outstanding questions remain, however, in how states and other stakeholders can most effectively hold alternative settings accountable. These questions are previewed below, and will remain at the center of our work as we seek to better understand the ways in which accountability systems for alternative education can function.

**What about schools that are exempt from federal accountability?** Under ESSA, schools with fewer than 100 students are exempt from federal accountability. What does this mean for alternative schools, given that many have small student populations by design? Additionally, educational settings classified as “programs” are often exempt from accountability as they are not freestanding schools. Exemption from accountability could lead to these settings being ignored even though they may be in need of improvement. Under current circumstances, some alternative settings may intentionally remain out of the accountability spotlight as to avoid punitive action, but if states can create an effective accountability system for alternative schools, the small schools and programs and others exempt from federal accountability should get the benefit of continuous improvement as well.

**Can schools and districts use alternative education to hide bad results?** Students who are at risk of dropping out or who are struggling academically are often encouraged to attend alternative schools. In many cases, this can be a positive transition for students whose needs are more likely to be met in high-quality alternative settings. In other cases, however, schools or districts can send struggling students to alternative schools so as to not include them as dropouts and to avoid using their test scores in their school data, even though those alternative settings are exempt from accountability and may be low-quality. How big is the issue of using alternative settings to “hide dropouts” and how can it be avoided? Additionally, how can states ensure that all settings, including those alternatives that are exempt from accountability, are providing a high quality education to students?

**To whom should alternative students be compared?** Are alternative settings best compared to their peers, or should they be compared to all settings? Is it possible to compare progress made by students in alternative settings to the progress of similar students in traditional schools? For instance, if a student starts an alternative school two years behind in credits, but earns more than one year of credit in one school year, it could demonstrate that the alternative school is doing a better job than the traditional school of moving that student toward graduation. Additionally, the fact that states take different approaches to accountability under their ESSA state plans will inevitably lead to a concern of comparability between alternative settings, given that not all states will hold alternative settings accountable in the same way.

As ESSA state plans and other accountability mechanisms are developed and implemented, these types of questions should guide national education leaders and assistance providers as they seek to share information and innovative practices with state leaders and other stakeholders.
Acknowledgements

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- **Jessica Knevals**, Colorado
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- **Kay Davenport**, Tennessee
- **Kaye Parker**, Kentucky
- **Laurie Shannon**, Washington
- **Lisa French**, Louisiana
- **Lori Lamb**, Arkansas
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- **Sarah Navarro**, Washington, D.C.
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Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education

POLICY BRIEF
Alternative School Options across the US

MOMENTUM STRATEGY & RESEARCH
OCTOBER, 2018
National Opportunity Youth Collaborative Report:  
Alternative School Options across the US

Introduction

As an organization whose leadership has been working to impact alternative education related policy and practice for more than a decade, Momentum Strategy & Research\(^1\) (Momentum) developed the National Opportunity Youth Collaborative (NOYC) with the vision of providing the best available data and information on alternative schools across the country and their performance. To accomplish this, Momentum has spent a number of years compiling the best available data and information, housed in the NOYC’s *Alternative School and Performance Database*—a collection of all alternative education options available to students within the public education system and their relevant student and school outcome data.

By maintaining the most accurate database of alternative education campuses (or AECs)—which we define in greater detail in the next section—Momentum aims to:

- Provide the best available data regarding the number and types of alternative options available to students across the country;
- Provide the best available data and research outlining typical performance trends to inform:
  - The expansion of quality measures and metrics used for AECs in high-stakes accountability;
  - Evidence-based performance targets; and
  - Policies for holding AECs accountable to rigorous and attainable standards.

This report marks the inaugural NOYC publication and is aimed at informing the public on the national alternative education landscape. Specifically, this report outlines the best available assessment of the number and types of alternative education campuses (AECs) to date.

Defining AECs

Over their years of working with state education agencies, charter school organizations, school districts, and education reformers on issues of measurement and accountability for so-called “alternative schools”, Momentum was aware that not all states, districts, charter authorizers, and/or policy makers were talking about the same set of schools. In some locations, the definition of an “alternative school” was very specific and codified in stature or in regulation, in others, “alternative education options” were more vague, with no official definition to be found. Even where there are definitions, there is a lot of variation in what it

\(^1\) For more information on Momentum Strategy & Research, see the About the Authors section in the back of this report.
means to be an “alternative school”. Therefore, our first task has been to identify where there are commonalities and use those to arrive at a definition that a) makes sense to those in the field and b) demarcates a very small subset of the public education system. Thus, Momentum started by collecting the alternative education and accountability policies from all 50 states, as well as DC, and reviewing the policies for common features to help arrive at our own definition of what we refer to as Alternative Education Campuses (AECS).²

Most often included in the statutory and/or regulatory definitions of AECs are two components: the target student population(s), and the educational unit (i.e., schools or programs). Two additional components that are found, but less often than the former two, include a minimum percentage of the target student population a school needs to be considered an AEC, and/or a specific school mission. The following paragraphs walk through each of these components.

**Target student population:** State alternative education policies tend to outline a list of characteristics that students could or should have before enrolling in an AEC. Table 1 shows the student characteristics most commonly cited within the state policies. These factors tend to be specified because they have been linked empirically to an increased likelihood of students dropping out of high school. Therefore, we refer to students with these characteristics as High Risk Students or High Risk Youth.³

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² Borrowing from the nomenclature used in our home state of Colorado.
³ It should be noted that the definition of High-Risk is not the same as the definition of “at risk” as outlined by Federal Adequate Yearly Progress language, where students qualifying for free meals and/or identified as English language learners are considered “at risk”. However, it is also worth noting that at-risk students may be disproportionately represented among High-Risk Student populations within AECs.
Table 1: Most Commonly Identified Student Factors Defining High-Risk Youth across the 50 States and DC, in 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Risk Characteristics Specified by States’ Alternative School Policies</th>
<th># of States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor academics (retained, failure of state assessments, poor grades)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Dropout</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive or problem behaviors in school</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant or parenting teen</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truant, chronic absentee, poor attendance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-age, credit deficient</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal activity, juvenile delinquent, court involved youth</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol, substance abuse</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced trauma or abuse</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficient</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student in foster care or ward of the court</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with addiction, alcoholism, or incarceration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education or IEP</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile or child of migrant family</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Momentum Strategy & Research

**Educational Unit:** States vary in whether AECs are defined as schools and/or programs. However, states that define AECs as schools tend to also include more robust systems of accountability in their state laws. States that define AECs as programs tend to hold these programs to compliance based standards, such as maximum student-teacher ratios and specific programmatic components.

**Minimum Percentage of high-risk students:** In addition, these state laws tend to specify a minimum threshold of High-Risk Students needed to qualify for alternative accountability (Table 2).
Table 2: Minimum Percentage of High-Risk Students Needed for Schools to Qualify as an AEC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico*</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average % Needed</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*At least 10% over the age of 19 or at least 20% classified as special education students

(Source: Momentum Strategy & Research)

**School Mission:** Finally, while only a few states mention the need to have a specific mission to qualify as an AEC, practitioners in the field have also tended to agree that a school’s mission to serve High Risk Students is important for purposes of identifying the appropriate staff and resources needed to serve the students.

Based on this policy analysis (and vetted with over 80 practitioners during a conference presentation)⁴, Momentum defines AECs as:

*Schools that, as their mission, serve a disproportionately high percentage of High-Risk Youth*⁵

**AECs by the Numbers**

In 2017, Momentum updated the entire list of AECs in their *Alternative School and Performance Database*. To identify AECs, Momentum first collected all published “alternative school” lists from the state departments of education.⁶ Second, Momentum conducted a search of the National Center for Education Statistics’ school database, selecting the alternative

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⁴ Presented on October 27, 2016 at the Alternative Accountability Policy Forum in San Diego, California.
⁵ Which aligns with the student characteristics outlined in Table 1 of this document.
⁶ However states defined their version of “alternative.”
identifier for each state. For each state, these two lists were then cross-referenced, and mismatches were researched further using the following steps:

1. Determine whether the school/program was run by a state agency, such as the state’s department of juvenile justice or health and human services division.
   a. If yes, the school/program was put back into the list of AECs,
   b. If no, the school/program entered the next series of reviews.
2. Review lowest and highest grades served and determine the following:
   a. Any on the list that served pre-K and/or kindergarten only were left out of the AEC list altogether.
   b. Mismatches serving Pre-K/K through 5/6 or K-12 were further scrutinized.
      i. If they were a school/program for special education students, they were put onto a specific special education AEC list.
      ii. If the mismatches were part of a state agency (such as a foster home, the DJJ, or state hospital), the school was left in the AEC database.
      iii. If neither i nor ii applied, the school/program was removed from the list.
   c. Mismatches serving middle school grades only, middle and high school grades combined, or high school grades only were subject to a website and document review.
      i. Those that had a clear mission to serve High Risk Youth and/or provide specific services, such as credit recovery or dropout recovery, were kept on the AEC list.
      ii. Those that did not include any indication as to a specialized mission fitting our criteria were moved to a separate list pending further verification of their AEC status at a later date.

Based on the methods outlined above, Momentum has identified 5,104 schools and programs across the country that are characterized as AECs. Across each state, there is a wide range of the number and type of AECs that have been identified. For example, there are 14 states for which we found no record of AECs, 2 states with more than 400 AECs, and the remaining states range somewhere in between. Figure 1 provides a detailed outline of the number of AECs identified in each state, using a color coded legend. The numbers reflected in Figure 1 are inclusive of standalone schools, school-based programs, district-run programs, treatment facilities, as well as schools and programs run within juvenile detention centers and state residential facilities.7

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7 See Appendix A for a list of the number of schools and/or programs by state.
Among the 5,104 AECs, at least 3,262 are standalone schools. Of the remainder, 635 have been identified as programs, and around 1,200 have not yet been identified as either schools or programs.\(^8\) (See Table 3).

Table 3. Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) by Type in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEC Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEC schools</td>
<td>3,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional schools</td>
<td>2,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter schools</td>
<td>684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEC programs</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status not yet determined</td>
<td>1,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total AECs</td>
<td>5,104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) States vary greatly in the quality of the data provided to NCES, and schools and programs can shift from one to the other over time. Thus, while having an NCES school identifier may provide the best indication of whether an AEC is a school or a program, Momentum found a number of instances where there was conflicting information, such as a state list identifying an AEC as a program, but the AEC had a NCES school code in the NCES database which may indicate that it is a school.
As summarized in Table 3, the great majority of AECs that are standalone schools are run as traditional public schools (79 percent), with just 21 percent (684 schools) operated as public charter schools. In addition, we see that nearly half of the schools and programs identified as AECs serve students in high school only. Another 31 percent of AECs serve both middle and high school students and roughly 14 percent are K-12 schools or programs.

Though Momentum has yet to do an exhaustive data collection effort to identify AECs’ primary missions and/or target student populations, we did record any data that was evident during the AEC identification project. Table 4 provides a preliminary look at some of the missions that were identified during data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEC Mission</th>
<th>Number Identified Thus Far</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit Recovery</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout Recovery</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Facility</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Parents</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To date, we have identified 97 AECs that serve primarily special education students, as well as 493 AECs that are run within residential facilities. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the
types of residential facilities in the AEC database—including adjudication facilities, residential treatment or hospitalization sites and group homes, or other residential facilities. In addition, 134 AECs explicitly stated that their main focus was to help students recover high school credits, and 231 explicitly marketed themselves as dropout recovery schools/programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEC Facility Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjudication</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or Treatment</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Home or Unspecified Residential</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>493</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What’s Next?

Late in the 2017-2018 school year, Momentum formed a partnership with the National Charter School Institute (NCSI) to capitalize on their individual assets. Through its data and compliance platform, Epicenter, NCSI has a robust and well supported data and information management portal that will be used by Momentum’s NOYC participating schools and organizations to upload data and information in a way that is secure and user friendly.

Epicenter was developed by NCSI as a compliance platform for charter schools to store and maintain data and information relevant to their charter authorizer. As such, Epicenter is well staffed with experts that can 1) assist Momentum in training and providing technical support to National Opportunity Youth Collaborative (NOYC) participants, 2) maintain a secure data warehouse so that participating users can be confident that any data shared is safe and stored in a way that is compliant with state and federal laws around student and family data privacy, 3) assist Momentum in the development of data tools that will allow NOYC participants to view typical performance patterns among AECs nationally and locally on a variety of measures and metrics, and 4) help Momentum bring their longstanding vision to reality. This vision is allowing AECs to compare their own measured outcomes against that of similar schools and/or programs.

When schools and organizations become participating partners in Momentum’s National Opportunity Youth Collaborative, they are not only gaining access to the Epicenter database, but they are also providing resources that support future data collection and research efforts. In the coming months, Momentum will be updating the Alternative School and Performance Database with recently published outcomes on measures such as cohort graduation rates, student attendance rates, PARCC and SBAC outcomes, and more.
In addition, it is only through alternative schools’ NOYC participation that Momentum gains access to student level data on measures that are more central to the missions of AECs, such as student engagement, social-emotional adjustment, and other non-academic measures of growth and success. Our ability to conduct research and analysis on these types of data will help alternative schools to set expectations for both students and their schools into the future.
### Appendix A: Number of AECs by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
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<td>AR</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>179</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>104</td>
</tr>
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<td>CT</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>WA</td>
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<td>WI</td>
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<td>102</td>
<td>139</td>
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<tr>
<td>WV</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>WY</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 3218  637  1249  5104
About the Authors

Momentum Strategy & Research (Momentum) is a Colorado based organization that collaborates with other organizations nationally to collect data and conduct research and analysis to inform public K-12 education policy. Momentum’s work largely focuses on research and development efforts to inform how atypical schools can be effectively assessed within accountability systems. Of particular interest are the measures and metrics used to hold alternative education campuses (AECs) accountable within state, district, and charter school authorizers’ systems.

Over the last decade, Momentum’s leadership has worked to shape alternative accountability policies and practices, working collaboratively with state departments of education, school districts, charter school authorizers, and large networks of alternative education providers. Momentum’s research and development efforts have directly impacted statewide alternative school policy and practice in Colorado, Arizona, and Ohio, as well as district and/or charter school authorizers in states such as New York, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, and Idaho. Currently, Momentum is partnering with groups to impact policy in California, Michigan, and New Mexico.

To find out more, or to connect with us directly, visit our website at:
https://momentumstrategyandresearch.godaddysites.com
nd Understanding Accountability in
• GoToWebinar Technical Assistance: 1-800-263-6317

• To submit questions during any of the presentations, please use the “Questions” box on the control panel

• To indicate you want to speak during discussion, please chat
• Name
• Affiliation
• Interest in this work
ESSA and Understanding Accountability in Alternative Education

Zachary Malter
American Youth Policy Forum
Overview

During this presentation, I will:

• Define the at-risk population and explore the settings in which they are educated.
• Discuss how accountability systems of various types can be responsive to the needs of at-risk students.
• Explore the relevance of ESSA and the opportunities it affords to encourage high quality education for at-risk students.
What is Alternative Education?

“Alternative education programs, both public school-based and community-based, offer students who are struggling or who have left school an opportunity to achieve in a new setting and use creative, individualized learning methods. While there are many different kinds of alternative schools and programs, they are often characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller student-teacher ratios, relevant and career-oriented themes, and innovative curricula.” (Martin & Brand, 2006)*

* All citations available on resource handout
2006 AYPF Paper on Alternative Education

- NCLB accountability did not serve alternative settings because of the lack of flexibility and focus on proficiency assessments.
- Inter-Agency Task Force (2003) identified that alternative settings need:
  A. Better management
  B. More accountability
  C. Better connections with parents
  D. To do a better job at serving the most severely at-risk students
Who Participates in Alternative Education?

- Alternative schools make up 6% of all high schools.
- There are 2,783 alternative high schools. Grew by a third between 2001 and 2014.

Students in Alternative Schools

- Low-Income, 56%
- Not Low-Income, 44%
- White, 40%
- Non-White, 60%

Source: DePaoli et. al, 2016
Who Participates in Alternative Education?

At-risk students that alternative schools are designed to serve are:

- Chronically absent
- Pregnant/parenting
- Have disciplinary problems
- Re-engaging with school
- Primary caregivers
- Returning from incarceration/adjudicated
- Wards of the state
- In need of extra assistance
# Types of Alternative Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Instructional Format</th>
<th>Authorizer</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Schools/Campuses</td>
<td>Traditional Learning</td>
<td>State Mandated, Authorized and Defined</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Programs within</td>
<td>Online/Blended Learning</td>
<td>Locally Mandated, Authorized, and Defined</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional School</td>
<td>Personalized Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A robust array of alternative settings is necessary to ensure all kids are successful.
Alternative Education: Current Outcomes

- 57% of alternative schools have low graduation rates.
- “In 10 States including Kentucky, Texas, Idaho, and Iowa, 50% or more of their low graduation schools were alternative schools.” (DePaoli et. al, 2016)
Alternative Education Accountability: What Does It Mean?

• Measures
• Ratings
• Consequences/Interventions
• Reporting/Report Cards
• Funding
• Authorizing

Opportunity to reflect on: What is the general purpose of accountability? Is it carrots and sticks or continuous improvement?
Alternative Education Accountability: Three Models

Model 1: **Same System** – Alternative Schools held to same measures and standards as Traditional Schools.

Model 2: **Different System** – Alternative Schools held to different measures, or have lower cut points, or different weights of measures than traditional schools.

Model 3: Alternative School Student Data **Affects Home School/Sending School** – A student’s data at an Alternative School is figured into his or her home school’s data.
AYPF 50 State Scan

So far based on analysis of 20 states:

- # of states with same system/same measures = 1
- # of states with separate system/separate measures = 7
- # of states who figure alternative data into home schools = 4
- # of states with a combination = 7
- # of states without alternative schools = 1
New Opportunities & Issues Under ESSA

- Bottom 5% - What does targeted support and intervention mean for alternative education?
- Fifth non-academic indicator
- Issue of N-Size
- Reporting for foster care & homeless youth
- Renewed emphasis on ELs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness to Receive Education</th>
<th>Demonstration of Learning</th>
<th>Readiness for College and Career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Re-engagement</strong></td>
<td>Academic Credit Growth</td>
<td>One Year Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students who had previously dropped out stay enrolled once they’ve re-engaged?</td>
<td>Do what extent do students show growth in academic credits?</td>
<td>Do “graduation-eligible” students graduate at the end of the year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Stabilization Rate</strong></td>
<td>Indicators of Academic Progress</td>
<td>Postsecondary/Workforce Readiness Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students remain in school until the end of the year?</td>
<td>Do students achieve certain academic goals for college and career?</td>
<td>How do students perform on a variety of postsecondary/workforce readiness criteria?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement in Attendance</strong></td>
<td>Comparing Learning Gains</td>
<td>Pass Rate on College Readiness Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do students make improvement in their attendance?</td>
<td>To what extent do students make progressively greater learning gains throughout the year?</td>
<td>Do students pass a college readiness exam?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends/Considerations

• Variety of measures throughout students’ academic trajectory, including career readiness
• Growth measures particularly useful for at-risk students
• Flexible, extended graduation rates
• Flexibility to suit diverse populations vs. comparability
• States are generally moving towards separate alternative accountability framework
• Moving away from punitive approach
• Intersections with juvenile justice reform, alternative assessments, charters, and restructuring of senior year
Lingering Questions

• Given the diversity of approaches presented today, and the opportunities provided by ESSA, what should states consider regarding accountability for alternative settings?

• Can/should we encourage a single system that can be responsive to the diversity of needs within alternative education and across traditional schools? Or do we need to protect/consider a separate system? Is there an effective way to do both?

• What can/do alternative settings provide states in terms of information/guidance around a potential 5th indicator?
Zachary Malter
Policy Research Assistant
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Audience Q&A
Alternative Education Campuses in Colorado

Jessica Knevals, M.P.A.
Accountability & Data Analysis
Knevals_J@cde.state.co.us

July 14, 2016
What is an Alternative Education Campus (AEC) in Colorado?

How does Colorado define a “high-risk” student?

What is the history of alternative education in Colorado?

How does Colorado measure accountability for Alternative Education Campuses (AECs)?

Future Considerations and Challenges for AEC accountability in Colorado.
In Colorado, schools that serve primarily high-risk students are called “Alternative Education Campuses” or AECs for short.

As of 2014, Colorado had 84 AECs which serve just over 16,000 students.

AECs are outlined in C.R.S. 22-7-604.5 as schools:

- (I) “Having a specialized mission and serving a special needs or at-risk population”,
- (V) “Having nontraditional methods of instruction delivery”,
- (VI) (A) “Serving students who have severe limitations...”, and
- (VI)(B) “Serving a student population in which more than 90% of the students have an individualized education program...or meet the definition of a high-risk student”.

Alternative Education Campuses
“High-Risk Student” is a student who has one or more of the following conditions

- juvenile delinquent
- dropped out of school
- expelled from school
- history of personal drug or alcohol use
- history of personal street gang involvement
- history of child abuse or neglect
- has a parent or guardian in prison
- has an IEP
- family history of domestic violence
- repeated school suspensions
- parent or pregnant woman
- migrant child*
- homeless child
- history of a serious psychiatric or behavioral disorder*
- is over traditional school age for his or her grade level and lacks adequate credit hours for his or her grade level**

*Added in 2010  **Added in 2011
History of AECs in Colorado

2002
- C.R.S. 22-7-604.5
- Established definition of AECs

2008
- CO Coalition of Alt Ed Campuses commissioned to establish basic framework for alt. ed.

2009
- SB 09-163, CO Education Accountability Act
- Determined AECs no longer exempt from accountability

2010
- School Performance Framework for AECs includes Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, Student Engagement, and PWR

2011
- AECs allowed to select optional measures in School Performance Framework

2015
- HB15-1350
- Created AEC accountability work group

2016
- HB16-1429 (based on work group recs)
- Modifies minimum % of high-risk studs and “high-risk indicators”
School and District Performance Frameworks & AEC School Performance Framework*

*Note: The percentage distribution for performance indicators will change for the 2016 school year and beyond.
AEC Accountability

Alternative Education Campuses receive a School Performance Framework annually, similar to traditional schools. The main exception is AECs are measured on Student Engagement measure, rather than Growth Gaps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>State-Required Measures and Metrics</th>
<th>Optional Measures and Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Achievement</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1. CMAS/PARCC % of students proficient in Reading, Math, Writing, Science</td>
<td>NWEA MAP, Scantron, Aucity, Galileo, Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), and/or Accuplacer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Growth</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1. CMAS/PARCC median growth percentiles in Reading, Math, Writing, and ACCESS (English language proficiency)</td>
<td>NWEA MAP, Scantron, Aucity, Galileo, Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), ACCESS and/or Accuplacer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1. Attendance rate</td>
<td>1. Student Re-engagement, 2. Returning students, 3. Socio-Emotional or Psychological Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2. Truancy rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postsecondary &amp; Workforce Readiness</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1. Completion rate (best of 4, 5, 6, or 7 year rate)</td>
<td>1. Credit/course completion, 2. Workforce Readiness, 3. Post-Completion Success, 4. Successful transition (for non-degree granting schools only), 5. Graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Indicator</td>
<td>School Has State-Required Measures and Metrics Plus Submitted Optional Measures and Metrics</td>
<td>School Only Has State-Required Measures and Metrics</td>
<td>School Does Not Have State-Required Measures and Metrics but Submitted Optional Measures and Metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Growth</td>
<td><strong>52.4%</strong></td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td><strong>17.5%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary &amp; Workforce Readiness</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td><strong>55.6%</strong></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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</table>
AEC School Performance Framework: Indicator Ratings & Overall Rating

- Schools receive a **rating** on each of the **performance indicators**:
  - **Exceeds** (4 pts), **Meets** (3), **Approaching** (2), **Does Not Meet** (1)

- The **ratings roll up** to an overall evaluation of the school’s performance, which determines the **school plan type rating**:
  - **Performance**, **Improvement**, **Priority Improvement**, **Turnaround**

- Under SB 09-163, the “Colorado Education Accountability Act”, if a public school is required to implement a **priority improvement plan** or **turnaround plan** for 5 consecutive school years, the state board must recommend that the public school's school district or the institute **take one of several actions** specified in statute with regard to the public school.
Adjusted AEC SPF Cut-Points: Impact for Accountability

- AECs in Colorado are measured similarly to traditional schools, but the weightings are lowered to take into account the high-risk population served.

- Without allowing additional measures and revised cut-points in the AEC SPF, 86% of AECs would be on priority improvement or turnaround plans, whereas, now only 24% were.

- AECs in Colorado are gradually improving over time. In 2011, 39% of AECs were on priority improvement or turnaround plans, and in 2014, only 24% were.

- Although AECs only constitute 5% of total schools in Colorado, of the 190 schools on priority improvement or turnaround plans, 21 are AECs, which represents 11% of all schools on priority improvement or turnaround plans.
Future Considerations and Challenges

- Revising the current AEC accountability system as appropriate under ESSA
- Setting student performance expectations that are ambitious, yet attainable, and connected to the expectations for all schools
- Incorporating accountability expectations for AEC schools with accountability expectations for districts with AECs
- Collecting and including optional measures, so that there is comparability between schools’ frameworks
- Communicating with the AEC community around district and school needs

Next Steps for 2016 and Beyond

How can we improve and refine the Accountability system for Alternative Education Campuses in Colorado under ESSA?
Audience Q&A
WASHINGTON STATE’S COMMITMENT TO CLOSING THE GAP FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

AN OVERVIEW ON THE MODEL AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Building Bridges Recommendations

1. Set an educational goal for youth and family serving agencies and coordinate efforts to achieve it.

2. Build local dropout prevention and intervention systems and practices at every grade level.

3. Create a dropout retrieval system for 16–24 year old youth who are not likely to return to high school.
Legislative Evolution

Building Bridges Workgroup
- 1st WA State Legislation on dropouts
- Recommendation #3: "Create a Dropout Retrieval System for 16 to 21 Year-Old Youth who are not likely to Return to High School"


ESSHB 1418 (2010)
- Second attempt passed
- No fiscal note – permissive
- Established "1418 Implementation Committee" to develop infrastructure:
  - Policies and procedures
  - Rules and recommendations
  - Model contracts and agreements
  - Implementation Manual

OSPI Open Doors (2014-15)
- RCW 28A.175.100
- Est. WAC 392-700
- Performance-based
- Case Management mandated
- Compliance monitoring required
- Longitudinal study required
- Over 3600 youth enrolled
Open Doors
Individual Case Management
Credit Recovery
Online
Alternative High School
Comprehensive High School
Running Start
Student Eligibility

- Students must be at least 16 years old and less than 21 years old by September 1 to be enrolled in reengagement.
- Additionally, students must meet credit deficiency ratios.
  - Or obtain a waiver from a district designated school personnel, the juvenile justice system, or case manager from the department of social and health services.
Current Status

- 98 school districts have been approved to offer this programming

- 4 typical models –
  - District self operating
  - Partnering with community organization
  - Partnering with community/technical college
  - Partnering with multiple districts in a consortium

- 256 District pathways/sites statewide
Framework Elements

- Statewide framework of reengagement
- Encourages partnerships and collaboration
- State K-12 funding follows the student ($6,308.69 annually)
- Performance based & individualized, with multiple indicators of academic progress
- Designed as an on-ramp to college/career pathways
- Case management required
Encourages Partnerships and Collaboration

- For instruction and support programs are partnering with:

  - Community and Technical Colleges
  - Vocational Skills Centers
  - Workforce Agencies
  - Regional ESDs
  - Community Based Organizations
  - Private Vendors
Funding Follows the Student

- Students receive full funding while showing academic progress up to college level.
- Enhanced funding for vocational/career technical education is available at the college level.
- Special Education Services are the responsibility of the district and the funding remains with the district as they serve the student regardless of the program model.
- Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program funds are available for programs serving students who qualify for ELL.
Requirements to Claim Eligible Students

Students and programs must meet three requirements to continue to receive monthly funding:

- **Minimum attendance period** – Two hours of face-to-face time with program staff for instruction, case management, academic and/or career counseling.

- **Weekly status checks** – The program must attempt to have communication with the students every week.

- **Academic progress** – Students must show academic progress by the 4th count day of enrollment.
Indicators of Academic Progress

1. Earns high school or college credit.
2. Passes one or more high school equivalency tests.
3. Makes a significant gain in core academic skill level as measured by pre and post testing.
4. Successfully completes approved college readiness training.
5. Successfully completes approved work readiness training.
6. Successfully completes a work based learning experience.
7. Enrolls in college course(s) other than Adult Basic Ed, high school equivalency certificate, or ESL class for the first time.
Indicators of Academic Progress

*continued*

8. Successfully completes an ESL class
9. Successfully completes an ABE or high school equivalency certificate coursework
10. Enrolls in progressively more difficult math or English college courses
11. Passes one or more tests/benchmarks that satisfy State Board graduation requirements
12. Successfully completes a grade level curriculum in a core academic subject that does not qualify for High school credit
13. Successfully completes a series of short term industry certificates (40 hour min.)
Case Management

- A ratio not to exceed 1 fulltime case manager to 75 youth
- Assist youth by connecting to resources and remove barriers to success
- Can provide academic as well as employment support
- Must have a bachelors degree or a minimum of two years working with at risk youth
Tracking Reengagement Students

School code:
- Reengagement schools are designated with an R school type code
- Allows the students to be disaggregated from district AYP measures for 4 and 5 year cohort rates.

Program code:
- Each program has a unique qualifying code attached to the student record
- Allows OSPI to track student data to the specific program and location
- Allows OSPI to aggregate data many ways including by state, region, district, pathway or partner
An EDS application is being designed that will allow data points to be collected that are not measures found in CEDARS, but are desired outcomes in Open Doors.

The new student qualification codes will allow the EDS application to be pre-populated with demographic information.
Program Accountability

Compliance monitoring of began October 2014 under the authority of ESSB 6002 (2014)

- To date 30 programs have undergone a compliance review
- This has led to a clarification of language and a 3rd WAC revision
- Guidance and best practice documents have been created and shared
- Ongoing guidance and assistance have been welcomed
Longitudinal Study

- The RCW governing Open Doors requires longitudinal study for 5 years.

- OSPI is working with the Education Research and Data Center to align the cohort and data tracking for compliance.

- This longitudinal tracking will include:
  - College enrollment and completion
  - Workforce data such as wages and industry
Open Doors
Individual Case Management

Credit Recovery
Online
Alternative High School

Comprehensive High School Running Start

College Apprenticeship Career Life
Next Steps

- ESSA Accountability subgroup on Alternative Accountability work group currently meeting
- First task is identifying school types
- Should these schools be held to the same measures as comprehensive schools and part of the district report cards?
- What other measures will we use to hold all schools accountable for student outcomes?
www.k12.wa.us/GATE/SupportingStudents/StudentRetrieval.aspx

Contact:

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Laurie.Shannon@k12.wa.us
Audience Q&A
Outline

- California’s alternative schools
- Our previous alternative schools accountability program
- Our current school accountability program
- Future directions for alternative schools
## Seven types of alternative schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Fall Enrollment</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Administrative Entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>62,830</td>
<td>At risk of not graduating</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Charter</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28,931</td>
<td>Expelled, suspended, truant, or dropout</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>15,202</td>
<td>Expelled, behavior or attendance problems or on probation or parole</td>
<td>Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Choice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13,283</td>
<td>Expelled, suspended, truant, or dropout</td>
<td>District or regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Day</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>7,353</td>
<td>Expelled or behavior or attendance problems</td>
<td>District or regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Court</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6,776</td>
<td>Incarcerated in local detention facilities</td>
<td>District or regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,212</td>
<td>Attendance, behavior, or academic problems</td>
<td>District or regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>974</strong></td>
<td><strong>136,587</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CA’s alternative schools are not a system

- District, county, or charter operated
- No clear differentiation of purpose or hierarchy of need
- Schools generally operate independently of others
- Most students enroll voluntarily
Mix of alternative schools varies widely

Percent of all 12th grade enrollment

- Other
- Independent charter
- District charter
- County
- District continuation
Short-term enrollment skews meaning of state data

- Average student is enrolled less than 4 months
- Annual state data does not measure alternative school performance well
  - Validity: Test data reflects what students acquired before attending alternative
- Transfers to alternatives affect regular high school accountability data
Outline

- California’s alternative schools
- Our previous alternative schools accountability program
- Our current school accountability program
- Future directions for alternative schools
Alternative School Accountability Model

- Schools choose from among 13 measures (behavior, attendance, attainment, achievement, and completion)
- Attempted to measure short-term academic gains using pre-post tests
- Data collected only on students attending at least 90 days
- Regular high schools: state began returning test scores of alternative school students to “home” high school in 2011
ASAM pros and cons

- **Strengths**
  - Choice of indicators reflects school mission
  - Recognition of twin goals--academic growth and behavioral change

- **Weaknesses**
  - 90-day enrollment requirement meant most students were not included in accountability data
  - Choice of indicators allowed schools to “cherry pick” outcomes
  - Lack of common, comparable, data among all schools
  - Pre-post tests did not provide comparable data
California’s alternative schools
Our previous alternative schools accountability program
Our new school accountability program
PPIC: future directions for alternative schools
California’s local control experiment

- 2013 Local Control Funding Formula revamped entire K-12 system
  - Eliminated most categorical programs (40+ programs)
  - Boosted base grants; significantly increased per-pupil funds for low-income and EL students and foster children
  - Required local plans that describe district problems and solutions
  - Plans track student/school progress on 23 indicators (achievement, school climate, student engagement, parent involvement, course access)
LCFF forms core of new accountability program

- New state accountability system is under development
- Likely to be based on test scores, graduation rates, EL progress, suspension rates, chronic absenteeism, and career and college preparation
- Tracks district performance and growth in performance
- No summative score—get a “color” for each indicator
- Many details yet to be worked out—working group for alternative schools
Outline

- California’s alternative schools
- Our previous alternative schools accountability program
- Our current school accountability program
- PPIC: future directions for alternative schools
Establish accountability of “home” high school

- Return accountability data to students’ home school
  - Ensures that most students are included in a school and district accountability score
  - Reduces incentive to encourage students to transfer to alternative schools

- Investigate establishing “at risk” subgroup based on 8th grade test score
Start process of creating a system of alternative schools and accompanying data

- Establish minimum criteria for “alternative school” designation
- Develop indicators to help schools reflect and improve
  - Graduation data based on year enrolled (junior, senior)
  - Success of students who return to home high school
  - Track progress on behavior and attendance while enrolled
Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

Paul Warren (warren@ppic.org; 916-440-1124)

Thank you for your interest in this work.
Audience Q&A
• To indicate you want to speak during discussion, please chat
• Given the diversity of approaches presented today, and the opportunities provided by ESSA, what should states consider regarding accountability for alternative settings?

• Can/should we encourage a single system that can be responsive to the diversity of needs within alternative education and across traditional schools? Or do we need to protect/consider a separate system? Is there an effective way to do both?

• What can/do alternative settings provide states in terms of information/guidance around a potential 5th indicator?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Plan Status</th>
<th>School Quality/Student Success Indicator</th>
<th>Definition of Chronic Absenteeism</th>
<th>Weight Goal</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism, with college and career readiness in high schools</td>
<td>Absent 15 or more days</td>
<td>15% in K-8 and 10% in high school.</td>
<td>Decrease chronic absence to 5% by 2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>K-8 4 points out of 100. High School 5 points out of 100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>An Acceleration Menu that includes chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10% as part of broader &quot;Acceleration Menu&quot;</td>
<td>Since schools are penalized for any chronic absenteeism, 0% is implied target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism along with science achievement, reading at grade level and other indicators</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year (Metric used in state analysis)</td>
<td>1 point for less than 5%; 0.5 points for between 5%-10%</td>
<td>Decrease chronic absence to 5% or lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism is a K-8 academic indicator. The non-academic indicator reflects suspension rates</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>A charting system reflects both status and growth</td>
<td>Goals set by local school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>5% of overall score</td>
<td>Will be determined Spring 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10.5% (elementary); 15% (middle); 9.7 (high school); full points if rate is lower than 5%; no points awarded if 30% or higher</td>
<td>Decrease chronic absence to 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism, along with science and social studies test scores, and college and career readiness in high school</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>20% (K-8); 35% within fifth indicator (high school)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism as part of school environment</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td>5.775% of overall score</td>
<td>10% is implicit target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Science achievement in all schools, social studies achievement &amp; acceleration indicators in middle and high schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism in combination with literacy, college and career readiness, success in enrichment classes and science and social studies achievement.</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td>6.7% of overall score (K-8); 3% (high school)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Plan Status</td>
<td>School Quality/Student Success Indicator</td>
<td>Definition of Chronic Absenteeism</td>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 15 or more days</td>
<td>10% of overall score</td>
<td>Reduce average chronic absence to 9% by 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>K-8 satisfaction survey. High school college &amp; career readiness</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism and student surveys</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year under consideration</td>
<td>10% of overall score (K-8); 7.5% of overall score (high school)</td>
<td>95% attendance in junior and senior years indicated under college or career ready indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>K-8 chronic absenteeism, high school college &amp; career readiness</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>Persistent attendees + improving attendees x 80% of students enrolled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Conditions for Learning Index, which is a climate survey, and post-secondary readiness</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Academic progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; behavior events; restraint and seclusion (each measure is strongly tied to equity)</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of days, more granular focus on all school time, including tardies</td>
<td>10-20 points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Science and social studies assessments, plus graduation credit accumulation for middle school and strength of graduation credentials for high school</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10% of overall score (for now)</td>
<td>Points TBD; based on 1-5% chronically absent, 5-9%, and above 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; school climate; well-rounded curriculum</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>15% of overall score</td>
<td>Achieve a “five star” school rating (measures TBD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; success in grade 9 courses; successful completion of broad and challenging coursework</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>2.5% of overall score; one of three parts for 7.5% total for SQSS</td>
<td>&quot;Improvement in chronic absenteeism&quot; no measure of improvement specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism, arts/physical education, access to librarian/media specialist; AP/IB/dual enrollment/CTE programs in grades 11-12</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>4% of overall score; one of four parts for 29% total for SQSS</td>
<td>Use 2016-17 statewide chronic absenteeism rate to set long-term goal at the 75th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; well-rounded education, college-career readiness will be introduced in 2019-20</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td>No numeric weight. Will use academic indicators, then attendance to identify low-performing schools.</td>
<td>95% consistent attendance, with no student group below 90%, by 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Plan Status</td>
<td>School Quality/Student Success Indicator</td>
<td>Definition of Chronic Absenteeism</td>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Goal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Growth in English and math test scores</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“90/90 Principle” (90% of students must be present 90% of the time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>“90/90 Principle” (90% of students must be present 90% of the time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism along science assessments, school climate, behavior and engagement in K-8; college and career readiness in high school.</td>
<td>Absent 5% or more of school year</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Weight tied to indicator for satisfactory attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction in share of chronically absent students from 27.56% to 15% by 2026.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; science proficiency, academic learning plans in middle and high school, high school readiness in middle school, ACT and exam scores in high school.</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Maximum points for chronic absence rates of 5% or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Growth in Test Scores (K-8); College-Career Readiness (high school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism and student surveys</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year, starting in 2018-19</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; College-and-Career and Civic Readiness Index in high school.</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goals based on starting point for subgroups; statewide 2017-18 target of 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Growth in test scores</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; “Prepared for Success” (fifth indicator used for high school, comprised of six indicators)</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td>No higher than 5%; meets the “Improvement Standard” of reducing chronic absenteeism by 3 percentage points a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; 9th grade course completion in high school</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>1/9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism; College-and-Career Readiness</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism for teachers and students, plus student suspensions, add high school metrics and science proficiency in later years.</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year. Includes students and teachers.</td>
<td>Up to 12 points combined with exceeding expectations on test scores, and suspensions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Positive and effective learning environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism in elementary and middle, with other indicators being developed. High school completion</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>Up to 10 points</td>
<td>Absolute achievement (relative to other schools) or reduction in percent of chronically absent students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>10% of overall score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Achievement outcomes on STAAR tests (3-8), college, career, and military readiness for high schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Equitable educational opportunities, science achievement &amp; growth, postsecondary readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Science assessments; physical fitness; college and career readiness; post-secondary outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td>No more than 10% rate of chronic absenteeism for all students and subgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism for K-8; for high school, combined with 9th graders on track and advanced courses</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>1-10 points in a rating system broken into deciles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism and suspensions</td>
<td>Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)</td>
<td>29% (K-8) 22% high school, combined with suspensions</td>
<td>Chronic absence rates lower than 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>Absent 10% or more of school year</td>
<td>No numeric weight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Science and social studies assessments; Graduation Credit Accumulation Index for middle school, strength of graduation credentials for high school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** FutureEd Analysis of State ESSA Plans