



Educational Fairness and Latino Student Success in Florida

Introduction

Latino* public school students are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. public school population and make up one in four public school students.¹ U.S. public schools also serve nearly five million English Learners (ELs) nationwide.²

The Hispanic student population will only continue to grow. The U.S. Department of Education predicts that by 2027 Latino students will comprise nearly 30% of the student population.³ Unfortunately, significant achievement gaps persist between Latino students and their peers, and that gap is even more pronounced for ELs.

On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) only 23% of Latino fourth graders scored proficient or above in reading, as compared to 47% of their White peers.⁴ In eighth grade reading, 38% of non-ELs scored proficient or above; that number was only 5% for ELs.⁵ The same gaps exist in mathematics where only 20% of Latino eighth graders scored proficient or above, as compared to 44% of their White peers. For ELs, that number drops down to only 6%.⁶ While there are bright spots—the Latino high school graduation⁷ and college-going rates⁸ have both hit historic highs—there is still much work to be done. As the Latino student population continues to grow, it is imperative that we are committed as a nation to raising the academic achievement for Latino and EL students. It's not only the right thing to do, the U.S. economy depends on it.

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

In an attempt to revamp accountability in public education and to continue toward the goal of closing achievement gaps, Congress passed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that was signed into law in December 2015. ESSA is the national education law passed to replace No Child Left Behind (NCLB). ESSA maintained many of the key civil rights protections, such as standards-based accountability and the reporting of data by student subgroups, while simultaneously providing states and districts with a great deal of flexibility and responsibility. ESSA's goal is to ensure equal opportunity for all students and fully prepare them for success in college and career. However, states now hold the responsibility to design an accountability system that meaningfully holds schools accountable for

the performance of all students, including Latino and EL students.

On September 26, 2018, Florida's ESSA plan was the last state plan to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.⁹ With the potential to impact 937,761 Latino students¹⁰ and 288,977 ELs¹¹ enrolled in Florida's public schools, Florida must have an accountability system that prioritizes and includes the performance of all students. This report provides an overview of key provisions in ESSA, discusses how Florida's ESSA plan addresses accountability for Latino students and ELs, and provides recommendations to Florida's accountability system to better ensure that Latino and EL students in Florida are receiving a high-quality education that prepares them for both college and career.

A Look at the Achievement Gaps in Florida:

- In 2017, Latino students had an average score that was 17 points lower than that for White students on the NAEP eighth grade math assessment.
- Overall, only 23% of Latino students scored proficient or better on the same eighth grade math assessment.
- On NAEP's fourth grade reading assessment, only 36% of Hispanic students scored proficient as compared to 53% of their White peers.
- On Florida's own state assessment, these gaps remain. For the 2017-2018 school year, only 54% of Hispanic students scored proficient in eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA), as compared to 70% of their White peers. That number drops to only 17% for ELs.

Overview of Key Provisions in ESSA for Latino and EL Students

ESSA is the current federal education civil rights law that ties federal funding to a variety of accountability and reporting measures at the state level. ESSA's passage in 2015 marked an overdue benchmark for reauthorizing NCLB. It also was an opportunity to update the law and provide states with more flexibility to create policies that are beneficial for their students and local context while still maintaining significant guardrails for civil

rights and accountability. There remains the recognition under the law that historically, states and districts have underinvested in schools serving a high number of Latino, EL, and other historically marginalized groups of students. For that reason, critical protections are needed across all states.

Most notably, ESSA requires states to establish a system of annual meaningful differentiation (AMD), a system that offers clarity and transparency on how schools are performing, that is based on the performance of all students and each subgroup of students.¹² We recommend a state's AMD system provide a school with a summative rating that meaningfully

includes subgroups and is connected to identification for additional resources and supports. Any accountability system should:

- **Count all subgroups of students.** States must develop an accountability system that holds all schools accountable for the performance of all students and each subgroup of students.
- **Include an English Language Proficiency indicator in the accountability system.** States must include an indicator for English Language Proficiency that is adequately weighted to meaningfully include ELs.
- **Utilize transparent data.** Each state education agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA) that receives Title I, Part A funds must prepare and disseminate an annual report card that includes information about a wide variety of student and school performance metrics; they must also consult parents and families in developing annual report cards.¹³ States should report, and make available, high-quality data on the

performance of all subgroups of students that is understandable to all stakeholders, including limited English proficient parents and students.

- **Engage parents and families in a meaningful way.** States must engage parents and families on critical components of the accountability system such as developing the state's ESSA plan districts' school improvement plans, and schools' annual report card.
- **Define a tiered system of supports and interventions.** States must set three distinct systems of school identification and support: Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI),¹⁴ Targeted School Improvement (TSI),¹⁵ and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI).¹⁶

Currently, Florida's ESSA plan fails to incorporate many of these provisions which are the most salient to ensuring a quality education for Florida's Latino and EL students.

Funding for K-12 Schools in Florida

Reforms are not enough, schools across Florida need adequate funding to better serve their students. Public investment in K-12 schools has fallen dramatically in a number of states over the last decade. Florida is not an exception. The approved per pupil funding level of \$7,221 for the 2017-2018 school year is lower than the \$7,306 per student appropriated in 2007. By one measure, Florida's per pupil spending remains 22.9% lower than pre-recession levels, after adjusting for inflation. At the same time that funding has decreased, costs have increased, leaving the burden on local districts to try and overcome funding inadequacy and inequity. Without adequate funding, schools are unable to retain high-quality teachers, invest in research-based practices, and equitably target funds to vulnerable student populations such as ELs and Special Education students. While funding is not the focus of this report, it is necessary to recognize that in order to justly implement the recommendations found in this report Florida must rethink its current funding formula to provide increased funding to support interventions and practices that can improve failing schools.

These grades range from an “A,” defined as schools making excellent progress, to a “F,” defined as schools failing to make adequate progress:

School Grade	Percentage of Points Earned*
A	62% of points or greater
B	54% to 61% of points
C	41% to 53% of points
D	32% to 40% of points
F	31% of points or less

* Only 12 states use an A-F grade and they are calculated very differently. For example, in TN and AZ, ESSA plans, the cut scores are “TBD”. In MS, an A is a 90% but then a B is an 89-63. MS does a norming for schools and they constantly recalculate cut scores. In LA, an A is defined as meaning that a school is on track to meet long-term goals. In IN, an A is 90% or better on a standard 10-point scale. An A in NM denotes that a school is in the 90th percentile of schools but an A for LEA means that they’ve scored more than 75 scaled points. The 90th percentile is very different than have a score of 90 points.

Florida’s Accountability System and ESSA Plan


Currently, Florida has a bifurcated accountability system that includes the state’s A-F grading system that was originally implemented in 1999 and a new “Federal Percent of Points Earned Index” (FPPEI) that was added to the ESSA plan 2018 after several rounds of feedback with the U.S. Department of Education. While the addition of the FPPEI did result in the approval of the state’s plan, in practice it functions as separate system that allows the state to circumvent some of the key provisions of ESSA. The two separate systems include different metrics and run the risk of misleading students, families, and other stakeholders invested in improving educational equity for all students.

State Accountability System


The A-F grading system is defined by Florida State Statute 1008.24 and is intended to differentiate schools by assigning them a standard letter grade. Depending on the type of school (elementary, middle, or high school) the school’s grade may include up to 11 components. The state describes these components as four achievement components, four learning games components, a middle school acceleration component, as well as components for graduation rate and college and career acceleration. Each component is worth an equal weight of 100 points in the overall grade.¹⁷

A-F Grading Components:


Achievement Components:

	ELA
	Mathematics
	Science
	Social Studies


Learning Gains Components:

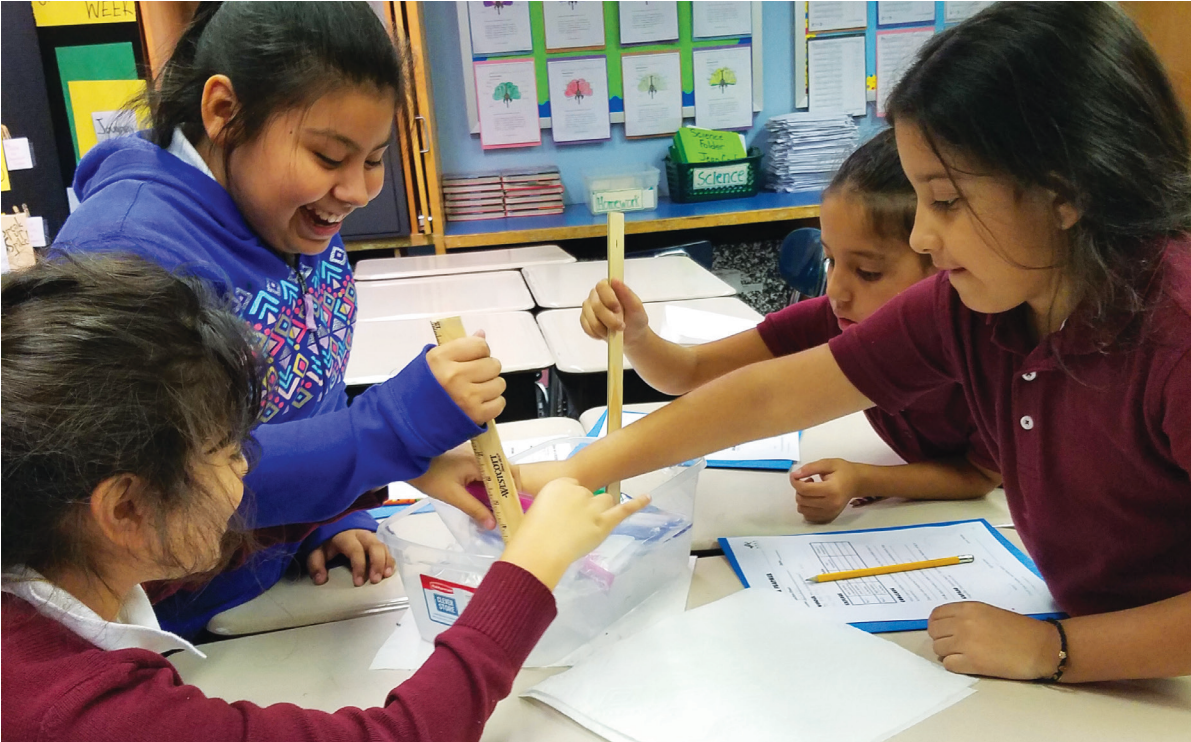
	ELA
	Mathematics
	Lowest 25% of students in ELA
	Lowest 25% of students in Math

Additional Middle School Components:

	Middle School Acceleration
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Additional High School Components:

	Graduation Rate
	College and Career Acceleration



While Florida has been using a summative rating system for nearly two decades, the A-F grading system, as submitted in the state's original ESSA Plan failed to meet the federal law requirements. The plan did not:

- Include subgroups of students in the determination of a school's grade.
- Include an English Language Proficiency indicator in the schools' grade.
- Report data on the performance of each subgroup of students.
- Identify and provide additional supports for Latino and EL students when a school fails to serve these groups well.

The September 2017 version of Florida's ESSA plan did not receive initial approval from the U.S. Department of Education. The state resubmitted a new plan to address the feedback from the Department of Education and made another attempt at approval. There were several changes throughout the plan, most notably, Florida introduced the FPPEI.

Federal Percent of Points Earned Index (FPPEI)

The FPPEI is an index that seeks to respond to two of the primary faults of the A-F grading system; including a metric for English language proficiency and reporting the performance of all subgroups of students, even though neither of these changes are reflected in the A-F grading system. For the FPPEI, Florida combines the components of the A-F grading system with the additional indicator for English Language Proficiency and changes the possible point value of components.

Federal Percent of Points Earned Index

ESSA Indicator	Florida Component	Points
Elementary Schools		
Academic Achievement (200 points)	ELA Achievement	100 points
	Mathematics Achievement	100 points
Academic Progress (400 points)	Learning Gains ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Mathematics	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% Mathematics	100 points
School Quality or Student Success (100 points)	Science	100 points
Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) (100 points)	ELP Progress	100 points
Middle Schools		
Academic Achievement (180 points)	ELA Achievement	100 points
	Mathematics Achievement	80 points
Academic Progress (400 points)	Learning Gains ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Mathematics	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% Mathematics	100 points
School Quality or Student Success (320 points)	Science	100 points
	Social Studies	100 points
	Middle School Acceleration--Mathematics Achievement (20 points) Acceleration Success (100 points)	120 points
Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) (100 points)	ELP Progress	100 points
High Schools		
Academic Achievement--including Student Growth (600 points)	ELA Achievement	100 points
	Mathematics Achievement	100 points
	Learning Gains ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Mathematics	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% ELA	100 points
	Learning Gains Lowest 25% Mathematics	100 points
Graduation Rate (80 points)	4-Year Graduation Rate (ACGR)	80 points
School Quality or Student Success (320 points)	Science	100 points
	Social Studies	100 points
	College and Career Acceleration 4-Year Graduation Rate (ACGR) (20 points) Acceleration Success (100 points)	120 points
Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) (100 points)	ELP Progress	100 points

The state's plan also indicates that the FPPEI will be used to determine which schools are placed in Comprehensive Support and Improvement and Targeted Support and Improvement. Using the FPPEI Florida will identify schools for CSI if the graduation rate is below 67% if the

FPPEI calculation falls below 41%, and any schools who have an FPPEI calculation above 41% and earns a D or F school grade. This addition is reflective of the disconnect between the two systems; at 41% or above in the A-F grading system would indicate a grade of C or above.

Florida's ESSA Plan still misses the mark

With these adjustments, and others not highlighted here, Florida's ESSA plan was eventually approved. However, it still falls short on creating an accountability system that meaningfully includes all students. Under the current system, the nearly 300,000 ELs in Florida public schools will not see how a school is excelling or failing at helping students attain English language proficiency because this component is not reflected in a school's overall grade. And while the state is willing to report subgroup performance, that same performance is still not part of the A-F grading system and reporting alone is not enough.

An accountability system cannot properly function simply through the reporting of data. For schools, and students, to benefit from the accountability system, that system must accurately reflect and help identify which subgroups of students are struggling within a school and then use that identification to drive action and resources to better support a school. Florida's bifurcated system does not accomplish that goal. Rather, it creates one system, the A-F system, that reflects the state's values and communicates a signal of quality to families but leaves ELs and Latino students behind and a second system, the FPPEI, that superficially includes ELs and subgroups but in practice is not tied to meaningful action because it is simply a compliance mechanism.

Data Transparency and School Report Cards

Having a strong accountability system is only one key component of an equitable education system. Another is the use of high-quality, transparent data that can communicate essential information to students, parents, communities, and other stakeholders. This requires schools and districts to be transparent about school performance, school funding, and about decisions being made that can impact the experience and education of all students. In a recent poll, 93% of parents say they need data to help their children do their best and 85% of teachers say data gives an objective place to start conversations with parents.¹⁸ The Data Quality Campaign suggests being transparent and earning trust is one of the key components of making data work for students.¹⁹ Florida currently uses data in several ways.

Florida's Current Use of Data

As described above, using data to calculate a school's grade is one of the most public facing ways that Florida utilizes data to communicate with students and families about the quality of schools. More specifically, the state uses D and F grades to signal to the public, and to the state, that a school needs supports and resources to improve the performance of students. In addition to the summative rating, Florida will now report additional data, like subgroup performance, that is not part of the school grade calculation. While this information will be made available to the public through a complicated online system consisting of a series of difficult to interpret spreadsheets, the bifurcated systems once again raises concerns about the transparency and usability of this data for students and family.

Florida also uses data to communicate critical information about education spending and use of funds. The Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) is the funding formula used “to allocate funds appropriated to school districts for K-12 public school operations.”²⁰ The FEFP requires districts to produce an accurate account of the funding that is allocated through the formula and the state of Florida produces a number of financial reports on their website including school district financial reports, full FEFP calculations, and school district budgets. While these reports could provide the public with essential information about how funds are distributed throughout schools, the reports are often difficult to find, dense in content, and not student- and parent-friendly.

Barriers to Transparency

For data to be an effective tool of equity, it is imperative that it measures what matters, is made readily available to a wide variety of audiences and is connected to action that can improve schools for Latino and EL students, and other historically marginalized groups of students. Currently, Florida’s data reporting presents several challenges for students and families.

- **Resources and reports are only provided in English.** Whether it is school performance, school funding, or other accountability measures, all reports are only made available in English. Additionally, the online resources, guidebooks, and other written explanations of critical calculations are also only provided in English. This means that these reports, and the data contained within them, are not usable for the more than two million limited English proficient Florida residents.²¹
- **Majority of data resources are only made available online.** District budget summaries, student performance, and enrollment data and school report cards are all made available online. Nationwide, 23% of Hispanics are smartphone dependent, meaning they do not have

broadband internet access at home. And nearly 80% of Latino adults say they primarily access the internet via mobile device.²² For households that do not have access to the internet, Florida’s data is completely inaccessible. For the families who access the internet via their mobile device, these reports are not made available in a mobile format, rendering this data unusable by families.

- **Reports often don’t measure what matters.** Measuring what matters is critical to making data work for students. However, there are many examples of where the data presented is not the data needed. One example is the school district budget summaries. In addition to these summaries being difficult to read and interpret, they only breakdown budget information by district, and not school. Recognizing that school segregation often exists even within school districts, looking at school-level expenditures is necessary to determine funding inequities in schools for Latino and EL students.

EL Students in the State of Florida

As ELs continue to be one of the fastest growing segments of our school-aged population, it is necessary that our public schools invest in systems and schools that support ELs in attaining English language proficiency, improving performance in core content areas, and in fostering bilingualism and biculturalism. ESSA made notable changes for ELs including requiring states to:

- Include an English Language Proficiency indicator in its accountability system.
- Implement statewide standardized procedures for entering and exiting EL services.
- Setting ambitious long-term goals for ELs in ELA, math, and English Language Proficiency.
- Identify languages other than English that are present to a significant extent

and make every effort to develop native language assessments where they don't exist in those languages.

Each of these requirements push states to a more intentional shift on meeting all the academic and linguistic needs of ELs. Florida has a long history of navigating laws intended to meet the needs of ELs.

Florida Laws Impacting English Learner Policy and Practice

In addition to ESSA and other federal laws impacting ELs, Florida has two additional mechanisms related to the EL policy and practice that play a role in how the state's ESSA plan aligns with the new requirements for serving ELs. The first is a 1990 consent decree that serves as Florida's framework for compliance with federal and state laws regarding the education of EL students.²³ The consent decree addresses the civil rights of ELs and ensures the comprehensible instruction to which ELs are entitled. It does this by laying out a six-part framework:

- Identification and Assessment
- Equal Access to Appropriate Programming
- Equal Access to Appropriate Categorical and Other Programs for ELs
- Personnel
- Monitoring Issues
- Outcome Measures

Generally speaking, the consent decree complements the requirements of ESSA for ELs; it is possible for the state to be in compliance with both ESSA and the decree.

The other law that has the potential to impact provisions related to ELs is the Florida Constitution. According to Florida's ESSA plan, "Florida's constitution does not provide for the delivery of government services in languages other than English. In fact, the Florida Constitution (Article II, Section 9) specifies English as the official state language.²⁴ The Florida Department of Education uses this language as part of the justification for why they do not provide

native language assessments for students. However, the state does provide a number of educational and government services in other languages including instruction in dual language programs throughout the state and the state seal of biliteracy to students, which requires students to be assessed in a foreign language.²⁵

Assessing Content Knowledge for English Learners

Since the state does not offer native language assessments, ELs are assessed for content knowledge in math and ELA in the English-only version of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). While native language assessments are not always appropriate for all ELs, they can be a valid and reliable measure for students who are receiving content instruction in another language or for newly arrived immigrant students who may have received a formal education in their home language prior to arriving in the United States.²⁶ The state does provide some accommodations for ELs by offering: 1) Flexible setting, 2) Flexible scheduling, 3) Assistance in heritage language, and/or 4) Approved dictionary and glossary. Additional accommodations may be offered for students with disabilities who are ELs.²⁷

ESSA requires that the performance of subgroups of students, including ELs, on the FCAT be included in the accountability system. However, as stated above, Florida's A-F system does not include the performance of any subgroup of student's including ELs. This data will be reported as part of the FPPEI, but schools will not be assigned a grade that meaningfully counts the performance of ELs on content assessments.

Research-Based Best Practices for Supporting English Learners

While much of the research around best practices for ELs focuses on the classroom there are recommendations from the field for how a state can best support ELs. The state can set up systems around assessment and accountability, funding, and teacher

retention to create the conditions in a state that help ELs thrive.²⁸

- **Building systemic supports, including standards, assessments, accountability systems, and curriculum that integrates academic content and English language development in the classroom.**

Language and academic content learning are most effective when done in tandem. ESSA gives states and districts greater flexibility in how to measure the progress and between English language proficiency and academic achievement.²⁹ Florida's current focus on students attaining English language proficiency as quickly as possible, and its refusal to adopt native language assessments both serve as barriers to be better integrating the language and content achievement in the classroom.

- **Targeting additional funding to ELs.** Research does not support a single, best-funding mechanism to support ELs in states. Research does support that schools and districts do need additional targeted funding to support the needs of ELs.³⁰ Florida does use a weighted funding formula; using an .212 weight on per pupil funding for ELs.³¹ However, research indicates that ELs

may require weights ranging from .50 to 2.0 to receive adequate funding for support.³² Even with a weighted funding formula, Florida's low funding levels prohibit the state from making a real investment in ELs.

- **Facilitating parent and family engagement is important for all students to do well in school.**³³ It is especially important when language and cultural barriers exist that can make it challenging for families to engage with teachers and school leaders. For immigrant parents, research indicates that schools can be overwhelming environments that discourage parent involvement.³⁴ Other research finds that parents "consistently call for opportunities to provide input and to receive more information from the school in a language and format they can understand."³⁵ To better support ELs the state must support and fund the implementation of parent engagement programs that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Currently, Florida's adversity to providing materials in language other than English and their consistently low-funding levels serve as a barrier to this type of investment.

Recommendations

Historically, states and districts have underinvested in schools serving a high number of Latino, EL, and other historically marginalized groups of students. This is evidenced by persistent achievement and equity gaps when it comes to academic performance and access to high-quality educational opportunities. The purpose of ESSA is to ensure equal opportunity for all students and fully prepare them for success in college and career. For this reason, the law maintains many key civil rights protections, such as standards-based accountability and the reporting of data by student subgroups, while simultaneously providing states and districts with a great deal of flexibility and responsibility.

Using ESSA as a tool, Florida policymakers have the opportunity to improve educational equity and fairness for all students in the state by embracing public policies meant to protect Latino, EL, and other historically marginalized groups of students. In particular, state policymakers should:

Strengthen Florida's Accountability System

- Create a single statewide accountability system that meaningfully counts all subgroups of students and results in one summative rating for schools.** The new FPPEI section of a Florida school's report card creates an additional accountability metric that is not aligned to the school's grade. Florida should create one system, compliant with ESSA, that will ensure schools are receiving grades that are reflective of how they are serving all students.
- Include English Language Proficiency as part of the state's A-F grading system.** ESSA requires schools to include a measure for progress toward English Language Proficiency (ELP) in their accountability system. Florida's A-F grading system circumvents this by adding the FPPEI to the report card that accounts for ELP. However, the overall school grade does not include an ELP indicator. By including ELP in the A-F grading system, Florida can ensure that schools are serving their growing EL populations and signal to schools and families the importance of EL performance.
- Increase the weight of the performance of student subgroups in the A-F grading system.** The report card should provide a school with a grade that meaningfully includes subgroups and is connected to identification for additional resources and supports. Currently, only the FPPEI accounts for the reporting of subgroup performance, but the overall school grade does not, which sends conflicting messages to both parents and schools. Other states that have meaningfully included subgroups of students are the District of Columbia and Tennessee. In Tennessee, nearly 40% of a school's grade is based on subgroup performance. Including each subgroup of students in the accountability system will help direct resources and determine strategies to close achievement gaps when schools are struggling with one or more student subgroups.
- Ensure that a school cannot get an A rating if any subgroup of students is underperforming.** Florida's plan allows a school to receive an average or above average grade even if a subgroup of students is underperforming. This does not provide parents with accurate information about how a school is serving students like their own. Additionally, allowing a school to receive a top rating while still failing to adequately serve part of the student population, sends a signal that all students are not valued equally by the state. The performance of subgroups of students should carry enough weight that schools can only receive an A grade if all subgroups of students are meeting the defined targets and goals set by the state.

Improve data transparency for students and families.

- *Provide schools with an A-F grade that reflects the performance of all students and each subgroup of student.* These ratings should communicate in a transparent way about the performance of all groups of students down to the school level. While Florida will be adding subgroup level performance to all report cards, the summative rating still does not take subgroup performance into account. Parents are left with a summative rating that does not align with the data presented in the report card. A school report card is a powerful tool in reporting to parents the expectation of school performance and the signaling of when action must be taken by the state to improve conditions at a failing school. Under the current Florida plan the grade will not provide this vital information, but rather it runs the risk of confusing parents and misrepresenting school performance.
- *Ensure that all data and data reporting tools are readily available for limited English proficient parents in the language they are most comfortable with.* Florida's ESSA plan states that school report cards and other critical data can be found through the Florida Department of Education's EDStats online tool. This tool is only available in English and to users who have access to the appropriate technology and software needed to navigate the tool. This is a barrier for low-income and limited English proficient parents. Florida should provide school report cards and school performance data in multiple languages

and in a variety of formats so that all families can make informed choices about their child's education.*

- *Engage families and collect feedback on what information and format is most usable for students and families.* Stakeholder engagement is an integral part of any state's accountability system. On the reporting and dissemination of vital school performance data, students and families are best equipped to make recommendations on the format and usability of the state's reporting tools. The state should solicit community and family feedback on their data reporting tools and implement appropriate recommendations that will improve data transparency for stakeholders.

Adopt policies that advance the English proficiency and academic performance of ELs.

- *Create and adopt native language assessments, when appropriate.* Native language assessments can be a powerful tool in accurately assessing a student's content knowledge. While native language assessments may not be appropriate for all ELs, they are an accurate and valid measure of progress for students receiving instruction in a language other than English and for students who are new arrivals and have previously received a formal education in their native language. Florida should adopt native language assessments to improve the accountability system and to signal to ELs and dual language learners that there is value in bilingualism.†

* The US Census Bureau, for example, provides information on how certain populations can access assistance in other languages. The State of Florida can do the same by providing a hotline or toll-free number and redirect to a call center or place to get information/assistance in language.

† A previous UnidosUS review of states' ESSA plans shows that 28 states have developed some assessments in another language other than English. *How Have States Set Goals For English Learners in ESSA Plans? An analysis of states' academic and English language proficiency goals*, Achieve and UnidosUS, http://www.achieve.org/files/Achieve_UnidosUS_ESSA%20EL%20Goals_1.pdf (accessed October 2018).

- *Increase and target funding to be invested in research-based practices to better support ELs.* Currently, Florida uses a weighted funding formula model to provide an additional weight for EL students to its per pupil allocation. However, Florida's overall per pupil funding is insufficient to serve the needs of all students. Florida should increase overall spending in education, use the state's accountability system to identify schools in need of additional resources for ELs, and target funds to those districts and schools to be used on research-based practices in attaining English language proficiency and content mastery. The state should require transparent reporting on the use of targeted funds to ensure that high-quality investments are being made in the state's nearly 300,000 ELs.
- *Expand high-quality dual language and other bilingual education programs to develop ELs' content knowledge, English proficiency and home language simultaneously.* In a growing global economy, bilingualism is more valuable than ever. Beyond being an asset on the job market, bilingual education programs promote bilingualism, biliteracy, academic content knowledge, and cross-cultural competency in students. Rather than solely focusing on a student's English language proficiency, Florida should invest in more dual language and bilingual education programs that will better prepare their students to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Conclusion

Florida's success relies on the success of its Latino and EL students. With Latino students representing 33% of the student population, they are the future workers, teachers, policymakers, and business leaders of Florida, and the nation. It is only fair to create an accountability system that accurately reflects how schools are serving all students, provides high-quality transparent data to families, and spurs action to support low-performing schools.

Florida's ESSA plan is not only a statement of their values and their commitment to all students, it is a powerful mechanism to ensure educational equity throughout the Sunshine state. In Florida, it is clear that there is still more work to be done.

As Latino students and ELs continue through the public education system and chart their path to college and career, Florida policymakers must take the lead in advancing policies and practices that support the achievement of all students.

- Florida must create a single state wide accountability system that complies with federal law and results in a summative rating that includes the performance of all students and the performance of each subgroup of students. The state's A-F grading system should continue to focus on closing persistent achievement gaps across the state and providing supports to schools even when only one subgroup of students is underperforming.
- The state and districts should improve data quality and transparency for students, families, and other stakeholders by providing reports in languages other than English and in a variety of formats that are easily accessible for families who may not have access to the technology and connectivity currently needed to access Florida's school-level data. Florida should engage parents and families to glean input on how to most effectively communicate the data on school performance to the public.
- Fully support and meaningfully include ELs in the state of Florida by including an English Language Proficiency indicator in the calculation of a school's grade, developing native language assessments for students when appropriate, investing in research-based practices that support ELs, and expanding dual language and bilingual education opportunities throughout the state.

APPENDIX A: ENROLLMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR SY 2017-2018*

Total Enrollment PK-12: 2,833,115

Latino Students: 937,761

ELs: 288,977

Florida Standard Assessments: ELA SY 2017-2018

3rd Grade

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 and Above	53.7%	69%	40%	79.3%

8th Grade

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 and Above	53.5%	69.5%	38.8%	80.8%

10th Grade

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 or Above	48.7%	65.1%	34.6%	74.7%

Florida Standard Assessments: Mathematics SY 2017-2018

3rd Grade

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 or Above	59.4%	72.6%	46%	86.3%

8th Grade

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 or Above	41.5%	58.3%	29.2%	70.1%

10th Grade (FSA Algebra EOC) SY 2017-2018

	Latino	White	Black	Asian
% of students Level 3 or Above	21.2%	35.1%	17%	50.2%

* Calculations based of data provided by Florida Department of Education at <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASWebReportStudio/gotoReportSection.do?sectionNumber=1> (Accessed 10/28/2019).

APPENDIX A: ENROLLMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR SY 2017-2018*

Total Enrollment PK-12: 2,833,115

Latino Students: 937,761

ELs: 288,977

Florida Standard Assessments: ELA and Mathematics SY 2017-2018

	ELA	Math
ELs	16.7%	32%
Non ELs	58.1%	59.7%

High School Graduation Rate for SY 2016-2017†

Latino	White	Black	Asian	English Learners
81.3%	86.2%	74.8%	93.2%	67.3%

2017 NAEP Results: Grade 4 Reading³⁶ & Mathematics³⁷

	Math: Percentage at or Above Proficient	Reading: Percentage at or Above Proficient
Latino	40	36
White	61	53
Black	27	23
Asian	73	69

2017 NAEP Results: Grade 8 Reading³⁸ & Mathematics³⁹

	Math: Percentage at or Above Proficient	Reading: Percentage at or Above Proficient
Latino	23	31
White	40	44
Black	12	20
Asian	56	67

* Calculations based of data provided by Florida Department of Education, <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASWebReportStudio/gotoReportSection.do?sectionNumber=1> (accessed October 2018).

† All data points above from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASPortal/main.do>.



UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger.

For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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UnidosUS's Policy and Advocacy component recognizes the need for a robust approach to education advocacy on behalf of the Latino community. Our federal policy work emphasizes the major civil rights laws governing and funding education, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), formerly known as No Child Left Behind, and the Higher Education Act (HEA). We align our federal work with state-level advocacy and provide support and expertise to state and local leaders in implementing education policy crafted through an equity lens.

PROGRESS REPORT

Defending Equal Access to
Quality Education

Progress Report brings a Latino focus to state and national education issues. You can find information about UnidosUS's advocacy and policy work, the activities of UnidosUS Affiliates, and read stories and perspectives from Latino educators from around the country.

Find out more at progressreport.co.

Endnotes

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

