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Policy Brief:
Data Equity for Student Success

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Who We Are

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- Sophia is a senior at Florida International University. Originally from Miami, Florida, Sophia is majoring in international relations with a minor in political science, a choice which was emboldened by her experiences as a first-generation, low-income student. She is a past president of the Student Ambassadors Organization, an alumna of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute Global Leaders Fellowship, and the founder of Dale Start Smart, a project she created to help guide low-income minority students in the college application process. Sophia is currently a UnidosUS *Líderes Avanzando Fellow.*

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- Allen is a sophomore at the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from Los Angeles, California, Allen is pursuing a simultaneous degree in environmental economics & policy and data science with a domain emphasis on social welfare, health, & poverty. On campus, Allen participates in the eco & Latinx communities through his involvement with the Student Environmental Resource Center (SERC), Bay-Area Environmentally Aware Consulting Network (BEACN), and the Latinx Business Student Association (LBSA) in hopes of uplifting communities of color and lower socioeconomic status by addressing environmental, educational, and other harms that impede growth. Allen is currently a UnidosUS *Líderes Avanzando Fellow.*

Summary

Under federal law, the measurement of a schools' success is based on academic indicators plus one additional indicator. As Congress considers reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), schools should measure the success of their students by adding four specific indicators that measure student progress in the multiple ways that schools support students. In addition, the ESEA should hold schools accountable for the progress of students in more subgroups and through a more uniform ranking system.

The Need

The current education ranking system does not accurately evaluate a school's progress and/or success. To accurately measure a school's success, we need to view more specific indicators along with the standardized assessment. Within our state report cards, there is a need to add four additional indicators that measure external factors that directly influence a student's and a school's success.

> A 2021 study done by PEW Research Center found that nearly **40% of Latinxs did not have broadband internet** access at home, and 32% of Latinx K-12 students did not have a computer during the pandemic.

This lack of access to technology is a factor that is not currently measured in state education data collection. Due to parent and student advocacy, more data has become apparent concerning the significance of external factors that affect student success within the school, which includes technology access along with access to mental health services and the issues of chronic absenteeism and food security.

Along with adding specific indicators that aim to provide a holistic view of the student and the school, there need to be more subgroups when the information is collected so that a school's students can accurately represent themselves on paper. Across all 50 states, subgroups are measured differently, which results in a gap in the information collected about the students and the schools measured. We must strengthen mandatory subgroup reporting that is currently left of the system to view to accurately interpret the assessment and information collected by the schools. In mandating specific subgroups, such as whether or not a student identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Filipino, Hispanic or Latinx, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, white, two or more races, foster care, and/or homeless, governments on the federal, state, and local levels will be able to more accurately review data and provide the specific funding and guidance to help the evolution of the schools and their students.

A vast amount of information has been collected with no uniformity among states. Setting specific criteria requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for all States could result in a more accurate reading of student success. In Florida's state report, aside from test scores, they also measure students' attendance, English language proficiency, and per pupil expenditure, and they also have a quality educator index to measure the quality and level of education of the teachers aside from the standard graduation and post-secondary, discipline, population, and enrollment categories. Although Florida scores highly in their 4th-grade education assessments, the current data categories are unable to explain why the state increasingly declines in their other tests in both 8th and 12th grades. In comparison, California uses a dashboard rating system that includes similar academic indicators for primary and secondary education but also includes non-academic indicators for "Chronic Absenteeism" and "Suspension Rate" to measure academic engagement.

The California accountability system illuminates a serious issue as there was a clear difference in performance levels as shown by the rate indicators for "English Language Arts" and "Mathematics," where nine sub-groups performed either "very low" or "low" compared to four subgroups who performed "medium," "high," or "very high." The nine groups consisted of disadvantaged and underrepresented minorities demonstrating that there are other facets that need to be discussed in order to improve the development of these subgroups.

Background

In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, reauthorizing the ESEA. Through ESSA, states were mandated to conduct academic information to receive a better idea of the progress and timeline of their students. The legislation required no specific criteria for all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, which resulted in a variety of data collected on various categories such as graduation rate, enrollment rate, student access to teachers, school improvement funds, and other topics. The objective of collecting this information is to create transparency towards the parents, the states, and Congress on how students are progressing in their education.

Our Ask

Amend the ESSA accountability provisions to include four additional indicators, a more robust subgroup accountability system, and uniformity in ranking school progress:

- **Additional required Student Quality and Success Indicators should include:** Access to technology; access to mental health services; chronic absenteeism; and food security.

- **Additional Subgroups should be included by *all states*:** American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Filipino; Hispanic or Latinx; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; White; Two or more races; foster care, homeless.

- **Uniform Ranking System:** Create a required uniform ranking system.

Impact

A holistic understanding of student experiences is important to reduce the current educational gap and academic outcomes for not only Latinx students but for all students, regardless of race and income level. Providing more concrete and select data alongside randomized assessment results will create a holistic perspective of the progression of American students' education. It allows students to be measured on more than their test grades and to demonstrate their efforts through major milestones in their academic progress.

A holistic view of student success will allow the federal government, through the nation's and state's report cards, to understand student progress differently, allowing for a new understanding of current educational gaps and of educational successes and the failures among grades K-12. This change is an important step in providing an accurate understanding reading of the current state of education allowing for the creation of sound policy.

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