

## Policy Extract

### [Framework for Action: Addressing Nutrition and Physical Activity through ESSA Implementation](#)

This resource is a supplement to “[State ESSA Plans to Support Student Health and Wellness: A Framework for Action.](#)” This supplement provides more detailed recommendations for supporting nutrition and physical activity during the school day through ESSA implementation.

#### **How can nutrition and physical activity be integrated into accountability systems and report cards?**

ESSA gives states the responsibility of choosing at least one indicator to measure school quality or student success that is reliable, valid and allows for disaggregation of data at the sub-group level. In addition, ESSA presents an opportunity to include health and wellness measures in school report cards. Including measures of nutrition and physical activity in state accountability systems and report cards represents an important strategy for supporting student learning as these factors have a direct impact on student achievement.

Additionally, by June 30, 2017, school districts must publicly name a staff member who will be responsible for monitoring their local wellness policy, and they must conduct and publicly report on a triennial assessment.

Advocates should begin by developing a strong understanding of their state’s laws, policies and practices that address nutrition and physical activity to identify the available leverage points and consider ways to set fair standards.

#### **Collecting school data on nutrition, physical activity and student physical fitness levels**

Data collected with these tools are ideal for use as part of a state’s accountability system and/or on a state’s report card. These data can also support needs assessments for schools in need of improvement.

#### **Accountability system and report card measures**

When considering which measures to include in accountability systems and report cards, it is important to understand how the two differ. State accountability systems serve as a concrete way to ensure that schools are meeting state benchmarks for the educational attainment of their students. In contrast, state and local report cards are more of a community accountability system that can provide advocates with the information they need to push for changes.

#### **How can nutrition and physical activity be supported through needs assessments?**

Needs assessments can provide advocates with an opportunity to ensure that schools and districts are considering the impact of health and wellness on student achievement. Getting involved in the development and implementation of a needs assessment can ensure that

factors such as school climate, nutrition education programs, or opportunities for physical activity are examined as possible ways to improve academic achievement. This strategy can also be a way to increase the number of schools that are implementing nutrition and physical activity practices, which can make it more feasible to include these on state and local report cards and ultimately on accountability systems.

In addition, including health and wellness in needs assessments represents an important strategy to ensure school districts and schools are able to implement data-informed programming to improve the measures included in state accountability systems and report cards.

### **How and nutrition and physical activity be supported through professional development?**

Professional development programs provide an excellent opportunity to ensure that teachers and staff understand how to integrate health and wellness into their interactions with students, but such programs vary widely from state to state in the way they address student health issues.

### **How can nutrition and physical activity be part of a well-rounded education?**

ESSA requires schools to provide all students with a well-rounded education.

The definition of a well-rounded education is broadly defined to include health, physical education and any other subject the state or school district determines will provide an enriching academic experience. It also allows them to use this funding specifically to provide a well-rounded education

### **What type of partners can support the state of school districts?**

ESSA requires state departments of education to elicit meaningful stakeholder engagement, which creates opportunities to provide input into the different elements of the state plan

### **Conclusion**

Ensuring students have access to healthy school meals, nutrition education and physical education is a key strategy for supporting their academic success and health. Including measures related to nutrition and physical activity in state accountability systems and report cards and supporting efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity through needs assessments and professional development serve as critical strategies for ensuring students are healthy and ready to learn