

TENNESSEE

Report Card

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

gave all states an opportunity to be creative, ambitious and inclusive with their new education plans to best meet the needs of students with disabilities and close achievement gaps for all students. But did Tennessee take full advantage of this opportunity?

TENNESSEE RATINGS:

Accountability Systems: Does Tennessee's accountability system under ESSA include students with disabilities?

Support for School Improvement: Will Tennessee help struggling schools by providing supports that work for students with disabilities?

Inclusive Planning: Did Tennessee align its ESSA plan with special education initiatives?

KEY:

- **Green** = Meaningful support
- **Yellow** = Partial support
- **Red** = Not supportive

HIGHLIGHTS OF TENNESSEE'S PLAN:

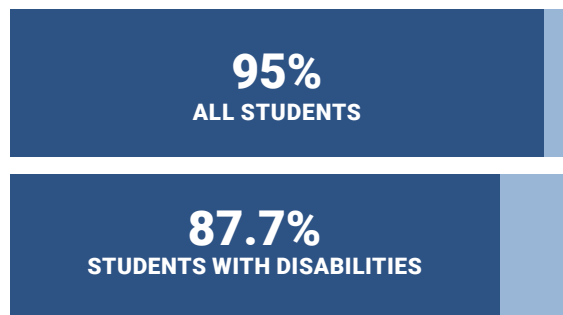
- Includes a detailed discussion of Tennessee's State Systemic Improvement Plan under IDEA, demonstrating how the state's IDEA and ESSA plans are aligned.
- Includes a description of how the state will address the needs of English learners who have disabilities.

HOW CAN TENNESSEE IMPROVE IT'S ESSA PLAN?

- Tennessee uses a super subgroup for all black, Hispanic and Native American students, which makes it impossible for schools and parents to access subgroup-specific data. Tennessee should disaggregate data for all subgroups, which would allow schools to better target improvement strategies, and parents to make informed choices about their child's education.

LONG-TERM GOALS FOR TENNESSEE

Graduation Rate Goals for 2022



States set long-term goals for each group of students under ESSA. Setting ambitious goals for all students is essential to making sure all students can succeed.

In addition to setting lower graduation rate goals for students with disabilities New York also set lower achievement goals.

SCHOOL RATINGS

Under ESSA, most states do not include the performance of students with disabilities in their school performance ratings. This means a school could earn a high score, even if students with disabilities and other subgroups are doing very poorly.

- ✓ Tennessee includes subgroup performance in its rating system.





Tennessee Report Card

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE SURE YOUR DISTRICT HAS AN EQUITABLE PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES UNDER ESSA?

ADVOCATE FOR STRENGTHS-BASED IEPs

- A strengths-based IEP uses students' abilities to improve weaknesses.
- IEP goals are built around the students' skills.
- Helping students identify and leverage their strengths, interests and preferences can lead to more self-awareness and self-advocacy.

ASK YOUR DISTRICT TO...

1. Use strengths-finders to identify abilities, interests and preferences
2. Prepare students to participate in IEP meetings and advocate for their needs
3. Start every IEP meeting with a discussion about strengths
4. Update IEP forms to include space to talk about strengths
5. Weave strengths into IEP goals as a way to set high expectations

Get started by visiting u.org/schoolwide and downloading our advocacy tools

Strengths-Based IEPs: Fact Sheet

A strengths-based IEP is not...

- A superficial look at strengths. Abilities are thoughtfully woven into IEP goals.
- An adults-only process. Students are encouraged to help identify strengths and actively participate in IEP meetings.
- Just about strengths and weaknesses. It also focuses on interests and preferences.

How IEP teams talk about—and use—strengths

For example, for students who struggle in math, what do they do well in that subject? Are they good at using a calculator? Do they prefer to work independently or in groups? Strengths-based IEPs aim to start with a strength for each of the skill sets described in the student's present level of performance.

How IEP teams can help schools work on...

- Helping weave strengths into IEP goals as a way to set high expectations
- Expanding IEP templates to focus on strengths, interests and preferences

Parent Toolkit: How to Ask for Schoolwide Teacher Training to Help Kids With Learning & Attention Issues

Easy-to-use resources to help you make the case for why your child's school needs more teacher training in four key areas—strengths-based IEPs, multi-tier system of supports, personalized learning and Universal Design for Learning—each of which can help kids with learning and attention issues thrive.

Design for Learning (UDL):

UDL is not...

- A curriculum or technology platform.
- One method of teaching all students. A variety of methods are used to give all students an equal opportunity to succeed.
- An "us" vs. "them" resource. UDL benefits all kids, not just those who struggle.

UDL helps optimize lesson plans for all learners

Information in more than one format—like audio, video and hands-on access material in ways best suited to their learning strengths.

Offer flexibility in how kids interact with the material and show what's possible to take a test, give an oral report or do a group project.

Different ways to motivate students and sustain their interest, like giving them assignments that feel relevant to their lives.

UDL helps schools work on...

- Using technology tools and other materials that align UDL principles
- Making assessments accessible to all and providing timely interventions
- Maintaining high expectations for kids with IEPs and English language learners

UDL

Using new skills and collaborating. Here are some ways Newberry School started transitioning to UDL in 2009:

- Made time for teachers to work together to identify which skills they want to target
- Piloted different presentation formats and different options to demonstrate learning
- Enabled teachers to meet regularly to help evaluate and refine these approaches

Understood National Center for Learning Disabilities u.org/schoolwide

For more information, go to u.org/hs-ssg. For tools to help advocate for schoolwide teacher training in this and other topics, go to u.org/schoolwide. Published in February 2018. All rights reserved.

For more information, go to u.org/udl. And to learn how to advocate for schoolwide teacher training on this topic and others, go to u.org/schoolwide. Published in February 2018. All rights reserved.

