



State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Guidance and Examples for States

February 2015

Introduction

To ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) announced in July 2014 that it would require all State education agencies (SEAs) to develop in consultation with key stakeholders State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (equity plans).¹ These plans must outline steps SEAs will take to provide all students with equitable access to excellent educators.

The Department has required that State equity plans must:

1. Describe and provide documentation of the steps the SEA took to consult with stakeholders regarding the plan;
2. Identify equity gaps;
3. Explain the likely cause of equity gaps;
4. Set forth strategies to eliminate equity gaps;

¹Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, requires a SEAs that receive a Title I, Part A grant to submit to the Secretary a plan, developed by the SEA, in consultation with local educational agencies (LEAs), teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff and parents (ESEA Section 1111(a)(1)). In meeting that requirement, the SEA must describe the steps that it will take "to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the [SEA] will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the [SEA] with respect to such steps" (ESEA Section 1111(b)(8)(C)). <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html>

5. Describe measures to use to evaluate progress toward eliminating equity gaps; and
6. Describe how the SEA will publicly report on its progress.²

The Department issued a guidance document to help States understand the requirements of each component.³ The document answers frequently asked questions about equity plan development and each required component.

In fall 2014, with the support of the Department's Reform Support Network (RSN), a small group of States and districts developed early draft equity plans. The goal of this cohort's early work was to inform the subsequent development of equity plans by all 50 States throughout the winter and spring of 2015. The pilot States are geographically and demographically diverse; some were recipients of Race to the Top grants and others were not. The pilot States received support from the RSN and experts, including the Center on Great Teacher Leaders (GTL) at the American Institutes for Research, and provided feedback on early tools and

²U.S. Department of Education, "State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): pp. 7–8. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/eafaq2014.doc>

³U.S. Department of Education, "State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014). <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/eafaq2014.doc>

The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

resources, which will be made available to all States through the Department's **Equitable Access Support Network** (EASN) this spring.⁴

This document uses draft equity plans developed by three of the pilot States to demonstrate several approaches to the development of State equity plans. It summarizes how the SEAs addressed each component of the plan and their insights into plan development. The paper concludes with lessons learned throughout the early cohort's work and recommendations that States might follow to develop their own equity plans. These recommendations are based on the experiences of the pilot States.

Please note that these excerpts are from *draft* plans that pilot States will continue to revise until the final plans are due in June 2015.

Component #1: Consultation and Input

Plan Requirements

Describe and provide documentation of the steps the SEA took to consult with LEAs, teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff and parents regarding the State plan.⁵

State Example: Missouri

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) hosts standing meetings with representatives of 10 education associations from across the State to share updates and solicit feedback on major areas of work. Prior to submitting their draft equity plan to the Department, staff from DESE met twice with these groups to solicit their feedback. The objective of the first meeting was to introduce these stakeholders to the equity plan process and timeline, and to provide them with an initial analysis of educator equity data to help inform future discussions about potential root causes and strategies. The second

meeting was facilitated by the RSN and **GTL**.⁶ During the second meeting, stakeholders provided feedback on the data, identified root causes of equity gaps and identified additional stakeholders and ways to engage them.

In addition to engaging education associations, DESE staff presented a summary of the equity plan to the State Board of Education. Their presentation compared their current draft with the 2006 State equity plan, introduced the initial analysis of data, the root causes of equity gaps and possible strategies to address them. DESE also convened its 11 area supervisors to identify additional possible root causes and strategies to address equity gaps in their regions. DESE plans to include their findings in the final equity plan.

Before DESE submits its final equity plan, staff plan to conduct focus groups with practitioners in different regions of the State. Area supervisors will participate, and DESE staff will report on the feedback they receive to key stakeholders (for example, education associations, the State Board of Education) and refine the equity plan as needed.

Insights from Missouri

Stakeholder engagement was at the center of Missouri's equity planning process from the start. "If anyone has their fingerprints on the process, we want their perspective," said Paul Katnik of DESE. State leaders regularly meet with a cross-section of key stakeholders to discuss the department's plans and priorities. The group includes local and State union representatives as well as representatives from the State Board of Education and other local groups, such as parent-teacher associations, school administrator associations and leaders from DESE. Katnik taps into these recurring meetings to introduce stakeholders to the equity planning process, but he also does a significant amount of personal outreach to stakeholders to communicate the importance of their feedback to the process.

For DESE leaders, strong relationships with the various stakeholder groups have made the stakeholder engagement process easier. "We genuinely work with

⁴ <http://www.gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/equitable-access-tool-kit/moving-toward-equity>

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, "State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): p. 7. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/ea-faq2014.doc>

⁶ <http://www.gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/equitable-access-tool-kit/moving-toward-equity>

some very great people and we very much value what they think and what their opinions are. When they make suggestions, we follow up and, to the extent we can, we incorporate their ideas,” Katnik said. As a result of the stakeholder engagement process, DESE has gained valuable insight into the need to incorporate teacher voices and explore working conditions as a possible root cause of equity gaps. To do so, DESE staff will engage with teachers in areas where there are significant disparities in access to excellent teachers. “There are actual human beings who live the inequity we’re describing,” Katnik said. “It’s important for us to get out and understand what it looks like in their day-to-day world.”

Component #2: Identification of Equity Gaps

Plan Requirements

Identify equity gaps.

- Define key terms:
 - Inexperienced teacher;
 - Unqualified teacher;
 - Out-of-field teacher;
 - Poor student;
 - Minority student; and
 - Any other key terms used by the SEA, such as “effective” or “highly effective.”
- Using the most recent available data for all public elementary and secondary schools in the State (i.e., both Title I and non-Title I schools), calculate equity gaps between the rates at which:
 - poor children are taught by “inexperienced,” “unqualified,” or “out-of-field” teachers compared to the rates at which other children are taught by these teachers; and
 - minority children are taught by “inexperienced,” “unqualified,” or “out-of-field” teachers compared to the rates at which other children are taught by these teachers.
- Describe how the SEA identified the equity gaps, including the source(s) of the data used for the comparison.⁷

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, “State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): p. 7. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/ea-faq2014.doc>

State Examples:

To demonstrate that States can define terms and examine equity gaps in different ways, this paper provides two State examples for this component: New York and Tennessee.

New York

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that States define three groups of teachers (“inexperienced,” “unqualified,” and “out-of-field”) and analyze whether certain students are more exposed than others to these teachers. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) began this section of its plan by defining those terms in the following ways:

- “Inexperienced” teachers are in their first year of practice.
- “Out-of-field” and “unqualified” teachers are not “highly qualified.”
- A teacher who is “highly qualified” meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - He or she is fully certified and licensed by NYSED.
 - He or she holds at least a bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution.
 - He or she demonstrates competence in the core academic subject areas he or she teaches.

After developing these definitions, NYSED compared student access to teachers in their first year of teaching and found that more first-year teachers are placed in higher-poverty schools than lower-poverty schools. NYSED determined that this inequity is more pronounced than the national average. It found the following gaps in student placement with first-year teachers, by school poverty and minority status:

- In 2011–2012, students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of students in poverty were 2.8 times more likely to be placed with first-year teachers than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of students in poverty.

- Students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of minority students were 3.8 times more likely to be placed with first-year teachers than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of minority students.

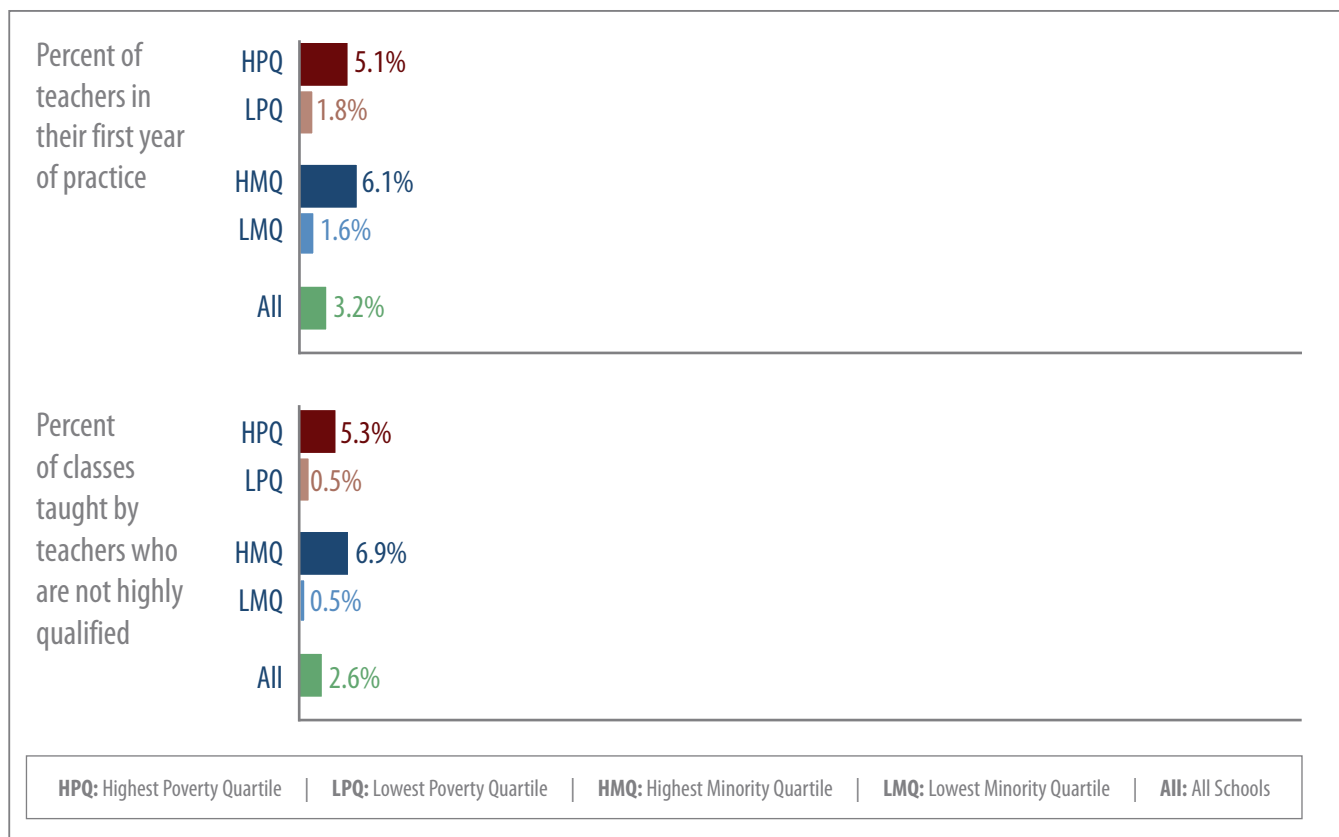
New York compared student access to teachers who are not highly qualified in the highest- and lowest-poverty schools, as well as the highest- and lowest-minority schools, and found that the gaps were more pronounced than the national average. NYSED found the following gaps in student placement with teachers who are not highly qualified, by school poverty and minority status:

- In 2011–2012, students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of students in poverty were 10.6 times more likely to be placed with teachers who are not highly qualified than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of students in poverty.
- Students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of minority students were 13.8 times more likely to be placed with teachers who are

not highly qualified than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of minority students.

The following graphs summarize the percent of first-year teachers and teachers who are not highly qualified in the highest and lowest minority quartiles and highest and lowest poverty quartiles.

In the highest-poverty schools, 5.1 percent of teachers are first-year teachers, whereas only 1.8 percent of teachers in the lowest-poverty schools are first-year teachers. An even larger gap exists between the highest-minority (6.1 percent) and lowest-minority (1.6 percent) schools. The data on teachers who are not highly qualified reveals even greater gaps. In the highest-poverty schools, 5.3 percent of classes are taught by teachers who are not highly qualified, versus only half a percent of classes in the lowest-poverty schools. Almost 7 percent of classes in the highest-minority schools are taught by teachers who are not highly qualified, while only half a percent of classes in the lowest-minority schools are taught by teachers who are not highly qualified.



Insights from New York

NYSED began its data analysis with metrics that are historically associated with equitable access, including highly qualified status and years of experience. It later added teacher effectiveness, retention and turnover. It derived definitions for these metrics from its Race to the Top application and the NYSED [Public Data Access Site](#).⁸ NYSED shared these definitions, along with business rules for and the results of the data analysis, with New York's Technical Advisory Committee. Committee members provided feedback on the definitions and metrics, and NYSED incorporated this feedback into the draft equity plan. NYSED cut a variety of metrics in multiple ways to test various combinations and relationships. It reached out to other States to learn how they were approaching their equity analysis and to get feedback on its metrics. NYSED also shared initial metrics with experts in the field who offered their perspective. It again presented the data and metrics to New York's Technical Advisory Committee to solicit additional feedback before finalizing the analysis.

NYSED relied heavily on business rules and definitions that had already been developed for the purpose of NYSED's Public Data Access initiative. To refine these rules and definitions, it sought the input of various partners, experts and stakeholders. "We revised and refined our metrics and analyses multiple times," said one NYSED official. "This enabled us to present a robust and accurate illustration of equity in New York's draft plan."

New York encourages other States to identify the data that they believe to be "the most rigorous and meaningful to illustrate and continuously monitor equity in the State." It also recommends collaborating with peer States, experts and stakeholders throughout the process to get their insight. Finally, the State found

⁸<http://data.nysed.gov/>

it helpful to focus on data that would inform the root-cause analysis and development of strategies to address inequitable access.

Tennessee

In addition to defining and analyzing student access to the specific groups of teachers required by ESEA (inexperienced, unqualified, out-of-field), States may choose to analyze student access to other types of teachers, such as those who are highly effective. Tennessee took this approach.

Tennessee began its data analysis by identifying the metric it would use to define effective teaching. It used its teacher evaluation system's value-added measure (VAM), which estimates a teacher's impact on students' academic progress. The system uses VAM to categorize teachers on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highest rating. Tennessee defined "highly effective" teachers as those who earned a 4 or 5 on VAM, as these teachers tend to have a greater impact on growth than expected.

Tennessee first evaluated the number of highly effective teachers in its schools by subject area and district. After identifying where highly qualified teachers are located by district and subject area, Tennessee then sought to determine whether certain subgroups of students have less access to highly effective teachers. First, Tennessee defined subgroups for poor and minority students, which included low-income students (eligible for free and reduced price lunch), minority students (black, Hispanic and Native American, as defined by the State's accountability system), and based on student performance, defining low-performing (student performance level of "below basic") and high-performing (student performance level of "advanced"). Tennessee then examined statewide equity gaps between these subgroups and comparison groups (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Mathematics Equity Gaps

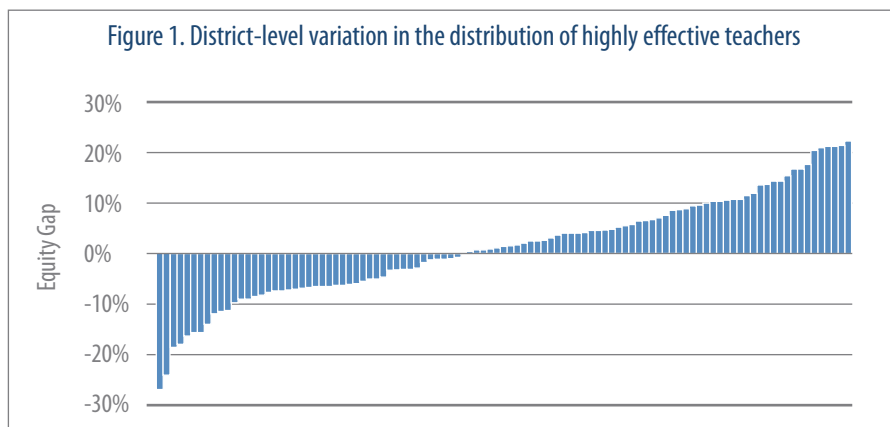
Comparison group	Subgroup	2014			2015		
		Percent of comparison group with access to a highly effective teacher	Percent of subgroup with access to a highly effective teacher	Size of equity gap	Percent of comparison group with access to a highly effective teacher	Percent of subgroup with access to a highly effective teacher	Size of equity gap
Not low-income	Low-income	60.8%	57.3%	3.5%	73.2%	69.3%	3.9%
Not minority	Minority	59.4%	57.5%	1.9%	72%	68.5%	3.5%
Below basic	Advanced	59.8%	53.3%	6.5%	74.5%	67.9%	6.6%
Advanced, not low-income	Advanced, low-income	61.1%	57.2%	3.9%	76.4%	70.6%	5.8%

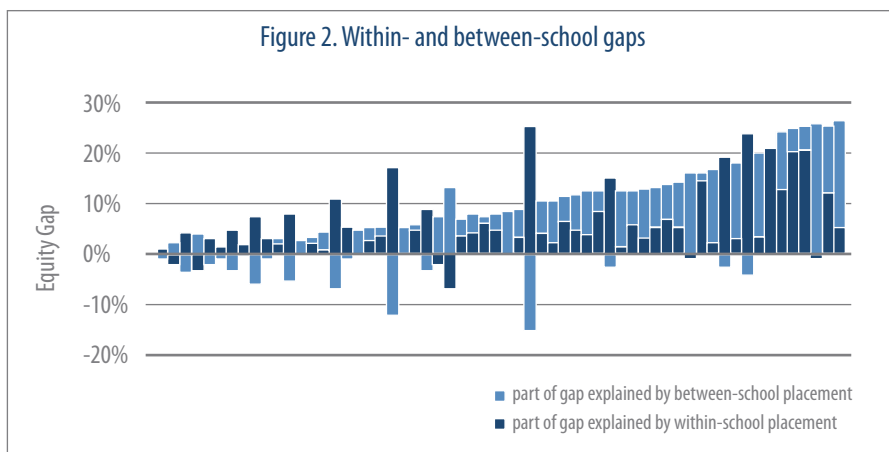
Table 2: Reading/Language Arts Equity Gaps

Comparison group	Subgroup	2014			2015		
		Percent of comparison group with access to a highly effective teacher	Percent of subgroup with access to a highly effective teacher	Size of equity gap	Percent of comparison group with access to a highly effective teacher	Percent of subgroup with access to a highly effective teacher	Size of equity gap
Not low-income	Low-income	30.3%	24%	6.3%	47%	41.6%	5.4%
Not minority	Minority	28.5%	23.0%	5.5%	43.9%	44.3%	-0.4%
Below basic	Advanced	22.6%	21.1%	1.5%	50.6%	41.8%	8.8%
Advanced, not low-income	Advanced, low-income	24.2%	18.4%	5.8%	52.7%	44.8%	7.9%

After conducting a statewide analysis of equity gaps, Tennessee examined the equity gap district by district. It found that more than half of its districts had equity gaps between low-performing and high-performing students that were greater than zero (see Figure 1). Tennessee also analyzed whether these gaps were a

result of between-school gaps or within-school gaps. Between-school equity gaps and within-school equity gaps require a different set of solutions, which is why Tennessee chose to analyze both. Analysts found that there were significant equity gaps both between and within schools.





Finally, Tennessee examined equity gaps between low-income students and other students and, controlling for achievement, found that the majority of gaps between low-income students and their higher-income peers are explained by between-school differences (see Figure 2).

Insights from Tennessee

For the past decade, equity has been a priority of the commissioners and State leaders in Tennessee and has become a key reform strategy for the State. As a demonstration of its commitment to equity, it has tasked four data analysts from the SEA to analyze the State's equitable access data to show where inequitable access exists. Careful study of the State's educator equity data was integral to its 2006 equity plan and a version updated in 2010.

Tennessee hopes to extend its efforts to increase access to effective teachers for poor and minority students and for students defined as performing below basic levels, regardless of race or free or reduced lunch status. This is because there is very little differentiation in the numbers of poor and minority students across schools or classrooms. These schools require the State to differentiate by performance level and not race and income level. "We know that our schools tend to be homogenous in terms of racial and economic makeup, so if we focused solely on minority or low-income students rather than on low-achieving students of any race or income level, we would limit our ability to detect inequities between students within a single school," the Tennessee official said.

Tennessee's evaluation system has produced several years of teacher effectiveness data. In addition, the State has made a concerted investment over a number of years to collect and analyze data, primarily from LEAs, which yielded information that the State believes will help it do a better job of closing gaps. Analysts were also able to help the SEA identify data it wants but currently lacks, and have begun to create systems to gather this data in the future. For example, the State has not historically collected data on teacher attrition. It has now begun to track when a teacher moves between schools or districts, or is no longer teaching in Tennessee. Knowing the movement patterns of effective teachers will inform future analysis of equity gaps.

The team chose to use VAM to define teacher effectiveness because it is objective, consistent and directly related to student outcomes. "Previously, we conducted an analysis of some of the national research around the impact that access to a highly effective teacher has on student achievement," said one Tennessee official. "Our State-level analysis found a similar effect and that became the basis for our focus and resulting data metrics on access to highly effective educators." Tennessee is considering whether to conduct a separate analysis on equitable access to high school teachers, whose effectiveness is not measured using VAM. If the State conducts the analysis, it will be included in the final version of their equity plan.

Tennessee plans to disaggregate equity data by region to identify where equity gaps are greatest. It will conduct a similar analysis at more local levels, an

approach outlined in the strategies section of this document. The State plans to differentiate support for districts to implement targeted strategies most likely to address equity challenges.

Component #3: Explanation of Equity Gaps (Root-Cause Analysis)

Plan Requirements

Explain the likely cause(s) of the identified equity gaps. (For example, an SEA might conduct a root-cause analysis.)⁹

State Example: New York

NYSED examined student achievement results, teacher and leader effectiveness ratings, equity metrics, and associated policies and regulations to identify a number of possible root causes of the State's equity gaps. The team grouped these root causes into five common talent management issues that pose potential barriers to equitable access:

- **Preparation:** NYSED cites national research that indicates educator preparation programs (EPPs) are not giving teacher candidates the skills they need to be effective. For example, relatively few EPPs in the United States are sufficiently preparing candidates to teach the new Common Core State Standards.¹⁰ Only 10 percent of programs ensure that student teachers are placed with effective educators for their field experience.¹¹ Only 25 percent of programs, at most, in the United States routinely admit students from the top half of their graduating college class, a low bar compared to

⁹U.S. Department of Education, "State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): p. 8. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/ea-faq2014.doc>

¹⁰Julie Greenberg, Arthur McKee and Kate Walsh, "Teacher Prep Review: A Review of the Nation's Teacher Preparation Programs" (Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/Teacher_Prep_Review_2013_Report

¹¹Ibid.

countries that outperform the United States on international standardized tests; those countries admit students from only the top third of their respective classes.¹²

- **Recruitment:** State-level research has shown that 85 percent of New York State's new teachers take their initial assignments within 40 miles of their hometown, creating local teacher labor markets that may make it difficult to attract top talent from outside the district or region.¹³ New York also hypothesizes that compensation plays a role in attracting top talent, and cites national research indicating that lock-step pay structures discourage highly effective teachers from teaching where they are needed most.¹⁴ New York, which has the most segregated schools in the country, according to research cited in its equity plan, has difficulty attracting teachers to schools with high percentages of low-income and minority students.¹⁵ Finally, certain subjects face shortages of qualified EPP graduates, giving districts little choice of teacher candidates to hire.¹⁶

¹²Amanda Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

¹³Don Boyd, Hamp Lankford, Susanna Loeb and Jim Wyckoff, "Understanding Teacher Labor Markets: Implications for Equity" (Albany, NY: University at Albany, 2002). <http://www.albany.edu/edfin/UnderstdngTeachLabMkts.BLLW.6.03.pdf>

¹⁴TNTP, "Shortchanged: The Hidden Costs of Lockstep Teacher Pay" (Brooklyn, NY: TNTP, 2014). http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Shortchanged_2014.pdf

¹⁵Gary Orfield, John Kucsera and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "E Pluribus... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students," (Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, September 2012). http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_omplete_2012.pdf

¹⁶Strategic Data Project, "SDP Human Capital Diagnostic: New York State Education Department" (Cambridge, MA: The Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, Oct. 2014). <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/cepr-resources/files/news-events/sdp-diagnostic-hc-nysed.pdf>

- **Development:** NYSED leaders recognize the relationship between high-quality professional development and teacher effectiveness.¹⁷ Some districts have offered opportunities for teachers to receive ongoing, job-embedded professional development tied to the areas of growth from their evaluation results through the use of instructional coaches, mentors, co-planning and professional learning communities. Others, however, struggle to implement these best practices for professional development in a way that improves teacher practice.
- **Retention:** Principal turnover is high across New York State. In addition, retention of effective principals is lower at schools that serve higher percentages of students from low-income families. Furthermore, school districts in New York retain their most effective teachers at nearly the same rate as their most ineffective teachers (87.9 percent and 84.2 percent, respectively). Schools in the highest poverty quartile retain fewer effective teachers compared to schools in the lowest poverty quartile (82.2 percent and 90.2 percent, respectively). In New York State, many layoffs are based on seniority, with no consideration to teacher effectiveness or impact on student achievement. LEAs often lack a strategic plan to keep the most effective teachers and principals from retiring, transferring or moving out of the profession.
- **Extending the Reach of Top Talent:** NYSED staff cite national research in concluding that teachers have few opportunities to advance professionally without leaving the classroom, and that more teachers would stay longer if they had access to such opportunities.¹⁸

¹⁷Tim R. Sass, Jane Hannaway, Zeyu Xu, David N. Figlio and Li Feng, "Value Added of Teachers in High-Poverty and Lower-Poverty Schools," National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, Working Paper 52 (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2010). www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001469-calder-working-paper-52.pdf

¹⁸TNTP, "The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools" (Brooklyn, NY: TNTP, 2012). http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf

NYSED leaders considered a number of other causes of the equity gap. Their report cites a study of New York City teacher absences and their negative impacts on students. Being taught by a long-term substitute teacher is similar to having a full-time teacher of average effectiveness replaced with one at the 10th to 20th percentile of effectiveness. NYSED also cites evidence that the tenure process has an important impact on equitable access to effective educators. For instance, the effectiveness ratings of teachers who receive probation extensions are lower on average than those likely to replace them. Schools with higher percentages of black students are more likely to issue tenure extensions. This indicates that high-minority schools would benefit from more rigorous tenure-granting processes.

Insights from New York

After working to identify the metrics and indicators it felt would give it the best insights into equitable access in New York, NYSED took a two-prong approach to its root-cause analysis. The first was to conduct a literature review that focused on common talent management challenges and how they impact schools, students and learning. Staff also reviewed research about achievement gaps and various factors that have been shown to widen or close gaps in student performance. This helped staff understand the most likely root causes of inequitable access.

At the same time, NYSED engaged with the approximately one-third of New York districts that receive various grants from the State, including the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness grants, Teacher Incentive Fund grants and Demonstration Districts Project grants. Through the grant management process, New York had extensive discussions with these districts about creating greater equity in access to effective teachers. The stakeholders they spoke with included superintendents, principals, teachers, union representatives and boards of education. These groups consistently identified and

reported five talent management challenges that aligned with many of the indicators and metrics that NYSED associates with its equity work: preparation, recruitment, development, retention and extending the reach of the most effective teachers.

NYSED found it helpful to talk to grant winners whose work to improve teacher and leader effectiveness aligned with the State's equitable access goals. According to Julia Rafal-Baer, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness, this "allowed for an expanded set of informed and invested stakeholders who provided authentic perspective to our analysis." NYSED also cited two resources that helped it understand the problem of inequitable access in New York: an RSN publication, "**Promoting More Equitable Access to Effective Teachers: Problems and Root Causes**," and the GTL's **Root Cause Analysis Workbook**.¹⁹

One of New York's challenges, which will likely be shared by many States, is that it is "geographically, economically, politically and racially diverse, making it difficult to definitively identify root causes," said Rafal-Baer. NYSED also acknowledges that equity gaps that look similar across two districts may have very different root causes, and that multiple root causes may contribute to a single equity gap. NYSED will continue to engage stakeholders to solicit feedback on its root cause analysis.

¹⁹Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research, "Moving Toward Equity Root-Cause Analysis Workbook: A Guide for State Education Agencies" (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, November 2014).

http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/GTL_Root-Cause-AnalysisWorkbook-ed.docx

Component #4: Strategies

Plan Requirements

Set forth the SEA's steps to eliminate identified equity gaps.

- Describe the strategies the SEA will implement to eliminate the identified equity gaps with respect to both (1) poor students and (2) minority students, including how the SEA determined that these strategies will be effective. An SEA may use the same strategy to address multiple gaps.
- Include timelines for implementing the strategies.
- Describe how the SEA will monitor its LEAs' actions, in accordance with ESEA sections 9304(a)(3)(B) and 1112(c)(1)(L), to ensure, through incentives for voluntary transfers, the provision of professional development, recruitment programs or other effective strategies, that low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers.²⁰

State Example: Tennessee

Tennessee used its most recent strategic plan as a starting point for its equity plan to ensure that the plan is aligned to current State initiatives. The State strategic plan promises to expand students' access to effective teachers and leaders to help districts reach ambitious academic goals. The equity plan therefore identifies several strategies to build on its existing work to improve access to effective teachers.

Tennessee will roll out its strategies to improve equitable access in four phases. In Phase 0, the State will focus on the implementation of current policies and programs. In Phase 1, the State will share new data on where highly effective teachers are concentrated and whether different populations of students have equitable access to them. In Phase 2, the State will provide targeted support to districts in which high-poverty and high-minority schools and classrooms do not have equitable access to highly effective teachers. Finally, in Phase 3, the State will share progress toward goals with the public.

²⁰U.S. Department of Education, "State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): p. 8. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleparta/equitable/ea-faq2014.doc>

As part of its Phase 0 effort, Tennessee identified a broad range of current State policies and programs that aim to address issues of teacher effectiveness and human capital management. Because Tennessee's root-cause analysis illuminated challenges with the overall supply of highly effective teachers as well as with equitable access to highly effective teachers, Tennessee organized these initiatives into three categories: strategies that address the overall supply of effective educators, strategies that address access to those educators (across or within schools), and strategies that address both.

First, Tennessee identified the following strategies it is or will be employing to address the supply of effective educators:

- **Preparation:** The State recently revised its process for reviewing and approving EPPs. These changes were designed to make the process less cumbersome and reviews more frequent—and to ensure that EPPs produce a higher quality supply of teachers. The State Board of Education adopted a new set of standards for educator preparation programs review that include metrics for program outcomes and impact. A stakeholder implementation group has been established to guide the production of new annual reports with data on recruitment, selection, retention, graduate and employer satisfaction, and graduate outcomes and impact. The State is also adopting higher cut scores for content knowledge tests, which will ensure that the teacher hiring pool is stronger.
- **Recruitment and Hiring:** The State recently developed a website where districts across the State can post jobs and job seekers can apply. This has allowed districts to post 3,000 jobs and access 39,000 candidates who have expressed interest in teaching in the State. The State also partnered with an organization that developed selection tools for school leaders to use during the hiring process and trained school leaders on how to use them.
- **Professional Learning:** The State recognizes the connection between professional learning and improving teacher practice. State leaders developed a training model for the transition to college- and career-ready standards. It identifies teachers with deep content and pedagogical knowledge and trains them to coach their peers. The teacher-coaches then deliver training to their colleagues at summer workshops. The State found this coaching strategy had positive and significant effects on teachers' instructional practice.

Next, Tennessee identified the strategies it is or will be employing to address access to effective educators:

- **Staffing and Assignment:** The State has previously provided financial incentives to districts to assign highly effective teachers to high-need students. The State distributed approximately \$10 million to districts that agreed to more intentional and strategic staffing efforts. Through the initiative, the SEA gave districts options: they could, for instance, make sure that no students below basic in reading or math are assigned to a Level 1 teacher; or they could assign Level 5 teachers 10 percent more students on average than Level 1 teachers. The SEA also provided financial incentives to districts to hire and retain highly effective teachers in the lowest-performing schools in the State. Finally, the State revised its tenure policy so that evaluations may be a factor in employment decisions, and it passed tenure reform legislation so that teachers must perform above or significantly above expectations for two years in a row to receive tenure. Those tenured teachers who perform below or significantly below expectations for two years in a row may be dismissed by their districts. This policy change enables districts to retain teachers who are effective and replace those who are not.

Finally, Tennessee identified the several strategies it is or will be employing address both the supply of and access to effective educators:

- **Evaluation:** The accurate identification of effective teachers is “the key strategy” of Tennessee’s plan to ensure equitable access, because “without a mechanism in place to identify our most effective teachers, we are unable to assess our equity gaps or begin to employ other strategies to address them,” said one SEA official. Since the inception of its evaluation system, the State has made efforts to improve the accuracy of observation scoring and the quality of feedback that teachers receive as part of the evaluation process. The State has also developed a school leader evaluation system and evaluation rubric, which all districts are using in the 2014–2015 school year. The State has heavily invested in data systems to collect, analyze and report evaluation data, to which all districts, school leaders and teachers have access.
- **Compensation:** The State Board of Education streamlined the State salary schedule and required all school districts to implement some form of differentiated pay for educators. Districts proposed a range of strategies to give effective teachers the opportunity to earn additional pay, including teaching in hard-to-staff schools or subjects.

Insights from Tennessee

The State has developed and implemented a number of reform strategies that address many of the root causes of inequitable access. Tennessee largely chose to incorporate those efforts into their equity plan rather than develop new strategies. It sees its equity planning work as tying together many of these reforms rather than as a separate exercise. At the foundation of all of these efforts is the State’s evaluation system, which serves both to identify effectiveness and support differentiated teacher growth.

A core team of six-to-eight leaders from multiple departments met several times as they were drafting the equity plan to identify statewide efforts that could align with the equity plan. A broader team of about 20 staff came together to build consensus on the content and organization of the plan’s strategies section.

Team members chose to use strategies already being implemented to address root causes of inequity in the State. They also plan to support a more local root-cause analysis exercise that allows local school districts to analyze their data (provided by the SEA) and identify strategies best suited to address their specific root causes. The State will then differentiate supports and strategies to meet the needs of the LEAs.

As one Tennessee official explained, it is important for an SEA to identify its role in this work. “We wanted to be mindful of what our biggest leverage points are versus what type of action is best left to the district level. Ultimately, we decided that the role of data analysis and data sharing, along with several existing support strategies, would be our biggest impact. This conversation was integral to determining exactly what our strategies would be.

Component #5: Measuring Progress and Component #6: Reporting Progress

Plan Requirements

- Describe the measures that the SEA will use to evaluate progress toward eliminating the identified equity gaps for both (1) poor students and (2) minority students, including the method and timeline for the evaluation (for example, by establishing an equity goal and annual targets for meeting that goal, or by reducing identified gaps by a minimum percentage every year).
- Describe how the SEA will publicly report on its progress in eliminating the identified gaps, including timelines for this reporting.²¹

State Example: New York

In its draft equity plan, NYSED outlined priorities for monitoring and reporting on equitable access efforts across the State. These priorities are divided into three components: (1) focus on educator preparation programs; (2) focus on educator evaluation systems; and (3) focus on educator career ladders and professional development.

²¹ U.S. Department of Education, “State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Frequently Asked Questions” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2014): p. 8. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/ea-faq2014.doc>

1. NYSED will continue to support and monitor improvements to access and entry into the teaching profession, such as the redesign of teacher and school leader preparation programs through performance-based assessments, clinically grounded instruction and innovative new educator certification pathways. Monitoring activities from the department have included, and may continue to include, the following:
 - a. *Evidence-based accreditation:* EPPs currently accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council undergo a peer review process to ensure program quality and promote continuous improvement of P-12 educator preparation.
 - b. *Public reporting of New York State higher education certification data:* NYSED aims to provide the public with data about the effectiveness of educators, including candidate performance on New York State teacher and school leader certification exams.
 - c. *Further development of preparation program profiles:* NYSED, in collaboration with State institutes of higher education (IHEs), developed an educator preparation program profile with demographics, certification exam performance, placement and employment rates for graduates. It will incorporate additional metrics to help IHEs further refine their programs.
 - d. *Continued construction of "Where are they now?" reports:* These reports show to which IHEs the graduates of New York high schools matriculate for college. This will enable schools and districts to better track their graduates and recruit them back to their hometowns to teach.

2. NYSED will continue to provide support and monitoring to LEAs as they implement teacher and principal evaluation systems that differentiate the effectiveness of educators. Monitoring activities at the State level have included, and will continue to include, the following:
 - a. *LEA submission of evaluation data:* All LEAs with approved Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plans submit evaluation data to the State on an annual basis. This data includes results for nearly 190,000 educators for 2013–2014.
 - b. *Public disclosure of APPR data:* By providing data to the public, NYSED hopes to strengthen the dialogue on equitable access to effective educators and increase the urgency among LEAs to improve in this area.
 - c. *Analysis of APPR results:* NYSED constructed a database that allows staff to identify errors and inconsistencies in evaluation data (for example, one LEA submitted data for only 50 percent of its teachers) and provide technical assistance where needed.
 - d. *Implementation of the APPR-enhanced monitoring cycle:* NYSED has developed a comprehensive APPR monitoring protocol to assess the fidelity and quality of evaluation implementation. NYSED will help LEAs identify strong practices and address areas for improvement.
 - e. *Pilot use of the Quality Framework:* Some districts are participating in a guided reflection and monitoring process using a New York State-adapted version of the [Quality Framework](#) during the 2014–2015 school year. This will serve as a pilot for the potential extended use of the Quality Framework in APPR monitoring efforts.

3. NYSED will provide resources and support to LEAs utilizing evaluation results in the design and implementation of robust career ladder pathways as part of their systemic use of the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) continuum. The department may provide the following types of technical assistance and support to LEAs:
 - a. *Provision of equity reports:* NYSED aims to create equity reports in 2014–2015, drawing attention to LEAs and schools where the highest need students are disproportionately assigned to less effective teachers and principals.

- b. *Continued investments in the professional development of teachers and leaders:* NYSED will continue to gather input on the impact of professional development efforts and the pressing needs of the field to inform ongoing support and continuous improvement.
- c. *Expansion of resources associated with career ladder pathways:* NYSED uses the [Improving Practice landing page](#) and continuously evolving resources as a means to support LEAs at various stages in utilizing their APPR results to drive talent management decisions.²²
- d. *Outline of key indicators for talent management systems:* NYSED has developed an initial set of indicators aligned to each component of the TLE continuum. LEAs can use this tool to establish baselines for various talent management strategies and to monitor progress and program impact.
- e. *Example LEA profiles:* NYSED, in conjunction with local LEAs, developed example profiles that highlight how various LEAs are working to address their diverse student achievement and talent management needs through the establishment of career ladder pathways.

Insights from New York

New York chose to focus its monitoring efforts on the indicators and metrics it thinks are most pertinent to increasing equitable access. These monitoring efforts include oversight of APPR implementation and programmatic review of efforts across the State on educator preparation, professional development and career pathways. NYSED intends to share responsibility for monitoring progress toward goals across departments. For example, the Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness will monitor APPR implementation and refine the metrics included in district reports. The Office of Higher Education will monitor educator preparation programs. LEAs will use the reports generated by the State to monitor their own efforts to improve equitable access.

²²<https://www.engageny.org/resource/improving-practice>

An important consideration for New York is how to sustain the work beyond its Race to the Top grant. The monitoring efforts NYSED committed to in its equity plan are either already in place or had already been planned. Over the last few years, NYSED has focused on providing support to districts as they continue to implement and refine their APPR plans, as well as to design and implement talent management strategies. The monitoring efforts in the New York State equity plan are a natural extension of the technical assistance that the State has provided to districts in recent years.

Rafal-Baer found that it was helpful to establish an end goal for equitable access to define what progress will look like, and “then to use that vision to determine what sources of evidence must be collected and monitored to ensure that vision is realized.” The measures of progress should directly relate to the root causes identified and initial metrics used to analyze equitable access data. Similar to advice other States have given about aligning the equity work with existing statewide efforts, Rafal-Baer encouraged States to align monitoring efforts with “the existing SEA scope of work, so that it does not place additional burdens on the State or districts.”

General Recommendations

The concept of providing equitable access to effective educators is not new for States. Following the passage of the amended ESEA in 2001, States were required to submit plans to ensure that students of color and those from low-income backgrounds were not taught by unqualified teachers at higher rates than other students. States last submitted plans to the Department in 2006. Although some States have continued to update their initial equity plans on a regular basis, most have not. Therefore, most States will be starting this work anew. However, the plans were intended and designed to be a continuous work in progress, and to be an instrument States can use to update, pursue and meet their equity goals.

RSN derived the following lessons from its work with the States that produced early drafts of equity plans. States can consider these lessons in determining how to create equity plans with their key stakeholders:

- **Start with the data and invest in its analysis.** Some States may be tempted to begin by identifying strategies to address equitable access. In the pilot group, for example, some States were quick to identify initiatives that would address problems of equitable access. These teams felt it was easier to start with the strategies component of the equity plan, a component for which they already had a foundation. They were less confident in their data: some questioned its accuracy, others its robustness or their ability to analyze it. In these cases, they opted to conduct data analysis later in the process.
- **Assign a project manager who can delegate tasks and engage stakeholders.** Creating a statewide equity plan is a complex and time-intensive task. The pilot States began the process by identifying a point person or project manager who is responsible for developing and submitting the equity plan to the Department and, in many cases, who will also be in charge of supporting the implementation of many of the plan's elements. The project manager should be familiar with the requirements of the equity plan and should have sufficient programmatic knowledge and authority within the SEA to assign tasks to colleagues across departments. Completion and quality of the equity plan will require contributions of agency staff with expertise on teacher effectiveness, student outcomes data, human capital initiatives and records, teacher evaluation, teacher preparation and school finance, among others. Pilot State teams comprised of members across these departments were able to efficiently divide up tasks, identify owners and deadlines, and inform or contribute entire sections to their State equity plan. The project manager should also be able to convene and coordinate various stakeholders to provide input for the plan, and aggregate the feedback that stakeholders provide.

However, strategies will have the greatest impact when they address the underlying causes of the equity gaps. For example, if a State discovers that only four districts are responsible for a majority of equity gaps in their State, it will want to propose solutions that are specific to those districts and their needs, not statewide strategies. "Use the breadth of data sources available to you," said one State official. "We wanted to incorporate the outcome measures we feel most strongly about."

One challenge for pilot States was the level of expertise and capacity required to analyze their equitable access data, as well as the availability of data at the State level. Some State agencies "borrowed" data analysts from outside their departments to assist with data collection and analysis. In various cases, these analysts have helped to identify additional sources of data, clean datasets and run regression analyses so that data provides a strong foundation for the equity plan. Other States accessed experts at GTL for assistance. One State asked GTL for a review of literature about the most important metrics to use when analyzing its data. Specific tools for conducting the data analysis are available on the Equitable Access Support Network website.²³

²³<https://easn.grads360.org/#program/state-equity-plan-support>

Tennessee Theory of Action

If...

- ▶ Research shows that teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than any other in-school factor, and the students who need good teaching the most systematically do not have the same access to effective teaching; and
- ▶ We believe this gap develops as a result of two key issues: (1) an inadequate supply of effective teachers and (2) the within- or between-school factors limiting access to effective teachers for particular groups of students; and
- ▶ There are a number of factors that impact a district's supply of effective teachers and students' access to those teachers;

Then...

- ▶ We need to continue working with districts to improve human capital management—the preparation, recruitment, hiring, staffing, evaluation, development, retention and compensation of educators; and
- ▶ This work will have a positive impact on the supply of effective teachers and students' access to them in districts across the State.

- **Work with others to develop the plan.** Submitting a high-quality plan will depend on the time and effort of many people from both within and beyond the SEA. States will benefit from engaging stakeholders as soon as possible and partnering with them to draft the plan and implement the identified action steps. States should not include stakeholders after the plan is complete. GTL's

Stakeholder Engagement Guide recommends the following timeline and steps to engage stakeholders.²⁴

²⁴Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research, "Moving Toward Equity Stakeholder Engagement Guide: Planning for Engagement with Stakeholders in Designing Educator Equity Plans" (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, December 2014): pp. 32–33. http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/GTL_Moving_Toward_Equity.pdf



Timeline: January–March 2015

Stakeholder Role: *Advisor.* Assist policymakers in setting priorities by providing insight into what is happening on the ground.

Communication Focus: Communication will focus on developing a preliminary equitable access plan.

- What are the priority areas that your state plan will focus on, and what are the key priorities of other stakeholder groups?
- What is the state doing to ensure that the priorities of all stakeholders are taken into consideration?



Timeline: October 2014–April 2015

Stakeholder Role: *Advisor.* Share what stakeholders learn with their own networks and home communities.

Communication Focus: Communication will extend as broadly as possible across your state, with the goal of developing stakeholder and public awareness and support for the plan. If possible, communication with the media will be leveraged to maximize reach across the state.



Timeline: April–May 2015

Stakeholder Role: *Reviewer.* Provide feedback by reviewing the SEA’s draft plan for implementing strategies that will improve equitable access.

Communication Focus: Communication will center on the SEA’s draft plan for implementing strategies to improve equitable access. Stakeholders will react to the plan. SEA staff will communicate how this input will be incorporated into the draft plan as well as respond to the U.S. Department of Education’s comments on the plan, when it is approved, and what action steps will begin the implementation.



Timeline: September 2016 and ongoing

Stakeholder Role: *Reviewer.* Ongoing, two-way stakeholder feedback loops inform revisions to the equitable access plan.

Communication Focus: As the plan is rolled out, communication will take place regularly to share updates and collect input. When the plan is updated, communication will inform all stakeholders of the revised approach, why it is being adopted, and how it will affect them. (For more information on communication planning for implementation, see “Building Communication Loops” on page 39.)

Drawing on experiences working with the pilot States, the EASN has cultivated a collection of resources on its [State Equity Plan Support page](#) that States may find useful as they develop their equity plans. These

resources address stakeholder engagement, data analysis, planning and processes for eliminating equity gaps. States can also request technical assistance from the EASN through the support page.

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