



# Summary of Public Input from Delaware's Report Card Revision Community Conversations

Prepared for the **Delaware Department of Education**

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## Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law on December 10, 2015 and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under Title I, Part A of ESSA, State and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) are required to prepare and disseminate report cards that provide information on the performance and progress of SEAs, LEAs, and schools. While SEAs and LEAs have flexibility to determine the format and style of these report cards, they must present the information in language that stakeholders, including parents, can understand and in a concise, uniform format accessible to persons with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> These report cards must be posted on SEA and LEA websites on or before December 31st for the preceding school year, starting with the information from the 2017-18 school year.

## Community Conversations in Delaware

Throughout October 2017, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) hosted five community conversation meetings. They were designed to provide background to the public on the Delaware report cards and gather input from stakeholders to inform revisions to the way information will be shared with the public. The meetings were held during weekday evenings in multiple locations across the state to facilitate broader participation by parents and other

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<sup>1</sup> Every Student Succeeds Act State and Local Report Cards Non-Regulatory Guidance (January 2017). See <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essastatereportcard.pdf>

stakeholders (see table 1). The attendees included leaders and staff from the DDOE, Delaware State Board of Education, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA), Parent Advocacy Council for Education (PACE), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), DelawareCAN, Village Resource Group, Inc., and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: State report card community conversation locations and dates**

Location	Date/Time
<i>Lewes</i>	October 9, 2017 6 pm – 8 pm
<i>Wilmington</i>	October 12, 2017 6 pm – 8 pm
<i>Dover</i>	October 18, 2017 6 pm – 8 pm
<i>Middletown</i>	October 23, 2017 6 pm – 8 pm
<i>Laurel</i>	October 24, 2017 6 pm – 8 pm

### Facilitating and Gathering Input from the Community Conversation Meetings

Each meeting started with a brief DDOE presentation on ESSA and its requirements concerning the report cards. Then, using three handouts prepared by DDOE (Appendix A), participants engaged in small-group exercises and discussions, followed by share-outs with the larger group, to provide input on the following three key items:

- **Education Terminology:** Defining report card terms with clear explanations using common language;
- **Report Card Elements:** Ensuring all relevant data elements are included within and communicated through the report card; and
- **Priorities:** Understanding which information is considered “need to know”, “nice to know”, or “do not need to know”.

Participants were encouraged to highlight their questions regarding definitions and requirements directly on the handouts or using sticky notes. Beginning with the second community conversation meeting, DDOE also collected marked-up handouts and sticky notes from participants per the suggestion from the MACC. This hands-on engagement not only expanded the input collected but also helped set a more receptive tone.

<sup>2</sup> MACC estimates that 45 individuals attended at least one of the meetings. The total attendance was 66, but some individuals attended multiple meetings.

## Findings

In this section, we summarize common themes that emerged from all five community conversations. Findings from the analysis of participants' input and written feedback from MACC are also discussed.

### Common Themes across the Community Conversation Meetings

Across all five community conversation meetings, several themes emerged. The following are summaries of these themes in the form of suggested actions for DDOE:

- ***Provide more context.*** In the State report card, it will be important not only to show the definition of a term, but also to describe why it matters or why it is relevant to monitoring performance and progress.
- ***Further clarify the term "report card".*** Many participants indicated the term "report card" was understood as student report cards.
- ***Consider added functionality for the report card.*** There was interest among some participants in the ability to customize a view (e.g., a role-based or interest-based display) of the report card. If such added functionality is impractical, consider multiple static "at-a-glance" reports that address specific topics of interest to stakeholders.
- ***Conduct focused outreach to parents and under-served and under-represented stakeholders.*** Many participants underscored the importance of obtaining input from parents and other groups that may not be well represented in discussions about school and district reporting. Some pointed out that the misunderstanding of the term 'report card' might have contributed to the low turnout of parents despite the evening scheduling of these meetings.

### Comments and Feedback

The community conversation meetings shared a common organization around three key items discussed earlier: education terminology, report card elements, and priorities. For each of these items, stakeholders provided more focused comments and feedback.

**Education Terminology.** The DDOE facilitated a breakout activity to review education terminology and definitions (see Appendix A). Participants engaged in a mix-and-match activity to pair each of 30 education terms with their definitions. They also reviewed the definitions for clarity and any potential communication gaps for parents and other stakeholders. Discussions at the

community meetings and input provided on the handouts suggest the following findings.

- 1) Many definitions are wordy and include terms that are likely to be unfamiliar to parents.
- 2) Some definitions (e.g., environment/climate) do not resonate with many community conversation participants or include unclear or vague phrases.
- 3) Participants pointed out stakeholders' reading levels may pose potential barriers to understanding the meaning of definitions provided.
- 4) Not only showing the definition of a term on the final report card but providing an explanation of how the scores/ratings were computed will be important for parents and other stakeholders to accurately interpret and use the information presented on the report card.

**Report Card Elements.** For this activity, DDOE prepared a two-page handout that included descriptions of reporting elements grouped into six sections: achievement; accountability; finance; general information about Delaware's schools; climate, culture, and environment; and educational staff. The handout also included columns to indicate whether these elements are required by the federal government, the State, or both. Elements that are currently reported on Delaware's State Profiles and those included in the State's ESSA plan are also flagged for the participants' review. Stakeholder feedback on this item included surprise at the large number of reporting requirements. This handout was also central in conducting the activity about priorities.

**Priorities.** Three categories—need-to-know, nice-to-know, or do-not-need-to-know—were used to indicate participants' individual priorities or preferences concerning 60 report card elements required by either Federal or State statutes or that are currently available from Delaware's school profiles. Most of the 428 element-level responses (62 percent, n=266) identified the element as "need-to-know".<sup>3</sup> Only 11 percent (n=46) indicated elements as "do-not-need-to-know", suggesting participants' high level of interest in having more information included in the State report card.

Across all 60 report card elements presented in the handout, the ones most often identified as "need-to-know" were included within the achievement section, and within college and/or career preparedness in particular (see table

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<sup>3</sup> Twenty-seven individuals generated the 428 element-level responses.

2). The one most often identified as “do-not-need-to-know” was the average teacher salary.

**Table 2: Comments from ESSA State Report Card Stakeholders - Priorities**

		Need-to-Know Requirement	Nice-to-Know Requirement	Do-Not-Need-to-Know Requirement
<b>General information about DE schools</b>				
General contract information	Head of district/school; District/school address	3	2	-
	School board members	3	2	1
	Title IX coordinator contact info	3	2	1
Public school information	Number of public schools by type and county	3	1	1
	Number of students who reside in the district	3	1	1
	Vocational technical high school percentage	3	1	1
	Number of students who school choice	3	4	1
<b>Information about climate, culture, and environment</b>				
Enrollment	Fall enrollment	4	4	-
	Enrollment by race/ethnicity	3	1	-
	Enrollment by demographics and other student characteristics	5	3	-
	Number of students in preschool programs	4	3	-
	Class size	7	1	-
	Recently arrived English learner (EL) students	3	2	1
School programs and curricular offerings	Information pertaining to school-specific curricular offerings	5	2	-
	Examples of exemplary programs, successful teaching, school climate or disciplinary strategies	4	2	-
Parent and community involvement	Information pertaining to parents and community involvement in the school and school district	2	4	1
Student behavior	Persistently dangerous school	6	2	2
	Number of school-related arrests	6	2	1
	Chronic absenteeism	7	2	1
	Expulsion rates	8	2	-
	Incidence of violence (including bullying and harassment)	8	2	-
	In-school suspension rates, out-of-school suspension rates	7	2	-
Staff information	Referrals to law enforcement	5	2	1
	Information pertaining staff population demographics	4	4	-
	Instructional staff to support staff ratio	4	2	1
	School district administrator-student ratios	2	4	1
	School teacher-student ratios	4	2	-
	Specialist to-student ratio	4	2	-
	Student/teacher/parent survey	4	3	-
<b>Information about Educational Staff</b>				
Education level	Educator education level	2	4	1
Average teacher salary	Average teacher salary	1	3	10
Retention	Educator/administrator retention	5	2	2
Experienced	Years of teaching experience	2	3	3
Inexperienced	Inexperienced teachers, principals, and other school leaders; presented by high poverty compared to low-poverty schools	4	2	2
Out-of-Field	Teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed; presented by high-poverty compared to low-poverty schools	3	3	2

		Need-to-Know Requirement	Nice-to-Know Requirement	Do-Not-Need-to-Know Requirement
Emergency/Provisional credentials	Teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials; presented by high-poverty compared to low-poverty schools	1	1	3
<b>Information about achievement</b>				
On-track in 9th grade	Percent of 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students earning a total of 4 or more credits in at least four of the following subjects: ELA, math, science, social studies, world languages	4	2	-
Alternate assessment	Number and percentages of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take an alternate assessment	4	2	-
Progress	Growth in ELA and math	6	2	1
	Long-term goals and measurements of interim progress	3	2	1
	Progress toward English language proficiency	4	2	1
College and/or career preparedness	Number and percentage of students enrolled in AP (3 or better) while in high school	8	1	-
	Number and percentage of students enrolled in IB (4 or better)	8	1	-
	Number and percentage of students who completed the SAT essay and scored 13 points or higher	7	1	-
	Number and percentage of students who received a certificate of multiliteracy	7	1	-
	Number and percentage of students who received a score of 50 or higher on the ASVAB (general technical)	6	2	-
	Number and percentage of students who received postsecondary credit attainment with a B or higher with a state-approved program of study (academic and technical)	8	1	-
	Number and percentage of students who received state-approved industry credentials	8	1	-
Postsecondary outcomes	Number and percentage of students who successfully completed an approved co-operative education and/or work-based learning extension	8	1	-
	Postsecondary outcomes at which students who graduate from high school enroll for the first academic year after graduation in programs of private postsecondary education in the state	5	1	-
	Postsecondary outcomes at which students who graduate from high school enroll for the first academic year after graduation in programs of public postsecondary education in the state	5	1	-
Dropout rate	Dropout rate	3	2	1
Graduation rate	Graduation rate (4, 5, and 6-year adjusted cohort rates)	6	-	-
Participation rate	The percentage of eligible students assessed and not assessed	2	1	-
Proficiency	English language proficiency attainment	4	-	-
	Proficiency - ELA/Math (grades 3-8 and 11), science (grades 5, 8, and 10), and social studies (grades 4, 7, and high school)	6	-	-
	Results on the statewide academic assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8 of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	4	-	-
Promotion by grade	Promotion by grade	2	3	1
<b>Information about accountability<sup>2</sup></b>				
Accountability		2	1	1
<b>Information about finance</b>				
Finance		1	4	2

**Note.** Twenty-seven handwritten notes, which included 428 responses, were collected from 4 of the 5 community conversations. Each participant provided multiple comments, and the numbers in this table are the number of responses, not respondents. Authors made every effort to include all legible input.