

GET INVOLVED—THIS IS THE YEAR!

This year, Title I plans are being developed in your state that will shape charter school accountability. Get involved and help ensure your office—and authorizers in your state—can continue holding charter schools accountable now and in the future.

What Should Title I Plans Do To Get The Best Result For Authorizers?

Title I plans must ensure authorizers can continue to hold charter schools accountable while respecting school autonomy. A one-size-fits-all approach to school support and accountability—one that does not distinguish between charter schools and traditional public schools—can make it difficult to do this.

1. **TOP PRIORITY: State Title I plans should respect the differences between charter school accountability and traditional school accountability.** Accountability for charters can be different *and* still hold all schools accountable. ESSA recognizes this and reiterates that charter school accountability is overseen by state charter school law. To ensure authorizers can keep holding charter schools accountable, systems for comprehensive or targeted support, at the state or district level, must not place authorizers in an inappropriate “support” role and must not prevent an authorizer from using state charter school law to enforce the charter contract and close a charter school.
2. **State report card systems should be thoughtfully developed** to ensure the information presented at the state and LEA level accurately informs parents about key aspects of the school.
3. **As implementation occurs, the State should issue guidance to authorizers on the transition to new metrics.** This must ensure that the recalibration of state performance targets does not and will not override any higher performance targets that may be in an existing charter contract. The goal is equivalency, not a reset.
4. **Pay special attention to numerical thresholds that are scattered throughout Title I plans, making sure the intended outcome carries over into the charter sector.** When put into practice, these state-wide thresholds can have different consequences for authorizers and charter schools. For example, because charter schools tend to have smaller student populations, a high n-size for subgroup reporting (such as one greater than 30, which a state may seek approval to use under proposed Title I rules) could result in widespread data gaps concerning subgroup performance in charter schools. This could make it more difficult for authorizers to monitor charter school performance in a robust fashion. In addition, the statewide jurisdiction of some authorizers means they may oversee a very large number of schools—potentially considerably more than most school districts in a state. Based purely on numbers alone, these authorizers could be more likely to cross any simple numerical threshold a state may establish for additional state intervention. This may unintentionally trigger a set of state actions that interferes with authorizer-driven accountability.

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO ASK QUESTIONS

Most of the people putting together Title I plans in your state don't want to make it hard to hold charter schools accountable; they just don't know that these Title I policies have a distinct set of ramifications in the charter world.

Encourage people to ask themselves two questions when considering a Title I policy:

- How will this provision work in charter schools?
- Does it need to be different in order to work with state charter school accountability?

What Can I Do?



STAY
INFORMED



TALK TO
PEERS &
STAFF



REQUEST
GUIDANCE
FROM STATE



PARTICIPATE
IN PLANNING
PROCESS



START
PREPARING

Stay Informed: Sign up for your state’s ESSA updates, follow the ESSA updates from one of the education groups in your state, or put it on your calendar to check in regularly with a colleague or peer that is closely following your state’s Title I planning. This will help you stay up to speed on what changes your state may make and when they will occur. *See what Title I does [here](#) and see if your State has an ESSA portal [here](#).*

Talk with other Authorizers: You can be more influential as a united group with a common interest. If you have a formal or informal group of authorizers in your state, talk with them about their plans for the ESSA transition and if their office is involved in the state ESSA work. If authorizers in your state identify with a named group of ESSA stakeholders, like school districts, talk with members of that group about ESSA’s impact on charter school oversight and authorizing. This could be as simple as sharing pieces of this series with one of your state associations. *Find other authorizers in your state on [our state pages](#).*

Talk to People in your Office, District, or State about Charter Schools and ESSA: There is a lot of misunderstanding out there about how charter schools will interact with Title I, especially when it comes to charter school accountability. Talking to people about what authorizing is and what strong charter school accountability looks like can do a lot to raise awareness about why it is necessary to treat charter schools a bit differently in Title I plans—and the problems that can happen if the plans treat charter schools the same.

A few talking points could be:

- *Accountability for charter schools is different than it is for traditional public schools, but different is not lesser.*
- *Charter schools are treated differently under ESSA for accountability purposes to make sure charter schools can be held accountable for fulfilling the promises they made in their charter contract.*
- *This is so an authorizer can use state charter law to close a failing charter school instead of having it go through a lengthy “school improvement” cycle.*

Request Guidance from the State When You Need It: Your state is getting some guidance from ED, and is likely disseminating its own guidance on the ESSA transition. But very little of that guidance has spoken directly to what the ESSA transition means for the work of authorizing. Guidance will be very important if you face gaps in the available performance data, or when you have to transition your charter contracts to new state metrics. Consistently requesting guidance pushes the State to pay attention to your issues: the squeaky wheel gets the grease. *NACSA has a list of [State ESSA implementation contacts](#): look up your state and give someone a call!*

Participate in the State Title I Planning Process: Much of the State work putting together Title I plans is done in public forums. In many states, this process began with community meetings or listening tours, led into special committees and advisory groups of different stakeholders, and will continue with formal meetings and comment periods as your state develops its plan. You can participate in this process by going to a forum, submitting comments with your perspective, or getting in touch with a relevant advisory group member (such as one that represents a professional group you or your organization belongs to or regularly works with). *See what NACSA recommends for State Title I plans [here](#), and see if your State has an ESSA portal [here](#).*

Start Preparing Your Office and Your Schools for Change: We may not know what the change is yet, but we do know that change is coming. Talk to your supervisors, your colleagues, and your schools about ESSA and the areas of your authorizing practice that could be impacted by the change. Think about what a successful transition looks like for you, where roadblocks might exist, and what steps your office can take make success happen. Then thoughtfully set your expectations and communicate early and often to prepare all parties for these changes. *Use our [“Preparing for System-Level Changes”](#) to get started.*