

## K-12 ESSA Plans: Deep Diving into State K-12 Accountability Systems

### Mission

Recent years have brought significant change to our nation's public school systems, as many states have adopted and revised new standards and assessments, teacher evaluation systems, data systems and methods for addressing low-performing schools. Policy interpretation and implementation churned leading up to and during the transition from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—the federal law that governed K-12 schools for well over a decade—to the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This process was made all the more uncertain by a shift in presidential administration and priorities. Amidst this backdrop of fast-moving change, HCM Strategists recognized the importance of safeguarding states' commitment to equity and success for all students and partnered with some of the nation's leading education policy and advocacy organizations to track, analyze and help strengthen states' accountability plans.

### Action

After the passage of ESSA, HCM built a comprehensive database detailing each state's accountability system as outlined under their NCLB waiver and ESSA plan as well as the standards and assessment system the state adopted. That intensive work served as a critical knowledge base regarding the changing school accountability policy landscape and enabled near real-time tracking of proposed changes that would otherwise have been unclear. HCM provided local advocates and legislators with state-specific primers that included the latest information on their states' plans for assessment and accountability. To help them communicate the importance of strong ESSA policies, the primers also clearly explained the components of an effective accountability system and offered examples of critical questions to ask elected officials. HCM also provided technical assistance and analysis on state ESSA plans to promote transparency and the adoption of best practices.

### Impact

By digging deep into shifting state K-12 accountability systems, HCM amassed a wealth of historical and current information to support the field's understanding of the changing policy landscape and to arm advocates on how and where to engage. The firm's work with states and advocates advanced the adoption of strong accountability policies that put students first, showcased innovative ideas and called attention to problematic provisions. HCM will continue to monitor ESSA implementation and empower advocates to support and hold states publicly responsible for fidelity to their accountability plans to ensure that schools work for *all* children. To that effect, HCM partnered with the Collaborative for Student Success to conduct an independent review of states implementation of their ESSA plans. The first review will highlight how states are implementing the school improvement provision outlined in ESSA as well as identify best practices and resources that states are developing to support their districts and schools in their turnaround efforts.