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 Georgia take full advantage of this opportunity?

GEORGIA RATINGS:

- **Accountability Systems**: Does Georgia's accountability system under ESSA include students with disabilities?

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

- **Inclusive Planning**: Did Georgia align its ESSA plan with special education initiatives?

**KEY:**

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

**HIGHLIGHTS OF GEORGIA’S PLAN:**

- Includes the performance of students with disabilities and other subgroups in the school accountability system as well as an indicator to measure how effectively schools are closing the gaps between subgroups of students.

- Georgia plans to intervene quickly in schools that struggles to support students and particular subgroups of students.

**HOW CAN GEORGIA IMPROVE IT’S ESSA PLAN?**

- Georgia could include subgroup performance in the calculations for additional indicators.

- Georgia could include a more detailed description of how the state plans to support students with disabilities using evidenced-based strategies and in particular, English learners with disabilities.

**LONG-TERM GOALS FOR GEORGIA**

**Graduation Rate Goals for 2022**

- **90.05%**
  - ALL STUDENTS

- **78.08%**
  - STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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 Georgia 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.

Georgia includes subgroup performance in its rating system.
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