The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to develop an accountability system that includes multiple measures of student academic performance and at least one additional indicator of "School Quality or Student Success" (SQSS). To support policymaking at both the state and federal level, the authors use the innovative measurement system developed by the CORE Districts in California to explore one important aspect of ESSA, the identification of schools for support and improvement using a multiple measures framework. CORE's unique system focuses on academic outcomes alongside non-academic measures of student success, including chronic absenteeism, suspension/expulsion, students' social-emotional skills, and school climate and culture. Given that most states do not have the full set of ESSA-compliant measures ready for use, there is much to be learned from the CORE Districts about how such measures can be integrated into state systems meeting ESSA's requirements. The authors find that:

1) Different academic indicators measure very different aspects of school performance, and states should therefore be allowed and encouraged to make full use of multiple measures to identify schools instead of reporting a single summative rating.

ESSA and the accompanying regulations require states to create a summative composite rating from a set of at least five indicators, and to use this summative rating to identify schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). Multiple measures offer several ways for states to identify schools for improvement, and there are tradeoffs between various approaches. The authors illustrate the tradeoffs between using a summative score to identify schools versus using a tiered approach, in which the full set of information is leveraged to make decisions about which schools are most in need of support.

The authors find that the four academic measures would identify dramatically different schools if used independently. For example, across all measures, less than 1 percent of schools are in the bottom 5-percent of all schools on all of the measures for which they have data. This demonstrates that the academic indicators measure very different aspects of school performance, illuminating schools' specific strengths and weaknesses. A summative score may identify schools that are relatively low on all measures, but fail to identify schools that have acutely low performance on one measure if they are even average on others.

As an alternative, the authors show how states can identify schools for CSI using a method that leverages full information on each indicator. Using a "dashboard" of measures, states could use a tiered approach to make a series of decisions about school performance on particular indicators. This would enable states to make judgments about whether or not schools need CSI based on a comprehensive evaluation of all the data. For example, of two schools with similar academic achievement, a state could choose to focus limited resources for CSI on a school with poor SQSS

* For the full policy memo, see http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/identity-crisis-multiple-measures-and-identification-schools-under-essa

outcomes rather than a school with positive SQSS outcomes, since the latter school may be on a road to improvement while the former is not.

A summative composite rating, even with only three categories, reduces this richness to one dimension. It is likely to focus educators' attention on how to improve their summative score – which identifies a school as "good" or "bad" – rather than on the various dimensions that measure and support student success. Given the value judgments inherent in the identification of schools for CSI, ESSA regulations should allow and encourage states to make full use of multiple measures to identify schools in the way they see fit rather than requiring states to report a single summative rating.

2) The ESSA regulations effectively restrict the weighting of the non-academic "School Quality and Student Success" indicators to zero, which is not in the spirit of the law's attention to multiple measures of school performance.

ESSA specifies that states must include at least one indicator of "School Quality or Student Success," which can include measures of student engagement, educator engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework, post-secondary readiness, or school climate and safety. Such measure(s) cannot remove schools that would have been identified for CSI by the four academic indicators alone. The authors find that SQSS indicators would have to account for less than one percent of the summative measure if their inclusion cannot change the set of schools that are identified for CSI. This effectively removes the non-academic measures from the accountability system, because measures that bear no consequences will not receive the same attention from educators and stakeholders as measures for which schools are held accountable. If the SQSS indicators are important indicators of school performance, as the law suggests they are, they should be accorded a meaningful weight in the process of identifying schools for support and improvement.

3) The majority of schools will be identified for Targeted support and Improvement (TSI) under the current regulations, which suggests that the rules for identification should be clarified.

States must identify schools for TSI if the performance of any subgroup falls below the bottom 5-percent level on the summative rating for the "all students" group of Title 1 schools. We find that this method of identifying additional schools for TSI has the potential to identify an enormous number of schools. For example, using academic performance, an additional 69 percent of schools (beyond those identified for CSI) would be identified for at least one subgroup. With infinite resources, it would be possible, and potentially desirable, to support all such schools. In the absence of such resources, however, ESSA regulations should further specify how to prioritize which schools to support through TSI identification.