



Building a Stronger Future Workforce for Oklahoma

January 2025

Oklahoma's future workforce is in school today. The business community can work to ensure Oklahoma's K-12 and post-secondary education systems prepare students for the workforce while measuring progress toward students' academic attainment. Policy recommendations within the A-F report card for schools and school districts will better align Oklahoma's K-12 and post-secondary education systems to the workforce needs of the economy and business community.

K-12 Education System Accountability

The state creates most education policies, but in order to receive Title I federal funding, states must follow federal law known as the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#). Oklahoma receives [\\$200 million per year in Title I Funding](#) to be used to ensure all children receive a fair, equitable, high-quality education, and close educational gaps.

One of the central focuses of ESSA is a state accountability system. Under ESSA, states must identify schools that are in need of comprehensive support and improvement and need targeted support and improvement. Schools needing comprehensive support and improvement are schools in the bottom 5%, that are not graduating one-third of students. Schools needing targeted support or improvement are consistently underperforming for a subgroup of students. However, schools may use a different rating system, so long as these schools are identified; for example, Oklahoma uses an [A-F rating system](#).

ESSA Required Metrics	
1. Academic Achievement	Measured by proficiency on the annual assessments
2. Graduation Rate	Four-year adjusted graduation rate
3. Academic Growth	Can be measured through assessments and benchmarks
4. English Language Proficiency	Progress in English language for non-English speakers
5. School Quality or Student Success	Must allow for meaningful differentiation in school performance, is valid, reliable comparable, and statewide, and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Postsecondary Readiness▪ Student Engagement▪ Educator Engagement▪ Student Access and Completion of Advanced Coursework▪ School Climate and Safety

For the school quality or student success indicator (SSQI), states have flexibility with what they choose to measure. The listed metrics are suggestions, not dictations. With this latitude afforded to the states come 50 different ways of measuring success and quality.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is a popular SSQI to measure student engagement. There are [38 states](#) using chronic absenteeism as a metric for elementary, middle and high school, Oklahoma being among them. The weight for chronic absenteeism ranges from .48% in Ohio to 15% in several states; in Oklahoma, chronic absenteeism is around 12% of the total (or 10 of 85 points, weighted equally with postsecondary opportunities, graduation rate, and English Language Proficiency). Rhode Island includes a teacher absenteeism metric.

Conversely, there are 13 states that elect not to measure chronic absenteeism. States excluding chronic absenteeism sub in a more robust college and career readiness, a climate survey or measure growth. [Utah](#), for example, uses a science achievement indicator and a science growth indicator as well as a robust postsecondary readiness indicator measured by various class offerings and scores.

Though chronic absenteeism has been tied to poor student outcomes, it is not, in itself, a measurement of student success or student engagement. Schools often [do not have control over when a student is in class](#) or not, so we are measuring school quality and student engagement based on a variable schools have little ability to improve. This produces a distorted understanding of how well schools and districts are performing their work. While schools can make modest interventions to address chronic absenteeism, its usefulness as a success may be limited and is better captured in other indicators.

School Climate Survey

A school climate survey is another option that can capture both student engagement and school climate and safety. The National School Climate Center [defines school climate](#) as “the quality and character of school life...based on patterns of student’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life,” [measured by](#) safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, and leadership efficacy.

[Research shows](#) the impact of a positive school climate on student success. Schools in California are using the data from school climate surveys to implement changes that provide students with a safer and engaging environment. These actionable shifts, including student teacher check ins, increasing school spirit, and increasing available counselors, can have an impact on school attendance and safety. [Kentucky](#) has also seen improvement in focusing on school climate. High poverty and low performing schools were able to improve based, in part, on modifying the school climate by setting high expectations for students and teachers.

While [6 states include a school climate survey](#) as a measure for the SSQI, [14 states issue a school climate survey](#) to create actionable goals that would increase other metrics. [Critics](#) note surveys can be answered dishonestly and are not scientific.

Post Secondary Readiness

Meanwhile, a metric showing success in college, career and military readiness (CCMR) is more indicative of a student’s success and how well a school is preparing its student body. There are [36 states](#) that utilize CCMR in some fashion as an SQSSI.

Oklahoma’s post-secondary opportunities while in high school attempts to function as a CCMR indicator but falls short by only five different options to be included. [To be counted in the indicator](#), students must complete one of the following:

Advance Placement Classes;
International Baccalaureate Program;
Dual (concurrent enrollment) in postsecondary course;
An approved work-based internship or apprenticeship; and/or
Programs leading to industry certification.

Oklahoma should up the ante on its postsecondary opportunity indicator. Like [Delaware](#) and [South Carolina](#), Oklahoma could include very specific benchmarks to meet for a student to count toward the CCR. Delaware, for example, includes specific scores a student must make on the AP or IB exams to count. South Carolina includes an ACT score of 20 and SAT score of 1020 as a student being counted. Students who fail to meet these marks are not counted in the CCR for the school or state.

Oklahoma could expand what counts towards the indicator. [New Hampshire](#) includes numerous options for accomplishing career readiness. These options include career and technology or industry-recognized credential, scoring a level three or higher on the ASVAB, completing a career pathway, completing an ACT National Career Readiness Certificate, or completing an approved apprenticeship program. Allowing students more than one way to be included in a school's CCR score provides the schools and students flexibility in determining what success looks like. In its state plan, [Kentucky's](#) Workforce Innovation Board works with the Department of Education to determine what industry-recognized credentials are in need and available to high school students. The Department of Education also pays for any assessments needed to obtain the credential.

Oklahoma could also put money behind the indicator, so schools have a greater incentive to offer CCMR opportunities. [Texas](#) has implemented perhaps the most full-throated readiness-oriented accountability system in the country using its CCMR program standards as its SSQI. The CCMR program tests students' readiness for college, a career, or the military through a number of indicators from dual credit to earning an associate degree while in high school. This program then provides bonus funding to schools for increasing the number of students meeting the benchmarks, creating a powerful incentive for schools and districts to improve their student readiness outcomes.

Pursuing the avenue of a robust career, college, or military readiness standard will help realign a school's focus on preparing the student for post-secondary success, over ensuring the school meets an indicator.

