ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION

WHEN EQUITY IS OPTIONAL

ESSA's Fifth Anniversary and Early Lessons from Implementation

ESSA

ACCOUNTABILTY RESULTS

WHEN EQUITY IS OPTIONAL

The Question

- **ESSA's Grand Bargain:** States get more flexibility to design school accountability systems but are constrained by guardrails to ensure they "stay on the road" toward closing achievement and opportunity gaps for historically underserved students.

Did the guardrails work? Or did more flexible systems lead to less equitable ones?

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The Data

- **10 states:** Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, Washington
- **School-level Data:** All4Ed compiled data on school enrollment, school ratings and accountability indicators, student achievement in ELA and math, and graduation rates
- **Year 1 of ESSA Implementation:** Typically, data collected from the 2017–18 school year that was released in the 2018–19 school year

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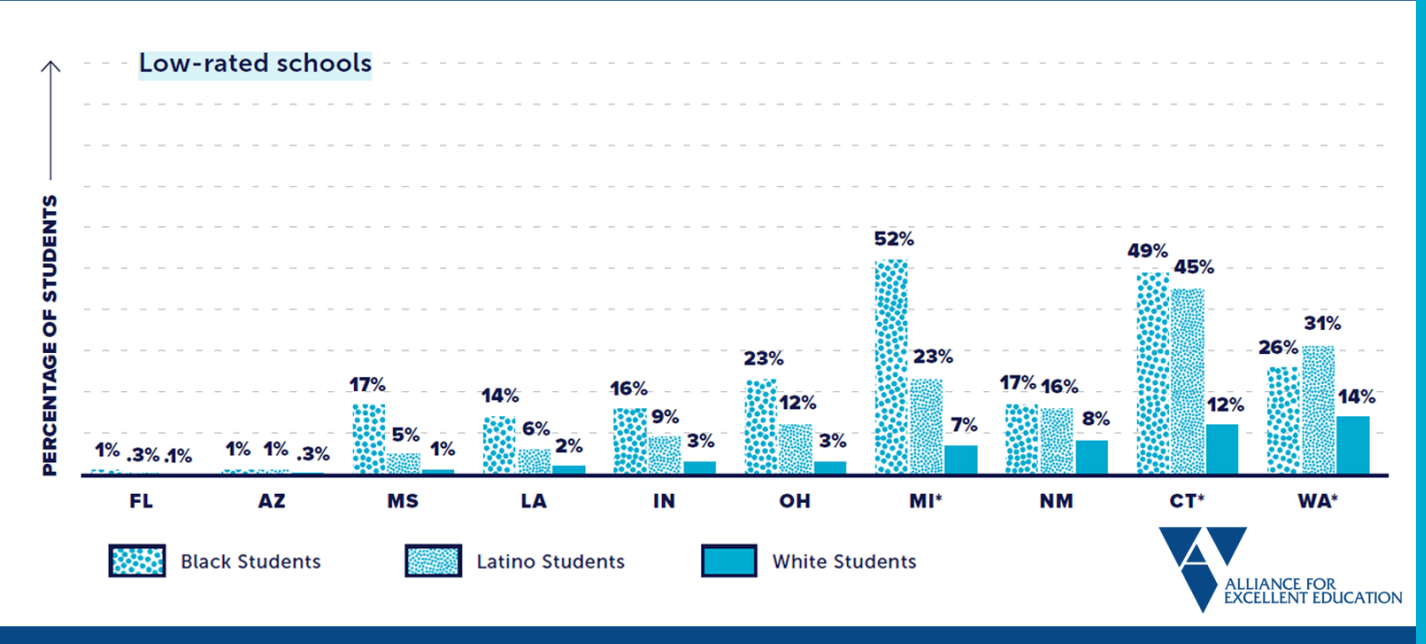
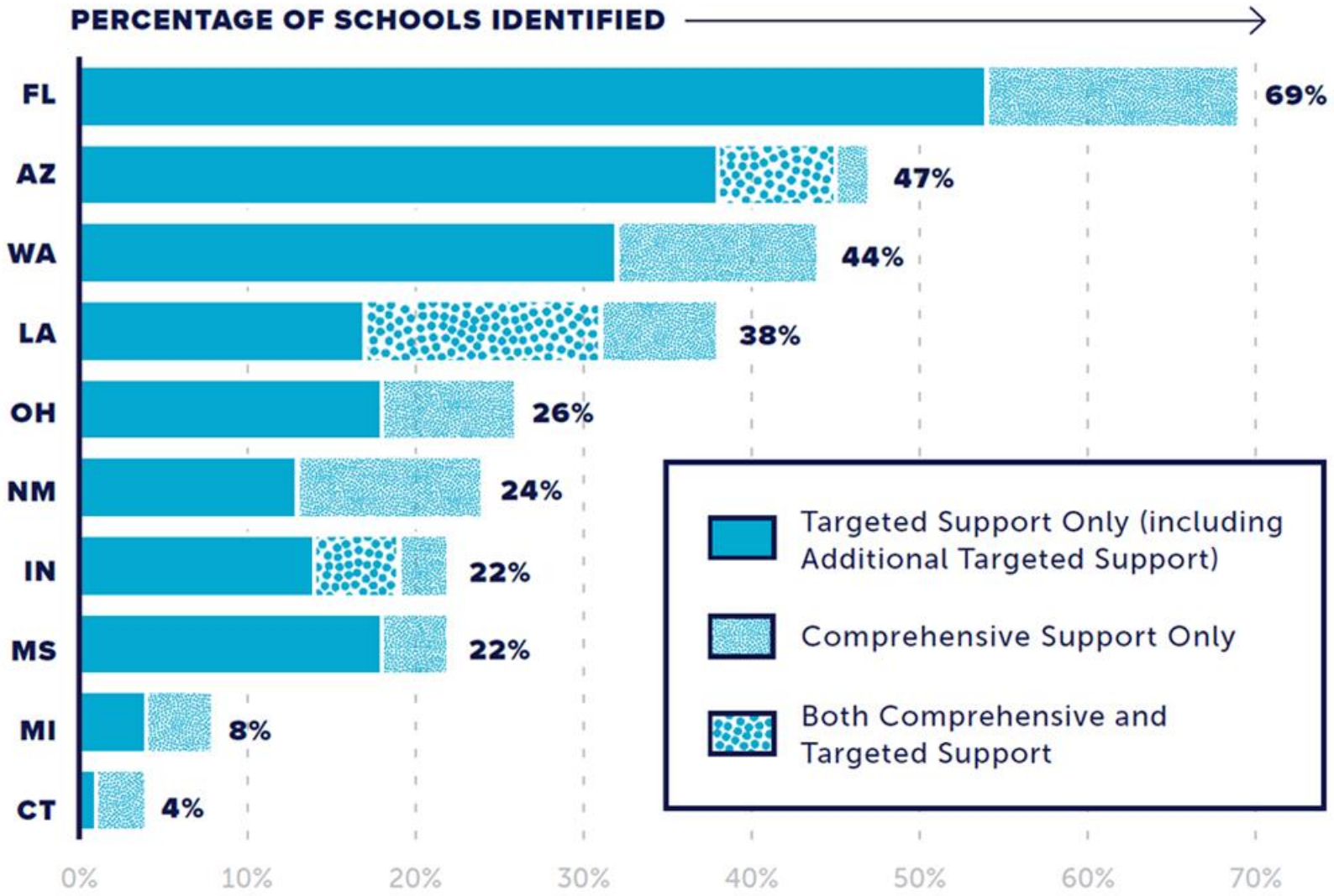


The Findings

Compared to their White peers, Black and Latino students in all 10 states:

- were more likely to receive a poorly rated education.
- were overrepresented in low-rated schools and under-represented in high-rated ones.

The likelihood that schools were identified for support—and thus, eligible for extra federal funding to help them improve—varied widely by state.



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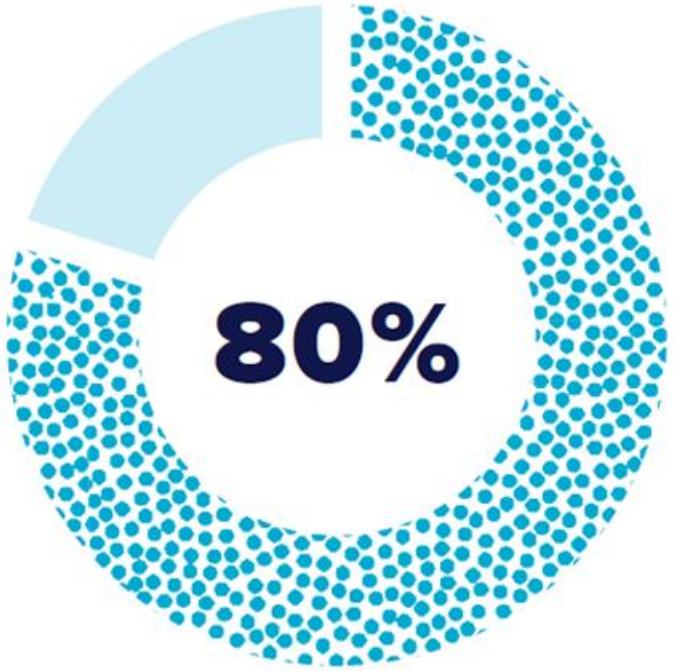
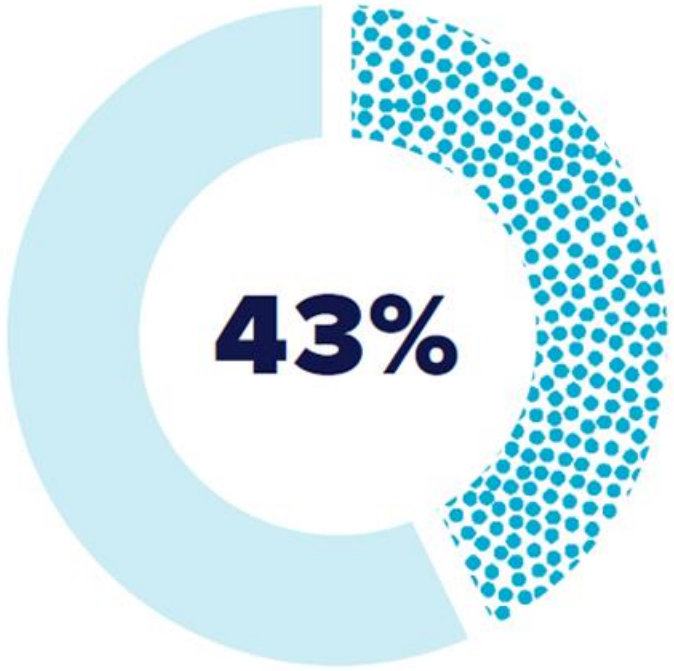
The likelihood that schools were identified for support—and thus, eligible for extra federal funding to help them improve—varied widely by state.

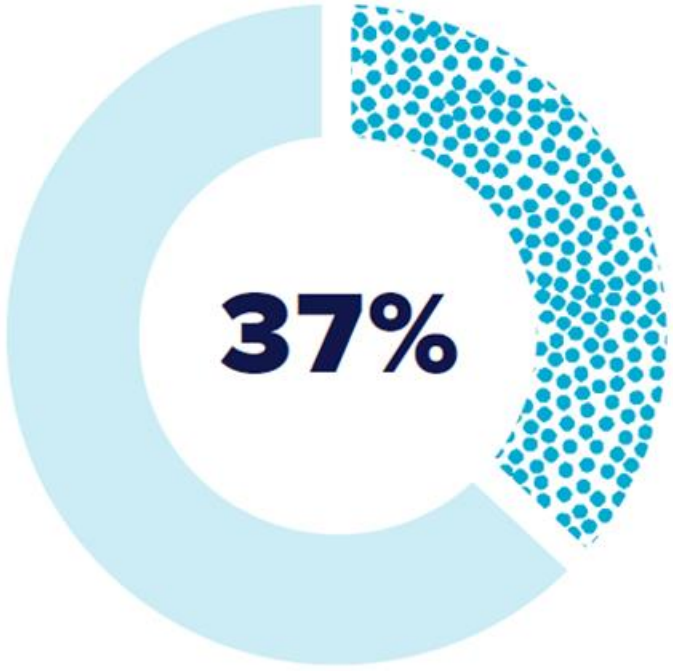
Worse, the lowest-rated schools—which predominantly serve **students of color**—were often **overlooked** for support.



80% of Michigan schools in the bottom 5% of the index were not identified for comprehensive or targeted support.

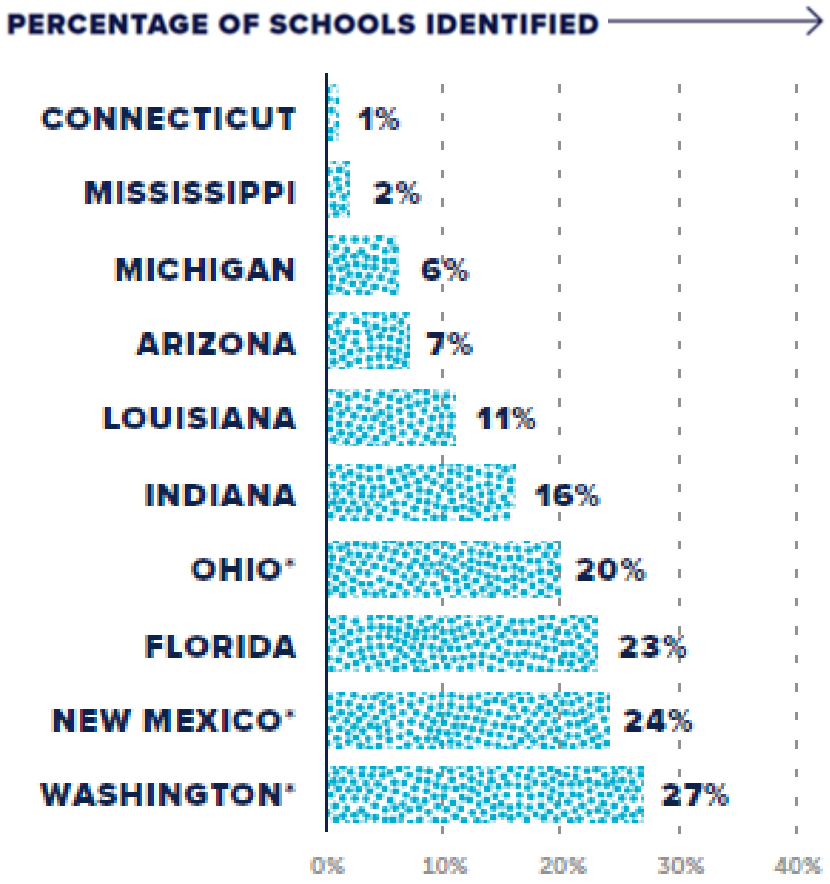


43% of Mississippi F schools were not identified for comprehensive or targeted support.

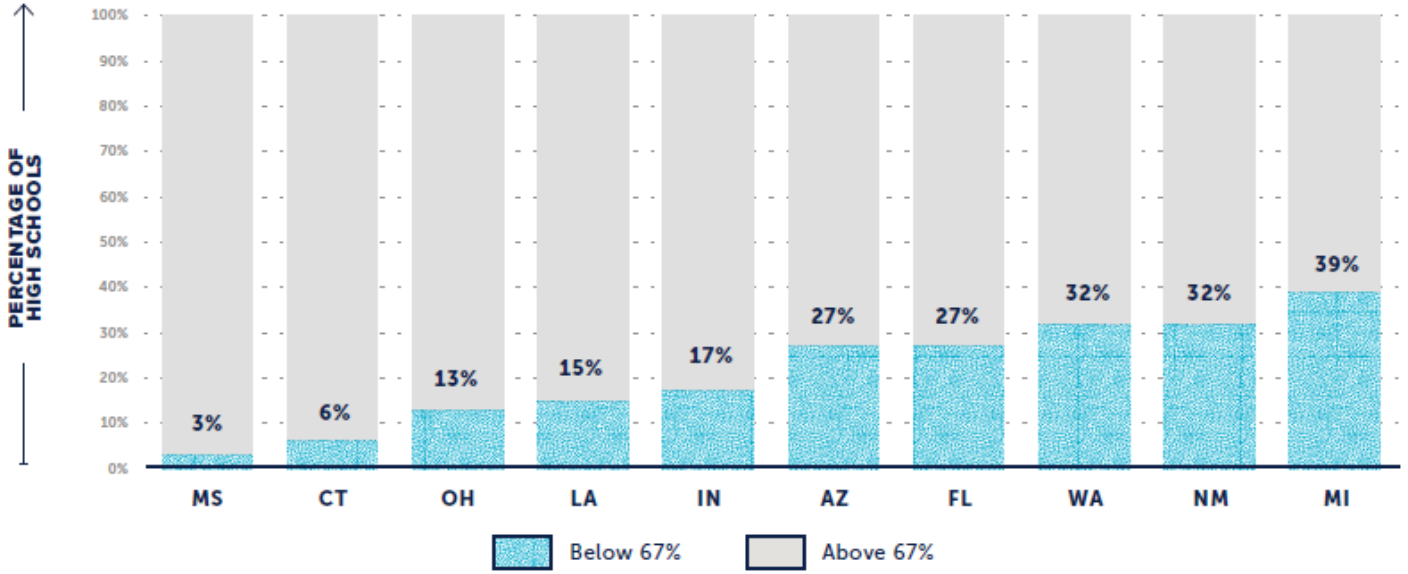


37% of Connecticut schools in the bottom 5% of the index were not identified for comprehensive or targeted support.

The percentage of high schools identified because of low graduation rates also varied by state.

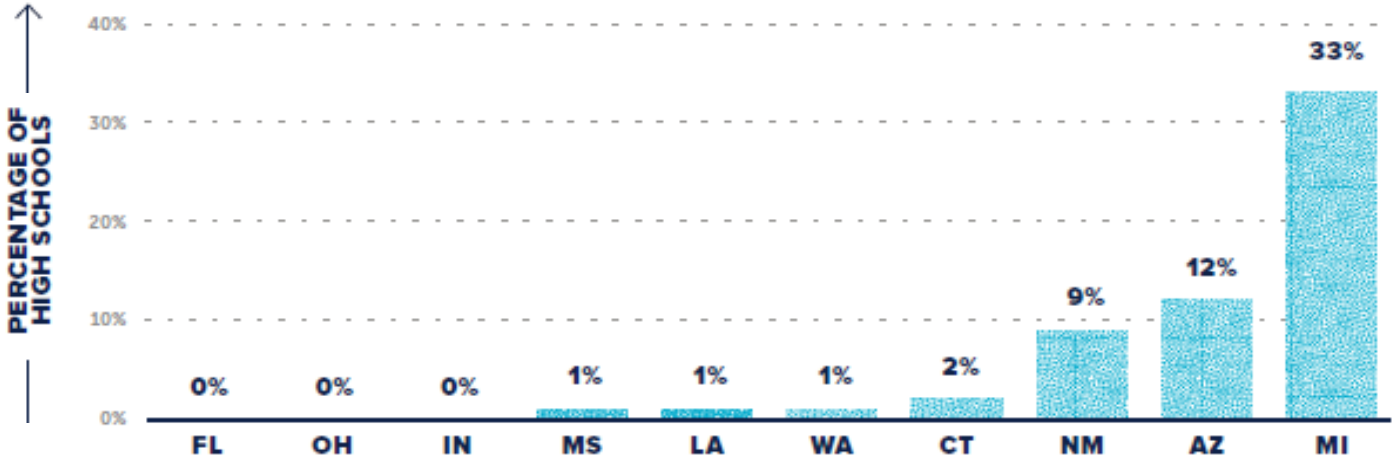


This was mostly due to differences in graduation rates between states...



... but also because of state choices that excluded some schools from support.

FIGURE 6. HOW MANY HIGH SCHOOLS WITH FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES BELOW 67% WERE NOT IDENTIFIED FOR CSI?



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What do we know now?

- Five years in, states are doing a wildly varied job of implementing ESSA in terms of serving students of color and students from low-income families.
- Given that these students have also been disproportionately affected by instructional loss and trauma stemming from the pandemic:
  - ✓ States must prioritize these students in reopening and recovery plans and direct supports to the schools that serve them. Congress must also provide significant, additional COVID-19 relief, targeting funds to high-need schools and students.
  - ✓ States must continue to measure students' academic progress, including by administering statewide assessments, to gauge the degree of learning loss.
  - ✓ Where current accountability systems fall short, states should use last year's "pause" to make their systems more equitable.

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For more information, visit:

www.all4ed.org/when-equity-is-optional

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