



February 13, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cassidy,

LEAP Innovations appreciates the opportunity to respond to your January 2026 Request for Information, “Informing Parents and Policymakers Through School-Level Academic Growth Indicators,” and for your attention to this critical issue. Our deep work on personalized learning implementation and measurement in K-12 has demonstrated the importance of actionable, nuanced measures of student growth. Our comments respond to questions #2 and #4 of the RFI regarding support for state innovation and communication to families.

For background, LEAP Innovations is a national nonprofit that partners with schools and districts to design and scale engaging, personalized, and future-ready learning. Since 2014, we have worked with more than 450 school systems across 24 states, supporting educators and leaders to implement research-based practices that have reached over 425,000 students. Our LEAP Learning Framework translates decades of learning science into a model for high-quality personalized learning, while the LEAP Learner Engagement Survey provides research-validated insights into the daily learning experience, helping school systems measure engagement, identify gaps, and prioritize strategies that improve outcomes. We equip education systems with proven tools, professional learning, and implementation support to ensure meaningful classroom impact. LEAP is also a proud member of the America Forward Coalition, a network of more than 100 of the nation’s most impactful nonprofit organizations advancing evidence-based public policies that expand opportunity and move America forward.

Recommendation #1: Leverage Complementary Measures of Growth

First, we recommend that federal policymakers **support states in leveraging complementary measures alongside traditional academic indicators as a key tool to measure growth in an actionable way.** As the RFI describes, there are numerous limitations to leveraging test scores as the sole measure of student growth. In our experience, the use of additional measures and aligned practices, including personalized learning, can help illuminate opportunities to make progress when growth is stagnant – and even when achievement levels are relatively high.

The federal government should support states, districts, and schools in designing, validating, and implementing complementary measures alongside the standard achievement measures under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This support would build on the extensive research and development that organizations like LEAP and our partners have conducted, helping to refine and scale such measures of student engagement, agency and durable skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, collaborative, adaptability, creativity). The federal government could leverage resources aligned with the Innovation Assessment Pilot authority to support state experimentation; invest in practitioner-focused R&D under the Institute of Education Sciences to establish and refine such metrics; and utilize innovative funding sources such as the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) tiered evidence program to implement and scale the use of such assessments.

Recommendation #2: Support the Effective Use of Learner Engagement Surveys

Second, **federal policymakers should support states in empowering districts to conduct school and class-level learner engagement surveys.** These surveys can provide critical context to help school leaders, educators, families, and students identify strengths, misalignment, and opportunities for improvement alongside traditional growth measures of achievement. For example, validated surveys like the LEAP Learner Engagement ask both students and teachers about their perspectives on the daily experience and belonging, engagement and other conditions in the classroom. Timely results enable leaders to align resources and professional learning to leverage strengths and support areas for growth before they show up in behavior or test scores.

We have seen the tremendous impact of this approach.¹ Since 2015, LEAP has supported the administration of the LEAP Learner Engagement Survey for schools and districts across 24 states, ranging from Louisiana to Vermont, leveraging deep research validated by expert research partners including the American Institutes for Research, SRI International, the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, and Resonant Education.

Conclusion

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations with your team. My contact information is jessica.paulsen@leapinnovations.org.

Thank you,

Jessica Paulsen
President, Innovation and Impact
LEAP Innovations

¹ See more information at <https://www.leapinnovations.org/survey>.