PLUS PROGRAM · ALIGNMENT GUIDE · TITLE I SCHOOLWIDE

PLUS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

ESSA TITLE I, PART A SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAM IN THE CALIFORNIA SPSA

SIDE-BY-SIDE LANGUAGE FOR GRANT WRITERS. ADAPT EVERY BRACKET TO YOUR SCHOOL.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Title I, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an ongoing federal formula program. Funds reach schools through their district each year, and there is no application window. A Title I school may run a schoolwide program when at least 40 percent of its students come from low-income families. A schoolwide program upgrades the whole school's program rather than serving only identified students. In California, the schoolwide plan is consolidated into the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). The School Site Council (SSC) develops and approves the SPSA, and the local governing board approves it. Every activity in a schoolwide program must be evidence-based. As of October 31, 2026, schools are running their 2026-27 SPSAs. Most will draft the 2027-28 plan in spring 2027.

> **Writer's note on federal funding.** Title I, Part A is funded for the 2026-27 school year. The President's 2027 budget request keeps Title I grants level, while the House 2027 bill would cut them by about 10 percent. Congress has not made a final decision, and a temporary funding bill runs through December 11, 2026. Confirm your school's 2027-28 allocation before the school site council approves the budget. In California, the school site council develops the SPSA and recommends it to the governing board for approval (Education Code 64001).

This guide follows ESSA Section 1114 and the SPSA sections that carry its requirements: Educational Partner Involvement, the comprehensive needs assessment, Goal and Identified Need, Annual Measurable Outcomes, Strategies/Activities, the evidence requirement, approval and the Annual Review. Each table shows what the schoolwide plan asks for, where PLUS fits, and sample language you can adapt. The sample language uses brackets for the details only your school can supply. Replace every bracket with your own data and rewrite the language in your school's voice. Many districts use planning software that prints these sections with its own headings. Keep the section names your district uses.

> **Writer's note.** Use the rows that fit your school. A strong SPSA goal shows PLUS working inside your schoolwide tiered model for behavior and your work with students at risk. It does not claim that PLUS raises test scores or covers every plan requirement.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNER INVOLVEMENT (ESSA SECTION 1114(B)(2))

The plan must be developed with parents and community members, teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals and administrators. Federal law adds students in secondary schools where appropriate. In California, students are part of the plan because a high school's school site council must include students (Education Code 65000) and the council develops the SPSA (Education Code 64001).

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Student involvement in a secondary school	PLUS cycle reports give the SSC documented student input nine times a year. Each report states the top four critical issues the Forum identified, the Direction results behind them and the activities the PLUS Team carried out.	*"Starting in [2027-28], the SSC will receive each PLUS cycle report at its regular meetings. The reports will give the council documented student input throughout the year."*
Input from parents and site advisory groups	Direction runs parent surveys by QR code. Some PLUS Teams host evening Forums for families.	*"The [ELAC] reviewed Direction student and parent results at its [March] meeting. Families asked that newcomer students be part of any student team, and the plan reflects that request."*

> **Writer's note.** Show how you gathered student input, who reviewed it and what changed as a result. Name the meetings where the SSC will see PLUS data.

COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (ESSA SECTION 1114(B)(6))

The plan must rest on a comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school, with attention to students failing or at risk of failing. The school must document its process, results and conclusions.

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Data on the whole school	Direction surveys a new representative sample of less than 10 percent of the campus with the same questions each cycle. It measures the student body, not individual students. A question asked across schools to more than 250 students sets a norm.	*"In a [February 2027] Direction pilot, [10.8] percent of sampled students reported being bullied on campus in the last 30 days, above the [6] percent norm for grades 9 to 12."*

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Attention to students at risk	Direction results can be viewed by grade level and student group. Compare them with attendance and discipline data for the same groups.	*"English learners at [School] have a chronic absenteeism rate of [31.2] percent. Direction results by student group showed higher rates of exclusion among [English learners and newcomer students]."*
Root causes and conclusions	Forums tell the school what students see behind the numbers.	*"Students linked conflict and exclusion between students to missed school. The PBIS and MTSS teams reviewed behavior and attendance data each month without student input to explain it."*

GOAL AND IDENTIFIED NEED

The SPSA states each goal and the need behind it. The goal should align with an LCAP goal.

SPSA ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
A goal tied to the needs assessment	PLUS supports goals for a safe and connected campus, attendance and engagement. Direction has an Attendance and Engagement category.	*"By June [2028], [School] will reduce chronic absenteeism and suspensions and increase student connection to adults on campus. Students will gather data on campus patterns and lead the response alongside adults through the PLUS Program."*
The identified need	State the specific finding from your needs assessment.	*"Chronic absenteeism at [School] is [6.6] points above the district high school rate. One in nine sampled students reported being bullied on campus in the last 30 days."*

ANNUAL MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

The SPSA sets metrics with a baseline and an expected outcome for one year. CDE notes that the baseline is updated each year.

SPSA ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Metrics the SSC can track during the year	Direction supplies monthly measures in the "last 30 days" form, so each item measures experiences. Cycle reports document implementation. Do not use reading scores or academic achievement as PLUS outcomes.	*"Sampled students reporting they were bullied on campus in the last 30 days (Direction, average of nine cycles): baseline [10.8] percent, expected outcome [8.5] percent."*
Metrics for identified student groups	Pair a Direction measure with attendance or discipline data for the groups your needs assessment named.	*"Chronic absenteeism, English learners (DataQuest): baseline [31.2] percent, expected outcome [27.0] percent."*

STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES (ESSA SECTION 1114(B)(7)(A))

The plan must describe the strategies the school will use. Section 1114(b)(7)(A)(iii) lists activities that address the needs of all students, especially those at risk.

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Opportunities for all children, including each subgroup (Section 1114(b)(7)(A)(i))	The PLUS cycle serves the whole campus. The Advisor selects the PLUS Team to reflect the student body, including English learners and newcomer students. Members are not elected and hold no offices.	*"Strategy [3.1]: Implement the PLUS Program as a year-long class section with a PLUS Team of 25 to 30 students selected to reflect the student body. The team runs the 30-day cycle nine times a year for the whole campus."*
A schoolwide tiered model to prevent and address problem behavior (Section 1114(b)(7)(A)(iii)(III))	This is the main fit. PLUS gives the PBIS and MTSS teams monthly student data on bullying, harassment, exclusion and fights. The PLUS Advisor serves on those teams.	*"The PLUS Advisor will bring each cycle's data to the PBIS and MTSS teams and carry their decisions back to the class. This links student voice to the tiered supports the school already runs."*
Counseling, school-based mental health programs, specialized instructional support services and mentoring (Section 1114(b)(7)(A)(iii)(I))	PLUS does not provide these services. The PLUS Team can serve as a liaison that promotes the wellness center and reduces stigma. Students do not counsel or mediate their peers.	*"Strategy [3.3]: The PLUS Team will promote the school wellness center through QR code campaigns and self-referral information. Counseling and mental health services remain with [school counselors and partner agency]."*

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Professional development for teachers and other staff (Section 1114(b)(7)(A)(iii)(IV))	The PLUS staff team attends the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training. The Advisor attends the PLUS Advisor Institute each June in Temecula.	*"Strategy [3.2]: Send the PLUS staff team to the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training and the Advisor to the June PLUS Advisor Institute."*
Coordination with other federal, state and local services, including violence prevention (Section 1114(b)(5))	PLUS connects to the school safety plan, PBIS, MTSS and the wellness center rather than standing alone.	*"PLUS cycle reports will go to the school safety committee and will inform the annual update of the comprehensive school safety plan."*

> **Writer's note.** Section 1114(b)(7)(A) also covers an enriched and accelerated curriculum, preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, and transitions from preschool. PLUS does not address those items. Leave them to the strategies that do. Write each description so an SSC parent can picture what happens on campus.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

CDE states that every activity, strategy and intervention in a schoolwide program must be evidence-based, supported by strong, moderate or promising evidence or by a documented rationale.

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Evidence for each strategy	PLUS meets the ESSA standard for moderate evidence (ESSA Tier 2, which CDE calls Level 2) for improving attendance. A quasi-experimental study in the Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness compared 153 students in a year-long PLUS elective at six high schools in one California district with similar peers. Participation significantly improved attendance.	*"Strategy [3.1] meets the ESSA standard for moderate evidence. A quasi-experimental study using propensity score matching found that participation in a year-long PLUS elective significantly improved attendance."*

SCHOOLWIDE PLAN ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Research that fits the goal	A 2022 study in the Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion examined how integrating youth participatory action research into schoolwide PBIS can prevent bullying and improve school climate. University research teams at UC Berkeley, the University of Oregon and the University of Florida continue to study PLUS.	*"Related research examines PLUS inside schoolwide PBIS as a strategy to prevent bullying and improve school climate."*

SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL AND BOARD APPROVAL

The SSC develops and approves the SPSA, and the local governing board approves it. A schoolwide expenditure must appear in the plan.

SPSA ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
SSC approval of the plan and its expenditures	PLUS costs appear in the Strategies/Activities table with their funding sources.	*"The SSC reviewed Strategies [3.1 to 3.3] and their proposed expenditures on [date] and recommended the plan to the governing board."*
Board approval	A spring SSC vote and a June board approval leave time to register the Advisor for the June Advisor Institute.	*"The [District] governing board approved the [2027-28] SPSA on [date]."*

ANNUAL REVIEW

A schoolwide program must evaluate its implementation and results each year and revise the plan as needed. In the SPSA, the Analysis describes implementation and effectiveness, differences between planned and actual spending, and any changes to the goal.

SPSA ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Implementation and effectiveness of each strategy	The year's cycle reports give the SSC a month-by-month record of what students found and what the campus did in response.	*"The SSC used the year's nine cycle reports, Direction trends and DataQuest attendance and discipline data to evaluate Strategies [3.1 to 3.3]."*

SPSA ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Changes for the next plan	Direction trends show which issues improved and which persisted.	*"Direction trends showed [exclusion between students declining and vaping on campus rising in spring]. The [2028-29] plan adds [a Direction vaping measure and a related campus activity]."*

BUDGET LANGUAGE

LINE	SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION
PLUS Advisor, 0.1 to 0.2 FTE	"Funds the PLUS Advisor at [0.2] FTE. 0.1 FTE can get the job done. 0.2 FTE is recommended because the extra 0.1 FTE lets the Advisor collaborate on the PBIS, MTSS and school safety teams. In this plan the class section is funded from [LCFF supplemental and concentration] and the collaboration time from Title I, Part A."
PLUS Program, first year ($3,495 per site)	"Funds the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training for a staff team of up to four, the online subscription with unlimited Direction and the activity resource database, the PLUS curriculum and one conference registration."
PLUS Program, each year after ($1,495 per site with a three-year agreement)	"Continues the subscription, one conference registration and one 2-Day training registration for a new staff member each year."
PLUS Advisor Institute ($1,495 registration plus lodging and travel)	"Prepares the PLUS Advisor to teach the PLUS class and lead its activities through the year."

Writer's note. Title I funds must supplement, not supplant, state and local funds, and each cost must be reasonable, necessary and allocable. Your district applies its own supplement-not-supplant methodology under ESSA Section 1118(b). Confirm with your Title I office how to fund the Advisor's time before the SSC votes. A schoolwide program may also consolidate federal, state and local funds. If your district consolidates, your budget may show PLUS under consolidated schoolwide funds instead of separate Title I and LCFF lines.

Writer's note. The full sample plan for a fictional school, Mission Creek High School in Del Arroyo Unified School District, on the Funding PLUS page shows these pieces assembled into one SPSA goal. Confirm prices at plusprogram.org/costs before you finalize the budget.

SOURCES

- CDE: Title I, Part A Schoolwide Program Requirements
- CDE: Schoolwide Programs

- CDE: SPSA Plan Summary for Federal School Improvement Planning
- CDE: Planning for the LCAP and School Plan
- 20 U.S.C. 6314, schoolwide programs (ESSA Section 1114)
- PLUS Program Costs