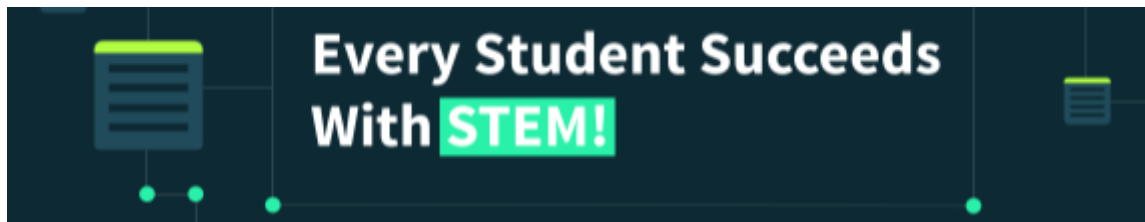


Every Student Succeeds with STEM Op-Ed/Commentary Toolkit

As states continue to develop new plans under ESSA, all members of the STEM community have an opportunity to (1) share why STEM is essential in ESSA and (2) highlight individual stories from states and programs. One vehicle to achieve this is by writing an **opinion piece or Op-Eds** – also known as a commentary.

The Op-Ed Toolkit provides you with tips for writing and placing your commentary piece, as well as sample language to start your draft. The Toolkit includes the following sections:

- [Messaging Guidance](#)
- [Messaging Architecture](#)
- [Tips for Op-Ed Placement](#)
- [Sample Op-Ed/Commentary Piece](#)

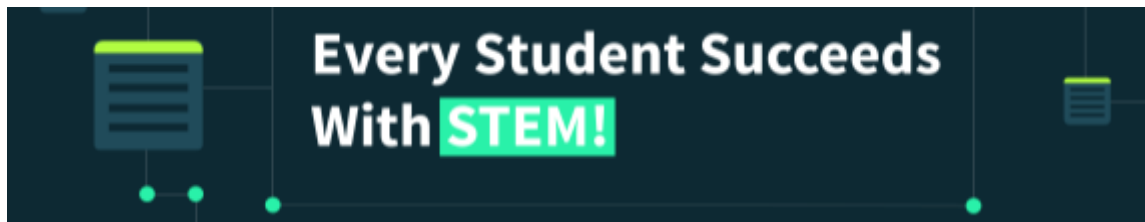


Messaging Guidance

Below are several important messages on why STEM matters and how STEM is an important part of ESSA.

What should I be saying about STEM and ESSA?

- STEM education helps ensure students have the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life.
- ESSA puts a greater emphasis on ensuring a **well-rounded education** and **ensuring equity**—and high-quality **STEM education opportunities are essential** to achieving both these goals.
- High-quality STEM education is essential to a **well-rounded education** for all students.
- Increased access to STEM learning promotes greater **opportunity, fairness, and equity**.
- In today's economy, **employers are looking for workers with STEM skills**.
- That's why **Making STEM a priority in every state under the new Every Student Succeeds Act** can help ensure all our children have the opportunity for not only a great education, but also to pursue the college or career pathway of their choice.



Messaging Architecture

Below are several tips for creating a successful messaging architecture.

How should I structure my op-ed?

In 2016, twenty 100Kin10 partners collectively developed [*Plagiarize this: A user friendly guide to talking about college- and career-ready standards with just about anyone.*](#) The toolkit was designed to help readers have more inspired conversations with teachers, parents, and the general public about college- and career-ready standards. Despite the focus on standards, the toolkit includes research-based information and framing for how to effectively design and deliver messages to your audience.

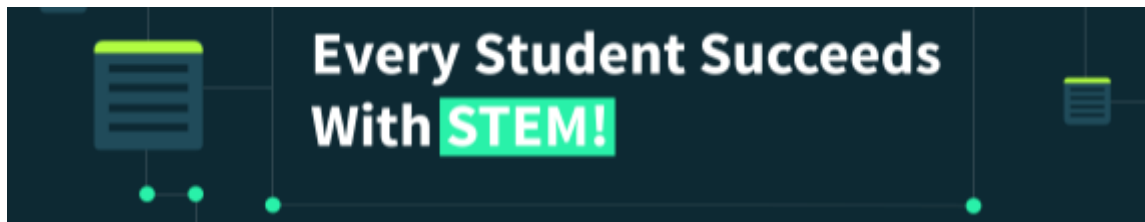
Included in the toolkit is a messaging architecture¹ built on research conducted by Dr. Drew Westen, a professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Emory University and a strategic messaging consultant. Dr. Westen's research concluded that successful messages use an architecture that enables you to:

1. Connect around shared values and emphasize with lived experiences
2. Acknowledge concerns
3. Prepare for potential misperceptions
4. Connect your audience's values to your solution
5. Establish context and credibility
6. Avoid exacerbating conflict and confusion

Plagiarize this also includes seven frameworks (including narratives and talking points) for how to speak about shared values, as well as an in-depth section of sample content that walks the reader through how to use compose commonly-used pieces, such as op-eds, emails, blog posts, and speeches.

Email info@100Kin10.org to access the toolkit.

¹ 100Kin10. *Plagiarize this: A user-friendly guide to talking about college- and career-ready standards with just about anyone.* Pages 8-14.



Tips for Op-Ed Placement

Below are several tips you can use as you: (1) reach out to media, (2) draft your op-ed, and (3) submit your commentary.

How to Reach Out to Media:

1. Start by identifying your target outlets
 - a. Think about who your audience is – who do you want to reach with your key messages?
2. Find the contact information for the editor
3. Reach out to the editor and ask if they would be interested in your op-ed
 - a. They may have specific suggestions for the frame of the piece

How to Write Your Op-Ed:

1. Start by using the template included in this toolkit!
2. Be sure to add stories and make the op-ed personal
3. You can use data to bolster the stories you include
 - a. However, you don't want to use too many data points as the piece will lose that personal feel
4. Try to get a co-author for the op-ed
 - a. Co-authors can add credibility to your piece or offer a unique perspective on the topic

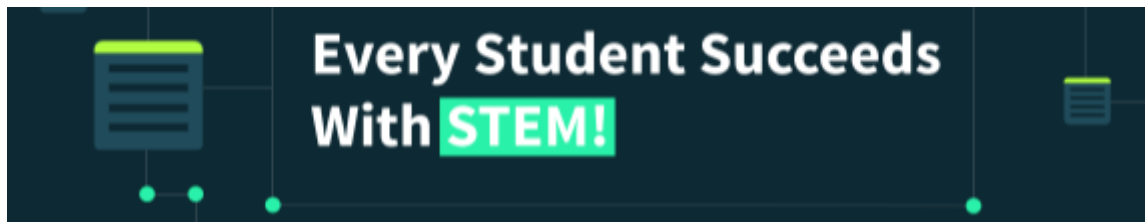
How to Submit Your Op-Ed:

1. Submit the op-ed to the editor
 - a. Submit the piece in the body of an email, not as an attachment
 - b. Call the editor to let them know you've submitted the op-ed
 - c. Note that they may come back with edits; respond within 24 hours
2. If you don't hear back from the editor within a few days, call them back and send a follow-up email
3. If the editor does not respond after two weeks, email them giving a deadline to respond
 - a. If the editor does not respond or declines the piece, submit it to another outlet

Remember to Track Your Impact: Share any responses you receive with us via:

Twitter: @success_STEM

Email: successwithSTEM@100Kin10.org



Sample Op-Ed/Commentary Piece

The purpose of this sample Op-Ed piece is to frame the issue – (1) explain why we’re talking about ESSA and STEM; (2) convince that STEM is an essential part of ESSA goals, not at cross purposes or an add-on, and (3) make a call to action to make STEM a priority.

This kind of framing and structure can be used for a variety of different messages. **A framing piece at this point in the process will help the engaged public understand the issue and elevate STEM in the conversation**, and could be especially helpful at a time of uncertainty to make clear that ESSA is moving forward.

Future opinion pieces (later this year as state plans progress) could move to more specific calls to action or policy recommendations.

Note this sample includes placeholder language and generic language to illustrate how to structure an op-ed like this. You should modify this sample and carefully review the text as you make it your own!

Audience: State leaders, the engaged public, stakeholders who will advocate for STEM in ESSA

Author: Organization leader, perhaps paired with a business leader.

Headline suggestions: Offer a headline with your Op-Ed that highlights student success with STEM or STEM and ESSA

Every student deserves a great education, one in which they gain skills they need to succeed in school, work and life. Now more than ever before that success depends on ensuring students learn how to think critically, solve problems, work collaboratively – the skills that are needed for virtually every job in the future and which prepare young people for success no matter what career path they choose in this rapidly changing world.

Open the piece making a connection with the audience on a shared common purpose – student success.

That’s why students need more education in STEM than ever before. High-quality STEM education—science, technology, engineering, and math—helps ensure students learn the skills that are in such high demand in today’s workforce. STEM jobs are among the fastest-growing and highest-paying jobs in America. And even if a young person never dons a lab coat or develops software, STEM is still essential: by some estimates, nearly 80 percent of all new jobs created nationwide over the next decade will require STEM skills.

Why STEM matters – to students, employers and the economy

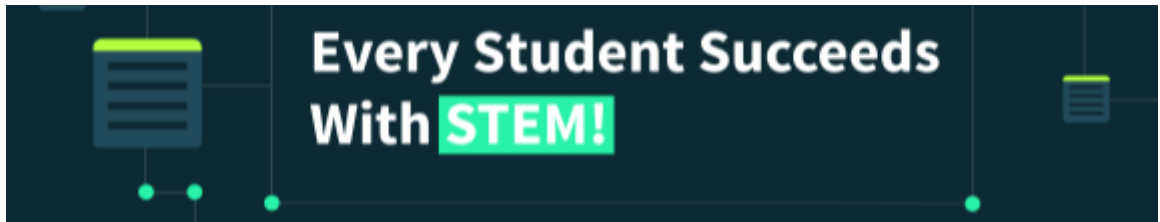
Early in the piece, it is good to suggest the urgency of issue.

It’s no wonder that 95% of parents say they want STEM to be a priority in school – yet fewer than half think it is. But we have a unique opportunity to change that right now – and the STEM community is working to help make that happen. [OUR ORGANIZATION/ COALITION] is working to ensure more students have more STEM learning opportunities. We want to ensure that great STEM teaching and great STEM learning are a priority in every state across the nation under the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We believe **Every Student Succeeds with STEM.**

It is important to introduce yourself and establish your credibility: who you are, and what you do for students.

ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as the nation’s education law. While the new law continues to require challenging academic standards and accountability systems in every state, it explicitly calls for all students to have access to a well-rounded education, and puts greater

Many readers will need explanation of what ESSA is. This section defines ESSA



emphasis than before on ensuring equity. STEM opportunities are critical to achieving both those goals.

STEM is more than a specific set of classes. Through strong, relevant, and active STEM learning, students gain essential skills, stay engaged in school and the future, and experience the power of experimentation, learning from failure, and perseverance—all essential elements of a well-rounded education, which along with education in the arts, civics and other academic areas, are key to a productive, fulfilling life.

And increased access to STEM learning promotes greater opportunity and equity. Too many students are being left out and left behind in today’s economy. Women and people of color are underrepresented in STEM occupations. Providing all students, not just a few, opportunities to gain these skills – no matter what a student’s background or where they live – helps promote equity.

ESSA also includes a significant shift of decision-making to the state and local levels, providing states with flexibility to set new policy and funding priorities. Right now our state, like every state across the country, is developing our first ever ESSA Consolidated State Plan, which will set out our state priorities in K-12 education as we put the new law into action in the 2017-18 school year. As our state develops new plans under ESSA, we have an important role to play to keep STEM teaching and learning a top priority for students.

Here in STATE, we have a [*proud tradition of / desperate need for*] STEM education. [State specific context added here could include: a state-specific stat on STEM needs; STEM education or economic success to date; reference an existing state STEM plan or vision; reference to STEM in the Governors State of the State.]

Our State Board of Education, State Superintendent and Governor can help make that vision a reality by insisting that STEM is a top priority and creating an ESSA plan that reflects the importance of STEM education for our state. In addition to making a clear commitment in our state plan to STEM education, we believe there are four specific areas that should be included:

- We must ensure equitable access to high level STEM courses such as computer science and advanced math, so all students regardless of income or geography have access to the opportunities these subjects provide;
- We should use federal funding to increase teacher recruitment, preparation and professional development, with a focus on active learning methods;
- STEM should be included as part of the new school accountability system as part of the career readiness measure;
- We should use the new federal Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants to provide schools and districts the resources to expand access to STEM education, technology and programs that support a well-rounded education.

Making STEM a priority in every state under the new Every Student Succeeds Act will help ensure all our children have the opportunity for not only a great education, but also to pursue the college or career pathway of their choice. We urge our state leaders to seize this opportunity to set our state on a path to provide greater opportunities for our students in school and work today – and our economic prosperity for the future.

and does so in a way that presents STEM is central to it...

...How STEM is central to a well-rounded education in the 21st Century. ...

... And how STEM can help promote equity

Some audience will need an explanation of ESSA plans and the state’s leadership role in developing them. Depending on the state, some may wish to mention the stakeholder process

For state networks and those writing to influence state policy, state-specific context goes here.

In this section, lay out the specific actions you want someone to take.

These are broad policy areas to advocate for. Any state-specific policy agenda should be used here.

The suggestions listed here are topics that have been raised on our webinars or in policy guidance memo, and which some partners have used in their stakeholder comments.

Close with a Call to Action In some op-eds, the call to action will be different - to invite stakeholders to get involved in the effort, for example.