

STRUCTURES FOR SCHOOL SUPPORTS IN THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

BACKGROUND

On Dec. 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed S. 1177 into law as P.L. 114-95. Now known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the legislation reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known until recently as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is Congress's first legislative overhaul of federal education policy since 2002. NCLB was extensively criticized for setting unrealistic goals and placing too much authority over education policy in the hands of the federal government. ESSA shifts more of that authority back to states and school districts. Important provisions in the bill include the creation of state-designed accountability systems (and the elimination of the Adequate Yearly Progress metric), greater authority over how testing is used in evaluation of students, and “guardrail” policies to ensure the lowest-performing schools and groups of students are not ignored.

SCHOOL SUPPORT PROVISIONS

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants are authorized by ESSA in Title IV. These grants, provided to states—95 percent of which is subgranted to local educational agencies (LEAs)—in the same proportional allotments as made in the Title I Part A grants, are intended as flexible funding to be used for a wide variety of programs. Three broad categories of uses are mentioned in the bill:

- Activities to support well-rounded educational opportunities.
- Activities to support safe and healthy students.
- Activities to support the effective use of technology.



Four existing, currently-funded programs were consolidated within the SSAE grant program: Advanced Placement, the Physical Education Program, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, and the Math and Science Partnership Program.

The range of allowable uses covers everything from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and arts/music instruction, to foreign language instruction, to providing safe and drug-free environments, to providing computer-based assessments and blended learning strategies in the classroom.

The SSAE grants are authorized at \$1.65 billion for FY 2017 and \$1.6 billion for each of FYs 2018 through 2020.

School Improvement

Replacing the School Improvement Grants (SIGs) as they existed under NCLB is another change to the school support structure in ESSA. The SIGs were previously capped at a 4 percent set-aside from Title I Part A dollars. Under ESSA, that set-aside number would rise to either 7 percent of those Title I dollars or the sum of their FY 2016 set-aside and any extra dollars received, whichever is greater.



Under NCLB, the SIGs were to be used by LEAs on schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years. In ESSA, the turnaround model is shifted to one largely determined by the states. However, intervention would still be required in at least:

- Schools in the bottom 5 percent of performers on the state-determined indicators.
- High schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students.
- Any school in which a subgroup of students is consistently underperforming.

States must either use 95 percent of these improvement dollars to provide subgrants to LEAs or, with the agreement of the LEA impacted, directly provide or arrange for provision of the relevant services. Further information on these grants are expected from the U.S. Department of Education in early 2016.

Resources

[Text of S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)

[NCSL Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)

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