

Title IV, Part A of ESSA: Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants

Description of Grants

The newly enacted bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes a flexible block grant program under Title IV Part A, which is authorized at \$1.65 billion in FY 2017. Title IV, Part A authorizes activities in three broad areas:

- 1) Providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g. college and career counseling, STEM, arts, civics, IB/AP)
- 2) Supporting safe and healthy students (e.g. comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices, health and physical education) and
- 3) Supporting the effective use of technology (professional development, blended learning, devices).

Distribution of Funds

Each state will receive an allocation based on the Title I funding formula. Using the same Title I formula, the states will then allocate funds to school districts.

Any school district that receives a formula allocation above \$30,000 must conduct a needs assessment and then must expend 20 percent of its grant on safe and healthy school activities and 20 percent on activities to provide a well-rounded education programs. The remaining 60% of the money can be spent on all three priorities, including technology. However, there is a 15% cap on devices, equipment, software and digital content.

If a district receives an allocation below \$30,000, the law does not require a needs assessment or setting aside percentages for well-rounded and safe and healthy students programs. It must spend money on activities in at least one of the three categories. The 15 percent technology purchase cap would continue to apply.

President's FY17 Budget Request

The President's FY 2017 budget proposal would provide \$500 million for the Title IV flexible block grant, less than one-third of the authorized \$1.65 billion level. The Administration also requested to include language in the appropriations bill that would allow states to distribute \$50,000 per year to districts on a competitive basis and would allow states to limit their spending to just one of the three listed priorities, or specific activities within one of the priorities.

Since the Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants program is the third largest authorized program in ESSA, failing to adequately fund it, as the President's FY 2017 budget proposes to do, will undermine the bipartisan Congressional intent in passing this important law.

Program Funding Need

Strong evidence demonstrates the need for students to have access to health and safety programs, a diversity of academic programs, and modern technology.

- Evidence supports a direct correlation between physical and mental health and learning that is essential to academic success, school completion, and the development of healthy, resilient, and productive citizens. Schools are uniquely positioned to help students acquire life-long knowledge and skills through comprehensive health education, physical education, nutrition, comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services, counseling, and integration among all education and health programs.
- In order to prepare students to succeed, they need access to a well-rounded curriculum. Funds through the block grant will help schools expand music, art, STEM, computer science, accelerated learning, history, and civics courses, as well as expand access to college and career guidance and counseling.

- Federal investments in education technology ensure schools have technology-proficient educators, well equipped classrooms, sufficiently supported administrative structures, and a curriculum optimized to take advantage of the benefits technology offers to all students—such as closing the opportunity and learning gaps and providing students with essential modern workforce skills.

Given the elimination under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of numerous programs that support the overall health and safety of students, the investments in education technology, as well as helping districts ensure access to a well-rounded education, a robust federal investment in support of these programs is absolutely essential through Title IV Part A. Without a significant investment in Title IV, Part A, districts will be forced into choosing which of the priorities to invest in—even though an ample investment in all three is necessary to providing students with a comprehensive education.

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