

INTERNATIONAL  
**LITERACY**  
ASSOCIATION

**ADVOCACY TOOLKIT**

# Every Student Succeeds Act

International Literacy Association | 2016

## Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help International Literacy Association (ILA) members learn about the essential components of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly known as No Child Left Behind). The toolkit is designed to provide an overview of the updated law and a summary of the major provisions organized by title as well as an in-depth analysis of portions most pertinent to literacy instruction.

In particular, the toolkit explores Title I of ESSA, which outlines how funding for low-income school districts is allocated. The toolkit also delves into Title II, which outlines the funding that states and districts can use for teacher training and professional development as well as specific literacy programs. Other titles are also summarized.

The hope is that ILA members will use the toolkit as a resource to help educate themselves and others in order to advocate for policies, funding uses, and other priorities at the local and state level.

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## Definitions in ESSA—Relevant to Literacy Instruction

### Blended Learning

The term “blended learning” (as part of Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1—Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants) means a formal education program that leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches

- That include an element of online or digital learning, combined with supervised learning time, and student-led learning, in which the elements are connected to provide an integrated learning experience
- In which students are provided some control over time, path, or pace

### Comprehensive Literacy Instruction

The term “comprehensive literacy instruction” (as part of Title II, Part B, Subpart 2—Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation) means instruction that

- Includes developmentally appropriate, contextually explicit, and systematic instruction, and frequent practice, in reading and writing across content areas
- Includes age-appropriate, explicit, systematic, and intentional instruction in phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, language structure, reading fluency, and reading comprehension
- Includes age-appropriate, explicit instruction in writing, including opportunities for children to write with clear purposes, with critical reasoning appropriate to the topic and purpose, and with specific instruction and feedback from instructional staff
- Makes available and uses diverse, high-quality print materials that reflect the reading and development levels, and interests, of children
- Uses differentiated instructional approaches, including individual and small-group instruction and discussion
- Provides opportunities for children to use language with peers and adults in order to develop language skills, including developing vocabulary

- Includes frequent practice of reading and writing strategies
- Uses age-appropriate, valid, and reliable screening assessments, diagnostic assessments, formative assessment processes, and summative assessments to identify a child’s learning needs, to inform instruction, and to monitor the child’s progress and the effects of instruction
- Uses strategies to enhance children’s motivation to read and write and children’s engagement in self-directed learning
- Incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning
- Depends on teachers’ collaboration in planning, instruction, and assessing a child’s progress and on continuous professional learning
- Links literacy instruction to the challenging state academic standards, including the ability to navigate, understand, and write about complex print and digital subject matter

### **Evidence-Based Strategies**

The term “evidence-based,” when used with respect to a state, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that

- Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on
  - Strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study
  - Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study
  - Promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias
- Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention

### **Multitier System of Supports**

The term “multitier system of supports” as used in ESSA means a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students’ needs, with

regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making.

## **Professional Development**

The term “professional development” means activities that

- Are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging state academic standards
- Are sustained (not stand-alone, one-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused, and may include activities that
  - Improve and increase teachers’
    - Knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach
    - Understanding of how students learn
    - Ability to analyze student work and achievement from multiple sources, including how to adjust instructional strategies, assessments, and materials based on such analysis
  - Are an integral part of broad schoolwide and districtwide educational improvement plans
  - Allow personalized plans for each educator to address the educator’s specific needs identified in observation or other feedback
  - Improve classroom management skills
  - Support the recruitment, hiring, and training of effective teachers, including teachers who became certified through state and local alternative routes to certification
  - Advance teacher understanding of
    - Effective instructional strategies that are evidence based
    - Strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers
  - Are aligned with, and directly related to, academic goals of the school or local educational agency

- Are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, representatives of Indian tribes (as applicable), and administrators of schools to be served under this Act
- Are designed to give teachers of English learners (ELs), and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and assessments
- To the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers, principals, and other school leaders in the use of technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy), so that technology and technology applications are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and academic subjects in which the teachers teach
- As a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development
- Are designed to give teachers of children with disabilities or children with developmental delays, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and academic support services to those children, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, multitier system of supports, and use of accommodations
- Include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice
- Include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents and families
- Involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education, including, as applicable, Tribal Colleges and Universities as defined in section 316(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)), to establish school-based teacher, principal, and other school leader training programs that provide prospective teachers, novice teachers, principals, and other school leaders with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced

teachers, principals, other school leaders, and faculty of such institutions

- Create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under Part A of Title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers
- Provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in this paragraph that are designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom
- Where practicable, provide jointly for school staff and other early childhood education program providers to address the transition to elementary school, including issues related to school readiness

### **School Leader**

The term “school leader” means a principal, assistant principal, or other individual who is

- An employee or officer of an elementary school or secondary school, local educational agency, or other entity operating an elementary school or secondary school
- Responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in the elementary school or secondary school building

### **Universal Design for Learning**

The term “Universal Design for Learning” means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that

- Provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged
- Reduces barriers in instruction; provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges; and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient

## ESSA Overview

### Purpose and Introduction

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was first passed in 1965 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson. This major education bill was created in response to the growing need for the federal government to improve the quality of education for lower income students across the United States. ESEA is the major education law that governs how states and local education agencies spend federal dollars and conduct the education of millions of public school students from pre-K to 12th grade.

Since 1965, ESEA has been reauthorized eight times; prior to the 2015 reauthorization, the most recent reauthorization occurred in 2002, when President George W. Bush and Congress reauthorized ESEA and renamed it the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

NCLB represented a significant step forward for children in the United States in many respects, particularly as it “shined a light” on the progress of many subgroups of students that had been traditionally overlooked (i.e., low-income, students of color, ELs, and students with disabilities). The law was scheduled for revision in 2007; however, Congress could not agree on a final bill. Over time, NCLB’s mandates became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators.

In 2011, in response to Congress’s inability to reauthorize the law, the U.S. Department of Education allowed states to apply for ESEA waivers to help relieve states from the unworkable provisions of NCLB. While relieving states of requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools, it also generated a new set of challenges. Ultimately, 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were granted waivers.

Early in 2015, under the leadership of Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and their counterparts from the House Education and the Workforce Committee, Chairman John Kline (R-MN) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA), a carefully negotiated and bipartisan law was crafted. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was designed to reduce the role of the federal government in mandating state education policy and provides more fiscal flexibility.



In December 2015, the House passed ESSA by a vote of 359–64, and the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 85–12. President Barack Obama signed ESSA into law on December 10, 2015. Final regulations are still pending, and full implementation of the law is not required until fall 2017. More details regarding the new law and key dates to remember are shared in this toolkit.

## **Shifts From NCLB and ESEA Waivers**

ESEA waivers are in effect until August 1, 2016. From fall 2016 through fall 2017, states have a school year to transition from waivers to ESSA requirements. Now, under ESSA, it's official and even more specific that states are in charge of their Title I planning and accountability systems with some basic requirements and key guardrails that the U.S. Department of Education must oversee. The pendulum has swung away from federal mandates to federal monitoring and oversight.

The major shifts under ESSA are as follows:

- Reduces the role of the federal government
- Allows for more fiscal flexibility
- Eliminates requirement to implement state-designed teacher evaluation systems, link results to student test scores, or both
- Eliminates AYP and highly qualified teacher (HQT) provisions
- Shifts the focus from “college and career readiness” to “all children receive a high-quality education” and “closing student achievement gaps”
- Expands support for early learning and other factors affecting student learning, including literacy

## **ESSA: Essential Framework**

The basic architecture of ESSA is the same as current law. States must continue to test students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school in English language arts and mathematics. Science assessments are still required once in the three grade bands (3–5, 6–8, 9–12), and states are required to set “challenging academic standards that apply to all children and all public schools.” Schools, districts, and states must also continue to disaggregate student data by student subgroups and use this data as the basis for a state-designed accountability system.

Although ESSA mandates district and school intervention in the lowest performing 5% of schools and in high schools graduating fewer than 67% of students, it does not specify what the specific interventions should be; this is left to the state to define and determine with school districts.

The bottom line is: There is a *huge* shift that moves more authority regarding the design of accountability systems and interventions from the federal level to states and districts.

## **ESSA: New Provisions and Flexibility**

- New comprehensive birth–grade 12 literacy program: Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) authorized as a set aside of Title II National Program Activity funds
- Allows, but does not require, supplemental support services
- States must adopt language proficiency standards for ELs
- States determine the “evidence-based” interventions to implement in lowest performing schools; districts determine interventions and timing when subgroups lag behind
- Allows transfer of funds between Title II (Teacher/Principal Recruitment and Training) and Title IV (21st Century Schools); states decide use of resources
- State report cards require substantial, easy-to-understand information for the public (including parents)

The new literacy program is an exciting addition and was a priority of Ranking Member Murray (D-WA). ILA has worked as part of the Advocates for Literacy Coalition (made up of 60+ national organizations that support improved literacy instruction from birth to grade 12) for over eight years to help write, support, and advocate for LEARN’s inclusion in ESSA.

Other new provisions to note: The once-required “supplemental support services” such as after-school tutoring for struggling students in the lowest performing schools are no longer mandated. The funds attached to these services are now available to states to determine best use. New flexibility between state formula Title II and state-opted Title IV grant funding will provide an opportunity for ILA members to participate in priority setting for use of these funds at the local and state levels.

## ESSA Implementation Timeline

**May–August 2016:** U.S. Department of Education issuing draft regulations, soliciting comments from stakeholders, and finalizing regulations to submit for Congressional approval.

**August 1, 2016:** NCLB ESEA waivers end, and states will not be required to deliver follow-up actions previously required under waivers, unless related to areas covered by both NCLB and ESSA.

**October 1, 2016:** Effective date for changes to the funding for competitive grant programs in ESSA. If a competitive grant program is reauthorized or is “substantially similar to a previous program” that is in the middle of a multiyear grant cycle, then the funding of the grant will continue for the length of the grant award, subject to annual appropriations. A program that is no longer authorized will get only one more year of funding in fiscal year (FY) 2016 (subject to appropriations) and then it will end, even if there are years left in grants made by the program prior to reauthorization.

**October 1, 2016:** Effective date for Impact Aid (currently funded in FY 2017).

**October 2016:** Final regulations are published and go into effect.

**July 1, 2017:** Effective date for the changes to all formula programs under ESSA (e.g., Title I funding for disadvantaged students, Title II funding for educator supports, Title IV funding for well-rounded and student support programs).

**School Year 2017–2018:** All other ESSA provisions go into effect.

## Summaries of Major Title Provisions

### Title I: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Education Agencies

#### *Why Title I Matters*

Title I is Congress’s attempt to provide all children with the opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and to close achievement gaps. Title I is the largest program supporting elementary and secondary education across the United States. Monies from Title I flow first to states and then to local education agencies (LEAs) on the basis of the number of eligible low-income students. Title I is the vehicle that

drives state-designed accountability systems that include state standards, assessments, and new additional school quality indicator(s) that apply to all children in all schools.

Advocates should seek to become engaged in the required stakeholder engagement process that states must use to design and implement new Title I plans impacting schools and districts.

### **Overview**

State education agencies (SEAs) must submit state Title I plans to the U.S. Department of Education that outline their ability to meet federal requirements to receive Title I funding. The state plan applies to all traditional public and charter schools in the state. The following is a summary of the standards, assessments, and accountability provisions that states must comport with to receive Title I formula funding:

#### **Standards**

- States are required to adopt “challenging” academic standards.
- The standards must be aligned with the state higher education entrance requirements and allow a student to enter higher education without the need for remediation.
- The standards must be aligned with state career and technical education standards.
- States must adopt English proficiency standards.
- States may adopt alternate standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- The U.S. Secretary of Education is prohibited from mandating or encouraging states to choose a particular set of standards (including Common Core State Standards).

#### **Assessments**

- States must annually test students in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school.
- States must test 95% of students overall and by subgroup in each subject.
- States must develop an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. States must adhere to a cap on use of the alternate at 1% of all students by subject. ESSA prohibits development of additional alternate assessments.

- States must identify and make efforts to develop assessments in languages for ELs.
- States may use computer-adaptive testing.
- States may allow districts to use locally selected, nationally recognized tests in high school in lieu of state reading, math, or science assessment(s).
- States may create their own testing opt-out laws.
- Up to seven states will be invited to participate in a new assessment pilot to create further assessment flexibility under federal law. Details are forthcoming.

#### **Accountability Plans**

- States must submit accountability plans to the U.S. Department of Education. The new ESSA plans are effective in the 2017–2018 school year.

#### **Accountability Goals**

- States may set their own achievement goals—both the long-term goal and smaller, interim measures of progress. These goals must address proficiency on tests, English-language proficiency, and graduation rates.
- State-set goals must set an expectation that all groups that are furthest behind close gaps in achievement and graduation rates.

#### **Accountability Systems**

States design accountability systems to rate/rank schools and student subgroups in need of intervention and support. For a full description of the requirements and how schools are identified for support, see in-depth analysis of [Title I](#).

#### **School Performance**

States must identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement. For a full description of how states and districts support schools, see in-depth analysis of [Title I](#).

#### **Transition From NCLB**

- Waivers from the NCLB law are null and void on August 1, 2016, but states still have to continue supporting their lowest performing schools (“priority schools”) and schools with big achievement gaps (“focus schools”) until their new ESSA plans are operational.

- In general, ESSA applies to any competitive federal grant distributed after October 1, 2016.

[Learn More About Title I](#)

## **Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders**

### *Why Title II Matters*

Title II provides grants to SEAs and subgrants to LEAs to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; to increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and to provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

Title II is important for literacy advocates because it specifically addresses teacher professional development and training. It is also where grants related to literacy education and national programs such as the LEARN program are housed, making it one of the most effective means to directly target literacy instruction.

Advocates can provide input to state priorities and use of Title II dollars to ensure they are spent on effective and evidence-based practices that funnel resources to the schools, educators, and students who need it most.

### *Overview*

ESSA allows but does not require states to design teacher-evaluation systems. The law also eliminates the HQT provisions in NCLB. Under ESSA, teachers in schools receiving Title I funds need only to fulfill their state's certification and licensing requirements. Special education teachers are required to hold a bachelor's degree and meet state certification requirements.

The \$2.3 billion state teacher-quality grants program formula (also known as the state allotment formula) for allocating these dollars considers both student population and poverty. As part of ESSA, Congress rewrote the formula to weight the poverty factor more heavily. It also did away with the minimum award amount guaranteed to each state since 2002.

Funding for national activities is included in Title II for the following activities:

- Development of teacher/school leader incentive programs and grants
- Literacy education program and grants (including early reading and K–12 programs)
- American history and civics education programs
- School leader training and recruitment
- State-led STEM master teacher corps programs

[Learn More About Title II](#)

## **Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students**

### ***Why Title III Matters***

Title III helps ensure that ELs, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English as well as assisting teachers, administrators, and other school leaders with ELs and their families.

Title III is important for literacy advocates because it highlights key growth measures related to English-language proficiency and provides guidelines for documenting progress in reading, writing, and speaking for ELs. Advocates should be familiar with how Title III and Title I both work in tandem for school accountability purposes.

### ***Overview***

The new law shifts accountability for ELs from Title III—the section of the federal law that previously authorized aid to states and local school districts for English language–acquisition programs—to Title I, the federal program under which the performance of all other student groups is scrutinized.

Under the new law, states will develop their own EL accountability systems that must measure progress in English language development and the number of students who become English proficient. English proficiency is an added requirement to state accountability systems. States must demonstrate that they have adopted proficiency standards that are derived from the domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing; address

the different proficiency levels of ELs; and are aligned with the state’s academic standards.

[Learn More About Title III](#)

## **Title IV: 21st Century Schools**

### ***Why Title IV Matters***

The purpose of Title IV, Part A, “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants,” is to improve students’ academic achievement by increasing the capacity of SEAs, LEAs, schools, and communities to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; improve school conditions for student learning; and improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

This block grant program is important for advocates because it is where all of the enrichment, extracurricular, wrap-around services and support systems for students are located. Literacy advocates will want to see a fully funded Title IV, Part A program in the first years of ESSA so that states can receive adequate funds to ensure LEAs have the resources necessary to provide enrichment and support for students—particularly as complementary funding to Title II teacher professional development as well as for the use of technology and the arts.

Note: Title IV also includes provisions for 21st century community learning centers (summer learning and after-school programs), quality charter schools, magnet schools, family engagement, school safety, and academic enrichment. This toolkit does not discuss these areas of the law.

### ***Overview***

Activities and programs funded by grants to states under Title IV, Part A support access to a well-rounded education and must be coordinated with other schools and with community-based services and programs and can be partnerships with higher education institutions, businesses, nonprofits, community-based organizations, or other public or private entities.

Activities that can be funded by states receiving grants can include the following:

- College and career guidance and counseling programs



- Programs and activities that use music and the arts as tools to support student success through the promotion of constructive student engagement, problem solving, and conflict resolution
- Programming and activities to improve instruction and student engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including computer science
- Efforts to raise student academic achievement through accelerated learning programs

[Learn More About Title IV](#)

## **Title V: State Innovation and Flexibility**

### *Why Title V Matters*

Title V's focus is to help states and districts reach targeted student populations and address unique situations including rural education. Title V matters to literacy advocates working in states where programs and grants designed to help rural education are of interest.

### *Overview*

The purpose of this Title V is to allow states and local educational agencies the flexibility to target federal funds to the programs and activities that most effectively address the unique needs of states and localities. Provisions related to transferability of funds and rural education initiatives are outlined in this title.

[Learn More About Title V](#)

## **In-Depth Review of Major Title Provisions**

### **Title I: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Education Agencies**

#### *Funding Authorizations*

The following is an outlay of authorized funding levels for Title I, Part A of ESSA as well as the funding levels for the transition years. It should be noted that beginning in 2017, School Improvement Grants (SIGs) will be eliminated as a separate program, but the NCLB 4% set-aside by states from their Title I allocation for school improvement will increase to 7%.

**FY 2016 Appropriation: \$15,349,802**

(Combined \$14,909,802 + FY 2016 Appropriation for School Improvement grants: \$450,000)

**FY 2017 Budget Request: \$15,359,802**

For FY 2017–FY 2020, Part A Grants to LEAs are authorized in the following amounts:

- FY 2017: \$15,012,318
- FY 2018: \$15,457,459
- FY 2019: \$15,897,371
- FY 2020: \$16,182,345

**Other Parts of Title I:**

- State assessments \$378,000,000 for FY 2017–FY 2020
- Education of Migratory Children \$374,751,000 for FY 2017–FY 2020
- Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk Children and Youth \$47,614,000 for FY 2017–FY 2020

**State Plans**

This new focus on input and collaboration from other entities and away from only the SEA represents a significant change from NCLB.

Title I plans must ensure coordination between programs in the following laws: IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), Education Technical Assistance Act, McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act, and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which is part of WIOA. Also states must participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as NAEP.

- SEAs must submit a Title I plan to U.S. Department of Education
- This plan must be developed with “meaningful” consultation with:
  - Governors
  - Members of the state legislature
  - State board of education
  - LEAs

- Indian tribes
- Teachers and principals and parents

### **State Standards**

The biggest change in state standard setting is the move away from “college and career readiness,” which was required under ESEA waivers, to “challenging state standards.” The focus now is on whether students can make the transition to postsecondary education without remediation, career training, or both.

States *must* adopt “challenging standards” in English language arts, mathematics, and science. States *may* have standards in any other subject determined by the state.

Standards must:

- Apply to all public schools and all public school children
- Align with higher education institution entrance requirements without the need for remediation
- Align with the relevant state career and technical education standards
- Adopt language proficiency standards for ELs that are aligned with the state academic standards
- Allow for alternate academic standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, aligned to challenging state standards

### **Assessments**

States must:

- Conduct statewide, annual assessments in ELA and mathematics in grades 3–8 and once in high school
- Assess not less than 95% of all students and 95% for each subgroup
- Conduct statewide assessment in science once in grades 3–5, 6–8, 9–12
- Develop an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAS) for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; states must cap student participation in AA-AAS at 1% of all students by subject. ESSA prohibits development of additional alternate assessments
- Identify and make efforts to develop assessments in languages for ELs

States may:

- Exclude ELs from one administration of ELA assessment or exclude the assessment results for accountability purposes for one year
- Allow computer adaptive testing
- Allow LEAs to develop Innovative Assessments under the Innovative Assessment Pilot (Up to seven districts may participate in the pilot once the U.S. Department of Education makes this available.)
- Allow LEAs to use a nationally recognized high school assessment in lieu of state assessment

### ***Accountability***

The state must establish long-term goals for students to meet state literacy and math standards as well as interim measures of progress. Although they no longer have to establish a finite goal (e.g., every student reading proficiently by a certain year), they must have clear ways to measure interim progress toward longer incremental goals (e.g., 90% of students graduating and then measuring against that number each year).

The state still must differentiate between (rate or rank) schools and districts in the state, and that system must use the goals in combination with required indicators to determine how schools and districts are doing. State-designed accountability systems must include the following:

- Elementary and Middle Schools
  - States need to incorporate at least four indicators into their accountability systems. These include proficiency on state tests, English-language proficiency, and one other academic factor that can be reported by subgroup (e.g., growth on state tests).
  - States are required to add at least one “additional indicator of school quality.” Possibilities include student engagement, educator engagement, school climate/safety, or another indicator that can be reported by a subgroup and is comparable in all schools and for all children.

- High Schools
  - States need to incorporate at least four indicators into their accountability systems. These include proficiency on state tests, English-language proficiency, and graduation rates.
  - States are required to add at least one “additional indicator of school quality.” Possibilities include student engagement, educator engagement, access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate/safety, or another indicator that can be reported by a subgroup and is comparable in all schools and for all children.
- Weighting the Indicators
  - States determine the weight of the indicators within its accountability system. However, the academic factors (tests, graduation rates, etc.) must have a “much greater weight” than the “other” school quality indicator(s).
  - The combined weight of all indicators is used to rank/rate schools to determine which schools and districts must provide targeted intervention and support.
  - States determine how large a factor the 95% participation rate is within the accountability system.

States will determine which indicator(s) they will add to the accountability system and states are required to involve stakeholders in a process to make these decisions.

### ***School Performance***

States must identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement. They are as follows:

- Bottom 5% of All Schools: At least once every three years, states must identify and intervene *in the bottom 5% of schools*.
- Lowest Performing High Schools: States must identify and intervene in high schools *where the graduation rate is 67% or less*. Schools must be identified and reevaluated at least once every three years.
- Consistently Underperforming: States must identify schools where a subgroup is *consistently underperforming* the same as the lowest 5% of schools. SEA determines number of years and exit criteria. LEA determines improvement plan. SEA must review after four years.

States must also assure districts identify schools when any subgroup is not meeting state standards.

- Subgroup Underperforming: Districts must oversee intervention *in any school when one or more subgroup is underperforming*. LEA determines when the intervention begins/ends except if the school is then identified as a consistently underperforming school.

### ***School Interventions***

For the bottom 5% of schools and for high schools graduating less than 67%:

- Districts work with school teams to come up with an evidence-based plan.
- States monitor the turnaround effort.
- If schools continue to flounder, after no more than four years the state is required to step in with its own plan (e.g., take over the school, terminate the principal/staff).
- States can make monies available for district/school use (e.g., for tutoring/other support).
- Districts can allow for public school choice out of consistently low-performing schools, but they have to give priority to the students who need it most.

For schools where subgroups of students are struggling:

- Schools must develop an evidence-based plan to target the student subgroup.
- Districts must monitor the plans. If the school continues to fall short, the district would step in, though there's no specified timeline.
- States and districts must come up with a “comprehensive improvement plan” in schools where subgroups are chronically underperforming, despite local interventions.
- The SIG program is consolidated into the bigger Title I pot, which helps districts educate Title I students. States could set aside up to 7% of all their Title I funds for school improvement, up from 4% in current law.

### ***State and Local Report Cards***

ESSA is quite clear about ensuring the public has easy-to-understand information on how students are doing in each school, what the qualifications of teachers are, and the funding provided to educate students, among other data. The report cards are required to be posted in ways in which the public is easily informed about the status of students by school and by district within the state. ESSA requires states to disseminate an annual state report card that is concise, widely accessible, and developed in consultation with stakeholders.

State report cards must include the following:

- A description of the state's accountability system
- Results on academic achievement, graduation, and on each indicator: by subgroup and for students who are homeless, in foster care, or have a parent in the military
- Information on ELs achieving proficiency
- Results on NAEP
- Per pupil expenditures
- Teacher qualifications

Local report cards must include the following:

- All reporting requirements from the state report card apply to the local report cards except for NAEP scores.
- LEAs must include information on student achievement on academic assessments across the school district and state.

### ***Funding Flexibility***

The biggest change in Title I is the new flexibility that allows states to determine whether the 40% schoolwide threshold of students eligible for free and reduced lunch must be met in order to use Title I dollars schoolwide. Some states may like this flexibility because it would allow Title I dollars to be used across a school rather than just for a percentage of students, which subsequently reduces paperwork and accounting practices that require separate bookkeeping and silos funds. Every state will likely operationalize this quite differently, but it is something to watch and understand as the impact on access to resources in certain schools may shift; for example, a school

that has 35% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch will have more flexibility in use of Title I funds if the state approves a waiver from the 40% requirement.

- **Schoolwide Title I:** Allows states to grant waivers from the requirement that only schools in which students from low-income backgrounds make up at least 40% of enrollment can use Title I for schoolwide purposes.
- **Supplement Not Supplant:** States are now only required to show that Title I dollars supplement state and local dollars and a waiver is not required. Districts are not required to show whether each expenditure is a core service or supplemental for Title I purposes.
- **Maintenance of Effort:** Current requirement still applies (i.e., requires districts to spend in their current fiscal year at least 90% of what they spent in the previous fiscal year, in order to get at least the same amount of federal money).

### ***Secretarial Authority***

The Secretary may:

- Oversee implementation of the law
- Approve state assessments through peer review
- Provide regulations, guidance, and technical assistance consistent with the statute

The Secretary may not:

- Prescribe specific goals for student achievement, either long term or short term
- Mandate turn-around strategies in the lowest performing schools or intervene in schools
- Coerce or provide incentives with funding or flexibility for states to adopt a particular set of standards, including the Common Core State Standards
- Specify any aspect or parameter of evaluations for teachers and school leaders developed at the state and district level
- Force states to use a specific test for accountability
- Tell states exactly how they must factor in test participation for accountability purposes



## **Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders**

### **PART A—SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION**

Under Title II, Part A, states receive funding by a formula system and must subgrant 95% to LEAs. Of the 5% it keeps, not more than 1% of funds can be used for administrative costs. States may reserve up to 3% of the amount reserved for subgrants to LEAs to support principals and other school leaders.

Under ESSA, teachers in schools receiving Title I funds need only to fulfill their state's certification and licensing requirements.

There are 21 allowable uses of funds by the SEA and 16 allowable uses of funds for LEAs to choose from that are different than state activities, including the following:

- Induction
- Mentoring
- Professional development
- Alternative certification
- Improving equitable access to effective teachers
- Class size reduction
- Differential pay systems

Districts must implement activities to address the learning needs of all children.

#### ***Formula Funding to States***

The formula will shift from the current formula, of which 35% is based on total student population ages 5–17 in the state proportionally relative to this population in all states, and 65% is based on student population ages 5–17 from families below the poverty line in the state proportionally relative to this population in all states to the following:

- 35/65 in FY 2017
- 30/70 in FY 2018
- 25/75 in FY 2019
- 20/80 in FY 2020 and succeeding years

Three essentials to the new formula are as follows:

- New formula weights state's population less, poverty more.

- Minimum award amount guaranteed to each state is eliminated.
- Gradual phase in from FY 2017 through FY 2020 and succeeding years.

A [Congressional Research Service](#) analysis projects that, by 2023, the following states' and territories' annual allocation will decrease by \$10 million or more from the FY 2016 grant: Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico. States that will see an increase of \$10 million more from FY 2016 are California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

### ***Funding Flexibility***

One of the biggest changes in ESSA, as compared with NCLB, is that states and LEAs have new flexibility with formula funds. States are now allowed to transfer none of, a portion of, or all of their formula allotment of Title II, Part A funds. They may do the same with Title IV, Part A funds and the state administrative funds of Title IV, Part B into and between those pots of funding. And, they may add these monies into (but NOT out of) Part A of Title I, Part C of Title I (Migrant Education program), Part D of Title I (Neglected and Delinquent), Part A of Title III, and Part B of Title V (Rural Education Initiative). The bottom line is that states may combine most of their ESSA monies as long as they do not take money away from Title I, Part A's intent and uses.

States may:

- Transfer up to 100% of their Title II formula block grant funds, Title IV, Part A, and/or State Administrative funds of Title IV, Part B to:
  - Title I, Part A formula program
  - Title I, Part C of Migrant Education
  - Title I, Part D, Neglected and Delinquent
  - Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition
  - and/or Title V, Rural Education Initiative
- Districts may also do the same.

*\*No funds may be transferred out of Title I.*

### ***Teacher Evaluation Systems***

- States may, but are not required to, implement teacher evaluation systems, link results to student test scores, or both.
- States may use Title II funds for teachers', principals', and other school leaders' evaluation and other support systems may be based “in part on student academic achievement.”
- Evaluations must include the following:
  - Multiple measures
  - “Clear, timely, and useful” feedback

### ***Teacher Provisions***

- ESSA eliminates the HQT requirements of current law.
- States must show that Title I teachers are certified by a state’s licensing requirements.
- State report cards must show qualifications of educators.
- Secretarial authority—explicitly prohibits the Secretary from mandating:
  - Teacher/school leader evaluation systems
  - Defining teacher/other school leaders
  - Setting the professional standards, certification, and licensure requirements for teachers/school leaders

## **PART B—NATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Title II, Part B creates the “National Activities” fund for technical assistance, evaluation, and competitive programs, which include the following:

- Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund
- American History and Civics Education program
- Supporting Effective Educator Development program
- School Leader Recruitment
- STEM Master Teacher Corps

Literacy-specific programs include the following:

- LEARN program
- Innovative Approaches to Literacy
- Comprehensive Center on Literacy Instruction for Students with Disabilities

### ***LEARN Program***

The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program is the only federally supported, targeted literacy funding for states to apply for through a discretionary grant process. LEARN supports states investing in birth through grade 12 teacher professional development and research-based interventions for students.

The purpose of LEARN is as follows:

- To improve student academic achievement in reading and writing by providing federal support to states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans that ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing from early education through grade 12.
- To provide targeted subgrants to early childhood education programs and LEAs and their public or private partners to implement evidence-based programs that ensure high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction for students most in need.

### ***LEARN Program Overview***

LEARN builds on the success of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program (SRCL), which has been funded through the appropriations process for the last five years and provided initial funding to the following six states: Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Nevada.

This year with FY 2016 funds, the U.S. Department of Education will be initiating a new competition for the second round of five-year grants. In order to submit an application, an SEA must conduct a needs assessment that analyzes literacy needs across the state and in high-need schools that serve high-need students, including identifying the most significant gaps in literacy proficiency and inequities in student access to effective teachers of literacy.

The LEARN program:

- Provides competitive grants to SEAs that must then distribute at least 95% of funds to local school districts with priority to entities serving the greatest number/percentage of disadvantaged students in low performing schools.

- States must distribute grant funds in a comprehensive manner supporting programs and activities from birth through grade 12:
  - 15% birth—kindergarten entry
  - 40% kindergarten–Grade 5
  - 40% Grades 6–12
- LEAs must use these funds to help improve literacy instruction as well as support intervention activities for all students whose literacy skills are below grade level.

### ***LEARN Program—State Uses of Funds***

States may reserve up to 5% of funds for the following activities:

- Providing technical assistance
- Coordinating with institutions of higher education in the state to strengthen preservice courses in evidence-based literacy methods
- Reviewing and updating, in collaboration with teachers and institutions of higher education, state licensure or certification standards in the area of literacy instruction
- Developing literacy coach training programs and training literacy coaches
- National evaluation

### ***LEARN Program—Local Uses of Funds***

Mandatory uses of funds for K–5 include the following:

- Developing and implementing a comprehensive literacy instruction plan across content areas that
  - Serves the needs of all children, including children with disabilities and ELs (especially children reading and writing below grade level)
  - Provides intensive, supplemental, accelerated, and explicit intervention and support in reading and writing for children whose literacy skills are below grade level
  - Supports activities that are provided primarily during the regular school day but that may be augmented by after-school and out-of-school time instruction
- Providing high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, literacy coaches, literacy specialist, ESL

specialists (as appropriate), principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, school librarians, paraprofessionals, and other program staff

- Training principals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other local educational agency personnel to support, develop, administer, and evaluate high-quality kindergarten through grade 5 literacy initiatives
- Coordinating the involvement of early childhood education program staff with teachers, principals, and other instructional leaders in the literacy development of children
- Engaging families and encouraging family literacy experiences and practices to support literacy development

Mandatory uses of funds in grades 6–12 include the following:

- Developing and implementing a comprehensive literacy instruction plan
- Using funds to train principals, teachers, and staff to develop high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction initiatives
- Assessing the quality of adolescent comprehensive literacy instruction as part of a well-rounded education
- Providing time for teachers to meet to plan evidence-based literacy instruction
- Coordinating the involvement of principals, teachers, and appropriate staff in high-quality literacy plans

Allowable uses of funds in grades K–12 include the following:

- Recruiting, placing, training, and compensating literacy coaches
- Connecting out-of-school learning opportunities to in-school learning
- Training families and caregivers to support the improvement of adolescent literacy
- Providing for a multitier system of supports for literacy services
- Providing time for teachers (and other literacy staff, as appropriate) to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction

### ***Innovative Approaches to Literacy***

- A discretionary grant program also part of this section of the law.
- Purpose is to support the development of literacy skills in low-income communities including:
  - Improving school library programs
  - Early literacy services including pediatric literacy programs
  - Programs that provide high-quality books on a regular basis to students in low-income communities

### **Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students**

There are nearly 5 million public school students in the United States classified as ELs, and a large component of ESSA accountability is focused on ensuring that ELs are being taught the skills they need to be proficient in reading and writing.

#### ***Important Terms Related to Title III***

- English learner (EL)
- English language proficiency (ELP)
- English language proficiency assessment (ELPA)
- Long-term ELs
- Newcomers
- Students with interrupted formal education (SIFE or SLIFE)
- Reclassification

#### ***Identifying and Reclassifying ELs***

The tools used to identify and reclassify ELs are as follows:

- Home language surveys
- EL classification-screeners/placement tests
- Annual English proficiency assessments

#### ***Growth Measures Under ESSA***

- States must set goals for increases in the percentage of students making progress in achieving EL proficiency defined by the state and measured by the ELP exam, within a state determined timeline.

- For accountability purposes, former ELs may be included in EL subgroup up to four years after they exit.
- States have three options for including EL newcomers in accountability systems:
  - The number and percentage of ELs meeting standards including four years after no longer receiving Title III services, disaggregated by ELs with a disability.
  - The number and percentage of ELs that have not reached proficiency within five years.
  - Progress in achieving ELP, as defined by the state and measured by the ELP exam, within a state-determined timeline for all ELs.

### ***What Does Progress Look Like?***

- Moving one level on ELP assessment
- Proficiency in one or more domains: reading, writing, listening, or speaking
- Differentiated targets: student's years in program, grade level, or previous proficiency level.
- Consecutive cross sections' progress one year's class to the next on ELP

### ***Authorized Funding Levels***

EL programs have funding authorized that gradually increases from \$756 million in FY 2017 to \$885 million by FY 2020.

States can use funds to make subgrants to eligible entities as long as 95% of state funding is used for purposes described in relevant Title III sections. States receive funding based on 80% of EL population in that state proportionally relative to that population in all states and 20% based on population of immigrant children and youth in that state proportionally relative to that population in all states. ESSA maintains the prohibition in existing law on federal prescription of curricular or pedagogical approach to educating ELs.

### ***Accountability***

- LEAs may exclude a student who has been in U.S. schools less than 12 months from one administration of the ELA test and may exclude the student from the accountability system for any or all of the ELA and math for one year.



- LEAs may assess and report on ELA and math for the first year a student is enrolled but not include the student in the accountability system. Second year compare first and second year scores to establish a measure of growth and include in accountability system. Third year include in accountability system like all EL students.
- LEAs may also include newcomers in accountability systems in the same manner as all students.

## **Title IV: 21st Century Schools**

### **PART A—STUDENT SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT GRANTS**

Title IV, Part A was created as a new flexible block grant program and consolidates many previously authorized programs from current law into one large pot of funding—typically called a block grant—under ESSA. The U.S. Department of Education will disseminate funds to every SEA through a formula that will then be subgranted to LEAs to decide how to use these resources to fund certain programs that their schools may need. In order to receive funding for the Student Support and Academic Enhancement Grants, states need to submit a state plan to the U.S. Secretary of Education for review and approval. If approved, each state receives a funding allocation based on the proportion of funding that states receive under Title I. Each state receiving Title IV allocations will then reallocate Title IV funding to LEAs using the same proportion of funding provided to schools in Title I. The funds allocated to LEAs in this section are to be used for three specific areas.

The purpose of Title IV, Part A is to improve students’ academic achievement by “increasing the capacity of states, LEAs, schools, and communities to provide students with access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and improve the use of technology.”

- Funds are distributed by formula to each state. States must subgrant 95% to LEAs.
- LEAs must:
  - Spend 20% of funds on activities to support “well-rounded” education (e.g., school counseling, music, arts, STEM, and accelerated learning programs)

- Spend 20% of funds on activities to support “safe and healthy” students (e.g., social/emotional learning, violence prevention, school-based mental health services, bullying prevention, and Youth PROMISE plans)
- Use a portion of funds to support effective use of technology

Examples of the use of funds for each area are as follows:

- Well-Rounded Educational Experiences
  - Accelerated learning courses (i.e., Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs)
  - College and career guidance and counseling programs
  - STEM, including computer science
  - Foreign language courses
  - Music and art programs
  - Programs to teach American history, civics, economics, geography, and government
- Safe, Healthy, Supportive and Drug-Free Environments
  - Bullying prevention programs
  - Drug and violence prevention programs
  - Plans to reduce exclusionary discipline practices
  - Resources for school-based counseling and mental health programs (including early identification and intervention programs)
  - Social and emotional learning
  - Health and safety practices
  - High-quality training for school personnel on suicide prevention, school-based violence, trauma, crisis management, and conflict resolution
  - Physical and sexual abuse awareness and prevention
  - Schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports
- Increased Access to Personalized Learning Experiences Through the Use of Technology
  - Support and train teachers and school personnel on effectively using data to improve the instructional experience
  - Address technology access and readiness needs
  - Develop specialized and rigorous academic courses and curricula through the use of technology

- Implement personalized learning and blended learning opportunities
- Purchase devices, equipment, software applications, and digital instructional resources

LEAs that receive a formula allocation above \$30,000 must conduct a needs assessment once every three years to determine the greatest area of need in the three categories. In addition, LEAs that receive an allocation of more than \$30,000 must reserve 20% of their funding for well-rounded education programs and 20% of their funding for safe and healthy school programs. The remaining percentage of funds may be used for technology, personalized learning, professional development, or any of the other programs listed. However, no LEA can use more than 15% of their grant for purchasing technology infrastructure (devices, software, etc.).

## **PART B—21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS**

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program provides grants to LEAs and community learning centers to offer academic enrichment activities for students in low-performing schools during nonschool hours or when school is not in session (before and after school and during summer break). The 21st CCLC program is a reauthorized program from current law which has been updated and improved.

21st CCLC grant recipients must use funds to establish or expand activities in community learning centers (which can be school based or located at a place with a partnering organization such as a community recreation center or science museum) that provide opportunities for academic enrichment; offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities; and offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their child's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

In addition, new language in ESSA allows 21st CCLC funds to be used for expanded learning activities before, during, or after the school day in cases where at least 300 hours are added during the school year and do not take the place of regular school day requirements. Local grant recipients may also use the funding to offer programs to promote family engagement,

family literacy, tutoring services, well-rounded education opportunities, mentoring programs, and healthy and active lifestyles programs, among other programs.

Funds are distributed by formula to SEAs. States then run a local competitive subgrant program to distribute the funds to the local level. The program is authorized at \$1,000,000,000 for FY 2017 and \$1,100,000,000 for each of FYs 2018–2020.

## **Title V: State Innovation and Flexibility**

### **RURAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

Title V, Part B (Sections 5201-5234), known as the Rural Education Initiative, is designed to give LEAs in rural areas more opportunity to receive funds and more flexibility in how to use funds received in ESSA. The purpose remains the same as the previous iteration—to help rural schools with their unique education needs and to ensure that they have the capacity to access competitive grant funding.

#### ***Authorized Appropriations***

ESSA authorizes \$169,840,000 to be appropriated for each of the fiscal years 2017 through 2020 (Section 5234).

#### ***Program Descriptions***

The Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program is a rural school initiative with two components. The first component is the actual awarding of funds directly to eligible LEAs from the U.S. Department of Education on a formula basis. The other component provides eligible LEAs with more flexibility in using the formula grant funds that they receive under certain state-administered federal programs, known as REAP-Flex (alternative uses of funds authority). This component does not provide for any funding but gives LEAs latitude in spending funds that they receive under other federal programs to support a wide range of local activities that support both school improvement and student achievement.

The Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program authorizes formula grant awards to SEAs, which in turn make subgrants to eligible LEAs by formula. The RLIS program is intended to meet the unique needs of rural and low-income districts by providing resources and flexibility to supplement selected priorities (Section 6222).

The guidelines for eligibility are established by the U.S. Department of Education. An LEA is eligible if:

- 20% or more of the children ages 5 to 17 served by the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line

For SRSA:

- The LEA must have a total Average Daily Attendance of fewer than 600 students
- Serve only schools that are located in counties that have a population density of fewer than 10 persons per square mile
- Serve only schools that have a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) school locale code of 7 or 8 (as assigned by NCES)
- Be located in an area of the state defined as rural by a governmental agency of the state

For RLIS:

- Each school within the LEA must have a locale code of 6, 7, or 8 as assigned by the NCES.
- Previously, LEAs eligible for both SRSA and RLIS funding are automatically enrolled in the former.

### **Key Changes**

- ESSA addresses the dual-eligibility problem of NCLB: LEAs that qualify for both SRSA funds and the RLIS funds would have the ability to apply for the program that meets their unique needs.
- ESSA would increase flexibility in LEAs' use of RLIS funding for a broader range of ESSA titles: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title III; Title IV, Part A or B. Previously, under NCLB schools could use RLIS funds for select activities: teacher recruitment and retention; professional development; education technology; parental involvement activities; Safe and Drug Free Communities; state grants activities; Title I, Part A activities; Title III activities. *Low-income rural LEAs now have further discretion in the use of their federal funding—for example, instead of being limited to applying their RLIS funding to recruitment and retention, they could apply it to any Title II, Part A activity.*

- ESSA would update the locale codes used to make determinations regarding LEA eligibility for rural programs. The U.S. Department of Education’s NCES revised these codes in 2005 and 2006 on the basis of proximity to urbanized areas, rather than county boundaries, population size, and metropolitan statistical areas. This changed the boundaries for the districts within each locale code. When NCES released its new definitions in 2006, it estimated that 485 districts would no longer be considered “rural” and 579 districts would be newly considered “rural”—a net increase of 94 rural school districts, or one half of 1% of all districts nationwide.
- This would likely change little for recipients of RLIS funding, as this program is based on rurality and poverty. The incidence of child poverty in areas that qualify for RLIS is unlikely to change drastically, as the larger southern districts that qualify for this program are often in areas with concentrated, persistent rural poverty. As a result, there is no Hold Harmless provision for RLIS.
- However, the change in locale codes could have a larger effect on the number of LEAs that receive SRSA funding, as eligibility for this program is based on rurality and population density. Population density in rural areas is changing rapidly in many regions of the country, which could easily disqualify an LEA for SRSA funding. For those LEAs that are affected and may become ineligible for funding under the updated locale codes, ESSA includes a Hold Harmless provision for the SRSA program. The U.S. Department of Education would reduce their grant funding by 25% per year over a three-year period.

### *Outside of Title V*

#### **Title VIII, Section 8011: Rural Consolidation Plan**

ESSA would help rural LEAs reduce their paperwork and compliance burden and access federal funding by allowing them to work with other LEAs or educational service agencies to submit joint applications for federal funding. Today, an LEA that receives funding from two or more NCLB programs (e.g., Title I and Title II, Part A) has the authority to submit consolidated plans and applications to its SEA. ESSA provides this same authority to pairs or groupings of rural LEAs as well as educational service agencies. Rural education agencies often lack the capacity to apply for and manage federal grants; those that do

are tasked with extensive reporting and management duties. Service sharing agreements such as this can help to ease that burden. Extending consolidation plans for federal funding to rural partnerships represents a potentially large reduction in administrative work for individual LEAs.

#### Title VIII, Section 8031: Outreach and Technical Assistance for Rural LEAs

ESSA would require the Secretary to conduct outreach to rural LEAs regarding competitive grant opportunities. Agencies would also gain the ability to receive technical assistance, if requested, on grant applications or preapplications. Because rural LEAs often lack the capacity to apply for competitive grants, this program could offer access to what may be otherwise out-of-reach funding opportunities. There is no indication of the level of support that the Secretary would be required to provide under this program. Nevertheless, it has the potential to benefit many small rural LEAs that lack the capacity to apply for competitive grants.

### HELPFUL ESSA RESOURCES

- [U.S. Department of Education ESSA Website](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education FAQ on Transition to ESSA](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education FAQ on Negotiated Rulemaking](#)
- [Education Week Overview of the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
- [National PTA Resources for Families on the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
- [Council of Chief State School Officers ESSA Resource Page](#)



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This toolkit is available in PDF form for free download through the International Literacy Association's website: [literacyworldwide.org](http://literacyworldwide.org).

**Media Contact:** For all media inquiries, please contact [press@reading.org](mailto:press@reading.org).

#### Suggested APA Reference

International Literacy Association. (2016). *Every Student Succeeds Act* [Advocacy toolkit]. Newark, DE: Author.

#### About the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 75 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices, and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students, and inform policymakers. ILA publishes *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*, which are peer reviewed and edited by leaders in the field. For more information, visit [literacyworldwide.org](http://literacyworldwide.org).



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