



P.L. 114-95, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (ESSA Block Grant)

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

Overview – ESSA authorizes a new flexible block grant program – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 – to increase the capacity of States, LEAs, schools, and local communities to:

1. Provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
2. Support safe and healthy students; and
3. Support the effective use of technology.

Authorization Level and Funding – ESSA authorizes the program at \$1.65 billion for FY2017 through FY2020.

- The Administration’s FY2017 budget request included \$500 million for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.
- Prior to the August 2016 recess, the Senate Appropriations Committee provided \$300 million and the House Appropriations Committee provided \$1 billion in their respective bills for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.
- The funding level will be finalized as part of negotiations to fund the Federal government for FY2017.

Allocation of Funds by Formula – Each State, and subsequently each LEA, receives an allocation based on their State or local share of the ESSA Title I funding formula.

- States reserve 5 percent of their allocation for State-level activities and 95 percent of funds are provided for local awards to LEAs.
- Each LEA that receives a formula allocation must conduct a “needs assessment” and then must use:
 - Not less than 20 percent of funds to support well-rounded educational opportunities;
 - Not less than 20 percent of funds to support safe and healthy students; and
 - A portion of funds (not defined under ESSA) to support the effective use of technology.
- Remaining funds at the local level can be used by the LEA to support any of the three aforementioned categories of activities.

State-Level Activities – States are authorized to use their share of funding (5 percent) for State-level activities and programming designed to meet the purposes of the program, including:

- Monitoring, training, technical assistance and capacity building for LEAs;
- Identifying and eliminating State barriers to the coordination and integration of programs, initiatives, and funding streams so that LEAs can better coordinate with other agencies, schools, and community-based services and programs; and
- Supporting LEAs in providing programs and activities that:
 - Offer well-rounded educational experiences to all students, which may include:
 - ✓ STEM courses;
 - ✓ Music and arts education;
 - ✓ Foreign languages;
 - ✓ Accelerated learning programs that provide postsecondary level courses accepted for credit at institutions of higher education (such as Advanced Placement courses);
 - ✓ American history, civics, economics, geography, social studies, or government education;
 - ✓ Environmental education; and
 - ✓ Other courses, activities, programs or experiences that contribute to a well-rounded education.
 - Foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments, which may include:
 - ✓ Reducing exclusionary discipline practices in schools;
 - ✓ Mental health awareness training and school-based counseling;
 - ✓ Integrating health and safety practices into school and athletic programs; and
 - ✓ Disseminating best practices and evaluating program outcomes to promote student safety and violence prevention.
 - Increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, including:
 - ✓ Providing technical assistance to LEAs to identify and address technology readiness needs, which specifically includes “access to school libraries”;
 - ✓ Supporting schools in rural and remote areas to expand access to digital learning¹ opportunities;
 - ✓ Supporting the delivery specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula through the use of technology, including digital learning technologies and assistive technology.
 - ✓ Disseminating promising practices related to technology instruction, data security and the acquisition and implementation of technology tools and applications;
 - ✓ Providing teachers, paraprofessionals, school librarians and media personnel, specialized instructional support personnel, and administrators with the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively; and

¹ Under ESSA, the term “digital learning” is defined as any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student’s learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices, including: (1) interactive learning resources, digital learning content (which may include openly licensed content), software, or simulations, that engage students in academic content; (2) access to online databases and other primary source documents; (3) the use of data and information to personalize learning and provide targeted supplementary instruction; (4) online and computer-based assessments; (5) learning environments that allow for rich collaboration and communication, which may include student collaboration with content experts and peers; (6) hybrid or blended learning, which occurs under direct instructor supervision at a school or other location away from home and, at least in part, through online delivery of instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace; and (7) access to online course opportunities for students in rural or remote areas.

- ✓ Making instructional content widely available through open educational resources, which may include providing tools and processes to support LEAs in making such resources widely available.

Local Consultation – In developing the local application, an LEA is required to consult with parents, teachers, principals, specialized instructional support personnel (which specifically includes school librarians under ESSA) and other stakeholders with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of the program.

- In addition, LEAs are required to engage in “continued consultation” with such stakeholders to improve local activities and to coordinate programming with other related strategies, programs, and activities being conducted in the community.

Local Needs Assessment – Prior to receiving funds under the program, LEAs must conduct a “comprehensive needs assessment” (that must be conducted every 3 years) to examine needs for improvement of:

- Access to, and opportunities for, a well-rounded education for all students;
- School conditions for student learning in order to create a healthy and safe school environment; and
- Access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology and professional development for the effective use of data and technology.
 - Note: Under State Activities, States are authorized to support local efforts to increase access to personalized learning experiences by providing technical assistance to LEAs to identify and address technology readiness needs, which specifically includes “access to school libraries” under the statute.
- LEAs that would receive an allocation of less than \$30,000 are not required to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment.

Local Uses of Funds – As part of the local application, LEAs must provide assurances that funds will be prioritized to schools that have the greatest need, the most low-income children, are identified under the accountability system or identified as persistently dangerous. Similar to activities authorized at the State-level, LEAs are authorized to use their share of funds (95 percent) to:

- Develop and implement programs and activities that support access to a well-rounded education and that:
 - Are coordinated with other schools and community-based services and programs;
 - May be conducted through partnerships; and
 - May include programs and activities, such as:
 - ✓ College and career guidance and counseling;
 - ✓ Activities that use music and the arts as tools to support student success;
 - ✓ Activities to improve instruction and student engagement in STEM (including computer science);
 - ✓ Efforts to raise student academic achievement through accelerated learning programs

- ✓ Activities to promote traditional American history, civics, economics, geography, or government education;
 - ✓ Foreign language instruction;
 - ✓ Environmental education;
 - ✓ Activities that promote volunteerism and community involvement;
 - ✓ Activities that support educational programs that integrate multiple disciplines, such as programs that combine arts and mathematics; or
 - ✓ Other activities and programs to support student access to, and success in, a variety of well-rounded education experiences.
- Support safe and healthy students through the development, implementation and evaluation of programs and activities that:
 - Are coordinated with other schools and community-based services and programs;
 - Foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement;
 - Promote the involvement of parents;
 - May be conducted through partnerships; and
 - May include programs and activities, such as:
 - ✓ Drug and violence prevention activities;
 - ✓ School-based mental health services;
 - ✓ Health and safety practices for schools and athletic programs;
 - ✓ Support for healthy, active lifestyles, including nutritional education and regular, structured physical education activities;
 - ✓ Prevention of bullying and harassment;
 - ✓ Mentoring and counseling for all students;
 - ✓ Dropout recovery programs;
 - ✓ Training for school personnel related to suicide prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and school-based violence prevention strategies;
 - ✓ Child sexual abuse awareness;
 - ✓ Reducing exclusionary discipline practices; and
 - ✓ Pay for success initiatives.
 - Use technology to improve the academic achievement, academic growth, and digital literacy of all students – including by addressing shortfalls identified in the local needs assessment conducted prior to receiving funds – which may include:
 - Providing educators, school leaders, and administrators with the professional learning tools, devices, content, and resources to personalize learning and to administer computer-based assessments and blended learning² strategies;

² Under ESSA, the term “blended learning” is defined as 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; and in which students are provided some control over time, path, or pace.

- Building technological capacity and infrastructure, including procuring content and purchasing devices, equipment, and software applications in order to address readiness shortfalls (as identified under the comprehensive needs assessment);
 - ✓ Note: There is a 15 percent cap under ESSA related to the purchase of technology infrastructure under the program.
- Developing or using effective strategies for the delivery of specialized or rigorous academic courses through the use of technology, including digital learning technologies and assistive technology;
- Blended learning projects;
- Professional development in the use of technology (which may be provided through partnerships with outside organizations) to enable teachers and instructional leaders to increase student achievement in STEM (including computer science); and
- Opportunities for students in rural, remote, and underserved areas to take advantage of high-quality digital learning experiences, digital resources, and access to online courses taught by effective educators.

SUMMARY OF LIBRARY PROVISIONS

- ESSA authorizes (but does not require) States to use their share of funds to assist LEAs in providing programs and activities that increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, including adequate “access to school libraries.”
- ESSA authorizes (but does not require) States to use their share of funds to assist LEAs in providing school librarians and other school personnel with the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively, including effective integration of technology, to improve instruction and student achievement.
- In developing their local applications, LEAs must consult with teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including school librarians.
- ESSA requires that LEAs conduct a “needs assessment” prior to receiving funds from the State (that must be conducted every 3 years). The needs assessment must include access to personalized learning experiences (which may include access to school libraries).

NEXT STEPS – ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

State-Level Advocacy

- Because States are authorized (but not required) to support LEAs in providing programs and activities that increase access to personalized learning experiences (which may include and professional development for school librarians and better access to school libraries for students), it will be important to contact and work with education officials at the State-level (State Educational Agency) to make them aware of their ability to use funds in support of personalized learning experiences, including ways in which effective school library programs can contribute to personalized learning activities in schools.

- Since States are authorized (but not required) to support LEAs in the delivery of specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula through the use of technology, including digital learning technologies, it will be important to contact and work with State education officials to ensure that such activities include effective school library programs that provide digital learning technologies.

Local Advocacy

- Since LEAs are required to consult with stakeholders – which may include school librarians – on the development of their local activities, it is critical to contact and work with leaders, administrators and technology educators at the school and LEA level to ensure that school librarians can adequately participate in the development and implementation of programming.
- Since LEAs must conduct a “comprehensive needs assessment” that includes access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology and professional development for the effective use of data and technology, it is essential to contact and work with leaders, administrators and technology educators at the school and LEA level to ensure that “access to school libraries” is considered as part of the local needs assessment.
- Since LEAs are authorized (but not required) to support the delivery of specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula through the use of technology, including digital learning technologies, it will be important to contact and work with leaders, administrators and technology educators at the school and LEA level to ensure that such activities include effective school library programs that provide digital learning technologies.