

Fact Sheet: ESSA Title IV Part A

Understanding the Flexible Block Grant

Description of Grants

The newly enacted bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes a flexible block grant program known as Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG) under Title IV Part A, which is authorized at \$1.65 billion in fiscal year 2017. Title IV, Part A authorizes activities in three broad areas:

1. **Providing students with a well-rounded education** including programs such as college and career counseling, STEM, arts, civics and International Baccalaureate/Advanced Placement.
2. **Supporting safe and healthy students** with comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices, and health and physical education.
3. **Supporting the effective use of technology** that is backed by professional development, blended learning and ed tech devices.

Distribution of Funds

Each state will receive an allocation from the flexible block grant based on the Title I funding formula. Using the same Title I formula, 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 must then spend 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 percent of the money can be spent on all three priorities, including technology. However, there is a 15 percent cap on spending for 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. However, the district must spend money on activities in at least one of the three categories. The 15 percent technology purchase cap would continue to apply.

House and Senate Fiscal year 2017 Allocations

The Senate's fiscal year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill would provide \$300 million for the Title IV, A block grant, while the House's allocation would provide \$1 billion, both falling far short of the

authorized level. If Congress decides to fund SSAEG below the authorized level, our nation's school districts will face tough choices in deciding which important SSAEG program areas merit investment—safe and healthy school programs, well-rounded curriculum development or the effective use of technology. No matter how schools make this decision, critical program areas will face limited investments—or none at all—significantly shortchanging students, educators and communities.

Program Funding Need

Evidence shows students need 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 lifelong 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 succeed, students need access to a well-rounded curriculum. Block grant funds 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. These benefits include closing the opportunity and learning gaps and providing students with essential modern workforce skills.

Given the elimination of numerous programs under ESSA 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 to choose which of the priorities to invest in—even though an ample investment in all three is necessary to provide students with a comprehensive education.