



# **The New Federalism**

**An Introductory Guide to the  
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

**Title IV – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools**

---

# Title IV

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools

### Introduction

Title IV, “21st Century Schools” contains six Parts: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools, Magnet School Assistance, Family Engagement in Education Programs, and National Activities.

This section will focus on the Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants, which are block grants that flow by formula to states and districts, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program, which provides students with a broad array of services, programs, and activities offered before, during (through expanded learning time programs), and after school. The Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants is a new program that has not been funded to date. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program was funded at \$1.167 billion in FY2016.

### Major changes or highlights made by ESSA related to Title IV

**New Block Grant Program.** Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, there were a multitude of smaller, competitive grant programs for specific subject matter and target populations. Many of these programs have been zeroed out in appropriations bills in recent years.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) creates a block grant, which Congress intended to replace the smaller, individual competitive grant programs previously administered under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This new grant program, which is currently authorized at \$1.6 billion, flows by formula to states and subsequently, to school districts. These grants are intended to improve students’ academic achievements by increasing states, school districts, schools, and local communities’ abilities to: (1) provide students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology in order to improve academic achievement and digital literacy. As with all discretionary grant programs, Congress must appropriate funds (which may or may not equal the authorized amount) in order for states and school districts to receive their share of funding under the block grant.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program

**State Funding.** Under the previous law, states were required to subgrant at least 95 percent of funds. Up to 2 percent of grant funds could be used for administration purposes, while up to 3 percent of funds could be used for state activities.

Under ESSA, the program maintains the same funding structure of “federal-to-state” formula and “state-to-local” competitive grants. However, 93 percent of the funds allocated to each state must be used for local competitive grants. The state educational agency may keep a maximum of 7 percent of the funds for state activities: up to 5 percent for state activities and up to 2 percent for administration. This is a 2 percent increase in the state set-aside over the previous law.

---

**Students Served.** Previously, under NCLB, program funds were targeted to students from schoolwide programs under Title I and schools that served a high percentage of students from low-income families. Under ESSA, the programs must serve Title I schools identified for school improvement and schools that the school district determines are in need of extra support.

**Expanded Learning Time.** Unlike NCLB, but similar to State Flexibility Waivers recently granted to individual states by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), program funds can be used for expanded learning time that has certain requirements under ESSA that include:

- Providing students at least 300 additional program hours before, during, or after the traditional school day;
- Supplementing/not supplanting regular school day requirements; and
- Ensuring that services are carried out by entities that meet the following requirements, which apply to before, after, and summer school programs:
  - Serve students who attend schools identified for extra support under Title I or other schools identified by the school district for interventions;
  - Enroll students who may be at risk for academic failure, dropping out of school, involved in criminal or delinquent activities, or who lack strong positive role models, and the families of those students (not in the previous law);
  - Submit a joint application from a school district and at least one other eligible entity; and
  - Demonstrate that the activities proposed are not otherwise accessible to students who would be served, or would expand access to high-quality services that may be available in the community (not in the previous law).

## **Summary of Title IV as amended by ESSA**

### **Part A—Student Support and Enrichment Grants**

**State Funding and Activities.** The new grant program, as implemented by ESSA, flows by formula to states. States may reserve up to 5 percent of funds to support school districts carrying out a variety of activities, including supporting school districts in providing programs and activities that offer well-rounded educational experiences to all students (increasing student access to and improving student engagement in high-quality STEM courses, including computer science, music and the arts, foreign languages and accelerated learning programs, American history, civics, economics, geography, social studies, or government education, and environmental education). Reserve funds may also be used to support school districts in fostering safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments (including mental health programs) and increasing access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology by providing technical assistance to school districts.

**Local Funding and Activities.** Funds flow from states to school districts by formula. In order to receive those funds, school districts must submit an application and conduct a needs assessment. A school district, or consortium of school districts, must develop its application with various stakeholders and this consultation is required to be ongoing. The needs assessment must 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.” This assessment must be conducted once every three years.

At the local level, school districts must support at least one activity or program from three separate categories: well-rounded educational opportunities (districts must allocate at least 20 percent of funds to this category); activities to support safe and healthy students (districts must allocate at least 20 percent of funds to this category); and activities to support the effective use of technology. It is important to note that a school district, or consortium of school districts, is prohibited from using more than 15 percent of funds for purchasing technology infrastructure.

## **Part B—21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**

**State Funding and Activities.** Under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program, funds flow by formula to states. As noted above, 5 percent of funds can be withheld for state activities that include, monitoring, evaluation, and training, as well as prescreening external organizations, which is a new requirement under ESSA. These external organizations are defined as “a nonprofit organization with a record of success in running or working with before and after school (or summer recess) programs.”

The state must make grants to eligible entities for community learning centers and they may make grants for expanded learning time. An eligible entity is a school district, community-based organization, another public or private entity, or a consortium of two or more of such agencies, organizations, or entities. A community learning center is defined as an entity that assists students to meet the challenging state academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess), and offers families of students served by such center opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development. It is specifically noted in the law that a state may not give priority or preference to applicants who propose to use funds to extend the regular school day.

**Local Funding and Activities.** Grants are competitive to eligible entities, as defined above. A state may require matching funds. Eligible entities may use funds for programs and activities that include:

- Academic enrichment learning programs, mentoring programs, remedial education activities, and tutoring services that are aligned with the challenging state academic standards and any local academic standards; and local curricula that are designed to improve student academic achievement;
- Well-rounded education activities;
- Programs that support a healthy and active lifestyle;
- Services for individuals with disabilities;
- Programs that provide after-school activities for students who are English learners that emphasize language skills and academic achievement;

- 
- Cultural programs;
  - Telecommunications and technology education programs;
  - Expanded library service hours;
  - Parenting skills programs that promote parental involvement and family literacy;
  - Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled to allow the students to improve their academic achievement;
  - Drug and violence prevention programs and counseling programs;
  - STEM programs; and
  - Programs that partner with in-demand fields of the local workforce or build career competencies and career readiness.

Grants are awarded for periods of three to five years. Any program or activity developed by a school district must meet measures of effectiveness that are based upon an assessment of the following: 1) objective data regarding the need for before and after school (or summer recess) programs and activities in the schools and communities; 2) an established set of performance measures aimed at ensuring the availability of high-quality academic enrichment opportunities; and 3) if appropriate, evidence-based research that the program or activity will help students meet the challenging state academic standards and any local academic standards. In addition, programs must ensure that measures of student success align with the regular academic program of the school and the academic needs of participating students and include state developed performance indicators and measures. Additionally, the program must collect the data necessary for the measures of student success described in the previous bullet.

### **Why does this matter to school boards?**

**New Block Grant Funding.** If funded, the Student Support and Enrichment Grants will provide new formula funding to states and school districts. These funds can be used for a wide array of activities and programs and school boards will have an opportunity to influence how those funds are spent.

**Expanded Learning Time.** If there is interest in implementing expanded learning time in districts and schools, there is funding for these efforts. Work will need to be done at the state level to ensure funds are allocated for that purpose. In contrast, if school boards prefer to focus on traditional before, after, and summer school activities, they can work with the states to limit funding for these purposes.