

ESSA Title II and Support for Educators

Frequently asked Questions

Educators and policymakers are now beginning to work on implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The new law supports the learning and development of educators in enhancing their capacity to help students succeed and includes new provisions aimed to help educators grow. See below for answers about the educator professional development activities and funding in Title II.

1. What happened to the definition of “highly qualified teacher” (HQT)?

Beginning in the 2016–17 school year, the HQT requirements will be eliminated.

2. How does ESSA ensure that all educators are properly credentialed and students have access to high-quality instruction?

ESSA maintains the requirement that teachers and paraprofessionals working in Title I schools meet state certification and licensure requirements. “Equitable distribution” of educators also remains in the new law, requiring states to ensure that students in Title I schools are not subject to “ineffective” (formerly known as “unqualified” under NCLB) educators more frequently than students in non–Title I schools.

3. How does ESSA change the definition of professional development?

ESSA eliminates NCLB’s definition of “core academic subjects”, thus expanding the allowable use of Title II funds for professional development to include teachers of every subject as well as all other school staff, from principals to librarians to paraprofessionals. It also recognizes that educators learn best when they can collaborate and immediately apply what they learn by explicitly requiring ongoing job-embedded activities that improve instruction. ESSA also supports educators as leaders by creating a few new programs (see question five) designed to build and reward the leadership capacity of teachers.

4. What Title II programs does ESSA maintain?

- **Teacher Quality Partnership Grants:** provide competitive funding to states; intended to improve the quality of new teachers by creating partnerships among institutions of higher education and high-need districts.
- **Teacher and School Leader Incentive Grants** (formerly the Teacher Incentive Fund): provide competitive grants to states, districts, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations; focus on funding performance-based programs, or human capital management systems.
- **Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grants:** provide competitive funding to national nonprofit organizations and districts for projects to recruit, select, prepare, and provide professional development for teachers or school leaders.
- **School Leader Recruitment and Support** program (formerly the School Leadership program): provides competitive grants to districts; designed to enhance educator preparation programs and encourage collaboration between schools of educator preparation and high-need districts.

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5. Does ESSA create any new professional development opportunities for educators?

Yes, ESSA allows states to create new teacher, principal, and school leadership academies to help meet the need for educators in high-need schools. Additionally, ESSA allows funds to be used for:

- New teacher residency programs to enhance clinical training opportunities for teachers.
- New STEM Master Teachers Corps to help train, recruit, and retain teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.
- New American history and civics program to provide enhanced learning opportunities for teachers of those disciplines.

6. Does ESSA help support recruitment of teachers?

Yes, it allows states to create consortia to develop processes that enable recruitment across state lines so that teachers who are certified and licensed to teach in one state can be hired in other states. Recruitment efforts can also be supported with federal funds from the School Leader Recruitment and Support program mentioned above.

7. What requirements do professional development programs have to meet?

Under ESSA, professional development programs and activities must be “evidence-based,” as opposed to the more demanding “scientifically-based” requirement under NCLB. This means these programs have demonstrated a record of success and there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest the program is effective.

8. Are there any changes to how professional development activities are funded?

Title II dollars continue to be allocated to states by formula. Under ESSA, there will be a shift away from an allocation formula that rewards communities with higher populations to a formula that rewards communities with higher percentages of families living in poverty. After a four-year phase-in period, 80 percent of funds will be allocated to higher-poverty districts and 20 percent will be allocated to those with larger populations.

9. Are educator evaluations required under ESSA?

No, the law does not require educator evaluations. It does stipulate, however, that if Title II funds are used to create or improve school district evaluation systems, educators must be evaluated “in part” on student achievement, and their evaluations must be based on multiple measures, such as observations and student surveys.

10. Title II funding for professional development is the only funding some states receive to support educators. Does ESSA allow these funds to be used on other activities?

Historically, states and districts have been able to transfer up to 50 percent of their Title II funds to Title I. This transferability option was expanded under ESSA to allow all—100 percent—of their Title II funds to be moved to Title I. States and districts are also allowed to transfer 100 percent of their Title IV allocation into Title I, and funds can be moved between Titles II and IV (well-rounded programs and activities). However, while funds can be transferred into Title I, money cannot be moved out of Title I into another title.