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Title IV, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*: Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants

What is Title IV, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and how does it work?

The bipartisan *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) created a new block grant program under Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichments (SSAE) grants. SSAE grants allow the funds to be used in three ways:

- 1) Providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g., those subjects that fall under the well-rounded curriculum definition¹, including physical education)
- 2) Supporting safe and healthy students (e.g., health and physical education, comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices)
- 3) Supporting the effective use of technology (e.g., professional development, blended learning, distance learning).

How are the Title IV, Part A (SSAE) funds distributed under ESSA?

Under ESSA, SSAE funds are distributed to states based on their relative share of Title I, Part A funds (with a guaranteed grant minimum for small states). States are required to subgrant 95 percent of their SSAE funds to school districts, reserving no more than one percent of their SSAE program allocation for administrative costs. States may use any remaining funds reserved for activities including:

- monitoring, training, technical assistance and capacity building for local education authorities (LEAs);
- identifying and eliminating state barriers to the coordination and integration of programs and funding streams that meet the program's purposes; and
- supporting districts in providing programs and activities that offer well-rounded education experiences, foster safe and healthy environments that support academic achievement, and increasing access to technology.

District allocations are also based on their relative share of Title I, Part A funds and must be at least \$10,000, unless sufficient funds do not exist to allocate all districts such amount. If the \$10,000 threshold cannot be reached for every district, then all grants are proportionally reduced.

In addition, districts are given the option to form consortia and combine SSAE funds. All districts must submit an application to the state in order to receive SSAE funds via formula and must conduct a needs assessment every three years (a requirement waived for districts eligible for less than \$30,000). Districts may reserve up to two percent of SSAE funds for administrative costs, with the remaining funds used for the three focus areas above. Districts that receive an allocation of \$30,000 or more, must use their allocation via the three priority areas described above. For those that receive less than \$30,000, districts are only required to provide assurances that they will use their allocation for one of the three activity areas: well-rounded educational opportunities (20 percent), safe and healthy student (20 percent) and technology (some of the allocation). Districts may not spend more than 15 percent of its allocation on technology infrastructure.

How can physical education programs in my state benefit from Title IV, Part A?

States are currently making decisions about education spending. States can use the five percent of the Title IV, Part A dollars that stay with the state to provide matching grants to school districts for specific programs or priorities that the state designates, to provide professional development to districts and/or technical assistance to them on their Title IV, Part A programs.

It is critical to advocate to the state department of education about the importance of using a portion of the Title IV, Part A funds for physical education programs. State departments of education receive their allocation of funding from the federal government and are responsible for distributing those funds to school districts. The role or title of the person responsible for distributing these funds varies state by state. Critical stakeholders at the state level include: state superintendent of education, state board of education, state ESSA committees, state title funding coordinators, state department of education physical education specialists, state department of education curriculum specialists/coordinators.

State Level Advocacy Opportunities for Physical Education:

- ▶ Advocate to the state department of education to use a portion of the Title IV, Part A funds for physical education programs:
 - Designate five percent of the Title IV, Part A dollars that remain at the state level to provide matching grants to school districts to provide professional development and/or technical assistance to school districts on their physical education programs
 - Specifically call out physical education as a state priority eligible for grant requests

How can my local school district benefit from Title IV, Part A?

At the school and school district level, plans must be created for how their Title IV, Part A funding will be spent. As districts create plans for funding, if there is a school district physical education coordinator, they should be assisting in creating a districtwide plan for the physical education piece of the funding. To address health inequity and health disparities, it is critical that the funds prioritize the lower-income schools in the district and impact a range of schools across the district. Programs that are funded should be able to link the impact of physical education on a student's academic achievement, as is required under Title IV, Part A.

Making your requests to school principals, district administrators, district physical education coordinator, and the district title funds coordinator is critical. In many districts, funding physical education is not the first thing they think of when identifying programs to be funded by SSAE, so it is important that advocates are educated about what is eligible under Title IV, Part A so they can be proactive in working to secure funding.

Districts that have been successful in accessing these funds or similar funding in the past have been very persistent in their requests and have created a coordinated plan that links to overall district priorities in the health, wellness, and physical activity space. It is also important that they share info on any data that will be collected as a result to show the impact on academic achievement.

Sharing stories and examples of states and districts that have been successful has been extremely helpful in getting other states and districts to understand the process and gain the momentum to push for their own success.

District Level Advocacy Opportunities for Physical Education:

- ▶ Ensure that advocates and decision makers understand that physical education is eligible under Title IV, Part A so they can be proactive in working to secure funding.
- ▶ Advocate that school districts that receive Title IV, Part A funding from the state block grant dedicate funds to support physical education programs.
- ▶ Making your requests to school principals, district administrators, district physical education coordinator, and the district title funds coordinator is critical.
- ▶ Urge prioritization of funding to low-resourced schools in the district.
- ▶ Work with the school wellness committee to make physical education a priority.

ⁱ "Well-rounded education" is defined in ESEA section 8101(52). The text of the ESEA, as amended by ESSA, is available at: <http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Elementary%20And%20Secondary%20Education%20Act%20of%201965.pdf>