

Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Rural Schools



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The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 offers several opportunities to support rural education by providing states and local districts more flexibility while preserving the critical role of the federal government.

Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)

ESSA maintains REAP, which represents a dedicated stream of flexible federal formula funding for local school districts. School districts can use REAP to hire additional teachers and aides, purchase new technology, extend course offerings for students, and focus on closing achievement gaps.

Rural Study

ESSA directs the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to review how it is serving the nation's rural schools within eighteen months of the enactment of ESSA. The study will assess the methods and means in which ED addresses the needs of rural schools and rural local education agencies (LEAs). ED also will develop an action plan detailing ways to increase participation by rural schools and LEAs in the development of federal policies and regulations.

Rural School Consolidated Grant Applications

Under ESSA, rural schools can coordinate through their LEAs to submit consolidated applications for federal grant programs. The No Child Left Behind Act, the previous authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, permitted this practice in a small number of states. ESSA expands this opportunity to all states.

Title I Formula Study

ESSA does not change the formula for determining allocations of federal Title I funds or Title I enrollment quintiles. However, ESSA requires the director of the Institute of Education Sciences at ED to complete a study examining the effectiveness of the four Title I Part A funding formulas, including the impact of the current formula structure on Title I funding allocations and whether the Title I formula adequately delivers Title I funds to the most economically disadvantaged communities.

Support for Rural Teachers and School Leaders

Under ESSA, the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund Grants provide competitive funding to school districts and early childhood education programs to support the development, implementation, improvement, or expansion of performance-based compensation or human capital management systems in schools served by those grantees. ESSA ensures that ED awards these grants to districts



and programs in geographically diverse areas, including rural areas, focusing on recruiting and supporting school leaders in districts with high-need schools. Finally, ESSA creates a new STEM Master Teacher Corps program that provides federal funds to support state-led efforts to attract and retain science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Support for Community Schools

ESSA includes federal funding to support the planning, implementation, and operation of full-service community schools² in high-poverty rural districts.

Support for Technology

ESSA creates a new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program¹ and authorizes up to \$1.6 billion annually to provide formula grants to states for multiple purposes, including increasing access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology. Schools in rural and remote areas can use federal funding from this program to expand access to high-quality digital learning opportunities. States also may use other federal funds authorized to support the effective use of technology to provide students in rural, remote, and underserved areas with digital resources, high-quality digital learning experiences, and access to online courses taught by effective educators.

For additional fact sheets and videos about ESSA, visit www.all4ed.org/essa/.

Endnotes

- ¹ The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program has three purposes: (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology to raise academic achievement and digital literacy for all students. If a district receives less than \$30,000 through this program, the district may choose to support only one of these purposes.
- ² ESSA defines a "full-service community school" as "a public elementary school or secondary school that—(A) participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships; and (B) provides access to such services in school to students, families, and the community, such as access during the school year (including before- and after-school hours and weekends), as well as during the summer."

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC–based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. www.all4ed.org

The **Rural School and Community Trust** (Rural Trust) is a national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, and advocates in a variety of ways for appropriate state educational policies, including the key issue of equitable and adequate funding for rural schools. www.ruraledu.org

