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ESSA Toolkit:

**A Guide to the Implementation of
the Every Student Succeeds Act**



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Toolkit Purpose

This toolkit is intended to help ACTFL members learn about the crucial aspects of the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Title IV, Part A of ESSA contains a new set of block grants known as Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants. These grants are intended to fund, in large part, a “well-rounded education.” Under the SSAE provision of Title IV, each school district is tasked with formulating a plan setting forth how it will utilize its SSAE grants. Districts are permitted to choose from a number of activities that constitute a well-rounded education, including foreign language, which has been explicitly included in the well-rounded education definition.

The grant money may also be used to fund safe and healthy school programs or technology programs.

In addition, each state must develop a plan that describes how the state intends to distribute the SSAE funding. As advocates for foreign language education, it is vital that we organize, mobilize and join together to ensure that we have a seat at the table when determinations as to how SSAE funds will be used are made.

Although the federal appropriations process is ongoing, with full funding the minimum SSAE grant to an LEA will be \$10,000. However, the end result of the appropriations process will dictate whether \$10,000 remains the minimum. Any district that receives more than \$30,000 in SSAE grants will be required to perform a “needs assessment,” describing which subjects or activities the district intends to fund.

In addition, other provisions of ESSA such as Titles I, II and III present exciting opportunities for funding for foreign language programs. This toolkit should be used as a resource in your work to obtain funding through both Title IV and the other sections of ESSA.

As you know, language learning is critical to developing well-rounded students, and it is imperative that all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are provided with an education that allows them be linguistically and culturally competent so that they can best succeed as world citizens and compete in the global economy now and in the future. As a supporter of robust foreign language education programs, we urge you to utilize the resources in this toolkit and advocate for foreign language education funding. With your assistance, we can ensure that foreign language education is a critical part of a well-rounded education for millions of students around the United States.

If you have questions or would like additional support from ACTFL, please contact us by visiting <https://www.actfl.org/contact-us>.



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ESSA Overview: History and Structure of the Law

In December 2015, the United States Congress authorized a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) entitled the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA replaces the previous version of the law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and provides states with much more influence when it comes to teacher quality, accountability, funding and more.

ESSA is broken up into a number of “titles,” each governing different aspects of elementary and secondary education:

- **Title I:** “Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged,” which includes provisions relating to state plans, accountability and school improvement plans;
- **Title II:** “Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders,” which includes provisions relating to teacher preparation and recruitment;
- **Title III:** “Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students,” which includes provisions relating to English language learners;
- **Title IV:** “21st Century Schools,” which includes provisions relating to student supports and academic grants;
- **Title V:** “Flexibility and Accountability,” which includes provisions relating to state innovation programs;
- **Title VI:** “Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education”;
- **Title VII:** “Impact Aid,” which includes provisions to assist school districts that operate with less local revenue than other school districts; and
- **Title VIII:** “General Provisions,” which includes definitions and provisions relating to waiver requests.

ESSA offers the opportunity to expand language learning to more students across the country in a number of ways, most notably through Title IV-A. Title IV-A of ESSA establishes Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants, which are distributed to school districts by states and can be used to, among other things, promote a well-rounded education.

As Title IV-A provides the most direct opportunity to expand foreign language education programs, the focus of this toolkit is on Title IV-A and SSAE grants. There is also significant opportunity for two-way immersion to serve the heritage language community and thus encourages the use of Title III funds for this model. However, as will be discussed later in this toolkit, there are opportunities for funding in other sections of ESSA as well.

In reviewing the information relating to ESSA in this toolkit, it is important to keep in mind the following definitions:



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- LEA: Short for “Local Educational Agency.” This is defined as “a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district or other political subdivision of a State.” In most cases, LEA will refer to a school district.
- SEA: Short for “State Education Agency.” This is defined as “the agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of public elementary schools and secondary schools.” In most cases, SEA refers to a state department of education.
- SSAE grant: Short for “Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant.” Grants established by Title IV-A of ESSA designed to allow school districts to promote a well-rounded education, safe and healthy students and the effective use of technology.



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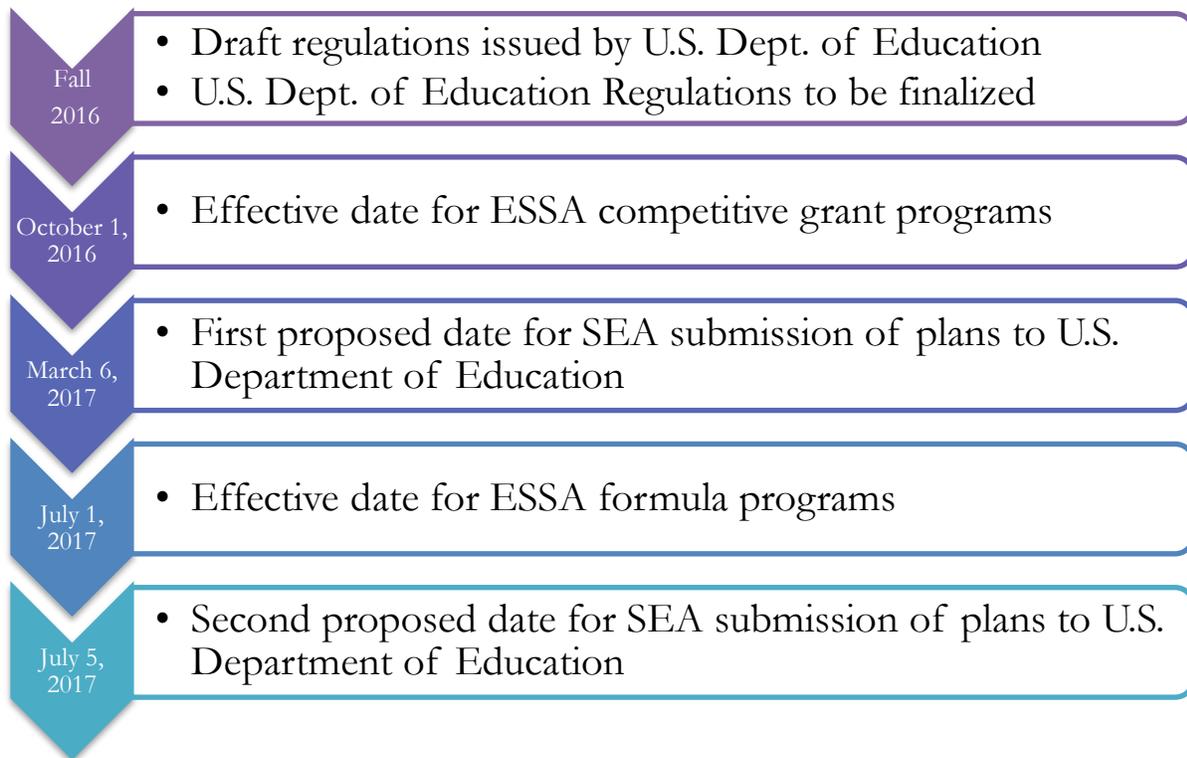


ESSA Implementation Timeline

Most of the ESSA provisions pertaining to funding for foreign language education will not take effect until the 2017-2018 school year. Specifically, in the 2016-2017 school year, formula funds will be allocated using the same methodology used to award funds in the 2015-2016 school year.

Accordingly, sub-grant allocations to LEAs will be made in the same manner and use the same allocation formulas as the 2015-2016 school year. Key dates are as follows:

- Summer 2016: The U.S. Department of Education will issue draft regulations, solicit comments from stakeholders and finalize regulations.
- October 1, 2016: Effective date for the changes to all competitive grant programs under ESSA.
- Spring – Summer 2017: The U.S. Department of Education has indicated in its draft regulations that States will have two opportunities to submit the required state plans: March 6, 2017 or July 5, 2017.
- July 1, 2017: Effective date for the changes to all formula programs under ESSA (e.g., Title I funding for disadvantaged students, Title II funding for educator supports, Title IV-A funding for well-rounded programs).





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ESSA Title IV-A and SSAE Grants: What You Need to Know

Title IV of ESSA is entitled “21st Century Schools.” Part A establishes SSAE grants, which aim to “improve students’ academic achievement by providing all students with access to a well-rounded education.” Foreign language learning has been explicitly made a part of a well-rounded education under ESSA. Other subjects that are eligible for SSAE grants include the arts, computer science, career and technical education, environmental education, physical education, social studies and STEM.

SSAE grants are distributed in the following manner:

- SEAs are granted funds through a formula allocation from the U.S. Department of Education in the form of a block grant.
- The SEAs then allocate the majority (at least 95%) of those funds to LEAs based on a formula set forth by the U.S. Department of Education.
- LEAs then use the funds to provide students with a well-rounded education, safe and healthy schools and improved school technology.

Prior to receiving SSAE grants from the U.S. Department of Education the following steps are required:

- SEAs must develop plans describing how the SEA will support LEAs in providing students a well-rounded education.
- Each LEA must submit an application to its SEA for funding. The LEA will then receive an SSAE allocation in proportion to its Title I funding. If the program is fully funded by the federal appropriations process, the minimum grant amount would be \$10,000. However, it is unlikely that the program will be fully funded.
- Any LEA that receives more than \$30,000 in SSAE grants must perform a “needs assessment,” describing which subjects the LEA intends to fund. PDF is found here:
<https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/reports/ACTFL%20Metric%20Tool.pdf>

The following restrictions are applicable to the expenditure of SSAE grant money:

- Any LEA that receives more than \$30,000 in SSAE grants must expend 20% of its grant on activities to provide a well-rounded education and 20% of its grant on safe and healthy school activities. The remaining 60% of the grant money can be spent on either well-rounded education programs, safe and healthy school activities or technology use. However, there is a 15% cap on technology devices, equipment, software and similar items.



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- Any LEA that receives less than \$30,000 is not required to set aside portions of the grant for well-rounded and safe and healthy students programs. However, the 15% technology purchase cap still applies.



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Applicability of Other Relevant ESSA Provisions

While the focus of this toolkit is on Title IV-A of ESSA, other provisions also provide opportunities for foreign language educators. A topline summary of the other relevant ESSA titles is below.

Title I: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

- Title I calls for “targeted assistance school program plans”, which are required to serve participating eligible students by using resources to help them meet state academic standards. These resources may include programs or activities necessary to provide a well-rounded education. Given the inclusion of foreign languages within the definition of “well-rounded education” and the correlation between foreign language study and improved cognitive development and academic achievement, there is an opportunity to utilize the funding associated with these targeted assistance school program plans for language learning.
- Similarly, Title I calls for schoolwide program plans documenting methods and instructional strategies that strengthen the academic program in the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, which may include programs activities, and courses necessary to provide a well-rounded education. There is an opportunity to use Title I funds associated with these programs for language learning.

Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders

- Funding to eligible entities may be available under Title II in support of K-12 literacy. Well-rounded education is referenced in this portion of the law, which requires local applications to contain, “an explanation of how the school will integrate comprehensive literacy instruction into a well-rounded education.” There exists an opportunity for funding for foreign language programs that work in conjunction with comprehensive literacy programs in order to provide students with the maximum benefits of a well-rounded education.
- It is also important to keep in mind that ESSA defines professional development as activities that are an integral part of school and LEA strategies for providing educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education. Foreign language is explicitly made part of a “well-rounded education.” Accordingly, Title II professional development programs should, in general be made available for foreign language educators.

Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students



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- The U.S. Department of Education permits districts to designate some Title III funds for English learners enrolled in dual language immersion programs that serve English learners.
 - For example, in New York City, a number of schools [have used Title III funding to add dual immersion programs](#). These programs serve both English-language learners and other families who want their children to be literate in multiple languages.
 - Additionally, in Utah, districts use their Title III funds to assist two-way Spanish dual language immersion programs which are part of the state dual language immersion programs.
- In addition, Title III provides competitive grants “to institutions of higher education or public or private entities with relevant experience and capacity to provide for professional development activities that will improve classroom instruction for English learners and assist educational personnel working with English learners to meet high professional standards, including standards for certification and licensure as teachers who work in language instruction educational programs or serve English learners.” Pending the final Department of Education regulations, there is an opportunity for teachers in dual immersion programs serving English learners to be eligible to participate in the National Professional Development Project.

Title VI: Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education

- Title VI provides for grants to support schools that are part of the Native American and Alaska Native Language Immersion Program and use Native American and Alaska Native languages as the primary languages of instruction. The Native American and Alaska Native Language Immersion Program is authorized at \$1.1 million dollars, with grants to be awarded competitively. If your school or LEA falls within this category, there may be an opportunity for funding.



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General Talking Points

Foreign language learning is vital to the development of well-rounded students, and it is imperative that all students are provided with an education that allows them be linguistically and culturally competent so that they can succeed as world citizens and compete in the global economy. In advocating for foreign language learning to SEAs and LEAs, ACTFL provides these talking points as a resource:

- **Students who study languages perform better than students who do not on standardized tests.**
 - A study examining students in Louisiana Public Schools found that students studying a foreign language significantly outperformed their peers who did not study a foreign language on tests in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.¹
- **Students who study language demonstrate improved cognitive development and skills compared to their monolingual peers.**
 - A study examining the English reading scores of students with different levels of intelligence found a significant relationship between high scores in reading and more intensive foreign language study for children with an average intelligence level and concluded that more widespread enrollment in elementary school foreign language classes would be favorable for this group.²
- **Dual immersion language programs help close the achievement gap between native English speakers and English language learners.**
 - A study in North Carolina found that two-way dual language programs—where English language learners and native-English speakers were educated together for part of the day in English and the other part of the day in another language—increased the Reading and Math achievement of all students, and appeared to close the achievement gap between limited-English-proficient students, non-language minority native-English speaking

¹ Taylor, C. & Lafayette, R. (2010). Academic achievement through Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES): A case for promoting greater access to foreign language study among young learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94 (1), 22-42. This study focuses on a FLES model of language instruction several times a week for elementary students.

² Garfinkel, A., & Tabor, K. E. (1991). Elementary school foreign languages and English reading achievement: A new view of the relationship. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24(5), 375-382. From Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts database.



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- African-American students, students of low-socioeconomic status and possibly special education students.³
- In 2015, a four-year randomized control trial study in Portland, Oregon, found that students randomly assigned to a dual-language immersion program outperformed their peers in English reading by roughly seven months in grade 5 and almost nine months in grade 8.⁴
 - **Learning another language improves an individual's earning potential later in life.**
 - An analysis of a representative sample of U.S. college graduates found a 2-3% wage premium for college graduates who can speak a second language after controlling for cognitive ability.⁵
 - **Foreign language study improves students' openness to other languages and cultures.**
 - A study in North Carolina found that a majority of students who studied a foreign language at the elementary school level, ten years later reported a positive view of foreign language speakers and their cultures.⁶

³ Wayne P. Thomas, Virginia P. Collier and Karyn Collier. (2010). English Learners in North Carolina. North Carolina Department of Education.
http://gled.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/file/view/NC_ELL_Study_Yr2_Final+Report_Jul27_2011.pdf.

⁴ Study of Dual-Language Immersion in the Portland Public Schools Year 4 Briefing. (2015).
http://dcimmersion.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/dli_year_4_summary_nov2015v6public-1.pdf.

⁵ Saiz, A. & Zoido, E. (2005). Listening to what the world says: Bilingualism and earnings in the United States. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 87, (3), 523-538.

⁶ Heining-Boynton, A. L., Haitema, T. (2007). A ten-year chronicle of student attitudes toward foreign language in the elementary school. *Modern Language Journal*, 91(2), 149-168.



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Advocate for Foreign Language Learning with SEA and LEA Officials

States are charged with submitting a plan describing how the SEA will support LEAs in providing programs that offer a well-rounded education. In addition, LEAs are tasked with providing their own plans to the SEA, detailing the activities the LEA intends to fund with the SSAE grant funding. Please use the questions below as a way to guide your advocacy, organizing and outreach.

Moving forward, it will be important to engage decision-makers at both the state and local level to ensure that foreign language learning is made a part of the grants devoted to “well-rounded education.”

How to Encourage Foreign Language Inclusion in SEA Plans

How to Encourage Your LEA to Fund Foreign Language

Ask: For foreign language learning programs to be encouraged by the SEA in its plan for SSAE grant funds.

Ask: For Title IV-A SSAE grant funds and Title III funds to be allocated to foreign language learning programs.

Research

- What is the structure of your state’s SEA?
 - Does your state have a State Department of Education, a State School Board or both?
- Has your state started its stakeholder engagement process?
 - Examples:
 - Arizona has [online surveys and has encouraged outreach through social media](#).
 - California has held stakeholder engagement [meetings and webinars, and performed surveys](#).
 - Colorado has started a [statewide listening tour](#).
 - North Carolina has an [online portal](#) to submit comments to the state.
 - If yes, what activities/programs have been planned?

Research

- What is the structure of your LEA?
- Has your LEA solicited input from school leaders on the LEA plan?
- Who is writing your LEA plan?
- Who is convening the group responsible for formulating your LEA plan?
- Who will represent the interests of foreign language educators at the table?
- Is your LEA required to create a “needs assessment” to qualify for SSAE grant money?
 - Needs assessments are required for LEAs that receive an allocation above \$30,000.
 - If required to create a needs assessment, we encourage your LEA to use ACTFL’s needs assessment tool to help formulate the needs assessment.
<https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/reports/ACTFL.%20Metric%20Tool.pdf>
 - Even if a needs assessment is not required in your district, you may still use the needs assessment tool to help provide a justification for inclusion of foreign language programs in your general LEA plan.
- Does your district use Title III money to fund a dual-immersion language program?



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- Who is writing your state plan?
- Who is convening the group responsible for formulating the state plan?
- Who are the influencers in the state that will have a say in formulating the plan?
- Who will represent the interests of foreign language educators at the table?
- How will the SEA look to influence the LEA plans?
 - For example, will the SEA explicitly say which programs may be funded? Will certain programs be pushed by the SEA informally through the application format or state provided examples of fund usage?

Public Options for Engagement

- Host or participate in existing town halls with other stakeholders and foreign language supporters.
 - Be sure to discuss the “general talking points” provided in this guide regarding the benefits of foreign language learning.
- Find out if your state has an ESSA task force and attempt to participate.
- Build coalitions with other groups (parents, business leaders, educators, etc.) that believe in the value of foreign language learning.
- Engage the press by writing letters to the editor about foreign language learning, penning an op-ed or visiting an editorial board
- Think outside the box!
 - For example, find a local business owner who needs workers with foreign language skills.

Private Options for Engagement

- Create a “target list” of potential champions for foreign language programs.
- Map your assets to this target list
 - Champions can include elected officials, education policy professionals and other thought leaders.
- Set up advocacy meetings, phone calls and e-mails with policymakers and allies.
 - Visit [the resources on the ACTFL advocacy webpage](#) for general tips as to how to set up a meeting with an elected official.

Options for Engagement

- Engage parent and community groups with passion for foreign language learning through community meetings, e-mail listservs, social media, etc. and ask leaders to send messages to the decision-makers in the LEA.
 - For example, in Fairfax County, VA, groups like [Fairfax FLAGS](#) exist to preserve language immersion programs.
- Identify other educators and other members of the school community that could be potential allies.
 - Look for individuals with a connection to foreign language learning and/or a high level of influence in your LEA
- Set up behind the scenes advocacy meetings with decision-makers and allies.
- Have decision-makers sit in and observe a foreign language classes to more concretely show the value of foreign language education.