

National Science Teachers Association

FACT SHEET: Title IV, Part A of ESSA: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants and Science/STEM Education

Congress authorized a \$1.65 billion block grant program under The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title IV Part A, and named it the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant. This grant is the third largest authorized program in ESSA and combines (and eliminates) several targeted programs under No Child Left Behind, including the Math and Science Partnership Grants. The Math and Science Partnership grants, which received \$152.7M in FY2016 before it was eliminated, was the largest single program at the Department of Education devoted exclusively to science/STEM-related classroom purposes.

Title IV, Part A authorizes activities in three broad areas:

- 1) Providing students with programs that ensure a well-rounded education with programs in STEM, college and career counseling, arts, civics, and access to IB/AP;
- 2) Supporting safe and healthy students with comprehensive school mental health programs, drug and violence prevention initiatives, and health and physical education; and
- 3) Supporting the effective use of technology, including professional development, blended learning, and devices.

How ESSA Title IV, Part A Grant Funds Are Distributed

Each state will receive an allocation based on their Title I funding formula.

Using the same Title I formula, the states will then allocate funds to school districts.

Any school district that receives a formula allocation above \$30,000 must conduct a needs assessment and must spend 20 percent of its grant on safe and healthy school activities and 20 percent on activities to provide a well-rounded education. The remaining 60 percent of the money can be spent on all three priorities, including technology. However, there is a 15 percent cap on devices, equipment, software and digital content.

If a district receives an allocation below \$30,000, the law does not require a needs assessment or setting aside percentages for well-rounded and safe and healthy students programs. It must spend money on activities in at least one of the three categories. The 15 percent technology purchase cap would continue to apply.

Title IV, Part A Allowable STEM Activities

Districts can use Title IV Part A grants to provide students with a well-rounded education and improve instruction and student engagement in Science and STEM by:

- Expanding high-quality STEM courses.

- Increasing access to STEM for underserved and at risk student populations.
- Supporting the participation of students in STEM nonprofit competitions (such as robotics, science research, invention, mathematics, computer science, and technology competitions).
- Providing hands-on learning opportunities in STEM.
- Integrating other academic subjects, including the arts, into STEM subject programs.
- Creating or enhancing STEM specialty schools.
- Integrating classroom based and afterschool and informal STEM instruction.

Funding for ESSA Title IV A

The program is authorized in ESSA at \$1.65 billion. Congress appropriated \$1.1 billion for FY2018 programs and \$1.17 billion for FY 2019. This figure represents a marked increase of funding from the FY2017 level of \$400 million. In FY2017, because of the low funding level of \$400m, states were given the option to competitively bid this targeted grant program.

This level of appropriations will allow school districts to be flexible in how they will fund and support programs that support safe and healthy students, create a well-rounded academic curriculum that includes STEM, and establish an effective educational technology program.

The Need to Adequately Fund ESSA Title IV and STEM Education

A continued robust federal investment in support of these programs is absolutely essential. Without a significant investment in Title IV, Part A, districts will be forced into choosing which of the priorities to invest in—even though an ample investment in all three is necessary to providing students with a comprehensive education.

K-12 STEM programs will have an impact on our nation’s economic future. In the past few years, U.S. businesses have voiced vocal concerns over the supply and availability of STEM workers. Growth in STEM jobs was three times as fast as growth in non-STEM jobs in the past 10 years, and at all levels of educational attainment, STEM job holders earn 11 percent higher wages compared with their same-degree counterparts in other jobs.

Full funding of the ESSA Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enhancement Grants at the authorized level of \$1.65 billion will support state-led efforts to promote hands on STEM learning, STEM specialty schools, integration of informal and formal STEM programs, and computer science instruction.

For more information go to <https://www.nsta.org/about/clpa/>

