

# Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Digital Learning



ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION



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## The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 supports digital learning and the effective use of technology.

### Funding for Digital Learning

ESSA eliminates the Enhancing Education through Technology (Ed-Tech) State Program. However, it creates a new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program and authorizes up to \$1.6 billion annually to provide formula grants to states for multiple purposes.<sup>1</sup> One purpose is to improve student academic achievement and digital literacy through the effective use of technology. Up to 60 percent of the subgrants states provide to districts from this program may be used to support activities such as

- providing professional development on the effective use of technology;
- providing resources to students in underserved areas to take advantage of digital learning experiences;
- providing resources to personalize learning;
- carrying out "blended learning"<sup>2</sup> projects; and
- building technological capacity and infrastructure, among other things.

Districts may use no more than 15 percent of their allocated grant funds for purchasing technology infrastructure.

### Supporting Effective Instruction and Assessments

Under ESSA, states and districts may use federal Title II funds to support training and professional development for teachers, principals, and other school leaders on how to effectively integrate technology into curricula and instruction. ESSA also includes a

competitive grant program to support professional development to improve classroom instruction specifically for English learners. Grant funds from this program may be used to support the use of technology-based programs that are effective in increasing student academic achievement and instruction of English learners.

Additionally, ESSA permits states to evaluate student academic achievement through the development of comprehensive assessment instruments, such as performance- and technology-based assessments and computer-adaptive assessments.

### Report on Student Home Access to Digital Resources

Under ESSA, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences is required, no later than eighteen months after the enactment of ESSA, to complete a study on the educational impacts of student access to digital resources outside of school. The study will evaluate barriers that students face in accessing digital resources outside of the classroom, challenges students who lack home internet access face (such as homework completion), and how these student barriers impact instructional practices of educators. The report will include a description of effective practices that states, districts, and other entities have used to improve student access to digital resources outside of the classroom.

### District Plans

Under ESSA, district Title I plans may describe how the district will assist schools in developing school library programs that will provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills.

For additional fact sheets and videos about ESSA, visit [www.all4ed.org/essa/](http://www.all4ed.org/essa/).

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> As defined by ESSA, blended learning means "a formal education program that leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches."