

Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Science



ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION



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The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 offers states and districts several opportunities to provide students with a robust science education.¹ The law includes provisions for training and recruiting science teachers; creating specialized schools dedicated to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); and expanding STEM curricula.

Training and Recruiting Science Teachers

ESSA's Title II authorizes \$2.3 billion annually for recruiting, preparing, and training high-quality teachers and school leaders, including science teachers.² States and districts may use Title II funds to train current educators to teach science and technology concepts, provide professional development to science educators, support elementary and early childhood educators to incorporate STEM content into their classrooms, and recruit professionals from the sciences into the field of teaching.

In addition, ESSA authorizes a new federal competitive grant under Title II to develop a STEM Master Teacher Corps to provide professional development for STEM teachers. The purpose of this grant is to allow STEM master teachers to advance their careers by working in academia and policy fields, lead content and professional development for other teachers, and improve the ability of all teachers to become more effective STEM educators.

Unfortunately, most of the professional development programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education are in peril. President

Donald Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget proposal eliminates the Title II program in its entirety as well as the STEM Master Teacher Corps grant. Following the president's lead, the U.S. House of Representatives Education Appropriations Committee provides no funding for these programs in its proposed FY 2018 appropriations bill. While the U.S. Senate may elect to provide some funding for educator professional development in its FY 2018 budget bill, the STEM Master Teacher Corps has never been funded and likely will not see new funding in this difficult budgetary climate.

STEM Curricula and Specialized STEM Schools

ESSA's Title IV includes the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program, which states can use for 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. Under these purposes, states may use SSAE funds to expand high-quality science courses, particularly in underserved schools; improve technology to support science education; and expand environmental science education programs.³ These grants also support the integration of STEM into all classroom subjects and afterschool activities as well as the expansion of specialized STEM schools. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$400 million for this program last year. This year, the U.S. House of Representatives proposes \$500 million, but the final funding level will not be determined for several more months.

ESSA also allows schools operating a Title I schoolwide program to use their Title I funds to update STEM-related learning spaces and labs.⁴ Additionally, ESSA encourages state education agencies to promote alternative routes for the state certification of teachers, including science teachers, and requires that states have academic standards for various subjects, including science.⁵

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



Endnotes

- ¹ Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Public Law 114-95, 114th Cong., 1st sess.
- ² National Science Teachers Association, *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Overview of the Federal Education Law and Federal Funding for STEM Initiatives* (Arlington, VA: Author, 2017), <http://static.nsta.org/pdfs/ESSAOverview.pdf>.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ U. S. Department of Education, "Resources for STEM Education" (Washington, DC: Author, 2017), <http://static.nsta.org/pdfs/ED-ResourcesForSTEMEducation.pdf>.
- ⁵ National Science Teachers Association, "What the ESSA Means for STEM Education" (Arlington, VA: Author, 2016), <http://static.nsta.org/pdfs/nstareports201607-pp4-5.pdf>.

Photos by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for **American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action**

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC-based national policy, practice, 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.
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