



*A Union of Professionals*

## **Every Student Succeeds Act**

A New Day in Public Education

### **Teachers and Paraprofessionals**

Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act maintains a separate teacher and school leaders state grant formula that largely mirrors the structure of current law (federal to state, and state to local formula grants). ESSA's Title II, Part A, slightly changes the state grant formula to increase the poverty factor over a multiyear period.

**ESSA ends the federal mandate on teacher evaluations.** States will be allowed to develop and implement systems. They must cooperate with stakeholders, including teachers, paraprofessionals and their unions. But whether and how they do so is not a condition of getting funding, as it was with Race to the Top and waivers.

In addition, there is a requirement that **no program funded through Title II can overturn existing collective bargaining agreements** or memoranda of understanding. Through strong labor-management relationships, union and school leaders can drive teacher quality, and advance student and school improvement. All stakeholders—educators, union leaders, administrators, policymakers, parents and the broader community—can and should work together and be held collectively responsible for our education system.

Resources will be provided to states and school districts to implement supports for teachers, paraprofessionals, principals and other educators. The bill maintains a broad focus on making funds available for **professional development, professional growth and leadership opportunities**. There is specific language that says a state can use funds for centers on induction, mentoring, career pathways and recruiting a diverse teacher workforce.

ESSA also supports teachers and paraprofessionals by:

- **Maintaining the role of paraprofessionals.** ESSA keeps paraprofessional certification requirements, which help prevent school districts from hiring paraprofessionals with little educational experience or professional training.
- **Requiring collaboration with and professional advancement of paraprofessionals.** ESSA ensures that paraprofessionals are included in the list of stakeholders who must be consulted in the development of state and local plans under Title II, and local plans under Title I,

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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including the operation of a targeted assistance school program. Other provisions expand professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals, including programs on how a state can establish, expand or improve pathways for paraprofessionals to earn a teacher certification.

- Providing collective bargaining protections. Teachers and paraprofessionals are covered by the Title I and Title II collective bargaining protections.
- Allowing collaboration on teacher licensure standards. ESSA includes language that would allow a consortium of states to work together to develop compatible standards on licensing and certifications. There is also language that allows funds to be used for voluntary teacher licensure reciprocity across states. With shifting demographics and teacher shortages, making it easier for districts to recruit and hire certified veteran teachers makes sense.
- Supporting efforts to improve teaching and learning conditions. ESSA allows states and districts to use Title II funds to conduct and publicly report on an assessment of educator support and working conditions that would be developed with teachers, leaders, parents, students and the community. It also encourages public involvement by requiring consultation with stakeholders to update and improve state activities

The following national activities are funded through reservations rather than separate authorizations of appropriations:

- Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (currently referred to as the Teacher Incentive Fund), which is a grant program and is designed to help fund teacher evaluation programs. Locals and states must apply. The program is not mandatory.
- Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN), which includes an optional reservation for Effective School Library programs.
- American History and Civics Education Program.
- Programs of National Significance, which include four sub-reservations for the following:
  - Supporting Effective Educator Engagement;
  - School Leader Recruitment and Support;
  - Technical Assistance and National Evaluation; and
  - STEM Master Teacher Corps (also enables funds to be used for grants to state educational agencies and nonprofit organizations for STEM professional development).

**Teacher Preparation Academies:** ESSA authorizes an optional program of academies, which are public or other nonprofit entities (and may include an institution of higher education) to prepare teachers, principals or other school leaders to serve in high-needs schools. These may be separate from the traditional teacher preparation programs and traditional alternative certification programs.

ESSA provides a lot of latitude as to who can establish an academy, and the program requirements are mixed. These academies will need to be closely monitored at the state level and during implementation.