

School District Recommendations for Implementing ESSA



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorizes the nation’s largest education law (formerly No Child Left Behind) with many much needed updates and revisions. The Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) Coalition has developed a set of recommendations that demonstrate how afterschool programs are particularly suited to assist school districts in meeting their ESSA requirements as well as reaching their goal that students from all backgrounds are successful in college and their future careers.

Topic	Strategy to Engage Afterschool
<p>Family Engagement</p> <p>Afterschool programs provide a crucial bridge between communities and schools and can help foster the family engagement called for under ESSA.</p> <p>ESSA’s provisions on Parent and Family Engagement in Title I Part B call on education agencies to collaborate with community-based organizations, such as afterschool programs, to carry out parent engagement plans and in using its parent engagement funds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering parents. Establish opportunities for parents to build their skills through classes hosted by afterschool programs. • Facilitating parent school partnerships. Host workshops that help parents navigate the policies and expectations of the school in partnership with afterschool programs so expectations are consistent. • ESSA requirements. Prepare parents to participate in the ESSA required school-parent compact by partnering with programs that already have strong parent relationships.
<p>STEM</p> <p>Throughout ESSA there is an emphasis on the importance of STEM learning. The United States is experiencing a rapid growth in the need for STEM professionals.</p> <p>The guidelines for ESSA’s Title IV Part A: Student Support and Academic Enhancement Grants (SSAE) indicate that districts receiving more than \$30,000 in federal funds are required to spend at least 20 percent of their funding on “well-rounded” educational activities. Districts can use these funds to support collaborations among schools and afterschool programs to improve instruction and student engagement in STEM subjects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complementing school learning with real world scientific enquiry. Provide students opportunities to apply what they have learned in school in the afterschool space. • Improving instruction. Create opportunities for school day educators working in afterschool to increase their confidence in teaching STEM. • Preparing STEM workforce. Expose young people to STEM career options in a low-stakes interactive environment through afterschool programs.
<p>College and Career Readiness</p> <p>Afterschool programs provide a link to higher education and career readiness. They expose students to higher education options and career paths and teach them skills that can unlock doors to future career prospects.</p> <p>Illinois has included college and career readiness as one of its student success/school quality indicators in its ESSA implementation plan. SSAE grants can be used to invest in out-of-school time career and college readiness strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous quality improvement. Gather data to assess the effectiveness of school’s college and career readiness efforts. • Resource alignment. Build school’s capacity by afterschool programs aligning their supports to the school’s college and career priorities. • Workforce skills. Afterschool programs foster the academic, technical, employability, and civic skills that are necessary for success in the classroom and workforce through activities like community-based group projects.
<p>Literacy Instruction</p> <p>Title II Part B of ESSA provides grants to “develop or enhance comprehensive literacy instruction” to entities serving “children from low-income families.” ESSA specifically states that these literacy initiatives can be “augmented by after-school and out-of-school time instruction.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning afterschool literacy activities with the school day. Reinforce the school day curriculum by providing individualized coaching and offering opportunities for students to read aloud and discuss what they have read in small groups. • Fostering an interest in reading. Utilize student interests to promote the development of literacy skills in the informal afterschool space that isn’t as standards focused.
<p>Training and Evidenced-Based Practices</p> <p>ACT Now released Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards in Spring 2016, as noted in the state’s ESSA plan. The Standards are evidence-based practices that lead to positive youth outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training school day teachers to understand what makes quality afterschool programs. School day teachers are the largest group of afterschool instructors. Attending a free Standards training would ensure that programs are high quality.