

Section 8601 of the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 Appropriations

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

(Updated December 2024)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was most recently reauthorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95), also known as ESSA. Subsection (a) of Section 8601 authorizes the Secretary to reserve up to 0.5 percent from most ESEA programs to carry out evaluation activities, such as: (1) conducting comprehensive, high-quality evaluations of ESEA programs that primarily use methods to permit the strongest possible causal inferences; (2) studying the effectiveness of ESEA programs and their administrative impact on schools and districts; (3) disseminating findings from Section 8601 evaluations; (4) evaluating aggregate short- and long-term effects and cost efficiencies across ESEA programs and related Federal programs; (5) improving the quality, timeliness, efficiency, and use of information related to ESEA program performance; and (6) assisting ESEA program grantees with activities that help support the conduct of high-quality evaluations under Section 8601. In addition, Section 8601(d) of ESSA states that:

The Director of the Institute of Education Sciences, shall, on a biennial basis, develop, submit to Congress, and make publicly available an evaluation plan, that—

(1) describes the specific activities that will be carried out under subsection (a) for the 2-year period applicable to the plan, and the timelines of such activities;

(2) contains the results of the activities carried out under subsection (a) for the most recent 2-year period; and

(3) describes how programs authorized under this Act will be regularly evaluated.

This document is the fourth such plan submitted to Congress. This plan focuses on all evaluations to be supported by Section 8601 funds appropriated in FY 2023 and FY 2024. All evaluation plans are publicly available on IES's [website](#).

I. Planned Use of Section 8601 Evaluation Funds

Funds that are set-aside from an ESEA program under Section 8601 can be used to support evaluations related to that program. They can also be pooled with 8601 funds set-aside from other ESEA programs and then used to support a broader set of evaluations. Evaluations supported with pooled funds typically relate to multiple ESEA programs, programs whose 8601 set-aside is too small on its own to support a high-quality evaluation, or programs such as Title I that do not have an 8601 set-aside.

FY 2023: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2023 to be spent on evaluations is \$14,831,148. Of this amount, \$8,794,912 is from pooled funds and \$6,036,236 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2023 are typically available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024.

FY 2024: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2024 to be spent on evaluations is \$16,492,770. Of this amount, \$8,600,000 is from pooled funds and \$7,892,770 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2024 are typically available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025.¹

Table 1 lists each new or continuing evaluation activity with a brief description or link to the study's description and timeline when available. Estimated costs from FY 2023 and FY 2024 funds are included, broken down by source. The amounts listed for each activity in the FY 2024 columns do not necessarily add up to the totals at the bottom of Table 1 because funding for yet to be awarded activities are still to be determined and therefore not listed.

¹ In Fiscal Year 2024, \$1,000,000 of the 8601 funds come from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, not regular appropriations, and are available for obligation through December 31, 2024.

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2023			Fiscal Year 2024		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Accountability and School Improvement						
Study of Strategies to Address Unfinished Learning in Math	C	\$4,090,119	-	C	*	-
Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives	C	\$303,979	-	C	*	-
Study of Schools Identified for Comprehensive Supports Under ESSA	C	\$1,258,198	-	-	-	-
Study of Post-Pandemic Federal Accountability and Key Drivers of Identification of Low-Performing Schools	N	\$1,628,377	-	-	-	-
Study of Accountability Systems' Role in Addressing Chronic Absenteeism. Chronic Absence has been a persistent problem in many schools, and has appeared to worsen following the pandemic. All states under ESEA Title I-A are required to evaluate their schools annually, and most states have chosen to use student attendance as one of the indicators. This study will examine the extent to which state accountability systems support schools in addressing chronic absence that use evidence to target its unique causes in each context.	-	-	-	N	*	-
Teachers and Leaders						
Study of Title II, Part A Uses of Funds	C	-	\$836,236	C	-	\$692,770
Study of Policies and Practices to Support the Educator Pipeline. This study will explore ways to examine how federal teacher pipeline policies and strategies to improve the teacher pipeline may affect the educator workforce, including educator effectiveness and shortages, as well as student outcomes. Findings will help inform program improvement particularly with respect to ESEA Title II-A.	-	-	-	N	*	-
Literacy						
Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School	C	\$748,128	-	-	-	-

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs, continued

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2023			Fiscal Year 2024		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Student Support and Academic Enrichment						
The Effects of a Systematic Approach to Improving Quality in Afterschool Programs: An Impact Evaluation to Inform the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Program	C	\$630,574	-	C	*	-
Evaluation of Grant Programs to Increase School-Based Mental Health Services. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) of 2022 provided a significant funding boost to the School-Based Mental Health and Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration grant programs under ESEA Title IV. This study will examine the extent to which the programs' implementation and outcomes for the grantee cohorts affected by this funding infusion are consistent with the key policy goal of expanding the supply of providers in high-need contexts.	-	-	-	N	-	\$2,000,000
Study of Policies and Practices with the Potential to Improve School Climate, Safety, and Learning Environments. This study will identify common approaches to supporting the learning environment, such as policies and practices related to discipline and socio-emotional and behavioral supports, the extent to which these approaches are reaching students overall, including students with disabilities, and whether they are likely to have the intended impacts on student outcomes. Findings will inform related programs and grantees particularly under ESEA Title IV.	-	-	-	N	*	-
Supporting Program Improvement of Full-Service Community School Grants. This work is to support conceptualizing and measuring the required performance indicators for grantees, which will improve data quality and enhance IES's national evaluation of this grant program under ESEA Title IV.	N	-	\$750,000	C	-	\$750,000

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs, continued

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2023			Fiscal Year 2024		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Support for English Learners and English Language Acquisition						
Study of the Impact of English Learner Classification and Reclassification Policies	C	-	\$2,748,495	-	-	-
National Evaluation of Title III Implementation	-	-	-	C	-	*
Evaluation of Strategies to Improve Outcomes for English Learners or Policies Supporting English Learners. <i>This activity will assess the feasibility of and prepare policy-relevant design options for: (1) an impact evaluation of strategies aimed to improve English learner (EL) outcomes and (2) a study of the implementation and outcomes of key federal policies related to ELs under Title III.</i>	N	-	\$1,125,016	C	-	\$72,582
Impact Evaluation of Strategies to Improve Outcomes for English Learners. <i>This study will generate rigorous evidence on potentially promising strategies to improve outcomes for English learners under ESEA Title III.</i>	-	-	-	N	-	*
Understanding the Role of Federal Policy Shifts in How English Learners are Supported. <i>This study will examine the implementation and outcomes of key policies related to English learners under ESEA Title III.</i>	-	-	-	N	-	*
Supporting Title III Data Quality. <i>This work is to inform data quality improvements for the Title III Government Performance and Results Act indicators, as well as Title III-related data from the Consolidated State Performance Reports and EdFacts.</i>	C	-	\$443,489	C	-	*

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs, continued

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2023			Fiscal Year 2024		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Cross-Cutting Topics						
<u>Dissemination and Interest Holder Engagement Around Generating Evidence for Federal Program Improvement.</u> <i>This work is to inform evidence-building activities for the Title II-A and III-A grant programs.</i>	N	\$135,537	\$133,000	-	-	-
<u>Evaluating How Federal Pandemic Relief Funds were Distributed and Spent at the State and Local Levels.</u> <i>This study will consider potential feasible approaches to better understand the role of federal pandemic relief funding in supporting education, and how these funds interacted with regular federal education funding, such as Title I-A grants.</i>	-	-	-	N	*	-
Total:		\$8,794,912	\$6,036,236		\$8,600,000	\$7,892,770

N = New Activity; C = Continuing Activity; * = Amount to be determined because activity is yet to be awarded (includes anticipated modifications to existing studies or new studies)

Pooled = Section 8601 pooled funds; Individual = non-pooled funds from an individual program's Section 8601 set-aside
Activity titles and descriptions carrying over from the previous plan may be updated as the scopes of work are finalized.

II. Results from Section 8601 Evaluations

The links provided for ongoing studies in Table 1 are to summary profiles that include information on the status of the study and findings from released reports.

Brief status reports are provided below for the studies described in the [prior evaluation plan](#) that are no longer included on the current plan because no additional funds are needed from FY 2023 or FY 2024.

(1) *Study of Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) grants*. This study began in 2022. The main objective is to identify how local educational agencies (LEAs) are using their SRSA grants (for example, for broadband or internet upgrades, teacher or aide salaries, afterschool programs) and to examine whether LEA characteristics (for example, population density, state and local revenue, neighborhood demographics) are associated with how funds are allocated. The analysis focused on fiscal year 2021 and 2022 grants, and results were presented to the program's state education agency workgroup which included state rural coordinators in August 2023.

(2) *Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program*. This mandated study began in 2018. The main objective is to describe how grantees who received federal Teacher School Leader Incentive (TSL) grants used their funds, and to assess the impact on student outcomes and teacher job satisfaction of a teacher-leader professional development program that is similar to what TSL grantees commonly report implementing. [Results on uses of funds](#) were released in 2023. Report preparation is underway for the final report on the impact of the teacher-leader program. Results are expected in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(3) *Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools*. This study began in 2023. The main objective is to describe the extent to which the federal Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grants are meeting their goals of expanding the reach of community schools, and whether grantees are making progress toward implementing the key pillars underlying the program's logic model. Data collection is underway, including surveys of grantees and reviews of annual performance reports. Initial results are expected in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(4) *Study of Implementation of the Stronger Connections Grant Program*. This study began in 2023. The main objective is to assess how states and districts are carrying out the federal Stronger Connections grant program (BSCA-SC), which was authorized under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and provided a major infusion of funds to support school safety. Data collection and report preparation are underway, primarily based on state and district grantee surveys and collection of administrative data. Initial results are expected in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(5) *Study of State Policies to Prohibit Aiding and Abetting Sexual Misconduct in Schools*. This study began in 2019. The main objective is to examine states' development and implementation of laws and policies to prohibit aiding and abetting educator sexual misconduct in schools, consistent with a new provision that aimed to protect students from sexual abuse in the Every Student Succeeds Act. [Results](#),

primarily based on a document review and interviews with state education agencies, were released in 2022.

(6) *Impact Study of Magnet Schools*. This study began in 2017. The main objective is to estimate the impact of the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) on outcomes, and examine whether certain school features are related to effectiveness. [Initial results](#) were released in 2021. Report preparation is underway for the final report, primarily based on district records and principal surveys. Results are expected in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(7) *Asian American Pacific Islander Data Disaggregation (D2) Initiative*. This study began in 2020. The main objective is to provide information about the three grantees who received D2 funds from the U.S. Department of Education to further efforts to refine their data systems by disaggregating AAPI English Learners into smaller subgroups; and then using the more detailed data to improve instructional programs, initiatives, or other services. Report preparation is underway, primarily based on grantee interviews and document reviews, and will document grantees' activities and challenges to help inform future policy and practice related to data disaggregation. Results are expected in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(8) *Study of State and Local Uses of Federal Education Funds*. This study began in 2019. The primary objective was to examine how much pandemic recovery funding contributed to K-12 education and did it reach local districts with the greatest need; and to examine the feasibility of collecting data from district fiscal systems for the purposes of reliably examining whether core federal programs pay for similar functions or support local education staffing. Due to data quality concerns, the study was unable to release a report on pandemic funding and a report based on analysis of the district fiscal data. However, preparation of a data file, based on what was collected from a nationally representative sample of 400 districts' fiscal system, is underway. The data file will document the data quality challenges and provide an opportunity for others to examine the data in the future. This data file is expected to be released in 2025. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

III. Planning for New Evaluations

Section 8601(a) authorizes the Secretary to reserve funds from most ESEA programs to carry out a range of evaluation activities. If the Secretary elects to reserve funds for one or more programs, the following factors are considered when deciding which evaluations to propose and conduct:

- *Congressional requirements.* This can in part be signaled by the statutory language in ESSA related to evaluation of a particular program. For example, some programs have an explicit requirement for an evaluation. Some programs allow for (but do not necessarily require) an evaluation. In addition, the Department will respond to evaluation requirements in annual appropriation bills and reports.
- *President's budget and policy priorities.* The Department will respond to the need for rigorous evaluation evidence on the implementation and impact of the President's budget and policy priorities. These priorities are informed by, and contribute to, the Department's learning agenda consistent with the Evidence Act.
- *Locally-driven needs.* This can be identified through periodic discussions with program staff at the Department who administer ESEA programs and have frequent contact with grantees at the state and local levels.
- *Feasibility.* Section 8601(a) prioritizes high-quality impact evaluations that permit causal inference, studies of the effectiveness of programs and their administrative impact on schools and local educational agencies, and others. The design of individual programs affects how they can be evaluated, including whether the most rigorous evaluation designs can be used.
- *Prior Evaluations.* Programs that have never been rigorously evaluated may take priority over those that have. In particular, the Department is committed to evaluating smaller ESEA programs over time.