

*Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Evaluation  
and Evidence-Building Plan for the  
U.S. Department of Education*



## U.S. Department of Education

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As part of the implementation of the *Foundations of Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018* (Evidence Act), the Secretary has determined the responsibilities for the Agency Evaluation Officer should rest with the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES's) Commissioner for the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE).

IES is the independent, non-partisan statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education. The IES mission is to provide scientific evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and to share this information in formats that are useful and accessible to educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public.

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# ***Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Evaluation and Evidence-Building Plan for the U.S. Department of Education***

MARCH 2024

# Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Evaluation and Evidence-Building Plan for the U.S. Department of Education

## *Introduction*

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) and its predecessor organizations have supported evidence-building for the purpose of improving outcomes for all learners for more than 70 years.<sup>1</sup> Today, this work includes rigorous implementation, outcome, and impact evaluations; grants to researchers for basic science, applied research, and inclusive innovation; evidence synthesis; the assessments of student proficiency; and data collection in support of foundational fact finding and performance improvement.

Many of the Department's most rigorous evidence-building activities are housed in its Institute of Education Sciences (IES), including its National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), and National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). However, supported both by IES and an organizational history of evidence-building, offices across the Department are engaged in work around evidence. Principal operating components with grant-making authority, such as the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE); the Office Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE); the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE); and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), collect and use performance data to improve their programs, and an increasing number are requiring grantees to conduct research or evaluation activities that build evidence about the outcomes and impacts associated with their federally-funded projects. Building and using evidence—be it in small ways or large—is everyone's business at the Department of Education.

The *Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018* requires agencies to detail a specific component of their evidence-building work—significant program evaluations—in *Annual Evaluation Plans*. In the Department's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 *Annual Evaluation and Evidence-Building Plan (Plan)*, the Department summarizes all implementation, outcomes, and programs evaluations undertaken by NCEE. We include both new work that is under consideration for FY 2025 well as continuing activities begun in a prior year.<sup>2</sup>

## *Organization and Contents of this Document*

This Plan is organized topically, using categories that represent both common areas of focus in education research and long-standing programmatic interests of the Department. Within each category we detail ongoing and planned evaluations. Each activity is listed only once; when applicable, evaluations are cross-referenced in other sections.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the *Cooperative Research Act of 1954* (Pub. L. 531).

<sup>2</sup> No part of this document represents a commitment by the U.S. Department of Education to award a new, or continue an existing, contract, grant, or cooperative agreement.

For ease of aligning this work to the Department’s FY22-FY26 Learning Agenda, we crosswalk the Department’s significant evaluation activities in a table at the end of this section. Readers will note that the Annual Evaluation Plan does not uniformly align with every aspect of the Learning Agenda.

In any given year, there will be significant evaluations that are beyond the immediate scope of the Learning Agenda. One reason for the expanded scope is that the Department has chosen to operationalize its obligation to include “significant evaluations” in the Plan by listing *all* its planned and ongoing program evaluations, including those that represent persistent problems of education policy or practice that were identified prior to the development of the Learning Agenda. This approach is consistent with our annual and biennial reporting of all program evaluations as part of our Annual Performance Report/Annual Performance Plan and the Institute’s Biennial Report to Congress, respectively, as well as a separate biennial report to Congress on the use of evaluation funds authorized under Section 8601 of the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA). A second reason is that Congress can require evaluation activities not aligned to the Learning Agenda, but the Department considers these efforts to be significant as well. Rarely, there may be aspects of the Learning Agenda for which there is limited work listed in this Plan. Although the reasons for this vary, most often it is because priority learning questions are being addressed using a mechanism other than program evaluation (e.g., foundational fact finding or research grants to the field).

Wherever possible, the Department intends to use its Learning Agenda to guide decision-making about where to invest evidence-building resources. Additionally, the Department hopes to develop new mechanisms for building evidence, including new partnerships with external researchers that provide opportunities for answering questions of shared interest.

### *Our Program Evaluations*

Each program evaluation described below is tailored to address a series of evaluation questions co-created by NCEE’s professional evaluators, Department staff, and external stakeholders. For each evaluation, we detail: (a) whether it is aligned to one or more of the Department’s Learning Agenda focus areas for evidence-building; (b) expected start and end date; (c) the issues, contexts, and problems that motivate the evaluation activity; (d) the evaluation questions it seeks to answer; (e) evaluation design and data sources; and (f) the publications and products that are expected to arise from the evaluation. Because each study is at a different phase in its lifecycle, the amount of information available about—and profiled for—each will vary.

Although each program evaluation is substantively different on most dimensions, there are some commonalities that, for the sake of parsimony, we describe here. These include common technical challenges and common approaches to disseminating evaluation findings to key stakeholders. We conclude this section with a brief discussion of recent changes to the context in which the Department conducts program evaluation that has contributed to their success followed by a crosswalk that maps our current and anticipated program evaluations with the focus areas of the Department’s Learning Agenda.

## Common Technical Challenges

Although every evaluation is unique, many evaluations face one or both of two common challenges: (1) obtaining high response rates to surveys that are used as part of program evaluations; and (2) providing actionable evidence to stakeholders in a timely manner. Each are discussed below.

It is well-known across the federal statistical community that response rates to survey collections are in decline, and the Department is not immune from this trend. Indeed, the Government Accountability Office noted waning response rates across the federal statistical system more than a decade ago.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, individual agency reports cited various barriers to survey completion including concerns about respondent confidentiality, declining trust in government and other public institutions, an increase in the total number of surveys respondents are asked to complete, and the burden of survey response given other competing demands in life and work.<sup>4</sup> Post-pandemic, there is little reason to suspect these potential drivers of non-response have abated.

To mitigate the risks associated with declining response rates, the Department prefers to use administrative data for key measures in its program evaluations whenever possible. However, many evaluations still depend upon survey instruments to collect data directly from respondents including students, parents, and educators. In those instances, we employ industry-standard approaches to maximize respondent cooperation. This includes being cautious about the number and length of surveys the Department sponsors to reduce survey fatigue. The Department conducts rigorous non-response bias analysis to ensure that the data can support credible estimates and rigorous analysis. Should the downward trend in survey response rate continue, conducting high-quality program evaluations will become more difficult.

Finally, providing stakeholders actionable evidence in a timely manner can be a challenge to program evaluators. Several factors can affect the timeliness of evaluations and other evidence-building activities, including: the time needed to procure independent evaluation services; the development of instrumentation used in an evaluation and meeting statutory requirements on information collection; gathering outcomes data, particularly on outcomes that may take several years to be observed (e.g., whether first-year college students complete a bachelor's degree); and analysis and reporting. The Department has sought to improve the timeliness of its evaluation efforts through more flexible contracting, improving its guidance to report authors to decrease the time between the completion of data collection and the release of a final report, and identifying interim deliverables that can be provided to key stakeholders during the evaluation and prior to the final report's release.

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<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office. (2012). Federal Statistical System: Agencies Can Make Greater Use of Existing Data, but Continued Progress Is Needed on Access and Quality Issues (GAO-12-54). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: McGeeney, K., Kriz, B., Mullenax, S., Kail, L., Walejko, G., Vines, M., Bates, N., & Trejo, Y. G. (2019). 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey report. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennialcensus/2020-census/planning-management/final-analysis/2020-report-cbams-studysurvey.html>; Czajka, J. & Beyler, A. (2016). Declining Response Rates in Federal Surveys: Trends and Implications. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/255531/Decliningresponserates.pdf>; U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). FY 2018 Annual Performance Report. Washington, DC: Author. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/budget/2020/CBI-2020-V1-01.pdf>.

## **Common Dissemination Approaches**

IES follows a consistent approach to dissemination for the bulk of its evidence products, including findings from program evaluations, official statistics, and evidence syntheses. This includes:

- Policy-relevant reports that are aligned to the needs and interests of various stakeholders (e.g., a standard 15-page report for most studies);
- Internal briefings for the Department’s policy and program leadership during a two-week period prior to a product’s release by IES;
- Sharing products with relevant media outlets, subject to an embargo agreement, immediately before their release;
- Posting products to the Department’s website, and actively pursuing an agenda of website modernization that improves the ies.ed.gov user experience;
- Announcing the release of new products using IES social media, including its NewsFlash listserv (46,000 subscribers) and its @IESResearch Twitter handle (20,000 followers);
- Leveraging the Department’s Regional Comprehensive Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories to disseminate relevant products directly to regional, state, and local education stakeholders; and
- Presenting findings to conferences of relevant grantees, advocacy organizations, and education researchers, such as the annual meetings of the Council on Opportunity in Education, the National Association of ESEA State Programs Administrators, and the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

## **Contextual Conditions Supporting Successful Program Evaluation**

Since 2022, two notable changes to the context within which the Department conducts its evaluations have supported efforts to build high-quality evidence about program effectiveness. First, in March 2022, Congress passed the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022*. For the first time Congress allowed the Department to reserve funds appropriated for programs authorized by the *Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), as amended*, for the purposes of HEA-related research and evaluation. Congress took similar action in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023*. The Department anticipates using funds appropriated in FY22 and FY23 for a variety of evidence-building activities, including significant evaluations. Indeed, the first tranche of those studies are described here as “anticipated.” Second, in 2023, IES entered into its first-ever interagency agreement for the purpose of augmenting data from a completed program evaluation—in this case, IES’ *Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: Results from the Experimental Sites Initiative*—with administrative data from the Department of Health and Human Services on sample members’ wage outcomes. Many federal education programs have as a goal improving learners’ workforce outcomes. The ability to securely access and analyze administrative data on those important outcomes, when appropriate and allowable by law, provides policymakers critical new insight into the effectiveness of federal education and workforce policy.

## **Crosswalk of Planned and Ongoing Significant Evaluations to the Learning Agenda**

We list program evaluations underway or planned to begin in FY 25 associated with each major focus area of the Department’s Learning Agenda in the table below. We include potential significant

evaluations under consideration for future fiscal years as “anticipated” in the table; however, their alignment to a Learning Agenda focus area should be considered tentative as specific research questions for anticipated studies have not been finalized.

Note that priority questions may be addressed by other evidence-building activities across the Department that are not “significant evaluations” and, therefore, are not included in this Annual Evaluation Plan. Examples include foundational fact finding conducted as part of the National Center for Education Statistics’ School Pulse Panel; policy analysis conducted by Federal Student Aid or the Office of the Chief Economist; or research, development, and evaluation activities undertaken by ED grantees, including those of the Institute of Education Sciences’ National Centers for Education Research and Special Education Research or the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program.

The contents of this document, including anticipated studies, do not represent a commitment by the U.S. Department of Education to award a new, or continue an existing, contract, grant, or cooperative agreement.



Table 1. Significant Evaluations

Significant Evaluation	Area 1. COVID-19	Area 2. Equity	Area 3. Educators	Area 4. Meeting Student Needs	Area 5. Postsecondary	Area 6. Federal Student Aid
A Study of Strategies to Increase Dual Enrollment Participation Among High School Students from Underserved Backgrounds		○			○	
<a href="#">Assessing Evidence of Effectiveness in Adult Education: Study of Career Navigator Training</a>		●			●	
Effectiveness of Promising Staffing Strategies to Improve the Outcomes of Students with Disabilities		○	○	○		
Evaluating the 2022-2027 Cycle of the Regional Educational Laboratories (REL) Program						
<a href="#">Evaluating the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program After the 2017 Reauthorization</a>		●				
Evaluating the Role of the Comprehensive Center Programs in 2024-2029						
<a href="#">Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools</a>	●	●		●		
<a href="#">Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices</a>				●		
<a href="#">Evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods</a>		●				
<a href="#">Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs</a>			●		●	
Evaluation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Program				○		
<a href="#">Evaluation of Title I Pilots that Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act</a>				●		
<a href="#">Evaluation of Transition Supports for Youth with Disabilities</a>		●			●	
Examining Discipline Policies and Practices with the Potential to Improve the Learning Environment		○				

Notes

- Indicates significant evaluation will be underway in FY 2025
- Indicates significant evaluation is under consideration and may be initiated in a future fiscal year (“anticipated”); anticipated studies do not represent an obligation by the government.

	Area 1. COVID-19	Area 2. Equity	Area 3. Educators	Area 4. Meeting Student Needs	Area 5. Postsecondary	Area 6. Federal Student Aid
Significant Evaluation, continued						
Impact Evaluation of Strategies to Improve Outcomes for English Learners		○		○		
<a href="#">Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School</a>				●		
<a href="#">Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program</a>			●			
<a href="#">Impact Study of Magnet Schools</a>		●				
Implementation of Campus-based Federal Aid and Alignment with Program Goals						○
<a href="#">Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives</a>		●	●			
Income-Driven Repayment Plans: Understanding Take-up, Repayment Outcomes, and Potential Improvements		○				○
<a href="#">National Evaluation of Career and Technical Education under Perkins V</a>					●	
<a href="#">National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Programs</a>				●		
<a href="#">National Longitudinal Transition Study</a>		●				
<a href="#">National Study of Special Education Spending</a>		●				
Parent Plus Loans: What Can be Learned to Inform Potential Improvements?		○				○
<a href="#">Study of Schools Identified for Comprehensive Supports Under ESSA</a>				●		
Study of Schools Identified for Most Intensive Supports Under ESSA: Key Drivers of Identification in Accountability System Formulas		○		○		

*Notes*

- Indicates significant evaluation will be underway in FY 2025
- Indicates significant evaluation is under consideration and may be initiated in a future fiscal year (“anticipated”); anticipated studies do not represent an obligation by the government.

	Area 1. COVID-19	Area 2. Equity	Area 3. Educators	Area 4. Meeting Student Needs	Area 5. Postsecondary	Area 6. Federal Student Aid
Significant Evaluation, continued						
Study of Schools Identified for Most Intensive Supports Under ESSA: Understanding Churn Following the Pandemic		○		○		
<a href="#">Study of Strategies to Address Unfinished Learning in Math</a>	●	●		●		
<a href="#">Study of the Impact of English Learner Reclassification Policies</a>		●				
<a href="#">The Effects of a Systematic Approach to Improving Quality in Afterschool Programs: An Impact Evaluation to Inform the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Program</a>		●				
<a href="#">The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State and Local Implementation Study 2019</a>		●				
To What Extent are TRIO and GEAR UP Programs Serving the Needs of Historically Disadvantaged Students as Intended?		○				○
To What Extent do Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policies Vary Nationwide and Influence Student Success		○				○
Understanding the Implementation of Common Strategies to Support the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms		○	○	○		
Understanding the Implications of Key Shifts in Perkins V Accountability					○	
Understanding the Role of Federal Policy Shifts in How English Learners Are Supported		○		○		
Understanding the Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Services in Supporting Youth Transitions		○		○		

*Notes*

- Indicates significant evaluation will be underway in FY 2025
- Indicates significant evaluation is under consideration and may be initiated in a future fiscal year (“anticipated”); anticipated studies do not represent an obligation by the government.

# Topic Areas

This Annual Evaluation plan includes evidence building activities organized into the following topical areas:

1. [Behavior and Attendance](#)
2. [Early Learning](#)
3. [English Learners](#)
4. [Literacy](#)
5. [Parent Engagement](#)
6. [Pathways to Career or College](#)
7. [School Choice](#)
8. [School Improvement](#)
9. [Students with Disabilities](#)
10. [Teachers and Leaders](#)
11. [Technical Assistance](#)

# Behavior and Attendance

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools](#)
- [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](#); listed below in the [School Improvement](#) topic area.

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Evaluation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Program
- Examining Discipline Policies and Practices with the Potential to Improve the Learning Environment

# *Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 1. COVID-19

Area 2. Equity

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

November 2019 to June 2027

## **Background**

Children living in distressed communities face significant academic, social, and health challenges, many of which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. The Full-Service Community Schools program is authorized by Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and aims to address these challenges by funding coordination and expansion of a comprehensive set of educational and developmental services for students, their families, and the broader community. Grants typically go to school districts and community-based organizations. Since 2010, Congress has invested \$365 million in the program, which has supported over 100 grantees and over 1,700 schools. Congress also mandated an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program, which this initial study will inform.

## **Research Questions**

- To what extent do the Full-Service Community Schools grants extend the reach of the program model?
- How do grantees and grantee schools make progress towards implementing the Full-Service Community Schools model? What are grantees' common challenges, and how do they address them?

## **Design**

This study will assess the ways in which implementation of the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) program is being carried out, which will lay the groundwork for studying the effectiveness of the grants in the near future. Information on implementation will be collected from 2023 FSCS grantees and include surveys of grantee organizations, grantee schools, and potentially teachers in grantee schools in 2024, 2026, and 2028 and annual performance reports to describe program implementation.

## **Publications and Products**

The report is expected in 2025 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# Early Learning

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices](#)
- [State and Local Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act](#); listed below in the [Students with Disabilities](#) topic area.

# *Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

November 2013 to November 2024

## **Background**

Experiences in early childhood programs can help young children, including those with disabilities, develop skills important for later learning. But many children need help to strengthen their social-emotional skills and engagement in classroom activities in order to reap those early learning benefits. Currently, there is limited evidence on how to effectively integrate supports for these skills into the general curriculum, particularly in classrooms where children with disabilities are served alongside their peers as promoted by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This study will test the efficacy of a coordinated set of evidence-based strategies, with multiple levels of intensity depending on student needs. The approach includes training and support for teachers to provide classroom-wide instruction of social and emotional skills and supports targeting children who demonstrate risk for social-emotional delays or persistent behavior challenges with the general preschool curriculum. If the efficacy study shows promise, a large-scale impact evaluation may be conducted in the future.

## **Research Questions**

- To what extent did teachers receive the intended training and supports designed to assist all classroom children develop socio-emotional skills and engage in classroom instruction? Were teachers able to implement a new approach that integrates targeted instructional supports for children who demonstrate risk for social-emotional delays or persistent behavior challenges with instruction for all children?
- What are the impacts of this approach on the classroom environment, teacher practices, and the social-emotional, behavioral, and language skills of children with and without disabilities in inclusive preschool classrooms?

## **Design**

To help plan for the efficacy study, the study collected descriptive information in spring/summer 2015 on the programs, curricula, and extra supports available to children ages 3 through 5 identified for special education services. This collection was based on surveys of state agency staff coordinating grants and services under IDEA Part B Section 619 and a nationally representative sample of district preschool special education coordinators. The study randomly assigned 34 inclusive preschool classrooms in 29 schools from three districts to either receive training and coaching support to implement the study's program integration approach or continue with the teachers' regular program



and practices. The addition and integration of the programs began in 2019 and data on participating preschool students was collected for 2 school years. These data include documentation of training to teachers, classroom observations to assess how program components were implemented, teacher surveys, and measures of children's social skills.

### **Publications and Products**

Data tables have been released from the national surveys. The tables highlight how preschool special education programs are structured, where and when children with disabilities receive services, the extent to which children with disabilities are educated in schools and classrooms along with their peers, and the curricula, programs, strategies, and practices used to support instruction of preschool children with disabilities. Tables also provide information on district-required qualifications to teach preschool and the professional development available to preschool teachers.

- [Characteristics of Preschool Special Education Services and Practices](#) (August 2020)

A [restricted-use file](#) containing survey data is available for the purposes of replicating study findings and secondary analysis.

The report for the efficacy study is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# English Learners

## *Significant Evaluations*


The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Study of the Impact of English Learner Reclassification Policies](#)

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Impact Evaluation of Strategies to Improve Outcomes for English Learners
- Understanding the Role of Federal Policy Shifts in How English Learners are Supported

# *Study of the Impact of English Learner Reclassification Policies*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

September 2021 to September 2027

## **Background**

Entry into and exit from English learner (EL) status are high-stakes decisions with implications for academic equity in the U.S. EL status governs the instructional settings, language supports, and educational opportunities available to students. Since former ELs are no longer entitled to language supports, exiting EL status too soon can leave these students linguistically unprepared for success in general education settings. However, maintaining EL status for too long can compromise students' opportunities to learn academic content among their peers. The decision is complicated by lack of universal agreement on a definition for English proficiency and wide variation in entrance and exit criteria. To reduce variability in EL entry and exit procedures within states, the 2015 reauthorization of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA) required states to develop standardized procedures. The shift to statewide standardization in procedures provides a unique opportunity to study the impact of classification and reclassification nationwide. Of particular interest is assessing how impacts for students vary across contexts, such as the level of proficiency states require to exit, whether states consider factors other than ELP assessment scores, instructional policies (such as dual language or English-only instruction), policies for monitoring and serving former ELs, and characteristics of the EL population enrolled.

## **Research Questions**

- Are standardized statewide entrance and exit procedures, introduced to Title III under ESSA, associated with more consistent application of these procedures across districts within states?
- Do standardized classification policies set by states have an impact on the instructional opportunities, experiences, and academic achievement and attainment outcomes of EL students compared to similar students not identified for EL status? How much do impacts vary across students with different characteristics, such as home language or enrollment in different language instruction educational programs?
- Do standardized reclassification policies set by states have an impact on the instructional opportunities, experiences, and academic achievement and attainment outcomes of former EL students compared to students who remain ELs? How much do impacts vary across students with different characteristics, such as home language or initial proficiency in English?
- What criteria do states have for classification and reclassification? What instructional settings, programs, and services do districts and schools offer to students? What is the relationship

between these state, district, and school practices and the impacts of classification and reclassification on student outcomes?

### **Design**

This study will describe state and district classification and reclassification policies and use a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to assess how these policies affect students' instructional experiences and outcomes. The RDD analysis will rely on student-level educational data from up to 30 states' longitudinal data systems (SLDS), representing more than 90 percent of ELs in the U.S. The RDD approach will compare students within each included district whose performance was just high enough to reclassify out of EL status with students in the district whose performance was just under the reclassification threshold. Similarly for analyses of initial classification, the RDD approach will compare students who just met the criteria for identification as an EL with students whose English proficiency was tested but who were not identified as an EL. The descriptive analysis will be based on existing information on state classification and reclassification policies and district and school surveys of local policies affecting ELs.

### **Publications and Products**

The first two reports for the study will examine the impacts of reclassification policies in the post ESSA era from the 2017-18 through the 2021-22 school year and the impacts of classification policies from 2017-18 through 2022-23, respectively. Both of these reports are expected in 2025. All reports will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.


# Literacy

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants](#)
- [Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School](#)

# *National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Programs*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

May 2018 to December 2026

## **Background**

Boosting literacy among school-age children remains a national priority. Nearly one-third of students in the U.S. have not developed the foundational reading skills needed to succeed academically, with those living in poverty, those with disabilities, and English learners (ELs) especially at risk. Since 2010 Congress has provided funds for preschool through grade 12 literacy improvement efforts, including through the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program and the newer Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) program. This study will assess the implementation of both CLSD and SRCL to determine whether states, districts, and schools use the grant funds as intended and to inform program improvement. In addition, the study will assess the effects of CLSD on instruction and students' reading achievement.

## **Research Questions**

- What is the impact of CLSD funding on student reading achievement in grades 3-5?
- Does CLSD funding affect grade 3-5 teachers' literacy instruction as intended, in ways that are linked to student achievement?
- How do trends in reading achievement differ for SRCL- and CLSD-funded schools versus similar non-funded schools?
- To what extent do SRCL and CLSD grantees carry out their efforts in ways that are aligned with the programs' goals - such as targeting disadvantaged students or using literacy programs and instructional practices that are comprehensive and supported by research evidence?

## **Design**

To assess SRCL implementation the evaluation focused on the last 11 grantees funded (in FY 2017) and drew on: grant application reviews, state grantee interviews, surveys of all district subgrantees in Spring 2019, surveys of teachers in a representative sample of 500 funded schools (Spring 2019 and Spring 2020), surveys of principals in those sampled schools (Spring 2020), and collection of state reading/language arts assessment data. The evaluation also included reviews of programs commonly funded by SRCL to determine whether they are supported by rigorous research evidence.


The CLSD evaluation includes the first two rounds of grantees funded in FY 2019 and FY 2020. To document program implementation, the evaluation includes interviews of all state grantees and a survey of all district subgrantees. To assess the program's impact, the study recruited and randomly

assigned approximately 120 schools to either a group that received CLSD funding right away or a group that received CLSD funding two years later. The experiences and outcomes of the two groups of schools during the first two years will be compared using data from state reading/language arts assessments, school-level surveys, and video observations of reading instruction.

### **Publications and Products**

The first report for the study, which will describe SRCL program implementation, is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

September 2018 to November 2028

## **Background**

With a third of US students failing to develop foundational reading skills by 4th grade, calls have grown to renew the focus on this critical learning and to use scientifically-based teaching methods. Many elementary schools are seeking to adopt a more strategic approach to improve the quality of reading instruction and the ways struggling students are identified and provided with extra help. These efforts, often under the umbrella term *multi-tiered systems of support for reading* (MTSS-R), rely on outside training and technical assistance to strengthen core reading instruction for all students (Tier I) and the systematic and targeted use of supplemental supports for those who need it (Tier II). The U.S. Department of Education has promoted MTSS-R as a broad approach to school improvement and to addressing equitable access to learning opportunities, but through this study seeks more evidence about its effectiveness on a large scale. The study evaluates two promising strategies that differ in the way they help teachers with instruction of the core curriculum and in how closely that curriculum is linked to the supplemental support. They also differ on whether the supplemental support pre-teaches the core curriculum or uses an alternative curriculum with lessons tailored to student needs.

## **Research Questions**

- Does the study's MTSS-R training and technical assistance (TA) affect students' reading skills and achievement, both initially and over time? Does it help students identified as struggling in reading make more significant gains? Do the effects differ across the two strategies?
- Are the effects on reading related to schools' experiences implementing the MTSS-R strategies, including the extent to which they carry out the strategies as intended and their use of key instructional practices?
- In what ways do these strategies affect the identification of special education students? What are their outcomes?

## **Design**

Approximately 140 schools were randomly assigned to one of the MTSS-R training and TA strategies or to continue with their usual reading instruction and supports. The study's training and TA is being provided for teachers in grades 1 and 2 across three school years, 2021-2022 through 2023-2024. Data collection includes: (1) study-administered assessments of students in grades 1 and 2 to identify struggling students and to estimate effects on their foundational reading skills; (2) student records to



estimate longer-term effects on these students' reading achievement; (3) staff surveys and observations of Tier I and II practice to provide information about instruction and the extent of staff training and TA; and (4) documentation of program implementation.

### **Publications and Products**

The first product for the study is expected in 2025 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# Parent Engagement

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools](#); listed above in the [Behavior and Attendance topic area](#).

# Pathways to Career or College

## *Significant Evaluations*


The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Assessing Evidence of Effectiveness in Adult Education: Study of Career Navigator Training](#)
- [National Evaluation of Career and Technical Education under Perkins V](#)

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Implementation of Campus-based Federal Aid and Alignment with Program Goals
- Income-Driven Repayment Plans: Understanding Take-up, Repayment Outcomes and Potential Improvements
- Parent Plus Loans: What Can be Learned to Inform Potential Changes?
- Study of Strategies to Increase Dual Enrollment Participation Among High School Students from Underserved Backgrounds
- To What Extent are TRIO and GEAR UP Programs Serving the Needs of Historically Disadvantaged Students as Intended?
- To What Extent Do Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policies Vary Nationwide and Influence Student Success
- Understanding the Implications of Key Shifts in Perkins V Accountability
- Understanding the Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Services in Supporting Youth Transitions

# *Assessing Evidence of Effectiveness in Adult Education: Study of Career Navigator Training*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

Area 5. Postsecondary

## **Expected Duration**

September 2018 to December 2027

## **Background**

Improving the skills and career pathways of the many adults who struggle with literacy, numeracy, and English proficiency is the key goal of federal adult education policy. Title II of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act encourages state agencies and local providers to find ways to facilitate postsecondary enrollment, credential attainment and higher earnings for the nearly one million learners who participate in adult education programs. One promising approach is providing these learners with career navigators—dedicated staff whose role is to advise learners in career and college planning and to help them address challenges as they follow through on their plans. Navigators can be a significant expense for adult education providers, but the staff often receive little training despite their diverse backgrounds and thus may not be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively guide learners. The study will test whether providing a promising model of training to navigators leads to improvements in their learners' postsecondary, employment and earnings outcomes.

## **Research Questions**

- Can providing training to career navigators improve adult learners' college enrollment and credential attainment rates? Can it improve learners' employment rates and earnings?
- What types of services do career navigators typically provide, and does the training change either the nature or intensity of services in ways that explain any impacts on learners' outcomes?

## **Design**

This impact study involves approximately 65 adult education sites. About half of the sites were assigned by lottery to a group in which the site's career navigators received training provided by the study. Career navigators in the remaining sites will not receive the study's training until after the study period is over. Using records obtained from the program providers and other agencies, the study will assess learners' college enrollment, credential attainment, employment status, and earnings at approximately 18 and 30 months after learners begin participating in the study. The study will also survey career navigators at the start of the study in order to collect descriptive information on the types of navigation

services typically provided and to whom those services are typically targeted. Through the collection of service logs during the study, information to understand how the training might influence the navigation services provided and the targeting of those services will be obtained. This study builds on an earlier systematic evidence review that summarized findings from existing studies of adult education strategies and identified gaps in the knowledge base.

### **Publications and Products**

A snapshot titled [Adult Education Strategies: Identifying and Building Evidence of Effectiveness](#) was released in April 2021.

A snapshot on the backgrounds of career navigators and the services they provide is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

### **Key Findings to Date**

A review of existing studies of the effectiveness of adult education strategies conducted during the design phase of the study found:

- There has been little rigorous research on whether particular strategies in adult education improve learner outcomes.
- The rigorous research that has been conducted does not address the full set of outcome areas that federal policy emphasizes. Studies measuring basic skills such as literacy did not measure longer-term outcomes such as credential attainment and earnings. Studies that investigated longer-term outcomes did not measure basic skills.
- The available evidence provides limited support for the use of particular adult education strategies over others, although bridge classes and integrated education and training programs offer some promise.

# *National Evaluation of Career and Technical Education under Perkins V*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 5. Postsecondary

## **Expected Duration**

September 2019 to September 2025

## **Background**

Even with constant change in the nature of work and the economy, the education decisions students make today will influence their later career direction and success. Helping secondary and postsecondary students develop skills that have value in the workplace is the key goal of career and technical education (CTE). Congress has supported CTE for over a century, most recently through the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018 (Perkins V). Many provisions of the prior Perkins Act remain, but Perkins V includes some changes designed to: (1) enhance CTE program quality through new mechanisms for program improvement and labor market alignment, (2) increase flexibility in Perkins funding and accountability, and (3) promote equity by expanding exposure to and participation in CTE for all students. Perkins V also requires IES to conduct this national evaluation to assess CTE programs under the new law.

## **Research Questions**

- How have CTE participation and outcomes changed since the prior Perkins Act?
- How, and to what extent, does current CTE implementation reflect key policy goals and objectives of Perkins V? What challenges do State agencies and local recipients face in administering and delivering CTE services, particularly the newly introduced provisions in Perkins V?
- In what important ways has CTE implementation evolved since the prior version of the Perkins Act?
- What CTE strategies and practices are effective and for whom?

## **Design**

The national evaluation will draw on a variety of data sources and studies for its assessment of CTE. New surveys of all state directors of CTE and a nationally representative sample of district coordinators of CTE were initiated in 2023 to collect information about Perkins implementation. Trends in CTE participation and outcomes will be obtained by analyzing other national data, including those from the National Center for Education Statistics, state-submitted Perkins V performance reports, and labor market repositories. To identify and report on the effectiveness of key CTE strategies, the evaluation will review rigorously conducted research, where it already exists, and consider conducting new studies of CTE approaches deemed most critical to the field's improvement.

## **Publications and Products**

The study's first report is expected in 2024, and IES will report on results from the evaluation every two years thereafter. These publications will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# School Choice


## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluating the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program After the 2017 Reauthorization](#)
- [Impact Study of Magnet Schools](#)



# *Evaluating the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program After the 2017 Reauthorization*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

January 2019 to October 2026

## **Background**

Following two rigorous evaluations examining *if* the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) works, there remains interest in understanding *how* it works. The only federally funded private school voucher program in the country, the OSP expands the set of school options available to low-income students in Washington, DC. However, the OSP is experiencing competition for students from a growing public-school choice sector. This third congressionally-mandated evaluation of the program will gather detailed information not included in prior studies to learn more about how the OSP is implemented and identify areas where support for families might be improved. To the extent possible, the evaluation will also assess OSP participants' academic progress and attainment.

## **Research Questions**

- How strong is interest in the OSP following the 2017 reauthorization, when Congress sought to remove potential barriers to participating in the program? What factors may influence whether or not families apply for and use OSP scholarships and remain enrolled overtime?
- How might support for families interested in the OSP be bolstered? How does the program operator carry out the key activities necessary to implement the DC OSP and how do they – and participating schools – help families overcome challenges in applying for and using scholarships?
- What are the long-term outcomes, such as college enrollment and attainment, of participating in the DC OSP?


## **Design**

This primarily descriptive study will collect information using interviews and surveys with the program operator, all private schools in DC (both those that do and do not participate in the OSP), and approximately 1,400 parents and their 1,600 students who applied for OSP scholarships in spring 2021. The study will also collect administrative records that identify where students apply to and actually attend school, as well as student achievement and college enrollment data.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report for the study, a description of who applies for and uses OSP scholarships, is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *Impact Study of Magnet Schools*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

September 2017 to May 2025

## **Background**

Decades after the Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional, concentration in schools by race, ethnicity, and poverty persists. The federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) supports districts and schools in their efforts to reduce group isolation and improve student achievement through increased school choice options for families. MSAP schools seek to attract a diverse set of students and provide high quality academic programs, typically by organizing recruitment and instruction around one or more themes. With growth in school choice more broadly and specifically in magnet schools since 2000, it is important to understand how well these federally-funded schools achieve their goals and how they work. This evaluation takes advantage of new opportunities to rigorously assess MSAP schools but with low burden. It draws on lotteries most MSAP districts now use to admit students to their magnet schools. By comparing the achievement and school characteristics of applicants who were and were not given a seat by chance, the study will determine the impact of the MSAP and examine how specific school features relate to effectiveness.

## **Research Questions**

- Which districts receive MSAP grants and are they well targeted to those where improvement is feasible?
- To what extent does enrolling in a MSAP school significantly shift students' experiences of diversity, including whether they have less racial/ethnic and socio-economic isolation than in schools they would otherwise have attended?
- To what extent does enrolling in a MSAP school significantly improve students' educational experiences, including achievement and/or other relevant measures of student success such as persistence in school or graduation?
- Which features of magnet schools are associated with greater success, if any?

## **Design**

This impact evaluation will include over 14,500 students who entered MSAP admissions lotteries in 2018 or 2019. Data will be collected for both students who were and were not offered placement, including district records containing student characteristics, enrollment, and test scores, and a survey of students' school principals about school organization and instruction. The academic progress and experiences of students in the two groups will be compared for the four years following their admissions lottery (through 2023).

## **Publications and Products**

A snapshot, titled [Drawing Across School Boundaries: How Federally Funded Magnet Schools Recruit and Admit Students](#), was released in January 2021.

A report examining the characteristics of districts and schools that received MSAP grants and the impact of admission to MSAP-funded schools on school diversity is expected in 2024.

## **Key Findings to Date**

- MSAP-funded schools report using a variety of strategies to recruit students, targeting those the schools believe are likely to exercise choice. Priorities for recruiting students reflect efforts to diversify. However, fewer than one in four schools offered resource-intensive accommodations that might be particularly attractive to high needs families.
- Perceived stigma of low academic quality and lack of diversity are top reported obstacles to recruiting students.
- MSAP-funded schools are most likely to give preference in admissions to students from affiliated families or communities. For example, about 70% of schools give preference to siblings of students already enrolled in the magnet and 59% give preference to students in nearby neighborhoods or schools.

# School Improvement

## *Significant Evaluations*


The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Title I Pilots That Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
- [Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives](#)
- [National Implementation Study of Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants \(Title IV, Part A\)](#)
- [Study of District and School Uses of Federal Education Funds](#)
- [Study of Strategies to Address Unfinished Learning in Math](#)
- [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](#)
- [Evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods](#)
- Study of Schools Identified for Comprehensive Supports under ESSA

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Study of Schools Identified for Most Intensive Supports Under ESSA: Understanding Churn Following the Pandemic
- Study of Schools Identified for Most Intensive Supports Under ESSA: Key Drivers of Identification in Accountability System Formulas

# *Evaluation of Title I Pilots That Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

September 2019 to October 2025

## **Background**

State testing has long been a cornerstone of federal education policy, but interest in reforming these assessments has been growing. Academic assessments can ideally serve multiple purposes: diagnosing what students know in order to tailor instruction, assessing school performance for accountability, and monitoring both students and schools for improvement. To encourage the development of novel assessments that better serve all of these purposes, Congress created the Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority (IADA) program in 2015 to allow the U.S. Department of Education to exempt states from certain federal testing requirements if they agree to pilot new types of assessment systems. Congress mandated an evaluation of IADA. The evaluation will describe the progress of systems that began participating under IADA in 2018, 2019, and 2020, and identify lessons learned on developing and implementing new assessments.

## **Research Questions**

- What were the key objectives and features of the IADA systems?
- How “ready” were the IADA systems at the start of the demonstration to meet early program expectations?
- How far along were the IADA systems after 2-3 years and 4-5 years of implementation?
- What challenges to developing and implementing assessments did IADA systems report?
- How innovative are the IADA assessments using Congress and the Department’s definitions of innovation?
- What development and implementation practices worked well for IADA systems?

## **Design**

The first phase of this descriptive implementation study examined IADA implementation in the initial four pilot states (5 different assessment systems) based on state IADA applications, annual progress reporting, and interviews with state assessment directors. The four states were: Louisiana and New Hampshire (approved in 2018); Georgia and North Carolina (2019). The second phase of the study, drawing on an additional round of interviews with state officials and reviews of annual progress reports, will also include Massachusetts (approved in 2020), and will look at states’ progress after a few more years of implementation in order to provide lessons learned from attempts to replace statewide assessment systems.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report, titled [Evaluating the Federal Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority: Early Implementation and Progress of State Efforts to Develop New Statewide Academic Assessments](#), was released in April 2023.

The final report for the study is expected in 2025 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

## **Key Findings to Date**

Key findings from the first report included:

- All five IADA systems sought to increase the usefulness of assessment data for classroom teaching, but few were ready to try out their assessments within a year of starting IADA—both program goals.
- After 2 or 3 years of participation, the IADA systems had made limited progress and may not be on track to meet the program’s 5-year statewide scale-up goal.
- States reported challenges hampering assessment development and implementation activities, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing major disruptions.

# *Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

Area 3. Educators

## **Expected Duration**

September 2011 to September 2025

## **Background**

Promoting equal access to high-quality schooling is a central goal of federal education policy. The Title I and Title II-A programs of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) further this goal by providing funds meant to help schools and districts better serve low-income students and improve teacher and principal quality. Some aspects of these two core programs, accounting for three-quarters of ESEA funding, shifted as a result of the law's latest update as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. ESSA shifts authority over many education policies from the U.S. Department of Education to states and localities, while still retaining some federal requirements from prior law. How states and localities respond will determine whether ESSA supports educational improvement as intended. This study provides a national portrait of Title I and Title II-A implementation at three key points:

- 2013-14, under the prior version of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, when a majority of states had received waivers from key requirements in exchange for commitments to specific reform principles, colloquially known as "ESEA flexibility."
- 2017-18, when states were transitioning to fully implementing ESSA's core components.
- 2021-22, when ESSA implementation is expected to be in a more mature phase, notwithstanding the coronavirus pandemic.

## **Research Questions**

- What strategies do states and districts use to help students meet state content standards?
- What types of assessments do states and districts use to assess student and school performance, and how are those assessment and other data used?
- How do states and districts identify and support their lowest-performing schools?
- How do states and districts support the educator pipeline, and what supports are provided to improve educator effectiveness?

## **Design**

National data were collected at the end of school years 2013-14, 2017-18, and 2021-22. These data included surveys of all state Title I and Title II coordinators and nationally-representative samples of districts, and in some of the data collections, surveys of schools and teachers within those districts. The evaluation also draws on existing data, such as state-level student achievement data from Department data sources as well as information from ESSA state plans. Responses to survey questions will be

tabulated into descriptive statistics (such as percentages) and simple statistical tests (such as tests for differences between percentages). These tabulations provide a snapshot at each time point and describe aggregate changes over time.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report, titled [Implementation of Title I and II-A Program Initiatives: Results from 2013-14](#), was released in January 2017.

A snapshot, titled [How States and Districts Support Evidence Use in School Improvement](#), was released in June 2020.

The second report, titled [The Transition to ESSA: State and District Approaches to Implementing Title I and Title II-A in 2017-18](#), was released in December 2020.

A snapshot, titled [State and District Strategies to Reduce Dropouts](#), was released in September 2021.

A [restricted-use file](#) containing de-identified data from the 2013-14 data collection is available for the purposes of replicating study findings and secondary analysis.

Additional reports are expected in 2024 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee>.

## **Key Findings to Date**

From the second report based on data collected during the 2017-18 school year (transition to ESSA):

- **Most states had not significantly changed their content standards by 2017-18, and districts increasingly provided supports to implement them.** By 2013, all but 4 states had adopted the Common Core standards. Although many states subsequently renamed their standards, only 14 reported making major changes to them by 2018. A larger share of districts reported assisting implementation of state standards in 2018 compared to 2014, for example by using textbooks aligned with state content standards (80% of districts in 2014 vs. 94% in 2018).
- **States broadened the measures they used to identify struggling schools, and more districts reported specific improvement activities at these schools.** Between 2014 and 2018, more states held schools accountable for students' attendance, achievement growth, and test scores in subjects beyond reading and math (14, 20, and 9 more states, respectively). Districts increasingly reported that their struggling schools implemented improvement strategies such as providing professional development to teachers on working in teams (61% of districts in 2014 vs. 93% in 2018).
- **States and districts increasingly used performance data as a means to support effective teaching.** Between 2014 and 2018, 9 more states used measures of teacher performance – such as their evaluation ratings or students' achievement growth – to assess whether students have equitable access to high-quality teaching. Districts increasingly used teachers' evaluation ratings to identify and support low performers between 2014 and 2018, for example with individualized professional development that included coaching, mentoring, or peer assistance (84% of districts in 2014 vs. 95% in 2018).



# *Study of Strategies to Address Unfinished Learning in Math*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 1. COVID-19

Area 2. Equity

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

August 2021 to August 2028

## **Background**

The coronavirus pandemic led to substantial unfinished learning in math and an important debate about how best to address it. Traditionally, policymakers and educators have advocated a "broad foundation skill building" approach, which systematically reteaches all below-grade content where there are knowledge gaps. "Just-in-time skill building" has received attention more recently, including in the U.S. Department of Education's [COVID-19 Handbook](#). This alternative reteaches only below-grade content deemed most essential to understanding the current grade-level topic. But there is limited evidence on which approach is most effective for which students and which contexts. This evaluation will compare the effectiveness of these two catch-up strategies when delivered via adaptive technology products in elementary schools, where the potential benefits of using technology supports are understudied. The findings will provide valuable evidence, especially for low-performing schools identified under the Every Student Succeeds Act and their most underserved students.

## **Research Questions**

- Which catch-up instructional strategy delivered through regular use of adaptive technology products is more effective at improving struggling students' learning – "just-in-time skill building" or "broad foundation skill building" – particularly in low-performing schools?
- Which strategy is best for students who begin the year especially behind, and for low-income and students of color?
- What below-grade math content is most strongly associated with successful learning of core fourth and fifth grade topics?

## **Design**


This impact evaluation will compare the effectiveness of two key catch-up learning strategies: "just-in-time" and "broad foundation." These strategies will be delivered through two adaptive math technology products (i-Ready and Freckle), each of which has separate modes that deliver one of the two strategies. The evaluation will first pilot study procedures with an initial group of approximately 15 schools during the 2023-24 school year. During this school year, up to 100 additional elementary schools will be recruited for the full study. Fourth and fifth grade students in these schools will then be

assigned by lottery to use one of the products in either the "just-in-time" or "broad foundation" skill-building mode for two school years (2024-25 and 2025-26). Data collection will include: a teacher survey to examine how the technology relates to changes in classroom practice; data from the technology platform to describe student engagement and implementation; and data from the products' diagnostic math assessments, as well as district administrative data, to examine the effect of the catch-up strategies on students' achievement.

### **Publications and Products**

The first report for the study is expected in 2025 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *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*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

July 2019 to June 2025

## **Background**

The time students spend outside of school hours, including after school, can be important opportunities for their social and academic development. The 21st CCLC program intends to provide these opportunities by funding a broad range of academic enrichment activities in community learning centers, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. But little is known about the extent and diversity of recent program activities, or whether a systematic approach to support program quality could improve staff practices and student outcomes. This evaluation will produce a national picture of funded program activities and program improvement efforts and evaluate the effectiveness of a continuous quality improvement system aimed at improving staff practices to support students' social and emotional skills.

## **Research Questions**

- What are the activities and services offered by 21st CCLC afterschool centers? How are they staffed and supported to meet local needs?
- What are the impacts of a continuous quality improvement system, which is a common component of 21st CCLC afterschool centers, on staff practices? What are the impacts on students' social and emotional skills and other school-related student outcomes?
- What are the challenges with implementing a continuous quality improvement system, and how are they addressed?

## **Design**

This evaluation includes a descriptive study of grantees and an impact study to determine the effectiveness of a specific strategy designed to improve student and grantee outcomes. The national description of program activities will be based on a survey of a nationally representative sample of 250 21st CCLC afterschool centers. To assess the effectiveness of the continuous quality improvement (CQI) system, approximately 100 21st CCLC afterschool centers were recruited to participate in the impact study. Half of the participating centers were selected by lottery to implement the CQI system supported by the study for two school years, and half continued their normally planned program. The impact study will compare staff practices and student outcomes for the two groups of centers. Information was also collected about program operations and staff training and experiences with the CQI system. Data

collection includes afterschool center director interviews, an afterschool staff survey, observations of program quality at each center, student survey and afterschool attendance records, administrative school records, and a school-day teacher survey.

### **Publications and Products**

The study's first report is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *Evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

November 2019 to January 2025

## **Background**

The Promise Neighborhoods program provides distressed communities funding to directly address student academic, social, and health needs as well as employment and other challenges that might contribute to these needs. With more than \$500 million invested under Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since 2010, the program gives grantees the flexibility to define their Promise Neighborhood and offer a wide set of supports and services intended to improve academic outcomes within these neighborhoods. This study is a Congressionally mandated evaluation.

## **Research Questions**

- Did the program's flexibility translate into diversity in grantee composition, configuration, structure, and scale?
- Are the services grantees provide aligned with neighborhood needs, as the program intends?
- What are the challenges grantees face in carrying out their programs?
- How much did outcomes shift for the schools in Promise Neighborhoods compared to other similar schools outside of Promise Neighborhoods, among early grantees?


## **Design**

This study will describe how the program is implemented, drawing on the experiences of all 25 grantees awarded funds between 2010 and 2018 as captured using surveys of grantees, student records from districts and schools, and annual grantee reports. The study will also compare outcomes for schools in Promise Neighborhoods before and after the grant award to the change in outcomes for similar schools not served by a Promise Neighborhoods grant, focusing on student test scores on state assessments, attendance, and high school graduation rates.

## **Publications and Products**

The report is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *Study of Schools Identified for Comprehensive Supports Under ESSA*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

October 2019 to November 2024

## **Background**

Decades of educational reforms have demonstrated that turning around the lowest-performing schools in the U.S. remains a complex challenge. To address perceived shortcomings in prior federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 provided new rules and regulations, as well as some new flexibilities, for how states identify their lowest performing schools and then assist and hold them accountable. This study provides the first nationwide examination of which schools have been identified as those needing comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) under ESSA, how states and districts are targeting supports to these schools, and the improvement related practices these schools are using.

## **Research Questions**

- Did the first CSI schools identified under ESSA reflect the new law’s objectives? How does the number and types of schools nationally and in each state compare to the schools identified for intensive supports just prior to ESSA, and does it vary by whether a state had a flexibility waiver before ESSA?
- Are states and districts targeting supports to CSI schools, with sufficient intensity, as intended by ESSA?
- To what extent are the supports provided by states and districts to CSI schools differentiated and individualized to address each school’s specific needs?
- In line with ESSA’s rules and regulations, are states and districts providing support for CSI schools to select evidence-based interventions and are these being implemented at the school level?

## **Design**

This descriptive study is examining the characteristics of CSI schools identified under ESSA during school year 2018-19, comparing them to schools identified for intensive supports during 2017-18 before ESSA was phased in. For 2017-18, a distinction will be made between schools operating in states with and without No Child Left Behind flexibility waivers. In addition, it will use school survey data collected in Spring 2022, through a separate [IES study](#) of the implementation of the Title I and Title II programs, to provide a nationwide description of supports for CSI schools and the extent to which these vary when compared to supports for non-identified schools.

## **Publications and Products**

A first report, describing the characteristics of CSI schools, is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# Students with Disabilities

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Transition Supports for Youth with Disabilities](#)
- [The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) State and Local Implementation Study 2019](#)
- [National Longitudinal Transition Study](#)
- [Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices](#); described above in the [Early Learning](#) topic area.
- [Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School](#); listed above in the [Literacy](#) topic area.
- National Study of Special Education Spending

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Effectiveness of Promising Staffing Strategies to Improve the Outcomes of Students with Disabilities
- Understanding the Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Services in Supporting Youth Transitions
- Understanding the Implementation of Common Strategies to Support the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms

# *Evaluation of Transition Supports for Youth with Disabilities*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

Area 5. Postsecondary

## **Expected Duration**

September 2019 to December 2030

## **Background**

Students with disabilities continue to lag their peers in high school graduation, enrollment in postsecondary education, and employment more than a decade after the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although IDEA requires states and districts to support student efforts toward their post-high school goals, there is limited evidence about which strategies are effective. This study assesses variants of an approach that the Department has promoted: strengthening students' goal setting, planning, and self-advocacy skills and helping them apply these self-determination skills to their transition objectives. The first strategy is a more systematic and coordinated version of how schools commonly teach students these skills. The second increases the intensity, and cost, by not only teaching the skills but also providing individual mentoring to help students complete key steps toward their goals.

## **Research Questions**

- Is instruction in self-determination skills and how to apply them to transition planning effective in improving the intermediate and post-school outcomes of students with disabilities?
- Is offering individual mentoring along with self-determination skill instruction effective?
- What is the added benefit and cost of providing individual mentoring support?

## **Design**


Prior to full scale implementation, the study will pilot the strategies in spring and summer 2024 with a small number of instructors and students in up to three schools across two districts. Following the pilot, this study will randomly assign approximately 3,000 high school students with an individualized education program who are two years from expected graduation. They will receive one of the study's transition support strategies or continue with the regular transition supports they would typically receive from their school. Training for instructors on how to implement the study's transition support strategies and students' participation in the strategies will both occur over two years, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026. Data collection will include (1) student surveys and student records to estimate intermediate outcomes, (2) administrative records on postsecondary participation and employment to estimate longer term outcomes, and (3) documentation of strategy implementation.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report from the study is expected in 2027 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.



# *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State and Local Implementation Study 2019*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

## **Expected Duration**

September 2017 to April 2025

## **Background**

Federal policy has long played a key role in educating the more than one in every ten US children who are identified with a disability. But the context for those policies has been shifting. Recent court decisions, regulations, and guidance, students' increasing language diversity, and environmental and health issues like the opioid crisis are expected to influence both the extent of supports needed and the ways practitioners and officials work to meet those needs through early intervention and special education. This study collected information that can provide a national picture of IDEA implementation 15 years after the law was last updated. Reports will describe how states and districts have adapted their policies and practices to the changing landscape in selected key policy areas, comparing data from 2019 to data from a similar study conducted in 2009. This new information will lay the groundwork for an upcoming reauthorization of IDEA.

## **Research Questions**

- How are state and district practices aligned with IDEA's goals of appropriately identifying children with disabilities?
- To what extent do schools provide professional development and other resources to general educators to support the students with disabilities in their classrooms?
- To what extent do districts and schools provide supports intended to help students with disabilities make successful transitions from high school?  
To what extent are states, districts, and schools implementing policies and practices to ensure that students with disabilities have qualified special education teachers and support staff as intended by IDEA?

## **Design**

This implementation study is descriptive, and its results will be provided in a series of topical reports. Data collection includes surveys of state administrators from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and territories receiving IDEA funding, as well as surveys of a nationally representative sample of 688 school districts and 2,750 schools about the 2019-20 school year.


## **Publications and Products**

A supplemental volume, titled IDEA State and Local Implementation Study 2019: Compendium of Survey Results, was released in September 2023.

A restricted-use file containing de-identified data is available for the purposes of replicating study findings and conducting secondary analyses.

The next report for the study is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# National Longitudinal Transition Study

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## Focus Area

Area 2. Equity

## Expected Duration

September 2010 to September 2025

## Background

Despite improvements over time, students with disabilities continue to face challenges in graduating and achieving other milestones towards independence after high school. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) seeks to address these challenges by requiring schools to provide the supports students need to complete high school and pursue postsecondary education and work. This study will provide an updated national picture of students' paths through high school and beyond, as well as measure the progress youth with an individualized education program (IEP) have made since the most recent reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. The study will also provide the first direct comparisons of the in-school experiences and outcomes of high-school aged youth with and without an IEP.

## Research Questions

- How do the personal, family, and school characteristics and in-school experiences of youth with disabilities differ from those of youth not served under IDEA? (Volume 1; March 2017)
- How do the characteristics and school experiences of youth vary across disability groups? (Volume 2; March 2017)
- How have the characteristics and school experiences of youth with disabilities changed over time? (Volume 3; February 2018)
- How do the course taking paths of youth with disabilities compare to that of other youth?
- Are youth with disabilities achieving the high school and post-high school outcomes envisioned by IDEA, and how does their college participation compare to those of other youth?
- How do these high school and postsecondary outcomes vary with student characteristics, including their disability?

## Design

This descriptive study includes a nationally representative sample of over 400 districts and about 21,000 students. During Phase I of the study, survey data were collected in 2012-2013 from approximately 12,000 youth ages 13-21 and their parents, of which about 10,000 are students with IEPs representing each of the federal disability categories. The surveys asked about students' background characteristics, health, functional abilities, and engagement in school, the academic supports they receive, and their expectations for and steps to achieve transitions beyond high school.

The current Phase II of NLTS 2012 follows the students through high school and beyond, relying on administrative data collected by the Department and other agencies. The study obtained high school course-taking and completion information from school district records (completed in 2022) and postsecondary enrollment information from the Department's Federal Student Aid (FSA) records and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC; collected in 2022-2023). Administrative data will be linked with the 2012-2013 survey data to examine key steps in high school course-taking and completion, and youth's experiences with college and training.

## **Publications and Products**

Publications are listed below.

### *Descriptive Reports*

[Preparing for Life after High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education. Findings from the NLTS 2012. Volume 1: Comparisons with Other Youth](#) (March 2017)

[Preparing for Life after High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education. Findings from the NLTS 2012. Volume 2: Comparisons among Disability Groups](#) (March 2017)

[Preparing for Life after High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education. Findings from the NLTS 2012. Volume 3: Comparisons Over Time](#) (February 2018)

### *Evaluation Brief*

[Preparing for Life after High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education. A Summary of Key Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2012](#) (May 2018)

### *Review Synthesis*

[Improving Post-High School Outcomes for Transition-Age Students with Disabilities: An Evidence Review](#) (August 2013)


A [restricted-use file](#) containing de-identified sampling and 2012-2013 survey data is available for the purposes of replicating study findings and secondary analysis. The next product from this study is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

## **Key Findings to Date**

The May 2018 brief summarizing key findings from the Phase I data collection about students' experiences in high schools includes:

- Although their engagement and use of school supports have increased over the past decade (2003-2012), high school youth with an IEP are more socioeconomically disadvantaged and less likely to have experiences and expectations associated with success after high school than were other students in 2012.
- Among the disability groups in 2012, youth with intellectual disability, autism, deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities, and orthopedic impairments were found to be most at-risk for not transitioning successfully beyond high school.

# *National Study of Special Education Spending*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 2. Equity

Area 4. Meeting Student Needs

## **Expected Duration**

September 2023 to September 2026

## **Background**

Despite the significant federal investment in helping states and districts implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), those funds have not been sufficient to meet a longstanding government promise to cover 40 percent of the added cost of educating what is a growing share of students in the nation. If Congress were to put federal funding on a path to fulfill that promise - or to consider updating IDEA's funding formula or guidance for how federal funds may be used - more information is needed about actual spending on special education and related services for students with disabilities. The best national estimates of spending, a proxy for cost, are more than 20 years old. Since then, there have been significant shifts in the number and composition of students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and in the policies and conditions under which they are educated. This new IES study will take advantage of methodological and data advances to provide more reliable and valid estimates of what is spent than was possible in the past.

## **Research Questions**

- How much does the nation as a whole spend to educate students with disabilities? How much of it is added spending on special education specifically?
- To what extent do spending amounts reflect students' needs versus where they live or go to school?
- What does this spending pay for and is it consistent with IDEA's intent?
- To what extent is the federal contribution to special education funding meeting its promise?

## **Design**

The first, foundational phase supports refinement of the study design that incorporates stakeholder feedback, development and piloting of study instruments, and potentially recruitment of the study sample. The study sample may include up to 2,000 school districts and 20,000 students based on estimates that will be updated when the design is finalized. The study's data collection is anticipated to begin in February 2026 and gather information about spending in the 2025-2026 school year.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report for the study is expected in 2027 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# Teachers and Leaders

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has the following significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025:

- [Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs](#)
- [Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program](#)
- [Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives](#); listed above in the [School Improvement](#) topic area.

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Effectiveness of Promising Staffing Strategies to Improve the Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

# *Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs*



Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 3. Educators

## **Expected Duration**

September 2019 to December 2026

## **Background**

Teacher residency programs are rapidly increasing in popularity, as a potential way to address persistent inequities in student access to high quality teachers. This form of teacher preparation combines coursework with extensive on-the-job training in schools under the guidance of experienced mentors. The programs also typically place new graduates in hard-to-staff positions, most often in the same low-income or lower-performing districts where they trained. This approach may be promising, as underscored by recent changes in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which now allows states and districts to use Title II funds to support teacher residencies. But so far there is little systematic information about the specific strategies they employ or rigorous evidence that they are more successful than other ways of preparing teachers to work in high need schools. This study will provide the first large-scale in-depth description of all current teacher residency programs in the United States, focusing on the strategies used to improve the effectiveness and retention of teachers from these programs and the extent to which they help meet district needs.

## **Research Questions**

- Are the core features and strategies used by residency programs distinct from other teacher preparation programs and in-line with often stated program goals?
  - What are the key recruitment strategies used to expand the quality and diversity of the applicant pool?
  - How do residency programs prepare prospective teachers – through coursework and classroom-based experiences – to teach in underserved schools?
  - What strategies do residency programs use to place graduates in traditionally hard-to-staff positions in the districts where they trained?
- From the perspective of districts, what are the benefits and challenges associated with hiring teachers from residency programs compared with other teachers who are not trained through a residency model?


## **Design**

This descriptive study includes surveys and interviews with the directors of all currently operating residency programs (about 160) across the country. Data will also be collected from school districts.

## **Publications and Products**

The first report for the study is expected in 2024 and will be announced on <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

# *Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program*

 Access the most up-to-date description of this study on the IES website [here](#).

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## **Focus Area**

Area 3. Educators

## **Expected Duration**

September 2018 to August 2025

## **Background**

Effective school leadership and teaching are at the heart of school improvement. Recognizing this, the 2015 update to the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act established the Teacher and School Leader Incentive (TSL) program. TSL aims to help selected districts to improve their human capital management - the way in which they make and implement educator preparation, recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, compensation, professional development, and tenure and promotion decisions - and to encourage the use of performance-based pay. To better understand the program and whether it is achieving its objectives, this congressionally-mandated evaluation examines how the first set of grantees used their TSL funds for grant activities. The study will also measure the effects of a key use of TSL funds: identifying, training, and supporting one or more teachers in a school to be a “teacher leader” providing personalized support and feedback (coaching) to a small team of other teachers.

## **Research Questions**

- How did TSL grantees prioritize their funding activities? Did they directly address educator equity or diversity as much as the program expected?
- What is the effect of a teacher leader role strategy on student achievement, educator retention and satisfaction? Is the teacher leader strategy cost effective?

## **Design**

This is both a study of TSL program implementation and an impact study examining the effectiveness of having a teacher in a leader (coaching) role for two years. Implementation information came from a survey of 14 2017 TSL grantees describing their funded strategies during the three-year grant period, including strategies related to teacher leaders. The impact evaluation includes approximately 90 schools in 8 districts across the country, with about half of the schools within each district assigned by lottery to implement the teacher leader model beginning in the 2020-21 school year. Using teacher and principal surveys, teacher leader activity forms, and district and school administrative records, schools with teacher leaders will be compared to schools continuing with their typical teacher support practices to estimate the causal impact of the teacher leader model on key teacher and student outcomes.



## Publications and Products

The first report, titled [Federal Support for Attracting, Training, and Retaining Educators: How Districts Receiving Teacher and School Leader Grants Use Their Funds](#), was released in March 2023.

The final report for the study is expected in 2025 and will be announced on <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/>.

## Key Findings to Date

From the first report on district grantees' use of Teacher and School Leader funds and how well aligned this is with key aspects of the program:

- **TSL districts prioritized strategies to improve their educator workforce over strategies to improve their data infrastructure.** This finding may suggest that districts already had an infrastructure that they felt was mostly sufficient to drive decisions and thus used the grant's flexibility to prioritize other strategies. Among other possible explanations is that districts still planned to prioritize upgrading their infrastructure, but primarily with non-TSL grant funds.
- **TSL districts most commonly prioritized performance-based compensation and personalized support.** Districts were required to have both activities in place but were not required to use grant funds to support them. Nevertheless, most reported using grant funds for performance-based compensation such as bonuses or on programs for teacher leaders who provide personalized support and feedback to teachers.
- **TSL districts may not have prioritized funding activities that directly addressed educator equity or diversity as much as the program expected.** Although all districts proposed to address equity and diversity, as encouraged by the U.S. Department of Education, most of their reported high-priority activities did not appear to specifically address these goals. Only some indicated that the prioritized activities were to improve educator diversity, and few reported that increasing underserved students' equitable access to effective educators was central to their high-priority activities.

# Technical Assistance

## *Significant Evaluations*

The Department has no significant evaluations that will include work in Fiscal Year 2025.

The Department anticipates additional future work in this area to include:

- Evaluating the 2022-2027 Cycle of the Regional Educational Laboratories (REL) Program
- Evaluating the Role of the Comprehensive Centers Program in 2024-2029

