

Section 8601 of the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 Appropriations

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

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

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

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

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

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

This document is the fourth such plan submitted to Congress. This plan focuses on all evaluations to be supported by Section 8601 funds appropriated in FY 2021 and FY 2022. All evaluation plans are publicly available on IES's [website](#).

I. Planned Use of Section 8601 Evaluation Funds

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

FY 2021: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2021 to be spent on evaluations is \$20,802,400. Of this amount, \$14,201,389 is from pooled funds and \$6,601,011 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2021 are available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

FY 2022: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2022 to be spent on evaluations is \$11,217,960. Of this amount, \$6,337,507 is from pooled funds and \$4,880,453 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2022 are available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.¹

Table 1 lists each new evaluation activity with a brief description or continuing and recently completed evaluation activities with a link to the study's description and timeline. Estimated costs from FY 2021 and FY 2022 funds are included, broken down by source. The amounts listed for each activity in the FY 2022 columns do not necessarily add up to the totals at the bottom of Table 1 because funding for yet to be awarded activities are still to be determined and therefore not listed.

¹ In Fiscal Year 2022, \$3,500,000 of the 8601 funds come from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, not regular appropriations, and remain available for obligation through September 30, 2025.

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2021			Fiscal Year 2022		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Accountability and School Improvement						
Impact Study of Strategies to Accelerate Math Learning	C	\$1,280,052	-	C	*	-
Study of School Improvement Plans and Their Implementation	-	-	-	C	*	-
Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives	C	\$1,778,855	-	-	-	-
<i>Study of Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) grants. SRSA grantees under Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) are required to describe the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, the SRSA program by addressing the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries. This study will analyze the FY 2022 SRSA GEPA statements to help understand this requirement's administrative impact.</i>	N	\$287,808	-	C	*	-
Teachers and Leaders						
Study of Title II, Part A Uses of Funds	C	-	\$548,287	C	-	\$620,000
Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program	C	-	\$2,065,724	-	-	-
Literacy						
Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School	C	\$5,478,930	-	C	\$1,837,507	-
Student Support and Academic Enrichment						
Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools	C	\$1,902,483	-	-	-	-
The Effects of a Systematic Approach to Improving Quality in Afterschool Programs: An Impact Evaluation to Inform the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Program	C	\$1,300,000	-	C	\$500,000	-

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

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2021			Fiscal Year 2022		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Study of Implementation of the Stronger Connections Grant Program. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) of 2022 provides \$1 billion via "Stronger Connections" grants under Title IV-A of ESEA for the purpose of improving student well-being with social and emotional learning and school safety. This study will examine how states targeted funds to and supported their LEAs, and subsequently how LEAs spent those funds.	-	-	-	N	-	\$3,500,000
Study of State Policies to Prohibit Aiding and Abetting Sexual Misconduct in Schools	-	-	-	C	-	\$39,998
Choice and Parent Engagement						
Impact Study of Magnet Schools	C	\$1,748,577	-	-	-	-
Support for English Learners and English Language Acquisition						
Study of the Impact of English Learner Reclassification Policies (formerly titled: Impact Evaluation of Approaches for Supporting English Learners)	C	-	\$3,686,980	C	-	\$182,435
Study of Educational Policies, Supports and Practices for English Learners: Implementation of Title III and Social and Emotional Learning	C	-	\$300,000	-	-	-
Asian American Pacific Islander Data Disaggregation (D2) Initiative	-	-	-	C	\$300,000	-
Supporting Title III Data Quality. This work is to inform data quality improvements for the Title III Government Performance and Results Act indicators.	C	-	\$20	C	-	\$538,020
Cross-Cutting Topics						
Study of State and Local Uses of Federal Education Funds	C	\$424,684	-	-	-	-
Total:		\$14,201,389	\$6,601,011		\$6,337,507	\$4,880,453

N = New Activity; C = Continuing Activity; * = Amount to be determined because activity is yet to be awarded (i.e., for modifications to existing studies, or new studies which include a short description and indicate timing of funding needs)

Pooled = Section 8601 pooled funds; Individual = non-pooled funds from an individual program's Section 8601 set-aside

II. Results from Section 8601 Evaluations

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

Brief status reports are provided below for the studies described in the [prior evaluation plan](#) that are no longer included on the current plan because no additional funds are needed from FY 2021 or FY 2022.

(1) *Trends in School- and Student-level Outcomes Based on Requirements under ESEA Title I-A*. This study began in 2021. The main objective is to illustrate how decision-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders can use ESEA Title I-A data collected by the U.S. Department of Education to address issues of interest, such as trends in academic subject proficiency and the extent to which gaps are narrowing among schools and students with the greatest needs. Three sets of “Spotlights” and “Exemplar Analysis Briefs” are expected to be made available through the [ED Data Express](#) online dashboard and data download tool in 2023 .

(2) *Study of How Interagency Data Exchanges Support Identification of Students in Foster Care*. This study began in 2021. The main objective is to describe the data-exchange practices that State Education Agencies (SEAs) have with State Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Results are based on a scan of publicly available data and resources and interviews with states about their data-sharing practices. A report and series of state data-sharing snapshots are expected in 2023 and will be announced on the Department’s [Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) website.

(3) *Implementation of Key Federal Policies in the Wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic*. This study began in 2020. The main objective is to describe how education officials are carrying out, and are supported by, federal policies like those associated with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Report preparation based on spring 2021 surveys of all states and a nationally representative sample of districts is underway. Results are expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(4) *Evaluation of Title I Pilots That Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act*. This mandated study began in 2019. The main objective is to chart the progress of states participating in ESSA’s Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority and to identify lessons learned for developing and implementing new assessments. Report preparation, primarily based on interviews with state assessment officials and Annual Progress Reporting, is underway, and results are expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(5) *Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools*. This study began in 2017. The main objective is to examine schools’ experiences as they departmentalize in fourth and fifth grades and generate valuable information on an improvement strategy that low-performing elementary schools may consider adopting. Report preparation is underway, based on student achievement data, principal interviews, and teacher surveys. Results are expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(6) *Impact Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs*. This study began in 2019. The main objective is to provide an in-depth description of all current teacher residency programs in the United States and the first large-scale description of strategies used to improve the effectiveness and retention of teachers from these programs. Data collection, including interviews and surveys with the directors of all currently operating residency programs (about 160) across the country, is underway. Results are expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(7) *Implementation Evaluation of Teaching Residency Programs*. This study began in 2010. The main objective is to provide important descriptive and implementation information on teacher residency programs, as well as information on the teacher retention outcomes of teachers who participate in such programs. The evaluation focused on programs that received grants from the Teacher Quality Partnership Program in fall 2009 and spring 2010. Results were released in 2014 and 2015. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(8) *Implementation of Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program*. This study began in 2020. The main objective is to describe the work of the first 12 grantees of this ESSA program, focusing on the extent to which certain program priorities are being implemented. The results are intended to help federal policy makers refine the goals and objectives of the SFEC program, as well as inform the work of grantees and improve the work with families of other education organizations and state and local educational agencies. Report preparation is underway, based on survey and interview data from summer 2022, with results expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(9) *Impact Evaluation of Parent Messaging Strategies on Student Attendance*. This study began in 2016. The main objective is to examine the impact of a parent text-messaging strategy by randomly assigning parents of 26,000 elementary school students to receive different versions of texting or to receive only their district's regular attendance outreach, and then comparing student attendance and achievement among the groups. Results were released in 2020. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(10) *Implementation Evaluation of the Title III National Professional Development Program*. This study began in 2020. The main objective is to describe teacher preparation and professional development approaches used by NPD grantees (National Professional Development program authorized by *Title III of ESEA*), to add to what is known about strategies that may be promising to improve educator capacity to serve English learners. Report preparation is underway, based primarily on surveys of all 2016 and 2017 NPD grantees, conducted in Spring 2021. Results are expected in 2023. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(11) *Evaluations of State Education Programs and Policies*. IES held a special grant competition in 2015 for states seeking support to evaluate major education improvement strategies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Three states and their research partners received funding: [California](#), to evaluate the effects of implementing a system that provides college-readiness information to high school students; [North Carolina](#), to measure the impact of a state program to provide multi-

tiered support to improve the performance of its 75 lowest-performing schools; and Tennessee, to examine the effects of a teacher evaluation and voluntary mentoring program to improve teaching practices and student outcomes across the state. [Results for North Carolina](#) were released in 2022; [Results for California](#) were released beginning in 2018; [Results for Tennessee](#) were released in 2022.

III. Planning for New Evaluations

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

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