

Section 8601 of the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 Appropriations

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

(Updated December, 2019)

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 second such plan submitted to Congress. The first plan was submitted in September 2017 and covered evaluation activities that were carried out in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 using FY 2017 appropriations pooled under Section 8601. This new plan focuses on all evaluations to be supported by Section 8601 funds appropriated in FY 2018 and FY 2019. These activities will typically be supported by contracts awarded in FY 2019 and FY 2020. 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 to support a high-quality evaluation, or programs such as Title I that do not have an 8601 set-aside.

FY 2018: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2018 to be spent on evaluations is \$20,345,549. Of this amount, \$12,858,703 is from pooled funds and \$7,486,846 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2018 are available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019.

FY 2019: The total amount of 8601 funds from FY 2019 to be spent on evaluations is \$20,705,673. Of this amount, \$12,797,437 is from pooled funds and \$7,908,236 is from individual program funds. Consolidated funds appropriated in Fiscal Year 2019 are available to be obligated for evaluation activities from July 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020.

Table 1 lists each new or continuing evaluation activity and its estimated costs from FY 2018 and FY 2019 funds, broken down by source. Table 2 provides more detail on each of the activities, including a study description and timeline.

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2018			Fiscal Year 2019		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Accountability and School Improvement						
Evaluation of Title I Pilots That Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act	N	\$1,994,152	-	-	-	-
Evaluation of School Improvement under Title I of ESSA: Key Aspects of Early Implementation <i>(Added to plan in March, 2019)</i>	N	\$1,485,319	-	-	-	-
Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools	-	-	-	C	\$3,683,162	-
Design Study and Impact Evaluation of District and School Improvement Strategies	-	-	-	N	\$500,000	-
Impact Evaluation of Title I Supplemental Educational Services	C	\$19,953	-	-	-	-
Teachers and Leaders						
Study of Title II, Part A Uses of Funds	C	-	\$431,359	C	-	\$440,449
Impact Study of Feedback for Teachers Based on Classroom Videos	C	-	\$636,077	C	-	\$330,560
Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program	-	-	-	C	-	\$1,000,000
Feasibility and Conduct of an Impact Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs or Professional Development for Classroom Teachers	N	-	\$2,000,000	C	-	\$4,000,000
Literacy and English Language Acquisition						
Title III Implementation Evaluation and Impact Feasibility Study	N	-	\$1,962,906	C	-	\$252,014
Academic Language Intervention Impact Study	C	\$216,716	\$956,593	C	-	\$1,885,213
Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School <i>(Added to plan in August, 2019)</i>	-	-	-	C	\$1,003,025	-
Student Support and Academic Enrichment						
Study of Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	N	-	\$1,499,911	-	-	-
Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools	-	-	-	N	\$2,327,867	-

Activity Title	Fiscal Year 2018			Fiscal Year 2019		
	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual	New or Continuing?	Pooled	Individual
Choice and Parent Engagement						
Impact Study of Magnet Schools	C	\$2,878,294	-	-	-	-
Impact Evaluation of Parent Messaging Strategies on Student Attendance <i>(Added to plan in August, 2019)</i>	-	-	-	C	\$400,000	-
Implementation of Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program <i>(Added to plan in August, 2019)</i>	-	-	-	N	\$500,000	-
Cross-Cutting Topics						
Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives	C	\$2,727,656	-	C	\$2,400,000	-
Study of State and Local Uses of Federal Education Funds	N	\$1,558,653	-	-	-	-
Evaluations of State Education Programs and Policies	C	\$1,977,960	-	C	\$1,983,383	-
Total:		\$12,858,703	\$7,486,846		\$12,797,437	\$7,908,236

N = New Activity; C = Continuing Activity

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

Table 2. Study Descriptions and Timeline for Proposed Activities, In Alphabetic Order

Activity Title	Description	Timeline
Academic Language Intervention Impact Study	Fourth-grade English Learners (ELs) continue to score significantly lower on reading and math achievement compared to their non-EL counterparts. While efficacy trials of academic language interventions have shown initial promise for ELs, more evidence is needed to see if these interventions can scale-up effectively in a variety of settings. This study is examining the implementation and impacts of an academic language curriculum using a randomized control trial in 70 schools. The study is focusing on the impacts on classroom instruction, academic language skills, and general reading outcomes for ELs and disadvantaged non-ELs. Findings from this study will help inform states' approaches to implementing ESSA, which requires that their accountability systems address academic progress for both groups of students under the Title I and III ESEA programs.	First report expected in 2020; Study to be completed in 2021.
Design Study and Impact Evaluation of District and School Improvement Strategies	Title I of ESEA promotes and in some cases requires states and districts to use evidence-based strategies when intervening in their low-performing schools. However, there is limited evidence on how to improve low-performing schools. This study will first develop design options for an impact evaluation of potentially promising improvement strategies—such as those that use innovative education technologies or borrow from charter schools—and then conduct an evaluation of one of them. Findings will inform ongoing efforts to improve low-performing schools under Title I of ESEA.	Study to be completed in 2025.
Evaluation of Full-Service Community Schools	Title IV of ESEA provides grants to implement the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) model in public elementary or secondary schools. FSCS seek to improve the coordination and integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families, particularly those attending high-poverty schools. Services are meant to be comprehensive and include educational, developmental, family, and health services provided through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships. ESSA mandates an impact evaluation of FSCS. This study will first identify design options and then conduct the full evaluation.	Impact design options expected in 2020; Study to be completed in 2024.
Evaluation of School Improvement under Title I of ESSA: Key Aspects of Early Implementation	Title I of ESEA provides states, districts, and schools considerable flexibility to address school improvement requirements in ways that factor in the local context. Given this flexibility, collecting information on key aspects of early implementation of the school improvement provisions under ESSA is a critical step in helping the U.S. Department of Education and the public better understand how grantees put these requirements into practice and their emerging technical assistance needs. This study will focus on schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) and provide baseline information on how entities at the state and local levels are responding to the school improvement requirements related to CSI schools under ESSA.	Study to be completed in 2022, with briefs published on a rolling basis starting in 2021.
Evaluations of State Education Programs and Policies	Three research grants are evaluating fully-developed programs and policies implemented by states to determine whether they produce a beneficial impact on student education outcomes relative to a counterfactual when they are implemented under routine conditions in authentic education settings. The specific topic areas of these grants are: standards and assessments; identification and improvement of lowest-performing schools and schools with the greatest achievement gaps; and teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. These areas relate to key ESEA programs, including components of accountability systems that states are required to enact under Titles I and II.	One study to be completed in 2019 and two studies to be completed in 2020.
Evaluation of Title I Pilots That Provide Flexibility Under the Every Student Succeeds Act	Under ESEA Title I, the Education Secretary may grant states flexibility to pilot programs that aim to improve student outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged groups. One such pilot, a scale-up of innovative assessment systems, seeks to do so by improving the quality and usefulness of federal accountability assessments. ESSA mandates an evaluation of pilot programs. This evaluation will examine the implementation of innovative assessment systems, and other relevant pilots as appropriate, including progress made, emergent best practices, and how relevant outcomes have changed over time.	First report expected in 2022; Study to be completed in 2024.

Activity Title	Description	Timeline
Feasibility and Conduct of an Impact Evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs or Professional Development for Classroom Teachers	Effective teachers are key to improving student achievement, but there is limited evidence on how to improve teacher performance. Residency models are an emerging strategy to produce effective teachers from the start. Professional development strategies used by charter organizations such as KIPP also point to potentially innovative ways to support teachers. This study will first develop design options for an impact evaluation of both innovative residency models and professional development strategies, and then conduct an evaluation of one of them. Findings will inform ongoing efforts to improve teacher effectiveness under Title II-A of ESEA.	Report expected in 2023.
Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools	There is a continuing need to find effective school improvement strategies that can be implemented with relative ease and at low cost. One strategy that many districts are trying is departmentalized instruction in elementary schools, where students are taught subjects by different teachers. There are potential upsides and downsides when teachers specialize in particular subjects (as opposed to the traditional format with each teacher teaching all subjects), but there is little causal evidence on the strategy. This study is examining the implementation and impact of switching to departmentalized instruction in fourth and fifth grades on classroom instruction and student achievement in reading and math. Findings from this study will have important implications for key ESEA programs, including improvement strategies for low-performing schools under Title I, as well as many aspects of Title II, namely how elementary teachers are prepared, hired, and provided with professional development.	Study to be completed in 2022.
Impact Evaluation of Parent Messaging Strategies on Student Attendance	Title I of ESEA requires that states define and measure school performance and include at least one non-academic measure of school quality. To meet this requirement, 36 states and the District of Columbia are now holding schools accountable for improving rates of chronic absenteeism. To generate evidence on low-cost strategies to improve attendance, this study evaluated the impact of parent-focused text messaging on elementary school students' attendance and achievement. To support implementation of cost-effective strategies, the final report from this study will be a "how to" guide for districts.	"How To" guide expected in 2021.
Impact Evaluation of Title I Supplemental Educational Services	Under Title I of ESEA (as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act), districts with schools that missed "Adequate Yearly Progress" for a third year were required to offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES), which provided additional instruction outside the regular school day by state-approved providers. Priority was given to the lowest-achieving students in identified Title I schools when insufficient funds were available to serve all students. This evaluation assessed the potential benefits of offering SES to applicants denied services due to insufficient district funds.	Study completed in 2012. (Funds are for a final award fee payment to the contractor)
Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School	A "Multi-tiered system of support" for reading (MTSS-R) is a strategy for providing high-quality reading instruction for all students, identifying students needing supplemental or more intensive supports, and providing these supports for those who need it. In their ESSA plans, more than 30 states named MTSS-R as a key approach to improve low-performing schools under Title I. Title II of ESSA supports professional development in in early reading, which often includes a MTSS-R emphasis. However, a recent ED-sponsored study found that many schools are not implementing the strategy in ways that align with best practice. This study will assess how training school staff on promising versions of MTSS-R affects implementation, teacher practice, and student literacy.	Report expected in 2024; Study to be completed in 2024.
Impact Evaluation to Inform the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program	Title II of ESEA provides grants through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program to support performance-based compensation systems or human capital management systems to improve student achievement. While grantees' plans are multi-faceted, teacher leaders are among the most common features. This evaluation, which is mandated by ESSA, will examine the implementation of the grants and the impact of using teacher leaders on teacher and student outcomes. Findings from this study will have important implications for key ESEA programs, including improvement strategies for low-performing schools under Title I, as well as many aspects of Title II, such as how teachers are deployed and developed.	First report expected in 2021; Study to be completed in 2023.

Activity Title	Description	Timeline
Impact Study of Feedback for Teachers Based on Classroom Videos	Recent small-scale studies suggest that individualized teacher support may be an effective strategy for improving teachers' instruction and their students' achievement. This large-scale study focuses on the impact of multiple cycles of individualized coaching and feedback to teachers based on video recordings of their classroom practice. Findings will inform ongoing efforts under Title II-A of ESEA to provide effective support for teachers at various experience levels.	Report expected in 2021; Study to be completed in 2022.
Impact Study of Magnet Schools	The most recent Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant competition under Title IV emphasizes admitting students to magnet schools through lotteries, which provides a natural experiment to rigorously estimate the impact of magnet schools. This study will compare the outcomes of students randomly assigned by lottery to either attend magnet schools or not attend these schools. Findings from this study will have important implications for MSAP and other ESEA programs related to school choice.	First report expected in 2024; Study to be completed in 2024.
Implementation of Statewide Parent Engagement Centers Program	The reauthorized Title IV of ESEA includes the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) program. This revision of the previous Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) program seeks to improve upon the earlier program by emphasizing the use and development of evidence of effectiveness. This implementation evaluation will provide information about the SFEC grantees, including their key activities, challenges encountered, and needs for evidence-based strategies. Subsequent work may include testing strategies to help SFEC grantees and others achieve ESEA's parent engagement goals.	Report expected in 2023.
Implementation of Title I/II-A Program Initiatives	Title I and Title II are key ESEA programs, which aim to help provide students with equal access to education by providing financial assistance to schools and districts that have a high percentage of students from low-income families (Title I) and improving teacher and principal quality (Title II). This study is designed to provide relevant data from states, districts, schools, and teachers on the implementation of Title I and II programs under changing policies and requirements since the reauthorization of ESEA by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, including implementation of ESEA flexibility during the 2013–14 school year and transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act during the 2017–18 and 2020–21 school years.	Next report expected in 2020; Study to be completed in 2022.
Study of State and Local Uses of Federal Education Funds	Titles I, II, III, and IV of ESEA provided approximately \$20 billion in formula grants to states and districts in FY18 with the goal of improving student outcomes. Through surveys, budgets, expenditure data, and personnel and payroll data collected from a nationally-representative sample of districts, this study will describe how these federal funds are used and allocated to schools. The study will also explore issues of coordination across programs, use of flexibility, and decision making. Similar data were last collected in 2004-05, so there is a need for updated information, especially with ESEA's reauthorization in 2015.	Study to be completed in 2022.
Study of Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	Title IV-A of ESEA provides grants to state and local education agencies to improve student achievement by: providing all students with access to a well-rounded education; improving school conditions for student learning; and improving the use of technology. Through surveys of all states and a nationally-representative sample of districts, as well as case studies of 25 districts, this study will examine how states and districts decide to use their funds, what kinds of services and activities districts are implementing, and how they are implementing certain types of programs and policies.	Study to be completed in 2021.
Study of Title II, Part A Uses of Funds	Title II-A of ESEA provides grants to state and local education agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of educators and to provide equitable access to them for low-income and minority students. This study will provide information about the funded strategies from all states and a nationally-representative sample of districts and charter schools. Findings will address the requirement that states submit an annual report to the Education Secretary.	First report expected in 2019; Study to be completed in 2022.

Activity Title	Description	Timeline
Title III Implementation Evaluation and Impact Feasibility Study	English Learners (ELs) continue to score significantly lower on reading and math achievement compared to their non-EL counterparts. Title III of ESEA aims to assist ELs in attaining English proficiency and meeting the same challenging State academic standards as all children. Through surveys of all states and a nationally-representative sample of districts, this evaluation will describe how Title III funds are used and the instructional programs and supports provided to ELs. Through an evidence review of widely-used or promising strategies and interviews with program developers and districts, the impact feasibility study will identify policy-relevant instructional models and design options for an impact evaluation of one or more of these models. Findings will inform ongoing efforts to improve the achievement of ELs under Title III of ESEA.	Implementation evaluation report and impact design options expected in 2021.

II. Results from Section 8601 Evaluations

Brief status reports are provided below for the six studies described in the [prior evaluation plan](#), which covered evaluation activities supported by funds appropriated for Fiscal Year 2017.

(1) *Implementation Study of State Supports under Title I for Reducing School Dropouts*. This study began in 2018. Its main objective is to describe state and district efforts to reduce the number and percentage of students who drop out of school, and how states support districts and schools to provide effective transitions in order to reduce dropouts. Data were collected through surveys of all 50 states and DC and a nationally-representative sample of districts during the 2017-18 school year. The study will also report recent trends in state-level dropout rates. Data collection is complete, and data analysis is underway. Results are expected in 2020.

(2) *Implementation of Title I/II Program Initiatives*. This study began in 2011. The main objective is to provide relevant data on the implementation of programs and policies related to Title I and Title II of ESEA at three points in time: 2013-14 (implementation under NCLB and ESEA flexibility), 2017-18 (transition to implementing ESSA), and 2020-21 (full implementation of ESSA). All three data collection years include surveys from all 50 states and DC, as well as a nationally-representative sample of districts. Two data collection years also include a combination of nationally-representative samples of schools, teachers, and charter districts.

A first report, titled [Implementation of Title I and Title II-A Program Initiatives: Results from 2013-14](#), was released in January 2017. This report was based on data collected during the 2013-14 school year. Key findings include:

- All but one state had committed to implementing college- and career-ready standards by 2013–14. At the district level, about two-thirds of principals reported fully implementing state content standards, and most teachers reported receiving relevant professional development.
- Many state assessments incorporated more sophisticated response formats to better assess students' college- and career-readiness. Twenty-four to 36 states (depending on grade level) in ELA and 19 states in math reported using extended constructed-response assessment formats to assess higher-order thinking skills.
- States used ESEA flexibility to reset their accountability goals and to target a narrower set of schools. Among the 43 states that had received ESEA flexibility for the 2013–14 school year, the most common accountability goal was to reduce by half the percentage of students and subgroups deemed “not proficient” over a 6- to 8-year period. These same states identified 15 percent of Title I schools as either lowest performing or as having substantial student achievement gaps, whereas 43 percent of Title I schools in non-flexibility states were identified as lowest performing.
- Almost all states adopted new laws or regulations related to educator evaluation systems between 2009 and 2014, and most districts reported full or partial implementation in 2013–14. Only four states had not adopted new teacher evaluation laws or regulations by 2014.

Data collection for the 2017-18 school year is complete, and report preparation is underway. Results are expected in 2020. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(3) *Academic Language Intervention Impact Study*. This study began in 2015 and is taking place in 70 schools across the nation. Its main objective is to examine the implementation and impact of an academic language curriculum on classroom instruction and on academic language skills and general reading outcomes for English Learners (ELs) and disadvantaged non-EL students. Schools assigned to the treatment group implemented the academic language intervention in 2017-18. Data collection in all study schools is underway, and results are expected in 2020. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(4) *Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools*. This study began in 2017. The main objective is to examine the implementation and impact of switching from self-contained classrooms (where each teacher teaches all subjects) to departmentalized classrooms (where each teacher specializes in one subject) on instructional quality and on student achievement in math and reading. Implementation and data collection for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years are underway on a study sample of 90 schools in 12 districts from across the nation. Results are expected in 2022. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(5) *Design and Feasibility of an Impact Study of Magnet Schools*. This study began in 2017. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of magnet schools on student outcomes (achievement, persistence, graduation) and the types of schools students attend (higher-performing, more diverse). The study plans to include districts and schools from across the nation, who received federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program grants in FY16 or FY17 and who enrolled students via a lottery. This study will compare the outcomes of students randomly assigned by lottery to either attend magnet schools or not attend these schools. Initial results are expected in 2024. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(6) *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 are expected in 2020. Abstracts for the evaluation grants are available at the links above.

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.
- *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.