

Pooled Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Year 2018

Institute of Education Sciences

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. 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 first such plan submitted under the reauthorized ESEA, and is divided into three sections that address each of the three mandated items above. This plan focuses on the activities that will be supported by pooled evaluation funds and that will be carried out in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. The plan will be updated in FY 2018 to include the next two years of activities (FY 2019 and FY 2020) and to summarize the results of activities that took place in FY 2018. Thereafter, the evaluation plan will be updated biennially.

I. Planned Use of Pooled Evaluation Funds

The total amount to be spent on pooled evaluation activities taking place in FY 2018 (using FY 2017 appropriations) is: \$7,016,991. Of this amount, \$200,000 will be used to begin new studies and \$6,816,991 will be used to provide continuation funds to evaluations that are in progress. Table 1 lists the name of each evaluation, whether it is a new or continuation activity, and its estimated costs in FY 2018. Table 2 provides more detail on each of the six activities, including a study description and timeline.

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Activities and Estimated Costs in FY 2018

Activity Title	New/Continuation	FY18 Cost
Implementation Study of State Supports under Title I for Reducing School Dropouts	New	\$200,000
Implementation of Title I/II Program Initiatives	Continuation	\$1,200,000
Academic Language Intervention Impact Study	Continuation	\$340,155
Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools	Continuation	\$3,000,000
Design and Feasibility of an Impact Study of Magnet Schools	Continuation	\$150,000
Evaluations of State Education Programs and Policies	Continuation	\$2,126,836
Total:		\$7,016,991

Table 2. Study Description and Timeline for Proposed Activities

Activity Title	Description	Timeline
Implementation Study of State Supports under Title I for Reducing School Dropouts	Title I, Part A of ESEA requires states to have a plan to lower school dropout rates (Section 1111(g)(1)(D)). States must describe how they will support districts to provide effective transitions of students at all levels of schooling, especially middle grades and high school, to decrease the risk of students' dropping out. Title IX, Sec. 9208 of ESEA requires an evaluation of these state plans. This study will document the implementation of these plans at the state and district levels and report corresponding trends in dropout rates.	Study to be completed in 2019.
Implementation of Title I/II 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). There have been significant policy changes related to Title I and Title II since 2001. This study is designed to provide relevant data on the implementation of Title I and II programs at several points in time. It will provide implementation data from states, districts, schools, and teachers under the previous reauthorization of ESEA (the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and ESEA flexibility (during the 2013-14 school year). It will also provide implementation data under ESSA (during the 2017-18 and 2019-20 school years).	Next report expected in 2019; Study to be completed in 2021.
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 72 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.
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	Study to be completed in 2021.

	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.	
Design and Feasibility of an Impact Study of Magnet Schools	Magnet schools are an important component of public school choice, as well as a strategy used by districts to improve student achievement and school diversity. Despite a growing number of students attending magnet schools, there is limited evidence about their effectiveness. The Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), an ESEA program under Title IV, provides a unique opportunity to study magnet schools across the nation. The most recent MSAP grant competition emphasizes admitting students to magnet schools through lotteries, which provides a natural experiment to rigorously estimate the impact of magnet schools. This study will first develop design options for an impact evaluation and then conduct the full evaluation if feasible. Findings from this study will have important implications for MSAP and other ESEA programs related to school choice.	First report expected in 2020; Study to be completed in 2024.
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: (1) standards and assessments; (2) identification and improvement of lowest-performing schools and/or schools with the greatest achievement gaps; and (3) 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 Title I and II.	Studies to be completed in 2020.

II. Results to Date from Pooled Evaluation Activities

Because this is the first pooled evaluation plan submitted under ESSA, there are not yet ESSA-funded activities on which to report. Future evaluation plans will include all available results from activities in the most recent two-year period. Below is a brief status report on the five studies listed in Tables 1 and 2 that are underway.

(1) 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 several points in time. The study will provide implementation data on all 50 states and DC, as well as on a nationally-representative sample of districts, schools, and teachers within those schools. Three years of data collection are planned: 2013-14 (implementation under NCLB and ESEA flexibility), 2017-18 (early implementation of ESSA), and 2019-20 (later implementation of ESSA).

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. Preparation is underway for data collection during the 2017-18 school year. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#). Key findings from the first report 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.

(2) Academic Language Intervention Impact Study. This study began in 2015 and is taking place in 72 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. Study schools have been randomly assigned to receive the academic language intervention or to serve as part of the control group. Results are expected in 2020. For more information about the evaluation, see its [study profile](#).

(3) Impact Evaluation of Departmentalized Instruction in Elementary Schools. The main objective of this study 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 reading and math. It is expected to take place in 10-15 districts across the nation and involve 200 schools. Procurement for an evaluation contractor is underway in summer 2017, and a contract will be awarded in September 2017.

(4) Design and Feasibility of an Impact Study of Magnet Schools. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of magnet schools on student outcomes (e.g., achievement, persistence, and graduation), and the types of schools students attend (e.g., higher-performing, more diverse). A feasibility task will first be conducted to determine the exact design and sample, but the study is expected 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. Procurement for an evaluation contractor is underway in summer 2017, and a contract will be awarded in September 2017.

(5) Evaluations of State Education Programs and Policies. IES held a special grant competition for states seeking support to evaluate major education improvement strategies using rigorous 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. The grants were awarded in 2015 and are expected to be completed in 2020. Abstracts for the evaluation grants are available at the links above.

III. Planning for New Evaluations

When deciding which evaluations to propose, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) will weigh a number of factors and consider the various tradeoffs before deciding which studies to conduct. These factors will include:

- 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, IES will respond to evaluation requirements in annual appropriation bills and reports.
- President's budget and policy priorities. IES 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 evaluations that focus on impacts and effectiveness of programs. In order to support such causal inferences, it is important to use either random assignment or quasi-experimental designs. Some ESEA programs may be structured in a way that is more amenable to evaluations with these designs: for example, they target more students or schools than can be served with available funding, making a lottery design possible; or they use eligibility criteria (such as cut scores on a standardized test) that can be used to identify similar students for treatment and comparison groups.
- Prior Evaluations. Some programs may have been evaluated already, so all else equal, these programs may be less of a priority than programs that have never been evaluated.