



Increasing Access to Effective Teachers and Leaders

Teachers are the most important in-school factor influencing student success,¹ yet too many low-income students and students of color lack access to effective educators.² With ESSA, states and districts must report on and address inequitable distributions of ineffective, out-of-field, and emergency credentialed teachers, and can also seize the opportunity to address other drivers of inequitable access, like teacher shortages and school conditions. District leaders can target ESSA's programs and funds to help prospective and current teachers and leaders develop the skills and competencies needed to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students and ensure they teach in schools that need their talent the most.



What's the Opportunity?

In an effort to advance equity, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides federal funds to assist states and districts in meeting the needs of traditionally underserved students, including students of color, students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless or in foster care. In exchange for robust data reporting, increased transparency, and a commitment to improve underperforming schools, ESSA provides states and districts with the financial flexibility to use federal ESSA funds on a wide range of actions.

Traditionally, district leaders have limited federal funds to expenditures that clearly met federal compliance requirements, such as funding additional academic interventions, due to concerns about triggering federal audits or oversight. While the law's requirement to ensure that federal funds supplement, and do not supplant, state and local funds remains, district and school leaders are no longer bound by accounting restrictions that required to them to make cumbersome financial demonstrations.ⁱ As a result, district and school leaders now possess greater latitude to invest ESSA funds in ways they think are most likely to benefit underserved students, including aligning their use of ESSA funds with the district's existing strategic priorities.

¹ Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrics* 73, no. 2 (March 25), <https://econ.ucsb.edu/~jon/Econ230C/HanushekRivkin.pdf>.

² *Do Disadvantaged Students Get Less Effective Teaching? Key Findings from Recent Institute of Education Sciences Studies*, National Center for Education Evaluation, January 2014, <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144010/pdf/20144010.pdf>.

This guide is intended to help district leaders disrupt the compliance mindset and inertia that have characterized traditional implementation of federal grants and leverage federal funding and programs in service of a more equitable education system.



Overcoming Potential Barriers to Equity

- Improving school conditions that can influence highly-effective teachers' decisions to move to and remain at a school (e.g., the quality of school leadership, compensation, school culture).
- Addressing policy barriers that may inhibit or discourage effective educators from moving to the schools that need them the most (e.g., collective-bargaining agreements that prioritize placement based on seniority or enshrine last in, first out policies; human capital management systems that tie compensation to effectiveness ratings and may dissuade teachers from moving to more challenging schools if they think it may affect their rating).
- Supporting educators' social and emotional health, particularly for those teachers serving in schools with the greatest needs, to reduce burnout and improve working conditions.
- Recruiting and retaining a more diverse educator workforce.
- Preparing pre-service teachers to serve in high-poverty and urban settings and providing ongoing support during their induction year.
- Ensuring professional development is job-embedded and driven by school-level needs.



Example: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Improves Struggling Schools with Strategic Staffing

Ensuring that a district's best teachers are in front of the students who need them the most is critically important to ensuring that all students across a school district have access to strong schools. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Strategic Staffing Initiative, which began in 2008, is one example of how a district can tackle the issue of teacher quality across schools.

In 2006, then-Superintendent Pete Gorman noticed that students in high-poverty, mostly Black schools were taught by a smaller proportion of the district's most effective teachers.³ After a largely failed attempt using \$10,000 incentives to encourage individual effective teachers to move to struggling high schools,

³ Marni Bromberg, *Achieving Equitable Access to Strong Teachers: A Guide for District Leaders*, The Education Trust, April 2016, https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/EdTrust_AchievingEquitableAccessStrongTeachers_GuideDistrictLeaders_April2016.pdf.

Superintendent Gorman decided to put together a comprehensive staffing initiative that used financial incentives combined with measurable standards of performance and teams of effective instructors to turn around struggling schools. The initiative included five key elements:⁴

1. ***The school principal is the key lever.*** Great teachers will not teach at a troubled school without a great principal. The district identified school leaders with a proven track record and asked the leader to make a three-year commitment to their new school.
2. Rather than an individual person switching schools, ***a team needs to move to the school to provide strength and support in numbers.*** Thus, selected principals were allowed to identify a team to bring with them to the new school, including one Assistant Principal, one literacy facilitator, one behavior management specialist, and up to five teachers with a proven track record of success.
3. ***Staff members who are unsupportive of change efforts need to be removed.*** Principals were allowed to select up to five teachers on the school's existing school staff who could be reassigned to other schools.
4. ***Principals need time and authority to reform schools and be relieved from non-negotiables,*** such as scheduling or programming, that constrain autonomy.
5. ***Compensation should reflect the demands of the job.*** Teaching staff at struggling schools received a ten percent pay supplement to their base salary. In addition, the effective teachers who committed to staying on the principal's new team for at least three years received a \$10,000 recruitment bonus and a \$5,000 retention bonus in their second and third years on the team.

Seven struggling schools were selected for the initiative in 2008, and another seven joined in 2009. All of the schools participating in the Strategic Staffing Initiative demonstrated impressive growth results, with Cohort 1 schools showing average gains in the percentage of students at or above proficient of six percent in reading, ten percent in math, and nine percent in science between 2008 and 2009.⁵ Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools integrated data on educator effectiveness and student achievement to surface the issue of inequitable

⁴ Strategic Staffing: 'The Moral Thing to Do,' Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, December 2009, <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/superintendent/White%20Papers/Strategic%20Staffing.pdf>.

⁵ Jonathan Travers and Barbara Christiansen, *Strategic Staffing for Successful Schools: Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*, Education Resource Strategies and the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program, 2010, p. 16. https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/ED_Case_Study_Strategic_Staffing.pdf

distribution, to identify focus schools for the initiative, and to monitor progress of the initiative.

District leaders interested in implementing efforts like the strategic staffing initiative could apply for funds through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program⁶ or apply Title II and school improvement funds to strategic staffing efforts in schools identified for intervention.



What Should I Look for in My State Context?

All states were required to submit state ESSA plans to the US Department of Education (USDOE), so district leaders interested in increasing access to effective teachers and leaders should familiarize themselves with the relevant aspects of their state plan⁷ related to this equity priority. Questions that districts can ask about their state plans and of their broader state context include:

- What support or technical assistance is the state offering school districts in terms of reporting equitable access data and demonstrating progress toward closing equity gaps? What support will districts get to meet these expectations around recruiting, preparing, developing, and retaining effective teachers?
- How is my state planning to use Title II to improve teacher preparation programs and professional development (e.g., in-district residencies, academies, professional learning communities)?
- Is my state taking the optional 3 percent Title II set-aside for school leaders? If so, how are they planning to use this funding?
- How is my state defining ineffective teachers?



Example: San Antonio Uses Teacher Residencies to Grow Capacity and Commitment

In the fall of 2015, San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) was struggling to maintain its talent pool as the number of teacher graduates across the state declined by half and the student population in the state continued

⁶ For more information see <https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/teacher-quality/teacher-and-school-leader-incentive-program/>.

⁷ All state plans submitted to the US Department of Education are available here: <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html>

to increase. Given these challenges, district leaders began to consider how they could onboard and support new teachers to keep them in the classroom, especially in high-poverty schools and in specialized areas, such as elementary literacy, secondary content, and bilingual education.

Despite the presence of five universities and seven community colleges in San Antonio, SAISD had few partnerships with local higher education institutions around teacher and leader preparation. New staff at SAISD started outreach to local campuses to establish partnerships with struggling SAISD schools. A selected pool of teachers at each of these schools was then selected to pursue a teacher residency resulting in a master's degree. The 2018-2019 academic year will launch the third cohort of teachers specializing in elementary literacy, the second cohort of teachers specializing in secondary content, and the first cohort of bilingual teachers. In exchange for investing in teachers' development, SAISD requires a three-year commitment to continue as SAISD teachers.

One of the first teacher residency partnerships began with Trinity University. The program was originally funded through local philanthropy and prepared teacher interns who worked for a full year while earning their master's degree. Graduates then committed to working with SAISD for five years. This program was effective in preparing educators and the school district continues to refine the original program to provide stronger mentor teacher experiences.

SAISD is now exploring ways to expand its residency opportunities through a collaboration with the National Center for Teacher Interns with Texas A&M University-San Antonio and with Our Lady of the Lake University. As part of these new initiatives, SAISD requires universities to offer wraparound support to schools, including staffing the residency program with professors who are at the school full-time to work with teachers and interns and to do teacher observations. In the fall 2018, SAISD plans to expand their residency partnership to the University of Texas-San Antonio.⁸

Increasing access to effective teachers and leaders begins with strong teacher preparation and requires targeted retention of effective teachers in the most high-need schools. SAISD's teacher residencies provide an example of how school districts can support effective teachers through programs like those funded by the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) and the Texas Title I Priority Schools (TTIPS) grant.


⁸ Personal correspondence, Dr. Matthew Weber (Deputy Superintendent of Talent Management, San Antonio Independent School District), March 1, 2018.



Turning ESSA’s Requirements into Opportunities

This table summarizes ESSA requirements for districts and provides illustrative examples of how district leaders could move beyond meeting ESSA’s requirements to using the law to drive their strategic priorities. Each box includes a reference to the related ESSA statutory provision found in the ESSA Provisions section of this brief (see p. 10) so that district leaders are able to validate any actions that they take to promote access to effective teachers and leaders.

	WHAT DOES ESSA REQUIRE DISTRICTS TO DO?	HOW COULD DISTRICT LEADERS BUILD ON ESSA REQUIREMENTS?
REPORTING AND DATA ANALYSIS 	<p>ESSA requires states and districts to report inexperienced, out of field, emergency credentialed educators by high-poverty schools compared to low-poverty schools.ⁱⁱ</p>	<p>District leaders may choose to report this information for all schools and/or analyze inequitable distributions of inexperienced, out of field, emergency credentialed within schools.</p>
	<p>ESSA requires districts to report on how they will address inequitable distribution of effective teachers in their local consolidated plans and define how teachers will be identified as ineffective.ⁱⁱⁱ</p>	<p>District leaders could identify a set of leading and lagging indicators about equitable access to effective educators (e.g., teacher assignments, qualifications, seniority, effectiveness ratings).</p> <p>For internal purposes, district leaders could analyze data on equitable distribution in different ways (e.g., by student demographics) and use to inform human capital decisions and strategy.</p> <p>District leaders can also create their own holistic definition of equitable distribution (e.g., teacher effectiveness, distribution of teachers in STEM, the arts, AP/IB, dual language, etc.) and use this to inform their analyses.</p>
SET PRIORITIES AND MAKE DECISIONS 	<p>Districts are required to conduct resource reviews for schools that are identified for comprehensive support and improvement and additional targeted support and improvement.^{iv}</p>	<p>District leaders can include information on resource allocations and inequities that impact access to effective educators, such as teacher salaries. District leaders should also consider conducting these resource reviews for targeted support and intervention schools.</p>
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	WHAT DOES ESSA REQUIRE DISTRICTS TO DO?	HOW COULD DISTRICT LEADERS BUILD ON ESSA REQUIREMENTS?
<p>SET PRIORITIES AND MAKE DECISIONS</p> 	<p>Districts must conduct needs assessments for schools that are identified for comprehensive support and improvement.^{iv}</p>	<p>District leaders can include questions in needs assessments that will illuminate how effective educators are distributed through the school and district and what the school’s human capital needs are. District leaders should also consider conducting these needs assessments for targeted support and improvement schools.</p>
	<p>In their Title II local plans, districts must describe how they will prioritize Title II funds schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement and targeted support and improvement.^v</p>	<p>Central office staff can work with school leadership teams to create additional time for planning and collaboration, and district leaders can reallocate funding for district-delivered professional development to school-level professional learning that is embedded in the school’s improvement strategy.</p> <p>District leaders can take advantage of or prioritize the state’s technical assistance offerings and other opportunities for support.</p> <p>District leaders can set a systemic vision for school-based professional learning that builds educator expertise with equity at the core and communicate this vision internally and externally.</p>



Using Flexible Funding

This table provides illustrative examples of the ways that district leaders can use ESSA funding to move toward improving access to effective teachers and leaders. The examples below are meant to elicit creative thinking about braiding funds to accomplish this equity initiative; they are not exhaustive.

OPPORTUNITY

Compensate effective teachers and leaders	<p>TITLE II Offer performance or incentive pay^{vi}</p> <p>OTHER PROGRAMS Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program^{vii}</p>
Prepare effective teachers and leaders	<p>TITLE II Design residency models focused on equity gaps, SEAD and other relevant issues^{vi}</p> <p>TITLE III Design residency models to prepare bilingual teachers/teachers for ELs^{viii}</p> <p>OTHER GRANTS Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program^{vii}</p>
Recruit effective teachers and leaders	<p>TITLE II Hire and recruit highly-effective teachers and leaders, with a focus on increasing workforce diversity^{vi, ix}</p> <p>OTHER GRANTS Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program^{vii}</p>
Working conditions	<p>TITLE I Address disparities in equitable distribution, which could consider how factors like school conditions affect distributionⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>TITLE II Improve teacher working conditions through opportunities like distributed leadership or teacher surveys^{vi, x}</p> <p>TITLE III Improve family supports for English learners and recent immigrants^{xi}</p> <p>TITLE IV Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program^{vii}</p>



Resources

- Council of Chief State School Officers, Reimagining Title II-A: A Resource for Creating and Improving State Plans and Working with LEAs
<https://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/reimagining-title-ii>
- Center for Great Teachers and Leaders, Moving toward Equity Toolkit
<https://gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/equitable-access-toolkit/moving-toward-equity>
- The Education Trust, Data Equity Walk Toolkit
<https://west.edtrust.org/data-equity-walk-toolkit/>
- Reform Support Network, Promoting More Equitable Access to Effective Teachers: Problems and Root Causes
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/equitable-access/problemsandrootcause.pdf>
- Public Impact, Opportunity Culture
<http://opportunityculture.org>
- Equitable Access Support Network
 - Talent Management Strategies: District Self-Assessment Checklist
<https://easn.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/12611>
 - Increasing Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: A Talent Management Guide for School Districts
<https://easn.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/14288>
- Tennessee Department of Education, Resources/Toolkits
 - Human Capital Self-Assessment Tool
<https://eplan.tn.gov/documentlibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?Document-Key=467264&inline=true>
 - LEA and School Plan Templates
<https://eplan.tn.gov/documentlibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?Document-Key=1325098&inline=true>



ESSA Provisions

This table provides statutory references for district leaders so that they can draw upon ESSA to validate district changes that promote increasing access to effective teachers and leaders in service of equity.

	ESSA STATUTORY LANGUAGE
i	<p>A special rule within ESSA’s supplement, not supplant provision changes the financial accounting methodology as follows:</p> <p>‘(1) In general.—A State educational agency or local educational agency shall use Federal funds received under this part only to supplement the funds that would, in the absence of such Federal funds, be made available from State and local sources for the education of students participating in programs assisted under this part, and not to supplant such funds.</p> <p>(2) Compliance.—To demonstrate compliance with paragraph (1), a local educational agency shall demonstrate that the methodology used to allocate State and local funds to each school receiving assistance under this part ensures that such school receives all of the State and local funds it would otherwise receive if it were not receiving assistance under this part.</p> <p>(3) Special rule.—No local educational agency shall be required to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) identify that an individual cost or service supported under this part is supplemental; or (B) provide services under this part through a particular instructional method or in a particular instructional setting in order to demonstrate such agency's compliance with paragraph (1).” [Sec. 1118(b)(1)-(3)].
ii	<p>Each state and school district must submit information to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) on “the professional qualifications of teachers in the State, including information (that shall be presented in the aggregate and disaggregated by high-poverty compared to low-poverty schools) on the number and percentage of—(I) inexperienced teachers, principals, and other school leaders; (II) teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials; and (III) teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed” [Sec. 1111(h)(1)(C)(ix)(I)].</p>
iii	<p>Districts must develop local plans that describe how they will ensure that schools receiving Title I funding will close the achievement gap and help all students meet challenging state academic standards. These plans must be submitted</p>

	<p>to and approved by the SEA and include a list of provisions the LEA must address, including “how the local educational agency will identify and address, as required under State plans as described in section 1111(g)(1)(B), any disparities that result in low-income students and minority students being taught at higher rates than other students by ineffective, inexperienced, or out-of-field teachers” [Sec. 1112(b)(2)].</p>
<p>iv</p>	<p>For all schools that the state identifies as needing comprehensive support and intervention (CSI) in a district, the district must work with “stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents)” to develop a plan that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “(ii) includes evidence-based interventions; (iii) is based on a school-level needs assessment; (iv) identifies resource inequities, which may include a review of local educational agency and school-level budgeting, to be addressed through implementation of such comprehensive support and improvement plan; (v) is approved by the school, local educational agency, and State educational agency; and (vi) upon approval and implementation, is monitored and periodically reviewed by the State educational agency.” [Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)(ii)-(vi)] <p>For schools identified for additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI), school districts must also “identify resource inequities (which may include a review of local education agency and school level budgeting)” [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(C)].</p> <p>Targeted support and improvement (TSI) schools where the performance of any subgroup of students on their own would lead the state to identify the school for CSI must also conduct a resource review [Sec 1111(d)(C)]. If these TSI schools are Title I schools, they can become CSI schools if they do not exit TSI status (exit status for TSI schools is determined by the local educational agency). And in the first year of identification (2017-2018), states “shall notify local educational agencies of any schools served by the local educational agency in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under [the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I schools] even without having those schools be identified as TSI schools first [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(D)].</p>
<p>v</p>	<p>District applications for Title II funds must include a description of how the LEA will prioritize funds to schools that are implementing CSI and TSI activities and have the highest percentage of children counted under section 1124(c) [Sec. 2102(b)(2)(C)].</p>

vi	Local uses of Title II funds may be used for “developing and implementing initiatives to assist in recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective teachers, particularly in low-income schools with high percentages of ineffective teachers and high percentages of students who do not meet the challenging State academic standards, to improve within-district equity in the distribution of teachers,” which may include initiatives around incentive pay, teacher leadership, and mentoring and induction programs [Sec. 2103(b)(3)(B)(i)-(v)].
vii	Districts can use funding under the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program for a variety of purposes that can be used to increase access to effective educators, including by “(i) attracting, hiring, and retaining effective educators; (ii) offering bonuses or higher salaries to effective educators; or (iii) establishing or strengthening school leader residency programs and teacher residency programs” [Sec. 2212(e)(2)(E)(i)-(iii)]. Funds can also be used to implement a differentiated salary structure that provides additional compensation for teachers in high-need schools and subject areas and for principals in high-need schools where they help to improve achievement [Sec. 2212(e)(2)(D)(i)-(ii)].
viii	Local Title III funds may be used for any activities that are consistent with the Title’s purposes [Sec. 3115(d)(9)], including supporting language instruction for English learners.
ix	Districts can use Title II funds to support “recruiting qualified individuals from other fields to become teachers, principals, or other school leaders, including mid-career professionals from other occupations, former military personnel, and recent graduates of institutions of higher education with records of academic distinction who demonstrate potential to become effective teachers, principals, or other school leaders” [Sec. 2103(b)(3)(C)]. Within this initiative, LEAs could choose to focus efforts on diversifying the teacher corps.
x	Districts can use Title II funds for “developing feedback mechanisms to improve school working conditions, including through periodically and publicly reporting results of educator support and working conditions feedback” [Sec. 2103(b)(3)(N)].
xi	Districts can use Title III funds to support English learners in a variety of areas, including “to assist parents and families in helping their children to improve their academic achievement and becoming active participants in the education of

	<p>their children” [Sec. 3115(d)(6)(B)], which could include a focus on social, emotional, and academic development. For LEAs experiencing substantial increases in immigrant children and youth, they are eligible for funds that can be used for “the provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic or career counseling for immigrant children and youth” [Sec. 3115(e)(1)(C)] and for the parent and family support services described above [Sec. 3115(E)(1)(A)].</p>
<p>xii</p>	<p>Districts can use Title IV-Part A funds to support safe and healthy schools by providing training for school personnel on issues including “(i) suicide prevention; (ii) effective and trauma-informed practices in classroom management; (iii) crisis management and conflict resolution techniques;” and “(vii) bullying and harassment prevention” [Sec. 4108(5)(D)(i)-(vii)].</p>