

ESSA: Mapping opportunities for the arts

Mapping Opportunities for the Arts in ESSA:

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A New Era for the Arts in Education

In December 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and, with it, ushered in a new era of education policy in America. Leaving behind many of the most criticized aspects of its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), this newest incarnation of the primary federal legislation guiding K-12 education provides state and district leaders with increased flexibility to best meet the needs of all students. This increased flexibility allows these leaders to look beyond the traditional methods of approaching student achievement and find innovative solutions for ensuring that all students have the opportunity to experience a well-rounded education – one that pushes beyond the subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, and includes the arts, sciences and humanities as essential components.

A companion piece to the previously released Education Commission of the States report, **ESSA: Quick guides on top issues**, this report serves as a resource for the arts and education communities – educators, school leaders, community organizations and policymakers – illuminating the ways that states and districts can engage the arts in the ongoing work of ESSA. Whether through funding opportunities to expand access to a well-rounded education, ensuring the effective engagement of community stakeholders in needs assessments and the development of state implementation plans, the establishment of key accountability metrics, or the creation of new assessments, the arts can play a pivotal role in improving schools and educational outcomes for all students.

The implementation of ESSA, however, is not occurring across states and communities through a fixed and prescribed process. Instead, it is a fluid environment of priorities and policies with new guidance and rules released on an ongoing basis. As such, this resource will not remain a static document. Instead, it will be continuously updated to reflect the most up-to-date information on the state of ESSA implementation. Visit the Arts Education Partnership’s **ESSA and the Arts** page for new and expanded opportunities as this resource evolves with the implementation of the new law.

To aid in its usefulness across various audiences, this resource is structured in two ways:

1

Topical breakdowns exploring specific areas within the new law. These sections summarize ESSA as it relates to a particular subject, identify areas for engaging the arts in ESSA implementation, provide research summaries that support the role of the arts in achieving goals within the topic area, and, as ESSA implementation proceeds, share promising examples of how state and districts initiatives include the arts and provide additional resources for further investigation.

2

A question and answer section exploring some of the most pressing issues for the arts in education community to consider.

Title I, Part A: Mapping opportunities for the arts

The programs of Title I, Part A of ESSA are designed to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education. The evidenced-based educational programs supported by Title I funds support students who are academically at risk and help close the achievement gap. With the new flexibility established by ESSA, there are a number of opportunities for engaging the arts in these educational priorities. As was true with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), districts can only supplement and not replace funds that they would have otherwise spent with money from the more than \$15 billion of federal funds authorized for the Title I, Part A programs in 2017.

Mapping Opportunities for the Arts

State Plans – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – Each state must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education detailing the state’s standards, assessments and accountability systems and provide descriptions of how the state will support districts in ensuring educational equity for all students. As part of the accountability systems, states must include at least one indicator of school quality or student success beyond student achievement, graduation rates and English proficiency. Indicators can include measures of student and educator engagement, access to advanced coursework, school climate and culture, or other indicators as decided by the state. The arts can serve as an asset in addressing each of these identified areas and, as such, a state could adopt arts-related indicators for its school quality or student success indicator(s). Examples include:

- The number of arts course offerings.
- The percentage of high school students enrolled in arts courses that provide postsecondary credit.
- The proportion of certified arts educators to students.

Local Education Agency Plans – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1006 – To receive Title I funding, a district must submit a plan to the state education agency that describes how it will identify inequities in educational opportunities and help close the achievement gap for all students. These plans must include a description of how the district will provide a **well-rounded education** – a new requirement within ESSA. As the definition of a well-rounded education includes the arts, a district can provide a description of its arts education programs and the role of those programs in providing all students a well-rounded education when describing the instructional programs offered to Title I-eligible schools and populations.

Schoolwide Programs – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1008 – Schools can use funding under this section of Title I, Part A to establish and implement plans based on a needs assessment to improve the education program of the entire school. To be eligible for schoolwide program funds, schools must have at least 40 percent of their students identified as coming from low-income families and create a schoolwide plan which embraces whole school reform. As a part of a well-rounded education, these plans may incorporate the arts as strategies to provide all students the opportunity to achieve. For example, opportunities for the arts can include:

- Engaging the arts to improve students’ non-academic skills, such as self-efficacy or engagement.
- Supporting student attendance and other non-academic indicators through increasing access and opportunities in the arts and other well-rounded educational subjects.
- Incorporating arts-based techniques in professional development programs to strengthen the effectiveness of educators in improving student learning outcomes.

Targeted Assistance Schools – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1009 – Schools that do not meet the poverty threshold for schoolwide schools can use Title I funding to create programs targeted to help academically at-risk students meet the state’s academic standards. These programs can occur during the traditional school day or in expanded learning time. Newly allowed with the passing of ESSA, the arts, as part of a well-rounded education, can be included as a potential strategy for meeting the objectives set by schools for the Targeted Assistance Schools programs. These strategies can include in-school, afterschool and summer programs that engage arts-focused learning in support of students meeting the state’s academic standards.

Parent and Family Engagement – Engaging the families of students is an important aspect of ESSA and appears in several areas of Title I.

- For example, districts must establish, implement and annually review with parents and other stakeholders a policy for engaging families in the school and, through doing so, improve their children’s education. The arts, as an effective strategy to engage families in the school, can be incorporated into these policies in a variety of ways, including incorporating arts programming in a back-to-school night or other broader parent engagement events, providing updates on arts education activities in parent newsletters, and including attendance at arts events as part of a parent engagement plan evaluation (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1010).
- In addition, the district must provide parents and families of English language learners (ELLs) with information on how they can support their children in learning within the well-rounded education subjects. For example, schools can provide parents with expectations for their children in arts classes, as well as strategies to encourage their children to practice and engage in creative activities at home (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1006).
- Finally, schools must include parents, educators and other impacted community stakeholders in the development of the schoolwide program plan. By finding out about their school’s process, arts educators, parents and others interested in engaging the arts in their school can participate in the development process and provide feedback to school leaders to help ensure that the school consider the arts as a strategy within the plan (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1008).

Research from ArtsEdSearch.org

Closing the Achievement Gap. Studies find that arts education engages students who are often underserved in public schools – including students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, ELLs and students with special needs – and that these students do better in arts-rich schools than in schools that do not have robust arts programs. These students also show the greatest relative improvement in academic achievement when participating in the arts, though they are least likely to have access to arts learning. Studies further find that arts integrated instruction offers alternative avenues for students to access information and learn in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and may be more effective than traditional remedial programs, thus offering a resource in helping to close the achievement gap.

Access to Arts Education. Research suggests that students in schools with extensive and broad offerings in the arts are not only able to learn the arts – a part of a well-rounded education – but also do better on state and district standardized tests and have more opportunities to achieve and succeed than students in schools lacking robust arts programs. Arts-rich schools graduate higher percentages of students, who in turn, are more likely to complete college and be socially active in their communities in adulthood.

School Climate and Culture. Research demonstrates that arts-centered initiatives can improve school climate and culture and connect schools to families and communities. For instance, schools with extensive arts education

opportunities have students think more positively about and engage in classroom activities, have better student and teacher attendance, and maintain teacher satisfaction with and engagement in their work. In addition, arts education participation encourages parental and community engagement through attendance at school performances, community events and programs, and opportunities for volunteering.

U.S. Department of Education Resources

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- ➔ [Fact Sheet for Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Supplement, Not Supplant Under Title I](#)
- ➔ [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Supplement, Not Supplant under Title I - Comment Period Closed on 11/7/16](#)
- ➔ [Fact Sheet for Final Regulations: Title I, Part A and Part B](#)
- ➔ [Notice of Final Regulation: Title I, Part A](#)
- ➔ [Fact Sheet for Final Regulation: Accountability, State Plans, and Data Reporting](#)
- ➔ [Final Regulation: Accountability, State Plans, and Data Reporting](#)
- ➔ [Timeline for identification of schools for support and improvement](#)
- ➔ [Accountability: Then \[NCLB\] and Now \[ESSA\]](#)
- ➔ [Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)
- ➔ [Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies \(Program Information under NCLB\)](#)

Additional Research & Resources

- ➔ [ArtsEdSearch.org - Arts Education Partnership](#)
- ➔ [A Policy Pathway: Embracing Arts Education to Achieve Title I Goals - California Alliance for Arts Education](#)
- ➔ [ESSA: Quick guides on top issues - Education Commission of the States](#)
- ➔ [ESSA's Well-Rounded Education - Education Commission of the States](#)
- ➔ [ESSA Implementation and Music Education: Opportunities Abound - National Association for Music Education](#)
- ➔ [Title1Arts.org - California Alliance for Arts Education](#)

Accountability in ESSA: Mapping opportunities for the arts

State accountability systems serve the important purpose of setting the state goals for education and establishing the metrics by which the state will know if it has achieved the goals. As part of the requirements for receiving Title I funding, states must identify the components of their accountability systems with special attention given to the indicators required by ESSA: measures of student achievement and growth in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) at both the high school and elementary/middle school levels; high school graduation rates; measures of language proficiency for English language learners (ELLs); and at least one measure of school quality or student success. It is this final indicator – school quality or student success – that opens the door for opportunities within the arts.

Mapping Opportunities for the Arts

According to ESSA, indicators of school quality or student success can include: “measures of student engagement, educator engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, and any other indicator the state chooses...” (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005). These indicator options provide a number of opportunities for the arts, particularly in the areas of student and educator engagement and school climate.

Student & Educator Engagement – As the research below shows, the arts can serve as a powerful tool for engaging students and educators in their schools and their learning. For this reason, states can incorporate arts measures such as participation in arts courses or co-curricular activities as indicators in the state accountability plan. For example, both **Connecticut** and **New Jersey** have included participation in arts courses/classes in their state accountability systems. The New Jersey system provides the percentage of students enrolled in each artistic discipline on the school report card for both middle and high schools. Similarly, the Connecticut measure creates a summative score for the percentage of students in ninth grade through 12th grade enrolled in any arts course and incorporates that arts score into the overall score given to the school through the state accountability system.

School Climate – In addition to using access and participation indicators, states can incorporate the arts when developing measures of school climate. Some states, such as **New Mexico**, or **California’s CORE districts**, incorporate measures of school climate into their accountability and reporting system through student and parent surveys. The California CORE districts also include measures of social-emotional skills. Although neither state includes the arts in their surveys, questions related to the arts in the school could be incorporated into parent, educator and student surveys for accountability purposes.

Other Accountability Options – According to a **2016 report** by the Center for American Progress, three states currently include the arts as part of the state accountability system: Connecticut, **Kentucky** and New Jersey. As noted above, both Connecticut and New Jersey’s base their measures on student access to and/or participation in arts education opportunities. **Kentucky**, however, requires that districts conduct an annual review of the arts and humanities programs to evaluate and make recommendations for the improvement of the program. The state Department of Education is required to conduct a similar review of every school’s arts and humanities programs every two years. The state then incorporates these program reviews into their accountability system (**Kentucky Revised Statutes 158.6453**).

Research from ArtsEdSearch.org

Student Engagement and Motivation. Multiple research studies spanning the education system from pre-kindergarten through high school suggest that arts education supports development in the engagement, attention, motivation and persistence necessary for students to succeed independently in college and in the workforce. Sustained attention and engagement in learning or in completing tasks are vital skills for college and the workforce, when students must work independently to complete work and succeed at discrete projects. Arts education can teach students how to turn barriers into opportunities, to persist in the face of challenges and motivate students to achieve mastery of skills.

School Climate and Culture. Research demonstrates that arts-centered initiatives can improve school climate and culture and connect schools to families and communities. For instance, schools with extensive arts education opportunities have students think more positively about and engage in classroom activities, have better student and teacher attendance, and maintain teacher satisfaction with and engagement in their work. In addition, arts education participation encourages parental and community engagement through attendance at school performances, community events and programs, and opportunities for volunteering.

Teacher Engagement and Retention. In addition, research finds that arts education can have a valuable effect on teaching, renewing the excitement that teachers feel for their profession and preventing the teacher burnout that is endemic to low-performing schools. Research also shows that teachers in K-12 schools who integrate the arts into their curricula find their teaching becomes increasingly dynamic and effective, are more engaged in and satisfied with their teaching, and exhibit lower rates of absenteeism.

U.S. Department of Education Resources

- [Fact Sheet for Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Supplement, Not Supplant Under Title I](#)
- [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Supplement, Not Supplant under Title I - Comment Period Closed on 11/7/16](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Final Regulations: Title I, Part A and Part B](#)
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- [Timeline for identification of schools for support and improvement](#)
- [Accountability: Then \[NCLB\] and Now \[ESSA\]](#)

Additional Research & Resources

- [ArtsEdSearch.org](#) - Arts Education Partnership
- [ArtScan](#) - Arts Education Partnership
- [California Core Districts: School Quality Improvement Index](#)
- [Connecticut Next Generation Accountability](#)
- [50-State Comparison: State School Accountability Report Cards](#) - Education Commission of the States
- [ESSA Final Rules on Accountability and State Plans](#) - National Association for Music Education
- [ESSA: Quick guides on top issues](#) - Education Commission of the States
- [ESSA's Well-Rounded Education](#) - Education Commission of the States
- [ESSA Implementation and Music Education: Opportunities Abound](#) - National Association for Music Education
- [Kentucky Unbridled Learning Accountability System](#)
- [Making the Grade: A 50-State Analysis of School Accountability Systems](#) - Center for American Progress
- [New Jersey School Performance Report](#)
- [New Mexico A-F School Grading System](#)
- [New Year, New Rules for ESSA](#) - National Association for Music Education

Assessments in ESSA: Mapping opportunities for the arts

Assessments can provide educators, administrators and policymakers with valuable information on student progress and serve as an effective tool for ensuring that the academic needs of all students are being met. Under ESSA, states receive funding for the development and implementation of assessments that measure student learning in the standards adopted by individual states. ESSA's flexibility provides opportunities for engaging the arts within these funding streams through both the development and refinement of assessments of arts learning.

Mapping Opportunities for the Arts

Developing Standards and Assessments – Title I, Part B, Section 1201 – States may use the Title I, Part B funds to develop standards and/or assessments in mathematics, ELA, science and any other subject that the state chooses – including the arts. Although **49 states** plus the District of Columbia have adopted K-12 standards for the arts, opportunities for the arts can include updating or replacing the current standards or creating aligned assessments to monitor student performance in the arts. For example, the **National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS)** has created Model Cornerstone Assessments aligned with the new **National Core Arts Standards** that assess arts learning across selected grade levels and artistic disciplines.

Innovative Assessment and Accountability – Title I, Part B, Section 1201 – Under this new program, states may, either individually or as a group, apply to the U.S. Department of Education to pilot a new system of state assessments. This system can include a wide range of assessment structures including competency-based and performance-based assessments. For states that have adopted standards for the arts, these systems can include assessments of arts learning aligned to the state arts standards. As an example of how states can accomplish this, the arts assessment administered by the **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**, often referred to as the gold standard of assessments, incorporates both performance-based tasks and traditional written and multiple-choice questions. Although not used for accountability purposes, the NAEP assessments demonstrate how states could administer and report on performance-based assessments for the arts, as well as other well-rounded education subjects.

Other Assessment Activities – Title I, Part B, Section 1201 – Once states have developed assessments, ESSA allows states to use this funding for the continued improvement or refinement of the assessments – including assessments in the arts. This can include ensuring the continued alignment of the assessments to the standards, the validity and reliability of the assessments in measuring student learning and expanding the assessments to include multiple measures of learning. It can also include supporting districts in the creation or revision of district-level assessment systems. For the arts, this could mean providing a district with funding to ensure that learning in the arts is assessed throughout the school year with formative, interim and summative assessments.

Research from ArtsEdSearch.org

Innovative Assessments. The arts can act as a catalyst for exploring innovative teaching methods and assessments. As states adopt new and more challenging standards, students must demonstrate deeper levels of cognitive engagement and increasingly robust connections to real-world contexts. This requires teachers to think about teaching and learning in more complex ways and to consider different ways of assessing student learning. Research finds that using the arts encourages teachers to use alternate forms of assessment to gauge students' understanding such as portfolios, student performances, process documentation and observations of lessons.

U.S. Department of Education Resources

- [Every Student Succeeds Act - Full Text](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Final Regulations: Title I, Part A and Part B](#)
- [Notice of Final Regulation: Title I, Part A](#)
- [Notice of Final Regulation: Title I, Part B](#)
- [ESSA Assessment Use of Funds Guidance](#)

Additional Research & Resources

- [ArtsEdSearch.org](#) - Arts Education Partnership
- [ArtScan](#) - Arts Education Partnership
- [Colorado Professional Learning Network Assessment Resource Bank](#)
- [ESSA Implementation and Music Education: Opportunities Abound](#) - National Association for Music Education
- [ESSA: Quick guides on top issues](#) - Education Commission of the States
- [ESSA's Well-Rounded Education](#) - Education Commission of the States
- [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) Arts Assessment](#)
- [National Coalition for Core Arts Standards](#)
- [National Core Arts Standards](#)
- [State of Washington Performance Assessments for the Arts](#)

ESSA State Plans: Mapping opportunities for the arts

In order to receive funding under Title I, Part A, and Title IV, Part A of ESSA, states must submit a state plan to the U.S. Department of Education that, among other items, includes a description of the state's assessment, accountability and reporting systems, as well as how the state will provide support for a well-rounded education. ESSA's flexibility allows many opportunities for incorporating the arts into these plans.

Mapping Opportunities for the Arts

Standards – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – ESSA requires states to have adopted “challenging academic content standards” for mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science and any other subject the state would like to include. This means that, although not required, states have the option to adopt new or updated academic standards in any subject, including the arts. In fact, **49 states** plus the District of Columbia have adopted arts standards. This includes 11 states which have adopted new or updated their arts standards since 2014 – the same year that the **National Coalition for Core Arts Standards** released the new **National Core Arts Standards** for dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts.

Assessments – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – States are required to implement assessments of student learning in mathematics, ELA, science and “any other subject chosen by the state.” Similar to the standards requirements listed above, this means that states have the option to assess student learning in the arts and/or any other subject. For example, **Washington** state law (**Revised Code of Washington 28A.230.095** and **RCW 28A.655.075**) requires that districts annually assess student learning in the arts, social studies, civics, educational technology, health and physical education and verify that this assessment has taken place. Although the state does not have a mandatory statewide assessment for these subjects, they do provide **sample standards-aligned assessments** that districts can utilize and report to the state.

Accountability – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – As part of their statewide accountability system, ESSA requires states to include measures of (1) high school student proficiency in mathematics and ELA, (2) proficiency of elementary and middle school students in those same subjects, (3) graduation rates, (4) English language proficiency for English language learners (ELLs) and (5) at least one measure of school quality or student success. This last option provides many opportunities for engaging the arts in state accountability systems. For example, measures could include student participation in arts-based classes/coursework, student participation in arts Advanced Placement exams, or arts-centered questions being included on student, educator or parent surveys of school engagement and climate.

District & School Report Cards – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – Every district that receives funding under Title I, Part A must release an annual report card at the school and district level. States are required to include student achievement and any additional indicators that will help parents and other education stakeholders understand the status and progress of the school/district on these report cards. As before, this requirement's flexibility creates pathways for including arts indicators, such as participation in arts classes/courses or the number of students per certified arts educator. For instance, **Connecticut** and **New Jersey** have incorporated student arts participation into their report card systems.

In addition, **California** will be launching the **California Arts Education Data Project** to track participation in arts classes and coursework in schools, districts and counties across the state. The project will result in a dashboard that allows parents, policymakers and school leaders to identify gaps in access and participation for the arts. This initiative is part of the **National Arts Education Data Project**, which will begin in California, **North Carolina**, **Ohio** and **Wisconsin**.

State Report Card – Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – States are required to develop and publicly release annual reports on the state’s overall education system. Potential opportunities for incorporating the arts within the development of the state report card system include:

- *State Accountability System Indicators* – States are required to include those measures that make up the state accountability system on the state report card. As there is potential to incorporate the arts into that system through the school quality and student success indicators, reporting a state-level aggregate of indicators can include any arts-related measures in that accountability system.
- *District & School Report Card Measures* – As with other areas of the law, ESSA provides states the flexibility to identify additional measures and include them in the state reports cards. For this reason, states could include arts-focused measures, such as state-level aggregate measures of arts indicators included on the district and school report cards as described above.

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants – Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 – As with Title I, Part A, states must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education in order to receive funding under Title IV, Part A – the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. These grants are designed to, in part, help districts and schools “provide all students with access to a well-rounded education” (Title IV, Part A, Section 4101). As part of the requirements to receive funding under this new program, districts must conduct a needs assessment on how it currently supports a well-rounded education – including the arts – and identify areas for improvement. Many opportunities for the arts exist within these applications, including arts education programs initiatives that use the arts for student engagement and programs that integrate the arts into other subjects.

Consolidated State Plans – Title VIII, Section 8009 – The state plan serves as a state’s application to the U.S. Department of Education for federal funding. To minimize the burden of applying for these funds, states have the option to complete and submit consolidated state plans that incorporate the application requirements for Title I, Title IV and any other program the state participates in. As state consolidate the applications for additional funding programs into their state plan, additional opportunities for the arts may arise.

Research from ArtsEdSearch.org

Innovative Assessments. The arts can act as a catalyst for exploring innovative teaching methods and assessments. As states adopt new and more challenging standards, students must demonstrate deeper levels of cognitive engagement and increasingly robust connections to real-world contexts. This requires teachers to think about teaching and learning in more complex ways and to consider different ways of assessing student learning. Research finds that using the arts encourages teachers to use alternate forms of assessment to gauge students’ understanding such as portfolios, student performances, process documentation and observations of lessons.

Student Engagement and Motivation. Multiple research studies spanning the education system from pre-kindergarten through high school suggest that arts education supports development in the engagement, attention, motivation and persistence necessary for students to succeed independently in college and in the workforce. Sustained attention and engagement in learning or in completing tasks are vital skills for college and the workforce, when students must work independently to complete work and succeed at discrete projects. Arts education can teach students how to turn barriers into opportunities, to persist in the face of challenges and motivate students to achieve mastery of skills.

School Climate and Culture. Research demonstrates that arts-centered initiatives can improve school climate and culture and connect schools to families and communities. For instance, schools with extensive arts education opportunities have students think more positively about and engage in classroom activities, have better student

and teacher attendance, and maintain teacher satisfaction with and engagement in their work. In addition, arts education participation encourages parental and community engagement through attendance at school performances, community events and programs, and opportunities for volunteering.

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- [Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)

Additional Research & Resources

- [ArtsEdSearch.org](#) - Arts Education Partnership
- [ArtScan](#) - Arts Education Partnership
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- [National Arts Education Data Project](#)
- [National Coalition for Core Arts Standards](#)
- [National Core Arts Standards](#)
- [New Jersey School Performance Report](#)
- [New Year, New Rules for ESSA](#) - National Association for Music Education
- [State of Washington Performance Assessments for the Arts](#)

Stakeholder Engagement in the Arts

Whether by ensuring that parents have a voice in their child's education, that educators and school leaders play a part in shaping the policies that will guide their work for the coming years, or that local communities have opportunities to support schools in their area, ESSA strongly emphasizes the value of consulting and collaborating with stakeholders. This focus on stakeholder engagement creates many opportunities for arts in education stakeholders to engage and shape ESSA implementation in their state or community.

The following information is meant to assist arts in education leaders:

- Know what areas ESSA requires states and districts to engage with stakeholders.
- Be familiar with potential opportunities for the arts within those areas.
- Understand the paths states and districts may use for stakeholder engagement.

Areas Where ESSA Requires Stakeholder Engagement

Although ESSA requires stakeholder engagement throughout the law, opportunities exist in several specific areas for arts in education stakeholders.

Title I State Plans

Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – Each state must submit a state plan that outlines the state's standards, assessments and accountability systems and discuss how it will address inequities in the state. ESSA requires state education agencies to develop these plans in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including districts, teachers, principals, school staff and parents. In addition, each state must make the plan available for public comment and publicly release the state's responses to this feedback.

Opportunity for the Arts: Arts-based measures can be included as part of the school quality and student success indicator required in the state accountability system. Potential avenues include participation in arts coursework, ratio of arts educators to students, or arts-focused questions on surveys of educators, parents or students. **See [ESSA State Plans](#) for more information on including the arts in state plans.**

State Report Cards

Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005 – ESSA requires states to develop and disseminate an annual report card that outlines the state accountability system, the goals for the state's education system and the progress the state has made toward achieving those goals. The reporting format for these report cards must be developed with input from parents in the state.

Opportunity for the Arts: ESSA provides states with the flexibility to include arts-focused metrics – such as the percentage of students participating in arts courses or the number of certified arts teachers per student – as part of the state report card. **See [ESSA State Plans](#) for more information on including the arts in state report cards.**

District and School Plans for Title I

Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Sections 1006, 1008 and 1009 – To receive funding under Title I, a district must submit a plan to the state outlining how it will identify and address inequities of access and participation across the district. The plan must include how the district will address both schoolwide improvement programs and programs targeting specific groups of students within a school. When developing this plan, the district must consult with, among others,

teachers, principals, administrators and parents of children served by plan. In addition, schools developing plans for schoolwide improvement programs and schools developing programs for target assistance must involve parents, educators, school leaders and other stakeholders served by or tasked with implementing the programs.¹

Opportunity for the Arts: As the definition of a well-rounded education includes the arts, districts can include arts education programs in their Title I plans for both schoolwide improvement programs and targeted assistance programs. **See [Title I, Part A](#) for more information on incorporating the arts into District Title I plans.**

Innovative Assessment Pilots

Title I, Part B, Section 1204 – ESSA provides an opportunity for a state – or a group of states – to pilot a new innovative assessment system that moves beyond traditional standardized testing to include other assessment options, such as competency-based assessments or performance-based assessments. The requirements for this program present two opportunities for stakeholder engagement:

- *Development* – When developing the innovative assessment system, ESSA requires states to collaborate with stakeholders including districts, teachers, principals, parents, civil rights organizations and those representing the needs of specific populations, such as English language learners and students with disabilities.
- *Annual Report* – States receiving funding in this program must submit annual reports to the U.S. Department of Education on the assessment pilot being tested. As part of this annual report, states must engage with “teachers, principals, other school leaders, and parents about their satisfaction with the innovative system.”²

Opportunity for the Arts: For states that have adopted arts standards, ESSA provides the flexibility to include innovative assessments of arts learning in the Innovative Assessment Pilot Program. **See [Assessments in ESSA](#) for more information on including the arts in the Innovative Assessment and Accountability pilot program.**

Title II Programs

Title II, Part A, Section 2102 – Title II funds are intended to ensure all students have access to educators who can help them meet the state’s challenging academic standards by supporting educators’ professional learning opportunities. To receive funding, the program requires states to consult with, among others, teachers, principals, parents and community partners. A district seeking Title II funding must submit an application to their state identifying the professional development system in place and how it will ensure schools implementing programs under Title I, Part A, receive priority funding. When developing the activities for this funding, districts must also engage with a similar set of stakeholders, such as teachers, principals, parents and community partners.

Opportunity for the Arts: The broad language found in ESSA allows Title II’s programs for the improvement of educator effectiveness to fund programs for arts educators and to provide non-arts teachers with arts-based techniques to improve effectiveness. For example, **Maine** – under the **Title II program** within ESSA’s predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB) – funded one district to provide professional development to help non-arts teachers better integrate the arts into their classrooms.³

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program

Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 – This new funding opportunity provides districts with funding to support greater access to a well-rounded education, a safe and healthy learning environment, and a personalized learning experience through the effective use of data and technology. To receive the funds, a district must complete a needs assessment

that identifies gaps in these three areas and submit an application outlining how the district will address those gaps. Districts must include stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, principals, students and community-based organizations, among others, in the development of the application

Opportunity for the Arts: As a part of a well-rounded education, districts can include the arts in programs to address gaps identified in the district needs assessment. Examples include programs, such as STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics), that seek to integrate the arts into other disciplinary subjects and those that use the arts as a strategy to reduce bullying. In addition, districts seeking to identify gaps in arts education learning opportunities by employing opportunity-to-learn standards, such as those developed for **music**, **theatre** and the **visual arts**.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Title IV, Part B, Section 4203 – In order to ensure all students have the opportunity to experience an academically-enriched education that prepares them to succeed in school, ESSA provides competitive grants to districts for the development of 21st Century Community Learning Centers. As states develop their applications to submit to the U.S. Department of Education for this program, ESSA requires that they include representatives of groups, such as teachers, districts and community organizations.

Opportunity for the Arts: States can include the arts and other cultural activities to potentially satisfy ESSA's requirement that all students have an academically-enriched education. For example, the **Virginia** Department of Education includes the arts and music education programs that further student academic achievement and occur outside of school hours in the allowable activities for their **21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Program under NCLB**.⁴

ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Requirements⁵

	STATE TITLE I PLANS	STATE REPORT CARDS	DISTRICT & SCHOOL PLANS FOR TITLE I	INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT PILOTS	STATE TITLE II PROGRAMS	STUDENT SUCCESS & ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAM	21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS
Parents / Families	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teachers / School Leaders	X		X	X	X	X	X
Community Partners/ Organizations				X	X	X	X
Public Comment	X						

*Please note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive and these stakeholder groups are only those **required** to be engaged by ESSA. ESSA does not limit stakeholder engagement to these groups, and many states and districts are engaging with additional stakeholders beyond what ESSA requires for a specific program or funding area.*

Paths for Stakeholder Engagement

Although all states and districts have the same requirements for stakeholder engagement, the strategies used vary from state to state and district to district. It is, therefore, important for arts in education stakeholders to learn about how their state or district approaches stakeholder engagement.

Examples of paths⁶ utilized for stakeholder engagement include:

■ Public Comment Periods

When drafting a new rule, policy or plan, a state may post the draft document for public comment on their website or other state forum. Public comments provide an opportunity for the state to gather feedback from any member of the general public who may not belong to an identified stakeholder group. For example, Washington posted its **draft ESSA plan** for public comment and provided a form for the general public to respond to the plans prior to finalizing the plan.⁷

■ Listening Tours / Town Hall Meetings

Some states are hosting a listening tour or series of public town hall meetings to present ESSA implementation plans. During these meetings, parents, educators, community organizations and members of the general public can provide feedback and who they are engaging in discussion. **Hawaii**, for example, hosted a series of **11 ESSA Town Hall meetings** and eight community forums to gather feedback as state leaders set a vision for education in the state.⁸

■ Mass Stakeholder Surveys

States can use **stakeholder surveys** to gather feedback and input from a large number of stakeholders and can target the surveys to specific constituencies and populations. These surveys can provide key opportunities for arts in education stakeholders to provide insights into the planning process. This can be particularly beneficial when states post surveys include questions focused on key arts-related issues such as a well-rounded education, as **Arizona** did.⁹

■ Statewide Focus Groups

Focus groups provide states with an opportunity to gather a cross section of stakeholders together and collect feedback on a variety of issues and topics related to ESSA planning and implementation. For example, New Jersey invited more than 60 organizations – including the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership – to participate in a series of **ESSA Stakeholder Focus Group** meetings, giving those participating stakeholders an opportunity to share priorities and feedback on the plan.¹⁰

■ Targeted Stakeholder Meetings

Beyond broad public engagement, states and districts may reach out to targeted stakeholder groups and host invite-only meetings. These meetings enable groups that may not otherwise participate in the process to engage and voice their thoughts and concerns. For example, **Louisiana** hosted **stakeholder engagement** meetings specifically tailored for civil rights groups and tribal organizations.¹¹

INDIANA ARTS EDUCATION NETWORK



Knowing that the implementation of ESSA opens the door to many opportunities for shaping education in Indiana, a group of arts education stakeholders from across the state joined together to form the **Indiana Arts Education Network (IAEN)**.¹³ Led by business leaders from the state's music manufacturing industry, the group met twice in the fall of 2016 to identify goals for the group and strategies for engaging with the development and implementation of the state plan for ESSA. In particular, the group focused on ensuring the state includes the arts in its plans for expanding access to a well-rounded education for all students. Over the course of the fall, members of the IAEN participated in the Indiana Department of Education **ESSA Listening Tour** hosted by the Indiana Department of Education and met with state education leaders to discuss the importance of the arts in education.¹⁴

■ Advisory Groups

When ongoing feedback and advice is necessary, states and districts may also form standing advisory groups to continually engage with stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of ESSA plans. For example, **Georgia** established an **Education of the Whole Child Working Committee** of educators, administrators and other education stakeholders, such as the Georgia Council on the Arts, to address issues including social-emotional learning and school climate.¹²

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Your Goals

- ✓ What outcomes would I like to see by participating in stakeholder engagement?
- ✓ Which ESSA title(s) or program area(s) would I like to include the arts in?
- ✓ Who shares my goal(s) and could I partner with them for this engagement?

2. State/District Engagement Plans

- ✓ How does my state/district approach stakeholder engagement?
- ✓ What opportunities exist for various stakeholder groups?
- ✓ Who (individual leader or government body) leads the stakeholder engagement for my state/district?
- ✓ In what way(s) can I participate and share my feedback?

3. State/District Priorities

- ✓ What issue(s) is my state/district focused on addressing?
- ✓ Do separate stakeholder engagement plans exist for individual issues?
- ✓ What program or policy area is my state/district seeking feedback on?
- ✓ How can I help shape state/district priorities through needs assessments and other stakeholder engagement opportunities?

4. Opportunities/Roles for the Arts

- ✓ Within the program(s)/policy area(s) my state/district is focusing on, what opportunities does ESSA present for the arts?
- ✓ Is there evidence of the role that the arts can play in addressing the priorities of my state/district?
(Visit [ArtsEdSearch.org](https://www.artsedsearch.org) for a clearinghouse of research on the outcomes of arts education.) Are there models that other states/districts have employed in using the arts to address these priorities? How can those examples be incorporated into my state/district? (Visit [ArtScan](https://www.artscan.org) for a database of arts education policies across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.) Who has authority in my state/district over the areas where the arts can be incorporated? What are the avenues for communicating with that individual/organization?

5. Continued Engagement

- ✓ How can I continue to engage with my state/district after the initial stakeholder engagement opportunity has ended?
- ✓ How can I provide feedback on policy implementation?

Opportunities for Engagement

Whether through a parent voicing the importance of including the arts in ESSA plans at a state town hall meeting, an arts educator participating on the district Title I advisory committee, a representative from an arts organization participating in a focus group, or an arts education supporter providing feedback on the draft state plan, a multitude of opportunities exist for the arts in education community to participate in ESSA stakeholder engagement. By knowing where ESSA requires stakeholder engagement, understanding the opportunities for engaging the arts in those broader educational priorities, and gaining familiarity with how individual states and districts approach working with community members, arts in education stakeholders can effectively work with other stakeholders to shape the implementation of ESSA in their communities.

U.S. Department of Education Resources

- [Dear Colleague Letter on Stakeholder Engagement](#)
- [Notice of Final Regulation: Title I, Part A](#)
- [Notice of Final Regulation: Title I, Part B](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Final Regulations: Title I, Part A and Part B](#)
- [Final Regulation: Accountability, State Plans, and Data Reporting](#)
- [Final Regulations: Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority](#)
- [ESSA Title IV, Part A Guidance – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program](#)

Additional Research & Resources

- [ArtScan – Arts Education Partnership](#)
- [ArtsEdSearch.org – Arts Education Partnership](#)
- [ESSA’s Well-Rounded Education – Education Commission of the States](#)
- [ESSA Implementation and Music Education: Opportunities Abound – National Association for Music Education](#)
- [A Handbook for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement: A Tool to Support State Education Agencies in Planning and Implementation of ESSA – Partners for Each and Every Child](#)
- [Let’s Get This Conversation Started: Strategies, tools, examples and resources to help states engage with stakeholders to develop and implement their ESSA plans- Council of Chief State School Officers](#)
- [Let’s Keep this Conversation Going: Steps to ensure stakeholders get engaged and stay engaged through the ESSA development process and beyond - Council of Chief State School Officers](#)
- [States Engage with Stakeholders to Develop and Implement their ESSA Plans – Council of Chief State School Officers](#)
- [Music Education for All Students – League of American Orchestras](#)
- [Music Opportunity to Learn Standards – National Association for Music Education](#)
- [Stakeholder Engagement in State ESSA Plans: Are Early Childhood Stakeholders Involved and in What Ways – Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes](#)
- [Stakeholder Engagement Provisions: PTA and the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) – National PTA](#)

Endnotes

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F.A.Q. ESSA and the Arts: Frequently asked questions

As states develop their state plans and the implementation of the ESSA begins to take place across the country, arts and education stakeholders continue to raise questions regarding opportunities for the arts. AEP has developed this document to provide those stakeholders interested in incorporating the arts in their state's plans for ESSA implementation with answers to some of their most pressing questions.

AEP will continue to expand this list as new questions come up, so be sure to visit the Arts Education Partnership's [ESSA and the Arts](#) page for the most up-to-date resources.

Q: Do funding opportunities for the arts exist in ESSA?

Yes. ESSA opens the door for a number of funding opportunities for the arts. These include:

- *Title I, Part A* – The inclusion of arts-based and arts-integrated programs to improve the academic outcomes of academically at-risk students.
- *Title I, Part B* – The development of assessments aligned to state arts standards.
- *Title II, Part A* – The inclusion of professional development programs for arts educators.
- *Title IV, Part A* – The inclusion of arts-education programs to address district gaps in providing all students with a well-rounded education.
- *Title IV, Part F* – The national programs operated by the U.S. Department of Education (Arts Education Model Development & Dissemination Program and the Professional Development for Arts Educators Program) that provide funding for the development of innovative arts education programs for students and arts professional learning programs for educators.

See the following sections for more information: *Title I, Part A, Assessments in ESSA and ESSA State Plans.*

Q: Can ESSA state plans include the arts?

Yes, there are many potential ways for the arts to be included in state plans. These include:

- *Standards* – The development of new or updated arts content standards.
- *Assessments* – The development of assessments for learning in the arts aligned to the state's arts standards.
- *Accountability* – The inclusion of an arts-related measure as a part of the required school quality or student success indicator.
- *District and School Report Cards* – The inclusion of arts-related measures of access, quality and school culture or climate on school and district report cards.
- *State Report Cards* – The inclusion of aggregated measures from the arts-related accountability indicators or the arts-related measures from school and district report cards.
- *Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants* – The inclusion of the arts into district needs assessments to identify gaps in how districts provide a well-rounded education and in the programs designed to address those gaps.

In addition, although state plans are often discussed only in reference to Title I, states have the option to consolidate their applications for all programs in which they plan to participate within one state plan. For this reason, opportunities for incorporating the arts in state plans may grow depending on the additional programs the state participates in.

See *ESSA State Plans* for more information on including the arts in state plans.

Q: Can the state accountability system include the arts?

Yes. ESSA requires states to include at least one measure of the school quality or student success indicator in their accountability systems. This can include “measures of student engagement, educator engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, and any other indicator the state chooses...” (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1005). A number of opportunities exist for the arts, such as the inclusion of arts-related measures of student access to and participation in arts courses or the inclusion of arts-specific questions on parent, student, and educator surveys concerning student engagement or school climate and culture.

For more information on including the arts in state accountability systems, please see *Accountability in ESSA*

Q: Does the passage of ESSA mean that our state education policy will be replaced?

No. Although ESSA has changed federal education law, in general, state policies for education remain the same. Schools and districts will continue to operate under the state’s education framework. That said, in order to receive funding under certain parts of ESSA, states may need to modify existing policy to ensure that they are in alignment with the program requirements under the new federal law.

Q: What is the timeline for implementing ESSA?

Although signed into law on Dec. 10, 2015, the process for implementing the changes included in ESSA will occur over time. The U.S. Department of Education has begun the process of developing regulations and guidance for ESSA, with an expected completion date of fall 2016.

Key ESSA implementation dates:

- Oct. 1, 2016 – Changes to all competitive grants go into effect.
- July 1, 2017 – Changes to all formula grants (including Title I & the Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants) go into effect.
- 2017-2018 school year – ESSA accountability systems begin to take effect.

In addition, many states are currently developing their state plans. Arts in education stakeholders have many ways they can engage in the state plan development process, including reviewing draft plans and participating in stakeholder engagement groups. Contact your state education agency to learn more about your state’s process for developing the state plan and the ways in which you can participate.

Q: Who can I contact if I have questions about ESSA implementation?

If you have questions about specific federal programs, please follow the links below:

- ➔ [Title I, Part A](#)
- ➔ [Title II](#)
- ➔ [Arts in Education Improvement Programs](#)

If you have questions about the development of your state’s plan or ESSA implementation in your state, you can find your state education agency’s contact information [here](#).

If you have questions about how your state’s implementation of ESSA can incorporate the arts, you can contact your state education agency’s arts education director [here](#).

About AEP and the ESSA/ Well-Rounded Working Group

Arts Education Partnership

The **Arts Education Partnership** (AEP), a national network of arts, business, cultural, education, governmental and philanthropic organizations, is a center within **Education Commission of the States**. AEP serves as the nation's hub for individuals and organizations committed to making a high-quality arts education accessible to all U.S. students, improving arts education practice and researching how the arts influence and strengthen American education. AEP is dedicated to advancing the arts in education through research, policy and practice.

Framing the work of AEP and our approximately 100 partner organizations is *The Arts Leading the Way to Student Success: A 2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education*. Released in 2015, this Action Agenda outlines four priority areas in which the arts can play a role in ensuring that all students graduate prepared to succeed in school, work and life: (1) Raise Student Achievement and Success; (2) Support Effective Educators and School Leaders; (3) Transform the Teaching and Learning Environment; and (4) Build Leadership Capacity and Knowledge.

AEP has long sought to provide leaders – whether they are in schools, communities, state houses or one of our national partner organizations – with the resources necessary to ensure that the arts are an essential component of a complete and competitive education for all students. This resource is designed to build leadership capacity and knowledge by providing concrete information on ESSA requirements and ways the arts can play a role in ESSA's implementation. This resource seeks to strengthen the role and contribution of the arts as schools and districts around the country enter this new era of ESSA.

About the ESSA/Well-Rounded Education Working Group

This resource was developed by AEP in conjunction with the ESSA / Well-Rounded Education Working Group. This working group, a subgroup of the Arts Education Policy Working Group, was convened by AEP in spring 2016 to coordinate the development and dissemination of information and resources on ESSA and the arts. The work of this group is intended to continue throughout ESSA implementation to share the promising opportunities arising for the arts.

Co-chaired by representatives from Americans for the Arts and the League of American Orchestras, the Working Group consists of representatives from the following organizations: Afterschool Alliance, Dance/USA, Educational Theatre Association, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, National Art Education Association, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, National Association for Music Education, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Dance Education Organization, OPERA America, Performing Arts Alliance, Perpich Center for Arts Education, Quadrant Arts Education Research, State Education Agencies Directors of Arts Education, VH1 Save the Music Foundation, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts and Young Audiences Arts for Learning.

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