ESSA: A New Era for Education and Afterschool in Ohio

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the new K-12 federal education law, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and replaces No Child Left Behind.

ESSA was signed into law in 2015 and will be phased in over the next few years. The law aims to increase local input and flexible decision making based on what communities and states need. The law has 10 titles (sections), three of which are very important for afterschool:

- **Title I** – Includes school accountability and interventions (like afterschool) to help support students. Each state is now determining how schools will be held accountable (i.e., how to measure a good school) and local districts with community input will be expected to determine what supports they need to be successful.

- **Title II** – Includes teacher professional development, such as ways where school day and afterschool teachers can work and be trained in coordination.

- **Title IV** – Includes two important parts: Title IV A has funding for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. Title IV B funds the 21st Century Community Learning Centers—the largest federal funding stream for afterschool, before school and summer programs.

Ensuring all students have access to a quality education—inside and outside the classroom—is one of ESSA’s key goals. This new law provides tremendous opportunities to secure resources for afterschool programs across our state. The Ohio Department of Education will soon release a draft state plan, which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in the spring of 2017. The time to engage is now!

Check the ODE site to learn about upcoming opportunities to engage in ESSA implementation:

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-ESSA
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WHAT YOU (AS A PROGRAM, PARENT, PARTNER) CAN DO:

**Send a letter to decision-makers.** As states write their new plans, they are required to consult with stakeholders—that includes afterschool providers and partners! This is an opportunity to let your voice be heard and to impact real policy in our state. Tailor our sample letter and send it directly to the ODE, state or local boards of education, superintendents, and other school leaders to explain how afterschool is critical to our state’s education plan.

**Weigh in on 21st CCLC.** As the Ohio Department of Education works to update the RFP process, the Ohio Afterschool Network will be sharing input and suggestions from the afterschool community. Please let us know what changes you’d like to see in future RFP processes so that we can advocate on your behalf. ESSA requires meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the development of the new RFP and your ideas will be critical to the future of 21st CCLC. Your input about eligibility criteria, competitive priorities, quality, professional development, and updated performance measures will be key!

**Share the facts and your own story.** Explain how afterschool benefits the students, families, and schools in your community. Look for opportunities to share our factsheets showing how afterschool supports academic success, helps to close the achievement gap, reduces absenteeism, and helps students graduate.

- Afterschool is a crucial strategy for improving schools and academic achievement—these programs help students make gains in reading and math and improve their grades and test scores.
- Research shows that afterschool helps reduce chronic absenteeism and improve graduation rates for students who regularly attend quality programs.
- Afterschool programs show the greatest effects on student improvement in high-risk populations, such as low-income students or minority students.
- Access to afterschool programs should be considered as part of a school climate and/or student success dashboard of indicators since the research is clear that afterschool and summer programs help students be successful.

Sharing details and personal experiences that explain how afterschool is improving the lives of children and their families will help breathe life into these facts and show local school leaders and the Department of Education that their investment in afterschool is a smart one!

If you have questions, need additional support or want to share feedback, please contact Nichelle Harris: director@ohioafterschoolnetwork.org.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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