



The EdTA
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Guide to Theatre Education Opportunities



EdTA's ESSA Guide to Theatre Education Opportunities

The authorization of a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ushered in a new era in the role of the federal government in administering education in the United States. The new law, replacing No Child Left Behind, entitled the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA). Fundamentally, the intent of this new iteration of ESEA (first signed into law in 1965) remains the same: to provide supplemental funds and programs for low-income students and to enable State and Local Education Agencies (LEAs or school districts) to improve the access and quality of elementary and secondary education. ESSA has the same goals, but significantly curtails the federal government's role in education and instead allows education to set their own standards and accountability systems.

ESSA includes thirteen arts-friendly provisions that help improve the opportunity for theatre and other arts education availability for all students. Most importantly, the law asserts that arts education should be part of the well-rounded education of all students. The "well rounded" language, replacing NCLB's core subject area definition of academic areas, is key to understanding where and how in the law arts education can access federal funds to ensure equal access to our discipline. In every instance where the term "well rounded" or "music and the arts" appears in the law, is potential funding that can be tapped for theatre and education. We've put together this *ESSA Guide to Theatre Education Opportunities* to help EdTA members and their state leaders understand the law and how our discipline can be part of its implementation in the coming years.

The guide addresses how theatre educators can ensure that students receive a well-rounded education, as defined by ESSA, no matter their circumstances, specifically addressing sections of the law, and articulating opportunities and strategies that can be applied. Among other things, attention is given to:

- **Availability of Title I programs to provide supplemental funds for a well-rounded education.**
- **Titles I, II and IV to support professional development for theatre educators.**
- **Flexible Accountability Systems that require states to include multiple progress measures in assessing school performance, such as student engagement, parental engagement and school culture/climate.**
- **Protection from "pull out" practices in which students are withdrawn from the classroom, including theatre and other arts, for remedial instruction.**

The guide is divided into two parts: *Opportunities for Theatre Educators* detailing areas of ESSA and its associated Title areas in which theatre educators can access funding or advocate on behalf their program on a school or district level; and *Opportunities for State Theatre Education Associations* that articulates state-wide funding options, and areas of the law that state leaders need to be aware of such state report cards, committee opportunities, and evaluation—all of which can be a factor in how theatre education is regarded and delivered by EdTA members in individual states.

This guide was adapted from the [National Association for Music Education's](#) document, *ESSA Implementation and Music Education: Opportunities Abound*.

ESSA Opportunities for Theatre Educators

Title I: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies		
Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Flexibility of Title I funds to support a well-rounded education, including theatre education.</p> <p>Section 1008: Schoolwide Programs</p> <p>Section 1009: Targeted Assistance Schools</p>	<p>Is theatre education included in your school's Title I plan?</p>	<p>1. Do you teach at a Title I school? If so, do you teach at a Schoolwide Title I school or a Targeted Assistance Title I school?</p> <p>2. If you are at a Schoolwide school, your school will need to update its Title I plan to address all aspects of a well-rounded education, including theatre. Ask your principal if you can serve on your Title I schoolwide planning committee, or give input on the status of your theatre education program to be included in the plan. While this may not lead to new funding right away, it will connect your program more directly to the educational plan of your school.</p> <p>3. If you are at a Targeted Assistance school, Title I funds are utilized at your school currently to support supplemental services for students academically at risk in reading and math. ESSA allows targeted Title I funds to support activities for a well-rounded education, including theatre. How would supporting theatre with these funds help support <i>all</i> areas of your school – and students identified as at risk? Meet with your principal to discuss the new language and what their vision is for the needs of the at- risk students in your school.</p>
<p>Protection from “pull-outs.”</p> <p>Section 1009: Targeted Assistance Schools</p>	<p>Do students get pulled from your theatre classes in order to receive “interventions” in math and reading? The law says this shouldn't happen.</p>	<p>If you have students that are missing out on theatre because of scheduled interventions, set up a meeting to discuss the intent of the new law with your principal. Is there a way to help students receive this additional support without having them miss their classes in the well-rounded subject areas? What would such a schedule look like?</p>

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Protection from “pull-outs” 2.</p> <p>Section 1009: Targeted Assistance Schools</p>	<p>Title I of ESSA discourages the practice of students being pulled out of regular classroom instruction, including instruction in the well-rounded subjects such as theatre and other arts, in order to receive remedial instruction. Instead, the law encourages schools to provide extended learning opportunities.</p>	<p>If that seems impossible, is a rotating schedule of interventions possible, so students only miss theatre once a week, or once every two weeks?</p> <p>You may need to get creative to help your principal solve what could be a logistical nightmare. This is a great time to collaborate with other subject-area colleagues who share this concern with you. Maybe together, you can create a better schedule that meets the needs of all students.</p>
<p>Engagement of parents and family.</p> <p>Section 1010: Local Education Agency – Parent and Family Engagement</p>	<p>How does your school and/or district engage parents and family members? Is there a way theatre education can better connect parents, family members and community to your school and/or district?</p>	<p>Title I places emphasis on the need to involve parents, family members and community with schools. As your district and school undertake a revision to their Title I plans, you are encouraged to learn more about your school’s current parental involvement strategies, and to suggest ways in which theatre can help better connect your school with your community. Here are two quick places where you can help your school with parental engagement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joyce Epstein, a thought leader on family engagement, lists audience members as one way parents get engaged with schools. Share your audience numbers and participation rate information with your Title I planning committee. 2. ESSA spells out the needs of all stakeholders to understand and be engaged with all aspects of a well-rounded education. One area of ongoing concern in theatre education is play production choice. Theatre educators can utilize EdTA’s Freedom of Expression resources to help parents, administrators better understand and navigate censorship and related copyright issues.

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Calendar of testing for your school/district.</p> <p>Section 1006: Local Education Agency – Testing Transparency as part of Parents’ Right to Know</p> <p>-</p>	<p>Does your school/district annually publish a testing calendar?</p> <p>Title I of ESSA requires districts to now publish a testing calendar of all state- and district-mandated assessments.</p>	<p>ESSA language requires districts make available a testing calendar for every grade level. This information could be very helpful to theatre educators as you plan your activities for the year.</p> <p>You may want to inquire of your curriculum supervisor if such a calendar currently exists. If not, you may want to ask which tests will be included in the new testing calendar. Note: all of the assessments which impact your daily schedule may not be included. If that happens, be sure to ask why certain tests are included and others are not.</p>
<p>Building a district plan of improvement, including theatre and other arts.</p> <p>Section 1112: Local Educational Agency – Plans and Applications</p>	<p>Is theatre education included in your district’s overall plan for improvement?</p> <p>Title I of ESSA asks that plans submitted for approval by the state prior to receiving federal funds include activities to support a well-rounded education, including theatre. The law also asks that parents, in particular parents of English Language Learners, know of the well-rounded education activities available for their students, including theatre and arts programs.</p>	<p>Prior to the start of the 2016/2017 school year, your district will be asked to update its District Plan to receive funds under ESSA. Under Title I, the revised plan <i>must</i> address well-rounded education activities, which can include theatre.</p> <p>How will your district know to include theatre? Does a theatre teacher or theatre program leader such as a District Arts Coordinator serve on the district’s Title I planning committee? Do you have time to serve in this capacity if no one else is bringing theatre education to this planning table?</p> <p>Does your district provide information on your theatre program to your parents, including information in the home language of the parents your school/district serve?</p> <p>Contact your arts or curriculum supervisor to find out more about how your district’s Title I plan is put together, and offer to serve or provide information on theatre education in your district to make certain it’s included in the district’s revised plan.</p> <p>Work to make certain theatre and arts programs are included in the information which is shared with your school/district’s parents, and make that it’s included in information that may be translated for parents who do not speak English as their first language.</p>

**Title II: Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers,
Principals or Other School Leaders**

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Professional development for all educators.</p> <p>Section 2102: Local Education Agency – Plans and Applications</p>	<p>Are the needs of theatre educators taken into account as professional development opportunities are created in your school/district? ESSA says that all educators should be able to access professional development in order to deliver a well-rounded education--including theatre teachers.</p> <p>Of note: Specific areas where LEAs can focus on Title II funds, and suggestions on where theatre educators might find a “fit.”</p>	<p>Who determines the professional development needs for your school district and school? Can you serve on that committee? Theatre educators CAN be involved in their local district to provide input (needs assessment) and approval (plan development) around the district’s Title II plan.</p> <p>Areas of interest that can be funded by Title IA, Title IIA, or Title IVA dollars in the plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the learning needs of all students, including gifted and talented and children with disabilities; • Improving classroom instruction and student learning and achievement; • Integrating technology including education about the harms of copyright piracy; • Effectively engaging parents, families and community partners • Creating opportunities for experiential learning through observation • Building capacity to design and utilize formative assessments; • Identifying students who are gifted and talented; • Providing high-quality professional development for teachers on how to integrate rigorous academic content and possibly work-force learning/preparation

Title IV: 21 st Century Schools		
Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Requirements for a well-rounded education.</p> <p>Section 4106: Local Educational Agency Applications – Needs Assessment and Plan</p>	<p>Is theatre education part of your district’s needs assessment? Does your district assess the well-rounded education opportunities available to students including theatre and other arts?</p>	<p>Prior to the start of the 2016/2017 school year, your district will be asked to undertake a needs assessment before applying for Title IV funds under ESSA. This funding, entitled 21st Century Schools, includes a specific provision that asks a district to assess how it is providing well-rounded educational opportunities for all of its students – including theatre and other arts. This needs assessment and planning, similar to the Title I LEA plan provision listed above, is an important check to make certain theatre education is included in your district’s plan and needs assessment.</p> <p>How will your district know to include theatre? Will a theatre teacher or theatre program leader, such as a District Arts Coordinator serve on the district’s Title IV needs assessment and planning committee? Do you have time to serve in this capacity if not one else is bringing theatre education to this planning table?</p>
<p>Requirements for a well-rounded education.</p> <p>Section 4107: Activities to Support Well-Rounded Educational Opportunities</p>	<p>Does theatre education stand out as an area that needs to be supported following your district-wide needs assessment?</p>	<p>Once the needs assessment discussed above takes place, theatre education <i>may</i> be an area where additional funds could support better programs and services for all students in your district. If this is the case, how will you and other theatre educators/leaders be involved in determining how the funds are utilized and the amount of Title IV funding that may be available to support your programs?</p> <p>Make certain that you and other theatre educators are involved in these budget planning activities if theatre is listed as an area receiving support with Title IV funds. Again, a district arts coordinator, and/or a curriculum supervisor can help you with this task.</p>

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>21st Century Community Learning Centers: after- or before-school opportunities for theatre.</p> <p>Section 4205: Local Activities</p>	<p>Does your school operate an after-school program funded by 21st Century grants? If so, theatre can be part of the program available for students after school.</p>	<p>ESSA continues to fund the 21st Century after-school programs, and includes language stating that such funds can be utilized to support well-rounded educational activities including theatre and other arts.</p> <p>If your school offers such a funded program, is theatre already part of what students can participate in after school? If not, why not? Who runs the after-school program at your school site? What are the priorities for the after-school program? How does theatre connect to those priorities?</p> <p>As you prepare for next school year, now is a great time to connect with the individuals offering your after-school activities to find out if it's funded by the 21st Century program and, if so, interest in expanding opportunities in theatre and other arts as the new law allows.</p>
<p>Competitive grant opportunity for arts education.</p> <p>Section 4642: Assistance for Arts Education</p>	<p>Do you have interest in expanding professional development opportunities in arts education in your district/school? And/or in building a stronger arts (including theatre) program? If so, the federal government may have a grant opportunity available to help you.</p>	<p>In the national programs section of Title IV, ESSA creates an opportunity for a competitive grant program in arts education. This is an area to wait and see what becomes available, as the priority for these funds is for a national program, such as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' arts education program.</p> <p>In the meantime, you should consider applying for a professional development or project grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information, go to www.arts.gov.</p>

Professional Development for Titles I, II, III, and IV		
Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>More professional development for theatre educators.</p> <p>Section 8002: Definitions – Professional Development</p>	<p>Are the needs of theatre educators taken into account as professional development opportunities are created in your school/district? ESSA says that all educators should be able to access professional development in order to deliver a well-rounded education.</p>	<p>Through Titles I, II, III and IV of ESSA, funds are available to support professional development for educators. Of particular note is the emphasis on content knowledge development under Title IIA (every district will receive a Title IIA allocation).</p> <p>How are the professional development needs of theatre educators currently identified by your school/district? How does that information connect to the Title I and IV planning going on in your school? Does your district supervisor make certain your PD needs are met? If so – great! If not, now may be the time to sit down and see what opportunities may be available next year through the federal and local funding sources.</p>

Scroll down for ESSA Opportunities for State Theatre Education Associations

ESSA Opportunities for State Theatre Education Associations

Title I: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies		
Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Flexible Accountability Systems</p> <p>Section 1005: Statewide accountability system</p>	<p>Are the arts or measures which could include the arts part of your state’s report card system?</p>	<p>Title I of ESSA spells out what the federal government will require for state level school report cards on school progress. While states have always been able to go above and beyond what the federal government required, ESSA is different in requiring states to add in additional measures of school success.</p> <p>Suggested additional measures include measures of student engagement, teacher engagement, student access to advanced coursework and school climate and safety. All of these areas could have theatre-related questions and/or theatre-related contributions based on how the measure was put together.</p> <p>In addition, states could include access to theatre educators as one of the “other indicators determined by the state” in state-level report cards. For an example, see New Jersey.</p> <p>Is your state theatre association involved in advocacy with the State Department of Education or Office of Public Instruction regarding state report cards? Is your State Board of Education determining what can/should be included on a report card for all schools? This is a great time to find out where these conversations are and if you can provide feedback, input or suggestions on what the accountability system will look like under the new law (going into effect in August, 2016).</p>

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Supporting state Title I plan goals, and getting theatre and the arts written into your state plan.</p> <p>Section 1005: State Plans</p>	<p>Possible place for theatre in vertical pathways section of the state plan under (g) Other Plan Provisions (1) (e) – Federal non-regulatory guidance and/or state level advocacy</p>	<p>While states do not need to specifically address well-rounded educational activities including theatre, in their state level plans according to ESSA, there is an opportunity to add well-rounded activities to the plan if a state would like to do so.</p> <p>Theatre education can and does play a supporting role for many the required areas of the Title I plan, including areas of student engagement, parent and family engagement, and vertical alignment of opportunities for students from pre-school through college.</p> <p>Does your state theatre education association connect with the people in your state department of education who will be writing the state plan? Can you share information to try and get theatre education included in the state plan? Doing so would help showcase your state’s commitment.</p>
<p>Become a part of the ongoing leadership for Title I in your state and join the state COP – Committee of Practitioners.</p> <p>Section 1603b: State Committee of Practitioners (COP)</p>	<p>State advocacy opportunity – membership opportunity</p>	<p>Part of ESSA, the COP or Committee of Practitioners, are the educators and administrators invited by the state to serve as its consultants for creating its state-level Title I plan and accountability system.</p> <p>Is there an opportunity for a theatre educator to serve on the COP? Are there opportunities to influence COP members to be more arts/theatre friendly in terms of your state’s accountability system or state level Title I plan?</p> <p>Finding information on your state’s Committee of Practitioners may not be easy. If you cannot find the COP on your state’s website, contact your state Title I director and ask about the COP, how someone becomes a member, and if the public can attend COP meetings.</p>

**Title II: Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers,
Principals or Other School Leaders**

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>State teacher evaluation systems.</p> <p>Section 2101: State assistance for teacher evaluation systems</p>	<p>Will your state revise your teacher evaluation system under ESSA?</p>	<p>Unlike the ESEA Waivers that all but four states are currently working under, ESSA does not require states to build specific teacher evaluation systems.</p> <p>It does, however, allow states to utilize Title IIA to revise or further refine their teacher evaluation systems if a state chooses to do so.</p> <p>If a state is interested in their teacher evaluation system, state theatre education leaders may want to see if the funds could help create a system which better reflects the needs of non- tested subject area teachers such as theatre educators.</p> <p>An additional area for potential state advocacy is the ability to dismantle current teacher evaluation systems. If the federal government no longer requires it, will your state continue its current work under the ESEA Waiver? Will it dismantle the system through administrative rule (such as through a State Board of Education) or through the state legislature?</p>
<p>Ease of movement for theatre teachers across state borders.</p> <p>section 2101 (p 325): State licensure reciprocity and/or sharing</p>	<p>Will your state work to ease certification requirements for teachers coming from out of state?</p>	<p>Just as revising the teacher evaluation system is an option for states to spend their Title IIA funds on, so, too, is working in collaboration with other states to remove barriers from teachers moving from state to state. Since the teacher shortage problem is often a local one, lifting barriers from teachers moving states might ease that challenge.</p> <p>If this becomes an area of action for your state, as a state theatre education association you may want to be involved in the discussions to make certain that this benefits theatre educators as well as other art and classroom teachers.</p>

<p>Development of the state plan.</p> <p>Section 2101: State funded activities</p>	<p>Theatre educators on state plan teams.</p>	<p>Just as in Title I, the state plan for Title II must be created with consultation of teachers and administrators. State theatre association leaders should consider getting involved in this planning process at the State Department of Education, keeping an eye out for the opportunities listed earlier and making certain theatre educators have access to these opportunities as appropriate.</p> <p>One potential route is to work through the Committee of Practitioners set up as part of Title I (see above) or to work with Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) involved in theatre educator teacher preparation. These IHEs are often invited to be part of state level planning for Title IIA.</p>
---	---	--

Title IV: 21st Century Schools

Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>State funding of theatre and arts education through Title IV State set aside</p> <p>Section 4104: State use of funds – the arts specifically called out under state activities.</p>	<p>Will your state utilize their Title IV dollars to fund theatre and other arts?</p> <p>“Activities and programs in music and the arts” is the second area listed under supporting LEAs in providing programs and activities which improve student engagement and achievement.</p>	<p>Title IV specifically lists funding for the arts as a potential area where states can help districts and schools. Is this something that might be of interest to your state?</p> <p>As a state theatre education association, do you have information that could help make the case for your state to invest in this area? For example, do you have data pointing out where funding could help students have better access to theatre education? Or do you have evidence of where theatre has helped improve student engagement that you can share?</p> <p>This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase what you know theatre can and does do in your state, and perhaps generate additional dollars in support of such work at more districts and schools. Again, the contacts will be at your State Department of Education, potentially working with your Committee of Practitioners (see Title I) and/or with your State Education Agency Director of Arts Education – SEADAE member (click here for a listing of SEADAE members and contact information by state).</p>

<p>Increasing state arts education consultants' time or number.</p> <p>Section 4104: State use of funds</p>	<p>Does your state have an active arts education consultant at your State Department of Education?</p>	<p>A possible use of the state Title IV funds would be to fund content positions such as an arts education consultant, and/or allow your arts education consultant to devote more of her time to the arts.</p> <p>To learn if you have a SEADAE member – an arts education consultant, refer to the contact list above. NOTE: this may be an excellent place to coordinate your advocacy work with the other state arts education associations in art, dance, and music</p>
<p>21st Century Community Learning Centers: peer review of competitive local applications.</p> <p>Section 4201: 21st Century Community Learning Centers</p>	<p>Does your state support theatre opportunities within its funded 21st Century after-school programs?</p>	<p>Educators will be invited to be part of a peer review of district applications to fund 21st Century after-school programs. While theatre and other arts are eligible areas for funding based on the well-rounded education language included in the law, state reviewers may be less familiar with what a quality after-school theatre and/or arts program looks like. Volunteering to serve as a theatre educator source helps ensure that a content expert reviews applications which include activities in theatre and the arts.</p>
<p>21st Century Community Learning Centers: review of state plan.</p> <p>Section 4201: 21st Century Community Learning Centers</p>	<p>Does your state include theatre opportunities within its future plans to fund 21st Century after-school programs?</p>	<p>A state level review committee to review the state's proposed 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding plan is required under the law, and a state theatre association. A may want to have representation on that review committee to ensure that well-rounded education activities including theatre and the arts is included in the state's plan.</p>

Title VI: Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education		
Area of ESSA	Opportunity	Strategies
<p>Federal-level grants and/or cooperative agreements in support of Alaska Native Education</p> <p>Section 6300: Alaska Native Education</p>	<p>Does Alaska include the theatre education in the culturally specified areas of this federal funding program?</p>	<p>ESSA language states: Activities may include instructing Alaska Native youth in leadership, communication, and Alaska Native culture, ARTS, history, and languages. An additional permissible activity of cultural immersion may also be relevant for theatre education programs and students.</p>