

## **The Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grant Program**

### **Background**

The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes the flexible block grant known as the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program, or Title IV, A for short. The block grant is authorized at \$1.6 billion and authorizes activities in three broad areas:

1. Providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g., college and career counseling, STEM, music and arts, civics, IB/AP),
2. Supporting safe and healthy students (e.g., comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices, health and physical education) and
3. Supporting the effective use of technology (e.g., professional development, blended learning, and devices).

### **Distribution of Funds**

Each state will receive an allocation based on the Title I funding formula. Using the same Title I formula, the states will then allocate funds to school districts.

Any school district that receives a formula allocation above \$30,000 must conduct a needs assessment and then must expend 20 percent of its grant on safe and healthy school activities and 20 percent on activities to provide a well-rounded education. The remaining 60 percent of the allocation may be spent on all three priorities, including technology. However, there is a 15 percent cap on devices, equipment, software, and digital content.

If a district receives an allocation below \$30,000, the law does not require a needs assessment or setting aside percentages for well-rounded and safe and healthy student programs. However, it must still direct the funds it receives toward activities in at least one of the three categories. The 15 percent technology purchase cap would continue to apply.

### **FY17 Funding Bill**

The FY17 funding bill included \$400 million for the SSAE program, only 25% of the authorized amount, significantly undermining flexibility at the district level. In order to ensure that states and districts have a chance to make meaningful investments, the funding bill included appropriations language that would allow states to competitively award funds to districts, rather than by formula. The states must follow the 20%, 20%, 60% allocation rule, and the districts can choose to apply to 1, 2, or all 3 of the buckets. If a state chooses to issue grants for technology, there is an increased cap of 25% for technology infrastructure. The competitive option is for FY17 only and all grants must be obligated by the end of FY18.

### **Talking Points**

- For FY18 lawmakers must provide at least full funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program in order to give states and districts the flexibility to invest in the programs that they need most, including the effective use of technology.

- This flexible source of funding will help my State/school district to meet our students and teachers' technology professional learning needs.
- The SSAE grant program must be sufficiently funded – consistent with the authorization level established by Congress late last year - to adequately prepare teachers how to effectively use technology to advance student learning and to update the nation's education technology infrastructure.
- Technology serves as a powerful tool for promoting educational opportunities when it is used appropriately. The nation's education technology infrastructure is insufficient in many parts of the country and distributed inequitably to meet schools' growing, leaving many communities far behind their more affluent peers.
- As we raise expectations for what students need to know and be able to do for success, we must also set a higher bar for the nation's technology infrastructure and related professional development required to enable its effective use for teaching and learning.
- The absence of robust education technology, and related professional development for teachers and school leaders, not only impacts instruction and decision making, but also jeopardizes implementation of foundational federal policies, such as using online assessments to support learning and promote accountability.