

ESSA: A New Era for Education and Afterschool in Georgia



THE OPPORTUNITY:

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the new K-12 federal education law that 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 Georgia Department of Education expects to release a draft state plan in June 2017, which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in September 2017. The time to engage is now!

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 GaDOE, state or local boards of education, superintendents, and other school leaders to explain how afterschool is critical to our state's education plan.

Encourage the Georgia Department of Education to collect and share data

- The GaDOE should collect data that reflects positive youth development, such as improved safety, health outcomes, and social/emotional skills. These data could be shared with community partners that run afterschool programs.
- Include access to and involvement in afterschool programs (with enrichment and academic components) as a mandatory component in any state and local needs assessments.

To stay up-to-date on upcoming opportunities to engage in ESSA, make sure you are subscribed to G·san's list serve by visiting afterschoolga.org/take-action

WHAT YOU (AS A PROGRAM, PARENT, PARTNER) CAN DO:

Explain funding opportunities.

Because afterschool is such an integral part of educational improvement, the GaDOE can combine different funding streams to provide afterschool programming to kids:

- Use Title I school improvement funds for afterschool and summer programs.
- Use Title II B to provide grants for literacy instruction in partnership with afterschool programs.
- Use Title IV A funds to support STEM and college and career readiness opportunities in afterschool and summer programs.

Weigh in on 21st CCLC.

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 here in Georgia. Consider encouraging the GaDOE to:

- Explicitly state that professional development and technical assistance be tied to the Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards to ensure maximum impact.
- List the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network as a pre-approved external organization that the GaDOE will work with to promote the quality of afterschool in Georgia.

Share the facts and your own story.

Explain how afterschool benefits the students, families, and schools in your community by sharing [GSAN's fact sheets](#) on afterschool in Georgia or the Afterschool Alliance's fact sheets on how afterschool supports [academic success](#), helps to close the [achievement gap](#), [reduces absenteeism](#), and helps students [graduate on time](#).

- 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 GaDOE that their investment in afterschool is a smart one!

If you have questions, need additional support, or want to share feedback, please contact info@afterschoolga.org or go to GSAN's ESSA page to learn more:

afterschoolga.org/policy-advocacy/afterschool-in-essa

CONTACT INFORMATION

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