

# GUIDANCE

WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES COMPANION GUIDE TO THE  
TITLE IV PART A: STUDENT SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT



New York State Education Department

Office of ESSA-Funded Programs

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# Title IV Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Program Well-Rounded Educational Opportunities

## INTRODUCTION

This companion document is intended to provide additional guidance related to the allowable activities that support the intent and purpose of well-rounded educational opportunities as defined in Title IV, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).<sup>1</sup>

## Activities to Support Well-Rounded Educational Opportunities

The purpose of a well-rounded education is to provide an enriched curriculum and education experiences to all students. It includes programs and activities in the subjects discussed in more detail below as well as other activities, including those that integrate multiple academic disciplines. In general, an LEA may use Title IV funds for any program or activity that supports student access to and success in well-rounded educational experiences.

A well-rounded education starts with early learning opportunities that make time for exploration and continues with K-12 education that helps students make important connections among their studies, their curiosities, their passions, and the skills they need to become critical thinkers and productive members of society. In addition, a well-rounded education promotes a diverse set of learning experiences that engages students across a variety of courses, activities, and programs in subjects such as English, reading/language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, and physical education.

Research supports the benefits of a well-rounded education. For example, students are better able to understand a text when they have had exposure to the knowledge and experiences referenced in that text. Experience shows that students who have been exposed to the language and vocabulary of the natural world, the sciences, and social studies are better readers. Research also shows that students who have strong experiences in the arts often perform better in math. The arts also help children think creatively and develop language skills in other languages.

Programs and activities that support a well-rounded education may include--

**Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.** An LEA may use funds for programming and activities to improve instruction and student engagement in STEM subjects. STEM activities may include: increasing access for groups of underrepresented students to high-quality courses; supporting participation in nonprofit competitions (e.g. robotics, math competitions, computer programming); providing students hands-on learning and exposure to STEM, including through field-based and service learning; supporting the creation and enhancement of STEM-focused specialty schools; facilitating collaboration among programs that take place during the school day and those

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<sup>1</sup> This guide is adapted from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance: Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants, Washington, D.C., 2016. Available online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>.

that take place during out-of-school time to improve the integration of STEM instruction in those programs; and integrating other academic subjects such as the arts into STEM curricula. In a high-quality STEM opportunity, STEM skills and content knowledge are integrated and learned through exploration, inquiry, problem solving, and often involve real-world contexts or applications.

**Music and arts.** An LEA may use funds for programs and activities that use music and the arts, which may include dance, media arts, theater, and visual arts, as tools to support student success through the promotion of constructive student engagement, problem solving, and conflict resolution. ArtsEdSearch, a clearinghouse of rigorously reviewed evaluation research concerning the effects of arts on teaching and learning, contains a growing body of research that affirms when part of a well-rounded education in schools, arts learning contributes to increased academic achievement and student success in preparation for college, career, and life.

**Foreign language instruction.** An LEA may use funds to support instruction in foreign languages, which is essential for students to fully participate in today's global economy and increasingly diverse communities. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages finds that language learning can support academic achievement, provide cognitive benefits, and positively affect attitudes and beliefs about language and other cultures.

**Accelerated learning programs.** An LEA may use funds for efforts to raise student academic achievement through accelerated learning programs, including by: reimbursing low-income students to cover all or part of the costs of AP, IB, or other accelerated learning program examinations; and increasing the availability of, and enrollment in, AP or IB programs, dual or concurrent enrollment programs, early college high schools, and other accelerated learning options. AP and IB programs are designed to help students prepare for college-level work and enable students to take college-level courses in high school and potentially earn college credit based on scores achieved on AP and IB exams. Dual or concurrent enrollment programs and early college high school programs enable students to prepare for college rigor and, through college course enrollment opportunities, graduate from high school with college credits and vocational certificates. Counseling, mentoring, or programs that develop study skills and critical thinking are also important components of accelerated learning programs.

**High school redesign with dual or concurrent enrollment and early college high schools.** An LEA or consortium of LEAs may use funds to support strategies designed to decrease high school drop-out rates, and to increase high school graduation rates and college-entrance rates and to redesign what the high school experience can be. Early College High Schools have been particularly impactful for racial and ethnic minority students and students from low-income families.

**Civics instruction.** An LEA may use funds to promote the development, implementation, and strengthening of instructional programs in civics. Civics is generally understood to mean the content of what citizens should know about politics and government, including the foundations of the American political system. Schools can provide civics instruction through both formal and informal education beginning in the early years of the education process.

**College and career counseling.** An LEA may use funds for college and career counseling programs and services. These programs and services are, generally, designed to help students make informed and

better educational and career choices as they develop personal, social, educational, and career skills. Programs often offer students information starting in middle school about how to prepare for college, including the importance of choosing rigorous high school course offerings, how to choose from among career options, how to enroll in and receive federal financial aid through the FAFSA, and how to pursue academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace. To help prepare students to transition to college, assistance is provided on identifying postsecondary opportunities that are associated with students' interests, applying for college admissions and obtaining financial aid, and preparing for college aptitude tests (*e.g.* SAT and ACT).

**Social emotional learning (SEL).** An LEA may use funds for activities in social emotional learning, including interventions that build resilience, self-control, empathy, persistence, and other social and behavioral skills. Extensive research, as well as educators' own experiences, shows that school-based SEL programs play an important role in fostering healthy relationships and increasing academic and career success. A growing body of research in this field is demonstrating that various tools and practices can enhance students' social and emotional development. For example, implementing practices that support students' sense of belonging and value can increase students' academic success.