

Spending Title III, Part A Funds to Support English Learners

This document provides information about how local educational agencies (LEAs) can spend Title III, Part A funds.

Title III, Part A is a U.S. Department of Education (ED) grant program that provides supplemental funding to help support English learners (ELs) and immigrant students. ED awards Title III, Part A funds to state educational agencies (SEAs), which then Subgrant funds to local education agencies (LEAs).

Title III includes two types of Subgrants to LEAs. First, are “formula” Subgrants available to LEAs that generate at least \$10,000 under a formula established in the Title III law. LEAs have the option of joining together to form a consortium to generate at least \$10,000 combined to qualify for Title III funds. These Subgrants must be used to support ELs in learning English and meeting state academic standards. (See Section I below – these funds will be referred to as “Title III EL funds.”)

Second, are “targeted” Subgrants SEAs might award to LEAs that experience a significant increase in immigrant children and youth and should provide immigrant children with enhanced instructional opportunities. (See Section II below – these funds will be referred to as “Title III Immigrant funds.”)

For convenience this section will refer to the program as “Title III.”

Purpose of Title III Subgrants to LEAs

In General

LEAs must use Title III funds for effective approaches and methodologies for teaching ELs and immigrant children and youth for the following:

1. Developing and implementing new language instruction educational programs and academic content instructional programs for English learners (ELs) and immigrant children and youth, including early childhood education programs, elementary school programs, and secondary school programs.
2. Carrying out highly focused, innovative, locally designed activities to expand or enhance existing language instruction educational programs and academic content instructional programs for ELs and immigrant children and youth.
3. Implementing schoolwide programs for restructuring, reforming, and upgrading all relevant programs, activities, and operations relating to language instruction educational programs and academic content instruction for ELs and immigrant children and youth.
4. Implementing LEA-wide programs for restructuring, reforming, and upgrading all relevant programs, activities, and operations relating to language instruction educational programs and academic content instruction for ELs and immigrant children and youth.¹

Definition of English Learner and Immigrant Children and Youth under ESSA

Under ESSA, an “English learner,” when used with respect to an individual, means an individual —

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
(ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
(II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
(iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual —
 - (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
 - (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.²

Under ESSA, the term “immigrant children and youth” means individuals who—

- (A) are aged 3 through 21;
- (B) were not born in any State; and
- (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.³

¹ 1 ESSA, Section 3115(a). For federal non-regulatory guidance on the Title III program, please see U.S. Department of Education, English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (September 2016) available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiiiguidenglishlearners92016.pdf>. This guidance will be referred to as ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance for the rest of this document.

² ESSA, Section 8101(20). Also, *ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance*, p. 43.

³ ESSA, Section 3201(5). Also, *ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance*, p. 43.

Title III and the Supplement not Supplant Requirement

Title III is subject to a strict “supplement not supplant” (SNS) requirement that affects how Title III funds are spent.⁴ Because SNS works differently in Title III than other federal programs this section addresses SNS before addressing other Title III spending issues.

At its most basic, SNS requires Title III funds to **add to (supplement) and not replace (supplant)** other federal, state, and local funds. Whether a cost complies with SNS is situation specific, but in general there **are three issues** to consider:

1. **Compliance with SNS is tested using two “presumptions,”**
2. **An LEA may not use Title III funds to meet its civil rights obligations to EL students, and**
3. **In some circumstances, an LEA may use Title III funds to pay for EL-related activities under Title I, Part A.**

Issue 1: Compliance with SNS is tested using two “presumptions”

The federal government presumes Title III supplanting in the following two situations:

1. An LEA uses Title III funds to provide services the LEA is required to make available under other laws, or
2. An LEA uses Title III funds to provide services the LEA paid for with state or local funds the prior year.⁵

These presumptions can be “rebutted” (disputed with evidence) and possibly overcome if the LEA can show it could not have provided the services in question with state or local funds.⁶

Example: Presumed Supplanting Violation

Paying for an interventionist that provides intensive small-group interventions to EL students with Title III funds would violate the second presumption of supplanting if the LEA paid for this interventionist with local funds the prior year.

NOTE: The LEA may be able to rebut this presumption of supplanting if it can show it did not have local funds available to pay for the interventionist.

Issue 2: An LEA may not use Title III funds to meet its civil rights obligations to EL students

Under the first presumption of supplanting an LEA may **not** use Title III funds to meet the requirements of federal, state, or local law. Under federal law, specifically Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), LEAs have legal obligations to ensure that ELs can meaningfully and equally participate in educational programs and services.⁷ ED guidance explains that to meet these civil rights obligations to EL students LEAs must:

- Identify and assess all potential EL students in a timely, valid, and reliable manner,
- Provide EL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful, consistent with *Castañeda v. Pickard* and the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols*,
- Provide sufficiently well prepared and trained staff and support the language assistance programs for EL students,

⁴ ESSA, Section 3115(g).

⁵ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-2

⁶ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-2.

⁷ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-2 and A-3.

- Ensure that EL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extracurricular activities,
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students,
- Ensure that EL students who have or are suspected of having a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are identified, located, and evaluated in a timely manner and that the language needs of students who need special education and disability related services because of their disability are considered in evaluations and delivery of services,
- Meet the needs of EL students who opt out of language assistance programs,
- Monitor and evaluate EL students in language assistance programs to ensure their progress with respect to acquiring English proficiency and grade level content knowledge, exit EL students from language assistance programs when they are proficient in English, and monitor exited students to ensure they were not prematurely exited and that any academic deficits incurred in the language assistance program have been remedied,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a school district’s language assistance program(s) to ensure that EL students in each program acquire English proficiency and that each program is reasonably calculated to allow EL students to attain parity of participation in the standard instructional program within a reasonable period of time, and
- Ensure meaningful communication with limited English proficient (LEP) parents.⁸

Because Title III funds may **not** be used to meet legal obligations, including civil rights obligations, Title III may **not** be used to meet the obligations in the above list.

Example: Impermissible Title III Spending on Civil Rights Obligations

An LEA may not use Title III funds to identify EL students because identifying EL students is a civil rights obligation under Title VI and the EEOA.⁹

Example: Permissible Title III Supplemental Spending

An LEA that meets its civil rights obligations on staffing may use Title III funds to hire extra staff. For example, ED guidance states that an LEA may use Title III funds to hire a specialist on EL students with interrupted formal education or English learners with disabilities to provide *supplemental* support to these unique populations; an LEA could also use Title III funds to hire staff that would provide *supplemental* LEA-wide instructional support to teachers of ELs. ED guidance also notes that determinations about the supplement not supplant requirement in Title III are always fact-specific.¹⁰

⁸ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-3. Additional information about the civil rights obligations to EL students is available in a joint U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice Dear Colleague Letter (2015), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>.

⁹ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-8.

¹⁰ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question D-7.

Issue 3: In some circumstances, an LEA may use Title III funds to pay for EL-related activities under Title I

Under the first presumption of supplanting, an LEA may not use Title III funds to meet the requirements of federal, state, or local law. Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), this meant LEAs could not use Title III funds to pay for Title I, Part A’s EL-related requirements. Under ESSA, however, certain requirements that were previously part of the Title III program have moved to Title I, Part A. Because of this, ED guidance permits LEAs to use Title III funds to pay for activities that were in Title III under NCLB, but are now part of Title I, Part A in ESSA such as:

- EL parental notification regarding language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) and related information (ESEA Section 1112(e)(3)),
- Parental participation (e.g., regular EL parent meetings) (ESEA Section 1116(f)), and
- Reporting to the State on the number and percentage of ELs achieving English language proficiency (ESEA Section 1111(h)(2)).¹¹

ED’s guidance states that LEAs may only use Title III funds for activities that moved from Title III to Title I **if** they ensure that:

1. The activity being supported is consistent with the purposes of Title III and meets federal guidelines for “reasonable and necessary costs,”¹²
2. The activity being supported is supplemental to the LEA’s civil rights obligations to ELs under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the EEOA, and
3. The LEA can demonstrate it is also using Title III funds to conduct activities required under Title III.¹³ (See below for more information about required Title III EL activities).

Please note LEAs may not use Title III funds for Title I, Part A activities that are *also* used to meet civil rights obligations. For example, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the EEOA, LEAs must track EL student progress in achieving English language proficiency. LEAs often use the annual English language proficiency (ELP) assessment, which is now required under Title I,¹⁴ to meet this civil rights obligation. If an LEA uses the annual ELP assessment to meet its civil rights obligations, Title III funds could not be used to pay for costs related to administering the ELP assessment.¹⁵

How Title III Funds May Be Used

Title III includes two types of Subgrants to LEAs. First, are “formula” Subgrants available to LEAs (or a consortium of LEAs) that generate at least \$10,000 under a formula established in the Title III law. These Subgrants must be used to support ELs in learning English and meeting state academic standards. (See Section I below – these funds will be referred to as “Title III EL funds.”) Second, are “targeted” Subgrants SEAs might award to LEAs that experience a significant increase in immigrant children and youth and should provide immigrant children with enhanced instructional opportunities. (See Section II below – these funds will be referred to as “Title III Immigrant funds.”)

¹¹ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-4.

¹² The concept of “reasonable and necessary” costs comes from federal regulations known as the Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG). See, for example, the discussion in [Basic Considerations of the UGG](#).

¹³ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-4.

¹⁴ ESSA, Section 1111(b)(2)(G).

¹⁵ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-7.

I. Title III EL Funds

LEAs must use Title III EL funds to assist ELs in learning English and meeting state academic standards.¹⁶

A. Required Uses of Title III EL Funds at the LEA-Level

LEAs must use Title III EL funds for **three** activities:

1. Providing **effective language instruction educational programs (LIEPs)** that meet the needs of ELs and demonstrate success in increasing English language proficiency and student academic achievement.¹⁷
2. Providing **effective professional development** to classroom teachers (including teachers in classroom settings that are not the settings of LIEPs), principals and other school leaders, administrators, and other school or community-based organizational personnel, that is:
 - Designed to improve the instruction and assessment of ELs,
 - Designed to enhance the ability to understand and implement curricula, assessment practices and measures, and instructional strategies for ELs,
 - Effective in increasing children's English language proficiency or substantially increasing the subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skills of such teachers, and
 - Of sufficient intensity and duration (which shall not include activities such as 1-day or short-term workshops and conferences) to have a positive and lasting impact on the teachers' performance in the classroom.¹⁸
3. Providing and implementing other effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplement language instruction educational programs for ELs, which must include **parent, family, and community engagement activities**, and may include strategies that serve to coordinate and align related programs.¹⁹

As with all Title III costs, these three required Title III EL activities – effective LIEPs, effective professional development, and effective parent, family, and community engagement activities – **must be supplemental to state and locally funded programming** the LEA is delivering to meet its civil rights obligations to EL students.

ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Section A guidance states the following should consider whether the LIEP is effective:

- Driven by data on the unique needs of ELs, including distinct subgroups of ELs as discussed in this guidance, and responsive to student performance data as part of continuous improvement;
- Aligned with local needs identified through timely and meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and examination of relevant data;
- Based on rigorous, relevant research on what instructional approaches are proven effective for promoting English language proficiency and high academic achievement (for more information on ways to improve student outcomes including using evidence, see the Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments Non-Regulatory Guidance *available at*).

¹⁶ ESSA, Section 3115(a).

¹⁷ ESSA, Section 3115(c)(1). For federal guidance about LIEPs, please see ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Section C.

¹⁸ ESSA, Section 3115(c)(2). For federal guidance on educators of English Learners, including professional development, please see ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Section D.

¹⁹ ESSA, Section 3115(c)(3). For federal guidance on parent, family, and community engagement, please see ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Section E.

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>); Accompanied by a robust plan for implementation that may include, for example, a logic model or theory of action; well-defined, measurable goals; clearly outlined roles and responsibilities for people involved; and implementation timelines;

- Examined through performance monitoring, and if appropriate, evaluation, in order to make changes to improve LIEP implementation and effectiveness; and
- Included as part of a systemic approach to serving ELs, based on a State’s English language proficiency standards and its academic content standards.

An example of relevant research is the Institute for Educational Sciences Practice Guide “Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School,” *available at* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=19>.

The ESEA (Section 8101(42)) defines “**professional development**” as activities that—

(A) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and

(B) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused, and may include activities that--

(i) improve and increase teachers'—(I) knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach; (II) understanding of how students learn; and (III) ability to analyze student work and achievement from multiple sources, including how to adjust instructional strategies, assessments, and materials based on such analysis;

(ii) are an integral part of broad schoolwide and districtwide educational improvement plans; (iii) allow personalized plans for each educator to address the educator's specific needs identified in observation or other feedback;

(iv) improve classroom management skills;

(v) support the recruitment, hiring, and training of effective teachers, including teachers who became certified through State and local alternative routes to certification;

(vi) advance teacher understanding of (I) effective instructional strategies that are evidence-based; and (II) strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers;

(vii) are aligned with, and directly related to, academic goals of the school or local educational agency;

(viii) are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, representatives of Indian tribes (as applicable), and administrators of schools to be served under this Act;

(ix) are designed to give teachers of English learners, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and assessments;

(x) to the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers, principals, and other school leaders

in the use of technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy), so that technology and technology applications are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and academic subjects in which the teachers teach;

(xi) as a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development;

(xii) are designed to give teachers of children with disabilities or children with developmental delays, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and academic support services, to those children, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, multi-tier system of supports, and use of accommodations;

(xiii) include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice;

(xiv) include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents and families;

(xv) involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education, including, as applicable, Tribal Colleges and Universities as defined in Section 316(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)), to establish school-based teacher, principal, and other school leader training programs that provide prospective teachers, novice teachers, principals, and other school leaders with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced teachers, principals, other school leaders, and faculty of such institutions;

(xvi) create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under part A of Title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers;

(xvii) provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in this paragraph that are designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom; and

(xviii) where practicable, provide jointly for school staff and other early childhood education program providers, to address the transition to elementary school, including issues related to school readiness.

Section E of [ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance](#) addresses Parent, Family and Community Engagement. Questions E-1 and E-4 of the guidance provides an outline of parent, family and community engagement activities that are allowable using Title III funds.

B. Authorized Uses of Title III Funds at the LEA-Level

In addition to spending on the required three activities above, LEAs may spend their Title III EL funds on other supplemental activities, including:

- Upgrading program objectives and effective instructional strategies,²⁰
- Improving the instructional program for ELs by identifying, acquiring, and upgrading curricula,

²⁰ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(1).

instructional materials, educational software, and assessment procedures,²¹

- Providing to ELs tutorials and academic or career and technical education, and intensified instruction, which may include materials in a language that the student can understand, interpreters, and translators,²²
- Developing and implementing effective preschool,²³ elementary school, or secondary school language instruction educational programs that are coordinated with other relevant programs and services,²⁴
- Improving the English language proficiency and academic achievement of ELs,²⁵
- Providing community participation programs, family literacy services, and parent and family outreach and training activities to ELs and their families to improve the English language skills of ELs, and to assist parents and families in helping their children to improve their academic achievement and becoming active participants in the education of their children,²⁶
- Improving the instruction of ELs, which may include ELs with a disability, by providing for: the acquisition or development of educational technology or instructional materials; access to, and participation in, electronic networks for materials, training, and communication; and incorporation of these resources into curricula and programs,²⁷
- Offering early college high school or dual or concurrent enrollment programs or courses designed to help ELs achieve success in postsecondary education,²⁸ and
- Carrying out other activities that are consistent with the purposes of Title III Subgrants.²⁹

If an LEA uses its Title III EL funds for one of the above authorized activities, it must ensure the funds are supplemental, including the requirement that the funds not be used to meet its civil rights obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the EEOA.

II. Title III Immigrant Funds

LEAs that have experienced a significant increase in immigrant children and youth might receive an “immigrant Subgrant” from their SEA. These Title III immigrant funds must be used to pay for activities that provide enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youth, and may include:

- Family literacy, parent and family outreach, and training activities designed to assist parents and families to become active participants in the education of their children,
- Recruitment of and support for personnel, including teachers and paraprofessionals who have been specifically trained, or are being trained, to provide services to immigrant children and youth,
- Provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic or career counseling for immigrant children and youth,
- Identification, development, and acquisition of curricular materials, educational software, and

²¹ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(2).

²² ESSA, Section 3115(d)(3).

²³ For more information on Title III and Early Learning, please see ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Section F.

²⁴ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(4).

²⁵ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(5).

²⁶ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(6).

²⁷ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(7).

²⁸ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(8).

²⁹ ESSA, Section 3115(d)(9).

technologies to be used in the program,

- Basic instruction services that are directly attributable to the presence of immigrant children and youth in the LEA, including the payment of costs of providing additional classroom supplies, costs of transportation, or such other costs as are directly attributable to such additional basic instruction services,
- Other instruction services that are designed to assist immigrant children and youth to achieve in elementary and secondary schools in the U.S., such as programs of introduction to the educational system and civics education, and
- Activities, coordinated with community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, or other entities with expertise in working with immigrants, to assist parents and families of immigrant children and youth by offering comprehensive community services.³⁰

III. Other Spending Considerations and Rules

A. LEA-Level Administrative Costs

LEAs may use up to two percent of their Title III funds for direct administrative costs.³¹ Indirect costs are not part of the two percent cap.³²

B. Maintenance of Effort

LEAs that receive Title III funds must comply with a maintenance of effort requirement.³³ In short, maintenance of effort ensures districts maintain a consistent floor of state and local funding for free public education from year-to-year.³⁴

C. Equitable Services

Title III funds are subject to an equitable services requirement.³⁵ In short, this means that the LEA must ensure that eligible private school students, their teachers, and other educational personnel are served by Title III.³⁶

³⁰ ESSA, Section 3115(e). See also ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question G-4.

³¹ ESSA, Section 3115(b).

³² ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-10.

³³ ESSA, Section 8521.

³⁴ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question A-17.

³⁵ ESSA, Section 8501(b)(1)(C).

³⁶ ED 2016 Title III, Part A Guidance, Question C-6. See also ED 2016 Fiscal Changes Guidance, Section P.