

3 Steps to Learning about Funding Through ESSA

Marcia Neel

May, 2018

As I sit on the plane flying home after the 2018 NAMM Fly-in, I am filled with thoughts of how I might be able to pass along all that I learned in a few short days to educators who do so much with so little so let's just get started.

We already know that ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) has provided an opportunity for music programs—one of the subjects articulated in ESSA's definition of a "well-rounded education"—to be provided with resources which were heretofore not available. The question of how to access them, however, can be a genuine mystery in some states so here are some ideas to help get music educators started on the hunt.

- Start by asking your principal, arts administrator, and/or Title I specialist if they are aware of, or have already submitted, grant applications to your state to receive funds from the current 1.1 billion level of funding that was made available to support a "well rounded education" for every child through ESSA's Title IVA, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant.
- If they are aware, inquire as to how to leverage these funds to meet the needs of your program so that it may be expanded to provide equal access to all students—another tenet of ESSA's "well-rounded education" provision. Perform a needs assessment. Need help? Refer to NAFME's Opportunity to Learn Standards (OTLs) document provided for this very purpose. It can be accessed at: https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/Opportunity-to-Learn-Standards_May2015.pdf. It specifies the resources your school should provide in order to give students a "meaningful chance to achieve at the levels spelled out in the Core Music Standards." (OTL, p. 1) My particular state is already accepting the second year of RFAs (Request for Applications) for Title IVA grant funding and music programs are benefitting.
- If your administration is not aware of this program, research which office in your state's Department of Education is responsible for the appropriation of the Title IVA funds so that you can access the information. The easiest way to do this is to search "ESSA Title IVA _____ (insert your state). In my state, the first thing that popped up was the actual RFA. The cover page states, "Questions related to this funding should be addressed to..." so that was my next step. I emailed that person (her email address was right on the cover page) at my state's Department of Education and got all the information that I needed including the names of all of the grant recipients that first year.

You may end up being the hero of your school by making your administration aware of these resources that will bring added support to your school but more than that, you will be able to bring the joy of music-making to more students by addressing the needs of under-served populations. Consider offering programs in world music, drumming, guitar,

mariachi, ukulele, and United Sound—a curriculum-based program that provides musical performance experiences for students with special needs through peer mentorship. As Mary Luehrsen, Executive Director for the NAMM Foundation, has often said, “you are either at the table or you are on the menu.” This provision includes “music” and “arts,” which articulates the importance of music as a part of every child’s education. It also provides an unprecedented step forward for music education, as “Well-Rounded” is mentioned in a variety of other significant provisions throughout the bill.

Those of us who continue to attend the NAMM Fly-in do so because we know that legislation like this makes a difference in the lives of young people. We all know how music changes the lives of our students so why not find a way to serve even more! Title IVA provides that opportunity for music educators—just take that first step.

Section 8002 Definitions (p. 807)

“(52) WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION. –

The term ‘well-rounded education’ means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State of local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.”