

A Helping of Academic Alphabet Soup: What is E.S.S.A.?

By David Wolff, District Coordinator of Gifted & Talented Services in Austin, MN

As advocates for gifted learners, we need to be well versed in the current topics that directly impact education. In this issue, I will add to your 'Educatoresé' vocabulary by outlining recent changes to federal law. It is always my goal to support parents by serving a 'helping of academic alphabet soup' to explain the meaning of educational acronyms or terms and how they apply to your child's learning.

Q: What does E.S.S.A. stand for? A: Every Student Succeeds Act

Every Student Succeeds Act is the 2015 name of the revised 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act [E.S.E.A.]. Prior to E.S.S.A., the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was referred to as No Child Left Behind [N.C.L.B.]. E.S.S.A. is the federal law that outlines provisions for, to name a few, Title I [disadvantaged students], Title II [professional development], and Title III [English language learners].

Q: What do educators mean when they refer to E.S.S.A.?

E.S.S.A. was reauthorized in December 2015, so many teachers are not currently using this acronym yet; many educators may still refer to this law as N.C.L.B. The purpose of the federal law is to provide schools with additional funds beyond state funding to close the achievement gap especially with students with barriers like disability, language, poverty, or mobility. With E.S.S.A., attention can be focused on students who are culturally, linguistically, and/or economically diverse and high ability.

Q: How will E.S.S.A. impact my child's learning?

There are several changes to the law but I will outline two mandated actions that districts will be responding to. The first action requires districts to collect and report student achievement data in all achievement groups – proficient, below-proficient, *and advanced*. The second action mandates that districts that receive Title II funds for professional development for teachers and administrators to provide training on *all* learners, including gifted and talented learners.

I encourage you to visit NAGC's resources at <http://www.nagc.org/get-involved/advocate-high-ability-learners/nagc-advocacy/federal-legislative-update/every-student> to access useful documents that you can further educate yourself on the details of E.S.S.A. in regards to gifted learners. Within these documents you will see how educators will be able to use Title 1 funds to identify and serve gifted and talented learners, read about the continuation of the Javits program, and the use of computer adaptive assessments so student master can be measured above-grade level. E.S.S.A. is fully enacted in the 2017-18 school year – we have a lot of work to do the prepare Minnesota districts for this change!

