

Dear LEA Representative:

In December 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind legislation that governs federal, state, and local policy around assessments, school funding, and accountability and support for schools. As part of ESSA, the federal formula grant program that covered Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) test fees for low-income students has been moved into Title IV, Part A funding for “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.” The last round of AP and IB exams covered under the old funding stream, the Advanced Placement Test Fee program, were administered in spring of 2016.

This shift to a new funding structure under Title IV-A will change how the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) provides funding to local education agencies (LEAs) for low-income student AP and IB test fees moving forward, beginning with spring 2017 exams. This letter provides information about the new regulations and early guidance on how LEAs can approach financial support for low-income students taking AP and IB exams.

Federal funding under the new ESSA regulations begins with the allocation that states receive in summer 2017. Because the old AP Test Fee program ended in the 2016 federal program year, states and LEAs were left without funding coverage for AP/IB exams administered in spring 2017. To address the gap, Congress has approved a special rule under 4107(b) of ESSA, allowing LEAs to use federal funding received in federal fiscal year 2018 (FFY18) across two years. Therefore, states and LEAs will use one year of Title IV-A funding to cover two years of exam. For spring 2017, OSSE and LEAs may use only Title IV-A funding. In spring 2018, states and LEAs additionally may use Title I, Part A funding for AP and IB exams for low-income students.

To date, Congress has not yet voted on allocation levels for Title IV-A, so OSSE does not yet know how much the state or LEAs will receive for FFY2018.

Here are OSSE’s current plans and recommendations for LEAs:

- OSSE will use Federal Fiscal Year 2018 (FFY18) Title IV-A state administrative funds to cover a portion of the costs associated with low-income AP and IB exams administered in spring 2017.
- **However, OSSE anticipates that these funds will not be sufficient to cover the full cost of all qualifying exams in spring 2017.** Therefore, OSSE is actively exploring options at the state level and encourages LEAs to do the same to ensure students can access AP exams to the same extent they have in prior years. Some options for LEAs to consider include:
 - LEAs may use all or a portion of their FFY18 Title IV-A funds to waive fees for qualifying low-income students beginning in FFY18.
 - LEAs may choose to use Title I, Part A carryover funding to cover spring AP/IB exam fees for low-income students beginning in FFY18.
 - Depending on funding levels and LEA costs, LEAs who want to cover the full cost of their low-income student AP/IB exams may need to use FFY18 Title IV-A or Title IV, A funds for both spring 2017 and spring 2018 exams.

- Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, OSSE and LEAs may also use Title IV, Title I, and Title II funding to support other types of activities related to AP and IB access and performance, including funding specific AP and IB courses and exams (Title IV, Title I) and supporting professional development and training for AP and IB teachers (Title II).

Regulations on Title IV-A Funding Levels – Below \$10,000 and Above \$30,000

In addition, federal regulations require LEAs that do not receive at least \$10,000 under Title IV to join a consortium of LEAs to access funds. Many District of Columbia LEAs eligible for AP and IB exam funding for low-income students will not meet this \$10,000 threshold and will be required to enter a consortium in order to access funds. Once Congress determines the level of state allocations for Title IV funds, OSSE will notify LEAs that do not meet the threshold of the steps necessary to join a consortium to be able to access funds.

LEAs or consortia of LEAs receiving more than \$30,000 in Title IV funding are required to spend funds across three categories named in ESSA Title IV:

- Must use 20 percent or more of the funds to support activities that support well-rounded educational opportunities (this includes AP and IB exam fees);
- Must use 20 percent or more of the funds to support safe and healthy students; and
- Must use a portion of the funds to support the effective use of technology, including an assurance that the LEA or consortium will not use more than 15 percent of the remaining portion for purchasing technology infrastructure.

LEAs or consortia receiving between \$10,000 and \$30,000 do not have to abide by the funding restrictions listed above.

Next steps

- OSSE will notify LEAs about the level of state administrative costs available to cover low-income student exam fees in spring 2017, and how much will be available for each LEA to use toward AP and IB exam fees for low-income students.
- OSSE will be in touch about Title IV funding levels and will notify LEAs below the \$10,000 threshold that they need to join a consortium to access funds.

OSSE acknowledges this shift is a big change from how the U.S. Department of Education and OSSE have managed funds to support low-income AP and IB test takers in the past. While we do yet know all of the details, OSSE is here to support LEAs and students during the transition to a different type of funding administration.

Program Contact

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