

## The Next Phase for ESSA

We continue to celebrate the wonderful news about the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and how music is now being listed as a stand-alone subject. While we celebrate this success it is important that we continue state and local advocacy follow up work so we realize all of the positive aspects of the implementation of this historic legislation.

The newest iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) law “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) offers many opportunities to support a sequential, comprehensive music education in our schools. After months of bill drafts and negotiations in Congress, ESSA is the result of a bipartisan compromise that was approved by conference committee in November 2015. The agreement substantially shrinks the federal education footprint and returns accountability to the states. The “Well-Rounded Education” provision (previously known as “Core Academic Subjects”) is a section within ESSA that lists courses, activities, and programming in subjects deemed critical when providing students a broad and enriched educational experience. The provision includes “music” and “arts,” which articulates the importance of music as a part of every child’s education. This provides an unprecedented step forward for music education, as “Well-Rounded” is mentioned in a variety of other significant provisions throughout the bill. This new law is to be implemented for the 2016-17 school term.

There is much work to be done to bring this on line by the start of the next school term. Now is the time for collaboration and planning with our education colleagues at the local, state and federal level. MMEA and NAFME encourage you to begin a dialogue with your potential partners to make these opportunities a reality in your school and community.

You will need a basic understanding of what this bill includes and what it means for you and your program. NAFME offers some very informative documents that will help with this understanding. I will list some of the most beneficial resources here and give a brief explanation of each so you can access that which is most beneficial to you.

Below is a link to “ESSA in Plain English.” I found this most helpful for a basic understanding of what this bill is and what it means for music education:

<http://www.nafme.org/wp-content/files/2015/11/ESSA-In-Plain-EnglishFINAL-2-2016.pdf>

The NAFME staff provided a webinar that was an overview of ESSA, this webinar provided details on several opportunities afforded by this legislation to expand access to music education for students nationwide. Below is a link to view slides from this webinar on ESSA with some ideas on what we can do to advocate at the state level for implementation of this historic bill:

<http://www.nafme.org/take-action/webinar-on-the-every-student-succeeds-act/>

Most importantly for us are the ideas on how music education is addressed in ESSA, what specific funding streams are available and how music education advocates can spread the word and effectively advocate for enhanced music education funding in our state or school district through ESSA.

Perhaps the most beneficial link is the “ESSA Implementation Toolkit”:

<http://www.nafme.org/wp-content/files/2015/11/ESEA-Implementation-and-Music-Education-Opportunities-Abound-FINAL.pdf>

Prior to the start of the 2016/2017 school year, your district will be asked to update its District plan to receive funds under ESSA. Under Title I, the revised plan must address well-rounded education activities, which can include music. How will your district know to include music? Does a music teacher or music program leader such as a District Arts Coordinator serve on the district's Title I planning committee? Do you have time to serve in this capacity? If not you will need to find someone who will bring music education to this planning table.

A very positive aspect of this “toolkit” addresses Professional Development for all educators. LEA (Local Education Associations) Title II plans should address the needs of music educators as professional development opportunities are created in your school/district? ESSA says that all educators should be able to access professional development in order to deliver a well-rounded education (including music and the arts). Volunteer to serve on this committee to bring quality music PD to your district.

In some brief conversations with Representative Margo McNeil at our recent conference it is very apparent that even Missouri Lawmakers are experiencing difficulty understanding all that is included in this bill. Now is the time for all of us to work with state and local policy makers so we can fully realize the benefits of this bill. MMEA plans to visit with state law makers to be sure that music is part of a “Well-Rounded” education for all of our students as this new law states. We will also offer periodic updates as to how you can best work with your local school administration to make this law a reality in your school district. Please feel free to write to me at any time if you would like to discuss the aspects of this bill: [brandesg.mmea@gmail.com](mailto:brandesg.mmea@gmail.com).