



ASHA Fact Sheet Every Student Succeeds Act

What is the Every Student Succeeds Act?

The federal government has the responsibility of supporting education across the nation. In order to do so, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was authorized 50 years ago to promote equal opportunity for all students. The current bipartisan federal education act, signed in 2015 by President Obama, is called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Why is ESSA important?

The ESSA has the potential to increase healthy behaviors for students. Studies show that students who are engaged in health education and fitness promotion are more prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and have improved decision-making, reduced health risks, and better school attendance.

In the previous federal education law, health education and physical education (among other content areas) were not included in the definition of core academic subjects. As a result, many schools stopped teaching health education and physical education in order to spend more instructional time on core academics.

ESSA is important because it encourages schools to emphasize health education and physical education as part of providing students a well-rounded education. The links between health and learning demonstrate how vital it is to address the comprehensive needs of students in order to impact school improvement efforts.

How can ASHA members support ESSA?

ASHA believes that all students deserve access to a comprehensive and well-rounded education that includes instruction in all academic content areas, including health education and physical education. Here are the ways school health advocates can support ESSA:

- Promote the inclusion of and increased instructional time for health education and physical education in all schools.
- Increase the accountability for qualified instructors in health education and physical education.
- Improve assessment to demonstrate student proficiency in the National Health Education Standards and the National Physical Education Standards.
- Inform and influence how to best implement funds to support safe and healthy students (Title IV), expand access to professional development for health and physical education teachers (Title II), and maximize implementation of effective instruction across K-12 education.

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