**The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):**

**What Does It Mean for Gifted Education?**

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Parents and educators all over the country are trying to understand the potential implications of the new federal education law. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, formerly nicknamed “No Child Left Behind”) has been revised and reauthorized, and it was signed into law in December. What does the now-named Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mean for the day-to-day life of schools and students? How will it affect gifted education and students with gifts and talents?

Highlights. Advocates for gifted education are generally happy with the way that ESSA turned out. Among other items, it makes it clear that Title I funds may be used to identify and serve low-income gifted students; it strengthens the requirements for teacher preparation in gifted education with use of Title II professional development funds; and it retains the Javits Grant program for research and dissemination of evidence-based practices. In addition, both states and school districts will be required to report disaggregated achievement data for the advanced band separately (i.e., no more “proficient and above”). This will make “excellence gap” data more readily available and may help advocates better make the case for gifted education in their own districts. However, note that the states have more flexibility with respect to the implementation of federal regulations under ESSA than they had before, so advocates will need to follow carefully the developments in their own states and districts during the 2016-17 transition year and the 2017-18 school year (the year in which accountability plans go into effect).

Resources. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) was instrumental in making sure that ESSA contains language that supports gifted education. There are several resources on their website (nagc.org) that can help you understand the changes and consider how to advocate to make sure that they are implemented locally. On their home page, go to the In the News section, find “Congress includes gifted students in Every Student Succeeds Act,” and click on “Read more.” You will find a news release, a Q&A document, details of the specific ESSA provisions related to gifted education, and several other items, including a video of the one-hour Dec. 17 webinar “NAGC Briefing on ESSA” (available on YouTube).

What can you do? Take a look at the two-page NAGC document containing “action planning suggestions” that are particularly valuable for local and state advocacy. Some of its suggestions follow. (1) Make sure that your district knows that it may use Title I funds for identifying and serving low-income gifted students. (2) Make sure that your district knows that it MUST use Title II professional development funds (if it receives them) partly for preparing regular classroom teachers to meet the needs of gifted students. (3) Watch for your local achievement data to see how many students from which sub-groups score at the “advanced” level. (4) If you are involved with one of Wisconsin’s two new Javits grants, start collecting stories and anecdotes (as well as data) that can show how students can benefit from Javits funding!