



Direct Student Services Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will DSS take funds away from poor students? It seems like the funds would come off the top of the Title I allocation, which would mean less in each district's basic Title I grant. Only a few districts would receive funding, and they would not necessarily be the poorest ones.

The set-aside is similar to the 7% school improvement state reservation, which enables states to target more resources to districts with a high number or percentage of struggling schools identified under ESSA. States would need to send DSS funds to those districts with schools identified under ESSA, but would have wide flexibility to target these resources even more to ensure they go to the poorest districts. In the end, the decision comes down to which option state officials believe would create the greatest benefit: giving each district a little more money by formula or concentrating the funds on potentially high-impact activities that more directly support parental choice. Each state will have to make its own decision based on state circumstances and its own policy preferences.

Q: Isn't DSS going to take away from local decision-making?

The vast amount of Title I funds would continue to flow to schools and districts to help support struggling students. The focus would be to enable students in struggling schools, and their parents, to have the option to access a wide variety of other education opportunities which may not otherwise be available to them in their current school.

Q: The funds awarded to districts through DSS won't be enough to make a difference and there will be a significant administrative burden to implement the program. Why wouldn't the state just allocate funds directly to districts?

Districts would apply for these funds. If they feel that the amount would not be sufficient to make a difference or that the administrative burden would be excessive, they would not need to apply for these funds. Other districts may alternatively find that these funds may be able to support new or expanded initiatives intended to improve student achievement in those schools struggling the most. All funds go to districts, but just as with the 7% school improvement grants, this would target a small portion of funds for those districts with the greatest needs.

Q: How is DSS going to result in improved student achievement?

There is strong evidence that activities and services such as advanced academic coursework, career and technical education programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials, and high-quality tutoring lead to positive outcomes. There is also great evidence that the Title I programs operated by districts do not, on average, bring about significant achievement gains.



Q: When they already have limited capacity, how can states and districts take on DSS when the administrative requirements are so extensive and costly to implement?

It's true that there are administrative responsibilities for the state. This would include administering a new grant program with very specific uses, assuring public school choice, and compiling/maintaining an updated list of high quality academic tutoring providers.

Despite these anticipated challenges, there multiple factors may relieve some of the administrative burden:

- Most states are familiar with the administrative requirements for a wide variety of new programs with very specific uses of funds. In particular, the experience (both positive and negative) that states gained in administering supplemental educational services under NCLB should be useful in guiding state administration of DSS and in holding down costs.
- Many states have maintained a list of high-quality academic tutoring providers for the last 10-15 years, and many continued to do so as recently as last year and should be able to benefit from this past experience.
- In addition to the 2% for administration, districts (unlike under Supplemental Education Services (SES)) would also have the option to reserve 1% for outreach and communication to parents.
- Direct Student Services are very different from SES, particularly with respect to the district having far more of a role to shape and implement its own programs – including deciding which types of Direct Student Services to offer students.

Q: Districts are already providing these services. Why should they add DSS?

A 2016 [report](#) from the US Department of Education found that nearly 70% of high schools with high black and Latino student enrollment do not offer calculus, more than half do not offer physics, a third do not offer chemistry and nearly a third do not offer Algebra II. In addition, AP and other accelerated courses or programs are often not made available to students in many schools. A [report](#) from the Education Trust found that more than half a million low-income students and students of color who would benefit from AP/IB are not doing so or do not have the opportunity to do so.