

Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Title I Funding for High Schools



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The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 changes the requirements for how local educational agencies (LEAs) may allocate Title I funds to allow more high schools to receive funding.

Ranking Schools Based on Poverty

ESSA requires LEAs annually to rank schools from highest to lowest based on the concentration of children from low-income families. Schools that **exceed a threshold of 75 percent** poverty receive funding first. For high schools, however, ESSA now allows LEAs to lower this priority threshold for Title I funding from 75 percent to 50 percent. This is important because high schools currently receive only 10 percent of Title I funding, yet they enroll nearly one-quarter of all students from low-income families.¹ Nationwide, there are **3,031** high schools with a poverty rate of 50 percent or higher that do not receive Title I funding. Lowering the priority threshold for funding from 75 percent to 50 percent would provide “priority status” to **2,559** high-poverty high schools that currently do not receive Title I funding.²

Using Feeder Patterns to Measure Poverty

ESSA allows LEAs to use a feeder pattern as a measure of poverty at the secondary school level. Prior to the passage of ESSA, policy guidance from the U.S. Department of Education allowed LEAs to use feeder pattern data to project the percentage of students from low-income families that would attend a middle or high school based on the poverty rates for the lower-level schools that “feed” into it. However, survey data indicates that only 4 percent of LEAs utilize feeder pattern projections to calculate the percentage of students from low-income families in high schools.³

ESSA codified the feeder pattern policy to offer LEAs a way to calculate poverty at the high school level more accurately. This is necessary because eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, the indicator school districts typically use to measure poverty, undercounts poverty at the high school level because high schools tend to serve larger, less homogenous populations than elementary schools and because older students are reluctant to participate in the program. Under ESSA, LEAs can use a feeder pattern calculation after notifying secondary schools in the LEA that such an option exists and after a majority of the secondary schools in the LEA have approved its use.

For additional fact sheets and videos about ESSA, visit www.all4ed.org/essa/

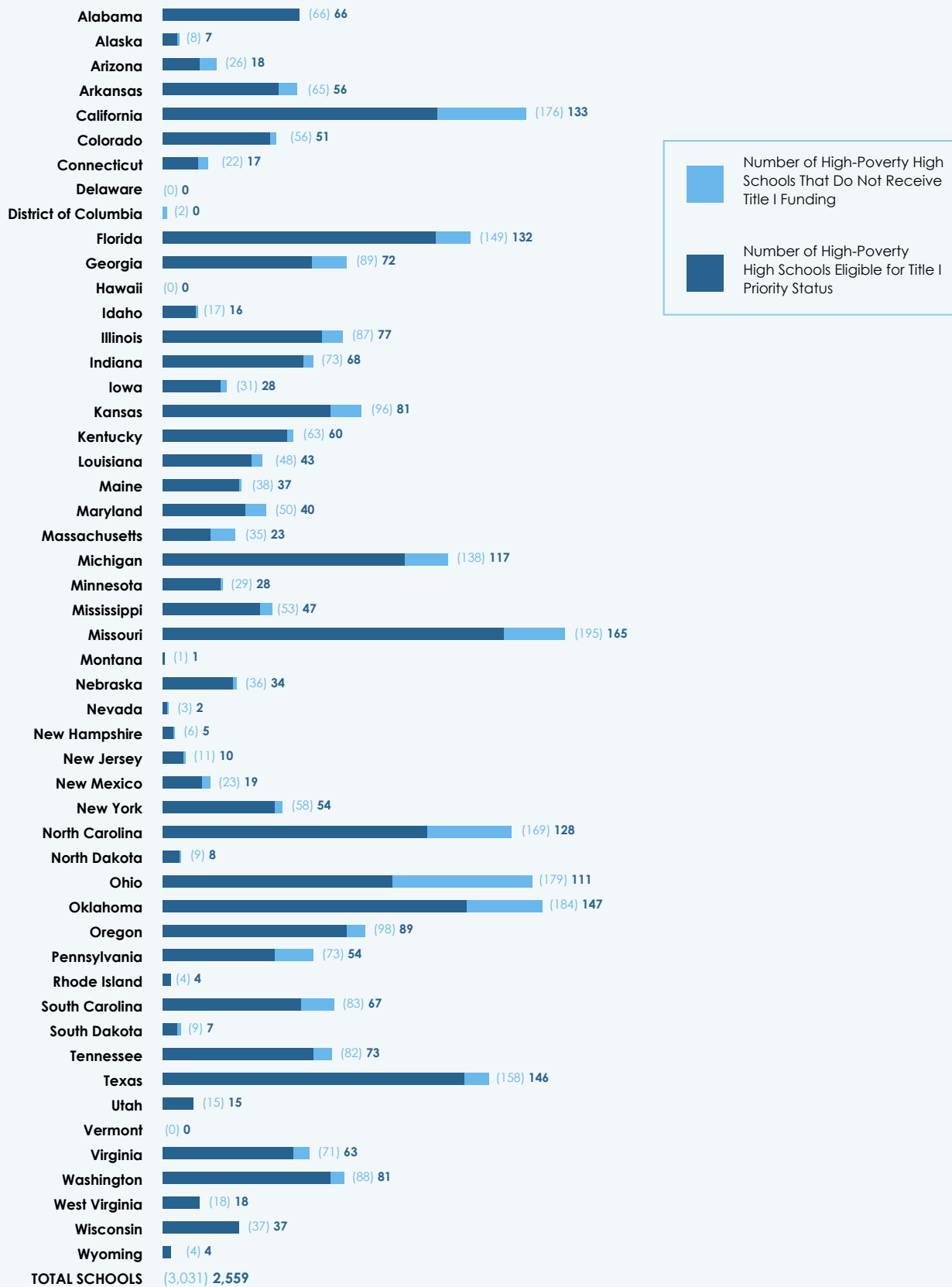
¹ Chambers et al., *State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume VI* (Washington, DC, U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

² Unpublished data analysis of public school data from the 2014–15 Common Core of Data by the Alliance for Excellent Education, 2017.

³ Chambers et al., *State and Local Implementation*.

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC–based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, a career, and citizenship. www.all4ed.org

TABLE 1: Number of High-Poverty High Schools Eligible for Title I Priority Status



Source: Unpublished data analysis of public school data from the 2014–15 Common Core of Data by the Alliance for Excellent Education, 2017.

Notes: "High-poverty" refers to high schools with a poverty rate of 50 percent or higher. The number of high-poverty high schools eligible for Title I priority status refers to the number of high schools that would receive that designation if the LEAs in the state lowered the priority threshold for funding as ESSA permits.