

## ESEA

As the latest rendition of the *Elementary Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) was signed into law by the President in December of 2015. This new legislation – which will take full effect in school year 2017-18 – includes numerous provisions which, having been championed by the Catholic school community, now increase and improve federally supported comprehensive educational services for private school students and teachers.

For Catholic school students, these services include remedial reading and math instruction, academic counseling, and after-school programs.

For Catholic school teachers, these services include instructional training and support.

When ESEA was first enacted in the mid-1960s, Congress determined that federal education aid should be directed in an equitable way toward helping all children in need, regardless of whether they attend a public or private (that is, Catholic!) school. That principle of equitable services governed the implementation of ESEA from 1965 until its most recent iteration – the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB).

In the years that followed NCLB's passage, such equity became eroded.

Now, the new law – the “Every Student Succeeds Act” – corrects such erosion and improves the protection of services for Catholic school children.

For example, under Title I of ESSA, which provides funding to public school districts to help high-need students fulfill their God-given academic potential, a public school district must fund – based on its *total Title I allocation* – federally provided services to Catholic school students who reside within that district. Each district must do this in accord with an equitable-share formula for funding that does not permit the district to set aside certain expenditures for other purposes.

Similarly, under Title II-A of ESSA, which is designed to ensure high-quality teachers, a public school district must set aside a proportionate share of federal funds for the professional development of Catholic school teachers. This “set-aside” for Catholic school teachers – on the part of the public school district – must now be based on the public school district's *total* Title II-A allocation.

In addition, ESSA establishes two new programs: *Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant* and *High Ability Learners and Learning*.

- The *Student Support and Academic Enrichment* program supports initiatives that advance student health and safety, student use of technology, student instruction in foreign languages, and student participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) education, and various other initiatives;
- The *High Ability Learners and Learning* program affords to high potential

students various educational challenges that capitalize upon and then advance even further their academic propensities.

The law provides an 18-month transition period from NCLB; the new law becomes effective at the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year.