

State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2019-20

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State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2019-20

June 2021

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Increasing student achievement by improving the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders is one of the key goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title II, Part A of ESEA (Title II-A) provides over \$2 billion per year in funding to states and districts to support effective instruction through the preparation, recruitment, and training of educators. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the ESEA in 2015, provided greater flexibility for states and districts in how they use Title II-A funds by expanding the option to transfer funds to other ESEA programs and authorizing states to set aside additional funds for training principals and other school leaders. This report, required by Congress, provides a national picture of state and district priorities for Title II-A funds in the 2019-20 school year.

KEY FINDINGS

- *About half of the states and a quarter of the districts used new ESSA flexibility.*
- *Professional development was a popular and substantial use of districts' Title II-A funds, with both short- and long-term training in common.*
- *To a lesser extent, districts invested in recruiting and retaining effective educators and reducing class size.*

Title II, Part A is the key legislation through which the federal government provides funds to states and districts to improve the quality and effectiveness of their teachers, principals, and other school leaders. The program also seeks to recruit new teachers to the field; encourage teachers and leaders to remain in education; and provide low-income and minority students with greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders. State education agencies (SEAs) are allowed to spend up to 5 percent of these funds directly, with the remainder passed on to local school districts. State and districts receive funding according to formulas that account for the total number of students and the number of low-income students in a state or district.

Because Title II-A is one of the largest sources of federal education funds for states and districts, it is important to understand how the grant money is used. Recognizing this need, Congress requires the U.S. Department of Education to collect and publicly report this information annually. This report responds to that mandate using survey data to examine Title II-A-funded activities and use of funding flexibility during the 2019-20 school year. Because districts of different size, type (regular and charter), and locality (urban, rural, and suburban) may use funds in different ways, the report discusses instances in which there are significant differences by these district characteristics. Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused many school districts to switch to remote learning during the spring of the 2019-20 school year, the findings in this report largely reflect pre-pandemic conditions because the survey was launched in March 2020, after many districts had already made spending decisions for Title II-A funds.

SUMMARY OF STUDY DESIGN

What data were collected? A state survey on the use of Title II-A funds was administered to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in the spring and summer of 2020. (For simplicity, this report refers to all 52 entities as “states,” consistent with the ESEA statute, which indicates that the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are treated as states under this law). At the same time, surveys were administered to a nationally representative sample of 5,515 local education agencies (LEAs) (typically school districts). The district sample included enough districts in each state to permit state-by-state estimates of district uses of Title II-A funds; a complete set of state-by-state tables is provided in Appendix D. Puerto Rico, which has a single school district, participated in the state survey but not the district survey. Finally, the sample also included a nationally representative sample of charter school districts.

All states and 4,967 districts (92 percent) responded to the surveys, including 4,533 traditional districts and 434 charter school districts. Appendix A provides more detail on the sample and data collection.

How was the study conducted? Survey responses were tabulated into descriptive statistics (such as percentages) and simple statistical tests (such as tests for differences between percentages). The study is descriptive and not designed to estimate the impact of Title II-A policies on state and district actions.

FUNDING FLEXIBILITY OPTIONS USED BY ABOUT HALF THE STATES AND A QUARTER OF THE DISTRICTS

Before ESSA, states and districts could take advantage of a flexibility option created under the prior version of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). “Transferability” under NCLB allowed states and districts to move funds between Title II-A and two other sections of ESEA (Title I-A and/or Title IV-A) if they thought this would enable them to meet the particular needs of their students more effectively.

ESSA increased the transferability options under Title II-A by:

1. Increasing the set of programs from which states and districts could transfer funds to include four additional programs.¹
2. Allowing states and districts to transfer **all** of their Title II-A funds to one or more of the other specified programs (or all of their funds from other programs to Title II-A), rather than the maximum transfer of 50 percent under NCLB.²

ESSA also allowed states to reserve up to 3 percent of funding for state-level activities to support principal and school leadership development.³ In addition, ESSA continues to allow states to reserve up to 5 percent of total funding for state-level activities.⁴

Similar to the 2018-19 school year, the most common state use of flexibility in the 2019-20 school year was to reserve additional funds for supporting principals and other school leaders. Twenty-three states reserved additional funds to support principals and other school leaders (Exhibit 1), up from 20 states in 2018-19.⁵ (The three additional states were California, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania). On average, states that reserved funds to support principals and other school leaders allocated 2.8 percent of the budget for local education agencies for this support (Appendix Exhibit B.2). Fourteen of the 23 states reserved the maximum allowable 3 percent, eight states reserved 2.8 to 2.9 percent, and one state (Michigan) reserved 0.3 percent (Appendix Exhibit B.2).

Few states transferred funds between Title II and other programs. The same four states that transferred funds to Title II-A from other ESEA programs in 2018-19 did so again in 2019-20. As in the prior year, no states transferred funds from Title II-A to other programs.

Exhibit 1. State use of ESSA flexibility provisions in the 2019-20 school year

Type of flexibility	Number of states	States
Used up to 3 percent of state allocations to support principals and other school leaders	23 states	Alaska, Arkansas, California, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming
Transferred funds from other programs to Title II-A	4 states	California, Louisiana, North Dakota, Oklahoma

Exhibit reads: Twenty-three states used up to 3 percent of their state allocation to support principals and other school leaders, and four states transferred funds from other programs to Title II-A. One state (California) did both.

Note: No states transferred funds from Title II-A to other programs.

Source: 2019-20 State Education Agency (SEA) survey (see Appendix Exhibits B.1, B.2, and B.3 for additional detail).

Districts most commonly used the transferability option to transfer funds from Title II-A to Title I-A; few made transfers into Title II-A. Overall, 25 percent of all districts transferred funds out of Title II-A (Exhibit 2): 23 percent transferred funds to Title I-A, 1 percent transferred funds to Title IV-A, and 1 percent transferred funds to Title V-B (Appendix Exhibit B.4). In contrast, just 7 percent transferred funds to Title II-A from other programs (Exhibit 2).⁶ A small number of districts transferred funds both into and out of Title II-A (Appendix Exhibit B.5).

Districts' use of the transferability option varied across states. The three states with the highest percentages of their districts transferring funds out of Title II-A were Oklahoma (70 percent), North Dakota (59 percent), and Maine (58 percent), while six states had just 1 percent or fewer of their districts making such transfers. Transfers into Title II-A were most common in Rhode Island (32 percent of districts), Tennessee (25 percent), Washington (15 percent), and Alaska (15 percent), while 12 states had 1 percent or fewer of their districts making transfers into Title II-A (Appendix Exhibit B.6).^{7,8}

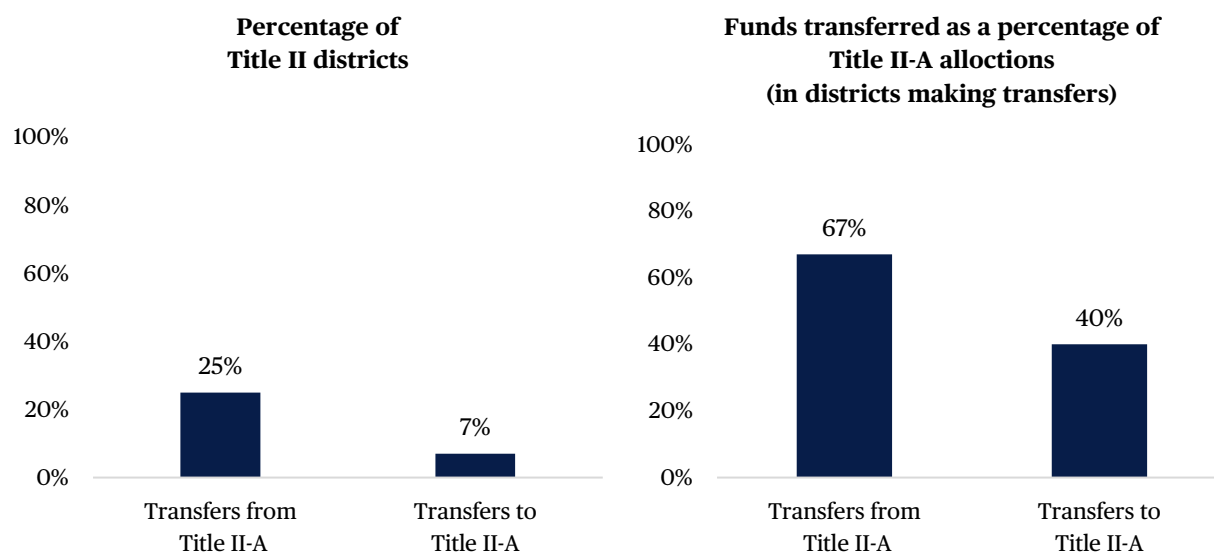
Exhibit 2. Use of funding transferability by Title II-A districts

Exhibit reads: Twenty-five percent of Title II-A districts transferred funds from Title II-A to other programs. Among districts that transferred funds from Title II-A to other programs, collectively these districts decreased their Title II-A funds by 67 percent.

Source: 2019–20 District survey.

Districts and states that transferred funds often substantially altered the proportion of funds available under Title II-A. District transfers from Title II-A resulted in a 67 percent decrease in Title II-A funds in those districts, while district transfers to Title II-A provided a 40 percent increase in Title II-A funds (Exhibit 2; Appendix Exhibit B.7). Among districts that transferred funds out of Title II-A, 66 percent transferred all of their funds and an additional 18 percent transferred more than half of their funds (Appendix Exhibit B.8). Some of the federal programs to which districts transferred funds also support activities related to teacher quality. Among districts that transferred funds into Title II-A, 13 percent transferred all of their funds and an additional 28 percent transferred more than half of their funds (Appendix Exhibit B.8).

Among the four states that transferred funds to Title II-A from other programs, there was wide variation in the resulting increase in funding for Title II-A state-level activities. Oklahoma reported the largest percentage transfer, increasing its funding for Title II-A state activities by 56 percent (Appendix Exhibit B.3). In the other three states, the increase in funding for Title II-A state activities was 34 percent in Louisiana, 24 percent in North Dakota, and 4 percent in California .

Small districts and rural districts were more likely to transfer funds from Title II-A. Over one quarter (29 percent) of small districts (with fewer than 2,500 students) transferred funds to another program, compared with 12 percent of medium districts (2,500 to 10,000 students) and 7 percent of large districts (more than 10,000 students) (Exhibit 3). Similarly, 33 percent of rural districts transferred funds to another program, compared with 22 percent of urban districts. In contrast, small and rural districts were less likely than other districts to transfer funds to Title II-A from another program (Appendix Exhibit B.7).

The types of districts that were most likely to transfer Title II-A funds to other programs – and least likely to transfer funds into Title II-A – were those that received relatively small allocations (Appendix Exhibit B.7). For these districts, combining federal funds from multiple programs provides a larger pool of funds with which to purchase specific resources or services.

Exhibit 3. District use of option to transfer funds from Title II-A to other programs, by district characteristics

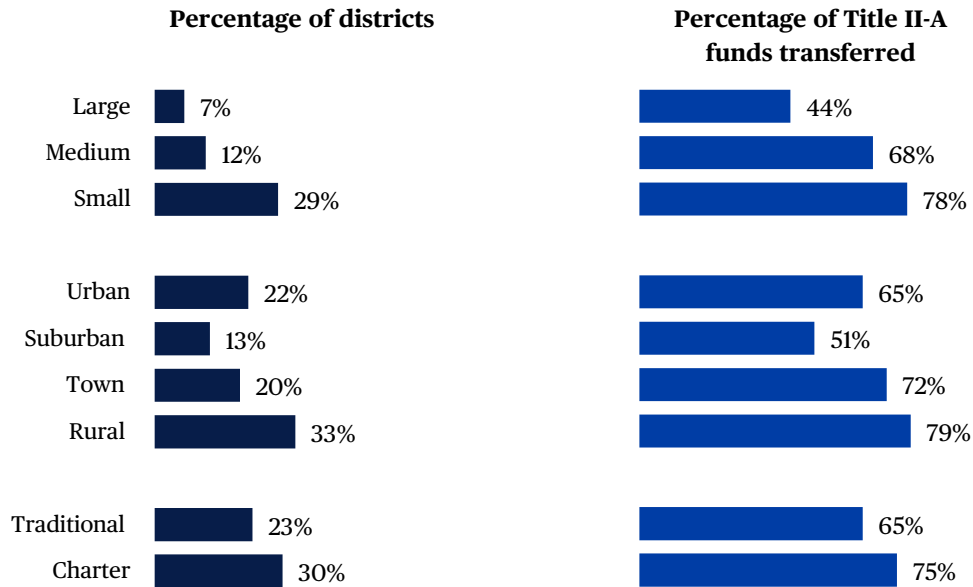


Exhibit reads: Seven percent of large Title II-A districts transferred funds from Title II-A to other programs. Among large districts that transferred funds, they collectively transferred 44 percent of their total original Title II-A funding to other programs.

Note: Large districts = districts with more than 10,000 students; medium districts = districts with 2,500 to 10,000 students; small districts = districts with less than 2,500 students.

In all cases, the percentage of districts transferring Title II-A funds and the percentage of funds transferred differed significantly by district size (chi-squared test, $p < 0.05$); urbanicity (chi-squared test, $p < 0.05$); and type (t-test, $p < 0.05$). See Appendix Exhibit B.8 for additional information.

Source: 2019-20 District survey.

Not only were small and rural districts more likely than large districts to transfer funds out of Title II-A; they also tended to make larger transfers. Among small districts that transferred funds, they collectively transferred 78 percent of their Title II-A funds to other programs compared with 44 percent in large districts (Appendix Exhibit B.7). Similarly, rural districts making such transfers shifted 79 percent of their Title II-A funds to other programs, compared with 65 percent in urban districts. Among districts that transferred funds in the other direction—to Title II-A from other programs—the size of the percentage increase in Title II-A funding did not vary substantially by district characteristics.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT A PRIORITY FOR DISTRICTS’ TITLE II-A SPENDING, COMMONLY USED FOR BOTH SHORT- AND LONG-TERM TRAINING

Professional development has long been a key strategy that districts use to increase the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Title II-A encourages districts to provide “high-quality, personalized professional development that is evidence-based” and focuses on a broad range of topics to improve teachers’ instructional practice. Indeed, ESSA defines the professional development to be supported through Title II-A and other programs as “sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused,” consistent with what research suggests is most effective.⁹

Professional development was the most popular use of Title II-A funds among districts. A large majority (81 percent) of districts reported using Title II-A funds on professional development (Exhibit 4 and Appendix Exhibit B.9). This amounted to a total of \$1.02 billion, or 59 percent of all Title II-A spending at the district level, after transfers to other programs. District reports indicated that, on average, 72 percent of teachers participated in Title II-A-funded professional development (Appendix Exhibit B.10). This percentage was higher in large districts than in medium- and small-size districts. Title II-A spending on professional development—one of several sources of federal funds for professional development—amounted to an average of \$372 per full-time equivalent teachers in districts that used Title II-A funds for this purpose and \$520 per teacher participating in Title II-A-funded professional development (Appendix Exhibit B.11).

Exhibit 4. District uses of Title II-A funds, by type of activity

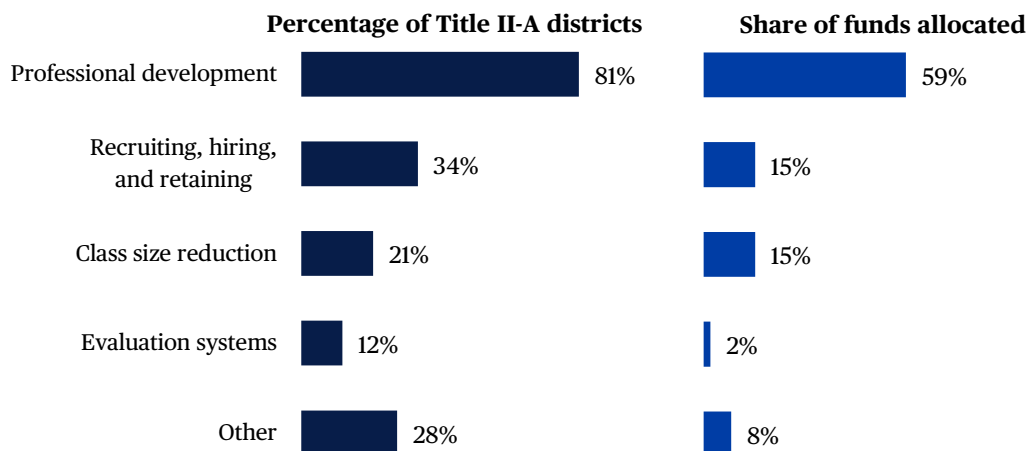


Exhibit reads: Eighty-one percent of Title II-A districts used Title II-A funds for professional development. Collectively, Title II-A districts spent 59 percent of Title II-A funds on professional development.

Source: 2019–20 District survey.

In addition, in most of the states, a large proportion of districts reported using Title II-A funds for professional development (Appendix Exhibit B.12). Specifically, in 44 states at least 70 percent of the districts reported using Title II-A funds for professional development (Appendix Exhibit B.12).

Similarly, professional development dominated the share of Title II-A funds spent in most states, especially in Michigan (84 percent of funds spent on professional development), Mississippi (79 percent), Alaska (78 percent), and Oklahoma (77 percent). Conversely, some states spent relatively few funds on professional development, such as Iowa (24 percent), Montana (31 percent), Pennsylvania (36 percent), and South Dakota (36 percent) (Exhibit 5, Appendix Exhibit B.13).

Professional development was more commonly used by large districts, and by urban and suburban districts. For example, 98 percent of large districts, 89 percent of urban districts, and 90 percent of suburban districts used Title II-A funds for this purpose. By contrast, 76 percent of small districts and 72 percent of rural districts did so (Appendix Exhibits B.14 and B.15). The use of funds for professional development was similar between charter and traditional public school districts.

Districts most commonly used Title II-A professional development funds for short-term training, but many districts also supported longer-term training and education, and some supported job-embedded training. Among districts that used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development, 93 percent reported supporting short-term training of 3 days or less days or conferences, while 77 percent supported longer-term training or education; only 52 percent of districts reported supporting activities that were collaborative or job-embedded (Exhibit 5). The Title II-A survey also asked for the largest two expenditures within each type of funds. Districts supporting teacher professional development most commonly reported that one of their largest two expenditures for this purpose was for short-term training (72 percent of districts), compared with 59 percent that reported this for longer-term training and 28 percent that reported this for collaborative or job-embedded development (Appendix Exhibit B.17).

Exhibit 5. District use of Title II-A funds for various types of professional development activities for teachers and principals

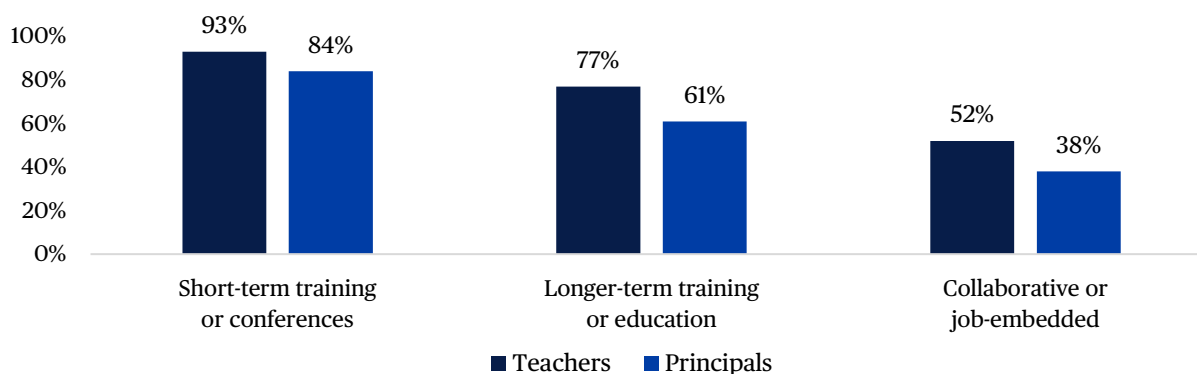


Exhibit reads: Among districts that used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development, 93 percent reported supporting short-term training of 3 days or less or conferences. Among districts that used Title II-A funds for principal professional development, 84 percent reported supporting short-term training of less than three days or conferences.

Note: Districts were asked to indicate all types of professional development for which they used Title II-A funds.

Source: 2019-20 District survey.

Exhibit 6 provides additional detail on the types of teacher training that districts supported with Title II-A funds.

Exhibit 6. Percentage of districts using Title II-A funds for various types of professional development for teachers

Type	Percentage of Title II-A districts
Short-term trainings or conferences	93
Short-term training (3 days or less), single session	88
Conducted by external provider	79
Conducted by district or school-level staff	65
Professional conferences or organizations	70
Longer-term training or education	77
Longer-term training with connected content (4 or more days)	65
One-on-one support from teacher leaders or coaches	45
Group support (e.g., lesson study, peer-to-peer communities of practice)	33
University or college courses	18
Professional certifications (e.g., national board certification, state-level credentials)	18
Collaborative or job-embedded	52
One-on-one support from teacher leaders or coaches	45
Group support (e.g., lesson study, peer-to-peer communities of practice)	33

Exhibit reads: Among districts that used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development, 93 percent reported supporting any type of short-term training. Among districts that used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development, 88 percent reported supporting short-term training that involved a single session of 3 days or less, conducted by any provider type.

Note: Districts were asked to indicate all of the listed types of teacher professional development for which they used Title II-A funds.

Source: 2019–20 District survey.

Large districts were more likely than small districts to report using Title II-A funds for teacher training that was longer-term (96 percent versus 72 percent), short-term (97 percent versus 92 percent), and collaborative or job-embedded (84 percent versus 44 percent) (Appendix Exhibit B.18).

District survey responses indicated similar patterns for principal professional development. For example, districts that used Title II-A funds for principal development were more likely to support short-term training or conferences (84 percent) than longer-term training or education (61 percent) or activities that were collaborative or job-embedded (38 percent) (Exhibit 6). In addition, among districts that used funds for principal development, one of their largest two expenditures for this purpose was for short-term training (74 percent of districts). By contrast, 51 percent of districts reported that longer-term training was one of the largest two expenditures for principal development, and 26 percent did so for collaborative or job-embedded development (Appendix Exhibit B.19).

Some states had relatively high percentages of their districts reporting that they used Title II-A funds for teacher development that was longer-term, collaborative, and job-embedded. In 11 states, more than 90 percent of districts used Title II-A funds for longer-term training (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia) (Appendix Exhibit B.20). In eight of these 11 states, more than three-

quarters of districts used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development that was collaborative or job-embedded. Eight of the 11 states also had the largest percentages of districts reporting using Title II-A funds for principal professional development that was longer-term, and tended to have relatively high percentages reporting that principal professional development was collaborative or job-embedded (Appendix Exhibit B.21).

Professional development most commonly focused on improving instructional practice and teachers’ content knowledge, particularly in English language arts and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Among districts that invested Title II-A funds in teacher professional development, 97 percent of them reported using Title II-A funds to support teachers’ instructional practice, while 89 percent supported training to improve teachers’ content knowledge (Appendix Exhibit B.22). To improve instructional practice, 83 percent of these districts supported training on instructional strategies for academic subjects and 75 percent of districts supported training in the use of data and assessments to guide instruction (Exhibit 7). To improve teachers’ content knowledge, 81 percent supported training in English language arts and 71 percent supported training in STEM subjects.

Exhibit 7. Teacher professional development topics supported with Title II-A funds

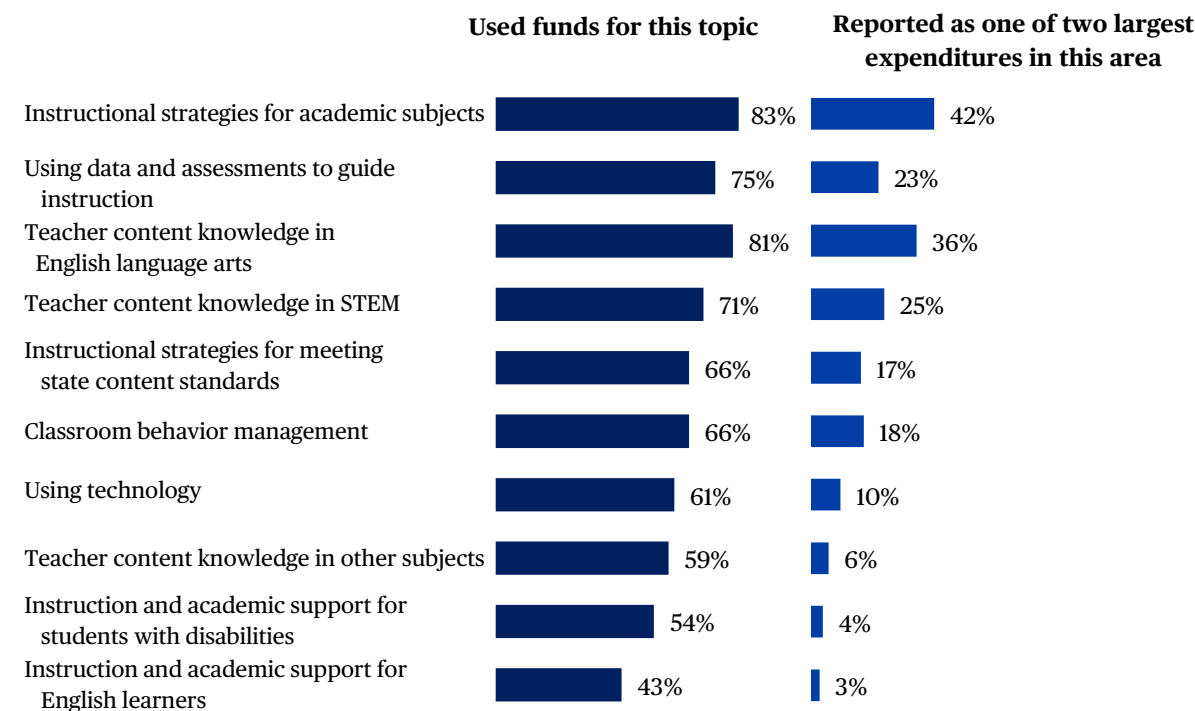


Exhibit reads: Teacher professional development on instructional strategies for academic subjects was supported with Title II-A funds by 83 percent of districts that invested Title II-A funds in teacher professional development and was selected as one of the top two professional development strategies by 42 percent of districts that invested Title II-A funds in teacher professional development.

Note: Districts were asked to indicate all of the listed topics of teacher professional development for which they used Title II-A funds. Districts first indicated whether they used Title II-A funds for each activity, then indicated which two areas were the “top two” based on the amount of funding allocated. The exhibit includes the 10 most frequently reported topics. See Appendix Exhibit B.22 for complete survey results and Appendix Exhibit B.23 for state representative results.

Source: 2019–20 District survey.

Recent concerns about equity have brought attention to students with special needs. In the 2019-20 school year, 54 percent of districts reported using their teacher professional development funds to support students with disabilities, and 43 percent of districts reported using teacher professional development funds to support English learners (Exhibit 8).¹⁰ Large districts and urban districts were more likely than other districts to use Title II-A funds for professional development on instruction and academic support for students with special needs. Training related to instruction for English learners was reported more than twice as much by large districts as by small districts (75 percent versus 35 percent), and more commonly by urban districts than by rural districts (54 percent versus 29 percent) (Appendix Exhibits B.24 and B.25). Similarly, training in instruction for students with disabilities was reported by 71 percent of large districts versus 52 percent of small districts, and by 62 percent of urban districts versus 46 percent of rural districts.¹¹

For principal professional development, districts most commonly invested in strategies and practices to help teachers improve instruction. Among districts that reported spending Title II-A funds on principal professional development, the three most common areas to invest funds were strategies and practices to help teachers improve instruction (85 percent), school improvement planning or identifying interventions to support academic improvement strategies (78 percent), and strategies and practices to advance organizational development (66 percent) (Exhibit 8). Districts also reported that these three areas were among their largest expenditures for principal professional development.

Exhibit 8. Principal professional development topics supported with Title II-A funds

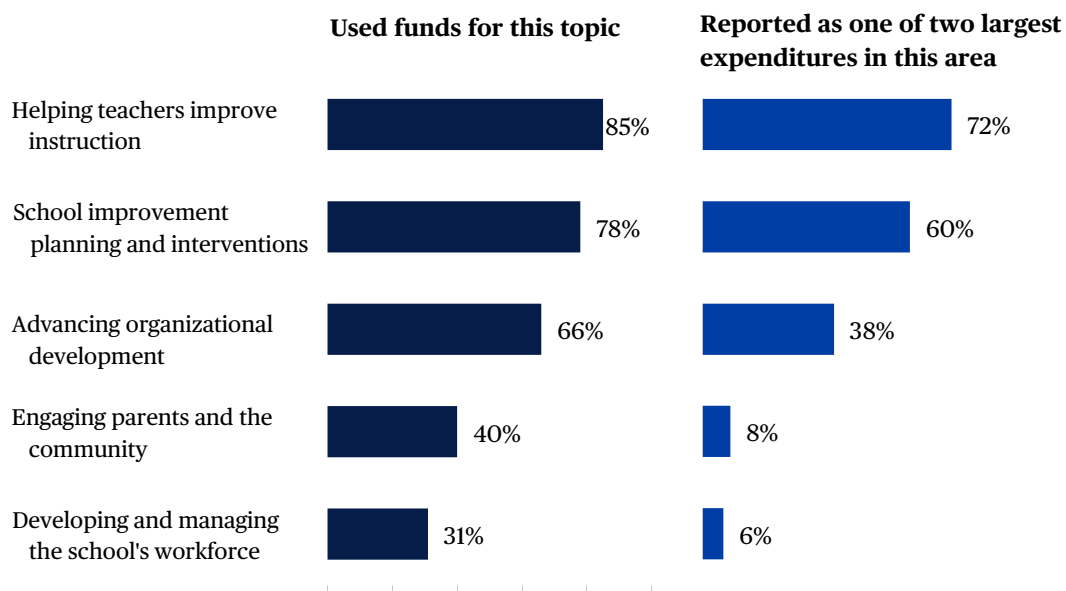


Exhibit reads: Principal professional development on helping teachers improve instructional strategies for academic subjects was supported with Title II-A funds by 85 percent of districts that invested Title II-A funds in principal professional development and was selected as one of the top two professional development strategies by 72 percent of districts that invested Title II-A funds in principal professional development.

Note: Districts were asked to indicate all of the listed topics of principal professional development for which they used Title II-A funds. Districts first indicated whether they used Title II-A funds for each activity, then indicated which two areas were the “top two” based on the amount of funding allocated. See Appendix Exhibit B.26 for additional detail and Appendix Exhibit B.27 for state representative results.

Source: 2019-20 District survey.

Most of the funds that SEAs spent on professional development were devoted to programs for principals. States reported spending \$15.3 million of their state activities funds on professional development, amounting to 18 percent of their Title II-A spending (Appendix Exhibit B.28). In all, 33 SEAs used at least some funds for professional development. Most funds were used to support principals (21 states and \$10.3 million). States also reported supporting professional development to improve instruction and instructional leadership in STEM subjects (21 states and \$2.6 million), among other things.

OTHER MAIN USES OF TITLE II-A FUNDS INCLUDE STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING AND RETAINING EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS AND REDUCING CLASS SIZE

While professional development is an important strategy for increasing the effectiveness of classroom teachers and school leaders, districts and states also used Title II-A funds in other ways to achieve this goal, such as recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals; reducing class sizes by hiring more teachers; and, to a lesser extent, designing and implementing evaluation systems for teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

Some of these activities are intended to recruit and develop new teachers who will be effective in the classroom, such as through reforming state certification systems and teacher preparation programs, recruiting individuals from other fields to become educators, improving the efficiency of district hiring systems, and developing or improving induction and mentoring programs. Other strategies are designed to support career growth and job satisfaction for experienced teachers and school leaders, such as career ladder opportunities that give veteran teachers additional leadership roles while keeping them in the classroom, differential and incentive pay, and improving the quality of evaluation and support systems.

ESSA also allowed two new uses of funds to help improve teacher effectiveness: states can establish preparation academies for teachers, principals, or other school leaders; and states and districts can bolster teacher evaluation and support systems.¹² In contrast, class size reduction—hiring additional teachers to reduce the number of students taught by each teacher—is a strategy intended to increase teacher effectiveness by enabling them to give more individualized attention to students. However, due to the need to expand the supply of teachers, this policy can increase the number of inexperienced and uncertified teachers if implemented quickly on a large scale.¹³

Districts spent over 90 percent of Title II-A funds on teachers. Overall, including both professional development and other types of strategies, districts reported that 91 percent of their Title II-A funds were used to support teachers (Appendix Exhibit B.29). The remaining 9 percent of district spending was used to support principals and other school leaders.

After professional development, a greater share of districts allocated funds to recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective educators than for any other purpose. Overall, 34 percent of districts reported using funds for recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective educators. Collectively, districts spent 15 percent of their Title II-A funds for this purpose (Exhibit 4). The District of Columbia (58 percent) and Hawaii (40 percent) devoted the most funding to recruiting, hiring, and

retaining effective educators; in contrast, districts in 13 states devoted less than 10 percent of funds to this area (Exhibit 9, Appendix Exhibit B.13).

Exhibit 9. District strategies to recruit and retain effective educators using Title II-A funds

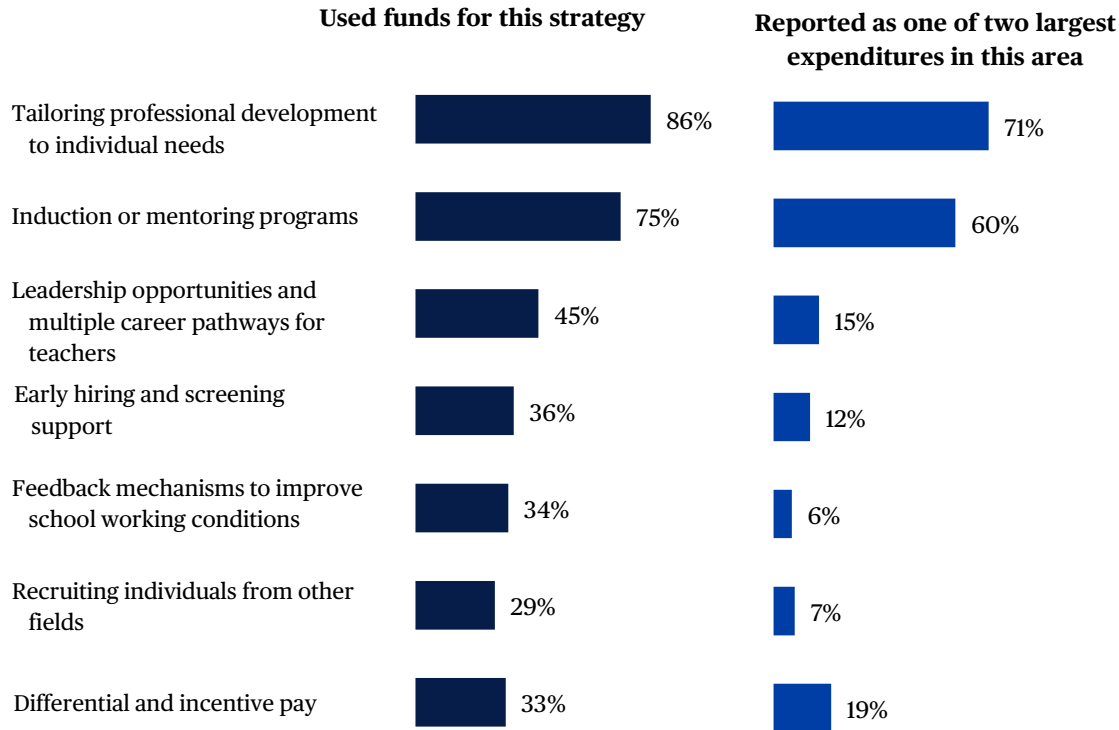


Exhibit reads: Among districts that reported using Title II-A funds to recruit, hire, and retain effective educators, tailoring professional development to individual needs was supported by 86 percent, and was selected as one of the top two professional development strategies by 71 percent.

Note: Districts were asked to indicate all of the listed strategies to recruit and retain effective educators for which they used Title II-A funds. Districts first indicated whether they used Title II-A funds for each activity, then indicated which two areas were the “top two” based on the amount of funding allocated. See Appendix Exhibit B.30 for additional details and Appendix Exhibit B.31 for state representative results.

Source: 2019-20 District survey.

Although large districts were more likely to use Title II-A funds for recruitment, hiring, and retention (61 percent) than were small districts (29 percent), the total share of funds allocated for this area was similar in these two groups (16 percent for large districts and 14 percent for small districts) (Appendix Exhibits B.14, B.15, and B.16). Similarly, urban districts were more likely to use the funds for recruitment, hiring, and retention (41 percent) compared with rural districts (27 percent), but both urban and rural districts allocated 15 percent of funds to this area. Charter districts used a similar share of Title II-A funds for recruitment, hiring, and retention (34 percent) as traditional districts (33 percent), but charter districts collectively spent 24 percent of their funds for this purpose, compared with 14 percent spent by traditional districts.

Among districts that used Title II-A funds to recruit, hire, and retain educators, the most common strategies that districts reported in this area were tailoring professional development to individual teacher or leader needs (86 percent) and induction or mentoring programs for new teachers and

leaders (75 percent) (Exhibit 9). These two activities were also the largest two expenditures in this area overall: 71 percent of these districts reported that tailoring professional development was a “top two” strategy, while 60 percent of these districts reported this for induction and mentoring programs.

When states used Title II-A funds to support recruiting and retaining effective educators, they also commonly focused on efforts to strengthen teachers’ and principals’ skills (Appendix Exhibit B.28). Among the 35 states that used Title II-A state-level funds to support recruiting and retaining effective educators, almost half of the funds were spent collectively on two categories: (1) supporting the use of teacher-led, evidence-based professional development (reported by 16 states for a total amount of \$5.9 million), and (2) reforming certification, licensing, or tenure systems or preparation programs (19 states and \$5.2 million) (Appendix Exhibit B.28).

Less than a quarter of districts used Title II-A funds for class size reduction. Overall, 21 percent of districts used funds for class size reduction, which accounted for 15 percent of all Title II-A spending (Exhibit 4 and Appendix Exhibit B.9). This continued a longer-term downward trend in the use of Title II-A funds for class size reduction, down from 41 percent of districts and 31 percent of funds in 2012-13 (and 57 percent of funds in 2002-03).¹⁴

Class size reduction was most commonly used by small and rural districts and least often used by charter school districts (Appendix Exhibits B.14, B.15, and B.16). Small districts spent a greater share of their funds on class size reduction than large districts (22 percent versus 12 percent), and rural districts spent a greater share of their funds than urban districts (24 percent versus 14 percent) (Exhibit 10). Charter school districts reported spending 2 percent of their Title II-A funds on class size reduction, compared with 16 percent in traditional districts.

Exhibit 10. Share of Title II-A funds used for class size reduction, by district characteristics

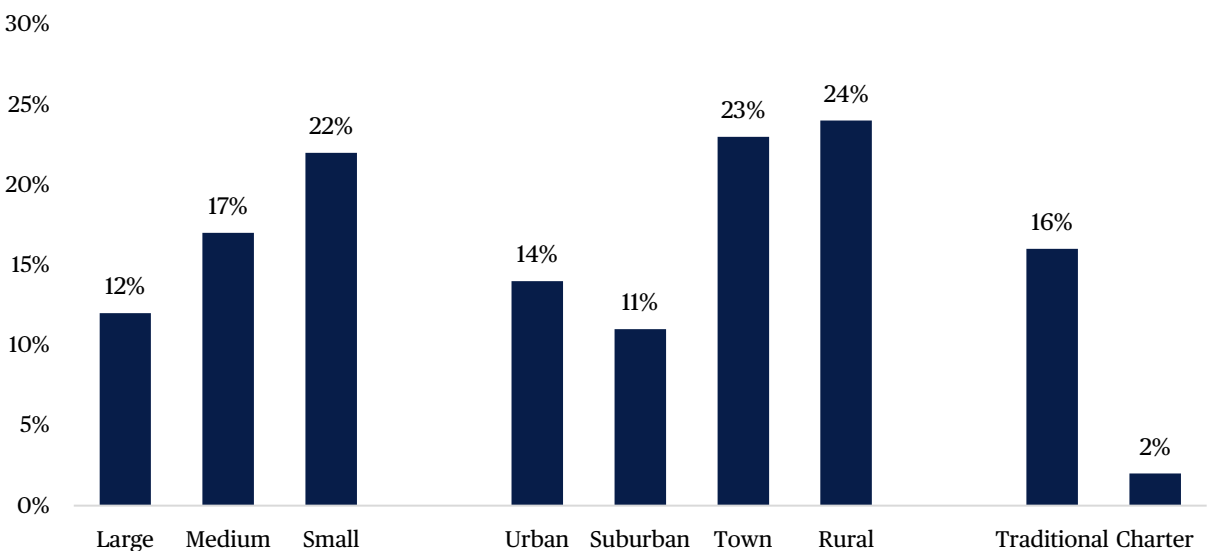


Exhibit reads: Collectively, large districts spent 12 percent of their Title II-A funds on class size reduction, while medium-sized districts collectively spent 17 percent of their Title II-A funds on class size reduction, and small districts collectively spent 22 percent of their Title II-A funds on class size reduction.

Source: 2019–20 District survey.

Districts' use of Title II-A funds for class size reduction varied considerably across states. Districts in five states—Alabama, Iowa, Montana, New York, and North Dakota—reported spending 40 percent or more of their funds on class size reduction, while districts in 24 states reported spending less than 10 percent of their funds on class size reduction (Exhibit 9, Appendix Exhibit B.13).

In the second year of ESSA implementation, no states opted to use funds for preparation academies, but over a third of the states and some districts used funds to support evaluation systems. Preparation academies offer an “alternate business model” for training educators, outside the typical track of education schools, with the potential to focus on training teachers in areas of high demand within the state.¹⁵ However, no states reserved funds for preparation academies for teachers, principals, or other school leaders in the 2019-20 school year, although two states had done so in the prior year (Appendix Exhibit B.28).

In contrast, 19 states reported using Title II-A state activities funds for evaluation and support systems for teachers, principals, and other school leaders, amounting to a total of \$6.7 million, or 7 percent of total state spending (Appendix Exhibit B.32). Across the 19 states, 2 states—New York and South Carolina—spent more than \$1 million for these evaluation and support systems, while 6 states—Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, North Carolina, and Rhode Island—spent less than \$100,000. Examined as a share of state activities funds used for these systems, South Carolina (74 percent) and Idaho (42 percent) spent the greatest share of their funds on evaluation and support systems, while seven states spent less than 10 percent of their funds in this way (Appendix Exhibit B.32).

At the district level, 12 percent of districts reported using funds for evaluation and support systems, amounting to 2 percent of total district Title II-A spending (Appendix Exhibit B.9).

CONSISTENCY AND CHANGE

State and district use of Title II-A funds in 2019-20 were generally consistent with patterns from the previous year, with similar usage of flexibility options and similar percentages of funds used in various spending categories. However, although the share of funds spent on most categories differed by only a few percentage points between the two years, these relatively small shifts generally continued longer-term trends. In particular, Title II-A spending on professional development has steadily increased while spending on class size reduction has declined. Whether future uses of Title II-A funds during and after the COVID-19 pandemic diverge from these trends can be examined through subsequent rounds of the annual surveys on state and district uses of Title II-A funds, including the surveys currently underway for the 2020-21 school year.

ENDNOTES

¹ The additional programs to which states and districts are allowed to transfer funds include Title I, Part C (Education of Migratory Children); Title I, Part D (Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk); Title III, Part A (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act); and Title V, Part B (Rural Education Achievement Program).

² For Title I-A, however, the transferability option is more limited: states and districts may transfer funds into but not out of their Title I-A programs.

³ Strong school leadership is associated with higher levels of student achievement, particularly in schools with the greatest needs (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin 2013; Coelli & Green 2012; Louis et al. 2010).

⁴ The maximum amount that a state may reserve is 7.85 percent of its state allocation—including up to 5 percent for state activities generally, and up to 2.85 percent for state-level principal and school leader support (i.e., 3 percent of the 95 percent earmarked for district subgrants). This would leave a minimum of 92.15 percent of the funds for district subgrants.

⁵ Isenberg & Webber 2021.

⁶ One percent of districts reported transferring funds both into and out of Title II-A. When examining the proportion of funds transferred in or out at the district level, this report focuses on net transfers. That is, districts are defined as having transferred funds into Title II-A if they transferred more funds into Title II-A than out of Title II-A. Conversely, districts are defined as having transferred funds out of Title II-A if they transferred more funds out of Title II-A than into Title II-A.

⁷ Throughout the report, when counting the number of states that met a threshold, the percentage of districts within a state (or share of funds spent within a state) is rounded to the nearest percentage point before the state is categorized as having met a threshold. For example, a state in which 9.6 percent of districts transferred funds into Title II-A would be counted as a state in which at least 10 percent of districts transferred funds into Title II-A.

⁸ In analyses in which we examined percentages of districts by state, we excluded Hawaii, which has a single statewide district.

⁹ Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan 2018; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner 2017; Garet et al. 2016; Blank & de las Alas 2009.

¹⁰ Use of teacher professional development funds for the 2018-19 school year are reported in Isenberg & Webber (2021).

¹¹ More broadly, large districts and urban districts were often more likely than other districts to support other specific professional development topics. This may reflect that these districts generally have larger Title II-A allocations and may also have more varied needs within the district.

¹² Allowable strategies intended to recruit, hire, train, and retain effective teachers are enumerated in Sections 2101(c)(4) and 2103(a) of the statute (*Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, 2015) and are further discussed in the non-regulatory guidance for states and districts (U.S. Department of Education 2016a).

¹³ The Tennessee STAR experiment with class size reduction in 79 participating elementary schools in the 1980s was found to have significant positive student achievement effects (Krueger & Whitmore 2001). However, when California adopted a similar policy statewide in the 1990s, this led to a sudden increase in the numbers of inexperienced and uncertified teachers, particularly in schools with high

concentrations of low-income and minority students (Jepsen & Rivkin 2009). Millsap et al. (2004) discusses the early history of federal funding for class size reduction.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education 2016b. Older versions of the Title II-A survey asked about the use of funds for “hiring highly qualified teachers to reduce class size,” whereas the current survey asks about “class size reduction.” The change in the wording of the survey question accorded with changes in the language of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, from the No Child Left Behind Act to the Every Student Succeeds Act.

¹⁵ Arnett 2016; Tooley 2017.

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DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The study team for this report included staff from Westat. None of the study team members has financial interests that could be affected by findings from this report.