

U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor: America's Important Federal Education Laws

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – In December 2015, Congress passed a long-overdue bipartisan education reform bill that significantly reforms the controversial No Child Left Behind law under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA replaces the high-stakes testing and punitive policies of No Child Left Behind with a greater state responsibility for better identifying and supporting struggling schools. It also requires meaningful state and local action in every school where students – or any subgroup of students – aren't learning. Any action taken to support school improvement must be solely driven by student outcomes. ESSA preserves Title I funds for students and schools – vitally important to Hillsborough and Pinellas students - increases teacher support, and incentivizes increased transparency of publically-funded charter schools that often are not subject to accountability and other safeguards for our tax dollars.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1975 - IDEA is America's special education law for children with disabilities that guarantees an opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education like all other children. IDEA sets high standards for achievement and guides how special help and services are made available in schools to address individual needs. More than 6 million children with disabilities receive special education and related services in America's public schools each year.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - FERPA protects the privacy of student education records and gives parents (and students after age 18) certain rights with respect to records like the right to inspect and review the student's records and right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's record except school officials with legitimate educational interest and other specified reasons. Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors, awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow them a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose such info.

Higher Education Opportunity Act – The Higher Education Opportunity Act/Higher Education Act (HEA) supports students in higher education with financing a postsecondary education; provides support to students pursuing international education opportunities and certain graduate and professional degrees; and provides support to institutions of higher education. The most prominent initiatives under HEA are the **Pell Grants** and Title IV programs that provide financial assistance to students and families. In FY 2014, approximately \$134 billion in financial assistance was made available to 13 million students.

Pell Grants – The federal Pell Grant is the single largest source of federal aid for college students. Pell Grants are need-based aid. Amounts can change yearly. The maximum Federal Pell Grant award is \$5,815 for the 2016-17 award year (July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017).

Students Loans – The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan program, authorized under Title IV, Part D of the Higher Education Act, is the primary federal student loan program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The Direct Loan program offers loans to undergraduate and graduate students as well as the parents of dependent undergraduate students to help them finance postsecondary expenses. There are four types of Direct Loans: Subsidized Stafford Loans for undergraduate students; Unsubsidized Stafford Loans for undergraduate and graduate students; PLUS Loans for graduate students and the parents of dependent undergraduate students; and Consolidation Loans through which borrowers can combine multiple loans into a single loan.

Pell grants, student loans and other postsecondary initiatives enable thousands of Tampa Bay area students to attend college each year. The college degree is the most reliable predictor of a good-paying job and success in future years.

Head Start – Head Start provides comprehensive early childhood development services to low-income children. Funding flows directly to the local level rather than the states. Traditional Head Start programs serve three- and four-year old children. In 1994, Head Start expanded to include an Early Head Start program, which serves children from birth to three years of age. Hillsborough County has one of the longest-running and expansive Head Start initiatives in the country in partnership with Hillsborough County and Hillsborough County Public Schools.

Civil Rights laws - Disability Discrimination (Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act); Sex Discrimination (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972); Race and National Origin Discrimination (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)



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