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 Guiding Every Student Higher 

2026 Federal Programs Institute

Reaching Higher with Title II, Part A

**A Panel Discussion on Strategic
Planning**

Michelle Harless | FPO

August 2026



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Agenda for Session

- Purpose of Title II, Part A
- Panel Discussion
- Highlights for Accounting and Reporting Funds
- Resources
- Questions

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Purpose of Title II, Part A

Title II, Part A

- Title II, Part A is intended to improve teacher and school leader quality with a focus on preparing, training, and recruiting high-quality teachers and principals.
- Title II provides grants to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and subgrants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to:
 - Increase student achievement consistent with the challenging state academic standards;
 - Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school-based leaders;
 - Increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school-based leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools and;
 - Provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school-based leaders.



Supplement Not Supplant

- Title II funds must only be used to provide additional services, staff, programs, or materials that are not provided with State or local resources; federal funds cannot pay for resources that would otherwise be purchased with State and/or local funds.
- Title II funds may not be used to pay for any training or professional development that is required under State law or State Board of Education Rule.
 - Example: Child Abuse Training, Child Sexual Abuse, and Human Trafficking of Children training required under T.C.A. § 37-1-408



Definition of Professional Development

- 20 U.S.C. § 7801(42) defines “professional development,” specifically noting that the professional development activities are:
 - Integral part of the broad school and district plans,
 - Increase educator knowledge,
 - Sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops),
 - Intensive, collaborative, job-embedded,
 - Data-driven,
 - Aligned with State academic standards, and
 - Classroom-focused



Needs Assessment and Consultation

- What is required under ESEA?
 - **LEAs** must engage in **meaningful consultation** with a broad range of stakeholders as required by ESEA §§ 6611(d)(3) and 6612(b)(3), and non-public schools as required by ESEA § 8501, and must have a process in place to “**use data...**to continually update and improve activities supported under this part”.(ESEA § 6612(b)(2)(d))
- What does the guidance say?
 - SEAs and LEAs must engage in meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders as required by ESEA § 6611(d)(3) and 2102(b)(3), and **should examine relevant data to understand students’ and educators’ most pressing needs, including the potential root causes of those needs given local context.** (Title II, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance)



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Results of FY25 Title II, Part A Use of Funds Survey

Key Takeaways from 2025

- Professional development remains the dominant investment area, with nearly all LEAs engaging in short-term professional development (PD) and conferences, and many supporting long-term, job-embedded learning.
- LEAs are prioritizing pipeline strengthening, induction, and targeted PD over structural changes such as class-size reduction or large-scale compensation incentives.
- While many LEAs analyze educator-quality data, fewer take direct action to address inequitable access, though PD and working-condition improvements are the most common approaches.
- Title II flexibility continues to support LEAs in customizing strategies to local needs across Tennessee.
- [FY25 Title II Use of Funds Survey Results](#)



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Panel Discussion

Strategically Spending Title II, Part A

Meet the LEAs: Mark Gullion

- Mark Gullion serves as the Director of Special Populations and Federal Programs for Rutherford County Schools.
 - A dedicated educator and leader, he has spent his entire career serving students, educators, and families within the Rutherford County School System. Throughout his career, Mark has held a variety of leadership roles, including classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, and Special Education Director. These experiences have provided him with a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning, school leadership, special education services, and the effective stewardship of federal programs and resources.
 - In his current role, Mark oversees federal funding initiatives and programs that support student achievement and educational equity across the district. His extensive experience and commitment to public education have helped shape programs and services that meet the diverse needs of students and schools throughout Rutherford County.

Meet the LEAs: Michelle Carter

- Michelle Carter serves as a Federal Programs Specialist for Rutherford County Schools, bringing more than 29 years of service to the district.
 - She has built her career around supporting students, educators, and families through a variety of leadership roles. Prior to her current position, Michelle served as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, and Title I parent engagement facilitator, experiences that continue to inform her collaborative and student-centered approach.
 - In her current role, Michelle provides leadership and support for Title I parent and family engagement initiatives, oversees Title I extended contracts, analyzes Title I and Title II budget requests and expenditures, assists with the revision and alignment of school and district improvement, serves as the district contact for Title I, Part D programs, and collaborates with the ATLAS team.. Serving and supporting at-risk students in Title I schools in Rutherford County has been both her passion and lifelong professional mission.



Meet the LEAs: Trassey Evans

- Trassey Evans currently serves as the Federal Programs Supervisor with Arlington Community Schools in Arlington, TN.
 - With 28 years in education and 25 years in federal programs, compliance, and school improvement, Trassey provides guidance and technical assistance to help educators maximize resources and strengthen instructional practices. She is passionate about collaboration and continuous learning, and enjoys sharing practical strategies that empower educators to create meaningful learning experiences and improve outcomes for all students.



Panel Question 1

- How does the LEA select stakeholders for consultation, and what efforts are made for engagement with all stakeholders?



Panel Question 2

- What data is utilized when conducting a comprehensive needs assessment?



Panel Question 3

- How does the LEA review and evaluate programs on an annual cycle?



Panel Question 4

- How are instructional coaches being utilized to support novice teachers and improve academic outcomes?



Panel Question 5

- What does the LEA feel has been the best "bargaining chip" for recruiting highly effective teachers?



Panel Question 6

- What does the LEA attribute to high retention rates?



Panel Question 7

- How does the LEA ensure professional development is selected as part of the improvement plan?



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Highlights for Accounting and Reporting Funds

Common Account Codes

- Teachers: 116
- Certified Substitutes: 195
- Non-certified Substitutes: 198
- Instructional Coaches: 172
- Stipends for employee attending PD or services outside of regular work hours other: 189
- Stipends for employee providing PD: 196
- Bonus Payments: 188
- Intra-district travel (usually for Instructional Coaches): 355
- Professional Development (including travel): 524
- [Standardized System of Accounting and Reporting Manual 2025](#)

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Common Obligations

- When obligations occur (34 CFR § 76.707):

If the obligation is made for...	The obligation is made...
Personal services by an employee	When the services are performed .
Personal services by a contractor (not an employee)	On the date the LEA makes a binding written commitment to obtain the services.
Travel (Hotel fees, Rental Car, Food, etc)	When the travel is taken .
Materials	When the date the LEA makes a binding written commitment .
Conference or Praxis Testing Registration	When the date the LEA makes a binding written commitment .





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Resources

Highlighted Resources

- [Title II, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance](#) updated January 2025
- [Title II, Part A Activity Evaluation Form](#)
- [Allowable Uses of Title II, Part A Funds](#)

PL1



Slide 26

PL1 [@Michelle Harless] the first and last links don't work.
Suzanne Lewis, 2026-07-20T22:59:07.164

1 0 Thanks @Suzanne! I have it fixed now.
Michelle Harless, 2026-07-21T11:48:47.302

Questions?

Michelle.Harless@tn.gov

(615) 418-4390

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What's Next | 1:00 – 2:10 p.m.

Strengthening Neglected & Delinquent Programs (Room 3)

Building Digital Workflows for Compliance (Room 4)

ESL Rule in Real-World Contexts (Room 5)

From Policy to Practice (Room 6)

Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness (Room 9/10)