



**Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the
Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

**Healthy Youth, Connected Youth,
Healthy and Connected Families**

September 28, 2010

Introduction

The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), a coalition of the National Human Services Assembly, brings together over 50 national non-profit organizations that provide programs, services, technical assistance, training and evaluation to youth in America. Primarily community-based, the members of NCY have a significant interest in youth development. NCY members collectively serve more than 40 million young people; employ over 100,000 paid staff; utilize more than six million volunteers; and have a physical presence in virtually every community in America.

Convened in 1974, the mission of the National Collaboration for Youth is to provide a united voice as advocates for youth to improve the conditions of young people in America, and to help young people reach their full potential. Specifically, we used the following guiding principles to examine No Child Left Behind and propose recommendations for change during this reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965:

- *Outcomes: Social, emotional, physical and civic outcomes should be considered along with academic outcomes.* While academic outcomes are critical, they are best addressed together with the full complement of interrelated developmental areas. We examined ESEA for opportunities to expand the list of targeted outcomes to include this broader set.
- *Target population: While efforts should be framed to help all youth, funding should target youth in disadvantaged populations.* We examined ESEA for opportunities to increase resources for schools with Title I designation, extremely low graduation rate, high poverty-level, large number of students on free/reduced price lunch, rural areas, and other factors.
- *Delivery systems: While school buildings and personnel are central to education, they can be supported by parents and families, community-based, faith-based and other public agency organizations.* We examined ESEA for opportunities to increase the constructive engagement of families, community-based, faith-based and other public agency organizations.
- *Coordination: Efforts to support young people must be aligned among multiple departments and sectors.* We examined ESEA for areas where coordination and alignment could improve effectiveness and efficiency.
- *Types of services, supports and opportunities: In addition to basic academic instruction, a range of complementary services and supports should be offered, such as mentoring, service-learning, physical fitness, and other enrichment programs that build and enhance life skills and applied skills from cradle to career.* We examined ESEA for areas where this broader set of services and supports could be provided.
- *Funding levels: Funding for the outcomes, populations, delivery systems and services and supports outlined above must be adequate.* We examined ESEA for areas where funding for the activities above could be increased.

At a time when statistics show the decreasing chances of an at-risk young person graduating from high school, or graduating with the skills to continue onto higher education or into meaningful employment,

our recommendations focus on relevance and readiness – making education and the future relevant for youth, and preparing them for success in *their* world. Based in research and best practices, our proposed enhancements to programs, or creation of new programs would

- increase student attendance;
- decrease dropout rate;
- improve academic success by building stronger connections to school and community;
- develop applied skills necessary for the workforce; and
- enhance social and civic responsibility.

This proposal is not comprehensive and we did not apply our principles uniformly throughout the analysis of ESEA. Our recommendations concentrate in areas we know best: healthy youth, connected youth, and healthy and connected families. Specifically, we propose changes and new programs in the following areas which provide the greatest opportunities to infuse the principles outlined previously:

- Integrated student support services
- Family engagement
- Afterschool programs
- Summertime learning
- Mentoring
- Service-learning
- Safe schools
- Physical education & nutrition
- Children and youth in foster care
- Children and youth experiencing homelessness
- Pregnant and parenting youth
- Dropout recovery and prevention & multiple pathways to graduation

We believe in public schools, and believe that national community-based organizations serve an integral role in supporting public education. Whether in the schools or partnering with them in the community, together, we can ensure that our nation’s young people receive the best education possible.

Integrated Student Support Services

Background

Approximately 70 percent of 8th graders are not proficient in math or reading,¹ and only about the same percentage of students entering the 9th grade graduate four years later.² Our nation’s education system is clearly in need of improvement. Accordingly, the reauthorization of ESEA will pay much attention to such issues as accountability, teacher quality, and education standards.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The Condition of Education 2006* (NCES 2006-071). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 131 and 136. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006071.pdf>.

² Greene, Jay P. and Marcus Winters (2005). *Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*. New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 7. www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp_08.pdf.

However, these aspects of school reform alone are not enough. Evidence suggests that to improve student academic success, we must meet students' needs in and out of the classroom.³ Doing so necessitates a much stronger connection between schools and the broader community. Research shows that when community resources are leveraged effectively, they can produce results. A review of 160 publications funded by the Department of Education found that effective community and family connections with school can impact student achievement in reading, math, science and other subjects.⁴

Recommendations

Title V – New Initiatives and Programs for Student Support Services

- All Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) receiving federal education funds should be required to develop community engagement policies and practices, and to designate a staff person to oversee their implementation. This would assist in ensuring that all students have access to the full range of student support services they need to facilitate their learning, including services available through public, community-based, and faith-based organizations. Such a community involvement requirement would operate in parity with the parent involvement requirement of Section 1118.
- Capacity should be developed to leverage community resources. Funds should be made available for school-community partnership grants to a subset of public schools with children and youth at highest risk of school failure. The DIPLOMA Act (S. 3595) would promote a collaborative framework that integrates services and engages families and communities to help address comprehensive student needs. By creating innovative partnerships, a number of stakeholders are involved in addressing the comprehensive needs of children and youth, thus tackling learning barriers located inside and outside the school.
 - Incentives need to be created for schools to partner with an array of community stakeholders in order to help strengthen student achievement, coordinate existing services and fill gaps in services ranging from tutoring and extended learning to health care and social supports. These types of partnerships promote a shared, systemic, and comprehensive approach to education via the integration of resources coupled with the engagement of families. By doing this, it allows communities to directly address the factors that influence student achievement.
 - States would receive funds by formula, and then would provide the funding (via a competitive grant process) to local consortia which consists of school districts, community based organizations, local government, service providers, students, parents and others that have a proven record of effectiveness. As part of the State strategy, an assessment of student needs and State assets are conducted which provide direction for the consortia in identifying and addressing learning barriers through the leveraging and integration of support services. Schools and communities are then able to improve academic achievement, build civic capacity, and provide a continuum of supports and opportunities for students and their families.

³ Dynarski, Mark (2004). Interpreting the Evidence from Recent Federal Evaluations of Dropout-Prevention Programs: The State of Scientific Research in *Dropouts in America*. Edited by Gary Orfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 265.

⁴ Jordan, Catherine; Evangelica Orozco; and Amy Averett (2001). *Emerging Issues in School, Family & Community Connections*. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 17. www.sedl.org/connections/resources/emergingissues.pdf.

- An integrated student services system would include: school- and student-level needs assessment; community asset assessment and identification of potential partners; annual plans for school-wide prevention and individual intervention strategies; delivery of services based on those strategies; and data collection and evaluation over time with modification of services as appropriate.

Family Engagement

Background

Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education increases student achievement and decreases the dropout rate, regardless of families' socioeconomic status, educational level, or ethnicity.⁵ Family engagement is also cost-effective way to improve student achievement, studies show that schools would have to increase spending by \$1000 per pupil to achieve the same results.⁶

Recommendations

Title I, Section 1118

Build Infrastructure and Capacity for Family Engagement by strengthening the parental involvement provisions in Section 1118 to:

- Incentivize school districts to meaningfully engage families by increasing the set-aside for family engagement from 1 percent to 2 percent and providing additional training and technical assistance on best practices.
- Develop research-based standards and evaluation tools for family engagement to ensure schools and districts are partnering with families in meaningful ways.
- Add a statutory definition and framework on effective family engagement that engages families across a child's lifespan and in all learning settings.

Title V, Sections 5561-5565

Increase the impact and efficacy of Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) and Local Family Information Centers.

- Streamline and shift the scope of the PIRC role and responsibilities from providing direct services and information to parents to providing capacity-building, training, and technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs.
- Pilot a local family engagement centers demonstration program through which local community-based organizations provide direct services to families and remove barriers for family engagement.

⁵ Henderson, A. and Mapp, K. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: the Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and Ferguson, C., Ramos, M., Rudo, Z., and Wood, L. (June 16, 2008). The School Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture: a Review of Current Literature. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. SEDL. p. 2.

⁶ Houtenville, A. and Conway, K. (2008). Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement. Journal of Human Resources, XLIII, 2. pp. 437-53.

21st Century Community Learning Centers and Afterschool for Older Youth

Background

American families need quality afterschool programs more than ever. In most families, both parents or the single parent is in the workforce. In communities today, 15.1 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends.⁷ Just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs, but the parents of another 18 million say their children would participate in afterschool – if a program were available.

Afterschool programs are a key component to broader school turnaround efforts and are effective in improving children’s academic and social achievement while also providing a safe and stimulating environment in the hours after the school day. Annual performance report data from 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grantees across the country demonstrate that regular attendees improve their reading (43%) and math grades (49%)⁸. Teachers reported that a majority of students who participated in 21st CCLC programs improved in every category of behavior. The categories with the highest percentages of student improvement were academic performance, completing homework to the teacher’s satisfaction, class participation and turning in homework on time.⁹

Recommendations

Title IV, Part B, Section 4201- 4206

Improve 21st Century Community Learning Centers by implementing the following:

Ensure 21st CCLC funded efforts are connected to college- and career-readiness goals.

- Afterschool programming should be aligned with school and district learning objectives and coursework.
- Grant applications for 21st CCLC should include descriptions of how 21stCCLC funded activities complement and enhance efforts to meet college- and career-readiness goals.
- Increase flexibility of 21stCCLC allowable activities.
- Maintain focus on ensuring children and youth have safe, supervised learning environments beyond the traditional school day.
- Encourage community engagement by allowing funded programs to offer the services and facilities of the school building (e.g., computer, library, arts and music, lab, gym access) to the neighboring community, with appropriate supervision and coordination.
- Encourage programs to operate in schools partnering with at least one community-based organization, however, continue the flexibility of allowing non-school community centers when appropriate.
- Enhance sustainability of programs by giving states flexibility to make grants renewable based on performance.
- Grantees would have to apply for renewal and document how additional resources will complement and enhance 21st CCLC funding.

Use existing research base and infrastructure to increase overall quality of 21st CCLC programs.

⁷ Afterschool Alliance (2009). *America After 3 PM*, Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm>

⁸ Learning Point Associates, 2007.

⁹ *Ibid*

- Researchers at the Institute of Education Sciences and Harvard Family Research Project (among others) have identified factors of afterschool programs that research and evaluation show are critical for creating positive outcomes. Based on this research, applicants for 21st CCLC funds should be required to provide a plan for ensuring that programs:
 - Provide engaging learning experiences that are tailored to youth interests, needs, and schedules and offer enriching opportunities for youth to be exposed to new ideas, new challenges, and new people.
 - Intentionally align afterschool with school instruction and allow opportunities for autonomy and choice.
 - Maximize student participation and attendance.
 - Provide appropriate supervision and structure and adapt instruction to individual and small group needs.
 - Provide adequate physical and psychological safety.
 - Effectively manage and prepare staff.
 - Effectively develop, utilize, and leverage partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, especially families, schools, and communities.
 - Assess program performance and use results to improve the quality of the program.

Improve Coordination and Alignment Between Schools and Programs

- Eliminate barriers and actively encourage coordination between LEAs/schools and community-based organizations around afterschool and summer learning, to include:
 - Sharing of collected student-level data.
 - Aligning school-day classroom based learning objectives with academic and enrichment programs offered before school, afterschool and during the summer.
 - Specifically with regard to LEA provided summer school, coordinate community-based organization programming with daily summer school sessions. Allow flexibility for half day enrichment and half day academic summer program models.
 - Allow flexibility for community-based organizations to be fiscal agents for school-based afterschool collaborative programs.
 - Ensure that collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations are strengthened, not weakened, by the connection to school improvement.

Adding Time to the School Day or Year

- Federally funded initiatives to increase the length of the school day, week or year should require equal partnerships with at least one community-based organization or other nonprofit entities that have experience in youth development or afterschool programs.
- Local communities should be ensured the flexibility to design and implement added time during the school day/year through partnerships between LEAs and community-based organizations (CBOs) or other nonprofit entities, in which either the CBO or the LEA can be the lead fiscal agent.
- Additional school time should be used for expanded academic enrichment and engagement through instruction and hands-on and community learning opportunities for core academic subjects (including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) and other subjects (including physical education and service learning) to help improve academic, social, health and emotional gains for children and contribute to a well-rounded education.

Afterschool for Older Youth

- Incorporate the provisions of S. 2785, the After-School Partnerships Improve Results in Education (ASPIRE) Act into any new federal investments targeted at middle and high school reform. The ASPIRE Act contains the following key elements:
 - Local and national afterschool “centers of excellence” that serve low-income and/or low performing students.
 - High quality programs, academic enrichment, civic engagement and service learning opportunities, and marketable skills development. Include a range of allowable activities including mathematics and science education; language arts, writing, and reading; history, geography, or social studies; career technical education activity; business and entrepreneurial education program; health, physical activity and wellness; credit recovery and attainment; environmental and conservation; or arts and music education.

Summertime Learning

Background

Extensive research leads us to recognize that we much focus on the year-round education of the whole child in order to fully prepare children for college, work and life. Specifically, summer should be integral to — rather than a break from — year-round education. Studies show that all students, particularly those in high-poverty communities, lose skills in math and reading over the summer months.^[1] Low-income students lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains.^[2] In fact, research from Johns Hopkins University attributes two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap in reading to unequal summertime learning opportunities during the elementary school years.^[3] Summertime learning loss has significant implications for school dropout rates, on-time graduation rates, and engagement in postsecondary education.

Only about 25 percent of American young people enroll in summertime learning programs.^[4] Those not enrolled in organized activities face additional risks to their health and safety as well as learning. Most children, particularly those at high risk of obesity, gain weight more rapidly when they are out of school during the summer.^[5] Effective summertime learning programs can take many forms, such as camps, school-based programs, and community-based programs —including partnerships between schools and other youth development and community based organizations. With the dropout rate around 50 percent in many urban school systems, simply asking schools to do more of the same over the summer months is unlikely to significantly improve student engagement or achievement. Rather, students need access to a variety of innovative outcome-based learning opportunities over the summer that increase motivation to learn through relevant, hands-on experiences.

^[1] White, W. (1906). Reviews before and after vacation. *American Education*, 185-188.

Entwisle, D., and Alexander, K. (1992). Summer setback: Race, poverty, school composition, and mathematics achievement in the first two years of school. *American Sociological Review*, 57, 72-84.

^[2] Cooper et al., op. cit.

^[3] Alexander, K. Entwisle, D., and Olson, L. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

^[4] Afterschool Alliance (2010). *America After 3 PM: Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*.

^[5] von Hippel, P.T., Powell, B., Downey, D.B., & Rowland, N. (2007) “The effect of school on overweight in childhood: Gains in children’s body mass index during the school year and during summer vacation.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(4), 796-802.

Recommendations

Title I, Parts A, B, C, D, F, H

- Create a dedicated program and funding stream that would focus exclusively on the summer months as a strategy to close the achievement gap, Include language and/or set-asides in Title I and throughout ESEA programs that explicitly feature summertime learning programs as an allowable and recommended use of funds to help states and districts close the achievement gap.
- Summertime programming should not be limited to remedial and credit recovery options. It should also focus on the need to further enhance areas where children and youth already exhibit talent and promise. In doing so, it nurtures the academic development of the whole student.

Title I, Part A, Section 1116

- Identify summer as one of the preferred delivery times for Supplemental Education Services (SES). Current SES language discourages the provision of services during the summer despite research on summer learning loss and significant private and public capacity to provide high-quality interventions and services during the summer.
- Consider revising SES to allow Title I funds currently used for SES to support summertime learning or expanded learning programs that include an academic assistance component.

Title I, Parts A and F

- Encourage states to use a portion of the state set-aside for Title I (both Part A and School Improvement Grants) to fund technical assistance and capacity building efforts for summertime learning at the state and district level.

Title IV, Part B

- Ensure that summertime learning programs are an essential component of all expanded learning approaches under the revised 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Provide incentives for strong school-community partnerships aimed at addressing specific learning needs at each site.

Title I, Part I Title VI, Part A, and Title IX, Part C

- Encourage alignment and coordination of federal, state, and local funding streams that can be used to support comprehensive summertime learning programs, including Title I, Workforce Investment Act/Summer Jobs, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, AmeriCorps, parks and recreation, camps, libraries, and juvenile justice.
- Support research to understand the costs and benefits of various approaches to summertime outcome-based learning programs. Despite extensive research on summer slide and the impact of summer on the achievement gap, additional study is needed to determine which types of programs yield the best results and are most cost-effective through a mixture of randomized, longitudinal trials and mixed methods research studies. In addition, districts, states, and the federal government should collect and aggregate data on resources committed to summertime learning programs as well as students served.
- Provide a robust role for local, state, and national intermediary organizations to provide technical assistance, build capacity, facilitate school-community partnerships, monitor program quality, and disseminate best practices for summertime learning programs.

Mentoring

Background

Mentoring is a critical element in a child's social, emotional and cognitive development. Quality mentoring programs build a sense of industry and competence, boosts academic performance and broadens horizons. In fact, it helps improve the learning environment for a young person in a number of critical ways. Youth who participate in mentoring programs have less unexcused absences¹⁰ and better school attendance.¹¹

Mentored youth have an enhanced sense of school connectedness¹², more positive attitudes towards school and teachers, and feel more competent and engaged with their schoolwork.¹³ Mentoring provides a link with a caring adult, which has a side effect of improving a young person's relationships and communications with their parents, teachers and peers¹⁴, additionally, mentored young people are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to higher education.¹⁵

Recommendations

Title IV, Part A, Section 4130

Section 4130 has been a critical source of federal grants that are awarded directly to local mentoring organizations, to help them serve more young people. It is the only federal grant program focused on mentoring as it relates to the school setting. Strengthen underlying legislative authority for school based mentoring grants by implementing the following:

- Update purpose to include fostering character education and improving the learning environment through engaging students, reducing school absentee rates, and academic performance.
- Require the Department to provide training and technical assistance to grantees, beginning in the first year of the grant and throughout the span of the grant.
- Require the Department to track mentoring practices and outcomes throughout the entire three-year span of the grant, preferably through a robust online tracking and evaluation system, and to evaluate the grantees during the course of the grant, rather than just at the end. Require a sustainability plan as part of the grant application.

Include mentoring into programs that target special populations:

- Alaska Native Education Program: mentoring as an effective dropout prevention program.

¹⁰ Tierney, Joseph P. et al. (2000) *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/publications.asp?search_id=7.

¹¹ Sipe, Cynthia L. (1999). Mentoring Adolescents: What have we learned? In *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*, Grossman, Jean Baldwin (ed), Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

¹² Karcher, M.J. (2005). "The effects of school-based mentoring and high school mentors' attendance on their younger mentees' self-esteem, social skills and connectedness." *Psychology in the Schools*. Vol 42, Issue 1, pp 65-77.

¹³ Jekielek, Susan M. et al. (2002). *Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

¹⁴ Rhodes, Grossman and Resch (2000). "Agents of change: Pathways through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents' academic adjustment," *Child Development* Nov-Dec, pp 1662-71.

¹⁵ Jekielek, Susan M. et al. (2002). *Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

- Native Hawaiian Education Program: mentoring as an effective program to integrate Native Hawaiian elders and seniors and as a community based learning center.
- Demonstration Grants for Indian Children: include mentoring as a special compensatory program to increase graduation rates of Indian children, and as a program to integrate Tribal elders and seniors.
- Demonstration program targeting middle and high school migrant youth.
- Delinquent and neglected populations.

Service Learning

Background

Service-learning can strengthen student engagement and improve school attendance^{[1],[2]} by reducing boredom, absenteeism, and other risk factors for dropping out of school.^[3] 81% of all students who drop out of school noted that service-learning would increase their benefit of school while only 16% of these students had access to such classes. The leading reason students drop out according to a survey of high school dropouts is lack of relevance (*Engaged for Success*, March 2008).

Service-learning programs enhance students' academic achievement in reading, writing, science, mathematics, and social studies.^[4] 66% of Americans say that schools have a responsibility to teach students how to use what they learn in the classroom for real-world projects and problems.

Recommendations

Increase the Department of Education's role in establishing service-learning as a key teaching and learning strategy in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The Corporation for National and Community Service's Strategic Plan includes a goal of having service-learning in half of all K-12 schools. However, the most recent *Community Service and Service-Learning in America's Schools* report shows that while school-based community service has remained robust, the percentage of schools with service-learning declined from 32% in 1999 to 24% in 2008.

Strengthen the relationship between the Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service:

- Require the Secretary of Education to establish a senior service-learning position or office and require that person/office to oversee the Department of Education's coordination with the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Require the integration of collection of data on community service and service-learning activities into ongoing U.S. Department of Education research and data collection activities (Common Core of Data, School and Staffing surveys, Condition of Education reports, etc.).

^[1] Melchior, Alan. (1995). *National Evaluation of Serve-America. (Subtitle B1). Final Report*. Evaluation of National and Community Service Programs. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University. www.eric.ed.gov (ED437573).

^[2] Melchior, Alan. (1999) *Summary Report: National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America School and Community-Based Programs*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University. www.learnandserve.org/pdf/lsa_evaluation.pdf

^[3] Bridgeland, John et. al. (2006). *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises. www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/TheSilentEpidemic3-06FINAL.pdf.

^[4] Billig, S. H. (2004) *Heads, Hearts, and Hands: The Research on K-12 Service-Learning*. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation. www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/Billig_Article2.pdf

- Authorize and encourage the Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service to collaborate in implementing similar and relevant programs (e.g., Promise Neighborhoods and CNCS’s Youth Engagement Zones authorized by the Serve America Act).
- Authorize the Department of Education to enter into cost-sharing agreements with the Corporation for National and Community Service for initiatives such as identification and dissemination of research-based best practices and integration of service-learning into state standards and outcomes.

Safe Schools and Strategies to Increase Attendance

Background

- The U.S. Department of Education has noted that bullying “affects nearly one in every three American schoolchildren in grades six through ten.”¹⁶
- “Tens of thousands of students are still afraid to go to school because of teasing, harassment, and intimidation from other students.”¹⁷
- Bullying and harassment has a significant impact on grade-point average, school attendance, dropout rates, and likeliness of continuing education:
 - Nearly one in eleven students, or their friends, skipped a class or day of school because they felt unsafe there,¹⁸
 - Bullied students were less likely than non-bullied students to report receiving high grades¹⁹ and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression reported GPAs almost half a grade lower than students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1).²⁰

Recommendations

Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Amendments

Amend ESEA (or specific portions within ESEA) to include the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would require schools to develop and implement anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies by adding the following:

- Prohibit bullying and harassment based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of students.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (2003), *Bullying Prevention in the School: Research-Based Strategies for Educators*, Washington, DC: *The Challenge*, No. 3. pg. 11. www.thechallenge.org.

¹⁷ National Association of State Boards of Education (2003), *Bullying in Schools*, Policy Update No. 10, June, pg. 11.

¹⁸ Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN. www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/499-1.pdf.

¹⁹ DeVoe, J. F., and Kaffenberger, S. (2005). *Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2001 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCES 2005–310). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁰ Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E. M., and Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation’s schools*. New York: GLSEN.

- Require LEAs to add incidents of bullying and harassment to the existing list of acts of violence that must be reported to SEAs and U.S Department of Education.
- Allow LEAs to utilize ESEA funds (such as Title II or Title IV) to implement anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, collaborate with community-based organizations, and train students and educators on how to address and prevent bullying and harassment within their schools.

Title IV – Strategies to Increase Attendance – New Program

Create Innovative Strategies to Increase School Attendance program, under the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools:

- Discretionary grant program to support State Educational Agencies, Local Educational Agencies, Community Based Organizations and Indian Tribes for the purpose of increasing student attendance at school.
 - Grants would support the development or enhancement of innovative policies, programs, and practices to prevent, provide alternatives to, and resolve suspension, expulsion, and truancy among students.
 - Funds could be used to:
 - stimulate collaboration between school systems, families, law enforcement, juvenile justice, courts, child welfare, social service systems, and community-based organizations;
 - train school system personnel in positive behavioral interventions and supports and graduated discipline policies and practices; and
 - provide start-up or supplemental funding for direct student support services such as truancy courts, truancy mediation, or personnel to staff in-school suspension and expulsion programs.

Safe and Supportive Schools

Through Title IV and other sections of ESEA focused on innovation and school turnaround, the federal government should provide incentives and funding to ensure that every school in the country is able to effectively assess and measure school climate and implement proven strategies to continuously improve the teaching and learning environment.

- School climate can be measured with the same scientific rigor used to measure academic achievement. Schools should be required use methods of evaluation that will provide high-quality data and performance feedback that permits assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
- The federal government should insist on effectiveness but not endorse a particular approach to improving conditions for learning. Schools should be provided with the flexibility to use evidence-based strategies that support and build upon the experiences, values and priorities of the local community.

- Creating a positive learning environment is not the sole responsibility of the school system. Schools cannot do this work alone and will need to work closely and collaboratively with the entire community, including families, nonprofit organizations, public agencies and local businesses. Schools should be required to use a comprehensive assessment tools that ask students, staff and parents/guardians to report their feelings and perceptions on key elements of school climate.
- U.S. Department of Education should establish a definition and research-based standards for school climate. All states, districts and schools should be encouraged to adopt or adapt the definition and standards.

Health, Wellness and Physical Activity

Background

Physical activity and physical education programs have a strong, positive effect on children’s academic performance in school. According to Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), a public-private partnership of more than 40 organizations, “Schools that offer intense physical activity programs have seen positive effects on academic performance and achievement (e.g. improved mathematics, improved reading and writing test scores, less disruptive behavior) even when the added physical education time takes away from class time for academics.”²¹

Programs that increase physical activity can help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic in the United States. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), “Between the early 1970s and 2000, the rate of childhood obesity has more than tripled for children between the ages of 6 and 11.” The GAO also reports that experts rank “increasing physical activity” as the most important strategy for preventing or reducing childhood obesity.²² The GAO finds that “areas of low socioeconomic status and high minority populations had fewer venues for physical activity” and “adolescents in unsafe neighborhoods engage in less physical activity” than their peers.²³ According to the Center for Disease Control, girls are twice as likely as boys to be inactive.²⁴

Recommendations

Title V, Part D, Section 5501-5507 – Carol White Physical Education Program

Improve PEP by implementing the following:

- Highlight non-school-based partnership language.
- Emphasize the need for “family fitness” – encourage programs that engage parents and caregivers in promoting lifelong fitness, nutrition and health both within the program and at home.

²¹ Action for Healthy Kids (2004). *The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools*. Skokie, IL. www.actionforhealthykids.org/special_exclusive.php.

²² Government Accountability Office (2005). *Childhood Obesity: Most Experts Identified Physical Activity and the Use of Best Practices as Key to Successful Programs*, Washington, DC: GAO-06-127R.

²³ Government Accountability Office (2006). *Childhood Obesity: Factors Affecting Physical Activity*, Washington, DC: GAO-07-260R.

²⁴ Center for Disease Control. Physical Activity and Health: Adolescents and Young Adults. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/adoles.htm>

Include the following in 21st Century Community Learning Centers and in other afterschool recommendations:

- Define healthy snacks and suppers. Improve the nutritional quality of afterschool snacks and increase the reimbursement rate.

Include the following language where appropriate:

- Importance of equal opportunities for boys and girls to participate and benefit from physical activity.

Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care

Background

Studies show that school performance suffers for children who change schools often, and it has been suggested that it takes four to six months to recover academically. On average, youth in foster care live in two to three different placements per year, often consisting of moves across school boundaries. These children deal with major life disruptions and too frequently are denied a stable education at a time when that stability is most needed.

In 2008, Congress passed into law the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (PL 110-351). One part of this new law deals very specifically with the education of children who are in foster care. Included in the education requirements, state child welfare agencies are now directed to assure that they have coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that a foster child remain in his or her school that the child was enrolled in at the time of placement. If remaining in the same school is not in the best interests of the child, the child welfare agency and the local educational agencies are to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the educational records of the child provided to the school.

Recommendations

Congress should continue to build on the good works enacted by the Fostering Connections to Success Act by incorporating the same improvements into the federal education law. In accordance with each youth's best interest and regardless of changes in their living situation, each youth in foster care should be entitled to remain in their same school when feasible and guaranteed seamless and immediate transitions between schools and school districts when school moves occur.

Title 1, Part A, SubPart 1

Make the following revisions to ESEA so that education agencies are aware and actively ensuring educational stability for foster youth.

Section 1111

- Add Title IV-E of the Social Security Act as a program with which the State educational agency shall coordinate in developing a state plan.

- Include a requirement for the state plan to describe steps the State education agency will take to ensure that each local education agency will address the educational stability of youth in foster care in accordance with their best interest.

Section 1112

- Add Title IV-E of the Social Security Act as a program with which the local educational agency shall coordinate to receive a sub grant.
 - Include a requirement for the local educational agency to describe a plan for ensuring educational stability of youth in foster care in accordance with their best interest.
 - Include assurances that the local education agency will coordinate and collaborate with the local child welfare agency to establish policies and conflict resolution procedures that ensure educational stability that is in the best interest of each foster youth.
 - Have the Secretary disseminate to local education agencies best practice models and guidance including the use of Memoranda of Understanding, designated contacts or school liaisons, and agreements to address transportation costs.

Educational Access and Support for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Background

The economic recession has forced record numbers of families and youth to lose their housing and experience the loss, instability, and trauma of homelessness. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of homeless children and youth (preK-12) increased from 679,724 students in the 2006-2007 school year and to 956,914 students in the 2008-2009 school year. This represents a 41% increase over the past two years.

Homelessness is associated with a higher likelihood of multiple school transfers, missing school (truancy), dropout, and lower standardized test scores. Homeless students often require additional supports if they are to be able to participate in any educational program. The most promising instructional strategy or academic program will be of little benefit to children and youth who have not been identified, cannot get to school, or who are constantly changing schools due to the instability of their homeless situation.

Recommendations

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Improve the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY program) by implementing the following:

- Enhance school districts’ ability to identify and serve homeless children and youth:
 - Provide professional development, training, resources, and time to school district homeless liaisons so they can carry out the duties required by the Act
- Increase school stability for children and youth experiencing homelessness:
 - Require school districts to keep homeless children and youth in their original schools, unless the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth wishes to change schools, or

unless an individualized, best interest determination by the school supports a change of schools.

- Increase access to early education programs for young children who experience homelessness:
 - Address barriers to stability in early education programs and permit immediate enrollment while documents are located.

Title I Part A of the Education for the Disadvantaged Program

Increase homeless students' participation in the full range of academic support opportunities offered by schools:

- Require that the amount of the Title I, Part A homeless set aside be based upon a needs assessment that includes objective criteria and is developed in coordination with the school district homeless liaison.
- Authorize the use of Title I, Part A funds for transportation to the school of origin.

Educational Access and Support for Pregnant & Parenting Youth

Background

For the first time in over a decade, teen pregnancy rates in the U.S. have increased. Every year in this country, there are approximately 750,000 teen pregnancies and 400,000 teen births. Overall, nearly three in ten girls get pregnant at least once before age 20, and the rates are much higher for girls of color. Pregnancy and parenting responsibilities significantly increase a student's risk of dropping out of school: only half of teen mothers get their high school diploma by age 22, compared to 89 percent of their childless peers. In a nationwide survey of dropout youth, close to one-half of all female dropouts and one-third of male dropouts said that becoming a parent played a role in their decisions to leave school.

Recommendations

Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Program – New Program

Authorize the Secretary of Education to establish a formula grant program to State educational agencies, with competitive subgrants from States to local educational agencies (LEAs) to promote the educational success of pregnant and parenting students by providing the necessary framework and resources to states and school districts to ensure that such students have equal access to educational opportunity. Specifically the program should:

- Enable states to create a plan for the education of pregnant and parenting students, provide professional development and technical assistance to school districts, coordinate services with other state agencies, and disseminate information, among other activities.
- Establish a state coordinator and school district liaisons for the education of pregnant and parenting students.

- Require school district grantees to provide academic support services for pregnant and parenting students; assist students in gaining access to affordable child care, early childhood education, and transportation services; engage in student outreach, recruitment and retention; provide professional development for school personnel; and revise school policies and practices to remove barriers and encourage pregnant and parenting students to continue their education.
- Allow districts to provide parenting and life skills classes; case management services; referrals to pregnancy prevention, primary health care, family planning, mental health, substance abuse, housing assistance, legal aid, mentoring, or other services needed by the student; and to address school climate issues, including illegal discrimination against and stigmatization of pregnant and parenting students.
- Collect and report data on pregnant and parenting students annually, including educational outcomes, and require a rigorous evaluation of the program.

Dropout Recovery and Prevention & Multiple Pathways to Graduation

Background

Every day, an estimated 2,500 students across the nation drop out of high school.²⁵ In the last decade, approximately 30 percent of students who enrolled in high school have failed to graduate four years later.²⁶ The situation is even more dismal for youth of color. In 2003, only 55 percent of African Americans and 53 percent of Hispanics graduated from high school—compared with 78 percent of white students.²⁷

Armed with this knowledge, state and local education agencies can take charge of the dropout problem by galvanizing community partners and families to institute real solutions for struggling youth and those who have left school prematurely. State and local education agencies can evaluate their school populations and create community-based interventions to protect students from the risks associated with dropping out and to keep them engaged in education. For youth who have already left school, pathways back to education can be created to support their academic goals while simultaneously preparing them for future work and educational opportunities.

Recommendations

Multiple Pathways

- Promote the creation of smaller, supported learning environments; opportunities for contextual learning; and opportunities for work and career exposure.
- Require states and districts applying for dropout prevention and recovery resources to specify the role that employers will play in ensuring that the curriculum is relevant; the instructional

²⁵ Keith Melville, *The School Dropout Crisis*, The University of Richmond Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 2006, 1, http://www.pew-partnership.org/pdf/dropout_overview.pdf.

²⁶ Jay P. Greene and Marcus Winters, *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*, Education Working Paper No. 8, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2005, 15, http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp_08.pdf.

²⁷ Jay P. Greene and Marcus Winters, *Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates*, Civic Report No. 48, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2006, 10, http://www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/cr_48.pdf.

materials and equipment are state of the art; competencies are being imparted and documented; and youth have access to a wide array of internship, work-study, work-experience, and career-exposure opportunities.

- Promote dual and concurrent enrollment programs for secondary-postsecondary credentialing as a vehicle to accelerate learning while gaining technical and occupational skills, and as a vehicle for reconnecting out-of-school youth to a positive educational pathway.

Dropout Recovery and Prevention

- Allow community-based organizations, workforce development providers, and institutions of higher education with a proven track record of working with struggling students and dropouts to receive funds under ESEA to provide these students with educational services and support that will lead to a high school diploma or equivalent credential (RAISE UP Act).
- Assist states, districts, and schools in the development and implementation of integrated data systems that inform the implementation of school wide strategies and trigger support and family-focused, strength-based interventions for students to prevent them from dropping out.

Cross System Collaboration

- ESEA should require states and districts to expand possible partners in educational planning to include the local workforce investment system and youth councils (or similar entities), to ensure the necessary alignment and to coordinate access to workforce preparation activities and experiences.

Calculating Graduation Rates

- Include calculation of a six-year graduation rate in the accountability system, to include students who fall “off track” for graduation but elect to re-enter secondary education to earn a high school diploma.
- Include in the graduation rate calculation all youth enrolled in district-sanctioned alternative education pathways and/or nontraditional environments that lead to a high school diploma or equivalent credentials.

If you have any questions or comments please contact Natalie Thompson, Policy Director at the National Human Services Assembly/National Collaboration for Youth at 202-347-2080 ext 21 or NThompson@nassembly.org.