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ABSTRACT

This Congressional report discusses recent accomplishments and continuing issues in the federal role in helping states and localities improve K-12 education. The panel that prepared the report consisted of state and local educators, researchers, and other citizens committed to education. The document focuses on the implementation of major federal legislation in elementary and secondary education, including Title I, other programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The report takes as its starting point the Department of Education's evidence on the academic achievement of American school children, in particular children from low-income families. It describes the current federal role in supporting the improvement of elementary and secondary education and provides conclusions and recommendations organized around six central themes: equity and adequacy in resource allocation; high academic standards for all children; assessment, accountability, and support for improvement; quality of instructional staff; school, family, and community partnerships; and research and evaluation. The text looks at the continuing need for federal involvement, pausing to examine trends in reading and mathematics achievement and why the achievement gap exists. It discusses how the federal role was reshaped in 1994, how the 1994 legislation is being implemented, and what remains to be done. (RJM)

Measured Progress:

THE REPORT OF THE *Independent* REVIEW PANEL ON *the Evaluation* OF FEDERAL EDUCATION *Legislation*

APRIL, 1999

Independent Review Panel

Christopher Cross
Choir of the Independent Review Panel
President, Council for Basic Education

Joyce Benjamin
Vice-Choir of the Independent Review Panel
Associate Superintendent
Oregon Department of Education

Eva Baker
Co-Director, Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST)
University of California at Los Angeles

Rolf Blank
Director, Education Indicators
Council of Chief State School Officers

David Cohen
Professor
University of Michigan

George Corwell
Director of Education
New Jersey Catholic Conference

Sharon Darling
President
National Center for Family Literacy

Bill Demmert
Associate Professor
Western Washington University

Joyce Epstein
Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University

Susan Fuhrman
Dean, Graduate School of Education
University of Pennsylvania

Jack Jennings
Director
Center on Education Policy

Joseph Johnson
Director, Collaborative for School Improvement
University of Texas at Austin

Diana Lam
Former Superintendent
San Antonio Independent School District

Wayne Martin
Director, State Education Assessment Center
Council of Chief State School Officers

Phyllis McClure
Independent Consultant on Education & Equity

Jessie Montano
Assistant Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

Jennifer O'Day
Assistant Professor
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Andrew Porter
Professor
University of Wisconsin at Madison
Wisconsin Center for Education Research

Edward Reidy
Program Officer of Education Programs
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Linda Rodriguez
Supervisor of Title I
Pasco (FL) County School Board

Richard Ruiz
Professor
University of Arizona

Ramsay Selden
Director,
Education Statistical Services Institute
American Institutes for Research

Maris Vinovskis
Professor
University of Michigan

Measured Progress:

AN EVALUATION *of the Impact* OF FEDERAL EDUCATION *Legislation Enacted* IN 1994

By
The Independent Review Panel on
the Evaluation of Federal Education Legislation

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Staff of the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES) of the Department of Education assisted and worked with us at every step. They also graciously accepted our recommendations on improving evaluation plans, a process that should result in improved evaluation studies and better information for policymakers and practitioners. Thanks goes to Alan Ginsburg, Director of PES, but especially to Val Plisko, Director of the division of elementary and secondary education in PES, and Joanne Bogart and Lois Peak of her office. They have been tireless in support of the panel and met every request with grace, good humor, and, above all, professionalism. Each of them embodies what is best about public service, and each deserves special commendation.

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National Assessment of Title I

INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL

Chairman William Goodling
Committee on Education and Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman James Jeffords
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Goodling and Chairman Jeffords:

In the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, P.L. 103-382, Congress called for the creation of a panel of researchers, policymakers, and other interested parties to advise the U.S. Department of Education on the evaluation of programs authorized under that statute. In fact, panels were called for in two sections of the law. For the purposes of organization and clarity these two panels were combined into a single body known as the Independent Review Panel.

While the authorizing statute creating the panel does not require a report, the panel was unanimous in wanting to take this opportunity to express its own views on a number of topics expressly related to the forthcoming reauthorization of ESEA, especially Title I.

By design, this report does not contain any original evaluation or research data. That is the province of the reports issued by the Department of Education, entitled *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I* and *Federal Education Legislation Enacted in 1994: An Evaluation of Implementation and Impact.* Rather, the panel has chosen both to express its own interpretation of the data and to raise issues and concerns that, by their very nature, were not included in the evaluation reports.

One of our important functions is to serve, both to the Department of Education and the Congress, as an expert group advising on the qualities of good evaluation, the limitations of what can be done and a collective conscience of the need for adequate funding of evaluation and research in these important areas of education.

We urge the reader to examine the data contained in the two separate reports issued by the Department of Education as a guide to the issues raised herein, as well as for a fuller understanding of what evaluation data is available and what information will be forthcoming.

Finally, there are many, many people who made the work of the IRP possible. Rather than enumerate them here, we have chosen to devote a separate page for those acknowledgments. The panel joins me in thanking all of them for their work and their dedication to this report.

Sincerely,
Christopher T. Cross
Chairman, Independent Review Panel and
President, Council for Basic Education

For further information, contact Christopher Cross
Council for Basic Education
1319 F Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004-1152
Tel: (202)347-4171; Fax: (202)347-5047

INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL REPORT TO CONGRESS

Introduction and Summary

In this final report to Congress, the Independent Review Panel discusses recent accomplishments and continuing issues in the federal role in helping states and localities improve K-12 education. The nonpartisan, congressionally mandated panel's members are state and local educators, researchers, and other citizens committed to providing the Congress and the nation with the best possible information about the implementation of major federal legislation in elementary and secondary education, including Title I, other programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Since 1995, we have met 15 times as a group and devoted hundreds, if not thousands, of hours to advising the U.S. Department of Education on the design, implementation, and sequencing of evaluation studies.

We write in response to *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I*, as mandated in the Improving America's Schools Act [IASA], P.L. 103-382, Sec. 1501. As mandated, the Assessment is "...planned, reviewed, and conducted in consultation with an independent panel of researchers, State practitioners, local practitioners, and other appropriate individuals." Our panel also fulfills the charge in Section 14701 of the law, which requires the Secretary of Education to "appoint an independent panel to review the plan for [an evaluation addressing all the other programs and provisions under IASA], to advise the Secretary on such evaluation's progress, and to comment, if the panel so wishes, on the final report." This report focuses on Title I.

Our purpose here is not to report the implementation and results of Title I and other programs under the Improving America's Schools Act. That is the role of the Department of Education. Instead, we offer our perspective and guidance on the Department's report, in accordance with our legislative mandate.

Our report takes as its starting point the Department's evidence on the academic achievement of American schoolchildren, in particular children from low-income families. While some progress has been made in raising their achievement, much more needs to be done. We therefore believe this is a proper area for continued national interest and support. We next discuss the current federal role in supporting the improvement of elementary and secondary education. Based on this recent record, we highlight the following conclusions and recommendations, which we believe will continue to advance the crucial goals of educational improvement and equity. These are organized into six central themes, which are further developed in the remainder of the report.

Equity and Adequacy in Resource Allocation

Title I plays a crucial, but necessarily supplemental, role in supporting efforts to improve achievement among poor children and to move all students toward challenging standards. Title I dollars (representing an average of $613 per student per year) do not come close to closing the resource gap between rich and poor schools. States and localities, which pay for more than 90 percent of the cost of elementary and secondary education, must be primarily responsible for closing the gap, but have failed to do so. However, to improve the effectiveness of Title I, we recommend the following:

- We strongly endorse targeting of funds on schools with high proportions of poor students. In addition, we recommend that the targeted grants authorized by Congress in 1994, but never funded, be appropriated in the next funding cycle.

- We recommend that Title I be fully funded, which would increase the appropriation from approximately $8 billion to about $24 billion, according to the Congressional Research Service. Although this goal is ambitious, we must remember that the severest problems facing American education are those surrounding the education of the most disadvantaged children in our society. Title I is the largest and most carefully targeted intervention available to help states and local school districts address the educational needs of disadvantaged children. As a nation, we should therefore commit ourselves to providing the level of Title I resources needed to make a difference in their schools.

- Since the inception of Title I, the participation of private school children has been guided by the principles of providing direct benefits to the child and public trusteeship of the dollars. We continue to endorse these principles. We urge public school officials to attend carefully to their responsibility in selecting students for participation and in consulting with private school officials about how private school students will be served under Title I. Title I programs face real costs in arranging for this service delivery, and we support the continued availability of funds under Title I to defray those costs.

- Finally, we urge careful monitoring of the allocation of funds and the provision of services for other special populations served by Title I: students with limited English proficiency and those who are migrant, Native American, and neglected or delinquent.

High Academic Standards for All Children

States are off to an excellent start developing high standards, but they need more technical assistance and other resources to build their capacity to formulate, review, and refine their standards.

- We encourage the participation of external organizations in reviewing and validating state standards and assessments. We believe the federal government should continue to stay out of the business of rating state standards, as is currently required under federal law.

- Both the public and the private sectors need to direct more resources to curriculum development and implementation, so that as states translate their standards into curriculum frameworks, the frameworks will be sufficiently detailed and complete to be useful to classroom teachers and other educators.

Assessment, Accountability, and Support for Improvement

Increased attention has been placed at all levels of government on holding schools and districts—and even federal agencies—accountable for results. We find this attention to results appropriate and desirable, but we stress that it must be based on legitimate and coherent criteria, adequate support for improvement, and appropriate authority, if it is to be effective. To strengthen Title I's accountability provisions, we recommend the following:

- We strongly endorse the law's insistence on holding schools and districts accountable for having the same challenging standards for low-income students as they have for other students. This should include giving Title I students access to a rich curriculum in all subject areas, not just reading and mathematics.

- We encourage Title I policy to reinforce and strengthen state systems of accountability. Title I should push states to hold all schools—not just Title I schools—accountable for improved achievement, either through their own accountability system or through the Title I system, whichever sets a higher standard.

- States should be using tests that are aligned with state standards and the content of classroom instruction.

- To maximize public engagement with these issues, Title I should encourage states to engage in a broad public dialogue about the criteria and processes involved in assessment and accountability.

- Research and effective evaluation in education are seriously underfunded. The budget for federally supported research, evaluation, and technical assistance should increase substantially.

Quality of Instructional Staff

As in every other aspect of education, the quality of teachers and other staff is proving to be crucial to the effectiveness of Title I. To meet this important area of need in Title I, we recommend the following:

- Because high-poverty schools need and deserve the best teachers, states and districts should be required to ensure that teachers and instructional aides in high-poverty schools be at least as qualified as those in non-Title I schools.

- Greater investment in both preservice teacher education and high-quality professional development for teachers is vitally needed.

- Congress should not allow districts to spend federal funds to hire paraprofessionals to provide instruction, since they generally lack adequate training for that role. Congress should begin to phase out districts' use of paraprofessionals in Title I instruction altogether during the next reauthorization. Meanwhile, districts should be encouraged to use paraprofessionals in noninstructional roles, and they are to be commended for placing language-minority paraprofessionals in classrooms with high concentrations of students with limited proficiency in English.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships

The directions set for Title I in 1994 reflected an understanding of the importance of fostering strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities. To build on this effort, we suggest the following:

- We recommend that states, districts, and schools make the necessary investments in staff, programs, and evaluations to fully implement Title I's mandates for comprehensive and ongoing school, family, and community partnerships to promote student success. We recommend redirecting attention away from the confusing and often mechanical term of "school-parent compact" to clarify the importance of establishing clear policies, planned programs, and useful evaluations of school, family, and community partnerships.

Research and Evaluation

We became all too aware of the scarcity of resources for research and evaluation in education as we prepared this report. The research, information, and evaluation base was inadequate to responsibly advise Congress on the issues addressed in this and the Department of Education's reports: Pertinent studies were too few and marginally funded, and the broader research base that could be used was spare. This is in marked contrast to levels of support for such research and evaluation in other sectors.

- Congress should set aside 0.5 percent of Title I funds, half for evaluation and half for research and development. This would make $40 million available for such efforts—a reasonable amount—compared to the $5 million currently being spent.

- Evaluation activities should include longitudinal studies of Title I that measure the achievement of participating students over time and in ways that determine effects. They should also include studies designed to inform practice early in the next reauthorization period.

- Funding is also needed for research and development efforts that identify effective practices and refine model programs for wider implementation.

We remain generally supportive of the philosophy and provisions of the 1994 reauthorization, which aimed to hold all children and all schools to the same challenging standards. It would be premature to change the law's key provisions now, before there has been time for implementation and full evaluation. Many of the outcomes of early implementation look positive. But in the future, educators and policymakers must attend to the depth and quality of implementation.

I. What is the federal role in elementary and secondary education? What is the continuing need for this role?

Historically, public education in the United States has been a decentralized system, with states possessing the primary constitutional responsibility for the provision of elementary and secondary education. But since the nation's earliest days, the federal government has also played a critical role, recognizing that an educated citizenry is essential to maintaining a democratic government and promoting the common good.

Indeed, the federal role in public education is not new, but dates back to the 18th century. As early as 1785, the Congress of the Confederation encouraged the expansion of public schools into the new western territories by setting aside land for their support. Under the Land Ordinance Act of 1785, it divided the Northwest Territory into townships, with one section in every township set aside for the support of public education, and in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 it declared that schools should "forever be encouraged."

In 1867, Congress created the Department of Education, later renamed the Bureau of Educotion, to collect and publish educational data, and to work with states and districts to standardize data. It also sought to identify promising educational practices and share this information with states and schools. After the Civil War, Congress also required that all new states admitted to the Union provide free, nonsectarian, public schools.

In the 20th century, the federal government offered support for vocational training for high school students. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the George-Barden Act of 1946 focused on the provision of training in agriculture, industry, and home economics.

Federal involvement in K-12 education grew substantially in the years after World War II, and the role evolved from one of encouraging the general expansion of public education to one of supporting innovation, improvement, and equity. Since then, the federal government has invested in elementary and secondary educotion in oreas of pressing national interest, motivated by strategic concerns about national defense, economic prosperity, and social well-being. It was a national defense concern—poor nutrition among World War II draftees—that prompted the Congress to establish the national school lunch program. After the launch of Sputnik, fears that Russian scientific expertise might translate into military dominance led to the passage of the National Defense Education Act, an effort to improve American mathematics and science instruction. The Higher Education Act in 1964 and the Elementary-Secondary Education Act of 1965 established the broad outlines of what is in place today. In addition to legislative action, the federal role in education also has included an important judicial component. Most notably, in 1954, the Supreme Court's historic decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* paved the way for desegregation of the nation's schools.

Federal education aid has provided states, districts, and schools with extra resources to improve education. Although local and state funds pay for more than 90 percent of the cost of elementary and secondary educotion, federal money in the United States—unlike in other nations—is a significant source of discretionary funds that can encourage greater innovation. It can be the oil that makes the gears operate more efficiently and effectively for all students. Similarly, research supported by federal funds can contribute to innovation in practice and improvement in policy.

Championing equity is a fundamental dimension of the federal role in the nation's schools. Among the ways the federal government has sought to do so is by targeting assistance to selected groups with special needs, such as poor children and children with disabilities. Indeed, the largest federal effort in K-12 education is Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (known as Chapter 1 from 1981 to 1994), which provides additional resources to schools with large concentrations of students from low-income families to help raise their academic performance. This $8 billion program represents more than 40 percent of all federal aid to elementary and secondary education, and our report focuses particular attention on it.

Trends in Reading and Mathematics Achievement

As we examine Title I and the federal role, it is important to consider them in the broader context of student achievement and the social conditions in which children live. Precisely because education is so important in this nation, its citizens engage in heated public debates over the condition of education and how well or poorly our students are performing. As a panel, we have carefully reviewed the evidence in an effort to offer a balanced assessment of the current state of student achievement and the circumstances of educationally disadvantaged children. We have selected 1970 as a starting point for comparison, because it coincides with the early implementation of the contemporary federal role (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965) and with the inception of a consistent source of data on student achievement (the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which measures how America's students are performing in the core subjects, began in 1969). We look at overall achievement trends not as evidence of the effectiveness of the federal role in K-12 education—which is a minor influence on achievement compared with the more active state and local roles—but to ground our assessment in a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the American education system.

The overall picture of student achievement today is a somewhat encouraging one: on average, today's schoolchildren have made gains in mathematics and are holding steady or may be improving in reading. Student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that mathematics achievement has increased steadily in grades 4, 8, and 12 since 1970, while reading performance has remained largely stable since the early 1970s and improved modestly in 1998. While this is encouraging, it is certainly no cause for celebration.

In the subject of reading, it is not that children are reading poorly—indeed, in international comparisons of reading achievement, American students have fared quite well. The 1998 NAEP reading assessment has also brought hopeful news. Nationally, reading achievement improved since 1994, particularly among 8th graders and lower performing students in 4th and 8th grades. However, the increases in 4th and 12th graders' average scores represented no net gain over the average scores of their counterparts in 1992. At the same time, expectations have increased about how well today's children must read to succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive job market. Although we are encouraged by the recent improvements, American students' reading achievement still remains inadequate: 38 percent of 4th graders, 26 percent of 8th graders, and 25 percent of 12th graders read below the "basic" level, as measured by the 1998 NAEP reading assessment.[3] We are also deeply concerned that the gap in reading achievement between students from low-poverty and high-poverty schools widened between 1988 and 1996.[4]

In mathematics, there have been some heartening developments. There has been a general upward trend in mathematics achievement for all ages (9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds), and the gap between poor and nonpoor is also diminishing. The mathematics achievement of students in the highest-poverty schools rose considerably between 1992 and 1996—as it did for students overall—increasing by 11 points. [5] But this is no cause for complacency. The average mathematics achievement of 9-year-olds in high-poverty schools still falls behind their peers in low-poverty schools. Moreover, American students' performance in mathematics is still not internationally competitive, and while they can solve basic problems well, they have trouble tackling more advanced material. In comparisons with other nations, U.S. 4th graders perform at or above the international average in mathematics. But this advantage quickly deteriorates: U.S. middle-school students lag behind their peers from other countries in mathematics.[6] By the end of high school, U.S. students rank next to last in advanced mathematics, according to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). [7]

On a more encouraging note, following on the heels of the curricular reforms of the 1980s, the percentage of students completing challenging coursework has increased, across all income levels. Between 1982 and 1994, the percentage of high school graduates taking the courses recommended in *A Nation at Risk* increased from 14 percent to 50 percent. (The 1983 report recommended that students take 4 years of English, 3 of social studies, 3 of science, and 3 of mathematics.) Students are not just taking more courses, but they are taking more high-level classes. The percentage of all high school graduates who have taken upper-level mathematics courses has increased steadily and considerably since 1982, with particularly dramatic increases among minority students. For example, the proportion of black high school graduates who have taken geometry nearly doubled, jumping from 29 to 58 percent, as did the percentage of Native American high school graduates taking geometry, increasing from 33 to 60 percent. [8]

Why the Achievement Gap Exists

Over the past three decades, much has changed in the broader society in which schools educate children. In particular, poverty rates should be of particular concern to us as educators and policymakers because children under 18 make up a significant proportion of the poor—about 40 percent—even though they represent only about a quarter of the population.[9] Thirty years ago, in 1970, 15.1 percent of children lived below the poverty level. That rate reflected a substantial decrease in child poverty that took place during the previous decade, down from a 26.9 percent rate in 1960. But during the 1970s, the child poverty rate rose again, reaching 22.3 percent in 1983. The poverty rate for children has remained high in the years since then, fluctuating between 19 and 22 percent. In 1997, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate was 19.9 percent. [10] Poverty also affects certain racial and ethnic populations more than others: Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately likely to be poor, more than twice as likely as are white children.[11]

We are particularly concerned about the relationship between poverty and student achievement, not because we think the federal government should assume the major responsibility for educating poor children, but because the educational success of poor children should be the business of states, localities, and schools, with federal assistance. The achievement gap between poor and nonpoor students and between white and minority students is not inevitable, but reflects many kinds of inequity in educational opportunity. [12]

The effect of poverty both on student achievement and on access to educational resources has been well documented and seems to stem from a host of factors. Beginning in the early years, low-income and minority children have disproportionately less access to preschool. In elementary and secondary school, low-income and minority students are more likely to attend schools with high concentrations of poverty, a factor that contributes very strongly to lower achievement. Low-income students have higher rates of mobility, which also may depress achievement in declining schools—both for those who stay and for those who move away. [13]

Generally, students in poor districts lack instructional resources. Mathematics and science classes with high concentrations of minority students are more often taught by underqualified teachers; classes in high-poverty schools are also more often taught by underqualified teachers.[14] In addition, poor students have less access to technology: Public schools with a large proportion of poor children were less likely than others to be connected to the Internet. [15]

Lack of access to resources and qualified teachers poses additional challenges, given that today's schools are educating an increasingly diverse population. Immigration has fueled enrollment growth, especially in states such as California, Florida, New York, and Texas, creating new challenges for schools. But non-native-English-speaking students lack adequate access to language-support programs that enable them to keep pace with their English-speaking peers. According to the most recent data available from the Office for Civil Rights, 2.6 million students have been identified as being in need of programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in 1994, but only 2.3 million students were actually enrolled in LEP programs that year.[16] School districts are scrambling to hire enough bilingual teachers and provide the resources necessary to meet the needs of this new influx of students, while programs serving American Indian students must find ways to connect effectively to the cultural backgrounds and needs of their students.

Once in school, different students are taught different things, and are held to different —and for low-income and minority students, often lower—standards. [17] Although there have been improvements, low-income high school students are less likely to be enrolled in college-preparatory coursework, as are African American and Latino 10th-graders.[18] In contrast, a rigorous mathematics curriculum improves scores for all students.[19] Grading systems also reflect lower expectations: A grade of "A" in a high-poverty school often is equivalent to a "C" in a low-poverty school when measured externally on standardized tests.[20]

In a society that is demanding higher skills of its citizens, student achievement is still simply not where it should be. The situation is even worse in schools with large concentrations of low-income students. Oespite some closing of the achievement gap in some subjects and grades, the achievement of students from high-poverty schools remains too low, and still falls well short of national and state goals. We must raise expectations for all children, doing everything we can to ensure that no child falls behind. While the Title I program cannot close the achievement gap by itself, it can serve as a powerful lever for change in partnership with districts and states that are committed to raising the achievement of low-income students. If state and local reform efforts are weak, we cannot expect to see the gap close; but if state and local efforts are more ambitious, then the funding Title I provides can facilitate these efforts, and we can reasonably expect more ambitious results.

II. How the federal role was reshaped in 1994

The main focus of this report, like the Department's reports, is on the operations and effects of the programs amended or newly authorized in 1994. That year was an important one in the history of postwar federal aid to elementary and secondary education, for it saw a shift toward different ideas about educational improvement and ways the federal government could best support states and school districts. We describe those ideas here.

The 1994 laws built on the momentum of a reform movement that had been gathering strength in the states and school districts over the previous decade. During the 1980s, the publication of the groundbreaking report *A Nation at Risk* and an "education summit"—at which President Bush and the nation's governors forged common ground around a set of national education goals—touched off a new wave of school reform focused on higher standards, a movement with activity at the local, state, and federal levels. Many states enacted legislation containing ambitious statements about what they expected students to know and be able to do. They also began to put accountability systems in place to shine a spotlight on failing schools and, eventually, to impose sanctions on those schools. President Bush's America 2000 program supported states' and districts' early work on standards and accountability. This work continued in the Clinton administration under the auspices of the Goals 2000 initiative.

At the same time that policymakers wanted to support the reform initiatives taking shape across the country, they also wanted to move away from old ideas about the federal role that might be hindering some children's full participation in school improvement. A central concern in the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was that the very presence of separate, categorical programs could contribute to diminished expectations for the children participating in these programs—especially for low-income children. Thus, during the 1994 reauthorization, new legislative language emphasized state and local policies that would raise standards and improve instruction for all students but especially for those students targeted by federal aid programs. States and districts would be held accountable for results but in return would receive greater flexibility. These changes represented a complete overhaul of the structure and requirements of the Title I program. The program's purpose, as stated in the law, was now "to enable schools to provide opportunities for children served to acquire the knowledge and skills contained in the challenging state content standards and to meet the challenging state performance standards developed for all children."

This new policy framework was referenced in most programs, but articulated most strongly in the Title I program. For the first time, the Title I law now explicitly states that disadvantaged children should be held to the same standards as other children, and it ties accountability to these results, asking states to create consequences for schools that fail to raise the academic performance of children participating in the Title I program. These amendments significantly raised the stakes for Title I, which was originally designed in 1965 to help schools meet the needs of disadvantaged children by providing additional funding to districts with large numbers of children from poor families.

Beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, policymakers had focused more attention on whether the test scores of children participating in Title I were increasing. Conflicting evidence emerged on this point. Under the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System launched in the mid-1970s, states did report gains by participating students. However, federally funded studies of Title I and Chapter 1, including *Sustaining Effects in the 1970s* and *Prospects in the 1990s*, showed little or no progress in closing the achievement gap through the early to mid-1990s. To be sure, these studies could not measure how the participating children would have performed had they not received Title I or Chapter 1 services in the first place. It is certainly possible that the achievement gap might have widened further in the absence of the services and resources provided by the program. Nevertheless, the studies did raise important questions about whether participating children had benefited enough from the program. These questions linger, although in fact the conclusions of those studies do not apply to the current version of Title I, which is substantially different from the earlier legislation.

Thus, Title I needed to be redirected in 1994 to be more effective in improving the achievement of poor children. Having observed that a promising movement for school improvement was gathering steam in the states, and continuing to identify shortcomings in the existing federal programs, Congress enacted and President Clinton signed legislation designed to bring federally supported services under the umbrella of challenging state standards for content and student performance. This approach would ensure high expectations for all students, including those living in poverty, and federal aid would support the work of states and districts in upgrading instruction to meet the standards. The legislation recognized that states and districts would need time to align their policies in support of student achievement (see Figure 1).

Now, however, is a reasonable time to begin looking at their progress.

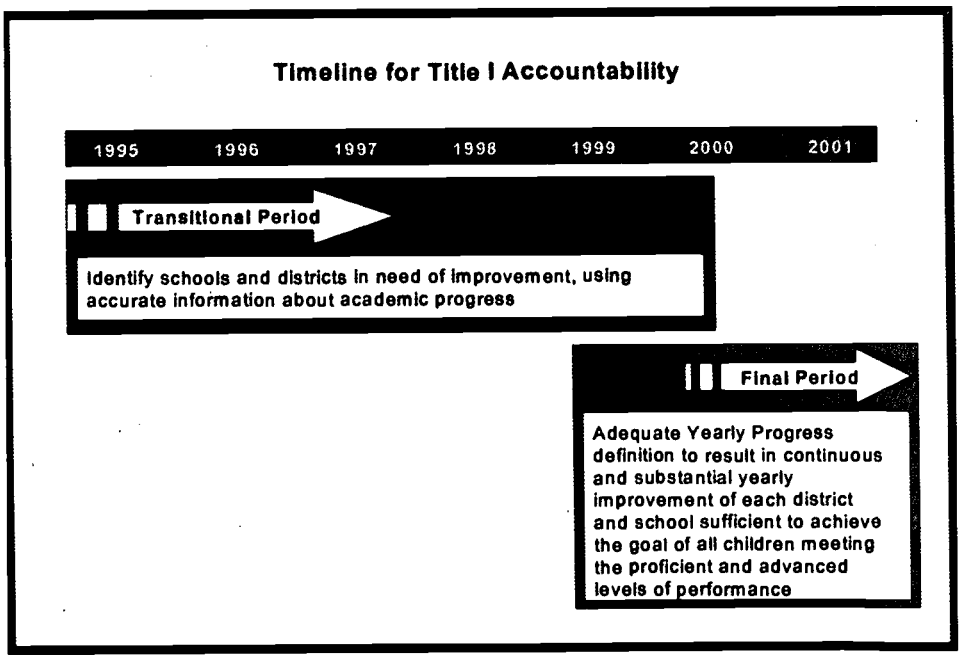

Figure 1. U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

III. How is the 1994 legislation being implemented, and what remains to be done?

As we have seen, the 1994 legislation placed large and complicated challenges before the nation's schools and the governments that support them. The Department of Education has reported the progress made in overcoming these challenges and the areas in which it believes more work needs to be done. We offer here our own comments on the progress so far observed in implementation and on the important work of policy and practice that still lies ahead.

If schools are going to bring all students to the level of performance that tomorrow's world will demand, then schools, school districts, states, the federal government, and the education profession will all have to make progress in six mutually reinforcing domains:

1. Resources must be targeted appropriately, and equity for special student populations must be at the forefront of policy concern.

2. Standards must provide the scaffolding for a challenging curriculum that is accessible to all students.

3. Assessments and accountability must push the education system toward improvement while support and technical assistance build the system's capacity to improve.

4. The teachers and other adults who work with students must possess high levels of skills and knowledge.

5. Schools, school districts, and states must develop, implement, and maintain comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships to get parents involved in children's education in ways that promote student success.

6. Well-supported research and evaluation must inform policy and practice.

None of this is easy to accomplish; nevertheless, all of it is consistent with the framework and expectations of current federal law.

We endorse the continued pursuit of the framework for educational improvement set forth in the 1994 legislation, with some revisions to reflect what has been learned in the past five years of implementation. Drawing on the Department's reports and our own professional experience, our more specific comments and recommendations follow.

Equity and Adequacy in Resource Allocation

A central principle of the federal role in education is its focus on students in high-poverty schools and other students with distinctive needs. We strongly endorse this focus, and we want to highlight it in our comments and recommendations.

The Department's reports to Congress show that Title I funds continue to be targeted on schools with high proportions of students living in poverty, and that the 1994 amendments have, if anything, strengthened this targeting. Because we are troubled by the inequity in overall educational resources available to students living in different economic circumstances, as described in an earlier section of this report, we believe that this targeting of federal dollars is crucial.

The 1994 amendments required that districts serve all high-poverty schools (at least 75 percent poverty student populations) before serving other schools. The increase in funding going to high-poverty schools can be attributed to this new requirement and also to the increased appropriations for concentration grants under Title I. The law also required a shift from county to district allocations in order to update poverty counts and improve targeting to districts. However, the impact of this change has been mitigated by a "hold harmless" placed on grants for fiscal year 1999—a congressional policy that contradicts the earlier change in the law, and one with which we disagree. Finally, we commend the increase in concentration grants and recommend appropriating more funds through these grants.

We also recommend increasing the funds appropriated for the Title I program as an effective means of targeting more aid to disadvantaged students. Although Title I appropriations have increased in recent years, they represent a shrinking proportion of federal funding for elementary and secondary education. In 1994, Title I received $7 billion a year while other elementary and secondary programs received $6 billion; Title I currently receives $8 billion annually while other elementary and secondary programs receive $11 billion. This means that Title I is now getting a smaller share of federal funds than it did five years ago. In addition, Title I is not fully funded. According to estimates provided by the Congressional Research Service, funding Title I Part A Basic Grants to the maximum amount authorized would require a $24.3 billion appropriation. Currently, Title I is only one-third funded, at $8 billion a year.[21] We recommend that Title I be fully funded.

A 1998 study by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) found that federal dollars have been more effectively targeted on poor students than state and local dollars. The GAO study found that federal funds provide an average of an additional $4.73 per poor student for every $1 in federal K-12 education funding, while state funds provided only an additional $0.62. Another study found that the poorest districts actually receive less state and local funds than the wealthiest districts. Districts in the highest-poverty quartile, which educate 25 percent of the nation's students and 49 percent of its poor children, receive 43 percent of federal funds and 49 percent of Title I funds but only 23 percent of state and local funds. But districts in the wealthiest quartile, which also educate 25 percent of the nation's students but only 7 percent of its poor children, receive 11 percent of federal funds, 7 percent of Title I funds, and 30 percent of state and local funds. [23]

Thus, Title I is an effective means of providing extra financial resources to address the problems of disadvantaged children, more targeted to that purpose than most state and local aid. Yet, Title I is shrinking in its share of federal financial resources for education. National attention has turned elsewhere, while the problems of the most disadvantaged in our society have not gone away. As noted elsewhere in our report, one-fifth of American children are from poor families; and the groups with the highest concentration of poverty are generally the ones experiencing the most growth in the population. For that reason alone, we must intensify our attention to meeting their needs. If Title I were funded fully, the hundreds of thousands of students in need who are not served now could be served. School districts could improve the intensity of their efforts, professional development could be improved, and more funding could be available for parental involvement.

We caution that Title I funds—currently amounting to an average school allocation of $613 per low-income student per year even in the highest-poverty schools —cannot fully close the spending gap between districts. Annual district spending ranges from $3,343 to $12,475 per pupil in this country.[25] We would therefore not want policymakers or the public to give Title I all the credit or blame for the trends in poor children's achievement. States and localities, which pay for more than 90 percent of the cost of elementary and secondary education, must be mainly responsible for closing the gap.

Equity issues arise not only in connection with family poverty but also with regard to children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The burgeoning population of English-language learners poses important policy challenges. These children are now participating more fully and equitably in Title I services, thanks to a policy change in the 1994 amendments that removed previous restrictions on services to children with limited English proficiency. According to the Department's Title I report, the program now serves 2 million students with limited English proficiency. We wish we could comment on evaluation findings about the services they are now receiving under Title I—or, for that matter, under the Bilingual Education Act—but unfortunately such evaluation, which is funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, has not been fully integrated into the National Assessment of Title I and other reporting of the Planning and Evaluation Service. By contrast, the National Assessment has done a good job of assessing services to migrant students and is to be commended for integrating this analysis into its overall reporting.

We note, too, that the federal responsibility for Indian students has not been well met. Research information about these students is lacking, and programs have not consistently addressed these students' serious needs.

Still another aspect of equity is the participation of students attending private schools, including religious schools. We continue to endorse the principles that guide their participation in Title I: providing direct benefits to the child, and requiring public trusteeship of the dollars. Recent data show a decline in the number of private school students served. [26] We recommend that public school officials fulfill their legal responsibilities to identify eligible private school children. They also must consult with private school officials about how those children will be served. Reversing an earlier decision, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Agostini v. Felton* in 1997 now permits service delivery in religious schools under specified conditions. However, some private schools still lack the space to provide these services, and as a result, local Title I programs face such costs as the rental or purchase of trailers or transportation to alternative sites. We support the continued availability of special, set-aside Title I funds to defray these costs, currently known as "capital expenses."

Thus, equity and adequacy in resources have many dimensions. We are particularly concerned with the federal role in improving education for children who live in poverty, but we also urge continued attention to all the populations of students for whom existing educational conditions fall short of what they need and deserve.

High Academic Standards for All Children

The initiation of a movement calling for clear and high standards in America's classrooms has been a significant milestone, and the mandatory inclusion of the nation's most disadvantaged students in that movement has been another. For the first time, federal law now stipulates that all children, including those served by Title I, must be held to the same challenging standards, although leaving states the freedom to define those standards. Already some significant progress has been made. With federal support and encouragement, substantial and increasing numbers of states and districts are defining and adopting standards, and beginning to insist that they apply to all students. Almost every state has adopted content standards. Some big-city school systems have made a vigorous commitment to raising standards and improving student achievement.

The standards movement is not without its challenges, however. Although the states have generally succeeded in developing content standards, the quality of these standards is uneven. In recent years, several independent analyses of state content standards have been conducted by such diverse groups as the Fordham Foundation, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Council for Basic Education. Their ratings differ considerably—a state's standards might earn an A from one group and a C from another, and they use different criteria to judge the standards, but the one thing they do agree on is that state standards are of varying quality and varying levels of specificity.

One reason for the divergent conclusions is the lack of a clear consensus on what constitutes good standards. Differences exist as to how specific or general standards should be and how often they need updating. Serious disagreements also exist over what content should be included and what should be omitted. There is, however, some research that addresses at least a part of what good content standards should be. They should have the force of law behind them and be explicit in describing the desired content, based on prevailing norms and expertise, and assessable. As the field of standards development matures, more consensus around qualities such as these may emerge. What is clearly needed—and is developing in the states—is the capacity to formulate, review, and refine standards. States are still struggling with the questions of what constitutes good standards and how to align them with assessments, and they need more high-quality technical assistance and other resources in these endeavors.

Another important area of need is the translation of standards into curricular frameworks that are sufficiently detailed and complete to guide teaching practice. This is an area in which capacity appears to be falling short of what is needed. States, districts, and professional organizations must bring more resources to bear on curricular development and classroom implementation.

Different institutions have different roles to play in the standards movement. By law, the U.S. Department of Education can only approve the process by which states have developed their standards, not the standards themselves. Reflecting this legal constraint, the Department's reports to the Congress merely report how many states have standards and studiously avoid comment on the quality of those standards. The external organizations that have begun to evaluate and rate standards are under no such constraint, however, and we welcome their participation in the movement. Their work should continue to support that of the states, which continue to play the central role. We encourage the states to continue developing their capacity to articulate challenging standards, and we agree that the federal government should stay out of the business of evaluating the quality of standards.

Assessment, Accountability, and Support for Improvement

After the initial development of standards, states and school districts must address the whole domain of assessment and accountability—measuring achievement of standards; setting high but attainable performance expectations for students and schools; communicating with teachers, parents, and students about standards; and holding schools accountable for results. These tasks are difficult ones, and states need technical assistance in carrying them out. They have also needed flexibility in their timelines. Although the 1994 law called on states to set performance standards for students and then develop assessments aligned with them, many states have actually preferred to begin with the assessments and then define performance standards in relation to the new assessments. The Department of Education has shown the proper flexibility in allowing states to follow this different sequence; we cite this as a good example of the way many agencies have had to learn from experience in the new terrain of educational reform.

Increased attention has been placed at all levels of government on holding schools and districts accountable for results. This climate of heightened interest in accountability has prompted policymakers to grapple more intensely with how to help failing schools transform themselves into high-performing organizations—and what to do if, despite extensive intervention, they continue to stagnate. We want to emphasize that accountability can only be considered a success when it applies equally to all districts, schools, and students, including the Title I population that has been neglected too often in the past. We also observe that accountability must emerge from a public dialogue in which our communities have a chance to articulate clear expectations for the educational system.

Current law requires that every school and district receiving Title I funds demonstrate that it has made "adequate yearly progress" toward the goal of enabling students to meet challenging state performance standards. If the state has its own accountability system, it must apply the same requirements to Title I and non-Title I schools. Thus the law asks for movement toward the same set of standards and the same challenging curriculum for all children in a state, and it mandates the same accountability structure for all schools.

We believe that poor students should have access to rich instruction in all subjects, not just what is needed to meet minimum expectations in reading and mathematics. As states develop standards and align assessments in other subjects besides reading and mathematics, we expect them to hold both Title I and non-Title I students to the same challenging standards. However, we believe that the timing and implementation of this broadening of accountability into other subject areas should be left up to states and districts.

We also believe that it is inappropriate to use only the bell curve of norm-referenced test scores to measure and report student progress. States should be using tests that are instructionally sensitive and geared to their own clearly defined standards of performance.

Moreover, despite the law's intention of bringing Title I students under the same framework of school and district accountability that enforces high expectations for all students, the Department's reports show that states can and do construct two different accountability systems. Although a recent study of state implementation of federal programs found 23 states reporting that they have the same accountability system for the state as for Title I, other states have different accountability procedures, and that leads to confusion. One study of local and state accountability systems

in three states and two cities found that some Title I schools were identified as in need of improvement by the state but not by the Title I system, and some were identified by Title I but not by the state. Another study in 12 districts found two systems at work in most of them. As the Department's National Assessment of Title I notes, "There is some tension between the two, and some confusion over implementation of the Title I requirements."

To address this problem, we return to the idea that federal laws are intended to support state improvement efforts. Because the state's own system of accountability commands so much attention from schools and districts, we encourage Title I policy to reinforce the state system while strengthening it if possible. Because children are ill served by separate systems of accountability, Title I provisions should push states to hold all schools—not just Title I schools—accountable, either through their own accountability system or the Title I system, whichever sets the bar higher. We also think states should be encouraged to seek external peer review and validation of their assessments, proficiency levels, and accountability indices, and to encourage a broad public dialogue within the state about standards and assessments. The bases for the construction of an accountability index and the cut scores used to establish different proficiency levels should be made public.

Support for continuous improvement remains vitally important, and the Department's evidence suggests that the need for high-quality technical assistance considerably outstrips the supply. States should take responsibility for building their districts' and schools' capacity to meet the demands of accountability systems. The budget for federally supported technical assistance should increase. A variety of mechanisms for delivering assistance can fill the varying needs of different states and localities; the key point here is that accountability by itself will not cause schools to improve, because professional knowledge and skill are just as important as motivation.

Finally, we turn to the subject of the accountability of federal agencies and state and local school systems for results. This reauthorization of ESEA poses difficult trade-offs between seeking greater accountability of federal agencies for program outcomes under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) while simultaneously expanding the Ed-Flex legislation to give states most operational decision-making for those programs. The central question, it seems to us, is, How can the Department of Education be accountable to Congress for results if it does not have decisionmaking and oversight responsibility for how programs are implemented at the state and local levels?

State and local education agencies already have varying degrees of latitude about how they carry out national objectives in their own reform plans. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (Title IV) and Innovative Education Program Strategies (Title VI) give them the most flexibility. The revisions to Title I in 1994 enhanced state and local flexibility by authorizing greater use of schoolwide programs, by loosening eligibility in targeted assistance schools, by granting waivers, and by permitting consolidation of administrative funds.

Flexibility in and of itself will not produce better results, especially when the authority to make decisions resides at the state and local levels, while a federal agency is held accountable. However, flexibility can work if it ultimately is linked to the accountability of state and local school systems for results.

Quality of Instructional Staff

State and local education agencies enjoy a great deal of discretion in decisions about the educational services that they support with federal funds, consistent with this nation's decentralized system of educational governance. However, one issue in the quality of educational services deserves special policy attention from all levels, including the federal government: the skills of instructional staff in the nation's schools in general and in high-poverty schools in particular.

We believe that children in high-poverty schools deserve the best-trained, best-paid teachers we can provide. Instead, many of these children are being taught by untrained aides without a college diploma, something that would be intolerable in more advantaged school systems. Research documents the effect over time of teachers' preparation on student achievement. Simply put, students who have more highly trained teachers perform better. Furthermore, the less additional support and enrichment students receive outside of the classroom, the greater effect their teacher's background has on their achievement.

The concentration of less well trained teachers in high-poverty schools is a major contributor to low student achievement in these schools. We recommend requiring states and districts to ensure that the qualifications of teachers and aides in high-poverty Title I schools (including type of license/certificate and placement in major/minor fields) be as good as those of the best teachers in their states.

The definition of teacher quality should take into account more than just subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Knowing one's students, including their language and cultural background, and being able to address a variety of needs represent a higher standard for teacher quality. Professional support needs to accompany accountability. Greater investment is necessary in high-quality professional development for teachers that is aligned with the new state and local standards. This investment should be larger—and the strategies should be more effective—than most states and districts have been willing to provide in the past.

Secretary of Education Richard Riley said in his State of Education address on February 16, 1999, that "no child should be taught by an unqualified teacher." Yet thousands of educationally disadvantaged students are being taught by Title I-paid aides who have only a high school diploma. According to the Follow-Up School Survey for the 1997-98 school year, Title I employed 76,893 aides and 74,664 teachers. The schoolwide programs in higher-poverty schools used more aides (43,880) than teachers (40,880), while targeted assistance schools employed slightly fewer aides (33,013) than teachers (33,784). Overall, only 25 percent of Title I aides have earned a bachelor's degree, while nearly all (98 percent) have completed high school. The ratio of aides to teachers in Title I in the 1997-98 school year is approximately the same as it was in Chapter 1 schools in the 1990-91 school year.

Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I notes that paraprofessionals, or classroom aides, are often assigned responsibilities that are more appropriate for teachers, and about two-thirds of paraprofessionals reported that they had received less than two days of training since the end of the previous school year. Many paraprofessionals lack the necessary education background to perform the teaching duties that they are assigned when schools are short-staffed.

While Title I can provide supplemental funding to states and districts, it cannot control whether they assign high-quality staff to high-poverty schools, except in the case of those staff members supported by federal funds. It also can support high-quality professional development for the teachers and paraprofessionals in the high-poverty schools that it funds, in accordance with the best available knowledge about what works in professional development.

We must improve all phases of teachers' career development, from teacher preservice education to teacher recruitment and professional development, so that teachers in high-poverty Title I schools are as good as any others in their state. Indeed, as we enter a new millennium, all teachers must be prepared to instruct students in challenging subject matter in an environment characterized by high standards. They will need excellent, ongoing professional development so that they can continually refine and sharpen their skills. Should the Congress fully fund Title I, as we recommend, we believe this arena—recruiting, training, and supporting good teachers in the nation's highest-poverty schools—would be the best use for new federal dollars. At the same time, the Congress should not spend federal funds on the use of paraprofessionals for instruction because they generally lack high-quality training for that role, and should begin to phase out the use of paraprofessionals in instruction altogether during the next reauthorization. The only exception to this should be using aides to assist instruction where many of the students are from non-English-language or minority cultural backgrounds.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Extensive research and exemplary practice have shown what constitutes a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. This is acknowledged in the National Assessment of Title I. We agree with the Department's recommendations for needed improvements in partnership efforts, including the goal for districts to coordinate and integrate the many family and community involvement initiatives in various federal, state, and local programs, and to improve the way programs are evaluated. But we would go further: We urge the Department to encourage and enable states, districts, and schools to fulfill the intent of the law to establish and maintain comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

One major emphasis of the 1994 Title I legislation is for schools to get all families involved in their children's education, and to mobilize family and community support and resources for students and for schools. The legislation requires every school receiving Title I funds to strive to create one school community that includes all families, and get families involved in helping students succeed in school. These emphases were designed to correct earlier practices that separated parents of children receiving Chapter 1/Title I services from other parents in the school, and to challenge schools to select family involvement activities that would specifically contribute to students' academic success. We strongly endorse the intent of the 1994 legislation, but more must be done to build state, district, and school capacity to implement purposeful and comprehensive partnership programs.

Although some schools have made progress in the intended directions, most elementary, middle, and high schools receiving Title I funds have not received adequate guidance in how to develop ongoing programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Part of the problem has been an overemphasis on the term "school-parent compact," which is interpreted in some places as a broad policy and plan, but in most places is merely a mechanical pledge or agreement signed by parents promising their involvement. Once signed, it is often filed away and forgotten. Because of a lack of consistency in definitions for the term "compact," data collected on compacts are not interpretable, and do not accurately or adequately indicate either the progress made by Title I schools in meeting the mandate for productive partnership programs or the problems they face in doing so.

The Department's report points out the importance of six major types of involvement [29] linked to school improvement goals for student learning, and a few activities that such programs should take. It will, however, take more than a piecemeal approach of adding this activity or that for Title I schools to get parents and the community involved effectively and equitably in productive ways. It will require building the capacity of leaders in states, districts, and schools to understand, plan, implement, and evaluate programs of partnership at all policy levels.[30]

This requires states and districts to organize offices with adequate staff and more realistic budgets for appropriate training, dissemination, program development, and evaluation activities, and with a philosophy of facilitating and supporting all schools in developing their site-based programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The current set-aside of 1 percent of Title I budgets in districts receiving $500,000 or more in Title I funding is not adequate for supporting district-level and school-level staff and program costs that are needed in full partnership programs. We recommend that states, districts, and schools set realistic budgets for developing and maintaining these programs.

Data are needed on the effective implementation and results of planned programs and specific activities that get families involved in their children's education.

In comprehensive programs of partnerships, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and special staff, including Title I aides, special education leaders, and others associated with family involvement (nurses, librarians, school secretaries) work together as a team to plan and implement goal-oriented involvement activities every year. It is imperative to take a team approach. Teachers are important members of this team in order to persuade families to participate in such activities as understanding report cards and improving grades, monitoring homework, and working with teachers in parent-teacher-student conferences and other learning-related activities. Because teachers are key participants in programs of partnership, we do not favor recommendations that suggest parental involvement be the responsibility of Title I aides. Such an approach establishes inadequate leadership and lacks the shared investments needed to organize, implement, evaluate, and maintain a program of partnerships. When educators, parents, and others plan and work together on all types of partnership activities, schools have fuller and stronger programs that come closer to realizing the 1994 Title I legislative intent.

Research and Evaluation

This report, like the Department's reports, is based on incomplete knowledge. Because the full implementation of the 1994 laws has yet to occur, it is too early to expect much direct evidence about the impact of these federal programs on students' educational success. Initial clues (and they are only clues) can be found in the recent NAEP data and in those states and districts that moved most rapidly to implement the reforms for Title I required in IASA. That evidence is provided in the Department's reports. The picture is one of modest early success in raising achievement and narrowing the gap in test scores associated with student poverty, but the evidence is not yet compelling. These early trends and indicators will have to be monitored carefully over time, and more evidence must be gathered from sites that have moved more slowly in response to federal policy. Moreover, the federal government provides about 7 percent of funding for elementary and secondary education, and this small financial contribution must work in the context of broader societal, professional, and policy trends.

Thus, both because implementation of the laws under our purview is occurring slowly and because the laws themselves cannot be the dominant influence on achievement, current national data should not necessarily be taken as evidence of the impact of federal laws. Instead, more time should be given for implementation, and more tightly focused evaluation and research must provide the basis for conclusions about impact.

We also note that if the Congress had appropriated larger sums for evaluation, we would know more about the results of the programs. It is difficult enough to conduct longitudinal studies within a five-year period of a program that is still being implemented; moreover, the entire National Assessment of Title I was significantly delayed by funding problems. We find it unacceptable that as a nation we spend hundreds of billions of dollars on education, but do not fund the research and evaluation necessary to assess the effects of that investment. Title I illustrates this problem. The nation spends several billion dollars each year on the Title I program, but since reauthorization the budget for evaluation has averaged only $5 million a year.

During the next reauthorization, we recommend a set-aside of 0.5 percent of program funds, half of which should be allotted for evaluation and the other half for research and development. In evaluation, we believe it will be imperative for the Department of Education to support studies that assess more definitively the achievement of students participating in Title I. Although we recognize the difficulties of identifying suitable comparison groups, we think that more sophisticated research and evaluation strategies can better capture the effects of Title I than the techniques we have used to date. We also urge that more participating students and schools be followed over time; such longitudinal designs can offer the best evidence of program effects. The current Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance has provided some analyses of its first two years of data in the final report of the National Assessment. We commend the Department for moving quickly in the analysis and release of these early data, but we caution that more data, analyzed with more time for thoughtful scrutiny, will be needed before this study offers clear answers.

With regard to evaluation, we would also like to see some studies designed specifically to generate findings as rapidly as possible for practical application. Too often, evaluation focuses exclusively on arriving at summative judgments about overall program success or failure, neglecting its formative role in the effective investment of funds and improvement of services.

Paired with the set-aside for evaluation, an equal sum for research and development is needed to identify effective practices in the field, to build on theory, and to refine model programs for wider implementation. The demand for "best practices" is increasing, and the knowledge base needs to keep pace. A significant investment in research and development is the best foundation for the dramatic improvements in education that all the nation's children need and deserve.

IV. Conclusion

We commend the Department on its evaluation work in the two reports, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I*, and *Federal Education Legislation Enacted in 1994: An Evaluation of Implementation and Impact*. In reflecting on the findings in these reports, we believe that the federal government must reaffirm its dual commitment to equity and excellence in any new elementary and secondary education legislation that it enacts. Given the existing achievement gap and the difficult conditions in which many poor children live, it will not be easy to ensure that all children can meet the challenging standards being established by states and districts. Continued federal support for schools with many children from low-income families will be essential for all children to learn at high levels. While this aid cannot close the achievement gap by itself, it can enhance and catalyze improvements in those districts and states that have made a vigorous commitment to raise the achievement of low-income students. We support the provisions of the 1994 laws. Although we still lack the data we need to judge the full impact of the significant policy shifts of 1994, we believe the framework set forth in the 1994 legislation is a good starting point. This report of the Independent Review Panel offers recommendations for changes needed, based on what has been learned over the past five years, in order to ensure that measurable progress will be made in the next authorization period.

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