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TITLE II, PART A

Don't Scrap It, Don't Dilute It, **FIX IT**

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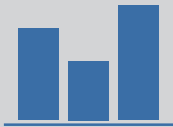
TITLE II, PART A

Don't Scrap It, Don't Dilute It, FIX IT



THE ISSUE

Washington is taking a close look at Title II, Part A (Title IIA) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as Congress debates reauthorization. The program sends roughly \$2.5 billion a year to all states and nearly all districts to “(1) increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools; and (2) hold local educational agencies and schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement” [Sec. 2101]. Although state, district, and school leaders may use these funds on a long list of permissible activities (including tenure reform, student loan forgiveness, and educator bonuses), most districts spend the bulk of their Title IIA dollars on professional development and class-size reduction. But is this investment delivering all that it could?



THE RESEARCH

Teacher professional development, as defined in the law and pursued in districts across the country, has shown mixed—mostly disappointing—effects on teacher practice and student learning. Sound educator learning activities and resources are critical to effective teaching and leading as well as to continuous improvement in our schools. Yet, 13 years and some \$30 billion later, Title IIA has not had the effect on teacher and principal quality or student achievement its creators hoped.



THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Congress should redefine “professional development” and reengineer Title IIA to focus strictly on continuous performance improvement—of people and organizations—while keeping implementation flexible. A new Title IIA would make certain that state, district, and school leaders have the capacity required to manage professional development activities and resources more effectively to achieve Title II’s vital student achievement goals. This brief lays out what Title IIA is and what it could be and points to some district and school leaders who are figuring it out for the rest of us.



THE ISSUE

Title II, Part A and Its Discontents

Title IIA funding is the primary, most stable, and only dedicated federal investment in teacher and principal quality. Apportioned by formula to states that apportion it to districts, Title IIA was the spoonful of sugar to help educators swallow the test-based accountability and highly qualified teacher provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). States and districts could spend the money on an eclectic selection of strategies (see below) to increase educator quality.

ALLOWABLE STATE-LEVEL USES OF TITLE IIA FUNDS

- Reforms to teacher and principal certification, recertification, or licensing
- Induction supports such as mentoring, team teaching, reduced schedules, intensive professional development, using standards or assessments for guiding beginning teachers
- Programs to establish or expand alternative routes
- Mechanisms to assist districts and schools to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers
- Reforms to tenure
- Teacher testing for subject matter knowledge
- Systems to measure the effectiveness of specific professional development
- Efficient administration of Title IIA-funded programs and provision of technical assistance
- Projects to promote reciprocity of certification among states
- Assistance to districts to develop proven innovative strategies to use technology to deliver professional development
- Training programs to integrate technology into curricula and instruction
- Assistance to districts to develop merit-based performance or differentiated pay systems or teacher advancement initiatives that emphasize multiple career paths
- Assistance to districts to provide professional development for principals
- Assistance to teachers to enable them to become highly qualified
- Activities that ensure that teachers are able to use challenging state standards and assessments to improve instructional practice and student achievement
- Projects or programs to encourage men to become elementary teachers
- Centers that serve as statewide clearinghouses for recruitment or retention or that carry out programs to improve recruitment and retention

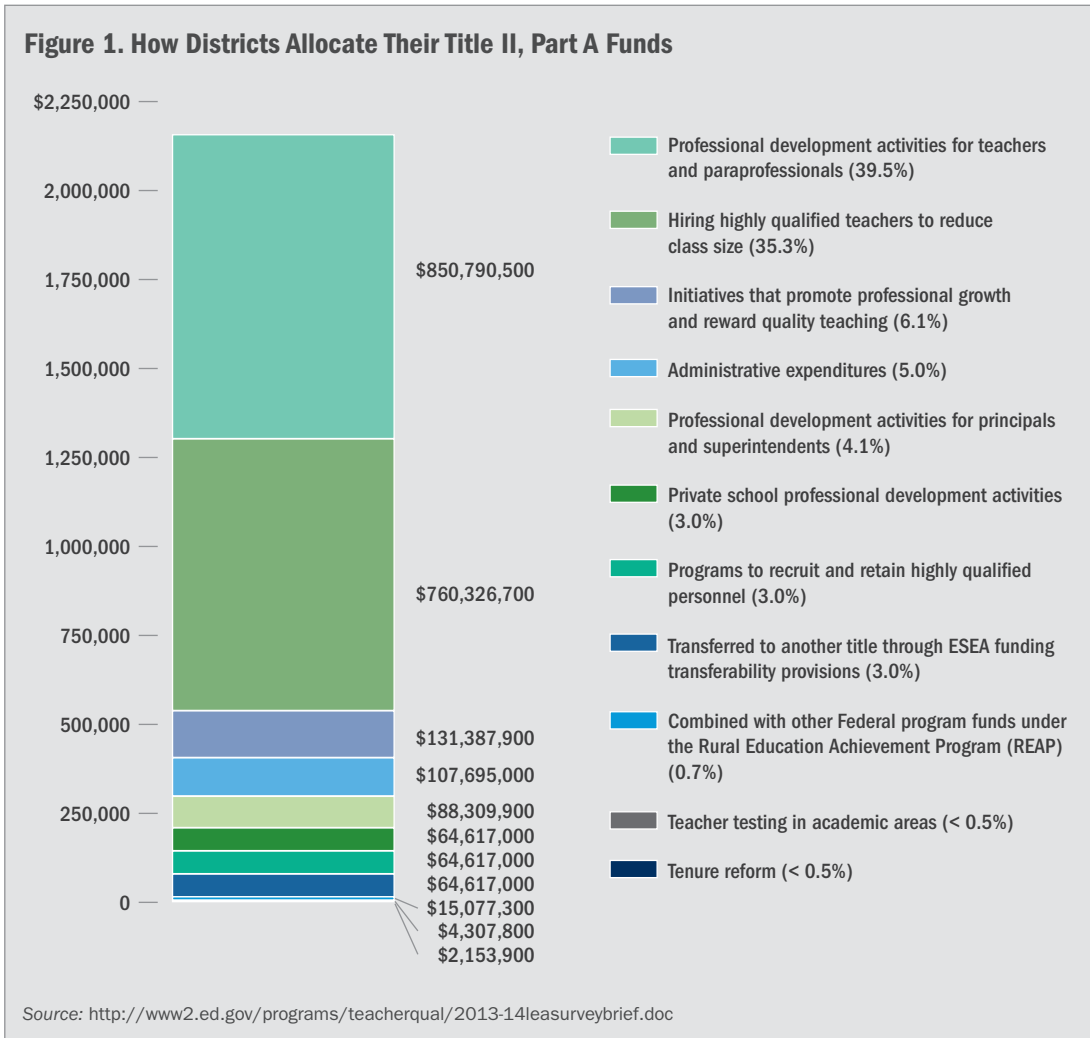
ALLOWABLE DISTRICT-LEVEL USES OF TITLE IIA FUNDS

- Mechanisms to help schools recruit and retain highly qualified teachers
- Initiatives to assist in recruiting highly qualified teachers, including scholarships, signing bonuses, or other financial incentives such as differential pay
- Programs to recruit and hire highly qualified teachers to reduce class size
- Programs to train and hire regular and special education teachers and specialists
- Recruitment of professionals from other fields
- Increased opportunities for nontraditional teaching candidates
- Professional development activities that improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and principals
- Initiatives to promote retention of highly qualified teachers, including teacher mentoring, induction supports, financial and other incentives to retain teachers and principals who have a record of success
- Activities to improve the teacher force, such as innovative professional development programs, tenure reform, merit pay programs, teacher testing, academies to help talented aspiring or current principals or superintendents to become outstanding managers and educational leaders
- Hiring of highly qualified teachers to reduce class size
- Teacher advancement initiatives that promote professional growth and emphasize multiple career paths
- Programs and activities related to exemplary teachers

Note: From Section 2111(C) of No Child Left Behind

This unfocused policy, with no mechanism in place to learn from local implementation efforts, has led to a diffusion of effort and money spent on programs that do little to improve teaching and leading in ways that matter for student learning. Although Title IIA is a state grant program, states for the most part exercise relatively little control over how districts spend the money. In addition, no states systematically analyze the results of the spending, so no one can definitively say that the Title IIA program has made a discernible difference in student learning (the reason for the law).

The U.S. Department of Education does track general categories of Title IIA spending. According to its data, by far the most popular strategies among district leaders have been to reduce class size and provide professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals. In 2013–14, 64 percent of all districts spent at least some of their funding on professional development. Figure 1 breaks it down by percentage of total district spending.



Professional development is a popular use of federal funds, but is it supported by the research? Rigorous studies examining the effectiveness of individual teacher professional development offerings find mixed results. Some well-designed, externally driven professional

Title IIA Stats

Congress authorized \$2.85 billion for Title IIA in 2002–03.

In 2013–14, after the recession, it authorized just \$2.21 billion.

Adjusted for inflation, that represents a 40 percent cut to state and local teacher and principal quality budgets.

development programs have fallen short of expectations (Garet et al., 2008; Garet et al., 2011), while others do all right (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami & Lun, 2011; Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Brobonikov et al., 2012). More embedded, locally driven forms of professional development show more consistent promise (Darling-Hammond & Falk, 2013; Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009; Supovitz, 2013), but implementation and the content of what teachers learn in their professional development matters (and is tougher to quantify). The bottom line is that through Title IIA, more than a billion dollars a year is spent on a diverse set of professional development offerings of unknown—but almost certainly varied—quality, implementation, and impact.

As a result, after 13 years and more than \$30 billion of Title IIA spending on teacher and principal quality, nearly all teachers—96.6 percent—meet the technical definition of “highly qualified”—a key goal of the law.¹ Yet, teacher and leader quality challenges persist:

- ▶ Inexperienced teachers are still disproportionately concentrated in high-need schools (Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013).
- ▶ Hard-to-staff schools remain hard to staff (Tirozzi, Carbonaro, & Winters, 2014).
- ▶ Principal churn is persistently high across the country. Twenty-two percent of public and charter school principals left their posts (either moving to new schools or leaving the profession) in the 2012–13 school year (up from 20 percent in 2008–09) (Goldring & Taie, 2014). This means that every year, about 20,000 of the nation’s roughly 98,000 schools experience a change in leadership.
- ▶ Instructional quality varies widely among classrooms (Blazar, 2013).
- ▶ Achievement gaps by race and by economics have shrunk only marginally (National Assessment of Educational Progress, n.d.; Reardon, Greenberg, Kalogrides, Shores, & Valentino, 2013).
- ▶ U.S. students continue to fare poorly in international comparisons of achievement (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013).

No one law could be expected to solve all of these problems, and certainly not Title IIA, which comprises less than 2 percent of federal education spending. But it could at least have ensured that teachers received basic “high quality, sustained, intensive, and

¹ For more information, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/2012-2013hqtpresent.ppt>.

classroom-focused” professional development (as defined in ESEA Sec. 9191) because that is how most districts spent the money.

It didn’t do this. A comprehensive study of the implementation of the teacher quality provisions of NCLB—including Title IIA—was completed in 2009 by Bea Birman and her colleagues at AIR. Based on an analysis of a nationally representative survey of more than 7,000 teachers, they found that, by and large, U.S. teachers have been receiving professional development that is superficial, short-lived, and incoherent. Specifically, they found in the 2005–06 school year:

- ▶ Only 13 percent of elementary teachers reported participating in more than 24 hours a year on the in-depth study of teaching reading.
- ▶ Only 6 percent of elementary teachers participated in more than 24 hours of in-depth study of teaching mathematics.
- ▶ Only one in five elementary teachers reported participating in professional development in which they practiced what they learned and received feedback.
- ▶ Only 17 percent of elementary teachers reported participating in professional development that was explicitly based on what they had learned in earlier professional development sessions.

Most likely, improvements to professional development have been made since the 2005–06 school year, but neither the Education Department nor Congress has authorized a follow-up study of the implementation of NCLB or Title IIA.

In 2014, using surveys and interviews with 1,300 teachers and professional development leaders, the Boston Consulting Group found evidence that although more teachers report engaging in research-based, collaborative forms of job-embedded professional development, even these richer formats leave most teachers cold (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). According to the report, fewer than three in 10 teachers (29 percent) are highly satisfied with their professional development, and only 34 percent say that it is getting better.

In a town hall speech in 2012, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said that when he asks teachers whether they think the \$2.5 billion federal investment in professional development is worth it, “they either laugh or they cry.”

Title IIA Stats

Title IIA (the only stable, noncompetitive federal source of funding dedicated to improving educator quality) was just 1.7 percent of the federal education budget in fiscal year 2013.

Why Is Title IIA Falling Short?

Title IIA is falling short for three interrelated reasons:

- ▶ It encourages a focus on improving *individual* teacher and principal quality rather than *organizational* capacity for sustained and continuous performance improvement.
- ▶ It contains no incentives or supports for enhancing the strategic management of educator and organizational learning.
- ▶ It is based on a definition of “professional development” that allows states and districts to spend money on activities and resources that do not improve the specific educator practices that help students learn new content and competencies.

Since NCLB’s Title IIA was written, the field has learned a great deal about what it takes to improve the performance of people and systems serving students. We need to use what we have learned and redefine *professional development* as *performance improvement*, which requires activities *and* resources that help teachers and leaders continuously get better at teaching and leading—both individually and collectively—from one day to the next.

What activities and resources are we talking about? Consider these examples.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Courses
- Professional learning communities
- Professional learning networks
- Summer institutes
- Critical friends groups
- Coaching sessions
- Mentoring sessions
- Instructional supervision
- Formative evaluation activities
- Orientation sessions
- Webinars
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Online classes
- Lesson studies
- Data team meetings
- Collaborative reviews of student work and performance assessments
- Learning walks
- Collaborative inquiry
- Action research
- Peer mentoring
- Demonstration lessons

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT RESOURCES

- Time for collaboration and learning
- Time for individual study and reflection
- Educative curricular materials
- Expertise and skill of coaches, mentors, and professional learning facilitators
- More accomplished, effective, or knowledgeable peers
- Collegial school climates with improvement-oriented professional cultures
- Research on practice
- Case studies or other records of practice
- Trust among teachers, parents, school leaders, and students
- Evidence-based feedback on practice, including proximal measures of student outcomes
- Professional teaching and learning standards
- Student learning standards
- Learning and teaching technology
- Social networks of teachers and leaders
- Communities of practice
- Video and case study examples of effective practice across content areas and competency levels
- Inquiry or lesson study protocols
- Facilitation guides and reflection tools
- Reasonable student loads and appropriately sized classes
- Data analysis tools
- Student learning data platforms/dashboards
- Content aggregation platforms, wikispaces

The activities in the first column are generally regarded as “professional development” or “professional learning.” But these activities work only when they draw on the right resources in the second column in the right way at the right time. A growing body of research suggests that some of these activities and resources are “higher leverage” than others. But this research doesn’t address the question that school leaders really need answered: What activities work best with which resources under what conditions at which schools for what purposes?

Educators do not simply perform better by acquiring more knowledge or skills. They perform better when they acquire the *right* knowledge and the *right* skills and have a chance to practice these new learnings, study the effects, and adjust accordingly. They perform better when they work in an organization that takes non-mission-critical tasks off of their plates, deploys them according to their strengths, and supplies them with vetted tools and instruments that they can use to be more effective every day.

The emphasis in Title IIA on improving “teacher” quality rather than “teaching” quality (and leader versus leading) means that “professional development” activities focus on remediating individuals rather than on improving systems. Viewed in this light, it is no wonder that Title IIA fell short of its goals, especially because on a teacher-by-teacher or principal-by-principal basis, the funds directed to professional development are anemic. In 2013–14, for example, the average U.S. teacher received just about \$251 worth of Title II–funded professional development,² and each principal received roughly \$856.³

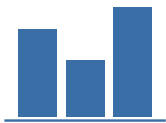
A smarter allocation of the funds available is needed. Improving system performance is hard work. Matching the right improvement activities to the right resources to the right educators in more than 20 subject areas in 12 or so grade levels is a daunting task, especially in a system that does not share or build on locally generated knowledge through the use of common instruments and processes. It also involves creating coherent professional learning experiences to help teachers master the curriculum, use high-leverage instructional practices, and implement needed classroom and schoolwide student interventions.

² Calculated by dividing 39.5 percent of total district Title IIA spending in 2013–14 ($.395 * 2,153,900,000 = \$850,790,500$) by the total number of public school teachers in 2011–12 (3,385,200). This calculation is an overestimate considering paraprofessionals were not included in the total number of teachers.

³ Calculated by dividing 4.1 percent of total district Title IIA spending in 2013–14 ($.041 * 2,153,900,000 = \$88,309,900$) by the total number of public school principals in 2012–13 (89,530) plus the total number of school districts (assuming that each district has at least one superintendent) (13,588).

There are few coordinated efforts to support educators as they engage in complex improvement work. As Stephanie Hirsh of Learning Forward has pointed out, states formed two consortia to develop assessments for the Common Core State Standards but formed zero consortia to ensure that teachers and leaders would be able to change and continuously improve their practice in ways that would ensure that their students could ace those assessments.

Fortunately, despite this, some educators—many, in fact—are putting together the pieces of this complex puzzle for us. So let’s learn from them.



THE RESEARCH

Stories From the Field— Professional Learning System Builders

The following are three examples of real educators engaging in the strategic management of educator and organizational learning systems. The research base is silent on whether these approaches are in fact optimal and sustainable in the long run, but their short-term effects demonstrate that they are an improvement on traditional attempts to ensure high-performing teaching and leading. Although there is nothing currently in Title IIA that precludes such activities, there is nothing in it to ensure that strategies such as these will be implemented in more places, more frequently. There is also nothing in it to ensure that the field studies and learns from these examples.

Baked-In, Continuous Improvement. District leaders in Lexington Public Schools in Massachusetts do not view professional development as an add-on separate from the work of teaching. Their theory of action (one they repeat at every turn) is that professional learning is the foundation for effective curriculum, instruction, assessments, interventions, and extensions—all of which are continuously reviewed in frequent data meetings to ensure that all of the districts’ educators are meeting the common goal of high achievement for all students.

Alongside the leadership team’s press to make sure that all of their educators are learning “every day, every place, continuously” by matching educator needs to activities and resources designed to improve student learning, achievement gaps in the district

have narrowed to a sliver.⁴ For example, in 2009, 77 percent of Lexington’s African-American students scored in the advanced or proficient category on the state’s 10th-grade mathematics test compared with 93 percent of White students. In 2013–14, 96 percent of African-American students were advanced or proficient compared with 98 percent of White students (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014).

Educator Support at the Center of Improvement. Garden Grove Unified School District in California is a large urban district about 30 miles from Los Angeles. This district’s performance improvement approaches were profiled in a 2013 report by AIR’s Joel Knudson for the California Collaborative, which is a smart read for those looking to improve Title IIA. Garden Grove district leaders model at least two critical elements for their educators:

- ▶ A consistent focus on the ongoing refinement (rather than the reinvention) of high-quality instructional practice.
- ▶ Nonstop relationship building to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement in which “all educators in all positions and with all levels of experience must constantly look for opportunities to grow and refine their work in the service of students” (Knudson, 2013, p. 12). The superintendent explained, “If we as leaders are not helping everyone around us become smarter and better, we’re not doing our job” (Knudson, 2013, p. 12).

Thanks to this orientation to the work, Garden Grove’s human capital strategies—recruitment, hiring, placement, induction, evaluation, supervision, tenure rules, advancement—are not ends in themselves but, rather, are seamlessly integrated into the district’s overall approach to improving student outcomes. For example, teachers are hired based on whether they can implement instruction aligned with the district’s Effective Instruction framework,⁵ their willingness to be coached and accept feedback, and their “commitment to collaboration as an essential tool for improvement” (Knudson, 2013, pp. 14–15). And the district makes coaching and collaboration a chief part of the day-to-day work of teachers.

Title IIA Stats

In 2013–14, 12 percent of school districts allocated all of their Title IIA funds to reducing class size.

⁴ Lexington’s professional learning system is profiled in a forthcoming publication from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and AIR (coming May 2015).

⁵ The framework articulates a shared conception of high-quality instructional delivery based, to put it simply, on a model of instruction that gradually shifts responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student.

These systemic efforts to promote individual and organizational learning are the engine of a strong upward trajectory in student achievement as measured by state mathematics and English language arts examinations among Garden Grove’s students, who are outperforming both the state average and students in comparably sized urban districts (Knudson, 2013). Gaps in achievement between student groups have narrowed only modestly, however, which underscores the need for ongoing performance improvement.

Deeper Learning for Educators and Students. A 2014 AIR study found that the Deeper Learning network of high schools is moving the needle positively with its students in part because teachers have time to work and plan together and build off of each other’s expertise (Bitter, Taylor, Zeiser, & Rickles, 2014; Huberman, Bitter, Anthony, & O’Day, 2014; Zeiser, Taylor, Rickles, Garet, & Segeritz, 2014). Deeper learning often includes project-based learning, collaborative group work, student internships, and cumulative assessments such as student portfolios. Many of the teachers in the Deeper Learning high schools had to learn distinctly different and more ambitious ways of operating, and strong school leaders had to match improvement activities and resources to make sure that happened. They also had to trust their teachers enough to experiment.

Title IIA Stats

In 2013–14, 10 percent of districts allocated all of their available funds for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals.

Four common threads run through these examples:

- ▶ Use of multiple sources of data and information to select, develop, and match improvement activities and resources
- ▶ Persistent nurturing of a culture of improvement and growth
- ▶ Collaboration and inquiry as hallmarks of effective professional learning activities
- ▶ Stable and capable school and central office leadership

Note that educator evaluation or performance appraisal is not on this list. Educator evaluation reforms across the country were often used in an attempt to shortcut the complexity of performance improvement. Teacher and leader evaluation may provide better data, tools, and protected time for one-on-one feedback sessions to help educators learn and managers make better decisions—but evaluation cannot be the sole solution to the challenge of continuous performance improvement.

Our three exemplars of robust improvement systems were funded using some combination of state, local, Title I, Title II, stimulus, and foundation funding. But they point a way forward for Title II reauthorization.



THE RECOMMENDATIONS

What Should We Do With Title IIA?

Once “professional development” is redefined (see p. 13), here is what needs to be done based on what we have learned about federal policy and performance improvement in the last 13 years:

1. Refocus the statute principally on creating smart professional learning systems that continuously improve teaching and leading for the purpose of increasing student learning. Sufficient funds should be directed toward ensuring the strategic management of performance improvement activities and resources through building district and school leader capacity. This should be done by:
 - a. Providing incentives for states to develop and disseminate models of innovative, promising, or effective approaches to building professional learning systems.
 - b. Creating multiple venues for state-, district-, and school-level leaders and researchers to share their data, success stories, and challenges in building systems of continuous performance improvement.
 - c. Allowing stipends or salaries for regional-, district-, or school-based professional learning coordinators (administrators or teacher-leaders) serving high-need students. These coordinators must be skilled in data analysis and adult learning and be responsible for assisting with monitoring professional development, sharing quality assessments of activities or resources with other coordinators, matching activities to resources, and bringing research to bear on practice, among other tasks.
2. Fund the strategic hiring of teachers or teacher-leaders (such as instructional coaches, mentors, etc.) in high-need schools and districts to provide additional flexibility for administrators to reschedule schools for learning.

3. Shore up and protect Title IIA as a stable source of funding for continuous performance improvement activities and resources and the strategic management of both. Do not combine funds allocated under this title with other programs or allow transfer of funds to other programs.
4. Authorize sufficient funds for rigorous, rapid, and continuous study of Title IIA's implementation and impact.

Survey after survey finds that teachers and school leaders want to make a difference and know that they are having a real, lasting, and positive impact on their students (Behrstock-Sherratt, Bassett, Olson, & Jacques, 2014; Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Drill, 2011; MetLife, 2013). If their effectiveness is cultivated, if they work with others who are also committed to getting better at what they do, and if they see evidence and data that show them that they are effective, they will be more likely to stay, and it is more likely that other capable individuals will want to join them.

Continuous performance improvement—of both people and organizations—at all levels is what is needed to meet America's education challenge. This is central to ensuring that all students graduate from our public schools college or career ready with world-class educations. The first draft of ESEA in 1965 embodied this aspiration. A re-imagined and more tightly focused Title IIA could be the way to reach that goal.

Toward a Redefinition of Professional Development

“Professional Development” As Defined in Current Statute

(34) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT-The term ‘professional development’ – (A) includes activities that – (i) improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified; (ii) are an integral part of broad schoolwide and districtwide educational improvement plans; (iii) give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards; (iv) improve classroom management skills; (v)(I) are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance in the classroom; and (II) are not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences; (vi) support the recruiting, hiring, and training of highly qualified teachers, including teachers who became highly qualified through State and local alternative routes to certification; (vii) advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are – (I) based on scientifically based research (except that this subclause shall not apply to activities carried out under part D of title II); and (II) strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers; and (viii) are aligned with and directly related to – (I) State academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, and assessments; and (II) the curricula and programs tied to the standards described in subclause (I) except that this subclause shall not apply to activities described in clauses (ii) and (iii) of section 2123(3)(B); (ix) are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators of schools to be served under this Act; (x) are designed to give teachers of limited English proficient children, and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and assessments; (xi) to the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers and principals in the use of technology so that technology and technology applications are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in the curricula and core academic subjects in which the teachers teach; (xii) as a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional development; (xiii) provide instruction in methods of teaching children with special needs; (xiv) include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice; and (xv) include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents; and (B) may include activities that (i) involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education to establish school-based teacher training programs that provide prospective teachers and beginning teachers with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced teachers and college faculty; (ii) create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under part A of title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers; and (iii) provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in subparagraph (A) or another clause of this subparagraph that are designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom.

(Section 9101 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)

551 Words



Suggested New Definition of “Professional Development”

(34) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT-The term ‘professional development’ refers to the activities educators engage in and the related resources they use to get better at teaching and leading from one day to the next (See also **PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT**).

36 Words

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