**Is Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Effective?**

*A paper by (Long, staff, something). The opinions and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Association. Month, 2013*

**Introduction**

Hop on to any elevator in Washington, DC and ask the question, “Does Title I work?” and the answer is “No, it does not.” Not surprisingly, this may not be the full, or even correct answer.

But why is this the perception? The answer to this question is fairly simple and clear: Title I is over identified with American education to the point that Title I’s effectiveness is tied to the belief of what is working overall. The picture of that belief is the chart below of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). It shows very small gains in all three age levels of children evaluated for the forty years it has been available. This range is one scaled point for 17-year-old children, five points for 13-year-old children, and twelve scaled points for 9-year-old children.

But Title I is only 5% of education spending at the elementary and secondary levels? So the core question, remains, is Title I working?

National Assessment of Education Progress

Reading Long-term Trend Scores



http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2008/2009479.aspx

What is Title I

Title I is the first major section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that was signed into law in April of 1965. It was designed to provide funds to school districts with large numbers of children who were low achieving and living in poverty. The school districts that qualified to receive Title I funds were believed to be too poor to provide their children with an effective basic education. The hoped for results were that the children who were unable to read would be taught well enough so that they would be able to effectively learn. The federal funds were to be added to state and districts so they could have the books and teachers to bring their children up to a basic level of reading that would allow them to learn the content that was taught in the fourth grade and above.

At first Title I was a simple funding stream to schools with large numbers of families living in poverty who were qualified to receive the benefits of the program. Specifically the program was to fund remedial reading instruction in schools for their students who qualified for the program. The program’s funding is not built on the idea of providing funds based on the individual child’s needs. Rather the program provides funds to a school that builds a program for all of the eligible children in that school.

Number of School Children in the United States in 1965:

Number of School Children Eligible for Title I in 1965:

Poverty Rate in 1965:

 In contrast, today Title I is not a simple remedial reading program. Title I today is part of a complex (and sometimes competing) set of federal, state, and local requirements that are designed to drive change schools. Some of these policies are using an instructionally based approach, others are using accountability, and still others are using standards. Currently, the federal government is augmenting Title I by focusing school reform/improvement on who is teaching, how effective they are, who is leading the school, how effective is the instruction and several other components. All of these components are part of a constellation of issues, ideas, and processes that everyone hopes will result in successful schools. And, unlike the goal of Title I in 1965 to improve the reading abilities of young children, the goal today is to graduate all students with the ability to enter the next phase of their lives with the academic skills they needed to learn in college or careers.

As an example of how Title I has changed, as well as to further understand the complexities of Title I, it is important to know that the funding stream has several large components. While in 1965 the program had one funding formula that is not the case in 2013. Now, there are four formulas that make up the Title I program. They are the basic grant, the concentration grant, the targeted assistance grant and the education finance incentive grant. Each has its own purpose and requirements. The chart below reflects the funding levels for FY 12 and FY 13.

**Grants to local education agencies FY 2012 FY 2013**

**ESEA Title I**

Basic Grants 6,577,904,000 6,232,639,000

Concentration Grants 1,362,301,000 1,293,919,000

Target Grants 3,288,126,000 3,116,831,000

Ed Finance Incentive Grants 3,288,126,000 3,116,831,000

**Total 14,516,457,000 13,760,219,000**

Other changes have impacted Title I. Over the forty years of Title I there have become many requirements and issues that have become embedded in the program. Perhaps the most significant is the requirement that Title I dollars be used to supplement local and state dollars. While this concept can have different interpretations it is basically that the federal money is designed to give the participating school the added resources to increase the amount of instruction the eligible child receives. It is not to replace state and local money (which is supplanting); the federal money is to be in addition to (supplementing). This requirement is frequently under dispute is when there is a new idea being applied to a school. To try to be clear on this point, at the local level there is a push to combine the resources so that the total would improve the effort for all students (non-Title I and Title I). While this seems like a good idea and in-line with the purposes of the Act, there is an important strategic issue. That is that federal money is to be used in addition to what every child is suppose to get from their schooling without Title I. The idea of supplement the state and local resources not replace and as a result provide for a higher level of resources for instruction for the child who needs more instruction. The reality is that if the program becomes a general aid package, the impact of the funds will be lost.

During the implementation of No Child Left Behind (which was one of the seven reauthorizations of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) a new term entered into the vocabulary of Title I and schools. For the first time a school would face significant consequences if it failed to make adequate yearly progress or AYP. Like many parts of Title I, the basic concept is pretty simple; the goal of the program was for all students to be at the proficient level in mathematics and reading as defined by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) by 2014. Each year a school would test all of its students (in elementary and middle school, for high schools it would be twice). The school would need to be making steady and measured progress towards that goal of proficiency. If not the school would then be categories as “failing to make AYP.” However, it wasn’t just the entire school, schools were also evaluated based on the progress of subgroups of students. These subgroups included grouping students by gender, disability, language minority, and ethnicity. If one subgroup failed to make progress the entire school would be labeled as “failing to make AYP.”

The consequences of failing to make AYP for a school would change in intensity as the years of failure mounted. At first, the school would get the opportunity to self correct, then it would lose control of the planning for the correction, and then it would lose control over part of its Title I funding and students. As the school continued to fail to make AYP, eventually the district would lose control of its school because control would shift to the state. While this rarely has occurred the threat of a state take over has contributed to the sense that many schools chronic failures and that these are the Title I schools and as such, this sense of chronic failure contributes to the sense that the program is a failure and it should be dismantled.

However, looking at the long-term NAEP results in a surprise, the achievement gap is closing and in looking at inflation, the $14.5 billion dollar program isn’t an expansion of 1400 percent from its beginnings in 1965.

The changes in Title I

In 1965 the mission of Title I was to improve the access of students who were living in high poverty to schools that had the teachers who could teach them how to read. In short, the program was designed to promote equity and access. By the mid-eighties the nation concluded that equity and access, without quality was insufficient and Title I’s mission and scope had moved from equity and access to include the requirement that it’s programs would work to improve the quality of its instruction, not just the availability of instruction. One of the tools used to enhance effectiveness was the expansion of the idea of accountability. This was done in both the 1988 and 1994 reauthorizations. By 2001, the reauthorization included the requirement that the accountability system (AYP) would monitor how students in specific groups would perform on the summative assessments. This in turn created a new requirements and procedures when a school wasn’t performing to the level required to make AYP. Thus over the forty-eight years, the program’s orientation has significantly changed from being focused on instruction for high-need children to all students performance on what are now very high-stakes assessments.

Not only has Title I changed over the years, but what is defined as being literate has changed as well. In the mid-sixties being functionally literate was basically thought to be reading at the fourth grade level. Today being able to function in society requires much higher academic skills. The movement towards understanding the need for all students to have a strong academic background when they complete high school is one of the core elements of college- and career-ready standards movement. However, this has been well documented for years, including the 1983 Nation At Risk report that stated that in order for the nation to be successful all of it’s students must have academic skills to prepare them for the advanced level training for jobs in a wide array of sectors. Today, the manufacturing community (AME, 2013) has stated that there are 100,000 jobs open in the manufacturing sector that are going unfilled because the students graduating from high schools do not have the academic skills needed to be trained in the manufacturing jobs of today. In addition they have stated that their sector needs to have over 3 million new employees over the next few years as they want to build new plants in the United States by essentially “re-shoring” plants and jobs back in the United States.

**The Long-Term Achievement Gap**

The education achievement gap between different groups of students is not a simple issue that can be reduced to one set of numbers. Having said that the nation does look to reading and math scores as an indication of success in the classroom.

Over the last forty years the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has conducted a study of long-term trends in reading and mathematics for children age 9, 13, and 17. These data is not the same as the NAEP state-by-state or national tests of specific content areas. Data for the 2012 long-term study assessed over 26,000 students in reading and 26,000 in mathematics. The following data includes results from the 2012 long-term study, but it is important to note that the trend line begins in 1973.

Since 1973 all students have made progress at age 9 and 13; but all groups – White, Black, Hispanic, Male students have made significant gains at all three age levels assessed – 9, 13, 17 in reading. The achievement gap between Black and White students has narrowed at all three age levels, as it has between Hispanic and White students at all three age levels.

In mathematics, significant improvements in overall achievement have been made since 1973 for all students at ages 9 and 13. The achievement gap has narrowed between Black and White students at ages 9, 13, and 17 and for Hispanic and White Students at the ages of 13 and 17.

The gender gap has narrowed in reading for 9 year olds and 17 year olds in mathematics between 1973 and 2012.

**Changes in NAEP reading average scores and score gaps for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students, by selected characteristics: 1973 - 2012**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Subgroups** | **Score changes from 1973** | **Score changes from 2008** |
| **Age 9** | **Age 13** | **Age 17** | **Age 9** | **Age 13** | **Age 17** |
| **All students** | **All students** | 13 |  8 |  |  |  3 |  |
| **Race/ethnicity** | **White** | 15 |  9 |  4 |  |  |  |
| **Black** | 36 | 24 | 30 |  |  |  |
| **Hispanic** | 25 | 17 | 21 |  |  7 |  |
| **Gender** | **Male** | 17 |  9 |  4 |  |  |  |
| **Female** | 10 |  6 |  |  |  3 |  |
| **Score gaps** | **White – Black** | Narrowed | Narrowed | Narrowed |  |  |  |
| **White – Hispanic** | Narrowed | Narrowed | Narrowed |  | Narrowed |  |
| **Male – Female** | Narrowed |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Indicates score was higher in 2012 Indicates no significant change in 2012. |

**Changes in NAEP mathematics average scores and score gaps for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students, by selected characteristics: 1973 - 2012**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Subgroups** | **Score changes from 1973** | **Score changes from 2008** |
| **Age 9** | **Age 13** | **Age 17** | **Age 9** | **Age 13** | **Age 17** |
| **All students** | **All students** | 25 | 19 |  |  |  4 |  |
| **Race/ethnicity** | **White** | 27 | 19 |  4 |  |  |  |
| **Black** | 36 | 36 | 18 |  |  |  |
| **Hispanic** | 32 | 32 | 17 |  |  |  |
| **Gender** | **Male** | 26 | 21 |  |  |  |  |
| **Female** | 24 | 17 |  3 |  |  5 |  |
| **Score gaps** | **White – Black** | Narrowed | Narrowed | Narrowed |  |  |  |
| **White – Hispanic** |  | Narrowed | Narrowed |  |  |  |
| **Male – Female** |  |  | Narrowed |  |  |  |
|  Indicates score was higher in 2012 Indicates no significant change in 2012. |

Charts can be found at:

<http://nationsreportcard.gov/ltt_2012/summary.aspx>

**Significance to Title I**

These data indicate that progress is being made in closing the achievement gap. One of the unique characteristics of this assessment is that it is the same assessment was that was used over the thirty-nine year time span (the one time shift in questions was done by using questions from an updated set of questions AND the old set). The overall picture is that of an improving education system. However, keeping in mind that Title I is 5% of the nation’s spending on elementary and secondary education it is important to note, that closing the achievement gap has been at the core of Title I’s mission. In addition, Title I has been concentrated on reading during in elementary grades and this is where the largest improvements have been made.

 **Title I Funding**

Title I of ESEA was enacted in 1965 and in its first year of operation it was appropriated almost $1billion. By 2013-14 school year the funding level of Title I had reached $14.5 billion for Part A funding. (There are four funding formulas for Title I: Basic Grant (Part A), Concentration Grant, Targeted Assistance Grant, and Education Finance Incentive Grant, See Reagan Miller paper published by CAP, 200x) (USED, 2013).

During its 38 school years of operation, Title I has never severed all of the children who were eligible for serves. And, Title I’s current percentage of all school funding is about 5% (ETS, 2013).

When questions are asked about Title I the observation is usually made that the program spends lots of money and shows very little by way of results (House Budget Committee, 2013). In fact while the program’s appropriation has grown over the thirty-eight years, its purchasing power should not be confused with the appropriation. The reality is that after factoring inflation the purchasing power of Title I is now on the decline. According to a Thompson publication of an analysis by Wayne Riddle (formally with the Congressional Research Service and now an independent contractor), the funding for Title I only increased to be 60% greater than what it was in 1965 and now back at the level of purchasing power it had in 2000 – at 40% greater than what it was in 1965.



While some observations have claimed that funding is not the most critical element for Title I, it is a significant tool. The Colorado Department of Education study conducted in 2009 evaluated which Title I programs were working over a six year period (in their state) and found that funding was a significant predictor of overall program success. Schools that were using the supplemental resources to a significant level were much more likely than other schools to produce significant improvements (Colorado, 2009). While it is important to note that Title I dollars are supplemental and as such reflect what the state and local governments are providing, plus the Title I dollars, the study’s results reflect an important insight. Colorado documented that resources must be concentrated to a critical mass to move from being a program of modest gains to one that produces accelerated gains.

Meaning of Funding for Title I

As noted earlier, one short definition of Title I is that it is a funding stream to state and local education agencies. In the past, states and school districts have been encouraged to serve as many eligible children as they can and to report that number as an indication of impact. However the actual determination of which students are being served is a function of their school. School districts are required to serve the school buildings with the most eligible children (by percentage). The result of this; plus the belief that early reading intervention is critical is that over 60% of Title I funds are currently in the early grades (K-5). However, many are now questioning the idea that as many students as possible should be in the program and change it to reflect the experience that schools that are able to mass funds to a critical level can have a greater impact. The problem is that Title I is not fully funded.

The question of adequate funding cannot be ignored. In 2013 the funding level, as adjusted for inflation is now back to 1999 levels. Overall, the funding level, at $14.5 billion allows for the federal government to touch many schools with the hope that a modest amount of funds can change a child’s learning. The reality is that Title I shows significant gains when the resources are at the proper level. This proper level is different in every state and locality and reflects the difference the Title I was initially designed to achieve, giving every child an equal chance to achieve to their level of ability.

**Status of Title I in 2013**

The long-term data shows that even with the modest investment the nation is making small gains in closing the achievement gap. But in 2013, the rate of improvement is disappointing. We think we can do better, by strengthening the programs focus on high need children.

**The Need in 2013**

The need for a program focused on children living in poverty continues to be critical. The 2009 international study PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) reported on the education progress in 47 developed and developing nations have made by measuring the reading and mathematics scores of those nations’ fifteen year olds. As a part of their policy and data analysis, PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background- Volume II, they concluded that the United States did not have a program aimed at providing the increased educational attention need by children living in high poverty. In contrast, almost all the other nations did have a national program aimed at making the investments in helping students overcome the deleterious effects of poverty on learning. But they also state, that poverty itself is only a small part (6%) of the explanation of why some children do not learn. They report that education policy itself can have a massively (94%) positive impact on success – if it is well targeted.

Recently, the Education Testing Service (ETS) issued a report: Poverty and Education: Finding the Way Forward (2013) that reaches similar conclusions. In their study the authors argue that the US does not have a program with a significant emphasis on educating children in poverty. Their argument is that Title I represents only 5% of the education spending and as such is too small to have the impact that is needed. Their report is a meta-analysis of existing data that indicates the number of children living in poverty in the United States continues to expand. They cite that one in five American children are living in poverty that is described as living where they are not sure of their next meal (food insecurity). In addition, the report documents that education is only one part of the factor of social policy that impacts children living in poverty. Most live in households with only one parent (88%), 1/3rd of all children live in households where neither parent holds full-time/year round employment. Plus, they report that the gap between income groups continues to expand and that this too has an impact on where children go to school as most minority and low income children attend schools that are almost fully comprised of students who from minority groups.

That the effects of living in poverty impacts a child early years and that that gap continues to grow. The landmark Hart and Rilsey (1995) vocabulary study demonstrates that children living in poverty come to their formal education with tens of thousands fewer words than their middle class counter parts. In addition, at the end of every school year, much of the progress that has been gained by children living in poverty is lost in what is called, “the summer slump.” The vocabulary gap (which is representative of a learning gap), which was large to begin with at Kindergarten and First grade, continues and grows with each passing year. Given that the need for literacy skills is key to learning content the lack of progress is significant.

**What is being done**

The National Title I Association has been collecting information on unusually successful Title I schools for over ten years (see the list in Appendix A). These schools demonstrate that children living in poverty are capable of achieving to a significant level and that each school has a unique set of circumstances that it must adjust to to be effective. Among the list of Distinguished Schools are:

School A: elementary (Name) brief paragraph on what they have done and how effective each school is.

School B: middle

School C: high school

Why do these schools work? They work for several reasons, none of which happen without significant work and investment by a wide range of professionals. One part of their success is that each of these schools has good leadership (which has been developed over years of education, training and experience). They also have instructional leadership that is aware of a wide range of teaching strategies, instructional methods and what their students need (this means that they aren’t applying a program to their student body; but rather determining what is needed and what their school should do to implement it). Plus they have built an intervention process that is built on the research but is adapted to the needs of their student body (which means they have data that is collected, analyzed, and implemented).

The Distinguished Title I Schools are examples of what can be done across the system but the resources of money and talent are not being found in enough schools.

The vast majority of Title I schools have significant challenges. One is a high turnover rate among teachers. While the national rate for teachers to leave the profession is 15% per year, in high poverty schools the rate is x. Schools with large number of students who are living in poverty also much cope with the reality that more of their students will move during the school year. Plus, as previously quoted only 12% of the children living in poverty live in households with their two parents. The challenges are just greater, not insurmountable, than schools with high numbers of children of the middle class.

**Challenges of the immediate future**

The challenges Title I is now facing are daunting. The number of children in need of the services that it supports is increasing, the funding level is decreasing, and the need for students to have literacy and mathematics abilities continues to expand. This is not the receipt for success. However, there are other changes that will challenge the nation to maintain, and hopefully increase its commitment to providing children who live in areas of high poverty with access to the basic education that they need.

**Title I in 2013**

Number of Children eligible:

Number of Children served:

Funding level:

One of these challenges is to be aware that almost all schools have a reform program. What is critical is to link Title I to these efforts without losing its emphasis. The issue is that some leaders want to use Title Is’ resources to support the general thrust of American education to improvement. Improvement is important and ideas around an agenda of systemic reform should not be lost, but these policies should not come at the expense of the primary mission of Title I, which is focused on providing the additional instruction students living in poverty require. The basic argument is that reforming the system should not come at the expense of instruction for the students who most need it.

Looking at the many changes in American education it is easy to see some promising and important initiatives that are being developed. Ideas such as the creation of virtual schools, charter school, and other new configurations are part of a new and vibrant movement. But, Title I is not simply a pot of money to be used for the process of any change. Title I is not a program that links money to the student, rather it links money to schools that serve students who are eligible.

In addition there are many other ideas and changes that are being proposed. One is to provide tutoring money for students who are eligible for Title I who may be in schools that are poorly performing. A form of this idea has been tried as a part of No Child Left Behind and has not been shown to improve educational outcomes. It has caused schools to reduce their own effort towards educating their entire group of Title I children, which clearly has a negative effect on the majority of students.

In addition, many are now calling for Title I funds to be dedicated with set-asides for early childhood programs and high school programs. Both of these are worthy of funding, but it would mean that local school districts and states would have to reduce the effort they are already making for high poverty children in elementary schools. This does not take into consideration what the local and state may already be doing in these communities. While we believe that early childhood education and high schools must be served, it should not be at the expense of high need children who are currently being served. New funds need to be found to make instructional services for all high need children a seamless activity. It is simply not possible to spend the same dollar twice.

The next several years will also see a major change in American education; most states will be implementing the Common Core State Standards, or a set of career- and college-ready standards that will be a major shift in emphasis. No longer will schools be working on reading and mathematics improvement with the goal of making AYP; they will be working towards a much different goal and with it a different curriculum. Now schools will be judged on how well they help students to function in their content areas subjects, their reading programs will become reading and writing, and literature will be read and measured for both artistic and subject matter by the literature’s text complexity. Given that most teachers have not been fully trained in how to implement these changes the changes themselves are going to be difficult. Unfortunately, in the Title I schools these challenges are going to be deeper as students who have vocabulary deficiencies now must also learn how to write both narrative and argumentative forms. These issues are not being addressed. The reality is that the change in standards is a significant opportunity to change Title I for a large number of students to move from a program that is aimed at the skill level to the meaningful level.

In addition, Title I funds are now being used to help schools to help their students improve their behavior and interactions. While in 1965, when this bill was being signed, the idea of Title I having a behavioral element was never even imagined. The program has had to adapt and change. But unlike some of the other changes, this change is directly aimed at supporting the high need student and it does have an impact on instruction. This process is an example of a change that is keeping focus on the primary mission, structure, and students that are needed to be served. The challenge in the near future will be to maintain this integrity as discussions on how wider mental health issues should be addressed.

One of the greatest challenges to Title I in the immediate future is the idea that it isn’t working and that it is simply a pool of funds to be used by school districts to initiate the changes that they see as needed. Title I is not a de facto general aid program, it was designed for and must be maintained as a source of funds for schools to help their low achieving/high poverty students to get the additional instruction they need to be successful. While there are many ways that schools can do this, this is what needs to be done. Using Title I funds to help all students in a low performing district (including those who are not Title I students) is not the primary purpose of the program and when this is attempted the program loses focus, its intensity and it dilates the likelihood of success.

Perhaps the most significant challenge is the drop in funding. In the Spring of 2013, a sequester and a small across the board cut in funds was enacted that totaled 5.3%. In reality many schools were expecting a drop in funding, some were expecting it in mid-year and were already had plans what they would do. They reported to this Association that they would: increase class size, cut summer school, and/or reduce support for the purchase of materials as well as other austerity measures. These action are at the same time as the number of eligible children is increasing and the emphasis of schools is changing from reading and mathematics skills to content subject matter.

As we look ahead, and the current Deficit Reduction Act of 2011 requires, there is a new sequester coming in the next year and the overall allocation of funds for federal education is mandated to be lower. What will this mean for Title I schools? First, all children will still be in schools, unlike the impact of cuts for Head Start (another program aimed at serving high poverty children), schools can not turn students away. They will simply have less. Less means that they will not be getting the additional instruction that they need to makeup the educational differences that they start school with (Hart and Risley, 1995, 2003). In practical terms this means: larger classes, less professional development for their teachers, fewer materials which collectively mean fewer educational opportunities. It is fairly easy to see where this will take the nation, either we will serve less students or serve less students well.

Focusing on the future

Title I’s impact on children has been positive. The long-term NAEP data indicates that the achievement gap is closing, yet no one believes that we are where we need to be. The Colorado study on Title I’s effectiveness demonstrates that funding, when it achieves a critical mass, can make a difference. The NASTID Distinguished Schools demonstrate that there are schools across the nation that are not only getting it right but are making progress. While, the Congress and the Administration are engaged in a set of policy disputes about waivers, flexibility, requirements, prescriptiveness and funding; most are missing the point by trying to turn Title I into a general funding stream. Title I is part of the primary mission of the federal government to ensure that all children in the United States have an equal access to the benefits of a basic education. This is because students who live in poverty start school with many educational deficits, many of which we know how to remediate. In addition, as again the Distinguished Schools demonstrate, that progress can be made year after year.

Title I is a small but important part of the education system. Over forty years it has contributed to the closing of the achievement gap and the gradual improvement in the American education system. But progress is slower than it should be. Title I should be expanded to fully serve all eligible students. Other nations have made major efforts to educationally impact their children who are living in poverty and they have seen their achievement scores climb (PISA, 2010). It is time for the nation to rededicate itself to help all our high-need children to succeed.

Appendix A: Distinguished Schools

Appendix B: NASTID principles for reauthorization (if we want to include, it should be mentioned in text)

Appendix C: Definitions - funding formulas, MOE, S/S, schoolwide, targeted

References