

Draft as of March 18, 2013

I. Introduction – Accelerating Improvement and Closing the Achievement Gap Act of 2013

In April 1965 President Johnson signed into law a promise that the United States would embrace its children living in poverty and provide them the education that would allow them to have access to the American dream. Now, almost 48 years later the nation has only partially fulfilled that promise.

a. Poverty - The number of children living in poverty in the United States is growing to more than 1 in 5. These children frequently start school already behind their middle class peers. They have had fewer opportunities to experience and develop and being behind when they start only becomes more profound as the academic years progress and become more demanding. Title I was created to help these children to succeed.

b. Purpose of Title I – Title I is an education program that works for children who are living in communities with large portion of families living in poverty. Many of these children are low achieving. We recommend that this program continue. However, there is growing evidence of effective strategies to accelerate achievement and close learning gaps for these children.

c. Historic role of Title I – The federal government provides resources to states and local districts to ensure that every child has access to a basic education by providing supplemental support. It is not a general aid program and cannot be treated as such until all of the eligible children are being served.

i. Special emphasis on children who need additional academic support because of the levels of poverty in the communities that they live in so that they are able to meet career- and college-ready standards.

ii. Funding levels -- Currently Title I funds are allocated based on the number of children in poverty. We ask that the program funds be allocated based on the resources needed to effectively raise achievement and closed persistent gaps in achievement.

d. What has been changing

i. Technology – data driven decision-making is changing how instruction can be managed and for the first time in history technology allows students and teachers to get the immediate feedback on performance tasks necessary to accelerate learning and adjust instruction. This is significant as it means that programs could be

allowed to change to allow for greater flexibility in how instruction is provided.

ii. State funding – state and local funding requirements for high poverty students should be maintained and not be replaced by supplemental support that is at the foundation of Title I.

iii. Links to other programs – Title I does not work in isolation, there needs to be greater connections to IDEA and pre-K (e.g. Head Start) as well as other programs that include programs for English Language Learners, Native Americans, homeless, migrant, immigrant and other minority populations with special needs. However, federal requirements need to be made with an eye towards making data collection, definitions, and eligibility criteria congruent.

e. Competitive funds –. Concentrating resources is an important tool for long-term school improvement; however, the development of competitive grants should not result in funding for Title I Part A being reduced.

II. Tools for improvement

a. Standards – implementing college- and career-ready standards are going to be demanding. We expect that many of the key challenges facing Title I will be highlighted as, for example, most Title I teachers with less than ten years experience have not learned how to teach writing and how it links to reading. Most current teachers are going thru a significant transition to teaching the college and career ready content. They must learn the content at a much deeper level and learn new instructional methods using new resources and technology to be able to teach the content at a deeper level. In addition creating the links from skills such as reading and mathematics to the core subjects will require changes and a re-allocation of resources. Specifically, this means that funds for professional development of teachers and administrators will need to be included in federal education programs for schools supporting Title I children.

b. Assessment – Title I students are frequently among the most assessed children in school. Too much instructional time is being lost and not enough of the right information is coming back into the classroom. In any rewriting of the ESEA the program's assessment and accountability requirements need to be balanced with how much information is currently being collected and the over all impact on instruction. (Suggested Alternative as of 3/18/13: Data for decision making is critical and needs to be collected on a regular basis. However, all levels of government should be sensitive to creating layers of testing that result in duplication or a reduction in instructional time. The goal is not to reduce instructional time but to improve it. Assessment systems should be designed to inform instruction by having data available to teachers in a timely manner.

c. Program range

i. Early childhood – programs such as Head Start and programs such as the Child Care Block Grant need to have links to education programs such as Title I to ensure that the transitions and the programs are effectively coordinated for the best interest of the child.

ii. Middle & high school – All too often the gains made in the elementary years are negated by the instructional systems and instruction of middle and high school academic programs. Being able to read on grade level by the 4th grade does not negate the effects of poverty. New requirements from the career- and college-ready standards such as being able to reading and write more complex text will demand that support for basic learning be expanded to include more complex demands (and skills) at the middle and high school.

d. Non-academic elements – legal requirements focused on parents involvement has frequently been defined to reduce how schools can involve parents in instruction. We recommend an expansion to give greater flexibility in how funds are spent so that parent involvement is a part of a program of instruction.

e. Academic elements – improving instruction is a constant part of any successful program. State and local districts should be able to craft professional development programs that reflect the needs of that school that focus on job-embedded programs but at the level that is needed. To be successful a range of funds should be allowed in the reauthorization.

f. Promising Practices – Information and ideas need to be shared and developed with an eye to continuing to develop implementation programs that are based on proven principles but reflective of the varying conditions in which each school functions and children learn. This would include more nationally supported research on learning, teaching and instruction.

g. ELL– Each English language learner comes to school with different language abilities. A child who needs three years to become ready to be assessed in English is different from the child who needs two years and one who needs six. We now have the ability to assess children's readiness and monitor their improvement. This needs to be reflected in national policy.

h. Disabled – Many disabled learners are part of Title I and building systems that ensure universal design for learning should be included in the re-writing of ESEA. We support a tiered approach to instruction that coordinates resources for each child and the program would need greater flexibility to implement multi-tier intervention systems.

III. Waivers – This will not be a normal transition from No Child Left Behind to the new ESEA. Several states have been granted waivers from specific program requirements but in doing so have taken on

new, complex and expensive requirements. When the new ESEA is enacted a transition will need to be outlined and negotiated with the states so that states who have implemented the waivers and those that did not can move effectively to enact the new statute without loss of momentum.

IV. State role – The federal role in education is always changing. Some of these changes are critically important in providing funds and focusing the nation on the needs of vulnerable children. However, the federal government has limits and needs to work with states as they are implementing their reform programs with local schools. Setting over arching goals and ensuring that the most vulnerable are served is a critical role that must be continued. States need flexibility on implementing initiatives but need to be accountable for outcomes such as accelerating achievement and closing subgroup gaps. School reform is expensive and time consuming, programs that last two or three years are insufficient for long-term success.

a. In addition there needs to be a small state minimum to ensure that states have the resources to work with districts and schools with large numbers of Title I students.

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Issues raised by NASTID members:

Many of the children we serve don't have food, a place to sleep or study. Can we find a way to increase the link between HHS and Title I to ensure that children come to school ready to learn and not have to worry about food or shelter.

Make sure that we do not imply that states with waivers are doing more and better programs than those states that are not.