



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

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

February 27th, 2010

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Integrated student support services
- Family engagement
- Afterschool programs
- Mentoring
- Service-learning
- Safe schools
- Increasing student attendance
- Physical education
- Dropout recovery and prevention & multiple pathways to graduation

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

Integrated Student Support Services

Background

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

However, these aspects of school reform alone are not enough. Evidence suggests that to improve student academic success, we must meet students’ needs in and out of the classroom.³ Doing so necessitates a much stronger connection between schools and the broader community. Research shows that when community resources are leveraged effectively, they can produce results.

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

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

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

- Communities In Schools, which places coordinators in schools to connect students and their families with resources in the community, has been able to produce a dropout rate of 3 percent for a student population with a typical dropout rate of 40 to 60 percent.⁴ An independent, third-party evaluation⁵ concluded that:
 - Among dropout prevention programs using scientifically- based evidence, the CIS Model is one of very few in the United States proven to keep students in school and is the only dropout prevention program in the nation with scientifically-based evidence to prove that it increases graduation rates.
 - When implemented with high fidelity, the CIS Model results in a higher percentage of students reaching proficiency in fourth and eighth grade reading and math.
 - Effective implementation of the CIS Model correlates more strongly with positive school level outcomes (i.e. dropout and graduation rates, achievement, etc.) than does the uncoordinated provision of service alone, resulting in notable improvements in school level outcomes in the context of the CIS Model.
- The Teen Outreach Program, a service-learning program that combines opportunities for community service with structured learning opportunities before and after school, has been found to impact a variety of student outcomes, from dropout rates to teen pregnancy rates.⁶
- A review of 160 publications funded by the Department of Education found that effective community and family connections with school can impact student achievement in reading, math, science and other subjects.⁷

Recommendations

Title V – New Initiatives and Programs for Student Support Services

Improve school access to and leverage of community resources to promote student success.

- *Community Engagement Policies:* All Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) receiving federal education funds should be required to develop community engagement policies and practices, and to designate a staff person to oversee their implementation. This would assist in ensuring that all students have access to the full range of student support services they need to facilitate their learning, including services available through public, community-based, and faith-based organizations. Such a community involvement requirement would operate in parity with the parent involvement requirement of Section 1118.
- *Developing Capacity to Leverage Community Resources:* Funds should be made available for school-community partnership grants to a subset of public schools with children and youth at highest risk of school failure.

⁴ Communities In Schools (2009). *Changing the Face of Education: 2007-2008 Results from the CIS Network*. Arlington, VA: Communities In Schools.

⁵ *Communities In Schools National Evaluation -- School-Level Report: Summary of Findings*, ICF International, April 2008.

⁶ Isaacs, Julia (2007). *Cost-Effective Investments in Children*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 24. www.brookings.edu/views/papers/200701isaacs.pdf.

⁷ Jordan, Catherine; Evangelica Orozco; and Amy Averett (2001). *Emerging Issues in School, Family & Community Connections*. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 17. www.sedl.org/connections/resources/emergingissues.pdf.

- Such funds could be made available either by formula or by competition.
- Eligibility criteria for schools could include: Title I designation; extremely low graduation rate; poverty-level; number of students on free or reduced price lunch; or similar factors.
- Funds could be used for salary support for a community liaison position (either a school employee or a contracted nonprofit service provider). Alternatively, if such a position exists already within the school staffing structure, funds could be used for other low-cost capacity-building activities; however, they would not generally be used for direct services.
- In addition to having a dedicated staff position, such an integrated student services system would include: school- and student-level needs assessment; community asset assessment and identification of potential partners; annual plans for school-wide prevention and individual intervention strategies; delivery of services based on those strategies; and data collection and evaluation over time with modification of services as appropriate.

Family Engagement

Background

- Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child’s education increases student achievement and decreases the dropout rate, regardless of families’ socioeconomic status, educational level, or ethnicity.⁸
- Family engagement is also cost-effective way to improve student achievement, studies show that schools would have to increase spending by \$1000 per pupil to achieve the same results.⁹

Recommendations

Title I, Section 1118

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

- Incentivize school districts to meaningfully engage families by increasing the set-aside for family engagement from 1 percent to 2 percent and providing additional training and technical assistance on best practices.
- Develop research-based standards and evaluation tools for family engagement to ensure schools and districts are partnering with families in meaningful ways.

⁸ Henderson, A. and Mapp, K. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: the Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and Ferguson, C., Ramos, M., Rudo, Z., and Wood, L. (June 16, 2008). The School Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture: a Review of Current Literature. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. SEDL. p. 2.

⁹ Houtenville, A. and Conway, K. (2008). Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement. Journal of Human Resources, XLIII, 2. pp. 437-53.

- Add a statutory definition and framework on effective family engagement that engages families across a child’s lifespan and in all learning settings.

Title V, Sections 5561-5565

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

- Streamline and shift the scope of the PIRC role and responsibilities from providing direct services and information to parents to providing capacity-building, training, and technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs.
- Increase authorization for PIRCs to \$43.2 million and establish a minimum grant award of \$500,000 to assure baseline family engagement in education capacity in each State.
- Pilot a local family engagement centers demonstration program through which local community-based organizations provide direct services to families and remove barriers for family engagement.

21st Century Community Learning Centers and Afterschool for Older Youth

Background

American families need quality afterschool programs more than ever. In most families, both parents or the single parent is in the workforce. In communities today, 15.1 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends.¹⁰ Just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs, but the parents of another 18 million say their children would participate in afterschool – if a program were available.

Afterschool programs are a key component to broader school turnaround efforts and are effective in improving children’s academic and social achievement while also providing a safe and stimulating environment in the hours after the school day.

- Annual performance report data from 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grantees across the country demonstrate that regular attendees improve their reading (43%) and math grades (49%)¹¹.
- In 2003-2004, 45 percent of all 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program participants improved their reading grades, and 41 percent improved their math grades.¹²
- Teachers reported that a majority of students who participated in 21st CCLC programs improved in every category of behavior. The categories with the highest percentages of student improvement were academic performance, completing homework to the teacher’s satisfaction, class participation and turning in homework on time.¹³

¹⁰ Afterschool Alliance (2009). *America After 3 PM*, Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm>

¹¹ Learning Point Associates, 2007.

¹² Mitchell, Carol et al. (2005). *21st Century Community Learning Centers Analytic Support for Evaluation and Program Monitoring: An Overview of the 21st CCLC Program: 2003–04*. <http://www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/21stcclmonitoringrpt.pdf>

¹³ *Ibid*

- Benefits of afterschool programs extend beyond the classroom. Communities with afterschool programs have reported reduced vandalism and juvenile crime. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, crime rates at the 19 schools considered least safe prior to the establishment of LA's BEST, a large and nationally recognized afterschool program funded in part with 21st CCLC funds, dropped 40 percent after the program was introduced.¹⁴

Recommendations

Title IV, Part B, Section 4201- 4206

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

- Increase authorized funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.
- Enhance quality, capacity and sustainability.
 - *Continuation funding*: give states explicit flexibility to make grants renewable, based on grant performance. Continuation grants could provide lower levels of funding with a matching and sustainability plan requirement.
 - *Foster diversity of settings*: ensure states are providing for a range of program locations, both on and off campus. Currently, roughly nine out of ten 21st Century funded "centers" are on school grounds.¹⁵ While there are clear benefits to this arrangement, some students, particularly those who may not respond well to the school environment, can benefit from an off campus facility and a change of scene.
 - *Building state infrastructure and capacity*: give states the flexibility to voluntarily expand set aside for states to engage in activities to increase quality and availability of afterschool programs through professional development, systems building, and planning assistance.
 - Currently, states receive a 5 percent set aside, with up to 3 percent going to TA and up to 2 percent going to administration.
 - Proposed: states receive 5 and up to 7 percent set aside, with between 3-5 percent going to TA (including evaluation) for quality improvement, increased access and affordability. Up to 2 percent of the set-aside would go towards administration.
 - States receive the option to increase their set-aside if their state allocation is no less than what they received in the fiscal year prior to date of enactment, and the increase does not impact funding to current grantees.
- Strengthen accountability by ensuring that program goals and measures accurately reflect the impacts on children's academic, social and behavioral development.

¹⁴ Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California (2001), *California's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time*, Washington, DC: Fight Crime Invest in Kids. www.fightcrime.org/reports/ca-as.pdf.

¹⁵ US Department of Education and Learning Point Associates, 2005, 2006, 2007.

- Currently the program’s impact is largely measured by changes in participants’ grades and test scores – measures which overlook the program’s capacity to promote students’ healthy social and behavioral development in ways that support their overall success in school, work and life. In addition to focusing on advancing students’ academic achievement, the purpose and principles of effectiveness should be broadened to include a focus on deepening student engagement in learning and promoting healthy youth development.

Afterschool for Older Youth – New Initiative

Create Afterschool for Older Youth Centers of Excellence

- Invest in local and national afterschool centers of excellence – established, evaluated programs with proven results for middle and high school youth that serve low-income and/or low-performing students.
 - These high quality programs offer academic enrichment, civic engagement/service learning, marketable skills development, opportunities for students to gain credit towards graduation through learning done outside the traditional classroom, and are tied to high school reform and college access.

Mentoring

Background

Mentoring is a critical element in a child’s social, emotional and cognitive development. It builds a sense of industry and competence, boosts academic performance and broadens horizons. In fact, it helps improve the learning environment for a young person in a number of critical ways:

- Youth who participate in mentoring programs have less unexcused absences¹⁶ and better school attendance.¹⁷
- Mentored youth have an enhanced sense of school connectedness¹⁸, more positive attitudes towards school and teachers, and feel more competent and engaged with their schoolwork.¹⁹
- Mentoring provides a link with a caring adult, which has a side effect of improving a young person’s relationships and communications with their parents, teachers and peers.²⁰
- Mentored young people are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to higher education.²¹

¹⁶ Tierney, Joseph P. et al. (2000) *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/publications.asp?search_id=7.

¹⁷ Sipe, Cynthia L. (1999). Mentoring Adolescents: What have we learned? In *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*, Grossman, Jean Baldwin (ed), Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

¹⁸ Karcher, M.J. (2005). “The effects of school-based mentoring and high school mentors’ attendance on their younger mentees’ self-esteem, social skills and connectedness.” *Psychology in the Schools*. Vol 42, Issue 1, pp 65-77.

¹⁹ Jekielek, Susan M. et al. (2002). *Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

²⁰ Rhodes, Grossman and Resch (2000). “Agents of change: Pathways through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents’ academic adjustment,” *Child Development* Nov-Dec, pp 1662-71.

²¹ Jekielek, Susan M. et al. (2002). *Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

The following recommendations strengthen the availability and quality of federal grant support for mentoring, and tie it more closely with the important role mentors can play in improving a young person's academic standing and learning environment. In addition, the recommendations will broaden the reach of mentoring to include a number of specific populations of young people who could benefit from a mentor's involvement in their life.

Recommendations

Title IV, Part A, Section 4130

Section 4130 is a critical source of federal grants that are awarded directly to local mentoring organizations, to help them serve more young people. It is the only federal grant program focused on mentoring as it relates to the school setting.

Improve mentoring programs by implementing the following:

- Update purpose to include fostering character education and improving the learning environment through engaging students, reducing school absentee rates, and academic performance.
- Require the Department to provide training and technical assistance to grantees, beginning in the first year of the grant and throughout the span of the grant.
- Require the Department to track mentoring practices and outcomes throughout the entire three-year span of the grant, preferably through a robust online tracking and evaluation system, and to evaluate the grantees during the course of the grant, rather than just at the end. Require a sustainability plan as part of the grant application.
- Include mentoring into programs that target special populations:
 - Alaska Native Education Program: mentoring as an effective dropout prevention program.
 - Native Hawaiian Education Program: mentoring as an effective program to integrate Native Hawaiian elders and seniors and as a community based learning center.
 - Demonstration Grants for Indian Children: include mentoring as a special compensatory program to increase graduation rates of Indian children, and as a program to integrate Tribal elders and seniors.
 - Demonstration program targeting middle and high school migrant youth.
 - Delinquent and neglected populations.

Background

- Service-learning can strengthen student engagement and improve school attendance^{[1],[2]} by reducing boredom, absenteeism, and other risk factors for dropping out of school.^[3] 81% of all students who drop out of school noted that service-learning would increase their benefit of school while only 16% of these students had access to such classes. The leading reason students drop out according to a survey of high school dropouts is lack of relevance (*Engaged for Success*, March 2008).
- Service-learning programs enhance students' academic achievement in reading, writing, science, mathematics, and social studies.^[4] 66% of Americans say that schools have a responsibility to teach students how to use what they learn in the classroom for real-world projects and problems.
- Service-learning helps students develop important skills that employers report as being desirable in the 21st Century workforce: oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. Service-learning also strengthens students' commitment to social and civic responsibility,^[5] which has been identified as a critical need in the workplace of the future.^[6]
- Service-learning engages the community in the mission of public education and establishes youth as leaders in the community. In the National Youth Leadership Council's recent report, *Growing to Greatness 2006*, 91 percent of principals reported improved school-community relations as a result of service-learning programs.^[7]
- The *2009 Civic Health Index* found that students who participated in school-based service more than a year ago are more likely to have volunteered through a community-based organization within the past year (59%) than students who have never participated in school-based service (48%).

Recommendations

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

The Corporation for National and Community Service's Strategic Plan includes a goal of having service-learning in half of all K-12 schools. However, the most recent *Community Service and Service-Learning in*

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

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

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

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

^[5] *Ibid.*

^[6] The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management (2006). *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*. Washington, DC. www.cvworkingfamilies.org/

^[7] National Youth Leadership Council (2006). *Growing to Greatness*. St. Paul, MN. www.nylc.org/inaction_init.cfm?oid=3698

America's Schools report shows that while school-based community service has remained robust, the percentage of schools with service-learning declined from 32% in 1999 to 24% in 2008. The Department of Education needs to play a significant role in complementing and supporting CNCS's Learn and Serve America program and building the capacity for service-learning programs in all of our nation's schools.

Consider the following opportunities to strengthen service-learning as you begin work on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

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

- Require the Secretary of Education to establish a senior service-learning position or office and require that person/office to oversee the Department of Education's coordination with the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Require the integration of collection of data on community service and service-learning activities into ongoing U.S. Department of Education research and data collection activities (Common Core of Data, School and Staffing surveys, Condition of Education reports, etc.).
- Authorize and encourage the Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service to collaborate in implementing similar and relevant programs (e.g., DoEd's Promise Neighborhoods and CNCS's Youth Engagement Zones authorized by the Serve America Act).
- Authorize the Department of Education to enter into cost-sharing agreements with the Corporation for National and Community Service for initiatives such as identification and dissemination of research-based best practices and integration of service-learning into state standards and outcomes.
- Authorize additional funding from the Department of Education for Learn and Serve America programs, including K-12 school-based formula funding through state education agencies and community-based competitive funding for programs including Youth Engagement Zones and Semester of Service.

Include and encourage service-learning as an allowable use in activities supported by Department of Education funding:

- Include provisions in Title I, Part A to provide additional assistance and incentives to school districts that develop programs to engage students in meaningful service and service-learning opportunities in lieu of mandating community service hour requirements.
- Include provisions in Title II to allow the use of federal funds for teacher preparation and service-learning curriculum development and professional development.
- Strengthen provisions in Title IV to encourage the following programs to use service-learning as a program delivery strategy:
 - Mentoring
 - Safe and Drug Free Schools
 - 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Safe Schools and Strategies to Increase Attendance

Background

- The U.S. Department of Education has noted that bullying “affects nearly one in every three American schoolchildren in grades six through ten.”²²
- “Tens of thousands of students are still afraid to go to school because of teasing, harassment, and intimidation from other students.”²³
- Bullying and harassment has a significant impact on grade-point average, school attendance, dropout rates, and likeliness of continuing education:
 - Nearly one in eleven students, or their friends, skipped a class or day of school because they felt unsafe there;²⁴
 - Bullied students were less likely than non-bullied students to report receiving high grades²⁵ and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students who suffered high incidence of bullying and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender expression reported a GPA almost half a grade lower than their peers who experienced no or low levels of bullying and harassment (2.8 versus 2.4)²⁶.

Recommendations

Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Amendments

Amend ESEA (or specific portions within ESEA) to require schools to develop and implement anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies by adding the following:

- Prohibit bullying and harassment based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of students.
- Require LEAs to add incidents of bullying and harassment to the existing list of acts of violence that must be reported.
- Allow LEAs to utilize ESEA funds (such as Title II or Title IV) to implement anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, collaborate with community-based organizations, and train students and educators on how to address and prevent bullying and harassment within their schools.

Title IV – Strategies to Increase Attendance – New Program

²² U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (2003), *Bullying Prevention in the School: Research-Based Strategies for Educators*, Washington, DC: *The Challenge*, No. 3. pg. 11. www.thechallenge.org.

²³ National Association of State Boards of Education (2003), *Bullying in Schools*, Policy Update No. 10, June, pg. 11.

²⁴ Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN. www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/499-1.pdf.

²⁵ DeVoe, J. F., and Kaffenberger, S. (2005). *Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2001 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCES 2005–310). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁶ Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., and Greytak, E. A. (2008). *2007 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN

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

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

Health, Wellness and Physical Activity

Background

- Physical activity and physical education programs have a strong, positive effect on children's academic performance in school. According to Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), a public-private partnership of more than 40 organizations, "Schools that offer intense physical activity programs have seen positive effects on academic performance and achievement (e.g. improved mathematics, improved reading and writing test scores, less disruptive behavior) even when the added physical education time takes away from class time for academics."²⁷
- Nutrition and nutrition education have a strong effect on academic performance – especially for disadvantaged youth. Tufts University's Center for Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy reports that "poor children who attend school hungry perform significantly below non-hungry low-income peers on standardized test scores."²⁸ AFHK also finds that children with poor nutrition have lower test scores, increased absenteeism, poorer concentration, and lower energy levels.²⁹

²⁷ Action for Healthy Kids (2004). *The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools*. Skokie, IL. www.actionforhealthykids.org/special_exclusive.php.

²⁸ Center for Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy (1994). *The Link Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children*. Medford, MA.

²⁹ Action for Healthy Kids (2004). *The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools*. Skokie, IL. www.actionforhealthykids.org/special_exclusive.php.

- Programs that increase physical activity can help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic in the United States. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), “Between the early 1970s and 2000, the rate of childhood obesity has more than tripled for children between the ages of 6 and 11.” The GAO also reports that experts rank “increasing physical activity” as the most important strategy for preventing or reducing childhood obesity.³⁰
- Disadvantaged youth often have little access to safe venues for physical activity – underscoring the need of both in- and out-of-school physical education programs. The GAO finds that “areas of low socioeconomic status and high minority populations had fewer venues for physical activity” and “adolescents in unsafe neighborhoods engage in less physical activity” than their peers.³¹
According to the Center for Disease Control, girls are twice as likely as boys to be inactive.³²

Recommendations

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

Improve PEP by implementing the following:

- Increase funding for PEP to \$100 million, and increase by 5 percent for each succeeding fiscal year.
- Highlight non-school-based partnership language.
- Emphasize the need for “family fitness” – encourage programs that engage parents and caregivers in promoting lifelong fitness, nutrition and health both within the program and at home.

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

- Nutrition education and physical activity required or allowable (FIT Kids Act).
- Define healthy snacks and suppers.

Include the following language where appropriate:

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

³⁰ Government Accountability Office (2005). *Childhood Obesity: Most Experts Identified Physical Activity and the Use of Best Practices as Key to Successful Programs*, Washington, DC: GAO-06-127R.

³¹ Government Accountability Office (2006). *Childhood Obesity: Factors Affecting Physical Activity*, Washington, DC: GAO-07-260R.

³² Center for Disease Control. Physical Activity and Health: Adolescents and Young Adults. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/adoles.htm>

Dropout Recovery and Prevention & Multiple Pathways to Graduation

Background

- Every day, an estimated 2,500 students across the nation drop out of high school.³³ In the last decade, approximately 30 percent of students who enrolled in high school have failed to graduate four years later.³⁴ The situation is even more dismal for youth of color. In 2003, only 55 percent of African Americans and 53 percent of Hispanics graduated from high school—compared with 78 percent of white students.³⁵
- In a survey of recent high school dropouts, the majority of participants acknowledged that they wished they would have remained in school. Seventy-six percent said they definitely or probably would re-enroll in a high school for people their age if they could.³⁶ Asked what would make a difference for today's high school students, 81 percent of dropouts cited the need to make the classroom experience more relevant via real-world learning opportunities, and 75 percent indicated that smaller classes with more individual instruction would be helpful.³⁷

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

Recommendations

Multiple Pathways

- Promote the creation of smaller, supported learning environments; opportunities for contextual learning; and opportunities for work and career exposure.
- Require states and districts applying for dropout prevention and recovery resources to specify the role that employers will play in ensuring that the curriculum is relevant; the instructional materials and equipment are state of the art; competencies are being imparted and documented; and youth have access to a wide array of internship, work-study, work-experience, and career-exposure opportunities.

³³ Keith Melville, *The School Dropout Crisis*, The University of Richmond Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 2006, 1, http://www.pew-partnership.org/pdf/dropout_overview.pdf.

³⁴ Jay P. Greene and Marcus Winters, *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*, Education Working Paper No. 8, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2005, 15, http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp_08.pdf.

³⁵ Jay P. Greene and Marcus Winters, *Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates*, Civic Report No. 48, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2006, 10, http://www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/cr_48.pdf.

³⁶ Bridgeland et al., *The Silent Epidemic*, 10.

³⁷ Bridgeland et al., *The Silent Epidemic*, 11-14.

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

Dropout Recovery and Prevention

- Allow community-based organizations, workforce development providers, and institutions of higher education with a proven track record of working with struggling students and dropouts to receive funds under No Child Left Behind to provide these students with educational services and support that will lead to a high school diploma or equivalent credential.
- Broaden the set of activities eligible for expenditure of supplemental education services funds to include those activities that address the broader set of barriers contributing to student failure at the high school level.
- Assist states, districts, and schools in the development and implementation of integrated data systems that inform the implementation of school wide strategies and trigger support and family-focused, strength-based interventions for students to prevent them from dropping out.

Cross System Collaboration

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

Calculating Graduation Rates

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

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