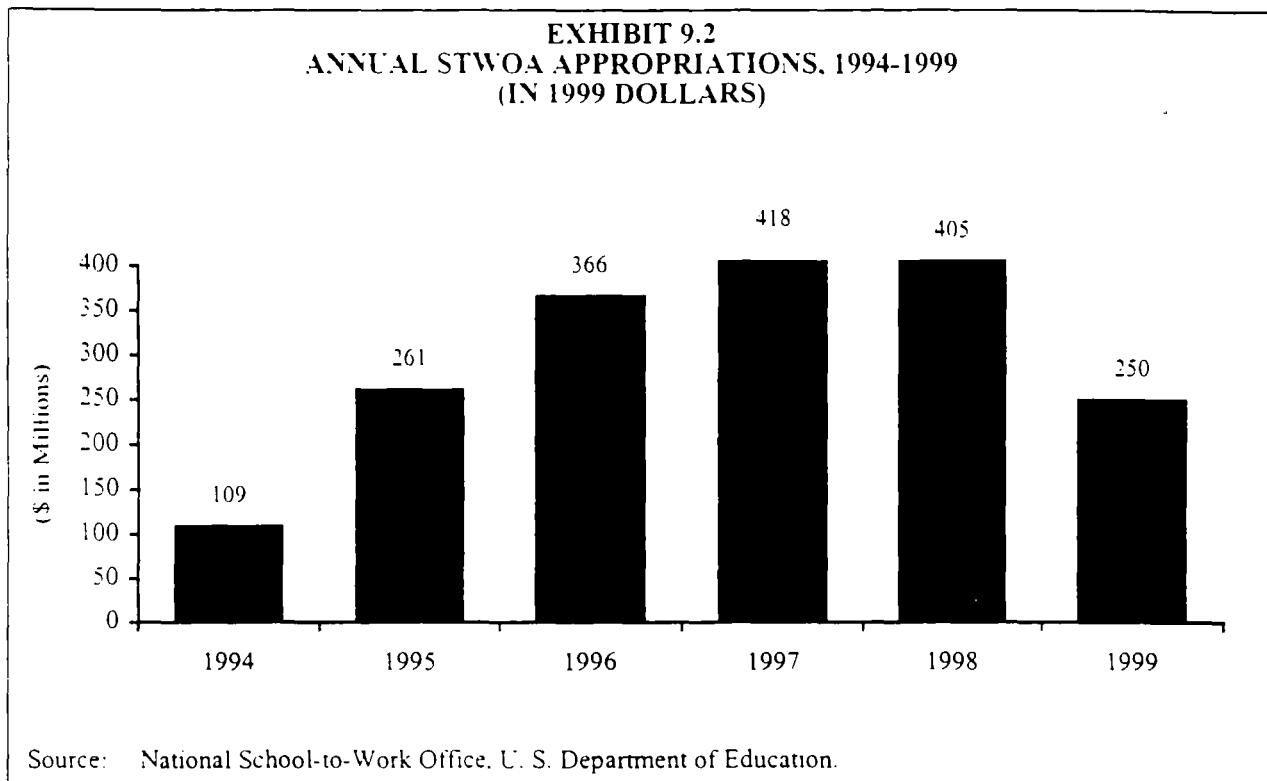


Congress has authorized \$250 million. The following chart summarizes annual spending under this Act in constant dollars.



The lion's share of federal resources was distributed to states in one-time four- to five-year grants for re-granting to local school-to-work partnerships. The law requires that 70 percent of the state's grant be distributed to local partnerships in the first year, rising to 90 percent by the grant's third year and thereafter.⁷ States can and have used remaining funds for interagency coordination, planning, statewide marketing and promotion, professional development, curriculum development, and other system-building activities. As of October 1998, all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico had received at least their first-year grant funds. First-year awards ranged from \$1.3 million to about \$22 million.⁸

Local partnerships have significant leeway in the use of the funds, provided they demonstrate broad support from local employers, schools, and other partners. STWOA investments at the local level fund activities that include coordination of students' work experiences by school staff, professional development opportunities for teachers (including teacher internships in modern workplaces), curriculum development, local labor market analyses, career exposure events and activities, and supplemental support services for students who need them.

A national evaluation has estimated STWOA spending per district at \$25,092 in 1997-98, or only about \$4.32 per elementary and secondary student per year.⁹ State, local, and private resources typically have augmented federal funds.

The STWOA funds are allocated among three main activities: grants to states, local grants, and national activities that include a variety of activities. Exhibit 9.3 summarizes these program characteristics:

EXHIBIT 9.3
SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT AT A GLANCE

Program Name	1999 Appropriation	Purpose	Funding and Targeting	Participation	School to Work Related Services
The School to Work Opportunities Act: State Implementation Grants	\$203 million	To provide seed money to states to help create STWOA systems through state initiatives and local partnerships of schools, employers, and other groups and individuals	Competitive one-time, 4-5 year grants to states submitting proposal demonstrating broad-based partnerships and priority activities. STWOA grants are meant to benefit all students and dropouts.	All states as well as D.C. and Puerto Rico with most funds regranted to localities; 1,106 local sub-grants	Broad range of services include: Curriculum, professional development, data collection, public and employer engagement, supports for students, employer incentives
The School to Work Opportunities Act: Other Grants	\$28.25 million	To promote STWOA initiatives to specific areas (see targeting provisions)	\$25 million targeted to urban and rural high poverty communities; \$3 million targeted to Indian schools; In previous years grants were made to localities in states that had not yet received implementation grants	To date: 109 localities with STWOA partnerships in high poverty areas; 18 Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded Indian schools	Same as for State Implementation Grants
The School to Work Opportunities Act: National Activities	\$18.75 million	To learn from and strengthen state and local programs and to promote cross-state and multi-state innovations	Varied competitive and non-competitive grants and contracts made to research and technical assistance organizations, industry associations, and local partnerships	Over 60 awards in the following areas: standards, employer/other stakeholder involvement, technical assistance, evaluation and research, communications and outreach.	Evaluation, research, technical assistance, multi-state and cross-state innovations, out-of-school youth initiatives

Source: National School-to-Work Office, U. S. Department of Education.

What Do We Know About Good School-To-Work Programming?

The School to Work Opportunities Act is designed to help local communities provide young people, particularly high school students, with opportunities to combine learning in school with workplace experiences that improve their preparation for careers and further education. The Act stresses the importance of real-world "learning in context" in school and outside it, as well as stronger, long-term partnerships between local employers, schools, and young people. It promotes collaboration between schools and employers on curriculum, teaching and learning methods, career exploration activities, and work experiences to provide students with good employability skills, a career direction, a strong academic foundation, and motivation to learn.¹⁹

Based on its review of research and practice, the Committee for Economic Development characterized good practice in school-to-work programming as follows:²⁰

- A rigorous academic program effectively delivered to all students,

- **An end to distinctions between the academic preparation needed for college and that needed for employment.**
- **Work as a learning experience for young people.**
- **Classroom curricula and methods related to students' work experience, and**
- **Connections among high schools, employers, and postsecondary institutions to improve young people's academic and career options.**

How Well Is the Program Working?

The national implementation evaluation, covering the period 1996-1998, is based on student data from only the second year of implementation and partnership data from the third. Some more-established individual programs and local efforts, launched prior to passage of the STWOA, are reporting promising outcomes. Others have had little impact on improving teaching and learning for young people. This report cites results in the following areas: partnership formation, employer engagement, population served, student satisfaction, college attendance, and academic performance.

Quality of Implementation: The number of partnerships in operation has expanded annually since passage of the Act. Most localities have succeeded in creating broadly-representative collaborations. These partnerships tend to be led by educators; representation of organized labor, four-year colleges, and students is uneven. The creation of these partnerships has been a central activity in every state. By fall 1997, in the 37 states that had received implementation funding, more than 90 percent of high school-age students lived in districts covered by local STWOA partnerships.¹²

Increasing collaboration between employers and schools has been a particularly successful aspect of STWOA implementation. Employer involvement has increased steadily since the Act was passed. According to grantee reports, the number of employers providing work-based learning experiences for high school students doubled between 1995 and 1997, increasing from approximately 60,000 employers to 137,000 in that period. More than 48 percent of high schools involved in STWOA implementation in 1996-97 reported that employers provided some training or internships for school staff, a 17 percent increase from the previous year. Other forms of business and industry support have also expanded, including participation in curriculum development, promotion and marketing of STWOA efforts, guest speaking at schools, and provision of material resources.¹³ About one-quarter of American firms report formal participation in a school-to-work partnership and one in three report providing work-based learning opportunities.¹⁴

National Indicator: By fall 2000, 350,000 employers participating in STW systems will offer work-based learning opportunities.

STWOA partnerships have tended to favor the provision of varied activities to larger numbers of students over a more intensive mix of activities for fewer students. The Act has been interpreted in two distinct ways at the local level.¹⁵ The "depth" interpretation favors STWOA programs that are tightly structured combinations of career development activities, career-related courses, and workplace experiences. They tend to be intensive and to serve small numbers of students. However, in a few districts (including Boston, Philadelphia, and Oakland), this approach is being used to drive the reform of entire high schools. The "breadth" interpretation, which appears to dominate local implementation, emphasizes Congress' intention to make a range of STWOA activities available to many students and to let localities design programs that fit their needs.

Early data on STWOA implementation reflects the emphasis on breadth. Less-intensive STWOA activities—job shadowing, career interest inventories, and other short-term activities that require little change in curricula or school schedules—have been implemented most broadly. More intensive internships and curricular changes have been slow to develop. Similarly, while programs that provide an identifiable sequence of academic and technical courses linked to work experiences have been

implemented in about a quarter of participating schools, they serve small numbers of students.¹⁵ Many more STWOA programs emphasize guidance for students in identifying broad career goals and choosing core courses and electives relevant to those goals.

Implementation has tended to move fastest on less-intensive and less-integrated innovations (such as job shadowing and career guidance activities) while improvements in curriculum and in coordination between school- and work-based learning have been limited and uneven. Congress enacted STWOA to promote changes in the major systems that help young people prepare for their future. At the same time, Congress expressly limited federal funding to five years of seed funding and provided modest funding for the initiative. The complexity of high school reform is daunting—and STWOA asks schools and employers to change their practices.

The Act stresses that opportunities for participation in programs linking school and work should be available to any student, from the low achieving to the "academically talented."¹⁷ Congress chose not to target these resources to specific groups of young people.

Local implementation reflects this emphasis on universality, according to early research on the characteristics of participants in STWOA activities.¹⁸ Participation in comprehensive career development activities and in workplace activities linked to school appears to be as common among high school seniors enrolled in college-preparatory curricula as among those who are not. That is, STWOA activities do not appear to be concentrated among the "non-college-bound," as many feared.

At the same time, however, local implementation seems to be particularly attractive to and beneficial for students less likely to continue their education past high school. More intensive programs that combine career-related academic courses, work experiences linked to school, and comprehensive career development have tended to attract students from the general and vocational tracks who do not plan extensive postsecondary education.¹⁹ In addition, the rate of participation in academic classes that students perceive as focused on their career interests has increased most dramatically among African-American students, due largely to the expansion of these activities on a school-wide basis in urban and suburban areas where black students are concentrated.²⁰

STWOA enables state grantees to address unique technical assistance needs. Most technical assistance efforts assume recipients have identical problems and needs. To customize technical assistance for each STWOA grantee, states have received a "line of credit" which they use to purchase assistance from an identified bank of nearly 200 qualified technical assistance providers.

Performance Accountability: STWOA provides states and communities with broad discretion to determine the activities supported, and is similar to other legislation in calling for a system of performance measures to assess progress. Considerable effort has been expended on developing and implementing such a system. STWOA grantees submit annual performance reports containing information on student and school participation in various STWOA activities, employer involvement, rates of high school graduation and transition to college, and additional sources of funding for STWOA. **Because STWOA involves a "one-time" only grant rather than ongoing federal support, the performance accountability measurement systems are not fully developed.**

Outcomes: For students, increasing employer engagement can provide resources, perspective, and real-world experience and connections that schools have difficulty offering. The national evaluation of STWOA found that **worksite experiences students get through school, particularly in paid positions, were of higher quality than jobs they found on their own.** They provided access to more diverse workplaces, more job time spent in training and more access to career information, more feedback on performance, and closer links between school and the workplace.²¹

Students give high marks to their STWOA activities, particularly those that afford them workplace experiences and academic classes related to their career goals.²² Female and minority students are more likely than male students and white students to attach a high value to their STWOA experiences.²³ In general, students are most positive about activities that involve individualized experiences, such as job shadowing and school-arranged internships. This emphasis on opportunities to relate to adults outside the classroom is consistent with findings from Boston that STWOA students consider their worksite

supervisors and school-to-work coordinators to be a greater influence on their post-secondary plans than their teachers.²⁴

Although formal links between high schools and post-secondary institutions have not expanded significantly as a result of STWOA, well-implemented STWOA programs have the potential to increase college enrollment. Project ProTech in Boston has found that its graduates go on to college at rates higher than those of their peers. Moreover, among African-American ProTech graduates, four out of five enrolled in college the year after graduating from high school, compared to only half the black students in the comparison group.²⁵ Baseline data from an independent evaluation found that eighteen months after graduating from high schools that participate in school-to-work systems, 60 percent of 1996 graduates were enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges, 7 percent were in other postsecondary training programs or the military, and 20 percent were employed full-time..

National Indicator: By fall 2000, the percentage of high school graduates, including vocational concentrators, who successfully transition into employment, further education, or the military will increase 90 percent.

Participation in well-designed STWOA programs appears to increase students' academic focus and motivation.

Baseline data from an independent evaluation found that in 1996, 83 percent of high school seniors graduating from school-to-work systems completed 3 years of math, 73 percent completed 3 years of science, and 69 percent completed three years of math and science. Studies have found that students in quality STWOA programs enroll in more college prep courses than their peers in the general curriculum, particularly in advanced math and science courses.²⁶ An evaluation of STWOA efforts in New York State concluded that, compared to their classmates, STWOA students had better school attendance, spent more time doing their homework, cut fewer classes, and were more challenged by their schoolwork.²⁷

National Indicator: By fall 2000, the percentage of high school graduates from STW systems completing 3 years of math and 3 years of science will increase by 10 percent.

However, in many communities, the emphasis in STWOA implementation on workplace experience without links to or changes in classroom teaching and learning has limited the likelihood of significant academic gains. To date, there is not yet sufficient rigorous evidence that STWOA activities contribute to improved standardized test scores and other traditional measures of academic achievement.

Clarity of Program Focus: While significant progress in implementation has been made since the Act's passage, and positive academic and career outcomes for students are evident in many promising programs, the Act as implemented in many communities has not lived up to the promise that Congress foresaw when it passed the law in 1994.

Politicization has made dispassionate assessment of the initiative's strengths and weaknesses, as well as its possibilities and liabilities, difficult. The STWOA was passed with broad, bipartisan support. By 1997, however, this unified support had unraveled. The initiative, which was seen by many as the "President's program," became a lightning rod for partisan political battling over the direction of federal education policy.

Many states and localities found it difficult to define and focus their STWOA initiatives and to specify how participants were to benefit from STWOA activities. When debate on this legislation began, policymakers' primary concern was the poor prospects of the non-college-bound. The Act's final language was far more inclusive, encouraging states and localities to create STWOA systems that would serve all students, including those with disabilities, as well as gifted and talented and out-of-school youth. This had the advantage of eliminating often false distinctions between college-bound and non-college-bound young people. At the same time, though, it resulted in significant confusion among program planners and implementers.

Lack of integration between STWOA and standards-based reform has fueled fears by some segments of the public and policymakers that STWOA is a diversion from, rather than a potential aid to, efforts to improve academic learning. In many communities, STWOA initiatives have not been well-integrated into mainstream education reform efforts. STWOA is frequently seen as another “add-on” program, rather than a component of a comprehensive high school reform agenda. In many States and communities, efforts to raise academic standards and STWOA initiatives have proceeded in parallel, but have not benefited each other.

Options for Strengthening the Program

The STWOA legislation sunsets in 2001, but there are other promising program options that should be considered. The recently reauthorized Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Act can support efforts to deliver rigorous high level academic content by appealing to students who have not typically done well in traditional science and math curriculum. Although in the past vocational education has not generally focused on improving students' academic performance, the most recent Act clearly indicates that Congress expects students in vocational programs to meet the same high academic standards states increasingly required of all students.

Two promising models in vocational education are High Schools That Work (HSTW), sponsored by the Southern Regional Education Board, and career academies. HSTW focuses on improving the academic achievement of vocational education students by requiring students to take an upgraded college-prep academic curriculum coupled with in-depth study in career/technical studies. Preliminary evidence suggests that National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores of students completing such curriculum increased substantially between 1996 and 1998, and that such students are able to pass challenging employer exams. There are currently about 700 high schools in the HSTW network. The National Assessment of Vocational Education being conducted by ED will examine more carefully whether such changes in school curriculum improve student achievement, and the support structures necessary to implement these changes.

Career academies represent a different model of school reform. Career academy programs are typically organized as schools-within-schools in an effort to create a smaller, more supportive learning environment. They offer a college-prep curriculum organized around a career theme (e.g., technology, health, finance, and travel). Their primary objective is college preparation—not job training. They also establish partnerships with local employers in an effort to increase students' awareness of career options and to provide students with applied learning opportunities in a work setting.

The Department of Education is currently supporting an evaluation of career academy programs. Data on whether these programs improve student achievement, postsecondary enrollment and persistence will be available when results from the National Assessment of Vocational Education are reported to Congress.

While states are still receiving and distributing federal STWOA funds, there are opportunities to learn from early implementation and to accelerate innovative practice. However, as states and localities reach the end of their federal funding, they will have to replace federal resources if they are to continue some of the more complex and costly activities funded under the Act. These activities include:

- Integration of contextual learning and experiences outside the classroom into curricula that meet high academic standards;
- Strengthening of local institutions that can build and sustain long-term relationships among schools, colleges, employers, and other community resources; and
- Support and leadership for these efforts in the business community.

Without continued investment by states and localities, it is likely that efforts to develop intensive work placements and to coordinate school- and work-based learning experiences will be weakened. It will not be easy to overcome the obstacles that now confront efforts to expand and deepen school-to-work

activity. Federal funding is of limited duration. Reauthorization was never intended and is unlikely, despite the amount of activity the Act has spawned in local communities. Moreover, restrictive provisions in the vocational education and workforce investment acts may limit the ability of localities to combine STWOA and other federal funds for program improvement, further isolating reforms begun through this funding.

How should federal policymakers proceed in promoting programs to improve the transition from high school to careers and further education? If the best innovations begun under STWOA are to continue, the following options should be considered:

- **Promotion of linkages between the academic standards movement and STWOA efforts**, through curricula that combine academic rigor with greater relevance to students' future plans.
- **Support for professional development** that can help teachers become more adept and comfortable with contextual teaching methods that strengthen the links between schools and outside resources, and
- **Continued support for the community-level partnerships and institutions** that connect young people with experiences outside the classroom, so that employers, parents, and students feel that the next generation is being adequately exposed to and prepared for future careers.
- **Targeted support for promising program models** combined with a longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of different models in improving education and employment outcomes.
- **Incorporate these approaches into a focused effort** to improve the performance of U.S. high schools, particularly struggling comprehensive high schools of our urban areas.

The implementation of the School to Work Opportunities Act reinforces an important lesson about federal investments in education reform: these initiatives must be characterized by continuity of support and by commitment to certain basic, well-defined objectives. Together, the short time horizon for the Act's investments and the breadth of activities promoted in the legislation resulted in what many predicted in 1994: significant creative activity at the local level, support for some exceptional program designs, wheel-spinning in other communities, and insufficient time for many reforms to sink deep enough roots to have noticeable impact or to survive the imminent end of federal funding.

As the School to Work Opportunities Act moves toward its sunset, the challenge that the Act addresses—the need to prepare all young people to be able to succeed in either postsecondary learning or in employment—remains. If anything, that challenge has become more compelling. Our economy is changing rapidly. New skills are required to succeed in a fast-paced, networked, and constantly-changing economy—skills that include teamwork, communications, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving.

The emerging economy requires changes in teaching and learning in all our schools, and in the nation's troubled urban systems in particular, so that our educational system prepares all students to meet the high standards that traditionally have been expected for only a privileged minority, and so that all young people leave high school (as the National Education Goals demand) in possession of the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

¹ Claudia Goldin and Robert Margo. "The Great Compression: The Wage Structure in the United States at Mid-Century," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February 1992): 1-34.

² Robert Zemsky, Daniel Shapiro, Maria Iannozzi, Peter Cappelli, Thomas Bailey, *The Transition from Initial Education to Working Life in the United States of America* (Washington DC: National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, 1998) 26-27.

³ Marilyn McMillen and Phillip Kaufman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997); U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1997, pg. 17.

⁴ Section 802, School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994, PL 103-239.

⁵ Sections 102 - 104.

⁶ Hershey et al., xv.

⁷ Section 215 (b)(7).

⁸ National School-to-Work Office Web Site. "Grants." October 1998.

⁹ Hershey et al., 44-45; *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1997.

¹⁰ Margaret Terry Orr, *Integrating Secondary Schools and Community Colleges Through School-to-Work Transition and Education Reform* (New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1998) 11.

¹¹ Silverberg (1996) as cited in Committee for Economic Development, *The Employer's Role in Linking School and Work* (Washington DC: CED, 1998) 2.

¹² Hershey et al., 27-28.

¹³ Hershey et al., 36-38.

¹⁴ Zemsky et al., 36.

¹⁵ Alan M. Hershey, Marsha K. Silverberg, Joshua Haimson, Paula Hudis, and Russell Jackson. *Expanding Options for Students: Report to Congress on the National Evaluation of School-to-Work Implementation* (Princeton: Mathematica Policy Research, 1998). xvi. Draft.

¹⁶ Hershey et al., 66.

¹⁷ Section 4 (2).

¹⁸ Hershey et al., Ch. 4.

¹⁹ Hershey et al., 116.

²⁰ Hershey et al., 117-120.

²¹ Hershey et al., 86-8.

²² Hershey et al., 122-124.

²³ Hershey et al., 127.

²⁴ Jobs for the Future and Boston Private Industry Council, *School-to-Career Initiative Demonstrates Significant Impact on Young People*. (Boston: Jobs for the Future, 1998) 5.

²⁵ Jobs for the Future and Boston Private Industry Council, 2.

²⁶ Committee for Economic Development, 24; Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, Inc. "New York State's School-to-Work Initiative Demonstrates Promising Student Results." *The STW Reporter*, 1.2 (July 1998): 2.

²⁷ Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, 3.

10. IS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY HELP AND GUIDANCE?

KEY FINDINGS

- The six technical assistance programs authorized in 1994 have served a significant number of families, schools and districts nationwide, and customer surveys suggest that federal technical assistance providers are supplying valuable services to the field.
- However, the Department's various technical assistance programs are characterized by overlapping missions and target audiences, with little evidence of extensive collaboration or coordination across programs. It appears that federal technical assistance programs do not yet operate as a coherent *system* of assistance.

Title I School Support Teams

- States' capacity to provide assistance to all Title I schoolwide programs and schools in need of improvement is limited. In fall 1998 almost half of all state Title I directors reported that there were more schools in need of school support team services than Title I could accommodate.

Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers

- Satisfaction with the quality of Center services appears to vary with the content of the assistance. For example, two-thirds of state administrators of federal programs reported that Comprehensive Center assistance was helpful or very helpful in planning and carrying out whole-school reform, while only 36 percent reported that the assistance was helpful in understanding federal legislative provisions.

Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia

- The majority of customers surveyed in the national evaluation of the Eisenhower Consortia give the assistance provided by the Eisenhower Consortia high marks for quality and usefulness.
- In addition, two-thirds of participants in Eisenhower Consortia professional development activities reported that they had incorporated some new behavior into their jobs as a result of what they had learned.

Other Federal Technical Assistance Programs

- The Department has not evaluated the effects of services provided by the Regional Technology in Education Consortia, the Parental Information and Resource Centers, or the School to Work Learning Center.

If all children are to achieve high and challenging academic standards, those who are responsible for children's learning—parents, teachers, schools, districts, and state education agencies—need resources. Educators and parents need access to new ideas and tested strategies for helping children to learn. States and districts need help understanding and implementing the provisions of new federal legislation. Professionals at all levels need guidance and coaching as they implement change and expand their repertoire of skills. The technical assistance services offered by the Department of Education aim to help parents, teachers, and administrators at all levels adopt effective strategies for improving student achievement.

The Department employs a variety of mechanisms to deliver information and technical assistance to states, districts, and schools:

- **The Department's own program offices deliver a range of technical assistance services to the field.** For example, the National School-to-Work (STW) Office sponsors a series of institutes for its grantees, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's Regional Service Teams are organized to provide technical assistance as well as monitor programs. In addition, the Department's own toll-free telephone number (1-800-USA-LEARN) and call centers help disseminate information to the field.
- **The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse System collects, synthesizes, and disseminates research and information about education.** The ERIC system includes the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education and other adjunct clearinghouses on high-priority topics.
- **The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education (ENC) maintains a collection of mathematics and science instructional materials, compiles information on mathematics and science programs in the federal government, and disseminates information to improve K-12 mathematics and science teaching and learning.**
- **Title I school support teams and distinguished educators provide information and assistance to schools planning or implementing Title I schoolwide programs, and to Title I schools in need of improvement.** In addition, many other titles under ESEA require states to use a portion of their administrative funds to provide technical assistance to subgrantees.
- **The Department's regional technical assistance programs help states, districts, schools, parents, and communities in priority areas.** These programs include the Regional Educational Laboratories, the Equity Assistance Centers, the Vocational Education and Adult Education National Programs, the National Institute for Literacy, and the Office of Special Education Program's parent resource centers and other technical assistance centers. **In addition, Congress established or reauthorized six major technical assistance programs under ESEA, Goals 2000 and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act:**
 1. **Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers** to help ESEA grantees implement ESEA programs and school reform programs that improve teaching and learning for all students

2. **Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia** to disseminate exemplary programs in mathematics and science and to improve teaching and learning in those subject areas
3. **Regional Technology in Education Consortia (R*TECs)** to promote the effective use of technology for teaching and learning
4. **Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs)** to promote parental and community involvement in student learning
- 5 & 6 **School-to-Work Learning and Information Center** and the **School-to-Work Technical Assistance Resource Bank** to help school-to-work grantees implement effective STW programs

In many states, however, federal technical assistance is a relatively small component of a much wider array of resources available to schools and districts. In many states, intermediate units such as California's County Offices of Education provide extensive technical assistance and professional development services to schools and districts. In some cases, state investment in technical assistance through these intermediate units outstrips federal technical assistance resources available to the state. In addition, states, districts, and schools draw on local colleges and universities as well as professional associations for subject matter expertise. Finally, most SEAs provide their own technical assistance to schools and districts. Any discussion of federal technical assistance efforts should be understood in light of extensive activity at other levels of the system.

This report describes federal technical assistance programs authorized under ESEA, Goals 2000, and School to Work, including the Title I school support teams and the six regional technical assistance programs listed above. The Regional Educational Laboratories, although they are an important source of information and assistance to the field, are not featured in this report.

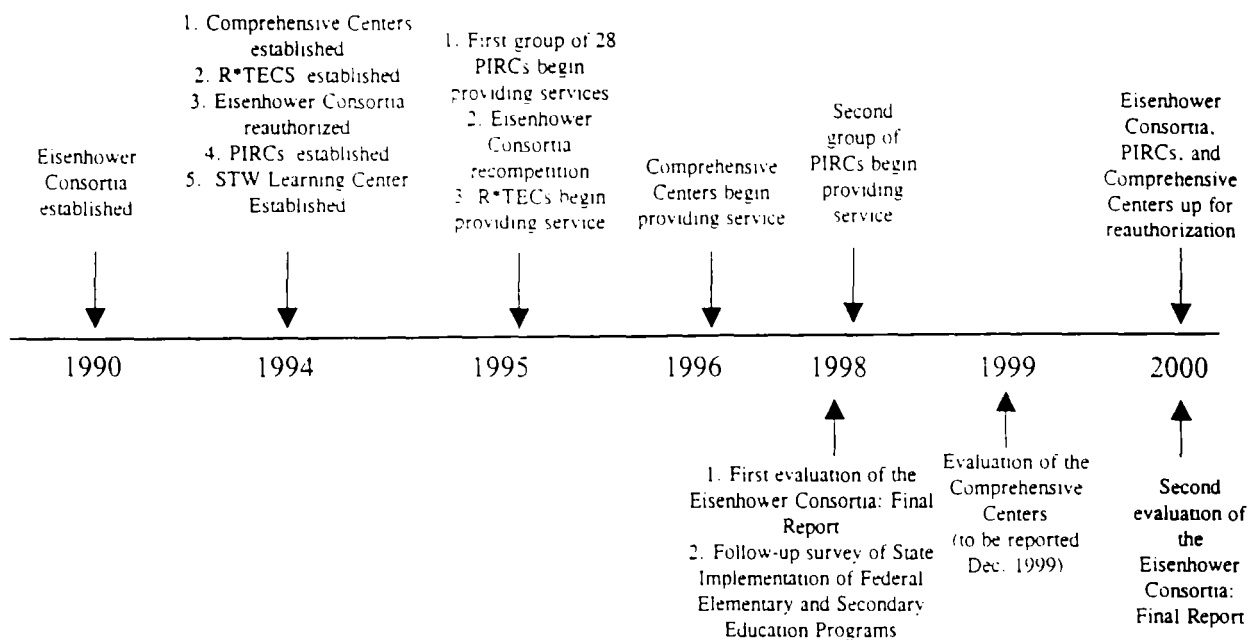
Introduction to the Programs and the 1994 Legislative Changes

Through the 1994 legislation, Congress sought to (1) provide *comprehensive* assistance to states, districts, schools, and communities to enable all students to meet challenging state content and performance standards and (2) create a *system* of assistance to support reforms promoted through ESEA and Goals 2000. Congress found that the system of federally funded technical assistance that existed before 1994, when each categorical program was served by its own group of technical assistance centers, had been fragmented and too narrowly focused on the requirements of individual categorical programs. In addition, there was considerable overlap in the topics of technical assistance across programs (e.g., in areas such as student assessment and program planning), resulting in a duplication of effort across the system. Congress found that technical assistance to support a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of students served by federal programs was a key strategy for helping schools and districts provide opportunities for all children to attain challenging standards.

The legislation passed in 1994 changed the configuration of the technical assistance services offered by the Department, and, in the case of the Comprehensive Centers, cut funding for services. ESEA consolidated 48 existing technical assistance centers, operated by 5 different categorical programs, into a

network of 15 Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers. At the same time, Congress reduced the funding of the Comprehensive Centers to about half the amount available to the antecedent programs. ESEA created a new structure for providing assistance to Title I schools by requiring states to develop a system of school support teams and authorizing them to use a portion of their Title I allocation to support the work of those teams. Finally, ESEA, Goals 2000, and School to Work established or reauthorized four new technical assistance programs to address three priority areas: (1) mathematics and science education; (2) technology; (3) parent involvement; and (4) implementation of school-to-work programs. Exhibit 10.1 displays the timeline for these events from 1990 to 2000.

EXHIBIT 10.1 FEDERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TIMELINE



Source: U.S. Department of Education.

Although each of the Department's technical assistance programs is designed to address a different set of needs and issues, the basic legislative mandate is similar across programs. Here are some common themes in the laws authorizing the Department's technical assistance programs:

- Disseminating information and practices to large numbers of potential customers.** All of the Department's technical assistance programs have, at least in theory, an extremely broad customer base: the Comprehensive Centers may serve all ESEA grantees; the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia may serve all K-12 mathematics and science educators; the R*TECs may serve all K-12 educators; and the PIRCs may serve all parents. Because the legislation requires providers to deliver assistance on a comprehensive list of topics to tens of thousands of potential customers, individual centers and consortia experience some pressure to implement the broadest possible coverage.

- **Targeting high-need, high-poverty customers.** At the same time, most technical assistance programs are charged with targeting schools and districts serving high-need, high-poverty populations. The Comprehensive Centers are required to target high-poverty districts, Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools, and schoolwide programs. The R*TECs are required to serve schools and districts where students have traditionally had limited access to technology. The PIRCs are required to target educationally and economically disadvantaged parents.
- **Reforming schools and improving teaching and learning.** All of the Department's technical assistance programs are charged with helping schools and districts to implement reforms that will improve teaching and learning for all students. The Government Performance and Results Act program performance indicators for the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia take this requirement one step further by calling for evidence of improvements in practice among recipients of assistance.
- **Collaborating with other technical assistance providers.** In line with Congress' vision for a national network of technical assistance programs, each of the Department's technical assistance programs is required to collaborate with other technical assistance providers. This charge is reflected in the legislation authorizing the Comprehensive Centers, Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia, and R*TECs.

Each of the Department's technical assistance programs draws on local, field-based expertise by soliciting proposals from eligible entities for grants to operate regional centers. (The exception to this rule is the School-to-Work Learning Center, which serves the entire country and is run through a contract by the National School-to-Work Office.) Each technical assistance program has a slightly different customer base and addresses a different set of needs, although in many cases the target audiences and the activities conducted overlap. The PIRCs are the largest program of the six and comprise the largest number of resource centers, with one in each state. Smaller programs operate centers in multistate regions; the boundaries defining regions are not consistent from program to program. Exhibit 10.2 summarizes key features of each program.

EXHIBIT 10.2
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Program Name	1999 Appropriation	Purpose	Funding and Targeting	Awardees	Services
Title I School Support Teams	\$38 million	Technical assistance and support to schools planning or implementing Title I schoolwide programs and schools in need of improvement	States may reserve up to one-half of one percent of their Title I allocation to support SST activities	SEAs recruit SST members; staffing of teams varies by state	Training and consultation to schools in developing and implementing schoolwide plans
Parental Information And Resource Centers (PIRCs)	\$30 million	Technical assistance and training to economically and educationally disadvantaged families	Discretionary grants to nonprofit organizations, or nonprofit organizations in consortia with LEAs	50 awardees	Parenting education, training, and information dissemination; Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) programs
Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers	\$28 million	Technical assistance to states, tribes, districts, and schools implementing ESEA programs	Cooperative agreements with public or private non-profit entities or consortia, based on a competitive application process	15 awardees	Professional development, consultation, information dissemination, convening/facilitating events
Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia	\$15 million	Technical assistance to K-12 mathematics and science educators and dissemination of exemplary programs in mathematics and science	Discretionary grants to eligible entities	10 awardees	Planning assistance, training, facilitating networks, information dissemination
Regional Technology In Education Consortia (RET*Cs)	\$10 million	Technical assistance to promote the effective use of technology in education	Cooperative agreements with SEAs, IHEs, or non-profit agencies, in cooperation with states and districts, based on a competitive application process	6 awardees	Professional development, information and resource dissemination, facilitating alliances
School-To-Work Learning Center	\$4 million	Technical assistance to support the implementation of effective STW programs	Contract with eligible entity	1 awardee	Maintaining a Web site, administering the technical assistance bank, supporting STW institutes
School-To-Work Technical Assistance Resource Bank	\$1 million	Technical assistance to support the implementation of effective STW programs	Task orders to eligible entities	192 awardees	Providing individual consultation to states and districts

Source: U.S. Department of Education.

What Do We Know About Good Practice?

A synthesis of findings from earlier studies of federal technical assistance programs suggests that high-quality technical assistance has the following attributes:¹

- **It is responsive to customer needs and aligned with state standards, local standards, or standards developed by national professional associations.** Teachers, schools, and districts will seek out and benefit from assistance only if it meets a real and clearly defined local need. In addition, products and services that are aligned with national, state, or local standards are more likely to have an impact throughout the organizations served.
- **Its products and services are based on sound research.** Customers need access to knowledge and expertise that are accurate, up-to-date, and based on valid ideas about how schools change.
- **The level of service provided is appropriate for the customer's purposes and the customer's capacity to use the assistance.** For some purposes, customers can be served effectively with basic information disseminated in publications or through a Web site; in other cases, customers require face-to-face assistance or more intensive coaching. In every case, technical assistance providers should provide help that the customer can use.
- **The scope, intensity, and duration of the assistance are sufficient to prompt change.** Improving schools is not a simple undertaking. Unless the goal of technical assistance is to convey relatively simple information (like the timetable for implementing particular provisions of a new law), assistance must be intensive and ongoing. One study of reform in urban high schools found that schools that were successful at turning themselves around had used at least 30 days of external assistance annually.²
- **It builds customers' capacity to identify and solve problems on their own.** New ideas have a limited effect on how schools operate unless teachers and administrators learn to work together to identify problems, develop their professional judgment, and incorporate new pieces of information and new skills into their broader professional repertoire.
- **It is carefully targeted.** None of the Department's technical assistance programs can hope to serve all states, districts, and schools receiving funds under ESEA, Goals 2000, or School-to-Work. As a result, these programs must make difficult choices about which customers should receive highest priority for assistance.
- **It incorporates strategies for reaching a large number of customers effectively.** Because assistance must be intensive and on-going if it is to prompt change in teaching and learning, it can be extremely expensive. Regional providers of technical assistance must adopt strategies for delivering assistance on a large scale if they are to have a measurable impact in their regions. Such strategies include managing regional networks of educators or schools involved in reform, leveraging local resources for ongoing support of change efforts, using distance learning and on-line technologies to reach larger numbers of educators at lower cost, and employing training-of-trainer and other dissemination models.

The provisions of the law address only some of these criteria for high-quality technical assistance. The law spells out who is to receive assistance and provides some guidelines for targeting of services. It also specifies what topics the assistance will address, and what general strategies can deliver the assistance (e.g., information dissemination or coordination with other service providers). However, the law has no requirements about the scope, intensity, or duration of services, and makes no provisions for adopting strategies that might reach large numbers of customers effectively. Instead, the quality of services provided depends primarily on the knowledge and skills of the technical assistance providers themselves, and on the Department's effectiveness in overseeing programs. The box below provides an example of high-quality, intensive technical assistance from a recent evaluation of the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia.

Guiding Teachers In Implementing Standards-Based Curriculum

Over the course of five years, the Eisenhower Consortium at Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) and the University of Hawaii are helping the Mokapu Elementary School in Hawaii to implement a new science curriculum that addresses the state's content and performance standards.

During a 10-day summer institute, facilitators from the University of Hawaii modeled a new, research-based curriculum series, Developmental Approaches in Science and Health (DASH), for groups of teachers. Facilitators explicitly focused on the major science concepts associated with the activities, and continually reinforced conceptual connections between units so that teachers understood how the curriculum culminates in specific student knowledge and skills. Teachers gained in-depth exposure to up to half of the units in the series during the summer institute.

Staff from PREL and the University of Hawaii provided ongoing support to teachers during the school year. Teachers met in groups once a week to share what they were doing in science class. In addition, teachers received 4 to 6 days of release time to observe each other teaching the new curriculum, visit other schools using DASH materials, or visit the university's lab school, where the curriculum materials were pilot-tested.

Source: Daniel C. Humphrey, Lee Anderson, Kara Finnegan, Judith Powell, and Viki M. Yang, *Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Regional Consortia Program: 1999 Evaluation Report*. Draft (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education) 35-36.

How Well Are the Programs Working?

Performance expectations for the Department's technical assistance programs emphasize customer satisfaction and targeting of services over the effects of those services on districts, schools, and classrooms. Because the law mandates high-quality assistance, customer satisfaction figures prominently in GPRA annual program performance indicators for the R*TECs, the Comprehensive Centers, and the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia. However, only the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia program has an indicator addressing the effects of technical assistance on recipients' practices.¹ This emphasis on process over outcomes in the

Department's program performance indicators reflects the fact that the effects of technical assistance on classrooms and schools are often difficult to assess.

Key findings from early evaluations of the Department's technical assistance programs are presented in the next seven sections. The kinds of data available from early evaluation activities reflect, in part, the criteria established by the Department's program performance indicators.

Title I School Support Teams

By fall 1998, Title I school support teams were serving schools in all but five states.⁴ Approaches to organizing and staffing school support teams vary widely by state. For example:

- **California** has established a system of 12 regional School Support and Improvement Centers, known in the state as S-4s. Each S-4 is housed in one of California's county offices of education and employs 1-2 staff members. The S-4s hold 6-8 institutes over the course of the school year for teams from schools developing plans for schoolwide programs. In addition, the S-4s locate additional professional development resources for the schools they serve by tapping other state and federal programs that operate out of the county offices of education; they also provide individual assistance to a small number of schools.
- **In Missouri**, each of the 45 districts in the state has designated one distinguished educator to provide up to five days of technical assistance each year to schools. The state pays for the distinguished educators' expenses and training through Title I program improvement funds, while the school district covers their salaries.
- **In New Hampshire**, 50-60 SEA staff serve on five regional service teams. Regional service teams provide technical assistance in several areas, including Title I, and broker services for individual schools. The state uses its Title I allocation for school improvement to purchase individual support to schools that request assistance, usually by hiring contractors.

Title I school support teams vary in their capacity to serve schools in need; in some states, the need for assistance is greater than school support teams can accommodate. In 1998, almost half of all state Title I directors (24) reported that there were more schools in need of school support team services than Title I could accommodate; 20 Title I directors reported that their programs were able to accommodate all schools that had a need.⁵

Program Indicator: States and districts will provide more effective assistance to schools not making progress through school support teams and other resources.

State-level data on the actual numbers of schools served by school support teams appear to be limited. In 1998, for example, 19 state Title I directors reported that they did not know the percentage of Title I schoolwide programs served by school support teams. Of those Title I directors that could provide estimates of the numbers of schools served, about half (13) said that school support teams had served all or almost all of the schoolwide program schools in their state. A small proportion (5) said that school support teams served a quarter of those schools or fewer.⁷

The Department has not evaluated the work of Title I school support teams, and there is no information available about their effects on schools.

Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers

Although the Comprehensive Centers are relatively new to the field. Comprehensive Center services have reached a significant proportion of states, districts, and schools. The Comprehensive Centers became fully operational in April 1996. In 1998, 68 percent of state administrators of federal programs reported that they had received assistance from the Comprehensive Centers⁷; 44 percent of district administrators of federal programs reported that they had had contact with a center.⁸

The Comprehensive Centers are targeting some services to high-priority customers, although the level of targeting does not yet meet the Department's expectations. Fifty percent of center services to schools in FY1998 were targeted to schoolwide programs, and 65 percent were targeted to high-poverty schools.⁹ By 1999, the Department's program performance plan expects center services to be even more closely targeted, with 85 percent of all center services targeted to high-poverty schools and districts.¹⁰

Program Indicator: By 1999, 85 percent of Comprehensive Centers' customers will represent schoolwide programs, or high-poverty districts and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded schools.

Satisfaction with the quality of Comprehensive Center services appears to vary with the content of the assistance. At the state level, Comprehensive Center customers appear to be most satisfied with assistance on general reform topics; customers at the state and district levels are less satisfied with assistance on the particulars of implementing ESEA programs. For example:

Program Indicator: The percentage of clients reporting satisfaction with the quality of technical assistance provided will increase annually, reaching 65 percent by 2000.

- In 1998, 64 percent of state administrators of federal programs reported that Comprehensive Center assistance on planning and carrying out whole school reform was helpful or very helpful.¹¹
- On the same survey, however, only 36 percent of state administrators who had received assistance from the Comprehensive Centers reported that the assistance was helpful or very helpful for understanding federal legislative provisions.¹² Similarly, only 29 percent of district administrators who had received assistance from the centers reported that the assistance was helpful or very helpful for understanding the new flexibility and accountability provisions in federal legislation.¹³
- The Centers' own customer surveys reveal general satisfaction with center assistance. Among the four Comprehensive Centers that reported the results of client surveys to the Department in their annual progress reports, approximately two-thirds of customers surveyed reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of center services.¹⁴

A national evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers is being conducted in FY 99 and will provide additional information about the effects of Center services.

Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia

Almost two-thirds of Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia customers report that they represent schools that serve a majority of at-risk students.

Consortia progress reports to the Department show that in fiscal year 1998, 23,545 district and school staff participated in the Consortia's continuing technical assistance activities. Sixty-five percent of these LEA participants reported that they work in schools serving a majority of at-risk students.¹⁴

Program Indicator: At least 70 percent of the district and school staff who participate in the Consortia's continuing technical assistance will work in districts or schools with more than 35 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Most customers give the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia high marks for the quality and usefulness of their services:

- In a national evaluation of the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia, almost all participants in selected professional development activities rated the quality of the professional development "excellent" or "good" in terms of accuracy of content and presentation. More than 80 percent rated it "excellent" or "good" in terms of completeness and depth.¹⁶
- On the Consortia's own customer surveys, 91 percent of participants report that the training or technical assistance they received from the Consortia was "moderately" or "extensively" useful in improving their instructional or job-related practice.¹⁷

Specific professional development and networking activities sponsored by the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia appear to have had a measurable effect on teachers. For example:

- In a national evaluation of the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia, nearly two-thirds of participants in selected professional development activities reported that they had incorporated some new behavior into their jobs as a result of what they had learned. Just over half of participants in networks facilitated by the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia reported that they had incorporated something new into their work.¹⁸
- Most participants surveyed reported that the activities contributed in a "moderate" or "major" way to their skills and knowledge in math/science/technology education, professional development, and assessments/standard setting. Participants in networks reported smaller changes in knowledge and skills.¹⁹

Program Indicator: At least 80 percent of the teachers, administrators, and providers of professional development who participate in the Consortia's continuing technical assistance will report improvement in their practice.

Contacts with customers by print and electronically are increasing annually. From October 1997 through September 1998, the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia reported over 500,000 contacts with

Program Indicator: The total number of Consortia contacts with customers by print and/or "hits" on electronic sites will increase by 10 percent annually.

customers by print and over 1.5 million Web site "hits," a 10 percent increase in total dissemination over the previous year.²⁰

R*TECs

The R*TECs target many of their products and services to students who have traditionally had limited access to technology. Although there is no information about the numbers of schools and districts served by the R*TECs, R*TEC progress reports indicate that R*TEC services reached over 146,000 clients in FY 1998, and R*TEC products reached over 268,000.²¹ Almost half of R*TEC customers during this period were teachers; the remainder were administrators, students, and parents.²² The R*TECs report that 60 percent of their services were designed to benefit underserved populations.²³

The R*TECs own customer surveys indicate that general satisfaction with R*TEC services is high:

- More than 90 percent of all R*TEC clients surveyed in 1997-98 agreed or strongly agreed that R*TEC services were "useful," "relevant," and/or "high-quality," and more than 80 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they "facilitate learning" and are an "important resource."²⁴
- More than 90 percent of participants in regional, statewide, or schoolwide alliances facilitated by the R*TECs rated alliance work "moderate" or "high" in terms of increasing access to resources, supporting school reform, and addressing educational concerns.²⁵

Program Indicator: An increasing proportion of recipients (individuals or agencies) of the R*TEC services and products—particularly those representing underserved schools—will indicate that these products and services are of high quality and meet their needs.

The Department has not conducted an evaluation of the R*TECs, and there is no information available about the effects of R*TEC services in schools and classrooms.

PIRCs

Participation in PIRC programs has risen steadily since 1996, in parallel with increases in funding levels and the number of PIRCs operating in the field. If participation in PAT and HIPPLY programs continues to rise at current rates, the program should meet its target by 2000:

- Participation in PAT and HIPPLY programs sponsored by the PIRCs has risen steadily, from 5,000 families in 1995 to 10,000 in 1997.²⁶

Program Indicator: In the geographic areas in which the Parental Assistance Centers provide direct services, the number of children and families who participate in Parents as Teachers (PAT) or Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPLY) will substantially increase. By 2000, approximately 14,000 families will participate in PAT or HIPPLY.

The PIRCs are also relatively new to the field. The first group of 28 PIRCs began delivering services in 1995; a second group of 28 began work in 1996 or later.

The Department has not conducted an evaluation of the PIRCs, and no information is available about the quality of PIRC services or the effects of those services on families.

School-to-Work Technical Assistance Program

Program data suggest that the reach of School-to-Work technical assistance services has been broad.

Since 1995, the School-to-Work Learning Center has filled over 14,500 information requests and 700 special information requests; the STW Web site averages about 150,000 hits per month. More than 200 School-to-Work grantees have used funds provided by the National School-to-Work Office, known as “lines of credit”, to purchase services from the STW Technical

Assistance Resource Bank; the Learning Center has brokered 250 task orders for technical assistance services.²⁷ In addition, the Learning Center has held more than seven strategic planning institutes and assisted in the planning of over 15 state initiatives.

Because the technical assistance activities supported by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act are not funded as separate line items, no performance indicators have been developed for STW technical assistance services.

Customer surveys completed by visitors to the STW web site indicate high levels of satisfaction with STW Learning Center services:

- More than three-quarters of visitors to the STW web site reported that they had obtained information they needed through the Learning Center
- More than eighty percent of visitors reported that the information was very useful and very easy to obtain²⁸

The Department has not evaluated the effects of STW Learning Center services on states, districts, or schools implementing STW programs.

Other Sources of Technical Assistance

Federally funded technical assistance providers do not operate in a vacuum; in many states, schools and districts may seek external assistance from an array of possible providers. School staff in large districts can draw upon the curriculum specialists and program coordinators at their district office, or at a regional educational agency; district staff may call upon their counterparts at the SEA. In some cases, the state’s own technical assistance activities can be extensive. In 1998, 91 percent of state administrators of federal programs reported that their programs provided technical assistance on at least one topic to subgrantees. Forty-one percent of administrators reported that they provided assistance on eight or more different topics.²⁹ Several states, including Oregon, Massachusetts, and Iowa, have adopted the STW Technical Assistance Resource Bank as a model for providing technical assistance at the local level. Exhibit 10.3 summarizes other examples of state-supported technical assistance activities:

EXHIBIT 10.3

EXAMPLES OF STATE-SUPPORTED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

Program Name	Funding	Organization	Purpose	Services
California: Professional Development Consortia	\$3 million	The state awards grants to 11 County Offices of Education	Professional development for K-12 educators	Training and other professional development to support state initiatives; brokering professional development and training from other sources; disseminating information about professional development resources in the region
North Carolina: School Improvement Division's Mandated Assistance Program	\$4 million	78 teachers and principals work on site in targeted schools as employees on loan from their districts	Intensive assistance to the lowest-performing schools in the state. In 1998-99, 12 schools were identified for mandated assistance	Five-member teams work in residence in targeted schools for one year. They review the school improvement plan, evaluate teachers, and provide individual mentoring/coaching to staff
New York: Teacher Centers	\$20 million	The state awards grants to districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services to operate Centers, which are directed by policy boards made up of a majority of teachers. 119 Centers serve 650 of the state's 750 districts	Teacher-driven professional development to K-12 educators and serve as clearinghouses of information and instructional materials	Workshops and other training, teacher networks, teacher-led study groups. Lending program of materials and equipment
Texas: Education Service Centers (ESC)	\$40 million	The Texas Education Agency (TEA) funds 20 regional ESCs, which receive policy direction from TEA	Serves as the TEA's training and technical assistance arm	Workshops and other training on a wide range of topics; individual consultation with schools and districts; publication development and dissemination

Source: Personal communications with state Departments of Education in California, New York, North Carolina, and Texas, 1999

Nationally representative surveys of state and local administrators suggest that, for some purposes, other sources of assistance may be more useful to educators than federally funded technical assistance programs. Several different surveys of local administrators suggest that federally funded technical assistance programs reach fewer districts and schools than state and local sources of technical assistance, and that state and local sources of assistance are often more useful to school and district staff who work on federal programs:

- In 1998, more than two-thirds of Title I principals reported that their state Department of Education had been helpful to a great or moderate extent in their understanding or implementing comprehensive reform; almost all Title I principals (91 percent) reported that their district had been helpful to a great or moderate extent.³⁶
- On the same survey, only a small percentage of Title I principals reported that federal sources of assistance—including the Comprehensive Centers, the Regional Educational Laboratories, the PIRCs, and other ED offices or programs—had been helpful to a great or moderate extent in their understanding and implementing standards-based reform. These findings probably reflect the fact that these technical assistance providers reach only a small percentage of schools.³¹
- In 1996, 77 percent of district administrators reported that state-sponsored workshops on standards-based reform were “helpful” or “very helpful,” compared with 54 percent who found the U.S. Department of Education-sponsored workshops “helpful” or “very helpful.”³²
- In 1996, 61 percent of district administrators surveyed reported that they had contact with at least one federally supported technical assistance center. Of these, fewer than half said that the assistance provided on standards-based reform was “helpful” or “very helpful.”³³

These results suggest that the states, supported in large measure by federal funds, play an important role in providing technical assistance services to districts and schools.

Survey results indicate that the Department of Education’s dissemination of written information reaches more state and local staff than its other technical assistance efforts, and also generates the highest levels of satisfaction.

- In 1998, Title I principals gave higher ratings to the ERIC Clearinghouse System than to any other federal source of technical assistance—one-third reported that ERIC had been helpful to a great or moderate extent in understanding or implementing standards-based reform, compared with 24 percent for the Department’s program offices, 22 percent for the Regional Educational Laboratories, and 13 percent for the Comprehensive Centers.³⁴
- In 1996, more than 50 percent of state Title I and Goals 2000 directors found written guidance from the Department on comprehensive, standards-based reform “helpful” or “very helpful,” compared with 46 percent who found assistance from Comprehensive Centers “helpful” or “very helpful.”³⁵
- A follow-up survey conducted in 1998 produced similar results: 88 percent of all federal programs administrators found written information from the Department “helpful” or “very helpful” in understanding federal legislative provisions, compared with 36 percent who found Comprehensive Center assistance “helpful” or “very helpful.”³⁶

The Federal Technical Assistance System

Some evidence suggests that technical assistance providers are working together within programs to enhance the quality of their services and eliminate duplication of effort. For example, all 15 Comprehensive Centers are currently collaborating on the implementation of the Reading Success Network, and a 1998 evaluation of the Eisenhower Consortia concluded:

The Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia have collaborated to achieve economies of scale and to take full advantage of the special capacities of individual Consortia. Their collaborations, coupled with assistance strategies that leverage resources from other institutions and programs, have helped stretch their limited resources.¹⁷

However, current levels of coordination and collaboration among technical assistance programs suggest that the notion of a federal system of technical assistance is not yet well-defined and is not reflected widely in practice. Comprehensive Center progress reports, for example, show that only eight percent of all technical assistance activities undertaken by the Centers in FY 1998 involved collaboration with other agencies. Similarly, Comprehensive Centers reported very few referrals to other technical assistance providers or programs.¹⁸ This lack of coordination is especially striking given the fact that some overlap exists in the mission and goals of the Department's major technical assistance programs, and that most of these programs are required by their authorizing legislation to collaborate together. For example, the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia, the Comprehensive Centers, and the R*TECs all share an interest in the implementation of standards-based reforms and new uses of technology in instruction. Both the PIRC's and the Comprehensive Centers support increased parental involvement in education.

Federal technical assistance providers have not yet exploited the full potential of new telecommunications technologies to disseminate information and deliver services. Despite their mission to promote the use of advanced technology in instruction, for example, the Regional Technology in Education Consortia report that 85 percent of their services are developed for face-to-face delivery. Only a small percentage of their services are developed for listserve, videoconferencing, or teleconferencing.¹⁹ In addition, most technical assistance programs have not yet developed cross-center or cross-consortia Web sites that would allow access to the on-line resources of each center or consortium from a single point of entry.

Federal technical assistance programs are providing valuable assistance to the field, but the federal technical assistance system cannot satisfy all needs and purposes. Customer surveys conducted over the past several years show a similar pattern of responses among customers of federal technical assistance. Direct recipients of specific services report relatively high levels of satisfaction with the quality and usefulness of the assistance they receive, suggesting that federal technical assistance providers provide valuable services to customers who have sought out their assistance. At the same time, general surveys of state and local administrators of federal programs yield lower levels of satisfaction and suggest that other sources of assistance may be more accessible and useful to these staff in some areas central to their work.

Federal technical assistance programs must address extensive needs with very limited resources. The Department's providers of technical assistance are expected to support changes in teaching and

learning that require substantial investments in ongoing and intensive assistance. At the same time, each of the Department's technical assistance programs is charged with serving tens of thousands of potential customers. As a result, federally funded technical assistance providers are forced to engage in a delicate balancing act between depth and breadth of services—serving enough customers to make their presence felt in the regions they serve, and serving a few customers intensively enough to bring about real change.

Developing viable strategies for reaching larger numbers of customers effectively is fundamental to the success of all of the Department's technical assistance programs. The Department's technical assistance programs do not have sufficient resources to serve all schools and districts in need of assistance, and both the Department and its technical assistance providers must learn to "make strategic choices about limited resources to achieve maximum impact."⁴⁰ At the same time, many states have extensive technical assistance and professional development systems in place that appear to be much more accessible to schools and districts than federal programs. In some cases, the Comprehensive Centers are organizing their services to support the work of these state systems (for example, the Northern and Southern California Comprehensive Centers work closely with the state's Title I school support teams). However, working with and through state-level technical assistance providers is not well-developed as a strategy for going to scale throughout the system.

Options for Strengthening the Programs

Options for reauthorizing the Department's technical assistance programs fall into two categories: (1) options for strengthening individual programs; and (2) options for creating a more coherent national system of technical assistance.

Strengthen Individual Programs

Limit the focus of the Department's technical assistance programs to those areas where they can add most value to customers, and to the entire federal technical assistance system. Some of the Department's technical assistance programs continue to struggle with a lack of clarity in their mission. For example, a review of the Comprehensive Centers' work in fall 1997 found that the notion of "comprehensive, cross-program" assistance contained in their authorizing legislation was poorly defined in practice and not well understood by the field.⁴¹ In addition, the objectives and activities of some technical assistance programs overlap in some important areas. In the process of awarding grants and negotiating cooperative agreements, the Department should think strategically with providers about how to limit their activities to areas where they can make a unique contribution.

Strengthen requirements to target services exclusively on high-poverty, high-need districts and schools. The Department's technical assistance programs engage in some targeting of goods and services, but not to the extent currently desired in their GPRA program performance plans. More extensive targeting of services is consistent with the policy framework of ESEA and effectively limits the number of potential customers for technical assistance providers. The legislation authorizing the Department's technical assistance programs should include explicit benchmarks for targeting.

Encourage the use of technology to expand the number of customers served. The Department's technical assistance programs have not yet exploited the full benefits of information technology as a

strategy for broad-scale dissemination of information to the field. In 1994, the World Wide Web was just beginning to be widely used as a tool for communication and information dissemination. Reauthorization of the Department's technical assistance programs should take advantage of the availability of this powerful new resource. More specifically, the Department should support the development of cross-program Web sites, and should create other incentives for technical assistance providers to explore innovative uses of technology in delivering assistance. A model for these efforts could be the Web site operated by the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, which provides a single point of entry to the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia and other federal mathematics and science resources. The School-to-Work Learning Center, described below, provides another model for how the Web can be used to disseminate information:

Using the Web to Disseminate Information About High-Quality Programs

The Web site maintained by the School-to-Work Learning Center (www.stw.ed.gov) has the largest collection of electronic STW resources in the country, with over 600 implementation tools. Updated daily, the site is the Department's primary mechanism for disseminating information about high-quality STW programs. The site features resources on evaluation, statistics, communications, and implementation information about STW. Its databases allow users to search for STW initiatives by state, technical assistance providers by area of expertise, and written resources by subject-area category. The site also features an *Examples That Work* database and compendiums of STW links to postsecondary education and parent involvement. The STW web site has won a Reinvention Hammer award for its innovative use of on-line technology to deliver services to grantees.

Source: National School-to-Work Office, U.S. Department of Education.

Strengthen accountability requirements for the Department's technical assistance programs:

- **Require that technical assistance providers demonstrate how their work has contributed to improvements in school or classroom practice.** Require that providers evaluate the effects of their work in classrooms, schools, and educational agencies. By the end of each grant period, require that providers produce credible evidence that their work has enhanced the knowledge and skills of teachers and administrators, and/or contributed to improvements in teaching, learning, or school administration.
- **Develop common standards and criteria for high-quality technical assistance across discretionary programs, and include benchmarks for performance into the legislation authorizing the Department's technical assistance programs.** Although the Department's performance indicators have established some standard expectations for center performance, they do not have the force of law. Through legislative language, announcements of competitions for grants and contracts, and general oversight of programs, Congress and the Department should communicate clear expectations for the quality, scope, and impact of those services. In addition, the Department, in consultation with the field, should identify some uniform, measurable benchmarks of high-quality technical assistance that can be used to judge the performance of all of its technical assistance programs.
- **Revise performance indicators to address the effects of technical assistance on the recipients of services.** An example is Indicator 2.1 for the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia: "At least 80 percent of the teachers, administrators, and providers of

professional development who participate in the Consortia's continuing technical assistance will report improvement in their practice."

- **Require technical assistance providers to demonstrate their responsiveness to local needs each program year.** Through needs assessment activities or documentation of ongoing relationships with key stakeholders in the region, providers should demonstrate that they understand the particular needs of their region—and are designing services to respond to those needs. Services should include entering into performance agreements with each state in their region on what technical assistance services will be provided.
- **Establish or refine standardized reporting requirements to collect reliable and valid information about activities and customers served.** The Department should continue efforts begun by the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Consortia, the Comprehensive Centers, and the R*TECs to collect reliable and valid information about activities that will allow the Department to assess their performance against established benchmarks. In addition, the Department should develop some core data reporting elements across programs.
- **Require grantees to engage in more formative evaluation and continuous improvement of their services.** Aside from reporting to the Department about the effects of their services on participants, technical assistance providers need to conduct more in-depth assessments on the quality and effectiveness of their work for the purpose of improving their services. A forthcoming evaluation report based on case studies of Eisenhower Regional Consortia services argues that the tracking of quantitative indicator data by itself does not always foster in-depth reflection on the quality and effects of services.⁴² In addition to collecting quantitative data on quality and effects, service providers should engage in formative evaluation exercises that include expert reviews of their work and observations and discussions of each other's services.

Develop a More Coherent Federal System of Technical Assistance

Focus the federal technical assistance system on those areas where providers offer unique expertise and where they can add most value. Federal technical assistance programs should target their assistance to address those issues and topics areas where assistance is not readily available from other sources, such as states, district offices, or institutions of higher education. These areas include:

- **Implementation of federal programs.** Providing assistance to states, districts, and schools in understanding new provisions of federal education legislation and in using federal programs to support local reforms is a continuing priority for the Department. Regionally-based technical assistance providers are well-positioned to provide such assistance because they combine expertise in the implementation of federal programs with intimate knowledge of state-level reforms and regional conditions and purposes. The STW Technical Assistance Resource Bank is another model, which has already been adopted by the Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other federal agencies.
- **Development and implementation of performance indicator systems and continuous progress models.** Collecting, analyzing, and using data on student performance and other outcomes to hold schools accountable and to manage programs is now a major emphasis of many federal programs, most notably Title I. Federal technical assistance providers can provide

valuable assistance to the field in the development of performance indicators and in these new approaches to accountability.

- **Dissemination of objective evaluation information on research-based school reform models and instructional approaches.** School systems and communities need objective information about the effectiveness of innovative school reform models and instructional approaches, based on rigorous evaluation data. Federal technical assistance providers can be a source of information for objective, third-party assessment of research-based models for school reform and instructional improvement.

Integrate the Comprehensive Centers, the Eisenhower Consortia, the R*TECs, and the PIRCs into a system of regionally-based comprehensive centers, complemented by national specialty centers.

One of the goals of the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA was to allow customers easy access to all of the Department's technical assistance resources from a single point of entry. This notion of "one-stop shopping" guided the development of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers. However, available evidence suggests that there is relatively little collaboration and coordination across the Comprehensive Centers, the Eisenhower Consortia, and the R*TECs, although their activities and target audiences do overlap in some cases. A system of closely-integrated regional centers would assist states, districts, and schools on the implementation of federal programs and the development and use of performance indicator systems and continuous improvement models. Specialty Centers, designed to disseminate research-based instructional materials and reform models in priority areas such as mathematics and science, reading, and the uses of technology in instruction, would serve much larger regions (with one to three centers serving the entire country), and would be encouraged to do their work electronically.

A number of states, including Texas, New York, and Oregon, currently operate systems of regional service centers, and the available evidence suggests that they have been effective at providing useful assistance to large numbers of schools and districts. These regional centers are easily accessible to schools and districts and offer a comprehensive array of services that can be tapped by a single phone call. Federal regional assistance centers could be more closely modeled on these state systems.

In one or two pilot regions, test a range of options for integrating the Department's technical assistance programs. The Department can support the development of new approaches to integrating the Comprehensive Centers, the Eisenhower Consortia, the R*TECs, and the PIRCs by testing one or more of the following options:

- **Standardize regional boundaries.** Because the size and shape of regions served varies with each of the Department's technical assistance programs, a single provider may have to collaborate with many others to coordinate its work with the work of other federal technical assistance programs. Standardizing regional boundaries would help to reduce the number of organizations involved in technical assistance in the region and increase incentives to collaborate.
- **Allow providers to submit a consolidated application for funding for the Comprehensive Center, the Eisenhower Consortium, the R*TEC, and the PIRCs serving that region.** Consolidated applications from a consortium of technical assistance providers would be judged, in part, on the strength of plans for integrating services across programs and for collaborating across programs to improve the quality of services provided to the field.

- **Provide some additional funding to technical assistance providers in the pilot regions to develop models for integrating common operations and eliminating duplication of effort.** Collaboration and coordination of activities among technical assistance providers takes time. A modest amount of additional funding would allow providers in the pilot regions to maintain the level of services they provide to the field and to explore approaches to streamlining common operations, for example, conducting regional needs assessments, developing relationships with key stakeholders, developing plans for providing services, and developing products and services.
- **Consolidate the Comprehensive Center, Eisenhower Consortium, R*TEC, and PIRCs serving the region into a single omnibus center.** This center, run by a single provider or consortium of providers, would carry out all the activities for these four technical assistance programs in the region.
- **Evaluate the effects of this integration in pilot regions on the quality and cost-effectiveness of services.** The results of this evaluation would inform future reauthorizations of the Department's technical assistance programs.

Create an electronic network that would disseminate products and information on behalf of all federal technical assistance programs. Modeled on, or embedded in, the ERIC system, this electronic network, composed of several specialty area clearinghouses, would provide users with access to products and materials developed by all of the Department's technical assistance providers, from a single point of entry. This national clearinghouse would be designed to take full advantage of cutting-edge telecommunications technology as a means of disseminating information.

Create a national dissemination system that would promote the adoption of high-quality, research-based school reform models and instructional approaches. Elements of a dissemination system might include:

- **An independent agency that would support the rigorous evaluation of effects on student learning.** This agency might award competitive grants to developers of promising school reform models and instructional approaches to support evaluation efforts, or it might conduct the evaluations itself.
- **Staff based in SEAs or in regional technical assistance centers who would be responsible for disseminating these models and approaches at the local level.**

Deploy federal technical assistance resources to complement existing state-level systems. Working with and through state-level technical assistance systems is one strategy for reaching larger numbers of schools and districts than would be possible for providers working alone. Federal technical assistance providers can add value to state-level systems by: (1) providing training to state-level technical assistance providers in their particular areas of expertise (including the implementation of federal programs, research-based school reform and continuous improvement models); (2) training Title I school support teams and supporting their work with schools; and (3) providing consultation and expertise in evaluation, analysis of student performance data, and continuous improvement.

Limit direct assistance to schools and districts to those with the highest numbers and percentages of children in poverty, and to areas where state capacity is low. Federal technical assistance providers cannot serve nearly all the districts and schools that require assistance. Because federal

resources to support direct assistance to schools and districts are so limited, they should be reserved for those schools and districts with the highest numbers and percentages of children in poverty. In addition, some states have very limited capacity to serve schools and districts themselves. in those cases it may be appropriate for federal technical assistance providers to help compensate for lack of capacity at the state level.

This list of attributes was developed by the author of this section, based on findings from the following studies: Katrina G. Laguarda, Karen P. Walking Eagle, Jeanine L. Hildreth, Theresa M. Ellis, and Brenda J. Turnbull, *A Conceptual Framework for an Evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers* (Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, December 1997); Carrie B. Chimerine, M. Bruce Haslam, and Katrina G. Laguarda, *Third-Year Evaluation of the Nine-Site Program Improvement Initiative* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994); M. Bruce Haslam, Matthew I. Janger, Katrina G. Laguarda, Karen L.M. Panton, and Beverly A. Pringle, *A Review of Technical Assistance Programs Supported by the U.S. Department of Education* (Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, April 1994); and Karen L.M. Panton, Kelly W. Colopy, and Beverly A. Pringle, *Evaluation of the Indian Education Technical Assistance Centers* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

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⁴ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, Feb. 1999.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, Feb. 1999.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, Feb. 1999.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, 18 Dec. 1998.

⁸ The Urban Institute, unpublished tabulations from the *District Survey: Local Implementation of Federal Programs (II)* 13 Jan. 1998.

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¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, 18 Dec. 1998.

¹² U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs*, 18 Dec. 1998.

¹³ The Urban Institute, *District Survey*.

¹⁴ The Urban Institute, *Year Three Evaluation Report: New England Comprehensive Assistance Center at the Education Development Center* (Washington, DC: Author, 1998) 41; Region II Comprehensive Center at the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, *Annual Grant Performance Report, 1997-98* (New York: Author, September 1998) 63; Region III Comprehensive Center, *Internal Evaluation Reports for the Period July 1, 1997-June 30, 1998* (Arlington, VA: Author) 10; Region XIV Comprehensive Center, *Annual Performance Report* (Tucker, GA: Author, August 1998) Appendix, 2.

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¹⁶ M. Bruce Haslam, Brenda J. Turnbull, and Daniel C. Humphrey, *Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Regional Consortia Program: Final Evaluation Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1998) 23.

¹⁷ Cross-Consortia Descriptive Data System, *Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Regional Consortia*

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- Preliminary Report, Fiscal Year 1998* (Washington, DC: Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Regional Consortia Program, 5 March 1999) 25.
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- ²¹ *Regional Technology in Education Consortia Program Performance: Draft Report Fiscal Year 1998* (Washington, DC: R*TEC Program, Jan. 1999) 8.
- ²² *Regional Technology in Education Consortia Program Performance: Draft Report Fiscal Year 1998* (Washington, DC: R*TEC Program, Jan. 1999) 12.
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- ³² Jane Hannaway, and Kristi Kimball, *Reports on Reform from the Field: District and State Survey Results* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997) Section III, 46-48.
- ³³ Hannaway and Kimball, 46-48.
- ³⁴ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from *The Follow-up Public School Survey on Education Reform*, 1 Feb. 1999.
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- ³⁶ U.S. Department of Education, unpublished tabulations from the *Follow-up Study of State Implementation of Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Program*, 18 Dec. 1998.
- ³⁷ Haslam, Turnbull, and Humphrey, 96.
- ³⁸ Policy Studies Associates, *Evaluation of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, Quarterly Progress Reports: Aggregated Data Tables*, draft, 17 Mar. 1999, 5.
- ³⁹ *Regional Technology in Education Consortia Program Performance: Preliminary Report Fiscal Year 1998* (Washington, DC: R*TEC Program, 16 Oct. 1998).
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- ⁴² Humphrey, et. al., 27.

11. ARE FEDERAL LAWS PROMOTING FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS?

KEY FINDINGS

Overall the flexibility provisions in the 1994 legislation are better implemented than the performance accountability provisions.

Flexibility

- The 1994 legislation encourages integration of federal programs with state and local efforts by building on state initiatives.
- States, districts, and schools report that the 1994 legislation provides them with more flexibility than previous legislation and that they are using this flexibility. They also indicate that the flexibility provided is sufficient to meet their needs.
- In cases where the 1994 legislation does not provide sufficient flexibility, waivers fill the gap.
- The relatively small number of waivers requested from the Department and in Ed-Flex states suggests that federal programs are sufficiently flexible to meet local needs. Other evidence supports this conclusion.
- Many of the federal requirements that concern district officials are not related to education programs, but instead pertain to health, safety, or civil rights requirements that impact schools and that should not be compromised.
- Educators are still learning how to utilize fully the flexibility in federal education programs.

Accountability

- Although the 1994 legislation greatly increased the amount of flexibility available to state and local education agencies, with the exception of ESEA Title I, it did not simultaneously put in place better systems for holding districts and schools accountable for results.
- Only three of the federal education programs authorized in 1994 require states to develop and use performance measures to monitor progress.
- States and districts have made progress in implementing the Title I accountability provisions, though they will remain incomplete until aligned assessments, which are required by 2000-01, are implemented.
- Tying flexibility in federal programs to clearly defined purposes is important.

Educators preparing students for the 21st century are working in a changed environment. More than ever before, ESEA and other major education laws passed in 1994 have focused attention on helping all students, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities, achieve higher academic standards. In addition, the rules have changed — literally. While federal programs have always provided relatively flexible funding to state and local education agencies, the laws passed in 1994 provide even greater flexibility in adapting federal education programs to specific local contexts. In exchange for this flexibility, states and districts are expected to show better results in terms of key outcomes for students. This chapter focuses on the implementation of key areas of flexibility and accountability in ESEA; the Goals 2000: Educate America Act; and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act.

What Do We Know about Good Practice?

Flexibility and accountability should work together to improve teaching and learning. Good flexibility in education programs should:

- Contribute to improved teaching and learning. Flexibility should not be an end in itself but a means of helping states and districts achieve key education goals;
- Advance the effectiveness of federal education programs and federal efforts to address national priorities such as high academic achievement for all students and computer literacy;
- Function together with good accountability systems for tracking progress and measuring results.

Good accountability in education programs should:

- Measure the progress of all students against challenging academic standards;
- Allow measurement of progress against key performance indicators;
- Keep the public informed about school and student progress;
- Be coupled with technical assistance to provide for continuous performance improvement.

To take full advantage of greater flexibility and to operate with greater accountability, states and districts need to be able to effectively support schools in planning and implementing comprehensive and innovative educational programs; they also need to assist schools in documenting and reporting student achievement. This is a new role for many states and districts.

Introduction to the Programs and the 1994 Legislative Changes

In striving to improve student achievement nationwide, the 1994 legislation sought to incorporate flexibility and accountability measures that would enhance the effectiveness of federal education programs in promoting improved student achievement. The legislation ties what we know about good flexibility with what we know about good accountability with the expectation that the flexibility and accountability provisions will have positive impacts for students by supporting:

- More flexibility for states, districts and schools within program implementation;
- More flexibility for coordination among federal programs and among federal, state, and local reform efforts;
- More innovation in education; and
- Better systems for holding districts and schools accountable for student achievement.

The legislation takes several different approaches to providing flexibility. In some cases, flexibility is incorporated within programs, giving greater discretion in implementing federal programs to state and local educators. In other cases, flexibility facilitates the implementation of federal programs in ways that reinforce state and local reform efforts and that allow for increased coordination across federal programs. Waiver authorities included in the legislation, which are administered either by the Department or by SEAs through the Ed-Flex program, make available the broadest kind of flexibility. The waiver authorities allow state and local educators to be exempt from federal requirements in instances where exemptions from the general rule support better program implementation in their local contexts.

Though the legislation emphasizes holding all children to high standards, strong performance-based accountability provisions are included only in Title I.

Exhibit 11.1 highlights the key flexibility and accountability provisions in the 1994 legislation. These provisions and the programs they affect are used to describe the flexibility and accountability in the 1994 legislation. Their implementation provides useful lessons regarding what works and where modifications are needed.

EXHIBIT 11.1
WHAT ARE THE KEY FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
PROVISIONS IN THE 1994 LEGISLATION?

Flexibility provisions allowing local discretion in program implementation:

- Title I of ESEA allows many more schools to implement schoolwide programs and eases restrictions so that schools can more easily serve students with special needs, such as limited English proficient and migrant students.
- The Eisenhower Professional Development Program (Title II, ESEA) was expanded so that, after a minimum appropriation for mathematics and science, educators may spend additional funds in other core subject areas.
- The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (Title IV, ESEA) expanded the range of drug and crime prevention activities schools and communities can support with program funds.
- Innovative Education Program Strategies (Title VI, ESEA) allows districts to spend funds in any of eight broad funding categories.
- The Bilingual Education Act (Title VII, ESEA) now allows districts receiving certain Bilingual Education Act funds to use the funds for improving services for LEP students systemwide.
- ESEA Title XI allows districts and schools to use up to five percent of their ESEA funds to carry out coordinated services projects to meet the needs of students and their families.

Flexibility for coordination with state and local reform efforts:

- The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (Title III, ESEA) ties funding for technology to long-range, home-grown state and district plans for implementing technology in schools and classrooms.
- The Public Charter Schools Program (Title X, ESEA) expands choices for parents and students by providing seed money for the development and initial implementation of public charter schools.
- Goals 2000: Educate America Act provides funds to states and districts to design and carry out state-designed standards-based school reform initiatives.
- School-to-Work Opportunities Act provides funds to states and partnerships within states to design and implement coordinated state systems for preparing youth for careers and further education and training.

Flexibility for coordination across federal programs:

- Consolidated application provisions in ESEA allow states and districts to coordinate program activities by submitting a single consolidated application for multiple programs supporting elementary and secondary education, rather than separate applications for each program.
- Provisions allowing the consolidation of administrative funds from various elementary and secondary education programs help states and districts streamline program administration.

Waivers from federal requirements:

- Waivers of most ESEA program requirements are available to states and school districts in cases where the requirements hinder innovation or improvement efforts.
- Ed-Flex (Education Flexibility Partnership Demonstration Program) has given 12 states the authority to grant waivers of most ESEA requirements to districts in their states.

Major accountability provisions:

- Title I of ESEA requires that accountability be based on states' individual accountability systems, which are to include high-quality assessments aligned with challenging state content and performance standards for students.
- Title I of ESEA requires states to identify low-performing districts and districts to identify low-performing schools. States must take action to strengthen districts that consistently do not make "adequate yearly progress" toward achievement goals for students. Districts must take similar actions for schools consistently not making adequate yearly progress.
- The Eisenhower Professional Development Program and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act mandate that states develop and use performance indicators to monitor the success of program implementation.
- Waiver recipients must outline measurable education improvement goals they expect to achieve under their waiver and report on progress made towards reaching the goals.
- Ed-Flex states must monitor and annually report on the progress of districts operating under waivers.

How Well Is Flexibility Operating in Practice?

While significant flexibility is available to and being taken advantage of by educators, the exchange of increased flexibility for increased accountability has not yet been fulfilled because performance accountability systems are not sufficiently in place. Flexibility and accountability should work in concert to promote innovative and effective approaches to improving student achievement. The following four sections discuss progress towards meeting the desired goals of the flexibility and accountability provisions mentioned earlier.

Do States, Districts, and Schools Have More Flexibility within Program Implementation? States, districts, and schools report that the 1994 legislation provides them with more flexibility than previous legislation and that they are using this flexibility. They also indicate that the flexibility provided is sufficient to meet their needs.

Example of the Use of Flexibility Provisions

The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) (Title III, ESEA) provides funds for acquiring technology for schools and gives funding priority to high-poverty districts and districts with the least access to technology while giving states almost complete discretion over how to meet these priorities and subgrant funds. The Oregon Department of Education observed that its neediest districts had the fewest resources for planning how to use technology. A waiver of certain TLCF requirements permitted the Oregon Department of Education to use TLCF funds to make planning grants to districts in order to support these districts' efforts to develop comprehensive, long-range technology plans. Coupled with the flexibility already in the program, the waiver enabled the state to do what it believed would increase the number and quality of technology plans implemented under TLCF.¹ As a result, by 1999, 186 Oregon districts had technology plans. Three years earlier, in 1996, only 30 Oregon districts had developed technology plans.²

Schools have significantly more flexibility. Title I schools, in particular, have increased flexibility due to expanded opportunities to implement schoolwide programs. The schoolwide program option greatly increases schools' flexibility by allowing eligible schools to consolidate funds from Title I and several other federal education programs. Such consolidation supports whole-school improvement rather than targeting program services to individual students. Research has shown that, with a focus on changing the entire school, not just the performance of the lowest-achieving children, schools serving even the most disadvantaged students can succeed.³ Schoolwide programs allow schools to use Title I funds to pursue activities such as adapting curriculum, training all teachers, and whole school reform to better meet the needs of the most disadvantaged students.

By lowering the poverty threshold for schoolwide eligibility under Title I, the 1994 law gave many more schools the option to implement schoolwide programs, as shown in the chart below:

EXHIBIT 11.2		
SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAMS		
School Year	1994-95 ⁴	1997-98 ⁵
Poverty Threshold	75%	50%
Number of Eligible Schools	9,751	22,799
Number of Schoolwide Programs	4,583	16,662
Percent of Eligible Schools Implementing Schoolwide Programs	47%	73%
Source: See endnotes 4 and 5.		

In addition, since 1994, 174 districts have requested and received waivers allowing otherwise ineligible schools in their districts to operate schoolwide programs.⁹ Title I schools still operating targeted-assistance programs also have more flexibility for serving migrant, preschool, neglected and delinquent, homeless, and limited English proficient students. The current legislation enables all Title I schools to better streamline services to students under several programs – a departure from the earlier approaches that were more categorical.

Provisions similar to Title I schoolwide provisions were included in the 1994 reauthorization of the Title I program for Neglected or Delinquent Youth and the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of ESEA). These provisions allow correctional facilities serving eligible youth to operate services institution-wide, rather than requiring that all services be targeted only to particular youth. They also allow districts receiving certain Bilingual Education Act funds to use the funds for improving services for LEP students systemwide.

The Eisenhower Professional Development Program (Title II, ESEA), once limited to mathematics and science education, now allows funds to be used for professional development in all core academic subject areas once a threshold amount devoted to professional development in mathematics and science (\$250 million) is reached. According to a national survey of district Eisenhower coordinators, while all districts funded professional development activities in mathematics and science, 60 percent also used Eisenhower funds to support professional development in other content areas, most frequently in English/language arts, social studies, and technology. Evaluators indicated that the expansion of the program has not changed its central role in funding professional development in mathematics and science;⁷ the flexibility does not appear to have compromised basic program purposes.

Similarly, the 1994 legislation expanded the range of drug and crime prevention activities schools and communities can support under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (Title IV, ESEA). ESEA Title XI allows districts and schools to use up to five percent of their ESEA funds to carry out coordinated services projects to meet the needs of students and their families.

States and districts benefit from the flexibility in Goals 2000, according to state and local officials interviewed in a recent GAO study. Goals 2000 funds support the achievement of state and local reform goals through systemic standards-based reform. Almost every state official interviewed reported that “flexibility is key to Goals 2000’s usefulness in promoting state education reform” because states are permitted to decide how the funds should be used, and states—which are at different points in the reform process—are in the best position to make this determination. **Most of the state officials did not desire any changes in the amount of flexibility provided by Goals 2000.**

Has Coordination across Federal Programs and with Federal, State and Local Reform Efforts Improved? Increased flexibility has provided states, districts, and schools with more opportunities to coordinate their reform efforts. However, it is too early to assess the extent to which these opportunities influence program activities.

The 1994 legislation encourages integration of federal programs with state and local efforts by building on state initiatives. For example, while Goals 2000 promotes systemic, standards-based reform, it includes only broad parameters for participating states to follow. Each participating state developed a plan for Goals 2000 based on its state plan for systemic, standards-based reform. Within each Goals 2000 state, districts that receive Goals 2000 funds integrate their Goals 2000 efforts with their local school improvement efforts. Similarly, the application process for the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) requires each participating state to develop a long-range plan for the use of technology in its schools. Though TLCF state plans must follow limited criteria outlined in the law, they are basically home-grown. TLCF funds support states and their districts in carrying out their plans for education technology. Other programs, including School-to-Work, also are designed to achieve the purposes of federal programs through integrating federal efforts with state and local efforts in mutually reinforcing ways.

Though consolidated planning promotes well-coordinated reform, its potential has not yet been realized fully. Consolidated application provisions encourage better coordination by allowing states and districts to coordinate program activities by submitting a single consolidated application for several federal education programs supporting elementary and secondary education, rather than separate applications for each.

In 1995, all but one state took advantage of the option under Title XIV of ESEA to submit a five-year consolidated application for federal education programs. Many state administrators who were involved in developing their states' consolidated plans felt that consolidated planning provided greater flexibility in the use of time, resources, and staff and were enthusiastic about the opportunities for greater effectiveness created by consolidated planning. However, according to an early evaluation of ESEA, state program administrators were just beginning to learn how to work together effectively to maximize its potential.⁹

Evidence of more collaboration in program implementation is emerging. According to a recent study, state administrators of federal programs are increasing the depth of and extent to which they coordinate across programs. The majority of state administrators surveyed for each of nine federal education programs reported that, since January 1997, their programs had conducted specific administrative or operational activities in coordination with other federally funded programs.¹⁰ Specific collaborative activities they most frequently conducted included monitoring local projects, providing technical assistance to districts and schools, and decision-making regarding allocating program resources to districts and schools.¹¹

District use of consolidated planning varies considerably by state. Approximately half of the states require districts to submit consolidated plans when they apply for federal funds, with other states typically providing this option to districts.¹² Recent estimates suggest 60 percent of districts nationally are using this option. According to a national sample of districts, small, poor districts are more likely to submit a consolidated application than the average district, while large, poor districts are less likely. Of those districts that submitted consolidated plans, over three-quarters claimed that consolidated planning makes federal programs more effective, including 90 percent of low-income districts.¹³

Use of provisions allowing the consolidation of administrative funds is more limited. The 1994 ESEA also added provisions allowing state educational agencies (where the majority of their resources came from non-federal sources) and districts to consolidate administrative funds for certain federal programs. Only some of the eligible states opted to consolidate their administrative funds and, among those that did, several were selective and consolidated funds for fewer than the allowable number of programs.¹⁴ Some states have not allowed districts to consolidate administrative funds for federal education programs. Only a small number of districts in states allowing this option consolidated administrative funds for several federal programs.¹⁵

Nearly all districts in a recent study reported doing more integrated planning and service delivery across different federal programs and three-quarters indicated that their administrative burdens had decreased.¹⁶ The 1994 legislation's decreased emphasis on keeping track of categorical programs and funds separately supports this shift to better coordination between programs and more comprehensive reform efforts. A 1998 evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program similarly revealed that Eisenhower and Title I programs are better coordinated at the district level, but also showed that some of the coordination remains at a more superficial "sharing" level and has yet to lead to true collaborative programming.¹⁷ **Although current law supports better coordination between programs, states, districts, and schools are really just beginning to pursue this goal.**

Concerning charter schools, since 1995-96, the first year of the federal Public Charter Schools Program, the number of charter schools nationally has risen from fewer than 300 to over 1,000 today.¹⁸ As public schools that operate under negotiated agreements exempting them from state and local regulations, charter schools have significant flexibility in how they operate. By providing seed money for the implementation of charter schools, the Public Charter Schools Program (PCSP) has helped nearly three-fourths of all operating charter schools overcome one of the most common barriers for charter schools – lack of sufficient funds for start-up costs. When counting charter schools in the planning stages, nearly eight in 10 have benefited from the PCSP.

Waivers from Federal Requirements. In cases where the 1994 legislation does not provide sufficient flexibility, waivers fill the gap. Waivers provide exemptions from federal requirements in cases where an applicant can demonstrate that an exemption likely will enhance the effectiveness of the federal program in improving teaching and learning. Under general waiver authorities, the Department may grant waivers to SEAs and school districts. Under the Ed-Flex Program, the authority to grant waivers of certain federal education requirements is delegated to 12 SEAs. Each participating Ed-Flex state must develop processes for granting waivers of federal requirements similar to the waiver review process operated by the Department. Districts in both Ed-Flex states and non-Ed-Flex states may receive waivers. The key difference is that in Ed-Flex states districts request waivers from their SEAs rather than the Department. Ed-Flex provides states with the opportunity to integrate waivers of federal requirements with other state initiatives. It also places on states the responsibility of holding waiver recipients accountable for improving teaching and learning. A second difference is that the U.S. Department of Education may grant waivers of requirements that apply to SEAs while Ed-Flex does not allow participating SEAs to grant waivers of requirements that apply to themselves. The U.S. Department of Education's waiver authority became effective in March 1994. The 12 Ed-Flex states received their waiver authority between February 1995 and July 1997.

Overall, from a potential annual pool of 52 State Education Agencies and approximately 15,000 school districts, the Department has received fewer than 650 waiver requests since waivers were initiated in 1994. Of these, the Department has granted 358 waivers.¹⁹ Thirty percent of the waiver requests submitted to the Department were returned because the applicants did not need a waiver. The law as

written already provided applicants with the flexibility to proceed with their school improvement initiatives without a waiver.²⁰ As shown below, the majority of waivers requested have concerned only a few provisions.

EXHIBIT 11.3 WAIVERS GRANTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ²¹	
Type of Waiver	Number of Waivers
All Waivers	358
Title I Schoolwide Eligibility	84
Title I Targeting Requirements	178
Eisenhower Professional Development Program	11
Math/Science Priority	
Other	85
Source: See endnote 21.	

Nearly one-quarter of the waivers granted to districts by the Department allowed otherwise ineligible schools to implement the more flexible schoolwide programs, rather than targeted assistance programs, under Title I. Over one-half of the waivers granted were targeting requirements under Title I that direct funds to the highest poverty schools in a district. Several waivers of the requirement to spend a minimum amount on mathematics and science under the Eisenhower Professional Development Program also were granted.

The experiences of Ed-Flex states with waivers resembles the Department's experience: Most Ed-Flex states have granted relatively few waivers²² and a large proportion of the waivers granted by Ed-Flex states allowed the implementation of schoolwide programs in otherwise ineligible schools. In a recent survey, Ed-Flex administrators in nine of the 12 Ed-Flex states said that they believed their state and districts were underutilizing the Ed-Flex authority. The most common explanation offered was that the reauthorized programs are sufficiently flexible.²³ Exhibits 11.4 and 11.5 below show the numbers and types of waivers granted by Ed-Flex states.

EXHIBIT 11.4
WAIVERS GRANTED IN ED-FLEX STATES FROM 1995-1997²⁴

Ed-Flex States	Date Waiver Authority Received	Number of Programmatic Waivers Approved for Districts ²⁵	Number of Statewide Waivers Approved ²⁶
Colorado	July 1996	6	1
Illinois	July 1997	1	N/A
Iowa	July 1997	0	N/A
Kansas	August 1995	20	N/A
Maryland	May 1996	22	0
Massachusetts	September 1995	14	N/A
Michigan	July 1997	0	1
New Mexico	November 1996	1	0
Ohio	November 1995	14	2
Oregon	February 1995	2	N/A
Texas	January 1996	40	8
Vermont	March 1996	10	1
Total Ed-Flex Waivers		130	13
Source: See endnotes 24, 25, and 26.			

Thirteen of the waivers granted by Ed-Flex states are statewide waivers—waivers which are available to be taken advantage of by many or all districts in the state and which, as a result, may impact multiple districts even though they are counted only as one waiver. For example, Ohio granted a statewide waiver which, under certain conditions, allows any school in the state to implement a schoolwide program, even if the school falls below the minimum poverty threshold for operating a schoolwide program. Ohio also granted a statewide waiver of the minimum amount of Eisenhower Professional Development Program funds that must be devoted to mathematics and science. Over 200 districts in Ohio took advantage of these statewide waivers.²⁷

EXHIBIT 11.5
TYPES OF WAIVERS GRANTED BY ED-FLEX STATES FROM 1995-1997

Type of Waiver	Number of Waivers Granted to Districts ²⁸	Number of Statewide Waivers Granted ²⁹
All Waivers	130	13
Title I Schoolwide Eligibility	90	2
Title I Targeting Requirements	25	5
Eisenhower Professional Development Program Math/Science Priority	12	3
Other	3	3
Source: See endnotes 27 and 28.		

Is the Flexibility in Federal Education Legislation Sufficient and Promoting Innovation? The relatively small number of waivers requested from the Department and in Ed-Flex states suggests that federal programs are sufficiently flexible to meet local needs. Other evidence supports this conclusion. In a recent survey, a majority of state administrators for seven federal programs indicated that the 1994 reauthorization gave them more administrative flexibility.³⁰ In an earlier study, many state administrators of federal programs—particularly those for the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program, and ESEA Title VI — indicated that they did not perceive increased flexibility due to ESEA because their programs had always been flexible.³¹ With respect to districts, over three-fourths of districts nationally—and all low-income districts—in a recent survey said federal programs are more flexible now than they were prior to the 1994 legislation.³² Significantly, 84 percent of districts nationally said that if they were given even more flexibility in federal programs, they would offer services no different than those they provide now.³³

Many of the federal requirements that concern district officials are not related to education programs, but instead pertain to health, safety, or civil rights requirements that impact schools and that should not be compromised. A 1998 GAO report on flexibility initiatives indicates, for instance, that removing asbestos from school buildings or making buildings accessible for people with disabilities is burdensome to districts. District officials also noted that the process for determining students' eligibility for free and reduced-priced lunches, under the Department of Agriculture program, is paper-intensive and challenging.

In addition, certain problematic accounting requirements appear to originate at the state level, not from federal laws or regulations. At least one state requires districts to submit more documentation for the uses of certain federal funds than federal regulations require. It can be difficult for districts to distinguish between state and federal requirements, especially where a state requirement arises from the implementation of a federal program.³⁴ Despite federal support and significant flexibility in federal legislation for charter schools, flexibility for many charter schools is limited by state charter schools laws that do not allow schools to have control over basic functions such as budgeting, acquiring services, hiring and firing, and operating outside of the local school district.

It will take more time, and a more seamless implementation of the flexibility and accountability provisions, however, before sufficient evidence will be available to determine whether the 1994 laws have led to more innovation. The greater flexibility provided by ESEA is intended to promote innovation in educational reform. Schoolwide Title I programs, for example, encourage the implementation of innovative, research-based ideas for education that serve to improve the whole school while directing extra support to students with the greatest educational needs. Schools switching to schoolwide programs can focus on redesigning their whole education program rather than on providing supplemental services for at-risk students. Other programs also involve school staff in researching and then implementing innovative research-based improvement methods. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, enacted in 1997, further encourages the use of research-based strategies in Title I and other schools. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (ESEA, Title IV) emphasizes more multifaceted solutions to the problems of drugs and violence in schools because the 1994 reauthorization expanded the range of school- and/or community-based education and prevention activities that can be funded under the program. Waivers also encourage innovation; they allow educators to focus first on identifying the most promising strategies for improving academic achievement and then on requesting waivers to remove obstacles to their efforts.

How is Accountability Operating in Practice?

Are Better Systems in Place for Holding Districts and Schools Accountable for Student Achievement?

Although the 1994 legislation greatly increased the amount of flexibility available to state and local education agencies, with the exception of ESEA Title I, it did not simultaneously put in place better systems for holding districts and schools accountable for results. For most of the education programs authorized or reauthorized in 1994, accountability systems have not been established. Even for Title I, important components of states' Title I accountability systems are not due to be completed until 2000-01. As mentioned earlier, an important feature of the 1994 legislation was the desire to exchange greater accountability in return for increased flexibility. The development and implementation of the accountability side of the exchange has been problematic and has proceeded at a much slower pace.

ESEA requires that states, districts, and schools shift to a performance accountability system for Title I and two other federal education programs, as illustrated in Exhibit 11.6. The previous legislation required all states to use national norm-referenced tests for accountability under Title I. In contrast, the current Title I calls for states to develop and use assessments aligned with challenging state content and performance standards to define "adequate yearly progress" for schools and districts. The assessments are to be administered to all students, including those with limited English proficiency and disabilities, using appropriate accommodations. States are to use the results to identify districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress, and districts are to use the results to identify failing schools. Title I also requires states and districts to provide technical assistance to districts and schools, respectively, that have been identified as in need of improvement, and to follow technical assistance with stronger corrective action if student achievement in a district or school does not improve. States and districts must use state definitions of adequate yearly progress in their annual progress reports to the Department on programs operating under waivers. Goals 2000 similarly emphasizes that states use assessments and accountability systems aligned with state standards.

EXHIBIT 11.6
ACCOUNTABILITY AT A GLANCE

1994 Federal Program	Accountability Requirement	Implementation Issues
Title I	Accountability systems are to be aligned with state standards. Schools and districts not making "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) must be identified. Corrective actions must be taken in cases of consistent low performance. States and districts must report student performance results to the public.	States are required to define AYP. No state has notified the Department that it has finalized the assessments that are the basis for determining AYP. States have until 2000-01 to do so and use transitional assessment systems in the interim. During this transitional period, states and districts must report "statistically sound" student performance results.
Eisenhower Professional Development	States are required to develop and use program performance indicators.	Compliance with this requirement varies considerably by state.
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act	States are required to develop and use program performance indicators.	Compliance with this requirement varies considerably by state.
Waivers and Ed-Flex	States are required to report on the progress of waiver recipients in meeting goals and improving student achievement.	Where state accountability systems do not provide school-level data on student performance, it is difficult to track progress.
All other programs	No performance-based accountability system is required by law.	

Source: U. S. Department of Education.

During the current federally mandated transition period, until 2000-01, accountability under Title I is somewhat loose. By the end of the transitional period, all states are required to use their state assessments for Title I accountability purposes. Currently, no state has notified the Department that its assessments have been finalized and some states are refining their existing definitions of adequate yearly progress. Change and variation across states in their definition of adequate yearly progress make it difficult to hold states and districts accountable for progress made using federal funds. Some states are employing measures other than state assessments to monitor schools' yearly progress. Some school districts have set their own temporary definitions of adequate yearly progress, using proxy measures that are not always well aligned with state standards. Furthermore, the lack of uniformity or comparability across these state systems does not ensure that all students, particularly limited English proficient and poor children, are held to the same standards.

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities and Eisenhower Professional Development programs require that state program managers develop and use program performance indicators to measure their outcomes. State performance reports and other Department records indicate that states have fulfilled this requirement. However, during the first several years following the 1994 legislation, many state administrators reported that their offices had not developed performance indicators.³⁵

With respect to Ed-Flex, accountability also is loose. Ed-Flex states are expected to monitor the progress of their districts operating under a waiver and the Department has asked Ed-Flex states to report on student performance in districts that have operated under a waiver for at least two years. While the impact of Ed-Flex remains unclear, it does appear that states with strong state accountability systems are better able to support implementation of Ed-Flex. A recent GAO study noted, "while some states have put in place specific goals (such as improving student achievement in math and science) and established clear and measurable objectives for evaluating the impact of waivers (such as improving average test scores by a certain number of points), many Ed-Flex states have not established any goals or have defined only vague objectives."³⁶ For example, in one state where a district was granted a schoolwide program waiver, only nonspecific goals were reported, such as "a commitment to the identification and implementation of programs that will create an environment in which all students actualize academic potential."³⁷ State reports on Ed-Flex have reflected this paucity of measurable goals.

In the absence of strong or uniform accountability systems, monitoring the effect of waivers granted by the Department has also been hampered. Because most waivers granted have been related to Title I requirements and because "adequate yearly progress" under Title I is one of the few performance-based accountability measures for federal education programs, the Department used "adequate yearly progress" to assess the impact of waivers through 1998. However, the difficulties pertaining to "adequate yearly progress" noted above also presented challenges to measuring the impact of waivers. According to 1998 state reports on waivers, 72 percent of schools for which information was provided made adequate yearly progress in 1995-96 and 67 percent of schools affected by waivers made adequate yearly progress in 1996-97. However, information was not provided on 50 schools for 1995-96 and on 86 schools for 1996-97.³⁸

State administrators have yet to fully convert their monitoring systems for districts and schools to reflect the central message of ESEA: Accountability for student performance is replacing the compliance monitoring of the past.³⁹ The emphasis on performance accountability needs to be sharpened. Although the framework created by ESEA, Goals 2000, and other federal education programs signals that districts and schools will be held accountable for the academic achievement of their students, this message has not permeated all school systems. State administrators, as a group, failed to use student performance data to assess program success.⁴⁰ A survey of state program administrators

showed that, except for identifying districts and schools in need of improvement for Title I, student performance data continue to be used most frequently for reporting purposes.⁴¹ instead of for program improvement. Moreover, very few state administrators report that monitoring visits are triggered by information about student performance. Instead, state administrators seem more likely to visit districts that invite them.⁴² District administrators similarly reported that assessments and accountability were among the areas in which they were making the least progress and needed the most assistance.⁴³

States and districts have made progress in implementing the Title I accountability provisions. In 1994-95, all states used national, norm-referenced tests for Title I accountability purposes. These tests were not typically aligned with challenging state or national standards. As of the 1997-98 school year, 14 states had designed their own assessments that were aligned with performance standards.⁴⁴ State administrators of six of nine federal programs included in a 1998 state survey reported that their programs made decisions or provided services based on state-level data that identified failing schools.⁴⁵ Districts, too, are actively identifying schools needing help. Approximately two-thirds of large, poor districts and 20 percent of all districts have formally identified schools in need of improvement. Over 80 percent of districts nationally with such schools use "more professional development" as a strategy for helping schools in need of improvement. Other strategies that the majority of these districts use include: District staff spending more time in identified schools, closer supervision of school decisions, assistance brought in from outside the district, and strong encouragement to adopt a new comprehensive model program.⁴⁶

At the same time, implementation of the Title I accountability provisions remains limited. Identification of low-performing Title I schools is intended to drive improvement by identifying low-performing schools publicly, requiring increased attention to school reform, and by providing external assistance and intervention. However, in 1998, 13 percent of principals of Title I schools did not know whether or not their schools were identified as in need of improvement.⁴⁷ In the same survey, only 47 percent of principals of Title I schools reported that their schools received additional technical assistance or professional development after their schools were identified as in need of improvement.⁴⁸

Overall, the performance accountability provisions in the 1994 laws are not as well implemented as the flexibility provisions.

What Results Have Been Achieved?

Two important measures of the success of the 1994 legislation exist. The first measure is whether student performance has improved. The second is whether educational programs are better able to meet their intended purposes. Nearly all district administrators in a recent study claim that the increased flexibility in the 1994 legislation has contributed to improved student outcomes.⁴⁹ However, because well-developed, standards-based accountability systems are not fully in place, it is difficult to confirm whether student achievement is improving programs or whether federal programs are better meeting their intended purposes. For most programs, it is simply too early to draw conclusions about student performance. However, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the legislation provides significant flexibility to states, districts, and schools to improve school programs, teaching and learning.

The effectiveness of federal education programs in meeting their intended purposes provides the other key measure of the success of the flexibility incorporated into these programs. To gauge the

impact of federal programs, the Department, through its *Strategic Plan*, has developed performance indicators for each program as well as overall objectives for the Department's efforts to improve education.

An important feature of flexibility is that it does not, in and of itself, lead to improved outcomes. Although the goal of providing less restrictive funding for innovative school reform is an underlying purpose of ESEA, flexibility should neither obscure the underlying intent of federal education programs nor move the federal government towards general funding of education, which is the responsibility of states and localities.

Comparing Goals 2000 and Title VI of ESEA illustrates the importance of clear expectations for the use of federal funds in conjunction with flexibility. Both programs are considered to be very flexible, yet Goals 2000 explicitly promotes systemic standards-based reform while Title VI provides relatively unrestricted funding to states and districts. Under Title VI, decisions about the uses of funds are most likely to reflect local priorities, with long-term district plans a close second in influence. State priorities are much lower on the list. Use of data on student performance also has little influence on district decisions about how to use Title VI funds.⁵⁰ Title VI funds are most likely distributed to all schools in a district with little targeting of funds to schools based on need (e.g., high-poverty or low-performance).⁵¹ By comparison, Goals 2000 funds are used to support local activities that are much more heavily influenced by state policies and long-term district plans. Targeting of funds to individual schools under Goals 2000 also is more likely to be based on schools or teachers wishing to participate or on schools with low achievement.⁵²

Goals 2000 funds, which are flexible but tied to clear purposes, appear to better support systemic school improvement. In contrast, ESEA Title VI more closely resembles general aid for schools. Title VI funds are much less likely than Goals 2000 funds to be used for activities related to implementation of standards-based reform.⁵³ Goals 2000 clearly designates funds for the purpose of promoting standards-based reform while providing states and districts with significant latitude in determining how to meet program purposes within their local contexts. Title VI functions as a block grant, providing flexibility in how funds may be spent, but identifying only broad categories of allowable expenditures, rather than specific priorities for the use of funds. In a 1998 survey, low percentages of local respondents cited standards-related activity as being supported by Title VI: 13 percent cited aligning curricula and instruction with standards; 13 percent cited providing professional development linked to standards; and 5 percent cited developing or adopting assessments linked to standards.⁵⁴ When Title VI funds have been used for professional development, they have supported a wide variety of topics; less than half of districts indicated that the Title VI-supported professional development focused on content or performance standards.⁵⁵ By contrast, 93 percent of respondents indicated that Goals 2000-supported professional development addressed standards or enabling students to meet state or district proficiency standards.⁵⁶

TEXAS: A COMBINATION OF FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Texas has effectively combined strong accountability and broad flexibility. While increasing individual school authority in the 1990s, the state strengthened its accountability system and increased the emphasis on high performance for all students. Texas rates its districts and schools based on pass rates for all grades tested in reading, writing, and mathematics on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), annual dropout rates for grades 7-12, and attendance rates for grades 1-12. Rewards and sanctions are meted out based on ratings of "exemplary," "recognized," "acceptable," or "low performing."

The system includes a number of significant features. All students in grades 3 through 10 are tested in reading, writing, and mathematics. Districts and schools must demonstrate that they have met the state's performance and dropout targets overall and for four student subgroups: African-American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged youth. Additionally, the percent of students who must pass the TAAS to achieve a particular rating has been raised by 5 percent annually since 1996. Finally, the state tracks school performance using a large database that makes results available to the public through the World Wide Web.⁵⁷

In 1996, Texas became one of 12 states with the authority to grant waivers of federal education legislation to its districts and schools through the Ed-Flex program. Texas has tightly linked its actions under Ed-Flex to the state accountability system and has used its Ed-Flex authority more often than any of the other Ed-Flex states. Texas districts and schools that receive waivers are held accountable for high student performance. In addition to being required by federal law to demonstrate specific, measurable improvements in order to continue operating under a waiver, Texas districts and schools operating under waivers must exceed "acceptable" academic performance, as defined through the state accountability system.

What has Texas accomplished? In over half of the districts that received waivers, gains made during the first year were significant enough to meet the expected gains for year two of the waiver. In many cases student performance gains exceeded the state average. Gains on the TAAS for African-American and economically disadvantaged students in districts and schools with waivers exceeded the statewide average gain for these groups.⁵⁸

Options for Improving Flexibility and Accountability

While considerable progress has been made in implementing the flexibility and accountability provisions in ESEA, obstacles still exist.

First, states, districts, and schools need to build their capacity to take full advantage of their new flexibility. The early study of ESEA and Goals 2000 showed that many state program administrators "were still learning how to communicate with each other and break down categorical program barriers."⁵⁹ Schools also are having difficulty adjusting to the changes in the law: "When you lift the [regulations], it's hard to convince [schools] that they can use flexibility to their own advantage and they won't be cited by an auditor," said one Title I state administrator.⁶⁰ It will take time for state and local district officials to become better collaborators in delivering education programs. Especially in an environment where opportunities for local innovation have replaced more prescriptive requirements, schools need support from state and district officials in developing the capacity to design, implement, and monitor the impact of schoolwide reform.

Second, better accountability systems must be put in place so that progress towards federal program goals can be measured. Many federal programs operate at the state level without clear performance indicators, making it difficult for state administrators to gauge the effectiveness of such

programs. Under Title I, the delay—until 2000-01—in the implementation of clear definitions of adequate yearly progress based on challenging state standards and assessments recognizes that designing assessments to measure student achievement against high academic standards is a complex, time-consuming task. At the same time, the delay may compromise the effectiveness of Title I. Only when solid accountability systems are in place can the impact of federal programs be determined.

Integrating data systems can facilitate the usefulness of and reduce the paperwork needed for accountability. Most states do provide the public with some information about their public schools. However, this information is rarely comparable from state to state. Several states are working to develop statewide integrated data collection systems for their administration of federal and state programs in such a way that schools and districts can compare and benchmark themselves to each other. To help streamline data collection, the Department is embarking on a five-year effort to create, by 2004, an Integrated Performance and Benchmarking System (IPBS) for federal elementary and secondary education program reporting. The IPBS will provide states, districts and parents accurate, comparable information about how their schools and districts compare to other schools and districts nationwide. This effort will reinforce the strengthening of accountability systems.

Third, more and better technical assistance is needed. The Department needs to continue providing technical assistance to states in implementing the 1994 laws and states must be equipped to provide technical assistance to their districts and schools. Surveys indicate that districts rely more on state education agencies than on the Department for technical assistance.⁶¹ While it is appropriate for districts to rely more on their states, this type of information flow highlights the importance of the Department ensuring that states have the capacity to assist their districts in implementing federal programs. States have had some success guiding schools in how to take full advantage of Title I through the creation of Title I support teams. However, in a recent study slightly less than half of the state Title I directors surveyed reported that their school support teams were able to meet the needs of all the schools in their purview.⁶² To assist states and school districts in taking advantage of the new flexibility and accountability provisions, the Department offers technical assistance through program staff, its Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, the Eisenhower Regional Consortia, and the Goals 2000 Parent Assistance Centers, among other resources. In addition, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, passed in 1997, should increase technical assistance by fostering the implementation of research-based school reform models in schools in need of improvement.

Given that federal programs appear sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of states, districts, and schools, it is important to focus on how to best support local reform and to prompt further progress by states and districts in the development and use of performance accountability systems. The Department and state educational agencies can provide leadership and technical assistance for building the capacity of districts and schools. The Department also can help states develop and use program performance indicators and complete their assessments by offering technical assistance and helping states share information. Congress also has a role to play. It is vital to increase the emphasis on accountability systems in reauthorizing ESEA and in no way interrupt the progress states have made in developing accountability systems. The Title I accountability deadline of 2000-01 should be a firm deadline, and states, while given significant flexibility, should be required to meet specific program goals for their uses of federal funds. By supporting states and districts as they build their capacity for innovation and results-based reform, Congress and the Department can make good on the promise of ESEA and other 1994 legislation to help all children achieve high standards.

The nation will not successfully complete the equation that exchanges increased flexibility for increased accountability until performance outcomes for all of the major programs are specified,

state assessments are completed, and all aspects of the school improvement system are in place.
The conclusions presented in the next chapter address in more detail how this might be accomplished.

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12. CONCLUSIONS

This report has evaluated the effects of the 1994 legislation enacted in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments, Goals 2000, and School to Work legislation. This concluding chapter considers the implications of the findings drawn from the preceding chapters according to the three organizing principles used throughout the report:

- How well are federal programs achieving their desired outcomes?
- Are programs being effectively implemented with respect to such issues as targeting to the populations most in need, delivery of high-quality services, and coordination of services across programs?
- Do programs demonstrate sound performance accountability?

It then offers options for consideration by Congress and other policymakers, which could strengthen the impact of federal programs by improving their implementation and accountability.

A. Implications of Findings on How Well Programs are Achieving their Desired Outcomes

1. Continue to support and accelerate the pace of standards-driven reform that states and local school districts are implementing.

Since the early 1990's, at-risk students have progressed on NAEP in reading and math, and all students have, on average, improved in math, although not in reading. These improvements in students' outcomes, particularly for at-risk students, are encouraging, but represent only a start at reducing the large performance gap between disadvantaged and more-advantaged students.

These findings suggest that standards-driven reform should be given a chance to fully take hold while the nation continues to assess progress in student performance. At the same time, the pace of reform must accelerate if significant reductions in the achievement gap are to be realized for those students most at risk of school failure.

2. Reorient program implementation to focus more on results.

Many ESEA programs are demonstrating improvements in certain performance areas consistent with standards-driven reform, but continued improvements in performance are required if federal programs are to contribute to greater results. For example:

- The U.S. General Accounting Office has documented that Goals 2000 has helped virtually all states to adopt content standards. However, at this time less than half the states have developed performance standards and fewer than ten states are able to report three consecutive years of performance data. Also, a majority of classroom teachers in high-poverty schools feel ill equipped to adequately teach standards in the classroom.

- The Eisenhower program has strengthened certain program features characteristic of good professional development, but only roughly half of the participants typically report that they acquired significant new knowledge from their training.
- The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund and other federal programs have made a substantial contribution to nationwide progress in getting computers into the classroom, but there is much less progress in enabling teachers to effectively use those computers and little information about students' level of computer literacy.
- Annual surveys show that crime in schools has declined in recent years and drug use is also starting to decline, although rates remain above those in the early 1990's.
- The number of school-to-work partnerships has greatly expanded and more students in school-to-work systems see a connection between their academic coursework and career interests. However, systematic attention to high-level academics in school-to-work job experiences is rare.

These findings suggest that legislative attention is needed to help programs focus on areas of weakness and more effectively apply research-based practices.

3. Clarify current program objectives.

Some programs lack clarity of purpose concerning the expected outcomes of program resources, which hinders their ability to effectively focus on achieving clear outcomes. These programs include:

- *Magnet Schools Assistance Program.* Clarification is needed on whether the MSAP should continue to focus on reducing only minority-group isolation or also include reducing isolation of ethnic or socioeconomic groups. The new requirement that the use of race in student selection must satisfy strict scrutiny by the courts (i.e., by using race-neutral alternatives) raises further concerns over how the magnet program can effectively operate to achieve reduced minority-group isolation. A related issue is whether the goal of MSAP should include assisting in the desegregation of school districts, in addition to the desegregation of schools.
- *Technology Innovation Challenge Grants.* This program currently addresses two related but distinct objectives. One is to support projects that enable school systems to go to scale in effectively implementing a system-wide delivery of instructional technology. A second purpose is to demonstrate whether and what types of technology innovations are able to produce significant gains in student outcomes. With respect to the second purpose, few projects are now evaluating the impact on student achievement; legislative clarification could focus projects on assessing the impacts of instructional technology on student learning.
- *Eisenhower Professional Development.* Reauthorization could address whether the program should continue to focus on mathematics and science training or should include professional training for teachers in other content areas, such as reading. Options to expand the focus of the program beyond math and science training to include teacher training in other content areas, such as reading. At the same time, evaluations of the Eisenhower program have shown that its focus on the content areas of math and science

is a source of strength in helping teachers align with content standards. To retain a content focus, possible options include: (1) adding a separate set-aside to the Eisenhower Professional Development program for reading or other subjects; or (2) including content-focused training as part of related legislation, such as in the Reading Excellence Act.

- *School to Work.* It is not clear whether this program was designed to assist all students, students not bound for college, or those who were interested in a career-oriented educational program.

B. Implications of Findings for the Quality of Program Implementation

Findings concerning the quality of program implementation include effectively targeting resources, using research-based strategies, improving technical assistance, and simplifying and coordinating programs.

1. Improve the effective targeting of federal resources.

Rationale

The federal government has an historic responsibility to help ensure adequate educational opportunities to students in high-poverty communities and schools and racial/ethnic population groups. Title I is the major program to reach these communities and populations, but a case can be made for other programs to also give priority to the neediest populations.

Broad options for consideration

a. Clarify provisions to target federal programs within states to the neediest populations, including high-poverty schools. Decide whether to give states discretion over program participation with appropriate performance accountability and reporting or, instead, to target funds on federal priority populations.

- **State discretion.** Under one conception of the federal role, federal ESEA support is intended primarily to achieve the National Education Goals through supporting statewide performance improvements on these goals, with states setting and reporting on statewide progress and having broad discretion to fund projects to fulfill these goals.

Under such an approach, federal program outcomes could be defined in such terms as:

- Improving the qualifications of a state's teachers through professional development.
- Reducing statewide rates of students' illegal substance use and school violence.
- Improving access and use of instructional technology in each state.

Advantages of a statewide approach are that it is simple, gives the states flexibility to target their perceived needs and would allow for greater targeting on highest quality projects.

One argument against a state-level approach is that it could weaken the targeting of federal funds, which are currently shown to disproportionately reach poor children and schools at much higher rates than do state funds. As the U.S. General Accounting Office has shown, federal funds provided an average of \$4.73 per poor student nationwide for every \$1 provided to each student, while state funds provided an additional \$0.62 per poor student in state funding. A state-level approach is also likely to dilute federally supported services. Moreover most states currently lack assessments and reporting that disaggregate the performance of populations traditionally targeted for federally supported services. Such disaggregation is a critical component in any performance accountability system to ensure that special populations are benefiting from federal resources.

- **Targeted program participation.** Under the targeted program approach, federal funds would have to be disproportionately directed to federal priority populations, especially high-poverty schools. For example, states might be required to allocate funds to groups of districts and schools to approximately follow the distribution of federal funding.

Under a targeted program approach, states would report on grantee outcomes, such as:

- Improving the qualifications of teachers who participate in federally supported professional development, including improvements by high-poverty schools.
- Reducing rates of illegal substance use and school violence in schools receiving federal support, including improvements by high-poverty schools.
- Improving access and use of instructional technology in schools receiving federal support, including improvements by high-poverty schools.

Major disadvantages of the targeted approach is that states would no longer have as much discretion to target their perceived needs or the best projects.

b. Call on states to report publicly on how they distribute federal funds to schools serving high concentrations of low-income and other federally targeted students. States would report their distribution of funding according to participation of high-poverty schools or other priority participants. This could be achieved through direct accounting for federal funding or through sampling program participants. The advantage of public reporting of funding allocations is that it leaves decisions over funding in the hands of each state, but it makes the distributional results of state funding a clear and open process.

c. Create “Catch-up Consolidated Grants” focused on achieving high performance for high-poverty schools. Under this approach, a part of reauthorization funding would explicitly focus on the multiplicity of federal grants potentially going to the highest-poverty schools (those in excess of 75 percent poor) to improve teaching and learning. These grants include those in the original 1994 ESEA reauthorization, such as Title I (education for disadvantaged), Title II (Eisenhower), and Title III (Technology Literacy Challenge Fund). There are also new grant programs including the Reading Excellence Act, 21st Century Schools, and GEAR-UP. Although the highest-poverty schools could benefit from participation under each program, collectively the aggregate effects of separate applications and tracking of funds would be quite burdensome.

An alternative is to provide a set-aside for consolidated support for these schools to implement research-based schoolwide models to support the purposes of programs such as 21st Century

Learning Communities, Reading Excellence Act, Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, GEAR-UP and Class Size Reduction. To receive consolidated "Catch-up Grants" funds:

- Highest-poverty schools (e.g., 75 percent or more poor children) would compete under a consolidated grant set-aside to support schoolwide approaches. Proposals would describe how schools plan to carry out the purposes of the programs folded into "Catch-up Grants" such as: improving early reading, as in the Reading Excellence Act program; running a program to start middle school students thinking about college and planning for their futures, as in GEAR UP; reduce class size; or a combination of such approaches.
- In turn, recipient schools would be **accountable to commit to continued progress** in improving student outcomes as defined through annual outcome and service improvement targets. States and districts would need to commit to assisting their highest-poverty schools by identifying resources and providing peer reviewers to work with the schools on a sustained basis.

2. Effectively implement federal program services.

Rationale

Programs that are not applying the best knowledge of promising and effective practices to their own projects are wasting taxpayer monies and short-changing participants. While we have seen some clear progress in improving the quality of ESEA services, serious implementation weaknesses remain. For example:

- The Eisenhower program has improved the intensity of its interventions, but district-implemented Eisenhower services remain less intense and less reliant on newer, more effective forms of professional development than those supported by the grants to institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations.
- School-to-Work implementation has focused more heavily on short-term, less-intensive interventions that involve large numbers of students rather than on in-depth structured programs and curriculum changes that are more difficult to undertake.
- Technology funds are building the schools' computer and Internet capacity, but need to focus on developing the staff capacity to effectively apply these systems in the classroom.
- Even Start programs produce demonstrable improvements in student achievement, but still need improvements in certain key components related to effective instruction and parent involvement.
- Some recent progress is observed in reducing student drug use and rates of violence, but associating that progress with the Safe and Drug-Free Communities and Schools Act has been harder to measure, as funds are spread thinly, averaging around \$6 per student.

Broad options for consideration

a. Adopt "Principles of Effectiveness" as an explicit legislative provision across all major federally funded programs. The Department, in administering the Safe and Drug-Free Communities and Schools Act, is addressing concerns of weak project interventions identified by evaluations by requiring that districts follow Principles of Effectiveness. Recipients are to

develop measurable goals and objectives, implement research-based programs, and evaluate programs regularly.

Reauthorization could extend the concept of “Principles of Effectiveness” to other programs and help focus limited resources on high-quality programs and enlarge the available pool of strategies of demonstrated effectiveness. Examples of how the Principles of Effectiveness could be applied to other programs include:

- Further clarifying the need for adequate intensity of services in such programs as Even Start, Eisenhower Professional Development, Public Charter Schools Program, and drug and violence prevention in high-need schools.
- Adopting effective instructional or training approaches, such as requiring: all programs to show how they link and support instructional content; instructional technology recipients to adequately address teacher preparation; or the Eisenhower program to include an emphasis on programs with collaborative “active learning” opportunities.
- Recognizing the importance of program retention in such programs as Even Start in which retention rates are relatively low.
- Requiring grantees across all programs to use data on the quality and effects of their professional development activities for continuous improvement as well as accountability purposes.

b. Introduce competitive awards. To the degree that recipients of federal funds are assured automatic funding based solely on need, such as through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, the incentives for high project quality are diminished. Competitive awards based on projects coming forth with proposals and judgements made on the basis of quality could enhance competition and the chances of obtaining better quality proposals.

Alternatively, voluntary-based awards may not achieve the desired targeting on areas most in need. The Eisenhower program, which typically operates through serving teachers who volunteer for the program rather than targeting teachers who may be less inclined to improve their practices, falls short in disproportionately targeting teachers in high-poverty schools. The effectiveness of an expanded competitive award process might be improved by setting aside funds for separate competitions for high need areas and by contingency funding of projects in which continuations depend upon demonstrated progress.

3. Modernize the system of technical assistance.

Rationale

Although the 1994 ESEA reauthorization consolidated some technical assistance authorities, the seamless network of support initially envisioned has yet to develop. Federal assistance providers often remain isolated from each other and from the direct delivery of technical assistance by state or locally funded providers. However, new tools have been developed which could make such a network possible. The Internet is now a widely-used avenue for information sharing and collaboration. Initial designs for an electronic information network can be drawn from pioneering states, such as Maryland, Oregon, and Washington State.

Effective information transfer must rely on the continuous development of high-quality, accurate information about effective practices to be shared. An electronically modernized, integrated, and sound assistance system could be supported by the following three components:

Broad options for consideration

a. Support an integrated national electronic education network. A federally supported network would serve as an electronic resource center for sound education information. Specialty area clearinghouses, built around a state-of-the-art ERIC system, could support the provision of information electronically. The network could provide schools and school systems with productivity-enhancing tools. The network might also make it easier for the collaboration and information sharing that now happens within state electronic systems among universities, school administrators, teachers, and parents to occur nationally and regionally.

b. Better integrate the Comprehensive Centers, the Eisenhower Consortia, and the R*TECS into a seamless system of regionally based comprehensive centers, complemented by national specialty centers linked to state and community providers. Regional technical assistance centers supported through various federal authorities generally receive high customer ratings for quality. However, they are not a system, their capacity is limited, and they do not necessarily focus on places with the highest need. Reauthorization would emphasize that federal assistance centers emphasize "training the trainer" models and work through state or local assistance collaboratives rather than directly provide assistance themselves. Further, the Comprehensive Centers should focus directly on issues of federal program implementation, including performance measurement to support continuous progress, a core program component which is universally weak among most programs.

Specialty Centers, designed to disseminate research-based instructional materials and reform models in priority areas such as mathematics and science, reading, and the uses of technology in instruction, would work nationally, including electronically, with one to two centers serving the entire country on a topical area.

c. Support "Grants for Evaluating Model Effectiveness." Rigorous independent evaluations of models would provide objective information that would be disseminated through the electronic network and Comprehensive Centers. Competitive awards could be made to support independent testing of model approaches using evaluations that meet rigorous standards of quality. The encouragement to apply research-based models is becoming increasingly common in federal programs, such as in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program and the Reading Excellence Act. Yet most models currently lack objective information with which to assess their impact or even understand the conditions under which they are likely to be successful. Evaluation grants would provide objective validation of models that could be screened through expert panel reviews and shared with states, districts, and schools to make optimum choices as they pursue their reform efforts.

4. Improve coordination across programs.

Rationale

Legislation that is acceptable when looked at in isolation may not be optimal when all parts are combined and the aggregate effects are considered. Administrative burden accumulates, and the sheer number of pieces of legislation may unintentionally diffuse efforts, confuse purposes, and fragment service delivery. Legislation may be improved by clarifying objectives and criteria for effective services.

This report has highlighted several areas of improvement:

- Almost all states and 60 percent of districts have submitted consolidated plans for federal programs. Of those districts that submitted consolidated plans, three-quarters claimed that consolidated planning makes federal programs more effective, with almost 90 percent of low-income districts agreeing with this statement.
- At the district level, nearly all districts surveyed in a recent study reported doing more integrated planning and service delivery across different federal programs. Three-quarters indicated that their administrative burdens had decreased.

But further improvements to simplify the programs are needed.

Broad options for consideration

a. Simplify and clarify federal authorities. Certain program areas are a priority for review and improved integration through coordinated funding or consolidation of purposes:

- Programs that provide major support for professional development, including Eisenhower Professional Development, Goals 2000, and Innovative Educational Program Strategies (Title VI-A), all provide relatively broad assistance. In addition, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund and Title VII professional development programs support professional development in areas of high need.
- Information technology programs, including four major elementary and secondary programs (the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, Technology Innovation Challenge Grants, Star Schools and the E-rate) along with seven other smaller authorities all support the expansion of technology in schools.
- Technical assistance is supported through various authorities with different foci, including assistance to parents, technology, math and science.

b. Strengthen across-program coherence. A number of programs with different purposes have common program components that would benefit from being made more coherent across programs. Two program components in particular should be reviewed:

- Professional development provisions that could be made similar through incorporating common language that is consistent with high-quality practices, including professional development provided through programs, such as Title I and Title VII.
- Parent involvement provisions to incorporate a common set of policies and requirements for schools to develop one single set of parent policies and compacts to cover all ESEA programs with now distinct parent involvement provisions.

C. Implications of Findings for Performance Accountability: Creating an Integrated Performance and Benchmarking System

Rationale

Efforts are underway in several program offices of the Department of Education to consolidate data collections and to bring them on-line electronically. In addition, most states already provide the public with information about their public schools in the form of "school profiles," or "report cards"; however, this information is rarely comparable from state to state. Several states are already developing statewide integrated data collection systems for their administration of federal and state programs, in such a way that schools and districts can compare and benchmark themselves to each other. Many are working toward the goal of a better-integrated performance and benchmarking data system. Such an **Integrated Performance and Benchmarking System (IPBS)** could enhance federal and state efforts by developing a set of mutually-needed core measures and performance indicators and increase the compatibility of the data collection systems. The goals of an IPBS would be to:

- Make federal education data more coherent, timely, and comparable across units and over time.
- Increase the usefulness of federal data to states, districts, and the general public.
- Facilitate the development of annual school, state, and district report cards which allow comparison and benchmarking between states and districts.
- Reduce the burden of federally required program data collections and surveys.

Broad options for consideration

The Department of Education could work together with states and districts on a long-term project to develop an IPBS. Such a system would be developed over the next five years, to replace the currently overlapping and antiquated federal-state education program reporting system by the year 2004. It could:

- Be based on a core set of program performance indicators incorporated in ESEA reauthorizing legislation, as well as in state program performance reports.
- Utilize the core set of indicators as a basis for streamlining other duplicative and inconsistent program data collections.
- Facilitate standardization of measures for program performance indicators across states, similar to the Common Core of Data.
- Make possible aggregation across schools, districts, and states, to provide national estimates, as well as comparable benchmarking between sites.
- Use modern electronic reporting methods, by having schools and districts sign on to an Internet site and report the data needed for the performance indicators.
- Include data quality standards for collection, aggregation, and reporting of data.

- Include grants and technical assistance to states to develop or improve their performance data reporting systems to be able to participate in IPBS.
- Be designed to ensure the complete confidentiality of student information.

The IPBS would be designed in partnership with various states and state education organizations, and piloted as a demonstration project in a few partner states, then revised and gradually expanded to all states.

A Final Note

The Department's evaluations of Goals 2000, Title I, and other Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs have shown that federal programs have contributed to the nation's progress in implementing standards-based reform. Many of the key elements for achieving the democratic ideal of excellence and equity for all are just being put in place. Other reform elements need to be strengthened if challenging standards are to reach all classrooms and help all children reach high expectations. Evaluations have documented how federal programs can stimulate and work in tandem with the best efforts of states and local school systems to improve education for our nation's children and for our future. They have also shown where federal programs, and education in general, must address shortcomings in delivering on the promise of high-quality schooling for all students. Educational improvement is a work in progress and benefits from a careful analysis of its implementation and early impact.

APPENDIX

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE 1994 AMENDMENTS TO THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT, THE SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT, AND THE GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT

Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)—the 1994 Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

Title I—Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards

Title I is intended to boost the academic success of low-achieving students in high-poverty schools. It is distributed by formula to states and districts, which distribute funds to schools according to poverty levels, with the highest-poverty schools funded first, as required by federal guidelines.

Part A, Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies supports districts in providing high-quality opportunities for students in high-poverty schools to meet the same challenging state content and performance standards that all children are expected to meet.

Title I allows many schools to implement schoolwide programs and eases restrictions so that schools can more easily serve students with special needs, such as limited English proficient and migrant students. A provision requires states to establish a system of school support teams to provide information and assistance to schoolwide programs.

Title I requires that accountability for Title I be based on states' individual accountability systems. Schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress benchmarks in student achievement must spend 10 percent of their annual Title I grants (or the equivalent) on professional development, but, in general, professional development is an option rather than a requirement under Title I. When Title I schools invest in professional development, it must (1) reflect research on teaching and learning; (2) improve teaching in academic areas; and (3) involve school staff, including regular and Title I teachers, in planning professional development.

Part A funding can be used to support preschool programs for children who are most at risk of failing to meet the state's challenging performance standards. The 1994 reauthorization required that, beginning in fiscal year 1997, local educational agencies that choose to use Part A funds to provide preschool services must ensure that these services comply with the Head Start Program Performance Standards. These standards are extensive and call for, among other things, developmentally and linguistically appropriate services, parent involvement in program planning, and supporting children's social and emotional development, cognitive and language skills, and physical development. Districts that choose to use Part A funds to operate or expand preschool programs using the Even Start model are exempt from this requirement.

Part B, Even Start Family Literacy Program provides family-centered education programs for low-income parents and children, from birth through age seven. The program is designed to promote achievement of the National Education Goals and to assist children and adults from low-

income families to achieve to challenging state content and performance standards. Local programs are implemented by building on existing community resources to create a new range of services. Each local program must include high-quality, intensive instructional programs that promote adult literacy and empower parents to support the educational growth of their children, offer developmentally appropriate early childhood educational services, and prepare children for success in regular school programs. The legislation also calls for local projects to provide special training for staff to develop the skills necessary to work with parents and young children in the full range of program services.

Title II—The Eisenhower Professional Development Program

The Eisenhower program is the largest of the Department of Education's efforts to develop teachers' competence. Part B awards funds to states and districts on the basis of a formula and to institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations through state-run competitive grant programs. The funds are earmarked for providing teachers with opportunities to learn more of the content and processes of teaching core subject areas, particularly math and science.

Allowable activities are wide-ranging and include workshops and conferences, study groups and collaboratives, task force work, and peer coaching. The activities may be sponsored by the district, a school, an institution of higher education, or other nonprofits. The Eisenhower Program requires efforts supported by its funds to reflect appropriate attention to the characteristics of effective professional development.

To cultivate professional skill and knowledge, Title II requires that professional development be based on solid research on teaching and learning, include strong academic and pedagogical components, and be of sufficient duration and intensity to have a positive, lasting impact on teachers' classroom performance. The law gives priority to math and science, but provides for other core subjects as well.

To bolster accountability and provide data for continuous improvement, Title II requires states and districts to develop and use performance indicators to measure the quality and effects of professional development.

Title III—Technology For Education

The Technology Innovation Challenge Grants (TICG) program works to develop the knowledge base for innovative uses of educational technology to improve teaching and learning. Under this program, Congress authorizes competitive five-year grants to local education agencies that are part of a consortium of community partners for technology development and demonstration projects. Besides focusing on areas with high concentrations of poverty, the program favors projects that include on-going professional development, directly benefit students, and are sustainable. The grants may be used to acquire and use educational technology to support school improvement, improve student learning (including professional development and professional support), purchase hardware, software, and linkages, and provide educational services for adults and families.

The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) provides leadership and leverage to enable states and districts to more effectively plan, coordinate and integrate the use of educational

technology to improve teaching and learning. With this program, all states receive technology funds based on their Title I funding. States must regrant the money on a competitive basis to local education agencies with high need or high poverty. These grants may be used for the same activities as the Technology Innovation Challenge Grants. The states must submit statewide technology plans that outline long-term strategies for financing technology and ensure that school districts with the greatest need are not left behind. In addition, local educational agencies must submit a three- to five-year technology plan with their applications for subgrants. The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund ties funding for technology to long-range, home-grown plans by states and school districts.

The Star Schools program provides support for distance learning, including paying for distance learning equipment, instructional programming, and technical assistance. This distance learning is provided by means of satellite, broadcast television, and, increasingly, the Internet. Funding is granted on a competitive basis for telecommunications partnerships that include a local education agency. When established in 1988, the program emphasized programs to benefit small rural schools. Increasingly this has been augmented to increase learning opportunities for other students, including urban schools. In many cases this includes professional development and brings instructional resources to strengthen teaching in existing courses, or to make it possible for students to take courses (such as foreign languages or advanced placement mathematics) that would not otherwise be available in these schools. For some rural schools these courses are important in retaining accreditation and staying open. The program focuses on underserved populations, including people who are not literate, have limited English proficiency, or have disabilities.

Title III establishes a network of six **Regional Technology in Education Consortia**. R*TECs are required to: (1) collaborate with states and districts on strategies for serving students with little or no access to technology; (2) provide information and recommendations on hardware and software currently available; and (3) provide technology-specific professional development to teachers, administrators, technology coordinators, and staff developers.

Title IV—Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (ESEA Title IV) expanded the range of activities that can be funded in school- and community-wide approaches to drug and violence prevention.

From the total appropriation, after funds are reserved for outlying areas, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, programs for Native Hawaiians, and evaluation of the program, the Department allocates the remaining funds to states, half on the basis of school-aged population and half on the basis of ESEA Title I funding. Of each state's allocation, 80 percent is administered by the state education agency and 20 percent by the governor.

States are authorized to reserve funds for statewide initiatives. The remaining funds are subgranted to districts, based 70 percent on enrollment and 30 percent on "high need." Criteria for determining high-need districts are developed by each state and may include such factors as high rates of drug use among youth and high rates of youth crime victimization. High-need funds may go to no more than five districts or 10 percent of the districts in each state, whichever is greater.

Participating districts must use their funds to implement a comprehensive drug and violence prevention program for students and employees that includes activities to promote the involvement of parents and coordination with community groups and agencies. Within this context, districts are authorized to use their funds for a wide range of related activities.

Governors' funds flow to parent groups, community action and job training agencies, community-based organizations, and other public and private nonprofit organizations for community-based drug and violence prevention programs and activities. Governors must give priority to activities for children and youth who are not normally served by states or districts, or for populations that need special services or additional resources (such as youth in juvenile detention facilities, runaway or homeless children or youth, and school dropouts). Governors may use some funds for program administration, and must use at least 10 percent for law enforcement education partnerships.

SDFSCA National Programs receive a separate allocation and support drug and violence prevention activities for students at all educational levels, preschool through postsecondary, through agreements with other federal agencies or through assistance to states, districts, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act programs mandate that states develop and use performance indicators to monitor their programs.

Title V—Promoting Equity

The **Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP)** requires that districts that receive grants have either a voluntary or a court-ordered desegregation plan to support racial integration in MSAP-funded schools, and design schools that are capable of attracting students of different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. MSAP funds may be used for planning, promotional activities, and for expenditures necessary for the management of programs in magnet schools that are directly related to the improvement of students' reading, mathematics, science, history, geography, English, foreign languages, art, music, or vocational skills. MSAP grantees are prohibited from using MSAP funds for transportation.

The Secretary gives priority to those applicants: (1) demonstrating greatest need; (2) proposing new or significantly expanded magnet programs; (3) proposing to select students for admission to the magnet schools on the basis of a lottery if schools are over-subscribed; (4) proposing to draw on community involvement plans; and (5) demonstrating how the project will implement innovative approaches that are consistent with state and local systemic reform plans.

Title VI—Innovative Education Program Strategies

This extremely flexible program allows school districts to use funds to support school reform and educational innovation in any of the following eight categories:

1. Instructional technology
2. Instructional and educational materials
3. Education reform projects, including effective schools and magnet schools
4. Improving higher-order thinking skills and reducing school dropout rates

5. Programs to combat illiteracy
6. Programs for gifted and talented students
7. School reform activities consistent with Goals 2000
8. School improvement programs consistent with Title I
9. Professional development

Title VII—Bilingual Education, Language Enhancement, and Language Acquisition Programs

The Bilingual Education Act recognizes the special needs of students with limited English proficiency and provides funds to support teaching and learning for limited English proficient students. The Act provides funds for broad scale improvement of services to LEP students. It provides discretionary grants to districts to improve, reform, and upgrade systemwide their approaches to serving LEP students through strategies such as curriculum development, development of education standards for LEP students, improving assessment procedures, and the use of educational technology. The Act also provides discretionary grants for schoolwide bilingual education or English-as-a-second-language programs and other special alternative instructional programs to schools with concentrations of LEP students. The Act also has a professional development focus and supports efforts to upgrade the skills of noncertified education personnel, teachers, and other educators who serve LEP students. In addition, the Act funds the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education and Academic Excellence Awards that promote the adoption and implementation of exemplary bilingual education, English-as-a-second-language and other programs that address the needs of LEP students.

Title VII (Bilingual Education) is funded at \$224 million for competitive grants in 1999. Of that amount, \$50 million in Subpart 3 (Part A) is allocated for training teachers and other educational personnel to prepare them to effectively serve students with limited English proficiency primarily through grants to institutions of higher education. Professional development is allowed under all of the Part A, Subpart 1 programs (Bilingual Education Capacity and Demonstration Grants). In light of the fact that LEP students are often served by paraprofessionals who are bilingual, who have ties to the local community, and who often lack formal educational credentials, Title VII supports career ladder programs for uncertified bilingual personnel.

Title VIII—Impact Aid

Not addressed in this volume

Title IX—Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native Education

Not addressed in this volume

Title X—Programs of National Significance

The **Public Charter Schools Program (PCSP)** requires that states that receive funds have enacted charter school authorizing legislation. Charter schools in partnership with public charter

granting entities use PCSP funds only to cover the start-up costs of planning, applying for, or launching a charter school.

In making grants, the Secretary must consider: (1) how the proposed charter school program will assist educationally disadvantaged students; (2) the degree to which meaningful flexibility is afforded to charter schools by the state education agency; (3) the state charter school program objectives' ambitiousness, mechanism for assessment of objectives, and likelihood of achieving its objectives; and (4) the quality of the strategy for assessing the achievement of its objectives.

ED reserves a fraction of PCSP appropriations for national activities, to provide charter schools information about eligibility for federal funds and to fund research assessing the impact of charter schools on student achievement and other measures.

Title XI—Coordinated Services

Title XI allows districts, schools, and consortia of schools to use up to five percent of funds they receive under ESEA to develop, or to implement or expand, a coordinated service project to increase children's and parents' access to social, health, and education services.

Title XII—School Facilities Infrastructure Improvement Act

Not addressed in this volume

Title XIII—Support and Assistance Programs to Improve Education

Part A establishes a network of 15 **Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers** to provide support, training and assistance to states, tribes, districts, schools, and other ESEA grantees. A long list of required topics for technical assistance includes: (1) improving the quality of instruction, curricula, assessments, and other aspects of school reform, supported with funds under Title I; (2) implementing effective schoolwide programs; (3) meeting the needs of children served under ESEA, including migratory, limited English proficient, homeless, and Indian children; (4) implementing high-quality professional development activities; (5) improving the quality of bilingual education; and (6) creating safe and drug-free environments. Comprehensive Centers must target their services to high-poverty schools and districts, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and ESEA recipients operating schoolwide programs.

Part B, the **National Diffusion Network**, is not addressed in this volume.

Part C reauthorizes 10 **Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia**. The Eisenhower Consortia are charged with contributing to the improvement of mathematics and science education by: (1) supporting the implementation of new teaching methods and assessment tools; (2) disseminating exemplary mathematics and science education instructional materials; and (3) coordinating resources for improving mathematics and science education. The Eisenhower Consortia serve mathematics and science teachers, administrators, and providers of professional development.

The School to Work Opportunities Act

The School to Work Opportunities Act provides grants to states and districts to implement school-to-work systems that enable any interested student to pursue a program of study that includes the following:

School-based learning. Partnerships are encouraged to create opportunities for career exploration, beginning no later than the seventh grade. By the end of 11th grade, students should make an initial selection of a coherent sequence of courses (called a "career major" in the Act) that prepares them for either postsecondary education or employment in a broad industry or occupational area. These courses of study should meet high academic standards as set by the state and also offer students a chance to earn portable, industry-recognized skill certificates.

Work-based learning. Local initiatives are encouraged to provide participating students with adult mentoring and a range of work experiences, coordinated with their school curriculum and program of study. The work experience should provide progressively more advanced skill instruction and encompass all aspects of the student's chosen industry or career area.

Connecting activities. Partnerships are encouraged to help coordinate the interactions among schools, employers, and young people through assistance with recruiting employers, matching students with work experiences, and helping employers work with students.

The School to Work Opportunities Act establishes a **School-to-Work Learning and Information Center** that provides training and assistance to states and local partnerships. In addition, the STW Learning Center operates a **School-to-Work Technical Assistance Resource Bank**. States that have STW implementation grants receive a line of credit to "purchase" technical assistance services from a list of pre-approved providers.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

Title I—National Educational Goals

Not addressed in this volume.

Title II—National Education Reform Leadership, Standards, and Assessments

Not addressed in this volume

Title III—State and Local Education Systemic Improvement

Goals 2000 provides funds to help states and districts develop and implement their own systemic education reforms focused on raising student achievement. States participating in Goals 2000 are asked to raise expectations for students by setting challenging academic standards for their students. Each Goals 2000 state and district develops its own comprehensive strategies for helping all students reach those standards. States and districts can use Goals 2000 funds for a wide range of activities that fit within their own approaches to helping students reach higher

standards—upgrading assessments and curriculum to reflect the standards, improving the quality of teaching, expanding the use of technology, strengthening accountability for teaching and learning, and building strong partnerships among schools and families, employers, and others in the community. Goals 2000 includes a strong focus on pre-service training and professional development related to reform for teachers.

Title IV—Parent Information and Resource Centers

Title IV authorizes up to one Center in every state and outlying area. The PIRCs are charged with: (1) increasing parents' knowledge of and confidence in child-rearing activities; (2) strengthening partnerships between parents and professionals in meeting the educational needs of children aged birth through five, and (3) strengthening the working relationship between home and school. The PIRCs are required to spend at least a portion of their funding on two established parent programs: Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY).

The Education Flexibility Partnership Demonstration Program (Ed-Flex)

The Education Flexibility (Ed-Flex) Partnership Demonstration Program was established by the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. In exchange for increased accountability for results, Ed-Flex provides greater state and local flexibility in using federal education funds to support locally designed, comprehensive school improvement efforts.

Ed-Flex gives partnership states the power to waive requirements of certain federal education programs, including the Title I program and the Eisenhower Professional Development program. Specifically, Ed-Flex allows the Secretary of Education to delegate, to up to twelve states, the authority to waive certain federal statutory or regulatory requirements affecting the state and local school districts and schools. A state that has developed a comprehensive school improvement plan that has been approved by the Secretary may apply for Ed-Flex. In addition a state applying for Ed-Flex must have the authority to waive its statutory or regulatory requirements, while holding districts and schools affected by the waivers accountable for the academic performance of their students.

Waivers

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), each contain general waiver authorities that allow the Secretary of Education to waive requirements of most ESEA programs and requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act in cases where a waiver will likely contribute to improved teaching and learning. In general, to receive a waiver, an applicant must address the following criteria:

1. Identify the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested.
2. Describe why the waiver is needed to improve student performance and what goals would be achieved under the waiver.

3. Describe how progress that would result from implementing the waiver would be measured.
4. Describe how interested parties were notified of the waiver request.
5. Describe how similar state requirements would be waived.

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Staff from the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES), Policy Studies Associates, American Institutes for Research, and the Urban Institutes who were instrumental in the writing of this report are:

Stacy Allen
Dan Aladjem
Bea Birman
Joanne Bogart
Robin Bouckris
Martha Chavez
Barbara Coates
Kathy Doherty
Elizabeth Eisner
Janie Funkhouser
Michael Garett
David Goodwin
Jane Hannaway
Daphne Hardcastle
Rich Kazis
Kate Laguarda
Mary Leighton

Meredith Miller
Antoinette Mitchell
Jacqueline Raphael
Tracy Rimdzius
Jeff Rodamar
Mary Rollefson
Collette Roney
Michael Rubenstein
Susan Sanchez
Beth Sinclair
Elizabeth Stief
Stephanie Stulich
Lisa Towne
Brenda Turnbull
Joanne Wiggins
Mary Ann Zehr

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Sylvia Wright