

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS OPTIONS

The two programs proposed by Education: the TRIO Early Intervention Program and the Urban School, College, and University Partnerships Program represent different models for helping disadvantaged students complete high school and go on to pursue a postsecondary education. This paper describes these approaches as well as pros and cons associated with them. A third option based on the Eugene Lang model is also described and analyzed.

TRIO Early Intervention - Pull Out Model

The TRIO Early Intervention Program would be based largely on the pull out model followed in the TRIO Upward Bound Program. In this model, colleges and community-based organizations work with selected eligible students in a few targeted schools. These students receive extensive academic instruction, as well as counseling, mentoring, and other support services. There is also an on-campus residential summer program lasting generally from five to eight weeks. While the Upward Bound Program works with high school age students, the Early Intervention Program would provide similar, but not as extensive, services to middle school/junior high school students.

Research shows that skills and aspirations needed to pursue a postsecondary education begin to be formed during early adolescence. There is currently not a TRIO or similar federal program providing intensive levels of service to this critical age group.

Pros

- **The model is proven successful; it is a low-risk approach.**

A recent study of short-term impacts of Upward Bound show that as a result of participating in the program students have higher educational expectations, are better prepared academically, earn more academic credits and have parents who are more involved in their children's school-related activities than comparable non-participants.

Many non-TRIO funded partnership projects have chosen to employ this model, including using it with middle school age children.

Cons

- **Cost per participant is high.**

Cost per participant for the Upward Bound Program is currently \$3,850 per year and is expected to increase to just over \$4,000 per year in FY 1998. Although the program is funded in FY 1997 at \$172.2 million, only 44,750 students nation-wide are served by the 601 funded projects.

A significant portion of the per student cost in Upward Bound results from the on-campus residential summer program. The new Early Intervention Program is not proposing as high a per student cost; at an estimated \$1,000 per participant per year, an appropriation of \$22 million would serve 22,000 students. The summer residential component of Upward Bound will not be a feature of the Early Intervention Program, nor will the services be as intensive.

- **This model does not strengthen the capacity of schools. Therefore, only participating students benefit.**

The model allows for serving only a very small percentage of the eligible population, helping only those selected to participate. Schools having a high percentage of eligible students are not helped to strengthen their capacity to better serve all students.

Urban School, College, and University Partnerships - Systemic Improvement Model

This program would address systemic problems confronting urban education. Unlike the student-focussed pull out model, this model would encourage the formation of partnerships between the urban schools, urban institutions of postsecondary education, as well as community-based organizations and businesses to develop solutions to locally-identified problems and therefore strengthen the capacity of the schools to perform better.

Funds would be targeted on partnerships including urban elementary and secondary schools serving high percentages of under-performing students, therefore concentrating funds on the most problem-plagued urban schools.

Pros

- **This is a capacity-building model which is designed to improve overall school performance therefore impacting all students in partner schools.**

By focussing on strengthening the capacity of the urban schools, this model can have lasting effects on current as well as future students. The model is not designed to invest in providing direct services to individual students, but to develop solutions that can be implemented and maintained by the partnership.

- **The model provides flexibility to identify and prioritize problems.**

Under the proposed Urban School, College, and University Partnership Program, funded partnerships would have considerable flexibility in the problems they seek to address and the solutions they implement. This allows local schools the freedom to prioritize issues, and allows for solutions which reflect the strengths of the partnering groups. It does not impose a "federal solution" to federally-prioritized problems.

\$20M
60 grants
@ \$30,000

Funds would assist the partners in developing programs or services which address problems affecting student performance. These might range from curricular or pedagogical strategies to ameliorating the impact in the school of adverse social conditions such as violence or widespread drug use in the community.

➤ **Community involvement and investment in urban schools is promoted.**

Partnership between urban schools and grantee institutions of postsecondary is a required element. Including in these partnerships, community-based organizations and businesses will strengthen these partnerships. Promoting such partnerships will have an inherently salutary effect.

Cons

➤ **Each funded partnership poses a higher risk of failure than student-based approaches.**

Each funded partnership will be unique and address problems which are difficult to solve. Although the solutions proposed for implementation may be tested elsewhere, the replication of successful solutions is far from an exact science. In other cases, partnerships may propose unique and untested ideas. In addition, partnerships may develop effective solutions, but lack the resources to sustain over time the ongoing services which may be required for successful implementation.

Promise to Pay Combined with Support Services

Proposals which derive largely from the Eugene Lang "I Have a Dream Foundation" are also under consideration as part of the reauthorization process. Like the approach pioneered by Eugene Lang, this would involve working with an entire class of students, such as 6th grade students in high-poverty schools, and include a promise of aid along with individual support services such counseling, mentoring, and tutoring through the 12th grade. Students in lower grades would know that when they reached the 6th grade, the same promise of aid would be extended to them.

Pros

➤ **The model has demonstrated success.**

Students participating in the I Have a Dream Foundation program have completed high school and gone on to college at rates greater than other low-income students.

- **By virtue of its universal approach within each school, it has school-wide impact.**

This approach involves not just a few selected students but an entire class of students. For this reason, the school as a whole is ultimately affected and improved as the class, by and large, improves its attitudes toward school, achieves better academically, and develops higher academic aspirations.

Cons

- **The cost would be very high.**

Replicating the Eugene Lang model intact, entirely with federal funds, would be prohibitively expensive. For this reason, reauthorization ideas have focussed on smaller scale efforts. Providing the needed support services such as counseling, mentoring, and tutoring on a very large scale would not be possible with federal funds alone. (It is estimated that the TRIO Programs, for example, serve no more than 10 percent of the eligible population.)

- **It is unclear whether a federally administered program of this kind would show student success rates similar to the Eugene Lang approach if promises and services were scaled back.**

Due to federal cost constraints the Eugene Lang model could not be replicated as a nationwide federal program; there will be a need to scale back either promises and/or services. The promise of a full Pell may not be sufficient to change behavior. No proven system for providing needed support services on a nationwide scale has been demonstrated.

- **The program would be complex and difficult to administer.**

Students would need to be tracked from 6th grade through the 12th grade and on into college. Such tracking would present administrative complexities which would be costly to operate, particularly since the target population tends to change addresses (hence schools and school districts) more frequently than the average.

- **Federal funds would go to those who would not otherwise be eligible.**

Unlike the other federal student aid programs in which aid is targeted at individuals based upon need, this program would be targeted at entire classes of students within low-income schools. This would result in many students receiving more federal aid than they would otherwise qualify for under the student aid need analysis formula.