

IRA Legislative Update August 11, 2008

Overview

The Congressional session only has a few short weeks left before it ends on 26 September. During that time it is anticipated that the funding process for education will change from the appropriations process to the emergency spending plan called the continuing resolution. The first section of this report on appropriations/funding will cover these issues.

After years of delay, the Higher Education Act's Reauthorization passed the House and Senate is now awaiting the president's signature. While the majority of the bill is on student loans and grants as well as new accountability for institutions of higher education, there are several sections that impact reading and literacy. The second section is the Higher Education Act which will cover these points, and IRA's role in the literacy language.

The third section will look at some possible, but unlikely action that could result in several education initiatives move through at least the House or Senate. The bill that is most likely to move is the adolescent literacy bill.

Please monitor our blog for details: LATadvisory.blogspot.com.

Appropriations/Funding

The Congress has partially moved the regular spending bill for the Department of Education programs. It is hung up on a number of partisan issues. The result looks to be that the appropriations process will give way to the wide-ranging continuing resolution (CR). The CR will set government spending for at least until after the first of the year, but may well go through the entire fiscal year. It will use three points as its guide posts, first what each chamber's appropriation committee has set as their spending level by program; and it will take into account the previous year's spending level. This means when you look at the attached chart you will notice that a handful of programs have gone up - Part A (LEA programs) of Title I and IDEA specifically, in contrast Reading First has been zeroed out.

Reading First was zeroed out after the release of the Institute for Education Sciences report on Reading First was issued in late April. The key finding was the lack of improvement in comprehension scores. This was on top of the findings by the investigative arm of the US Department of Education. The US Department of Education had changed of how Reading First is administered; but the fallout from the various reports has had a significant impact. Currently, many Congressional offices are saying that teachers are writing letters of support of Reading First and the Administration is hoping to see some money for Reading First in the CR. However, while it is possible, it is unlikely as there are no funds that haven't been spoken for, which means to fund Reading First money will have to be taken from other programs. This isn't likely to occur, but it is possible.

Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2009 (figures in thousands of dollars)

PROGRAM

2008 Appropriation

House subcommittee

Senate Committee

TITLE I

15,489,476

15,788,285

15,735,884

LEA grants

6,597,946

6,597,946

6,597,496

Concentration grants

1,365,031

1,365,031

1,365,031

Targeted grants

2,967,949

3,245,962

3,283,462

Education finance incentive

2,967,949

3,245,962

3,283,462

Striving Readers

35,371

39,371

35,371

Even Start

66,454

66,454

66,454

Reading First

393,012

0

0

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

5,289,076

5,399,609

5,292,422

Improving Teacher quality

2,935,248

2,960,249

2,935,249

Education for homeless children

64,067

66,787

64,067

Rural Education

171,854

174,910

171,854

INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT

985,517

976,846

944,314

National Writing Project

23,581

25,000

23,581

Reading is Fundamental

24,606

25,000

24,606

English Language Acquisition

700,395

730,000

730,000

IDEA

11,993,684

12,587,920

12,512,631

HEAD START

6,870,000

7,100,000

7,100,000

Higher Education Reauthorization: College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008

After over four years of work, the Congress has sent to the president a rewritten higher education act. This act contains many changes to the student loan and grants program. In addition it also requires public

and private institutions to make public several reports on graduation rates, retention and cost. This is in the name of accountability. Many in the higher education community are against these requirements because of their costs. IRA did not take a position on these issues.

IRA was able to have very specific language included in the process. The idea of this language was the result of board appointed committee that drafted a set of legislative recommendations to improve professional development opportunities and programs in reading. This resulted in several key areas of the Higher Education Act's Teacher Quality Enhancement being changed. These changes included: establishing reading as a high need area for support, expanding the understanding of preparation of reading teachers to include more emphasis on high need students with a well-educated teacher. (See attachment for more specific information.) We will be providing a more detailed report on how best to use this initiative to help teacher education programs expand their offerings in the area of high quality reading education.

Movement on education bills in September?

When Congress reconvenes in September they hope to finish their work on or about September 26th. The entire agenda will be tied up in the election. While it is highly unlikely that any additional education measures will be enacted, it isn't impossible that one or more measures may pass one house or the other. The most likely candidate is the House version of adolescent literacy legislation, HR 2289 the Striving Readers Act of 2007. This measure has 51 co-sponsors and is supported by a wide range of groups. It was originally introduced by Congressman John Yarmuth (KY-3). There is a companion version in the Senate (S. 958) sponsored by Senators Sessions (AL) and Murray (WA) and Sessions (AL). Another possibility is the HR 1623 the Graduation for All Act sponsored by Congressman Ruben Hinojosa

H.R.4137

College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008 (Engrossed as Agreed to or Passed by House)

TITLE II--TEACHER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

SEC. 200. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this title:

(4) EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM- The term `early childhood education program' means—

(C) a State prekindergarten program (including a program authorized under section 619 or part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that serves children from birth through kindergarten and that addresses the children's cognitive (including language, early literacy, and pre-numeracy), social, emotional, and physical development.

(7) ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF READING INSTRUCTION- The term `essential components of reading instruction' has the meaning given such term in section 1208 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

(14) LITERACY COACH- The term `literacy coach' means an individual—(A) who--

(i) has teaching experience and a master's degree with a concentration in reading and writing education; and (ii) has demonstrated proficiency (as determined by the principal of the individual's school) in teaching reading and writing in a content area such as math, science, or social studies;

(B) whose primary role with teachers and school personnel is--

(i) to provide high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers and school personnel related to literacy;

(ii) with respect to the areas of reading and writing, to collaborate with paraprofessionals, teachers, principals, and other administrators, and the community served by the school; and

(C) who may provide students with--

(i) reading or writing diagnosis and instruction; and

(ii) reading and writing assessment, including assessment in cooperation with other professionals (such as special education teachers, speech and language teachers, and school psychologists).

(18) TEACHING SKILLS- The term `teaching skills' means skills that enable a teacher to--

(C) employ strategies grounded in the disciplines of teaching and learning that--

(iii) focus on the identification of students' specific learning needs, particularly students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and the tailoring of academic instruction to such needs;

PART A--TEACHER QUALITY PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

SEC. 201. PURPOSES; DEFINITIONS.

(b) Definitions- In this part:

(4) TEACHER MENTORING- The term `teacher mentoring' means the mentoring of new or prospective teachers through a new or established program that--

(B) provides high-quality training for such mentors, including instructional strategies for literacy instruction and classroom management;

SEC. 202. PARTNERSHIP GRANTS.

(d) Partnership Grants for Pre-Baccalaureate Preparation of Teachers- An eligible partnership that receives a grant to carry out an effective program for the pre-baccalaureate preparation of teachers shall carry out a program that includes all of the following:

(aa) meet the specific learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are gifted and talented, students with low literacy levels and, as

applicable, children in early childhood education programs;

(bb) differentiate instruction for such students; and

(cc) effectively teach high-order analytical, evaluative, problem solving and communications skills appropriate for the teacher's content or specialty area;

(VI) can successfully employ effective strategies for reading instruction using the essential components of reading instruction;

(6) LITERACY TRAINING- Developing and implementing a program to strengthen content knowledge and teaching skills of elementary and secondary school teachers or literacy coaches that--

(A) provides teacher training in reading instruction for elementary or secondary school teachers or literacy coaches who--

(i) train classroom teachers to implement literacy programs; or

(ii) tutor students with intense individualized reading, writing, and subject matter instruction during or beyond the school day;

(B) develops or redesigns rigorous evidenced-based reading curricula that are aligned with challenging State academic content standards, as required under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and with postsecondary standards for reading and writing;

(C) provides opportunities for teachers to plan and assess instruction with other teachers, school leaders, and faculty at institutions of higher education;

(D) provides training and professional development for principals to prepare them to understand the teaching of reading, guide instruction, and foster school improvement; and

(iv) The establishment of clear criteria for the selection of mentor teachers based on measures of teacher effectiveness and the appropriate subject area knowledge. Evaluation of teacher effectiveness shall be based on, but is not required to include all of, the observations of such domains of teaching, which may include the following:

(V) In the case of mentor candidates who will be mentoring current or future literacy and mathematics coaches or instructors, appropriate skills in the essential components of reading instruction, teacher training in literacy instructional strategies across core subject areas, and teacher training in mathematics instructional strategies, as appropriate.

SEC. 204. ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION.

(a) Eligible Partnership Evaluation- Each eligible partnership submitting an application for a grant under this part shall establish and include in such application an evaluation plan that includes strong performance objectives. The plan shall include objectives and measures for increasing--

(4)(A) the percentage of highly qualified teachers hired by the high-need local educational agency participating in the eligible partnership;

(B) the percentage of such teachers who are members of underrepresented groups;

(C) the percentage of such teachers who teach high-need academic subject areas (such as reading, mathematics, science, and foreign languages, including less commonly taught languages and critical foreign languages);

PART C--ENHANCING TEACHER EDUCATION

Subpart 1--Recruiting Teachers With Math, Science, or Language Majors

SEC. 241. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

(c) Use of Funds- Grant funds made available under this subpart--

(2) may be used to upgrade curriculum to provide all students studying to become teachers with high-quality instructional strategies for teaching reading and teaching the English language to students who are limited English proficient, and for adopting, modifying, and differentiating instruction to teach students with disabilities;

(7) may be used to develop innovative teacher preparation programs that emphasize the essential components of reading instruction and other strategies based on scientifically valid research and that address early intervention strategies for students with reading difficulty or language processing differences.

Subpart 2--Community Colleges as Partners in Teacher Education Grants

SEC. 251. GRANTS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

(b) Authorized Uses of Funds- Grant funds provided under this subpart shall be used to carry out the activities described in subsection (a), and may be used to--

(12) develop associate's degree programs with an emphasis on the essential components of reading instruction to train educators such as pre-service teachers, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathology assistants, and tutors to teach students with reading difficulties and students who learn to read differently than their peers; and

(13) develop licensure programs for early childhood educators that emphasize the essential components of reading instruction and other strategies based on scientifically valid research, and that address strategies for early screening and early intervention for students with reading difficulty and who learn to read differently than their peers.