

Fact Sheet

Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1998 (PL 105-244)

Background

In 1998 the commitment to improvement of teacher training programs was manifested in Title II of the Higher Education Act. Several programs were funded with the intent to improve teacher quality through support for recruitment, preparation, licensing and certification reforms and support systems for new teachers. Title II authorizes three grant programs: State Grants, Partnership Grants, and Recruitment Grants. In the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Title II was authorized at \$300 million. Throughout the history of Title II the funding levels have remained essentially static at about \$89 million until the FY 2005. In FY 2005 the funding was cut to about \$68 million as part of the appropriation process. There has also been a subtle shift in funding that moved the bulk of money into the Partnership Grants program, in keeping with the Administrations overall effort to share the costs in education among the various constituents and participants.

In the Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Proposal the Administration has eliminated funding for the Title II Teacher Improvement programs. In eliminating these programs, the Administrations notes that the program provides funds to improve recruitment, preparation, licensure, and support for teachers by providing incentives, encouraging reforms, and leveraging local and state resources to ensure that current and future teachers have the necessary teaching skills and academic content knowledge to teach effectively. However the administration feels that all of the activities allowable under the Teacher Quality Enhancement program can be carried out under other existing Federal programs. This change was, according to the Administration, due to a lack of performance data and program design deficiencies, which caused it to receive a “Rated Results Not Demonstrated” rating by the PART (Program Assessment Rating Tool) process.

The Higher Education Act is now being reauthorized by the Congress. The House of Representatives adopted a new Title II bill during the 108th Congress. The U. S. Senate had not yet taken action on the reauthorization during the 108th Congress, but several proposals had been introduced. It is anticipated that the House will submit a proposed Title II Bill similar to the one approved by the last session of Congress. The Senate will most likely take up the legislation this spring.

Types of Activities Supported

State Partnership Grants

State Partnership Grants are 3-year, non-renewable competitive grants to states to support efforts to improve the quality of pre-service teacher preparation programs, reform teacher certification and licensing requirements, develop and encourage alternative routes to traditional preparation for teaching, and support alternative routes to state certification for prospective teachers. The funds can also be used to develop effective mechanisms, primarily using financial incentives, to hire, reward and fire teachers, based on performance; develop programs to address the elimination of social promotion; as well as support other recruitment initiatives. Priority has been given to applicant states working to improve the academic content and teaching skills of prospective teachers or to those states working to increase the number of highly qualified teachers working in high-poverty, urban and rural areas.

Partnership Grants

Partnership Grants are non-renewable 5-year competitive awards to eligible partnerships. Partnerships are defined as including a postsecondary institution, a school of arts and sciences and a high need LEA. It may also include a governor's office, SEA, state board of education, charter school, private elementary or secondary school, non-profit organization or a business. Applicant partnerships that include a business receive priority consideration. No member of the partnership can receive more than 50% of the funds provided. These awards have a matching requirement, which works as follows: year 1, 25%; year 2, 35%; years 3-5, 50%.

Partnership Grant applications must be based on needs assessment data. Funded activities must include: implementing reforms to teacher preparation programs that will increase academic competence of graduates; providing high quality clinical pre-service experience for teachers through mentoring and other activities that pair teachers in training with qualified faculty; and creating ongoing professional development that improves academic knowledge in subject areas for teachers both certified and working toward certification. Other activities that can be funded under these grants include: preparing teachers to work more effectively with parents, disseminating information about effective practices through relevant boards and agencies of the state, developing programs to improve the managerial and leadership skills of principals and superintendents, and teacher recruitment activities.

Recruitment Grants

Only states or partnerships that qualify for State or Partnership Grants may apply for a Recruitment Grant. It is intended that the Recruitment Grant awards will be used to establish scholarship programs to help students pay tuition, room and board and other expenses related to completion of teacher preparation programs; to provide support services to scholarship recipients as required; to provide support services to scholarship recipients during their first 3 years of teaching. They may also be used to develop initiatives to assist high need LEAs and schools in identifying and hiring highly qualified teachers.

Issues for Reauthorization

During the 108th Congress the first oversight hearing on the HEA reauthorization focused on implementation of Title II of HEA. In addition, Title II was the first order of business for the House Education and the Workforce Committee to address in the HEA. The revised Title II bill passed by the House enjoyed strong bi-partisan support indicative of Congress's interest in improving the quality of teacher preparation programs. Although little work was done in the Senate, the interest in Title II is similarly strong. Senator Kennedy introduced a bill that would have expanded Title II significantly and proposed additional funding.

As the 109th Congress takes up the subject of HEA reauthorization it will have many issues to deal with, not the least of which is the Administrations signal that it wants to eliminate all of the Title II programs. The House Education and the Workforce Committee continues to be chaired by Congressman John Boehner (R-8th OH), who has indicated that HEA, and in particular Title II, is a priority. He has expressed interest in creating competitive grants that support teacher training entities modeled on charter schools. This reflects a goal of infusing new competition into the system, thereby putting outside pressures on colleges and universities to reform programs in order to make them more effective and attractive to teacher candidates. This program was included in the previous reauthorization language. This reflects the House member's outspoken criticism of colleges and universities regarding the preparedness of teacher education graduates—both their content knowledge and their instructional skills. It is

reasonable to assume that any new reauthorization bill proposed in the House Education and the Workforce Committee would include similar language. It was this type of criticism that led to his strong support for programs such as Troops to Teachers and the new Adjunct Math and Science Teacher initiative included in the Administration's fiscal year 2005 budget.

The higher education associations, under the umbrella of the American Council on Education (ACE), in the past have listed "improving teacher education" as a goal for the HEA reauthorization. In the document submitted to the Congress outlining their goals, ACE expressed strong support for improving teacher preparation programs—whether through traditional or alternative routes—and asked that more funding be provided to colleges and universities to improve these programs. This would suggest that HEA should drive Title II funding to institutions—not to SEAs. A second concern of ACE is language in Section 207 of Title II that requires the reporting of pass rate information for students who have majored in education and taken licensure examinations. This has been a very controversial issue and will likely remain so throughout the reauthorization process. It is related to the whole issue of HEA accountability that will spark controversial debate during this reauthorization. The higher education community will strongly resist efforts to impose, on colleges and universities, the kind of oversight and regulation that NCLB has brought to bear on K-12 education systems.

K-12 education associations and teacher professional groups have been looking at the HEA Act reauthorization for the first time, in hopes of strengthening the support it offers to meet the goal of having a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom within 5 years—a mandate of NCLB. Meeting that goal will require major changes in the area of pre-service as well as in-service education. This is an area where a strong case can be made to strengthen not only SEA and LEA efforts to find highly-qualified teachers, but to develop programs that would help to retain them in the classroom.

Also of interest to teacher professional associations are the Partnership Grants. Not only are non-profits eligible for funding, but these grants can and should be used to reform teacher preparation programs—joining forces between institutions of higher education and LEAs. A push is anticipated from the elementary and secondary community to expand the purposes and possible programs that could be supported with these funds, and also to greatly increase the level of funding that is appropriated for these purposes.

It is likely that some form of HEA reauthorization will be brought to the House Education and the Workforce Committee, most likely this spring given the strength of support that the previous bill received. In the Senate, however, the issues are somewhat different. The Republicans are relatively satisfied with the legislation passed by the House—both the Ready to Teach Act and the expanded Teacher Loan Forgiveness Act. In the Senate the debate will likely focus on Democratic interest to expand both funding and the types of grants made available under Title II of the current law. Given the very tight budget for FY 2006 any reauthorization of HEA will face a difficult funding battle.

[For further information see 108th Congress H.R. 2211, The Ready to Teach Act of 2003, and H.R. 438, The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act of 2003.]