

Excellent Education for All through The Elementary and Secondary Education Act

(An excerpt from addendum 1 of *The Crucial Voice of the People, Past and Present: Education's Missing Ingredient*, second edition, by Victoria M. Young, © 2012)

The focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is to provide the equal access to quality education that is not currently available to all children in the United States. The ultimate goal is to, someday in the near future, be able to change the focus of this law to preserving and protecting that equality. Until that day, we must recognize the issues that are barriers to equality in our schools and classrooms and fully address those problems directly.

To fulfill our duty to America's children, effective schools must be established in every community where they do not currently exist. Understanding that those communities with the highest concentrations of poverty have children at greatest risk of being educationally underserved, their needs will be our first priority. It is our responsibility as a nation to address the identified lowest performing schools throughout our land, as a short term goal, while providing a long-term strategy to prevent the wide gaps in opportunities, and therefore educational achievement, that we have experienced in our past and that continue to plague our nation's children today.

In addition to providing the best in educational opportunities to every child, this plan views appropriation of funds as a national strategic educational investment and expects communities to make wise use of all education resources. It is acknowledged that the urgent need of children begs for some emergency measures.

Purposes:

- * To establish equal access to quality education,
- * To strengthen and improve all schools.

Title I – *Education of Children of Low Income Families* to provide formula-funded financial assistance to local education agencies in support of *children from low-income families* in order *expand and improve* community efforts to meet their learning needs.

Execution: To address learning needs requires a “needs assessment.” School staff (principals, counselors, aids, and teachers) and parents (or other adults involved in these high-needs children's lives) will be the first to collectively identify those needs. Those identified needs will then be brought to the attention of the larger group of community stakeholders (civic, non-profit organizations, foundations and concerned individuals) to be further defined, measures for success indicators established, and existing resources in the community identified. “Gaps” in resources will be identified and brought to the attention of state education officials so that no identified need goes unaddressed. State officials will be responsible for identifying their resources and establishing indicators of their success and to continually monitor and report on their ability to meet their responsibility. Needs assessments will be done using the existing government assessment tools.

Emergency measures: Those Title I schools now designated as chronically low-performing will be guided through the assessment and improvement processes with cooperative funding

(“set aside” Title I money) and staff from the state and local districts with a “support team” provided through the U.S. Department of Education.

Schools identified as chronically low-performing need strong, effective, democratic leadership to take these schools through a successful school improvement process. A federal leadership program (Academy) will be “designed to enable people who are already experienced principals and other school leaders, knowledgeable about how schools work and the special problems they face, to learn how to turn around the expectations, beliefs and practices of school stakeholders in low-performing schools. The expected focus of the Academy would be on how to improve instruction and change schools’ culture” (Ratner, The “Lead Act,” H.R. 5495/S 3469: Briefing Paper).

Accountability: Using the indicators of success as designated for targeted results through the school improvement process, the “appropriate objective measurements” will be used to judge the “effectiveness of the programs in meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children.” Local and state officials will have established the parameters (what and how often) of those measurements and will make those facts transparent to the community and state, respectively. An accounting of expenses and results of the uses of Title I money will be reported to federal officials for review. National monitoring of achievement gaps through the random use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) will continue unchanged. Results of progress by the nation and cost /benefits will be reported annually to the President, Congress, and the Nation.

Title II – *School Library Resources, Textbooks, and Other Instructional Materials* to be provided through grant-funding to offer access to educational materials *for all students* in the State recognizing the invaluable human and material resources that a library provides for a community.

Execution: To provide equal opportunity, the State will be required to assess the equity of resources in its districts, establish the communities that are priorities, establish the material priorities within those communities (using input from stakeholders), work cooperatively to use existing resources to provide the “materials gap,” and, only where sources have been exhausted, work cooperatively with these communities to secure a federal grant through this title to supplement materials essential to offering equal-quality learning supports.

Title III – *Supplementary Educational Centers and Services*, available to the *entire community* through grant-funding, or formula funding where high-poverty rates and chronically low-performing schools exist, to provide services not currently offered but deemed vital to educational improvement in underserved areas. These centers and services are to have the “participation of persons broadly representative of the cultural and educational resources of the area” as a way to “utilize the best available talents and resources” to “substantially increase the educational opportunities.”

Execution: Services deemed essential to children being “ready to learn,” as determined by school and community needs assessments and demonstrated lack of existing resources, will be given priority. All communities will be encouraged to use their existing resources wisely by encouraging cooperative efforts with existing non-profits and civic organizations.

Emergency measures: Where epidemiological studies show a disproportionate incidence of childhood disorders that affect learning, those areas will be designated a “disaster” and emergency measures implemented through the appropriate state and federal agencies, in

cooperation with organizations and foundations. Examples being high levels of lead or high percentages of children affected by drugs such as methamphetamines. In addition, given that an adult advisor or mentor can greatly improve a student's chances for school success, if an "advisors corps" or mentorship program does not exist, one will be created immediately in an existing public institutional structure, if other resources are not available.

Title IV – *Educational Research and Training; Cooperative Research Act* to support educational research and training to enable the Department of Education to more effectively accomplish its purposes and to perform its duties including dissemination of information, funded directly for the Department with formula funding for the lowest-performing districts. The research, training, and dissemination of information will be targeted at improving the quality of teaching, counseling, advising, and parental and community engagement practices—to improve student achievement.

Execution: Regional Educational Research Laboratory facilities that were previously funded by federal dollars should be reclaimed and restructured to assist the research needs of the nation's chronically low-performing schools. The U.S. Department of Education will do an internal programs audit with an eye to potential duplications with regional laboratories that will be incorporated into their structure. In the short-term, the Department must "lead the states and localities to make the structural changes in teacher and administrator preparation and training, coupled with family support" (Ratner, Gershon (Gary) M. Why the No Child Left Behind Act Needs to be Restructured to Accomplish Its Goals and How to Do It. University of the District of Columbia Law Review, David A. Clark School of Law, Vol.9, Number 1, Winter 2007).

Dissemination of research findings will, first, focus on the elements of developing effective schools, community education concepts, parent and family engagement and participation, with special focus on fostering understanding of the change process in people. Once the system of distribution is established, a free flow of information of best practices with practical applications will be available.

Emergency measures: Because chronically low-performing schools are in communities least likely to have the existing human capacity to overcome the obstacles of systemic school change, a community education organizer will facilitate the flow of information from the Department of Education to local school personnel and community members plus assist with the implementation of the other emergency measures previously mentioned. It is recommended that the feasibility of using the existing structure of the Cooperative Extension Service to house this position be fully explored.

Title V – *State Departments of Education* formula-funding will be used "to stimulate and assist in strengthening the *leadership* resources of State educational agencies" to assist them in identifying "educational problems, issues, and needs in the State."

Execution: States that have a historical trend of low-performance or persistent and wide achievement gaps on NAEP scores will be required to assemble a state school improvement team to actively participate along-side the federal "support teams" in the communities that have emergency measures in place.

Knowing that our public schools will always have problems to solve, these measures are not proposed as a once-and-for-all answer. They should be seen as a necessary, temporary, first step in a transformation process aimed at providing equal educational opportunity of the highest quality. The first annual national report will simply and clearly provide the public with the measurements that we will be using as a nation. So, as a final proposal for this Act, it is recommended that a Presidential Commission on Indicators of Educational Quality be called to establish the quality indicators to which this nation will commit itself and its resources.

End notes: The guidance required to write this addendum was provided by the past and present work of others. The framework for the national approach was provided by Francis (Frank) Keppel's summary of the work by the 88th and 89th Congresses (*The Necessary Revolution in American Education*. Harper & Row, New York and London, 1966). Keppel's writings also provided the general outline for the original titles of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which no longer correlate to what we now call No Child Left Behind.

In addition to Gary Ratner's work as quoted, there are so many other influential voices unheard by Congress over the years that it is an impossibility to mention them all. Their good work has been noticed and played a role in influencing the thought behind this proposal. Here are a few examples; Framework for Providing All Students an Opportunity to Learn through the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, A Broader-Bolder Approach, and Empowering Schools and Improving Learning: A Joint Organizational Statement on the Federal Role in Public Schooling.

You will find very few qualifiers in this proposal in reference to race or special education status. That is because equality is equality; by its very definition, we are all the same. Once you understand how equality should be applied to school children and the practices we must hold in highest esteem in our classrooms, no qualifiers are necessary. What is necessary is that people now push policy that is fair and balanced, represents our expectations, and focuses on providing high-quality personalized learning opportunities. For America, this is what opportunity looks like.