

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Statement on Title I report "Comparability of State and Local Expenditures Among Schools Within Districts: A Report From the Study of School-Level Expenditures."
November 30, 2011

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA, our department has gathered valuable data from school districts across the United States. Today, we're releasing key findings that confirm an unfortunate reality in our nation's education system. Many public schools serving low income children aren't getting their fair share of state and local funding.

I want to take a quick moment and thank our team here for their hard work. This is original research and this is an extraordinarily valuable conversation for the nation to have. I think our job is to tell the truth and to provide real transparency and potential solutions, and we're really trying to do all those things in this effort.

Our researchers here reviewed extensive data for more than 13,000 school districts. They found that more than 40% of Title I schools are getting less state and local money for teachers and other personnel than schools within the same school district that don't receive money from the federal Title I program.

Educators across the country, educators and parents, policy makers all understand that low-income students need extra support and resources to succeed. But in too many school districts policies for assigning teachers, compensating teachers and allocating resources are standing in the way of low-income students getting the education that truly prepares them for success in college and career.

And the net result is this: In far too many places Title I money is filling budget gaps rather than being used to close achievement gaps. The Title I program is designed to provide extra resources to high poverty schools to help them meet the greater challenges of educating at risk students, and that's why Title I requires districts to provide a comparable level of services to all schools before they can receive Title I funding for their low-income schools.

But the current comparability requirement hides inequitable funding for schools within the same district by measuring teacher pay based on district-wide salary schedules, not on the actual money spent on salaries in these schools. And this current approach undermines Title I's critically important goal of providing additional resources, supplemental resources and services for children living in poverty.

President Obama's *Blueprint for Reform* would close this loophole of the comparability requirement and ensure that state and local funding is equitably distributed across schools. We're so thankful to the Senate Health Committee, led by Senator (Tom) Harkin and Senator (Mike) Enzi for their taking this proposal very very seriously. They made a very significant step forward by including this language to reform comparability in their

bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and I want to thank Senators Harkin and Enzi for their shared commitment and courageous leadership on this issue.

In addition to their support, Senators (Michael) Bennet and (Thad) Cochran and Representative (Chaka) Fattah have also been tremendous leaders in this effort. And I also want to commend the NEA for their strong support for closing the comparability loopholes as well.

Ensuring equal access to education for all students is a fundamental principle of our Department's mission, and I believe it's a national imperative for securing our nation's economic future. Allowing these funding disparities to continue to persist poses a serious impediment to our nation's effort to provide all students with the opportunity to get a high quality education.

The good news here is that it's absolutely feasible for districts to address this problem. It will have a significant impact on educational opportunities for our nation's poorest children, those children most at risk. Making funding comparable is not as difficult as some might think, requiring the average district to change only 1 to 4 percent of their total school-level expenditures. With these minor changes across many schools, low-spending, low-funded Title I schools today, could see their expenditures increase by 4 to 15 percent, which is very significant. Our Department, Congress, states and districts, all have a collective responsibility to ensure that children are receiving the support they need to be successful in school.

Continuing to work together in a bipartisan manner with Congress and with local leaders across the country, we look forward to making sure that disadvantaged students get the world-class education they deserve. While some districts have some real challenges here and will need to make some changes over time, we have many districts who are doing this extraordinarily well now.

Coincidentally, or maybe not so coincidentally, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, which won the Broad prize this year, does this exquisitely well now, Cincinnati, Ohio, does this well, Brownsville, Texas, which is also a Broad prize winner a few years back, is another district that is managing their resources in a very thoughtful manner. So examples of real success are out there, not just obviously making sure resources are going in the right direction, but this is really driving, raising the bar for all students in closing achievement gaps, and I want to commend those districts and so many others who are doing a great job here.