

TERMS IN USE ON THE EDUCATION TOPIC

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A Nation at Risk: The 1983 report produced by the Reagan administration's National Committee on Excellence in Education. This report is often cited as evidence that American public education is not producing a globally competitive workforce.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): This is a requirement that was imposed by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, but was eliminated with the 2015 congressional passage of the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under NCLB, each state was required to compare student performance on standardized tests in certain grades to the students in the same grade for the previous year. Schools failing to show AYP for two consecutive years were to be publicly labeled “in need of improvement.” Schools failing to show AYP for five consecutive years were to be closed unless the state could secure a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education.

Charter Schools Program (CSP): This is a federal program designed to promote the expansion of charter schools. The Department of Education website (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/csp/index.html?exp=7>) offers the following description: “The Charter Schools Program provides money to create new high-quality public charter schools, as well as to disseminate information about ones with a proven track record. Federal funds are also available to replicate and expand successful schools; help charter schools find suitable facilities; reward high-quality charter schools that form exemplary collaborations with the non-chartered public school sector and invest in national activities and initiatives that support charter schools.”

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): This refers to a set of standards for English and math developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The development of the Common Core received significant funding and other support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walton Foundation. As of 2017, 45 states and the District of Columbia have signed on to the CCSS. Critics have charged that the federal government pushed state education agencies to adopt CCSS through the requirements of the Obama administration’s Race to the Top program. This criticism was addressed by a provision of the Every Student Succeeds Act that specifically bans the federal government from requiring or even “incentivizing” the adoption of the Common Core.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): The original version of this legislation was passed in 1965 during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson; its primary focus was to provide grants to support the education of children from low-income families. Both the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) were reauthorizations of ESEA. In its most recent authorization, ESEA contains nine titles. Title I provides assistance to state education agencies designed to improve education for certain disadvantaged groups. Title II is designed to promote teacher training and recruitment of high-quality teachers and administrators. Title III is focused on language instruction for English learners and immigrant students. Title IV provides grants for the 21st Century Schools program. Title V encourages state innovation and local flexibility. Title VI provides for Native American education. Title VII focuses on Impact Aid, supporting school systems unduly affected by the influx of children from federal installations such as military bases. Title VIII is a catch-all category covering such topics as rural education, ensuring school access for military recruiters, prohibiting sexual abuse and preventing abuses of student privacy. Title IX contains provisions for the education of homeless children.

English Language Learners (ELLs): This term is used to refer to students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): This major piece of legislation was signed into law by President Obama in December of 2015. ESSA repealed and replaced No Child Left Behind, becoming the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This legislation maintained a requirement that state education agencies continue to utilize standardized testing to measure student progress, but it eliminated the harsh federal penalties for failure to meet testing targets. ESSA also made it illegal for any federal entity to require or incentivize the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. ESSA was widely hailed as returning the regulation of elementary and secondary education to state and local entities.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): This 1974 legislation provides protection for student educational records. However, the law does provide exceptions allowing information to be released for certain statistical purposes. Proponents of strengthening student data protections believe that additional measures may be needed to protect the digital privacy of students.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): This 1990 legislation provides for the free and appropriate public education of students with disabilities in the “least restrictive environment.” The legislation establishes standards for the identification of disabilities as well as the creation of an “individualized education program” (IEP) for each student so identified. The IEP is supposed to outline the impact of the student’s disability, clarify the student’s current education status, outline necessary accommodations, identification of the services needed to meet that student’s needs and finally the establishment of goals so that progress can be tracked. The IEP requirements force schools to add highly-trained staff members, resulting in significant costs for schools. The federal government provides some funding for carrying out the requirements contained in IDEA, but critics argue that funding levels are far short of actual costs.

Impact Aid: Title VII of the Every Student Succeeds Act provides funding for schools districts with concentrations of children who reside on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties and other Federal properties or have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties. School districts receive a large portion of their funding from property taxes, but federal installations and Indian reservations are not subject to local property taxes. Impact Aid is designed to make up for the loss of revenue caused by installations not subject to property taxes. In FY 2016 about \$1.3 billion was appropriated for Impact Aid.

Inclusion: This refers to the practice of teaching students with special needs in regular elementary and secondary school classrooms. This practice was formerly referred to as “mainstreaming.” The controversy associated with a policy of inclusion is that the normal classroom teacher may lack the training to meet the needs of students with special needs. In addition, other students in the classroom may suffer from the fact that the teacher’s attention is unduly focused on the special needs student. Defenders of inclusion argue, however, that this practice benefits both students with disabilities and other students in the classroom. Students are taught the importance of diversity and learn how to interact with others, much as they will be required to do post-graduation as they enter college and the workforce.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): See IDEA.

Least Restrictive Environment: See IDEA.

Maintenance of Effort Requirements: Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) directed federal funding to school districts serving disproportionate numbers of students from low-income families. The purpose of the legislation was to address funding inequalities between rich and poor school districts. The concern, however, was that state education agencies might decrease their own funding of inner city school systems as a result of the new federal funding source. Accordingly, ESEA contained a provision requiring that localities receiving federal funds show that state and local sources had not reduced their own funding. This is also sometimes called a “supplement-not-supplant” requirement.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: This 1987 legislation contained provisions providing for the education of homeless children, including transportation to and from school free of charge. The Act gives students the right to continue to attend their school of origin, meaning the school that they attended at the time they became homeless regardless of where the family may now live. The Act also requires that schools register students for classes regardless of whether they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residency. While the federal government provides some resources to state agencies to support the education of homeless children, such funding falls far short of what is required to meet the federal standards.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): This is a national exam established in 1996 using funding provided by the Carnegie Foundation. When Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, it required that the NAEP be administered to all school children in grades four and eight in reading and math. The NAEP Web site (<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>) reports that it “is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas.”

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): President George W. Bush signed this reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001. NCLB continued to guide U.S. education policy until 2015 when it was repealed and replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). NCLB was widely criticized for imposing standardized testing requirements on all U.S. elementary and secondary schools. Schools failing to show adequate yearly progress (AYP) on standardized tests for two consecutive years were publicly labeled as “in need of improvement.” Schools failing the AYP standard for five consecutive years were to be closed unless the state education agency filed for a waiver from the NCLB requirements. In order to receive a waiver, the state agency was required to secure federal approval for alternative steps to be taken for bringing failing schools up to a standard of proficiency. While ESSA maintained many of the testing requirements of NCLB, it eliminated the federal sanctions for failure to show adequate progress.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): The National Center for Education Statistics website (<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>) describes PISA as “an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students’ reading, mathematics and science literacy every three years. First conducted in 2000, the major domain of study rotates between reading, mathematics and science in each cycle.” In the most recent test (conducted in 2015), the U.S. placed behind 18 other countries. These results are discouraging to observers who worry that America may soon lose its leadership position in international competitiveness as a result of weak educational performance.

Race to the Top (RTTT): This Obama administration program existed from 2009 to 2015 as a special funding stream outside of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The \$4.35 billion in funding for RTTT came as part of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – the stimulus program designed to aid recover from the “great recession” of 2008. The RTTT invited states to compete for federal funding by submitting plans for replacing failing schools. The program encouraged applicants to propose the firing of teachers and administrators in failing schools, while also allowing alternative routes to teacher certification. The funding stream for RTTT had expired by the time that President Obama submitted his Fiscal Year 2016 budget; that budget did not include RTTT funding.

San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez: This 1973 Supreme Court decision focused on the question of whether state education agencies have a federal constitutional requirement to equalize funding between rich and poor school districts. At issue was also the question of whether the U.S. Constitution creates a fundamental right to an education. The Supreme Court rejected the notion of a “right to education” and provided no relief to the plaintiffs who were arguing that a state education agency has a constitutional obligation to equalize funding for school districts in low-income areas.

School Improvement Grant (SIG): Under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, state education agencies were asked to identify the bottom 5% of its school districts, based on standardized testing outcome. School districts so identified could then apply for special SIG funding which would provide up to \$2 million per year for three years in order to promote a turnaround in failing schools. Those school systems winning an award of SIG funds were required to follow strict mandates following one of four prescribed interventions modeled after private sector business practices. Most of the SIG interventions included firing and replacing many of the teachers and administrators in failing schools. When NCLB was replaced by the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I no longer contained a special provision for SIG funding.

State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF): The website (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/stabilization-fund.html>) of the U.S. Department of Education offers the following explanation for SFSF: “The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program is a new one-time appropriation of \$53.6 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Of the amount appropriated, the U. S. Department of Education will award governors approximately \$48.6 billion by formula under the SFSF program in exchange for a commitment to advance essential education reforms to benefit students from early learning through post-secondary education, including: college- and career-ready standards and high-quality, valid and reliable assessments for all students; development and use of pre-K through post-secondary and career data systems; increasing teacher effectiveness and ensuring an equitable distribution of qualified teachers and turning around the lowest-performing schools.”

STEM: This acronym stands for science, technology, engineering and math instruction. According to Education Week (http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2015/04/when_did_science_education_become_STEM.html), “the first explicit mention of STEM – using the acronym – seems to be in 2005. Rep. Vernon Ehlers, a Republican from Michigan, and Rep. Mark Udall, a Democrat from Colorado, had set up the Science Technology Engineering and Math, or STEM, caucus in Congress.”

Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS): This international test was created by the International Association for the Evaluation of Achievement. It was first conducted in 1995 and is repeated in four years cycles for grades four and eight.