

S. HRG. 107-517

IMPLEMENTATION OF READING PROGRAMS AND

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HEARIN G

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION ,

LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

ACT (P.L. 107-110), FOCUSING ON THE READING FIRST AND OTHER

LITERACY -RELATED PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES

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that the resources do get spent in a way that we have a lot of confidence will end up in results.

Second, the way the money is then subgranted out to school districts and the accountability provisions that have to be part of any State plan, the goal there is also to make sure that there is a way to follow the implementation. In other words, we do not just give the money to a State, and the States to the districts and then to hope good things happen. Part of the comprehensive plan is to follow the implementation ongoing and also to have assessments to make sure we know whether or not success is taking place. It is very targeted, very targeted to the most needy students and the most challenged situations.

And then, of course, as I mentioned in my testimony, a lot of money is reserved for State activity so that you have got professional development, instruction at the local level targeted and State activity aimed at transforming the way the State understands its obligation with regard to reading for young people.

Senator GREGG. Is this peer-review process going to base its evaluation on phonics?

Mr. HICKOK. It is going to base its evaluation on the five components that I mentioned, and phonics is one of those components.

Senator GREGG. Two of those are basically phonics.

Mr. HICKOK. Well, phonics and phonemic awareness, and you are probably better to ask the experts that will come after to me on reading about the difference between those two things. But as I understand it, phonics is the ability to make the sounds that letters are all about, and phonemic awareness is the ability to relate text to sounds. Again, that is my very modest understanding of the difference.

But there are five components to reading instruction that need to be in place. The thing to remember, the experts told me as well, is that the degree to which those components are in place will differ with regard to the children's needs. The goal here is that every child needs all five of these components, but they might need emphasis on various aspects of those.

So it really will have to be a combination of scientific research

and understanding the needs of the individual students as they are getting the instruction they need.

Senator GREGG. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Collins?

Senator COLLINS. Mr. Secretary, first, let me join my colleagues in commending the Department for acting quickly to implement this landmark legislation. I know that represents a great deal of work and commitment on your part, the Secretary's part, and all of the Department, and we thank you.

In your written testimony, you indicated that the administration will not create any list of approved programs and that you will support a variety of paths, provided that they are based on scientific research. Reading experts tell us that different techniques work well with different children, and therefore I think it is imperative that we give flexibility to the States and to local schools, as long as they are using reading programs that have proven to be effective.

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There are concerns, among some States, that the Department may attempt to limit funding for certain programs, despite their proven effectiveness. Maine has devoted considerable resources during the past 8 years to the Reading Recovery program as being an important part of Maine's commitment to meeting high standards for literacy for children.

Maine has approximately 350 Reading Recovery teachers who are providing services to meet the needs of first-grade students, with intensive one-on-one instruction as part of an overall approach to reading. As I indicated in my opening comments, we have had a lot of success.

Is there anything in the guidance that the Department has given so far that would preclude funding for Reading Recovery programs.

Mr. HICKOK. No, there is not, and I want to make sure that that is pretty well understood, not just by the committee, but by everybody. I mean, the fact is we will have, if I might say so, we do not have a dog in this fight. Our only goal is to make sure that whatever is being done at the State and local level results in students being able to read by Grade 3.

The real sad part of the story is, while we do not have a whole lot of knowledge about some things in education, we know about reading, and yet in far too many places, we are not successful. So the goal here is to transform the culture of education with regard to reading.

Reading Recovery, as far as I know, can be a part of that transformation. It has to be able to make its case, within a State application, the way everybody else does, in terms of those five components.

The goal here is to transform the classroom and the instruction, but as I said just a moment ago, it is also to recognize the individual needs of individual students. The goal would be preventative programs, so the need for intervention and remediation is limited, but that does not mean that reading recovery or any other successful program that has got the science and can demonstrate it in an application cannot be a part of this. The goal here is that end to success.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. I very much appreciate those reassurances.

In your testimony, you also indicated that Reading First funds will focus on providing increased levels of professional develop-

ment. I think that is absolutely critical. Other -than involved parents, a well-qualified, well-trained teacher is the most important prerequisite for a student's success.

We, in Maine, are now embarking on the challenge of designing a statewide professional development program for K through 3 teachers, as well as statewide professional development for all K through 12 special education teachers. Have any models been developed by the Department to give assistance to the States in developing professional training programs for reading teachers and for special education teachers?

Mr. HICKOK. Well, the Reading Leadership Academies talked about that issue, both in terms of Reading First, Early Reading First and professional development, and I can make sure that we get to you whatever models or examples that would be helpful.

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