



ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Straight A's:

A Citizen's Update on Education

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Education Bill Moves Forward, Mandatory Special Education Funding Left Behind

This week, Congress will vote on an agreement reached on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The way was cleared when the conference committee rejected a very controversial, but very important vote to the education community, on a key bipartisan amendment offered by **Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)** and **Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE)**. The Harkin-Hagel amendment was intended to guarantee the original funding level promised to states in the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although the amendment was agreed to by Senate conferees 16 to 9, House conferees rejected the amendment 8 to 6 and killed its chances.

Twenty-Five Years of an Unfulfilled Promise:

Before 1975, only one-fifth of all children with disabilities received a formal education. At that time, many states had laws that specifically excluded many children with disabilities, including children who were blind, deaf, or emotionally disturbed, from receiving such an education. In 1975, Congress passed what is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to help states provide all disabled children a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

At that time, Congress promised to provide 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure for each disabled child served. However, even with large increases in funding over the last five years, the federal portion of IDEA funds has never exceeded 15 percent. The Harkin-Hagel amendment was intended to ensure that States would receive the amount originally promised in 1975.

The Harkin-Hagel amendment would have increased funding for IDEA in annual increments of \$2.5 billion until the full 40 percent federal commitment was met in fiscal year 2007. In a Senate floor statement, **Senator Hagel** explained the reasoning behind the amendment:

“Congress did the right thing in passing IDEA 25 years ago. Today we are calling on Congress to again do the right thing, to fully fund the commitment Congress made to this program and to the people of this country . . . This amendment will give local education authorities and taxpayers the ability to spend these funds as they see fit to fulfill their own education needs. They could hire more teachers, build new schools, and increase the technology in their schools . . . This amendment will help our teachers and our State and local officials to provide the best education possible for our young people. That should be our goal.”

Senate conferees' vote on Harkin-Hagel amendment: 16 to 9 in favor:

Voting in Favor of the IDEA Amendment:

Sens. Evan Bayh (D-IN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), John Edwards (D-NC), Tom Harkin (D-IA), James Jeffords (I-VT), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Patty Murray (D-WA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Paul Wellston (D-MN), Susan Collins (R-ME), Pat Roberts (R-KS), and John Warner (R-VA)

Voting Against the Amendment:

Sens. Wayne Allard (R-CO), Christopher Bond (R-MO), Mike DeWine (R-OH), John Ensign (R-NV), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Bill Frist (R-TN), Judd Gregg (R-NH), Tim Hutchinson (R-AR), and Jeff Sessions (R-AL)

House conferees' vote on the Harkin-Hagel Amendment: 8 to 6 against:

Voting in Favor of the IDEA Amendment:

Reps. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), Dale Kildee (D-MI), George Miller (D-CA), Patsy Mink (D-HI), Major Owens (D-NY), and Tim Roemer (D-IN).

Voting Against the Amendment:

Reps. John Boehner (R-OH), Michael Castle (R-DE), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Van Hilleary (R-TN), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), Thomas Petri (R-WI), and Marge Roukema (R-NJ).

Guaranteed Funding for IDEA Would Have Come at a Crucial Time:

Full funding of IDEA would not only have fulfilled the federal government's promise from 1975, it would have freed up more money for states in other areas. In the past, states were forced to pick up the slack for federal funding of IDEA by taking funds away from other important priorities. Full funding of IDEA would have allowed them to use their savings to hire more teachers, build new classrooms, or purchase new technology for all children.

Making IDEA funding mandatory also would have freed up more money in the appropriations process for other programs, such as Title I, a program that Congress has also failed to fully fund since its enactment thirty-six years ago. By moving IDEA funding to the mandatory side of the federal budget, billions of dollars would have been freed up in the appropriations bill. This would have allowed Congress to help both special education needs and help economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

The Harkin-Hagel IDEA amendment was rejected at a time when state education budgets are facing an estimated \$11.3 billion cut nationwide, according to a recent report by the Democratic staff of the House and Senate Education Committees. These cuts will come in the form of teacher layoffs, technology cut backs, the elimination of teacher training, the postponement of school modernization, and an increase in class size in many states.

Sponsors of the amendment and members of the Education Committees vowed to revisit mandatory special education funding when IDEA is reauthorized next year.



12th-Graders Perform Poorly on National Tests

Test results from a national science test show that many high school seniors are not meeting higher standards in education. In the *Nation's Report Card: Science 2000*, the average scores of fourth- and eighth-graders were essentially unchanged from 1996, but average scores among 12th-graders showed a significant decrease of three points.

Secretary of Education Rod Paige attended the report release and shared his concern about the low 12th-grade scores:

“The decline is not huge, but it is statistically significant, and morally significant as well. After all, twelfth-grade scores are the scores that really matter. If our graduates know less about science than their predecessors four years ago, then our hopes for a strong 21st Century workforce are dimming just when we need them most.”

Did You Know?

Since its inception in 1969, the mission of the *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* has been to collect, analyze, and produce valid and reliable information about the academic performance of students in the United States in various learning areas. Under legislation passed by Congress, NAEP must provide objective data about student performance at national and regional levels. Since 1986, this data has been used to publish the Nation's Report Card.

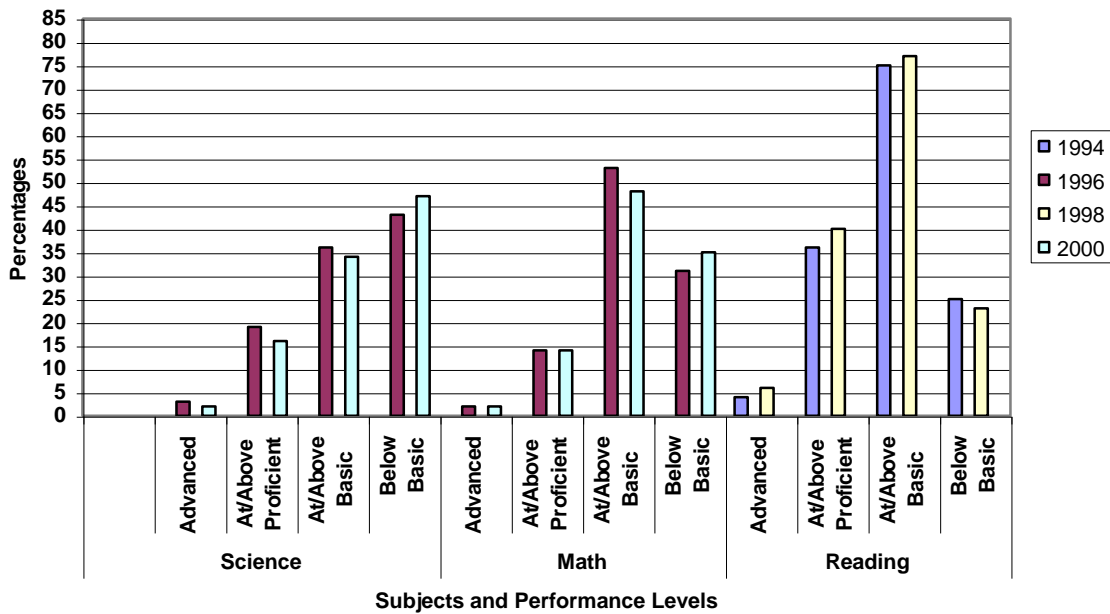
NAEP currently conducts assessments in reading and mathematics at least every two years, in science and writing at least every four years, and in history or geography and other subjects selected by its governing board at least every six years. A sample set of fourth, eighth, and 12th-graders are given NAEP tests. Scores are used as a gauge to measure education progress on both the state and national levels.

More about NAEP: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ncesprograms/assessment/surveys/naep.html>.

The release of the *Nation's Report Card: Science 2000* test, taken together with the *Nation's Report Card: Math 2000* test, released in August, and the *Nation's Report Card: Reading 1998* test, tell us that high school seniors' performance in these three key areas has not kept up with 4th and 8th graders' performance.

The results from these national tests in science, math, and reading show a remarkable number of 12th-graders who test below the basic level. In the *Science 2000* test, 47 percent of high school seniors scored below “basic.” In the *Math 2000* test, 35 percent of 12th graders scored below “basic.” In the *Reading 2000* test, 23 percent of high school seniors scored below “basic.” Not only are a large percentage of our high school seniors performing poorly on national tests, they are doing worse than they did four years ago.

Performance Levels of 12th-Graders on the Nation's Report Cards



Most recent tests place more 12th-graders in the “Basic” or “Below Basic” performance levels than the same test just a few years earlier.

For each grade, the levels are cumulative; that is, abilities achieved at the *Proficient* level presume mastery of abilities associated with the *Basic* level, and attainment of the *Advanced* level presumes mastery of both the *Basic* and *Proficient* levels. NAEP defined performance levels as such:

- **Basic:** This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.
- **Proficient:** This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
- **Advanced:** This level signifies superior performance.

The Nation’s Report Card: Science 2000, Math 2000 and Reading 1998 tests:
<http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

Alliance Report:

The results from the reading, math, and science NAEP tests are consistent with the Alliance for Excellent Education report, “**Investing in Excellence: Making Title I Work for All Children.**” In our report, the Alliance argues that a lack of funding has forced school districts to make a Sophie’s choice between their elementary-age children and their adolescents--and repeatedly, they’ve chosen to put their limited funds toward early education. One can easily see this choice in test scores, which show a decline in performance among 12th-graders, while scores for fourth and eighth grade students improved.

Alliance report: <http://www.all4ed.org/report.htm>



American Students Work Harder Than Their International Peers ... Outside of the Classroom

The 2001-2002 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study found that 43 percent of all high school students work a job outside school. The average percentage for other nations is about 18 percent. Each year, the **Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans** conducts a telephone survey of America's young people between the ages of 14 and 18. The survey's objective is to learn what's going on with high school students so policymakers can better address their needs.

While some students work to supplement their family's income or pay for college, the vast majority of working teens (63 percent) work because they appreciate having money of their own. This extra spending money does not come without a price and usually cuts into time that should be spent doing homework. For example, the **Third International Mathematics and Science Survey (TIMSS)**, where low exams scores of American students have caused great concern, found that 55 percent of American 12th graders work three hours or more on a normal school day.

According to a report from the Employment Policy Foundation during the summer of 2000, teen employment was at its highest rate in four decades. A report from the Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor included statistics that revealed the teenage employment rate for June 2000 was at its highest rate since 1953. Of the 16-to-19--year-old population, 51.6 percent held jobs. This means that more of our students are working now than in the last 40 years.

Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans website:

<http://www.horatioalger.com/pubmat/surpro.htm>

Third International Math and Science Study: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/>



Brown University Seeks Fellows to Study Federal Role in Education

Brown University is accepting applications for a nonresidential, postdoctoral fellowship program. The program focuses on the relatively turbulent role the federal government plays in education funding. Federal efforts in educational reform often conflict with the venerable traditions of local control and states' rights in educational governance. This program seeks fresh work on the federal role, ranging from the politics of federal education programs to the process of implementation to the history of educational ideas.

Brown University website: http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Education/Advanced_Studies_Fellowship/

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