

Recommended Comments to Congress on SES

Submit your comments directly to Congress on ESEA reauthorization before March 26th at eseacomment@mail.house.gov

SES under “No Child Left Behind” is leveling the playing field for our Nation’s educationally and economically at-risk students, giving them access to the same high-quality tutoring that historically has been available only to wealthier families who can afford to pay for such services. We call on Congress to preserve this civil right for low-income/low-achieving students who are trapped in our Nation’s struggling schools waiting for turn-around strategies to show results. Here’s why:

- **Availability of and Enrollment in SES is Increasing**
 - Each year, with growing outreach and maturity of the SES delivery system at the state and local levels, significant gains in SES participation rates have been made: since the 2002-2003 school year, more than 2 million low-income and low-achieving children have participated in SES services.
 - While SES enrollments have grown, the number of students served remains a fraction of those eligible. SES expenditure data, based on reports to the USDE from eight states (FL, GA, MA, MO, ND, OR, TX, and WA) for the 2005-2006 school year, indicate that only 32.5% of the maximum funds set-aside for SES were spent on tutoring. This means that the other 67% of funds earmarked for SES, which could have been utilized by hundreds of thousands eligible families went unspent, or was spent by school districts for other, non-SES, Title 1 purposes.
- **SES Works: Growing Evidence of the Program’s Effectiveness**
 - A nationwide SES study conducted by the Rand Corporation found that student participation in SES in school districts including Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Palm Beach, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. had a statistically significant, positive effect on students’ achievement in reading and math.
 - In multi-year studies conducted by Los Angeles and Chicago school districts, their own research departments found that children in SES tutoring programs made statistically significant gains in math and reading compared to a matched group of un-served children.
 - A summary of a number of national, state and local evaluations of SES indicates that 8 in 10 parents whose children are enrolled in SES are very enthusiastic about the program and its benefits. A side-benefit is that these parents have become newly engaged in the life of their child’s local schools.
 - An August, 2006 U.S. Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) report indicated that 90% of the school districts surveyed reported “good,” “very good,” or “excellent” working relationships with SES providers
- **SES providers – education entrepreneurs -- create good-paying jobs and support local economies**
 - Most SES provider employees are certified teachers and other educators looking to supplement their incomes. Teachers employed by SES, earn approximately \$4000 a year in supplemental income.
 - The average SES provider had a payroll of \$900,000 and total revenues of \$1.6 million in 2008 – increases of 26% over those figures in 2007.
- **Recommendations to Improve SES:**
 - *Adequate Funding.* Maintain a dedicated funding source, whether as a set-aside of Title 1 or in some other form that assures that resources will be available for tutoring for eligible students.

- *Public-Private Partnerships.* Given the enhanced potential for quality at scale, private sector providers should continue to receive equal opportunity to provide tutoring, school improvement, online learning, school management, and other effective educational services. This requires that education innovators be allowed to participate, when appropriate, in all federal funded competitive grant programs and that all barriers limiting participation to any specific sector be eliminated.
- *Stronger State Role.* States should be provided additional resources to ensure they are able to take a more active role in overall management of the SES program, particularly the creation of a more robust system for approving and removing tutoring providers coupled with a rigorous evaluation system that is compatible with the goals of tutoring.
- *High quality providers.* Providers should also be required to coordinate more closely with State and LEA standards and curricula to ensure alignment of tutoring to college and career readiness proficiency benchmarks. Providers should be required to align their services to standards comprising College and Career Readiness; demonstrate a set minimum of years of operating experience providing educational instruction to youth; use scientifically based instructional methods and materials; and use effective tutors.
- *Increased intensity of tutoring interventions.* Intensify the “dosage” of tutoring services, by lengthening the duration of services, encouraging linkages of tutoring with other after-school services, and inject more flexibility in the scheduling of services by encouraging services to be offered before school, after school, on weekends and during the summer.
- *Parent Choice.* Parents of eligible students must continue to have the right to select their preferred provider from the list of approved organizations. Parents must be informed of student support services prior to the start of the school year in order to help them make informed choices for their children. This information includes the past performance of providers, schedule and intensity of services, and location of services.
- *Enhanced Coordination and Partnerships.* School districts should be required to work with providers as partners, not competitors, and to remove barriers that hinder provider access to school facilities on fair and reasonable terms. All entities that work with student should exchange student data related to performance and special learning needs.