

November 13, 2007

To: Legislative Action Team

From: Rich Long

Subject: House Mark-up of Higher Education Act

As reported earlier, the Higher Education Act (HEA) is scheduled to be reauthorized. The House Committee on Education and Labor has released its most current draft and is planning a mark-up (the time when the committee opens the text to change by members of the House Education and Labor Committee) for Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. The Senate has a separate bill. There are several sections of the Higher Education Act that are of significant interest to IRA. This short note is to highlight those sections.

### **General background on the Higher Education Act Amendments of 2007**

The House Education and Labor Committee announced introduction of an HEA reauthorization bill and intend to mark it up in committee on November 14. A press release announcing the bill's introduction asserts that the bill would:

- Streamline the federal student financial aid application;
- Make textbook costs more manageable for students;
- Expand college access for low-income and minority students;
- Increase college aid and support programs for veterans and military families;
- Create safer college campuses for students and faculty;
- Ensure equal college opportunities and fair learning environments for students with disabilities; and
- Help strengthen our nation's workforce and economic competitiveness.

**The term "literacy coach" is defined in the new HEA** and means "a professional "(A) who "(i) has teaching experience and a master's degree with a concentration in reading and writing education; "(ii) has demonstrated proficiency as determined by the principal of the individual's school in teaching reading and writing in a content area such as math, science, or social studies; "(B) whose primary role with teachers and school personnel is to "(i) provide high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers and school personnel related to literacy; "(ii) with respect to the areas of reading and writing, collaborate with paraprofessionals, teachers, principals, and other administrators, and the community served by the school; and "(iii) work cooperatively and collaboratively with other professionals in planning programs to meet the needs of diverse population learners, including children with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals; and "(C) who may provide students with "(i) reading or writing diagnosis, instruction, and assessment; and "(ii) reading and writing assessment, in cooperation with other professionals (such as special education teachers, speech and language teachers, and school psychologists)."

**Of particular interest to IRA is Title II of the HEA** – specifically, the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants – which enables K-12 schools and institutions of higher education to form partnerships for improving teacher preparation. This Title includes:

- **LITERACY TRAINING** – “Developing and implementing a program to strengthen content knowledge and teaching skills of elementary and secondary school literacy coaches that - “(A) provides teacher training in reading instruction for literacy coaches who “(i) train classroom teachers to implement literacy programs; or “(ii) tutor students with intense individualized reading, writing, and subject matter instruction during or beyond the school day; “(B) develops or redesigns rigorous evidenced-based reading curricula that are aligned with challenging State academic content standards, as required under section 1111(b) (1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and with postsecondary standards for reading and writing...(D) provides training and professional development for principals to prepare them to understand the teaching of reading, guide instruction, and foster school improvement.”
- **TEACHING RESIDENCY PROGRAMS** – “Evaluation of teacher effectiveness shall be based on observations of such domains of teaching as the following: (V) “Evaluation of teacher effectiveness for choosing mentor candidates who will be mentoring current or future literacy and mathematics coaches or instructors, “appropriate skills in the essential components of reading instruction, teacher training in literacy instructional strategies across core subject areas...”

**It is important to note that certain definitions in HEA Reauthorization Act are reliant on the meanings given the terms in section 1208 the ESEA Act of 1965 (which are expected to be changed when NCLB is reauthorized):**

- **ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF READING INSTRUCTION** - The term essential components of reading instruction' means explicit and systematic instruction in — (A) phonemic awareness; (B) phonics; (C) vocabulary development; (D) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and (E) reading comprehension strategies.
- **READING-** The term reading' means a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following: (A) The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print. (B) The ability to decode unfamiliar words. (C) The ability to read fluently. (D) Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension. (E) The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print. (F) The development and maintenance of a motivation to read.
- **SCIENTIFICALLY BASED READING RESEARCH-** The term scientifically based reading research' means research that - (A) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and (B) includes research that - (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and (iv) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

The House Education and Labor Committee's higher education subcommittee is questioning whether the HEA and NCLB laws are working together at the federal, state and local level, and whether they are aligned with respect to teacher preparation. Title II of NCLB provides grants to states to improve teacher quality and reduce class sizes. The reauthorization of the two laws will provide Congress an opportunity to explore interrelationships among the goals for each.

Richard M. Long, Ed.D.

Director, Government Relations

International Reading Association

Suite 630

444 North Capitol Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001

(202) 624-8800

(202) 624-8826 (fax)