

S.3086: Equity in Excellence Act of 2010

U.S. Senators **Christopher Dodd** (CT) and **Charles Grassley** (Iowa) introduced S. 3086, the *Equity in Excellence Act of 2010*, on March 8, 2010. The bill would help fulfill the promise of Title I of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by developing the talent of our high-potential, low-income students who are currently underserved by our nation's schools.

Problem: Although NCLB aims to close the achievement gap for children from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, those from low income families, in the eight years since NCLB's passage, the achievement gap between cohorts of the highest performing students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are more advantaged grows at a faster rate than that of like students at the opposite end of the achievement spectrum. The "excellence gap" gap at the top is especially problematic in light of the demand for a high-performing and highly skilled workforce for the new global economy and exemplifies the continuing socio-economic divide in the nation.

Issue Overview: Achievement gaps in reading and math skills between Kindergarten and fifth grade grow roughly twice as fast for students who begin school with scores one standard deviation above the mean as for those who begin one standard deviation below the mean. This trend is especially stark between high-achieving African-American and White students. Additionally, half of lower-income students who were classified as high-achievers in math early in their schooling lost this status in elementary school

Solution: S.3086 would amend ESEA to create a system of "**Equity in Excellence**" grants to support high-need school districts in eliminating the achievement gap between high-achieving, low-income students and their more advantaged peers.

The competitive grants will support local educational agencies in developing a program of services and strategies to ensure that the rate of growth in academic achievement of high-achieving, educationally disadvantaged students is, at a minimum, comparable to that of their more advantaged peers. The program will target interventions and academic services to cohorts of low-income students entering first grade who perform in the top 10% on achievement assessments or are identified through teacher or family referrals, following them through grade four. Data will be collected on the effect of the program.

Grant funds in S.3086 would support the:

- implementation of high quality assessments that provide diagnostic information that informs instruction;
- implementation of evidence-based, challenging education programming designed to maximize learning of high-potential students, including enrichment programs, academic acceleration strategies, and the procurement of high quality support materials such as curricula;

- training and hiring of effective school personnel instructional staff, such as principals, counselors, and psychologists, with the knowledge and skills in implementing evidence-based instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of high-achieving students; and
- education and training of parents of high-potential, educationally disadvantaged students to support educational excellence for their children.

The bill is pending before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; we hope to include the text of the bill in ESEA.