

# Remedial Education Reform: Private Alternatives to Traditional Title I

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The federal government currently spends approximately \$8.2 billion dollars per year on Title I remedial education programs. Title I is designed to meet the educational needs of economically disadvantaged children and improve student achievement. The program funds remedial reading and math instructional programs and is designed to help children who live in or near poverty.

The Department of Education's own program evaluations demonstrate that in its 30-year history, and after more than \$120 billion, the program has not raised student achievement for disadvantaged children.

Title I also has huge funding discrepancies from one school district to another. Title I allocations to the states vary because of the complex formulas that govern the program. For example, Oklahoma receives \$576 for each student below the poverty line, while Vermont receives about \$1,326. Among large metropolitan areas, the variation in the distribution of Title I dollars is also significant. For example, Phoenix, Arizona receives \$570 per poor student, while Boston, Massachusetts receives \$1,045.

In light of the failure of traditional Title I programs to raise student achievement, the U.S. Department of Education has shifted its focus away from individualized instruction to programs that reform an entire school. Schoolwide programs, especially externally developed "models," are being overemphasized with little research evidence backing their superiority. Schoolwide programs also make measuring individual achievement difficult, which is required by the tougher accountability standards in the 1994 reauthorization and the pending reauthorization. Whole-school assessment cannot isolate which specific programs (like Title-I interventions) are responsible for increases or decreases in student achievement.

The focus on schoolwide reform also overlooks one of the few effective Title I programs: the private-remedial education partnership. Since the early 1990s some public schools have begun relying on private remedial education companies such as Sylvan Learning Systems and Kaplan Educational Services to serve disadvantaged students.

In 1998, Sylvan began a \$13.8 million contract in Compton, California, where education quality was so poor that the state took control of the district. Preliminary results indicate that students in the new program have gained an equivalent of one grade level after 20 hours of instruction. “Sylvan at School” programs enroll nearly 80,000 students in 850 public and nonpublic schools, often serving the worst-performing students.

In a national database of Sylvan students for the 1997-1998 school year, 75 percent of the students began their program with California Achievement Test (a national standardized test) reading scores below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. The U.S. Department of Education considers a gain of two NCEs (which are not equivalent to percentage points but a common standard for measuring student progress) acceptable improvement and a gain of seven exemplary. The average gains for these students were eight Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) for reading.

The success of these programs is due to a number of factors:

- Professional development that provides extensive teacher training;
- Instructional guarantees;
- A collaborative relationship with school staff;
- Use of extensive student assessment and a student-achievement profile for each student;
- Initial diagnostic testing for new Sylvan students; and
- Parental involvement throughout the process.

The successful private remedial-education programs illustrate the desirability of making individual students the centerpiece of the Title I program. Private remedial-education programs are well-suited to help local Title I programs meet the 1994 reauthorization and the pending reauthorization’s tougher accountability requirements:

- **Assessment is the cornerstone of private remedial-education programs.** Private remedial-education companies have to test the students in their programs to demonstrate student achievement and retain their Title I contracts, as well as win new contracts. They have a comparative advantage when it comes to student testing and are also designed to be evaluated by independent evaluators. Additionally, many of the private remedial-education companies have extensive expertise in diagnostic testing as one of their core business functions aside from remedial education (Sylvan and Kaplan, for example, offer SAT, GRE, and other standardized testing programs). They could offer school districts insight into how to set up a permanent evaluation system.
- **Teacher training and quality is a cornerstone of private remedial-education companies.** As schools are required to replace paraprofessionals with certified Title I teachers, relying on a private company with an extensive teacher training and recruitment program could help ease the transition from a teacher-aide based system for public schools. The private remedial-education companies are contractually required to provide high-quality certified teachers for their Title I programs.

While the currently configured reauthorization of Title I may not explicitly encourage private remedial-education pilot projects, public schools have the flexibility to experiment with different types of Title I programs. Although the U.S. Department of Education’s current favorite is whole-school reform, no legal limitations restrict how schools can use their Title I funds. As long as schools meet the accountability standards required by Title I legislation, local school administrators are free to meet these standards using private remedial-education pilot programs. These private programs can be set up with performance standards that provide incentives for the private contractor to meet federal standards.

The most-striking difference between public Title I programs and public-school contracts for private remedial-education programs is the federal Title I program's failure to focus on individual low-performing students. That the federal Title I program would expect an at-risk student to make any progress without ever assessing that student's individual performance to determine what kind of remedial help the student might need is counterintuitive. In fact, evidence shows that programs that focus on individual students perform well. Yet, for over 30 years, Title I, a program whose mission is to serve at-risk students, has failed to make low-performing students its centerpiece. The 1994 reauthorization and the current pending reauthorization shift the focus farther away from individual students by encouraging whole-school reform and continues a funding mechanism based on self-reported school poverty data rather than individual student qualifications. Until Title I becomes a program focused on student outcomes with a funding system that allows public and private programs to compete for Title I students, disadvantaged students will continue to lag behind their more-advantaged peers.

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## Part 1

# Introduction

“George buys two calculators that cost \$3.29 each. If there is no tax, how much change will he receive from a \$10 bill?” In 1994, 80 percent of fourth graders could not solve this math problem.<sup>1</sup> The California State University System reported that 55 percent of all incoming freshmen in 1998 needed remedial math classes, and 47 percent needed remedial English classes after scoring poorly on the college placement test.<sup>2</sup> Nationwide, 41 percent of college freshmen enrolled in public two-year colleges and 22 percent freshmen in public 4-year institutions will enroll in remedial courses (see figure 1).<sup>3</sup> The best long-term indicator of achievement, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), shows no consistent upward trend in student achievement during the past three decades.<sup>4</sup> The latest international achievement comparisons from the 41-nation Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) show U.S. students ahead in the early school years but falling to the end of the list by the senior year of high school. The longer U.S. students stay in school, the further they fall behind the averages of other countries.<sup>5</sup> American fourth graders received an A in science and a B- in math. Thirteen-year-olds, did slightly worse, scoring at the international average in math and below average in science. In both math and science, American high-school seniors scored well below the average of their peers in other countries.<sup>6</sup> Only three countries, Lithuania, Cyprus, and South Africa, did worse.

In 1998 the federal government spent over \$51 billion on education. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), at \$8.2 billion per year, is the largest item in the federal education budget.<sup>7</sup> Title I is designed to meet the educational needs of economically disadvantaged children and improve student achievement. The program funds remedial reading and math instructional programs and is designed to compensate children who live in or near poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> *Quality Counts 1998--The Urban Challenge: Public Education in the 50 States*, Joint Report, Education Week and Pew Charitable Trust, January 8, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Kristina Sauerwein, “CSU Unveils Program to Cut Remedial Class Needs,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 1999.

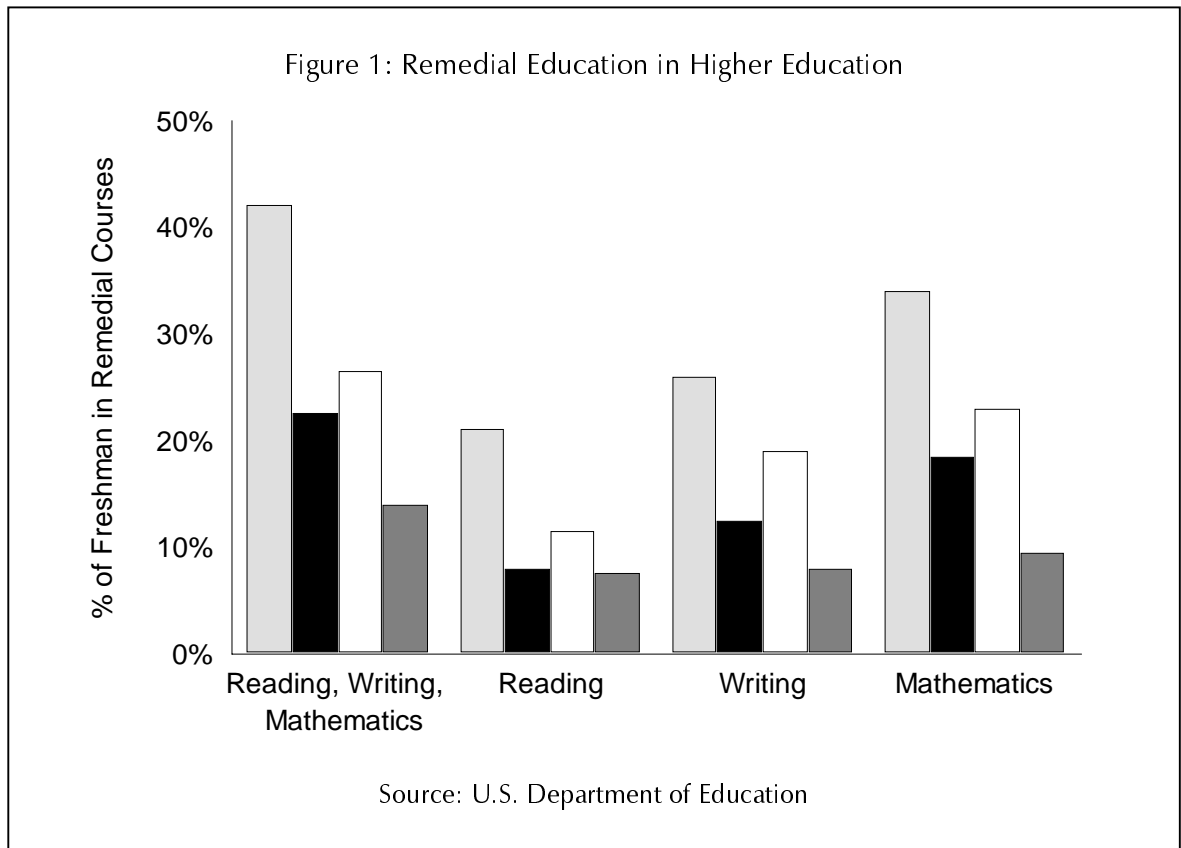
<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Remedial Education at Higher Education Institutions in Fall 1995* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> The NAEP tests academic achievement in reading and math every two years, using a sample population of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 from each state.

<sup>5</sup> *Quality Counts 1998*.

<sup>6</sup> Debra Viadero, “U.S. Seniors Near Bottom in World Test,” *Education Week*, March 4, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, P.L. 103-382.



Since being introduced in 1965, Title I has failed to demonstrate improvements in the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. As Title I, and public education generally, has not produced satisfactory student achievement, parents have turned to an alternative private remedial education market. Since the early 1990s some public schools have also begun relying on private remedial education companies such as Sylvan Learning Systems to serve disadvantaged students at the school site. These private programs offer a useful comparison with public Title I programs in terms of their impact on student achievement.

## Part 2

# Background: Title I

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson established Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as part of his Great Society program. The goal was to improve the basic and advanced skills of students at risk of school failure, especially low-achieving children living in low-income school areas. Recipients of Title I assistance are viewed as being disadvantaged in both economic terms (those children eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches), and educational terms (those children who are performing below appropriate grade level for their age).

Title I has been reauthorized eight times, undergoing three major modifications (and name changes) in order to help increase its effectiveness. In 1988, the Hawkins-Stafford Amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act changed the program name to Chapter 1 and tried to increase the accountability of Title I dollars and standards for Title I students. Again in 1994, when Chapter 1 was reauthorized (the name was changed back to Title I), the program was redesigned for more accountability—requiring states to develop both content standards and performance standards for reading and math by the year 2001.<sup>8</sup>

## A. Evaluating Title I

In its 34-year history, the U.S. Department of Education funded two major longitudinal studies on Title I's effectiveness: *Sustaining Effects* and *Prospects*, in 1984 and 1997, respectively. *Sustaining Effects* gathered data for three years (beginning in 1976) on 120,000 students in 300 elementary schools, and the *Prospects* study examined data for 40,000 students over three years beginning in 1991. The *Sustaining Effects* study demonstrated that the \$40 billion in federal aid spent to help poor children over two decades had done little to improve their achievement. Although the elementary-school students showed slight gains over their peers, “by the time students reached junior high school, there was no evidence of sustained or delayed effects of Title I,” Launer R. Carter, the director of the study, wrote in *Educational Researcher*.<sup>9</sup>

Although the test scores of Title I students improved compared with those of similar students who did not receive help from the program, the improvements did not narrow the gap between them and high-achieving students. When Title I students moved on to junior high school, they needed more remedial courses and showed no lasting benefits from the remedial help they received in elementary school. Title I was least effective for “the most disadvantaged part of the school population,” the authors of the 1984 study wrote.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), Title I, Part A.

<sup>9</sup> Launer F. Carter, “The Sustaining Effects Study of Compensatory and Elementary Education,” *Educational Researcher*, vol.3 no.7 (August/September 1984), p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



Thirteen years later, the most-recent longitudinal study of the program found that even after the federal government spent another \$78 billion (from 1984 to 1997), bringing the total to \$118 billion, little had changed. “After controlling for student, family, and school differences between Chapter 1 participants and nonparticipants, we still find that participants score lower than nonparticipants and that this gap in achievement is not closed over time,” the authors of the *Prospects* study wrote.<sup>11</sup> Researchers could not discern any long-term achievement gains directly linked to the Title I program. The program identifies and serves the children who need the most help, but, according to the study, “the services appear to be insufficient to allow them to overcome the relatively large differences between them and their more-advantaged classmates.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Wayne Riddle, an education analyst at the Congressional Research Service, analyzed the two federal longitudinal studies and five other Title I studies and concluded that “Title I participants tend to increase their achievement levels at the same rate as nondisadvantaged pupils, so gaps in achievement do not significantly change.”<sup>13</sup>

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As Title I, and public education generally, has not produced satisfactory student achievement, parents have turned to an alternative private remedial education market.

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## B. 1994 Reauthorization

The 1994 reauthorization of Title I attempted to fix the program by requiring states to have both content and performance standards for reading and math by the year 2001. It also changed how Title I dollars were disseminated to the schools. Congress identified the following goals for Title I in 1994:<sup>14</sup>

- Ensure a focus on high standards for all children, including those at risk of failing to meet them;
- Provide children with an enriched and accelerated education program;
- Promote schoolwide reform, effective instructional strategies, and challenging content;
- Significantly upgrade the quality of curricula and instruction;
- Coordinate services with other education, health, and social-service programs;
- Afford parents meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at home and at school;
- Distribute resources where the needs are greatest;
- Improve accountability; and
- Provide greater decision-making authority and flexibility to states, districts, and schools in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance.

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, *Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity, Interim Report* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, July, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Wayne Riddle, “Title I, Education for the Disadvantaged: Perspectives on Studies of Its Achievement Effects,” *Report for Congress*, 96-82 EPW, January 5, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), Title I, Part A.

In addition to developing content and performance standards, the 1994 reauthorization requires states to adopt an assessment tool that allows results to be disaggregated by gender, race, disability, and low-income status to ensure that no group is allowed to fall behind.<sup>15</sup>

The 1994 reauthorization of Title I gave states until 2001 to implement a full accountability system with state content and performance standards—until then states are supposed to implement “interim measures.” The U.S. Department of Education’s 1999 interim report on the 1994 reauthorization notes the slow progress of states to adopt standards: “While most states have adopted academic content standards in at least reading and math, only 20 have adopted performance standards, only 14 have assessments aligned with their standards, and only six have altered their professional development programs.”<sup>16</sup> Since many states have not complied with developing standards, the federal government is offering to pay for consulting teams to tell states how to develop their standards.<sup>17</sup>

The 1994 reauthorization also requires all states to identify Title I schools that need improvement. According to a 1999 report by *Education Week* and The Pew Charitable Trust, 19 states had comprehensive policies for identifying underperforming schools.<sup>18</sup> Four of those won't start rating schools until late 1999, and West Virginia currently has no schools on its list. *Education Week* obtained the lists and analyzed the schools currently identified as low-performing in the remaining 14 states. The 14 states list a total of 1,024 underperforming schools, or 3 percent of the schools in those states and 1 percent of schools nationwide. In all, they educate about 602,000 students. Four in 10 of those schools have minority enrollments that exceed 90 percent, compared with just 11 percent of schools across the 14 states and in the nation as a whole. Fifty-seven percent of the schools are in cities, compared with 31 percent of all schools in the 14 states and about 27 percent of all schools nationwide. In about three-quarters of the schools, more than half of the students are poor enough to qualify for federal free lunches.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to failing to identify schools in need of improvement, states vary widely in how they determine whether or not a school should be considered underperforming. Many states have set standards that deem a school’s performance adequate if less than half its students meet state standards for proficiency.<sup>20</sup> At least eight states have set their standard at or around the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, and a few have set the standard even lower. In Alabama, for example, more than half of a school’s students must score below the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile for the school to be put on an intervention track, and more than half must score below the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile to immediately target a school for improvement efforts. In Florida, the standard is 33 percent of an elementary school’s students scoring below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or 40 percent for a middle school. And a school must fail to meet this standard in both reading and math, and its students must fail to achieve a passing average on the state writing exam, for two years straight, before the school is labeled “low performing.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Mapping Out the National Assessment of Title I: The Interim Report* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Federal Legislation Enacted in 1994: An Evaluation of Implementation and Impact* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Quality Counts 1999--Rewarding Results, Punishing*, Joint Report *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trust, January 8, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “States’ Accountability Criteria Vary Widely: About 15% of Title I Schools Targeted for Program Improvement,” *Title I Report*, June 1999.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

## C. 1999 Title I Evaluation

In light of the poor findings from the longitudinal research studies and to demonstrate improvements since the 1994 reauthorization, the U.S. Department of Education cites a more recent 1999 congressionally mandated evaluation of Title I, and the results of the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to demonstrate that the 1994 reauthorization has led to increases in student achievement due to programmatic changes.<sup>22</sup> The 1998 NAEP results initially appeared to show significant improvements in fourth-grade reading scores in nine states since 1994, although only five states had progressed past their scores in 1992, with Connecticut leading the way.<sup>23</sup>

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The Department of Education's 1999 Title I assessment concluded that while the performance of students in high-poverty schools is improving, they remain much further behind their peers in meeting basic standards of performance in both reading and math.

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Kentucky parent Richard Innes discovered a problem with the 1998 NAEP reading scores. According to the official results, Kentucky was one of the most-improved states in fourth-grade reading. Using data available over the Internet, Innes argued that gains in some states, including Kentucky, were the result of excluding higher numbers of students with learning disabilities. Innes asked the critical question: can a state's scores be accurate when they don't include large numbers of low-scoring students?<sup>24</sup> An analysis by the U.S. Department of Education confirmed that several states had inflated reading improvement because they had excluded more special-education students from testing in 1998 than in 1994.<sup>25</sup> The federal analysis found that more than half of the 36 states where the NAEP is administered excluded higher percentages of special-education students in 1998, while five excluded more non-English-speaking students. Kentucky pulled out 10 percent of students selected for its 1998 sample, compared with 4 percent in 1994. Louisiana pulled 13 percent in 1998, up from 6 percent in 1994. And Connecticut, the nation's highest-scoring state, removed 10 percent of the students selected to participate, compared with 6 percent in 1994.<sup>26</sup> The report found that jurisdictions with larger increases in total exclusion percentages also tended to have larger score increases. In Maryland and Kentucky, for example, after accounting for the special-education exclusions, reported gains were considered statistically insignificant.<sup>27</sup>

Even conceding that the 1994 reauthorization of Title I might have led to modest gains in student achievement, Title I is still least effective for the most-disadvantaged part of the school population.

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<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I*, (Washington D.C.: Government printing Office, March 1, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Nina Shokraii Rees, *A Close Look at Title I, the Federal Program to Aid Poor Children*, Backgrounder No. 1271 (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, April 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Gail Russel Chaddock, "What's New," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 18, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Amy Argetsinger, "U.S. Deflates Md. Gains on Reading Test in '98," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., "Issues Surrounding the Release of the 1998 NAEP Reading Report Card," Testimony, Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, May 27, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Argetsinger, "U.S. Deflates Md. Gains on Reading Test in '98."

The 1984 *Sustaining Effects* report, which tracked 15,000 students from 1976-1979, concluded that “Title I was least effective for the most disadvantaged part of the school population.” Twenty years later, the Department of Education’s 1999 Title I assessment concluded that while the performance of students in high-poverty schools is improving, they remain much further behind their peers in meeting basic standards of performance in both reading and math.<sup>28</sup> In 1998, the percentage of fourth-grade students in the highest-poverty schools who met or exceeded the NAEP basic level in reading was about half the national rate, and progress in reading overall was only back to 1988 levels.<sup>29</sup> The 1999 report concluded that “schools enrolling the highest concentrations of poor children are most likely to be identified as in need of improvement.”<sup>30</sup> This is also confirmed by *Education Week’s* findings that the schools identified as underperforming were 90 percent minority, often located in cities, and more likely to have more than 50 percent of their students qualify for the federal free lunch program.<sup>31</sup> In addition, a 1999 report by the Heritage Foundation noted that, on the 1998 NAEP reading test, a 20-percentage-point gap existed between the achievement of poor and affluent students, and only 42 percent of students in the highest poverty schools scored at or above the NAEP basic level for reading compared with 62 percent nationwide.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Quality Counts 1999.*

<sup>32</sup> Rees, *A Close Look at Title I, the Federal Program to Aid Poor Children.*

## Part 3

# Title I Funding Issues

Funding for Title I has steadily increased since 1967. Figure 2 shows the Title I budget from 1980-1999.<sup>33</sup> Currently 90 percent of America's school districts and about two-thirds of its schools (23,000 schools) receive Title I grants. Seventy percent of public elementary schools receive the bulk of Title I funds; 30 percent of public middle/secondary schools receive grants. However, Title I funds also provide money for private schools, with 52 percent of Catholic schools, 9 percent of other religious schools, and 9 percent of secular private schools receiving grants.<sup>34</sup> Title I currently serves over 11 million students, but only about half these students live below the poverty line, leaving around 4 million poor students unserved because funding is targeted at schools that need the funds most, not directly at needy students.<sup>35</sup> Almost all of the highest-poverty schools (95 percent) receive Title I funds, compared with (36 percent) of the lowest-poverty schools. (See Figure 1) In a briefing on the federal role in education, Washington University education professor Paul T. Hill explains the inequities inherent in a funding system targeted at schools rather than students:

*I have a low-income, disadvantaged, low-achieving son and live in Montgomery County, and he's a Title I student there because he's among the lowest in all those categories in Montgomery County. He moves to D.C., and he might not get Title I in D.C., because the definition of a Title I student is totally flexible district to district. In Montgomery County a school that has 20 percent poor kids may be one of the poorest schools and get Title I. And in D.C., a school that has 20 percent poor kids may be one of the richest schools and not get Title I. . . . There is a case to be made there, that the same kid is Title I or not.<sup>36</sup>*

## A. Funding Formula

School districts and schools may receive two types of grants. The first is the basic grant, which goes to almost all Title I schools and accounts for 90 percent of the Title I budget. To qualify for a basic grant, a county or locality needs at least 10 poor school children; and the county's total percentage of poor five- to 17-year-olds must be more than 2 percent. The second is concentration grants, given to schools to add to basic grant payments. To qualify, a school must have at least 15 percent of their students in poverty or more than 6,500 students whose

<sup>33</sup> The Title I budget figures are in 1998 dollars using the gross domestic product chain weight deflator.

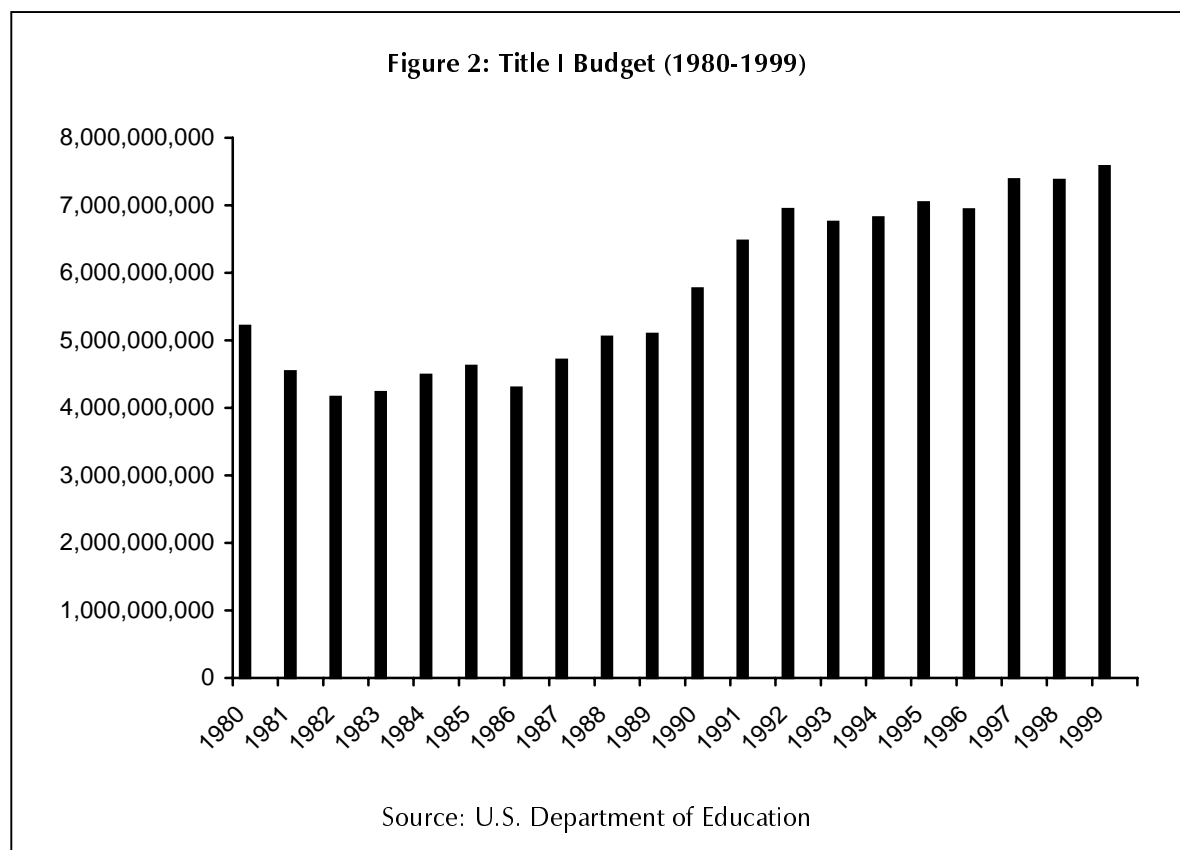
<sup>34</sup> *Education of Disadvantaged Children (Chapter 1, ESEA)*, Biennial Evaluation Report, Fiscal Year 1993-1994 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> Wayne Riddle, Specialist in Educational Finance, Congressional Research Service, testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., March 16, 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Thomas B. Fordam Foundation Briefing, "The Federal Role in Education," *Federal News Service*, March 4, 1999.

family income is less than \$10,000 a year. Also, all new money (that is, money that is more than what was allocated the year before to Title I budget) will be made into target grants. The target grants are to provide higher per pupil amounts to counties and districts with a higher percentage or number of poor children.<sup>37</sup> The average award is \$146 million, and the range of awards is \$16.8 million to \$919.1 million.<sup>38</sup>

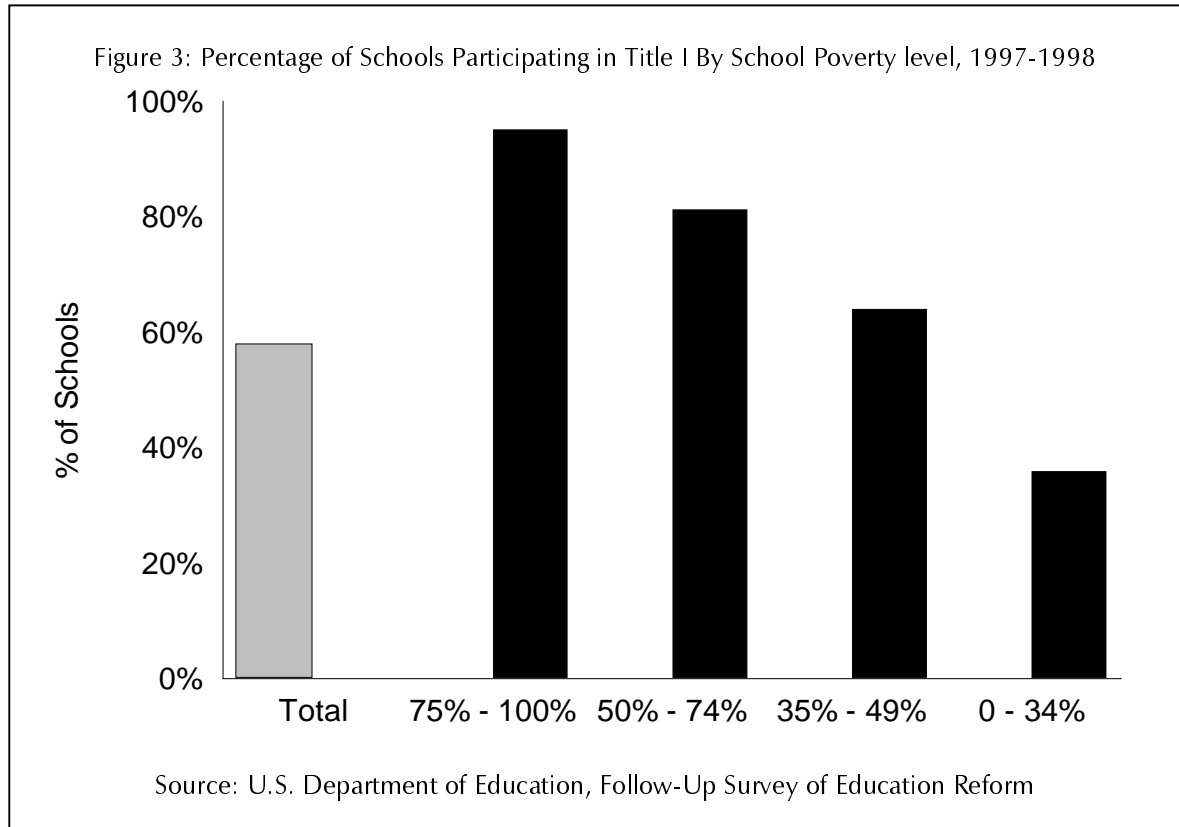
Traditionally, the federal money went to the county level, the county then suballocated money to the school districts. Districts then decided which schools received the money. However, starting in 1994, this process changed to allow money from the federal level to go directly to the districts. School districts rank their schools according to the number of children that receive subsidized lunches. The law requires that districts first serve schools that have at least 75 percent of the students that are poor as determined by students who qualify for the federal free-lunch program. After that, the districts have greater discretion as to where they can send the money. In districts that have numerous schools with high poverty rates, schools with high but not the largest poverty rates will often get passed over. Other changes in the 1994 reauthorization of Title I included the elimination of school districts with 2 percent or fewer children living under the poverty level. Since the 1994 reauthorization, more poor children are receiving assistance. However, many children who need Title I assistance do not receive it simply because their schools do not have enough poor children (see figure 3). Districts now look at census data regarding the poverty level of their district every two years rather than every decade.



<sup>37</sup> Target grants were to start the 1998-99 school year, but Congress has yet to provide any money for the program.

<sup>38</sup> Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), Title I, Part A.

Congress also tried to fix the “perverse disincentive” system of Title I funding in 1994. Previously, if student scores went up, the school would lose its grants and therefore eliminate some of the programs that might have helped the children to raise their scores. Starting in 1994, schools maintain their funding levels as student test scores increase.



## B. Title I Funding Inequities

Although the 1994 reauthorization attempted to make Title I funding more equitable, there are still huge discrepancies in funding from one school district to another. Title I allocations to the states vary because of the complex formulas that govern the program. For example, Oklahoma receives \$576 per student below the poverty line, while Vermont receives about \$1,326.<sup>39</sup> Among large metropolitan areas, the variation in the distribution of Title I dollars is also significant. For example, Phoenix, Arizona receives \$570 per poor student, while Boston, Massachusetts receives \$1,045.<sup>40</sup>

Even at the local level, the variations in funding can be enormous. In Monterey County, California, for example, in 1998-1999 the five largest districts—with 70 percent of the county’s school age population and 75 percent of the county’s Title I-eligible children—were ineligible for concentration grants in 1998-1999

<sup>39</sup> Rees, *A Close Look at Title I, The Federal Program to Aid Poor Children*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

school year because they did not meet the 15 percent minimum requirement.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the entire \$1.3 million in concentration grants drawn by Monterey County students were divided among the four districts that had a count of “formula children” making up at least 15 percent of enrollment. They are small districts, with 60 to 160 school-age children within their borders. And their concentration grants were about what would “normally” be received by districts 10 times their size.

Since Title I “hold-harmless” language guarantees districts as much funding as they received the prior year, in the 1999-2000 school year these districts will again receive a windfall. For the 1999-2000 school year San Ardo Union Elementary was allotted \$532,148 for 52 “formula children;” San Lucas Union Elementary gets \$422,048 to serve 36 children. This amounts to more than \$10,000 per “formula child,” as compared with a state average of about \$655 and a national average of about \$730. While the county’s largest school district with the largest number of Title I children will again receive no funding from concentration grants. (See table 1).

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Title I currently serves over 11 million students, but only about half these students live below the poverty line, leaving around 4 million poor students unserved because funding is targeted at schools that need the funds most, not directly at needy students.

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District	Population 5-17	Eligible Population	Percent Eligible	Basic Grant 1999-2000	Conc. Grant 1999-2000	Total Title I Funding	\$ per eligible
Monterey Peninsula	16,776	2,442	14.6	1,392,055	0	1,392,055	\$570
Bradley	68	8	11.8	0	220,199	220,199	\$27,525
Lagunita	66	7	10.6	0	183,499	183,499	\$26,214
San Ardo	141	52	36.9	27,673	532,148	559,821	\$10,776
San Lucas	163	36	22.1	31,791	422,046	453,839	\$12,607

Source: Title I Report, July 1999

The other two fortunate small districts should not have been eligible for concentration grants this year at all. In fact, they aren’t even eligible for basic grants, because they have fewer than 10 “formula children.” But the hold harmless clause ensured that they would get concentration grants equal to last year’s. Thus, Bradley Unified Elementary School District will receive a \$200,199 concentration grant for eight eligible children, more than \$27,000 per eligible child. Lagunita Elementary gets \$183,499 for seven eligible children, or more than \$26,000 per child.<sup>42</sup> That’s \$384,000 that could have been divided among needier Californiaschools. “The situation is clearly inequitable,” stated Judith Bell, who handles Title I allocations for the California Department of Education. “They’re ineligible, but they get the pork. How do you explain that to everybody else?”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Julie Miller, “Unintended Consequences in California,” *Title I Report*, July 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Miller, “Unintended Consequences in California.”



When allocations were made by the county, concentration grants assigned to a county were distributed among districts within that county that had a count of formula children making up at least 15 percent of their enrollment. In Monterey, the small districts get the funding because in the 1998 school year Monterey County had only four districts that met the 15 percent minimum requirement for concentration grants. The hold harmless guarantees ensure that the districts will get the same amount of funding as the previous year—even if they no longer have 15 percent of their school-age population living in poverty.

Even without the hold harmless guarantees, Table I demonstrates the limits of the current Title I funding formula based on poverty percentage rates. A district such as Monterey Peninsula with over 2,000 children living in poverty but a large student population receives no funding while a district such as San Lucas with 30 children living in poverty but a small student population receives funding. While the 30 children should not have their funding revoked, the 2,000 children are still disadvantaged—even if they do not make up 15 percent of the district's student population.

## Part 4

# The Schoolwide Debate

## A. Pullout Programs

Until the 1994 reauthorization, the most common method for Title I service delivery was through pullout programs that took students out of their regularly scheduled class for additional instruction. Students usually received a half hour of additional instruction five times a week. However, the Department of Education's Biennial Evaluation Report and the 1997 *Prospects* study found that students actually only received an extra 10 minutes of instructional time per day, in addition to missing their regularly scheduled class instruction. The report found that 70 percent of children missed class instruction and 56 percent of students missed reading/language arts instruction.<sup>44</sup> The reports also noted that there is often no formal co-ordination between regular classroom instruction and Title I remedial instruction. In other words, the remedial instruction did not relate to the student's regular classwork, and there was no coordination between a student's regular teacher, Title I teacher, or parents to determine the student's progress.<sup>45</sup>

Title I critics have also argued that pullout programs were unsuccessful because they were often taught by underqualified teacher's aides rather than teachers. *Education Week* reported that teacher's aides spent 60 percent of their time teaching or helping to teach students during the 1997-98 school year. Forty-one percent of Title I aides spent half or more of their time on those activities without a teacher present.<sup>46</sup>

In California, the latest available figures indicate that the ratio of aides to teachers paid for by Title I funds is four to one. At Los Angeles Unified School district (LAUSD), the nation's second-largest school district, the ratio is seven to one.<sup>47</sup> LAUSD has 6,540 part-time paraprofessionals whose employment consumed nearly 40 percent of LAUSD's Title I budget in the 1998-99 school year.<sup>48</sup> In comparison, 21 percent of the district's Title I funds are spent on instructors and teacher training.<sup>49</sup> Most of the instructors on the district's Title I payroll rarely teach. Instead, they serve as program coordinators at their individual schools.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Education of Disadvantaged Children* (Chapter 1, ESEA), Biennial Evaluation Report.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Erik W. Robelen, "Study: Title I Aides often Acting as Teachers," *Education Week*, August 4, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Ralph Frammolino, "Title I's \$118 Billion Fails to Close Gap," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

Critics argue that Title I aides are not properly trained and offer Title I student's little more than an adult in the room rather than solid instructional input. While improved teacher quality might improve student performance, critics seem to use paraprofessionals as a scapegoat for ill conceived, poorly implemented pullout programs. Teacher certification does not guarantee increased student performance. At best it is a proxy for performance rather than an outcome measure that directly measures student achievement.

## B. Schoolwide Programs

In light of the Title I's past poor performance, the U.S. Department of Education has concluded that direct instruction through pullout programs does not work, and shifted its focus away from individualized instruction to programs that reform an entire school. Schoolwide programs, especially externally developed "models," are being overemphasized with little research evidence backing their superiority.<sup>51</sup> At best, evidence for the effectiveness of whole-school reform is mixed, and no clear evidence links schoolwide projects to improved student achievement. Witnesses at a July 13, 1999 hearing on whole-school reform concluded that there "isn't enough evidence to draw firm conclusions about which approaches, much less which specific models, are most effective."<sup>52</sup> The 1999 *Educators Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, released by the American Institutes for Research and commissioned by five leading education organizations including the National Education Association, ranked 24 schoolwide programs by the amount of research available on student achievement. The report found that only three of the 24 popular school reform models have strong evidence that they improve student achievement.<sup>53</sup>

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At best, evidence for the effectiveness of whole-school reform is mixed, and no clear evidence links schoolwide projects to improved student achievement.

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The 1994 reauthorization of Title I made it easier for schools with at least 50 percent of their students in poverty to adopt schoolwide projects and use Title I funds for whole-school reform, not just services to individual eligible students. Since 1995, the number of schools implementing schoolwide programs has more than tripled from about 5,000 to approximately 16,000.<sup>54</sup> The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project (also known as Obey-Porter for the legislators that sponsored the project), provides an additional \$150 million in federal grants to Title I schools to implement schoolwide reforms. The legislation authorizing the project suggests 17 school-wide reform models, although funding is not contingent on selecting one of the models. Critics argue that there is little evidence to back up the models, especially the newer models that have not established a track record in the schools. As education policy professor Herbert Walberg argued, most of the popular reform models do not "have any evidence at all, and especially evidence that is independent of developers. This kind of screening would never be acceptable in medicine."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "What Works? Lawmakers Seek Answers at Hearing on Comprehensive Reform," *Title I Report*, July 1999.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Lynn Olson, "Researchers Rate Whole-School Reform Models," *Education Week*, February 17, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> "Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I."

<sup>55</sup> Debra Viadero, "Who's In, Who's Out," *Education Week*, January 20, 1999.

Success for All, one of the most commonly used whole-school reform models and the most popular model chosen by schools seeking grants under the schoolwide demonstration project, got a mediocre score in an independent evaluation of the program conducted by Miami-Dade County school officials. Researchers examined changes in reading scores from 1996 to 1997 in nine schools that were using Success for All. “By the spring of 1997, the researchers found that, the reading scores of students in the Success for All schools were no higher than those for comparison schools.<sup>56</sup> Students learning to speak English in those schools made no more learning gains than their counterparts elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> An independent evaluation of Success for All by the University of Maryland showed an average effect of near zero. Success for All students scored about the 50 percentile or the same as matched control groups. In five of 10 comparisons, control groups outscored Success for All students. The Maryland study also compiled six estimated effects from other independent evaluations of Success for All. In two cases, Success for All students did better than control groups; in two cases, the differences were not statistically significant; and in two instances, control groups outscored Success for All students.<sup>58</sup>

In another independent evaluation of Success for All in the Baltimore public schools, Richard Venezky of the University of Delaware found that the average Success for All student failed to reach grade-level performance by the end of grade three. Even with further Success for All instruction, students continued to fall further behind national norms. By the end of fifth grade, they were almost 2.4 years behind.<sup>59</sup>

Title I’s increasing emphasis on schoolwide reforms makes it difficult to design a study that directly measures student achievement.<sup>60</sup> “With schoolwide models and the merging of funds, how can you attribute anything? It’s pointless,” stated Rolf Blank, director of education indicators at the Council of Chief State School Officers, voicing what appeared to be a consensus opinion, at a hearing on the future of Title I research.<sup>61</sup> Researchers also expressed concern that schools operating more-traditional targeted assistance programs are being ignored with the strong focus on schoolwide efforts.

Title I students have been subject to two extremes of Title I implementation. For most of Title I’s history students were taught using a poorly implemented pullout method that did not test disadvantaged students to determine their actual skill level, did not offer individualized lesson plans, and did not regularly test students to determine student progress. The current favorite, whole-school reform, does not offer any individualized instruction but expects disadvantaged students to absorb the school improvements, whether new computers or a new method for teaching reading, like all other students. High quality teaching and school resources, in the first place, should eliminate the need for special programs for disadvantaged students.

Supporters have defended whole-school programs by arguing that the programs work if correctly implemented. In other words, the problem is implementation not the schoolwide program itself. This same argument, however, can be used in support of pullout programs. Correctly implemented pullout programs such as those provided by private remedial education programs also achieve positive results.

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<sup>56</sup> Debra Viadero, “Miami Study Critiques ‘Success for All,’” *Education Week*, January 27, 1999.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, “The Diogenes Factor,” *Education Week*, April 8, 1998.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> “Research Panel, Ed Officials Ponder Current and Future Title I Studies,” *Title I Report*, July 1999.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

## Part 5

# Private Remedial Education

**T**itle I has been reauthorized eight times and gone through three name changes, yet after spending well over \$120 billion, the program appears not to be reaching its goals. As Title I and public education generally have not produced satisfactory student achievement, parents have turned to an alternative private remedial-education market.

Many parents are spending \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year to buy their children extra academic help. Companies like Sylvan Learning Center, Huntington Learning Center, and Kaplan Educational Centers (to name just a few) are experiencing phenomenal growth. Sylvan has grown to 700 centers nationwide, adding 50 centers per year, and by the end of 1998 Kaplan had 100 centers nationwide.

This trend toward relying on private learning centers is not limited to individual parental decisions. Several urban school districts around the nation have contracted with learning centers to work in the public schools using Title I and other public-education funds. Sylvan Learning Systems signed its first contract to deliver services to public-school students in six Baltimore elementary schools in 1993. Today, Sylvan at School programs operate in 850 public and nonpublic schools across the nation with an enrollment of nearly 80,000 students.

## A. Sylvan Learning Systems

Extensive in-house and independent evaluations of Sylvan Learning Systems have demonstrated increases in student achievement.

### *1. Measuring Student Growth*

Sylvan Learning Systems uses the California Achievement Test to measure the progress of every student enrolled in its public-school programs. Sylvan compares individual student's beginning and end-of-program test scores.<sup>62</sup> Results are expressed in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE). NCEs are derived from national percentile rankings and are commonly used to measure year-to-year student progress. The NCE compares each student's individual level of achievement to the national norm group at the same time of year. If students' NCEs increase from fall to spring, then those students have gained on the norm group. In other words, they have accelerated their growth in relation to the national norm group.

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<sup>62</sup> Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program, Research and Evaluation, Contract Education Services Division, 1999.

The U.S. Department of Education has set a desired gain of plus-two NCEs as significant. University of Arizona professor Stanley Pogrow, developer of High Order Thinking Skills, has argued that the Department of Education has set its agency's NCE expectations low. He claims that "a more substantial goal worth aiming for would be a goal of four NCEs."<sup>63</sup> A growth of plus-seven NCEs is considered exemplary in federal grant programs.

## 2. *Evaluating the Evaluators*

The Chauncey Group International conducted an audit of the assessment system that Sylvan uses as part of its public-school program. "The purpose of the audit was to help ensure that the assessments used in Sylvan programs were evaluated with respect to a uniform, rigorous set of standards and by a well-documented process, open to public scrutiny."<sup>64</sup> The standards that the Chauncey Group used for the audit were developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), *Standards for Quality and Fairness*, because they are representative of the significant topics in any assessment system. The ETS standards are organized into 13 major areas and are modeled after the draft revised *Joint Technical Standards for Education and Psychological Tests*, developed by the American Psychological Association and the National Council of Measurement in Education. (see Box)

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Several urban school districts around the nation have contracted with learning centers to work in the public schools using Title I and other public-education funds.

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The 13 areas in which Sylvan's assessment processes were audited include:

- Developmental Procedures
- Customer Service
- Uses and Protection of Information
- Assessment Development
- Cutscores, Scaling, Equating
- Score Reporting
- Test Takers' Rights
- Suitability for Use
- Fairness
- Validity
- Reliability
- Assessment Administration
- Assessment Use

The Chauncey Group's report concluded that "all three of the programs implemented by the Sylvan Contract Education Services use sound assessment practices as evidenced by the degree to which they meet the standards outlined in the ETS *Standards for Quality and Fairness*."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Brian Jendryka, "Failing Grade for Federal Aid: is It Time to Close the Book on Chapter 1?" *Policy Review*, (Fall 1993), p.80.

<sup>64</sup> *Quality Audit for Sylvan Contract Education Services*, The Chauncey Group International, (March-May 1999).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

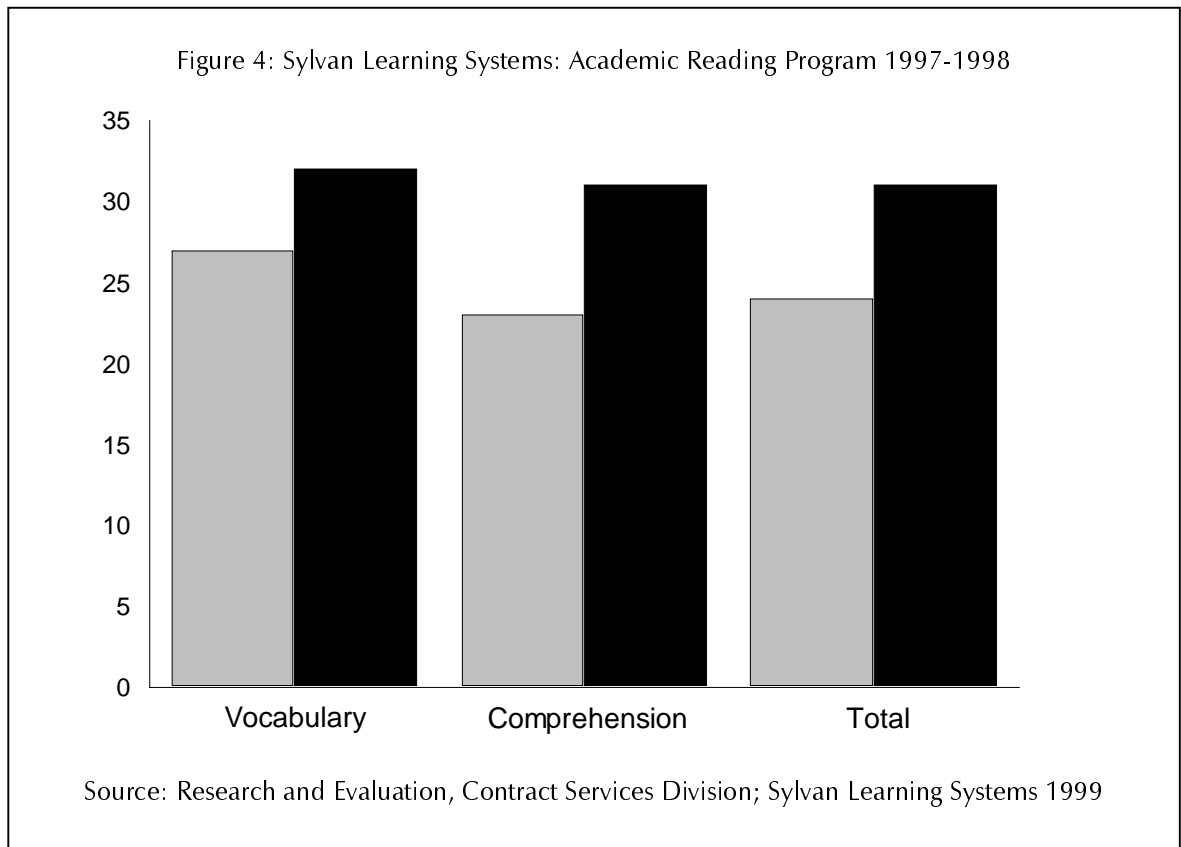
### 3. Key Findings of the Assessment of the 1998 Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program

National averages for students completing the Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program show strong gains in student performance for the 1997-1998 school year.<sup>66</sup>

- Vocabulary scores increased on average by 19 percent.
- Reading comprehension scores increased on average by 35 percent.
- Total or overall reading scores increased on average by 25 percent.

Sylvan Academic Reading Program students at all grade levels increased reading skills (see Figure 4).

- On a national average, students enrolled in the Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program achieved a gain of seven NCEs.
- The average student showed a gain of five NCEs on the vocabulary portion of the CAT and a gain of eight NCEs on the comprehension portion.
- On a national average, Sylvan at School students enrolled at the elementary level achieved a gain of eight NCEs on the Reading CAT.
- Elementary students increased their total reading scores an average of 32 percent.
- Middle-school students increased their total reading scores an average of 21 percent.
- High-school students increased their total reading scores an average of 30 percent.



<sup>66</sup> Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program, Research and Evaluation, Contract Education Services Division, 1999.

### Sylvan at School Highlights

One Sylvan Learning Center school—Maple Elementary School in Dorchester, Maryland—received the only award for Outstanding Title I school of the year for all of Maryland. The Sylvan at School program was specifically cited as a contributing factor in the improvements that this school demonstrated.

At Easton High in Maryland all the ninth graders who failed the math test the first time passed it after participation in the Sylvan program. “We are very satisfied with Sylvan’s performance—you can’t argue with 100 percent. They delivered more instructional hours than they agreed to and billed us for fewer hours,” reported curriculum coordinator Doug Gibson.

A study of the St. Paul Minnesota contract to provide math and reading to 800 students found that minority students made the largest gains—60 percent of students made reading gains greater than the nationwide average, with 71 percent for Asian students and 85 percent gains for African-American students. In math, 79 percent of students also made greater-than-average gains.

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Sylvan scores are especially impressive because they are for Title I students who are the worst performing among Title I students.

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#### ***4. Focus on Lowest-Performing Students***

Sylvan scores are especially impressive because they are for Title I students who are the worst performing among Title I students. As Irene McAfee, the vice president for research and development at Sylvan’s Contract Education Services points out, “the most difficult part of assessing how Sylvan students are doing in comparison to similar students is finding a control group of similar students.”<sup>67</sup> The students who are sent to Sylvan are often the lowest-performing and no other students match these students academically. In a national database of Sylvan students representing districts across the nation for the 1997-1998 school year, 75 percent of the students began the Sylvan program with California Achievement Test (CAT) Reading scores below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. Of the 4,227 students with complete pre-and post-test data, 70 percent had reading gains of two NCEs or more and 66 percent had reading gains of three NCEs or more over a one-year period. The average gains for these bottom-quartile students were eight NCEs for reading, with 10 NCEs for comprehension and six NCEs for vocabulary. One school’s Beginning Reading Program started with 71 percent of its students as nonreaders. When reassessed after attending the Sylvan Program, 100 percent of the students were reading. In addition, an examination of the pre- and post- percent of students attaining mastery of basic readiness skills showed exceptional progress. For example, only 23 percent of the students could identify lowercase letters on the Inventory of Beginning Abilities pretest. After the Sylvan Program, 96.8 percent of students were able to identify the letters. Only 27 percent of the students could identify long vowel sounds on the Decoding Abilities Test. After the Sylvan Program, 73.8 percent of the students were able to identify long vowels.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Irene McAfee, interview with author, July 10, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Irene McAfee, Response to the Martha Abel MacIver Study, The Impact of Sylvan Instruction on Urban Students Placed at Risk, May 1999.

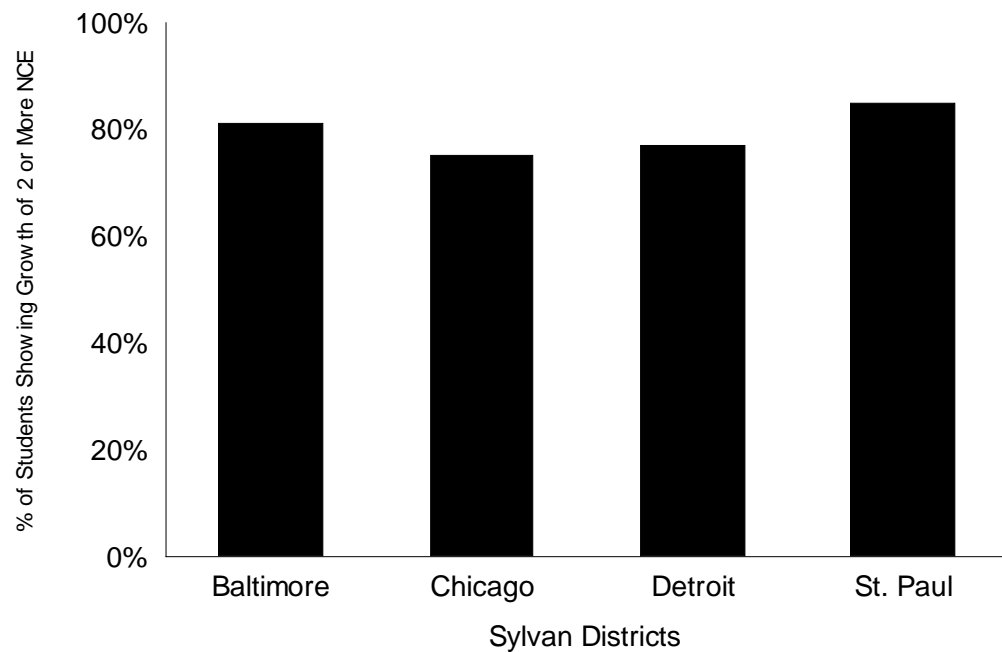


### Highlights Reading Progress for Lowest-Performing Sylvan Students (see Figure 5) (1997-1998 School Year)

- For Baltimore City Sylvan Centers, 469 students began the program with achievement test scores below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. At the end of the program year, 81 percent had reading gains of two NCEs or greater. The average total reading gain across students was 10 NCEs.
- Chicago, with 689 students, and Detroit, with 798 students, experienced average student gains of eight NCEs for students starting the program with scores below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- In St. Paul, Minnesota, 85 percent of the low-quartile students had two or greater NCE gains in reading, and the average total reading gain in St. Paul was 12 NCEs.
- In the spring of 1998 Sylvan began a \$13.8 million contract in Compton, CA, where education quality is so poor that the state has taken control of the district. Preliminary results indicate that students have gained an equivalent of one grade level after 20 or more hours of instruction.<sup>69</sup>

Private remedial-education companies have the flexibility to tailor their programs to meet state standards in addition to increasing a student's standing on nationally norm-referenced tests.

**Figure 5: Achievement Growth for Bottom-Quartile Sylvan Students(1997-1998)**



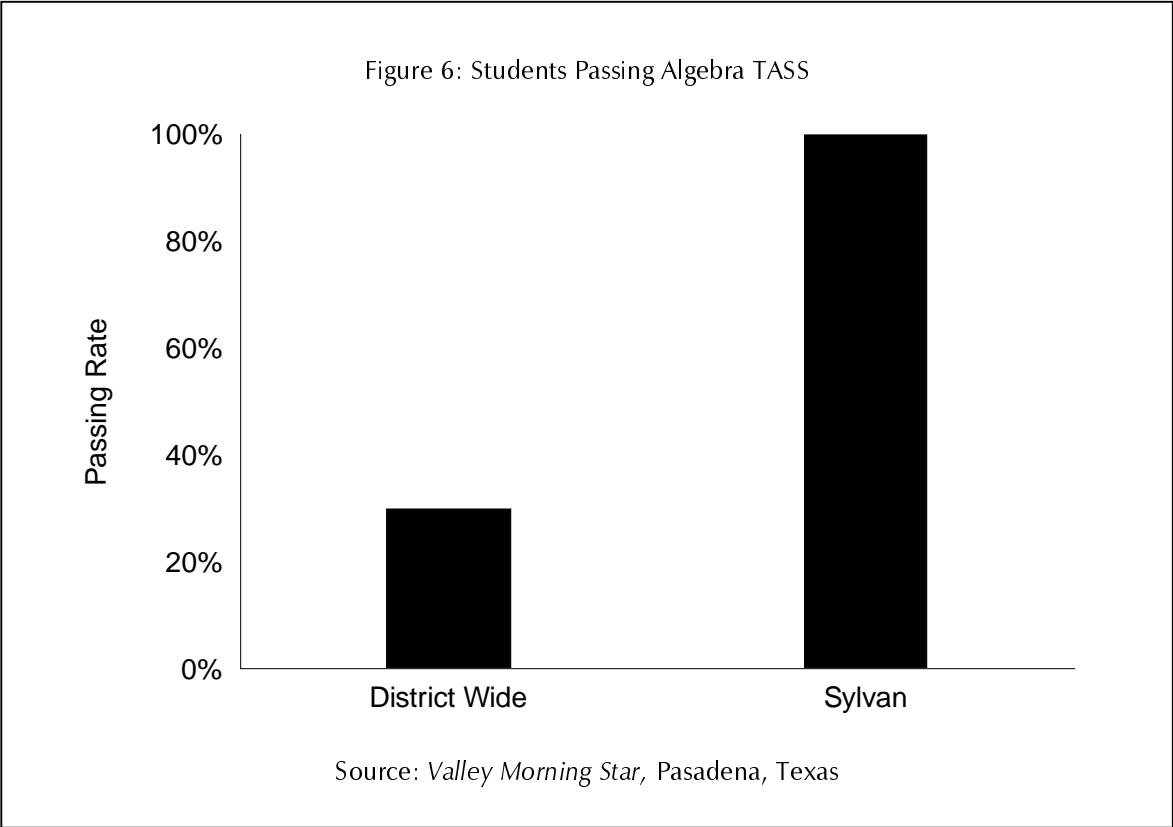
Source: Sylvan Learning Systems

<sup>69</sup> Kathleen Wilson, "High School Districts Seek Outside Help," *Ventura County Star*, April 19, 1999.

**5. Sylvan Meets State Standards**

Another problem identified in the 1999 assessment of Title I is the dual system of standards between Title I and individual state standards. Some critics have argued that Title I assessments should not just be based on NCEs but on how many students can pass state-specific standardized tests. Private remedial-education companies have the flexibility to tailor their programs to meet state standards in addition to increasing a student’s standing on nationally norm-referenced tests. In Pasadena, Texas, for example, Sylvan had a contract to provide basic reading and math at two middle schools. After students in the Sylvan program achieved extensive point gains beyond the minimum contract requirement, Sylvan was asked to help students pass algebra, a subject required by the Texas Assessment of Achievement Skills (TAAS). In 1995, when students at the two middle schools were tested in algebra only 30 percent passed. The next year every algebra student was enrolled in the Sylvan program and every student passed. Sylvan had a 100 percent pass rate compared to the district-wide results of 30 percent. (see Figure 5)<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, the Florida Department of Education retained another company, Kaplan Educational Centers to provide professional development and academic intervention pilot programs at six public schools in Leon, Broward, and Franklin County School Districts to help teachers and students meet Florida state standards and meet the required achievement levels on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).



<sup>70</sup> Lisa Snell, “Remedial Education: Title I vs. Private,” *Privatization Watch*, (December 1998), p.1.

## 6. Independent Sylvan Evaluations

In addition to Sylvan’s in-house evaluations, independent analyses of student outcomes for instructional delivery by Sylvan Learning Systems also report positive results.

Johns Hopkins University researchers analyzed data from the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) for students participating in the Sylvan program from 1993-1995. Outcomes for students who participated in the Sylvan program were compared with outcomes for control groups constructed by Johns Hopkins University researchers from the BPCS database. The study compared scores on the Maryland Functional Math test for 136 eighth-grade students who received Sylvan instruction with scores from a random sample of other eighth graders throughout Baltimore City who scored within the same range on a pretest. Sylvan math students made significantly higher test score gains than did the control group of non-Sylvan students. In both the Sylvan and the control cases, the students had not passed the functional test on a previous administration of the test. Sylvan students averaged a 28.5 point gain (for a passage rate of 43.4 percent), compared to the control group gain of 12.7 points (passage rate of 17.1 percent). “We believe that a 26+ percent differential in pass rates after an intensive program of instruction is quite educationally significant,” reported Johns Hopkins’s researchers.<sup>71</sup> Sylvan’s elementary math program in BCPS served a total of 165 children in 1993-94 and 371 students in 1994-95. On average, 1993-94 Sylvan elementary math students gained 14.11 NCEs on the California Test of Basic Skills math test after a year-long intervention, while control students gained 7.2 NCEs (see Table 2).

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Sylvan’s survival depends on Sylvan students demonstrating measurable gains, while the traditional Title I student is not likely even to be assessed to measure progress.

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The Johns Hopkins study also analyzed data for the first two years of reading programs in BCPS and found no evidence that Sylvan reading programs in high-poverty schools improve student achievement. The authors pointed out, however, that “others have reported cautiously positive effects of Sylvan instruction on reading comprehension, and Sylvan reading instruction has evolved since the first two years in Baltimore, additional research may uncover more positive effects.”<sup>72</sup>

**Table 2: Outcomes for Middle School Sylvan Students and Control Group (Maryland Functional Math Test, 1994)**

	Sylvan (N=136)	Control (N=747)
Avg. MFMT Score F94 (Pretest)	307.19 (15.25)	307.15 (13.82)
Avg. MFMT Score F94 (Posttest)	335.72 (25.04)	319.83 (19.90)
Gain	28.53 (18.54)	12.68 (15.11)
Percent Passed	43.4%	17.1%

Source: <sup>1</sup> Martha Abel MacIver and Sam Stringfield, “The Impact of Sylvan Instruction on Urban Students Placed at Risk: Evaluation of a Privatization Experiment,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Martha Abel MacIver and Sam Stringfield, “The Impact of Sylvan Instruction on Urban Students Placed at Risk: Evaluation of a Privatization Experiment,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.8.

### Sylvan responds Quickly to Early Signs of Poor Performance

Although the Johns Hopkins report was released in June 1998, the data analysis was conducted on test scores collected between 1993 and 1995, the first years of implementing the Sylvan Program in a public-school system. Since the 1993 data, Sylvan has made substantial modifications to the Sylvan at School program. In light of lower-than-expected reading scores, Sylvan completely redesigned its public-school reading program to adapt to the needs of the Title I child. The Beginning Reading Program was revised to target students who are nonreaders. This program allows students to learn the readiness skills necessary for academic progress while staying motivated to remain in school.<sup>73</sup> Sylvan's quick response to feedback from student test scores marks a key distinction between private remedial-education companies and traditional Title I programs: Sylvan's survival in the public-school system depends on Sylvan students demonstrating measurable gains, while the traditional Title I student is not likely even to be assessed to measure progress.

An independent analysis of Sylvan Learning Systems in Broward County, Florida, compared middle-school students who had received at least 55 hours of Sylvan reading instruction with demographically comparable Title I students and found Sylvan students' posttest scores 1.9 NCE points higher.<sup>74</sup> The evaluation found that Sylvan students demonstrated a moderately higher gain than similar Title I students and that participation in the Sylvan program was at no time associated with a decline in performance levels. African-American males registered especially high gains. After participation in the Sylvan program in 1995-1996, students sustained gains in the 1996-1997 school year.<sup>75</sup>

## B. Kaplan Learning Services

Although Sylvan has been the largest provider, positive results are not limited to Sylvan programs. Kaplan Learning Services, for example, has also shown significant gains in student achievement in their public-school programs:<sup>76</sup>

**Los Angeles Unified School Districts.** In 1998 Kaplan won a contract to conduct after-school, extended-day programs in supplementary reading, math, language arts, and science education on-site at 25 Los Angeles Unified public schools. The program served approximately 6,000 students for the 1998-99 school year and was funded through Title I dollars.<sup>77</sup> The customized programs were designed to supplement the education students received during the school day. Each program combined detailed assessments, individualized-multimedia curricula, and intensive small-group instruction. LAUSD teachers were hired to fill all instructional positions. Results are being studied by an outside evaluator, and by late July 1999 LAUSD had

<sup>73</sup> Irene McAfee, Response to the Martha Abel MacIver Study, The Impact of Sylvan Instruction on Urban Students Placed at Risk, May 1999.

<sup>74</sup> K.A. Blasik and E.V.E. Hodges, "Remediating Middle School Students in Reading: Privatized Vs. Public School Efforts," *ERS Spectrum*, (1997).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> *Kaplan Learning Services School Partnerships 1998-1999*, Kaplan Learning Centers Inc.

<sup>77</sup> "LAUSD Approves Kaplan Plans for Remedial Education and Professional Development at 32 Schools," Kaplan press release, April 14, 1998.

not yet given permission for Kaplan to release the results to the public.<sup>78</sup> In a pilot project at three Los Angeles public elementary schools during summer 1997, 240 third, fourth, and fifth graders gained an average of 7.95 months in initial reading skills and 4.92 months in reading comprehension after spending one hour per day in the eight-week program.

**George Washington High School, New York City.** The Kaplan after-school program at George Washington High School helped ninth grade students improve their basic skills in reading and math. Each student spent three hours a week developing basic skills using computer-based curriculum and small-group reading instruction. The program included customized detailed feedback on student assessments and professional development for teachers. Students in the program showed an average grade-equivalent increase in reading of one year in 55 hours of instruction based on the California Achievement Test.<sup>79</sup> The principal of the school asked Kaplan to extend the program and offer the same opportunity to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students.

**Philadelphia Public Schools.** Kaplan provided basic skills instruction and career development to 900 students for the Private Industry Council's Youthworks program and 100 students at another Philadelphia high school. Students progressed an average of eight grade-equivalent months in vocabulary and nine grade-equivalent months in comprehension, based on the California Achievement Test.<sup>80</sup>

## C. Huntington Learning Centers

Huntington Learning Center is also a newcomer to the public-school market. The District of Columbia signed a contract to set up Huntington Learning Centers at several Washington, D.C. junior-high schools for 300 low-performing students. Huntington conducted reading and math programs for students whose basic skills were below grade level. Initial results showed improvement in overall reading skills and higher Stanford Achievement Test (Stanford 9) scores.<sup>81</sup> According to Browne Junior High School Principal Cynthia Clarke, Huntington's program "enabled students to increase their individual Stanford-9 NCE by an average of 21.1 points. Eighty-three percent of my students at the Below Basic level advanced to Basic; meanwhile, an overall 31 percent of my students advanced one full ranking."<sup>82</sup>

Huntington Learning Centers does not publish specific student-achievement data but makes test results available to any interested public-school official considering private remedial education.<sup>83</sup> At this time, Huntington Learning Center is not actively pursuing new public-school contracts due to the bureaucratic complexity of working with school superintendents and school boards. The company is, however, willing to work with any school district that approaches the company and has had very positive experiences with public-school students once a public-school contract has begun.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Joseph Scherer, Executive Director, Kaplan Learning Services, interview with author, July 28, 1999.

<sup>79</sup> *Kaplan Learning Services School Partnerships 1998-1999*, Kaplan Learning Centers Inc

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> *Recent Successes*, Huntington Learning Centers, [www.huntingtonlearning.com](http://www.huntingtonlearning.com), July 12, 1999.

<sup>82</sup> Marcia Tress, "Schools and Tutoring Companies Tailor programs for Student Success," *Curriculum Administrator*, September 1998.

<sup>83</sup> Russ Miller, Huntington Learning Center, interview with author, August 10, 1999.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

## D. Regional Private Remedial Education Programs

Smaller regional remedial education companies have also won public-education contracts and posted higher student outcomes than traditional Title I programs:

- The Chicago-based Success Labs Inc., for example, has nine Success Lab School Learning Centers in the Chicago public schools and two centers operated by the Chicago Park District. The company spent two years developing a reading program specifically for inner-city students before opening the Spencer (Chicago Public School) Learning Center in 1995 and the Tilton (Chicago Public School) Learning Center the following year. Program evaluations for all students enrolled in the Success Labs public-school program during the 1995-96 and 1997-98 school year demonstrated an average reading improvement on the Illinois Test of Basic Skills of 1.385 years.
- The Cedar Rapids, Iowa-based EduCare Learning Centers have demonstrated cost savings and increased student achievement in their Title I services to local elementary schools. Students enrolled in a nine-week, 27-hour program gained on average one grade level in reading and math for the 1996-97 school year. Students at a second Cedar Rapids elementary school gained an average of 1.29 grade levels after 35 hours of instruction during the 1996-97 school year. The Educare Title I contract also saved one elementary school 21 percent of the public school cost to provide Title I services. The cost of the public-school program in 1996-97 before contracting with Educare was \$15,500. The cost was \$12,188 after contracting with Educare for the 1997-98 school year.

**Part 6**

# Key Characteristics of Private Remedial Education

In addition to increases in student achievement, several notable process features of Sylvan-type programs appear to be especially important for schools serving students placed at risk.

## A. Student Centered

The Johns Hopkins study noted three significant characteristics of Sylvan's public-school programs:<sup>85</sup>

- A focus on student products;
- A system for gathering all of each students' products in a single, longitudinal file each year, which allowed the student, the parents, the teacher, and the administrator to have ready access to each child's progress on a real-time, reliable basis;
- A system commitment to regularly reviewing students' progress, with discussions between multiple adults relative to any student not making readily observable progress.<sup>86</sup>

As MacIver and Stringfield, authors of the Johns Hopkins study of Sylvan programs, concluded, "Unless schools are committed to systematically monitoring individual student progress on norm-referenced tests and implementing intervention strategies for those falling behind, it is unlikely that student achievement will improve."<sup>87</sup>

This conclusion runs counter to the current trend in Title I instruction which focuses on whole-school reform, offers no reliable method for testing individual student performance, and does not monitor individual Title I students in any way.

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<sup>85</sup> Martha Abel MacIver and Sam Stringfield, "The Impact of Sylvan Instruction on Urban Students Placed at Risk: Evaluation of a Privatization Experiment," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 1999.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

### **Private Remedial Education Keys To Success (box)**

- Professional Development—provide extensive teacher training, often including existing school staff;
- Instructional guarantees;
- A collaborative relationship with school staff;
- Use of extensive student assessment and a student-achievement profile for each student;
- Initial diagnostic testing; and
- Parental Involvement throughout the process.

## **B. Parent Involvement**

Private remedial education companies schedule regular appointments with parents to review their child's progress. If face to face meetings are not possible, they confer with parents by phone or written report.

## **C. Instructional Guarantees**

Private companies usually guarantee increases in student achievement, or they offer additional instruction for free. Sylvan in School programs, for example, guarantee an average yearly achievement growth of five NCEs in the targeted content area after 64 hours of instruction. In Baltimore when 85 to 90 percent of the 3,000 city students in the program exceeded the federal goal of a two-point gain on California's Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the other 10 to 15 percent of the students received free instruction per Sylvan's guarantee.

## **D. Staff Development**

Private remedial-education companies conduct extensive teacher training and often incorporate public-school staff into the process. Sylvan staff workshops include the Sylvan testing process; how it relates to the classroom; how three-to-one instruction is delivered; conferences with parents; and linkages between Sylvan and regular classroom instruction.

## **E. Individual Diagnostic Assessment**

One failure of Title I has been a lack of individual assessment. Pullout programs have been used with generic lessons rather than a focus on a specific student's skills. Private remedial-education companies assess each student to gain information about a student's skill level. This assessment allows the teacher to develop an individualized learning plan for each student.



## F. Innovative Reward Systems

Some private remedial-education programs use external rewards to motivate students. Sylvan has the Sylvan Store in which students can redeem tokens they have earned for desirable merchandise such as movie tickets or radios.

## G. Low Teacher-Student Ratios

Private remedial-education instructors work with approximately three students to one teacher to ensure that each student receives critical personal attention.

## H. Performance Benchmarks

Private contractors are evaluated the first year of the contract for specific increases in student achievement. The 1994 reauthorization of Title I, on the other hand, gave states until 2001 to implement a full-accountability system with state content and performance standards. Until then, states are supposed to implement “interim measures.” This is only the standard-development component; it still does not address how these states will determine if students meet these standards. Since many states have not complied with developing standards, the federal government is offering to pay for consulting teams to tell states how to develop their standards.

The importance of standards has been demonstrated in a variety of ways. For example, a program by the Heritage Foundation looking for schools in the poorest neighborhoods where students performed in the top 25 percent of all American students found 125 schools. The common bond these schools shared was that principals set specific benchmarks that the whole school must meet. High standards must be measured constantly against regular, rigorous testing. One school in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, measured students on standardized tests four times a year.<sup>88</sup>

## I. Competition

Title I contracts have been competitively bid. Private remedial-education companies are constantly facing competition from other tutoring companies. In fact, Sylvan Learning’s founder, Berry Fowler, who sold the company in 1979 for \$5.3 million, is starting a new lower-cost line of tutoring companies called A Thousand Points of Knowledge. Fowler is selling licenses to use his materials and methodology so teachers can tutor with very little overhead. The licenses will cost \$29,000 for a territory of 10,000 school-age children and a \$1,200 annual license fee. In contrast, a Sylvan franchise costs about \$92,000 for a territory of 10,000 children and royalties paid to the parent company of 8 percent of franchise revenue. The tutoring cost would range from \$19 to \$20 an hour versus \$25 to \$45 an hour charged by current learning centers.

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<sup>88</sup> Samuel Casey Carter, *No Excuses: Seven principals of Low-Income Schools Who set the Standard for High Achievement* (Washington D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1999).

## J. Economies of Scale

Private-education companies often have large economies of scale and expertise, while the federal program has high administration costs. *Education Week* has referred to the annual Title I conference as the “annual bean-counting conference,” because so much conference time is devoted to panels on Title I compliance rather than teaching strategies for remedial education. In Arizona, state schools superintendent Lisa Graham Keegan says she has 165 employees—45 percent of her staff—to manage federal programs that make up 6 percent of her budget.<sup>89</sup> Private-education companies also use well-documented instructional methods including extensive student diagnostic testing to determine their individual needs, three-to-one student/teacher ratios, extensive teacher training, and innovative reward systems.

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<sup>89</sup> “\$8 Billion Program Fails to Close Education’s Race Gap,” *USA Today*, March 5, 1999.

**Part 7**

# Recommendations

The successful private remedial-education programs illustrate the desirability of making individual students the centerpiece of the Title I program.

## A. Title I Portability

In 1999 one of the most hotly debated recommendations for fixing Title I was to set up a funding stream through which Title I dollars would follow the individual student from school to school. Title I portability would minimize the arbitrary nature of Title I funding and force schools to focus on student achievement. However, this improvement would come at a substantial cost. If all 4 million Title I students who are eligible but do not currently receive Title I funding were to accept Title I grants, the Title I program cost would increase substantially. For example if you used the national average per pupil Title I funding of \$730 the program costs would increase by almost \$3 billion.

In order to reduce the cost of portability programs targeted to all eligible Title I students, the eligibility criteria would have to be tightened. The eligibility could be based on an individual student's parental income level and an individual student's achievement level. However, introducing eligibility requirements could increase administrative costs. The current Title I program is funded based on a percentage of students that are eligible for the free-lunch program at individual schools. No specific program application is tied to individual Title I eligible students. The federal program does not require individual schools to verify parental income for a student to receive a free lunch. Thus, if schools were required to verify income data and administer placement tests to potential Title I students, the administration costs would be significantly higher.

The process to qualify for a free lunch amounts to parents self-reporting income on a form that is turned into their local school. Federal free-lunch program administrators argue that the program has little potential for fraud because "the worst that happens is a kid gets a free lunch."<sup>90</sup> Federal free-lunch data, however, are used as one of the main poverty indicators for school districts and are linked to other local, state, and federal funding streams. In New Jersey schools where over 20 percent of students qualify for the federal free-lunch program must provide full-day kindergarten and half-day preschool for four-year olds who qualify for the free-lunch program.<sup>91</sup> While fraud from the federal free-lunch program may have small consequences for the

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<sup>90</sup> Jeffrey Bills, "Fraud Opportunity Limited to Kid Getting a Free lunch," *Chicago Tribune*, March 13, 1995.

<sup>91</sup> John Chadwick, "Clifton Votes to Check Incomes of those Applying for Free Lunches," *The Record* (Bergen County, N.J.), April 8, 1999.

program itself, the cost of fraud to other education programs such as Title I may be much greater. Districts that have tried more strictly to verify parental income have met with resistance. When the Bergenfield school district in New Jersey required parents to submit more extensive income documentation after the number of students in the free-lunch program doubled in one year, the New Jersey state nutrition program forced the district to reinstate all students who were disqualified from the program. Bergenfield district business administrator Tom Egan argued that there were inconsistencies in some of the applications, including applications from foreign students and students whose parents had homes valued at \$350,000.<sup>92</sup>

Currently, students who qualify for the free-lunch program do not have to demonstrate low test scores or a need for remedial education to contribute to an individual school's percentage of Title I eligible students. The 1998 NAEP assessment of fourth-grade reading scores, for example, reported that 40 percent of students who participated in Title I scored at the basic level in reading, 13 percent scored at the proficient level, and 2 percent scored at the advanced level on the 1998 NAEP reading test.<sup>93</sup> While many students who qualify for the free-lunch program need extra academic help, low student income should not be the only determining factor for Title I participation. Individual students should be assessed to determine whether or not the student needs remedial education. Testing for academic placement would eliminate some students from the Title I program.

If real accountability is to be enforced through the structure of the federal Title I program, schools should be required to monitor and create profiles for the performance of individual Title I students in order to receive that student's portion of Title I funding. This would create a public record for the parents, teachers, and Title I evaluators that could be used to determine whether a Title I program is improving performance of the specific student. Every Title I program, whether private or public, would be forced to track the progress of each low-income student, not just schools as a whole.

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If a Title I program fails to improve student achievement, there should be sanctions including a loss of funding to the school, with individual students receiving funds for alternative remedial-education programs.

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## B. Limited Title I Portability

Presidential candidate George W. Bush has proposed a more-limited portability proposal that would target Title I students in schools that have failing Title I programs. Schools that fail to show improvements in student achievement for three consecutive years would lose their Title I funding, and the student's parents would be given a remedial education voucher. Bush's plan would give \$1,500 to parents of Title I children in failing schools to spend on the remedial-education programs of their choice.<sup>94</sup> This idea takes into account the robust private market for remedial education, allowing parents to send their children to public or private remedial-education providers of their choice.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> NAEP 1998, 1994, and 1992 National Reading Summary, <http://www.naep.gov>.

<sup>94</sup> Matt Miller, "Follow the Money, "Bush Wants Failed Schools to Lose Federal Funding," *Time*, September 20, 1999.

As part of the FY 2000 Labor-HHS-Education spending bill, House, Senate, and White House negotiators accepted a public school choice provision for title I students trapped in failing schools. “For the first time, school districts must give parents the choice of taking their children out of schools that are identified as in 'school improvement' or in 'corrective action'. Parents will now be able to move their children to another public school or charter school that is not in school improvement or corrective action.”<sup>95</sup> A school is considered in school improvement if it fails to make adequate yearly progress under Title I guidelines over two consecutive years. Nationally, about 7,000 Title I schools are currently in school improvement.<sup>96</sup>

### C. Private Remedial Education Pilot Programs

Since schoolwide programs have mixed evaluations at best, the U.S. Department of Education should open up the Obey-Porter schoolwide target grants to allow experimentation with other types of pilot programs such as private remedial-education contracts. Public schools are not restricted from using Title I dollars for private contracts unless the local state or school district prevents such contracts. The additional Obey-Porter grants, however, are designed to fund whole-school programs. Additional funding through target grants should not be tied to the type of “model” a school uses to improve student achievement (such as the 17 schoolwide models listed by the Department of Education) but should be tied specifically to student outcomes. If a Title I program fails to improve student achievement, there should be sanctions including a loss of funding to the school, with individual students receiving funds for alternative remedial-education programs.

### D. Title I Program Improvement Trade-offs

Policymakers must consider a range of possible Title I program improvements from full Title I portability to sponsoring private remedial-education pilot projects in the Title I reauthorization process. One test of possible Title I improvements is to examine each recommendation through an established list of desirable outcomes for an effective Title I program.

Based on the Title I shortcomings, an improved Title I program would address both the inconsistent funding levels for Title I school districts and the low student-performance outcomes achieved by many Title I programs. A well-designed Title I program should also be relatively free of fraud and simple to administer (see box).

**A well-designed Title I program:**

- Should have funding consistency. Each school should receive the same per-pupil amount;
- Should be simple to administer;
- Should be resistant to fraud;
- Should require accountability for performance. The flow of funds over time should be tied to performance measures.

<sup>95</sup> Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, “Public School Choice Scheduled to become federal law for First Time through Education Spending Bill,” press release, November 17, 1999.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

Title I portability would create the most-consistent funding mechanism for Title I and require high levels of student performance because of the competition between public and private programs to attract Title I students. The program would be relatively free from fraud if the eligibility criteria were tightened but would have relatively high administrative costs to monitor eligibility and student-placement scores. The program might also substantially increase program costs.

Limited Title I portability would not substantially increase program costs. It could require all schools to focus on student performance and result in loss of funding for program failures. It would not significantly change the fraud or program-administration levels from the status quo.

A private-remedial education pilot program would not increase the cost of the Title I program or increase administration costs. The program would have high accountability as the private contractor would lose the remedial-education contract if student achievement did not improve.

<b>Title I Improvement Matrix</b>				
	<b>Consistency of Funding</b>	<b>Administrative Simplicity</b>	<b>Potential for Fraud</b>	<b>Funding Tied to Performance Measures</b>
<b>Current Title I Program</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Complete Title I Portability</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Limited Title I Portability</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Private Remedial-Education Pilot Program</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>

As the matrix illustrates all three Title I reforms are superior to the current Title I system.

## **E. State and Local Education Policy Implications**

The Title I reauthorization legislation (the Student Results Act of 1999) will likely require schools, districts, and states receiving Title I funding to make student-achievement data public by the start of the 2000-2001 school year. These data would include the number and percentage of low-performing students on statewide assessments, disaggregated by subgroup.<sup>97</sup> Reports also must include comparative and trend data on student achievement, as well as data on teacher qualifications and data for both Title I and non-Title I students. Schools would have to report on such things as the percentage of teachers certified in their subject area and the ratio of certified teachers to paraprofessionals.

Congress has sent local school districts a contradictory message about future Title-I priorities. The bill continues to support the movement away from individual remedial instruction towards whole-school reform, which uses Title I money to raise the standards for all students enrolled at a school. Specifically, the bill

<sup>97</sup> Alexander Russo and Julie Miller, "House Bill Would Add Group-Specific Accountability," *Title I Report*, October 1999.

lowers the percentage of poor children from 50 to 40 percent that would qualify a school for participation in a schoolwide program.<sup>98</sup>

Schoolwide programs, however, make it difficult to measure individual achievement of Title I students, which is required by the tougher accountability standards. Whole-school assessment cannot isolate which specific programs (like Title I interventions) are responsible for increases or decreases in student achievement.

The bill also tightens the standards for the use of paraprofessionals as Title I teachers. The bill requires that all current Title I teachers be fully qualified by the end of 2003, and that all new Title I teachers be fully qualified (including an academic major or demonstrated performance on subject-area assessments.) Schools would be barred from adding paraprofessionals to their Title I-funded staff and could only replace existing employees. Within one year, newly hired paraprofessionals would have to have two years of college coursework, earn an associate's degree or pass a rigorous test of knowledge developed at the local level. Current paraprofessionals would have until 2003 to meet the standard. While certification may improve teacher quality it does not guarantee increased student performance. At best it is a proxy for performance rather than an outcome measure that directly measures student achievement.

Given the more rigorous accountability standards required by the new Title I legislation and the stricter requirements for Title I teachers, private remedial-education programs are well-suited to help local Title I programs meet these requirements:

**Assessment is the cornerstone of private remedial-education programs.** Private remedial-education companies have to test the students in their programs to demonstrate student achievement and retain their Title I contracts, as well as win new contracts. They have a comparative advantage when it comes to student testing and are also designed to be evaluated by independent evaluators. Additionally, many of the private remedial-education companies have extensive expertise in diagnostic testing as one of their core business functions aside from remedial education (Sylvan and Kaplan, for example, offer SAT, GRE, and other standardized testing programs). They could offer school districts insight into how to set up a permanent evaluation system.

**Teacher training and quality is a cornerstone of private remedial-education companies.** As schools are required to replace paraprofessionals with certified Title I teachers, relying on a private company with an extensive teacher training and recruitment program could help ease the transition from a teacher-aide based system for public schools. The private remedial-education companies are contractually required to provide high-quality certified teachers for their Title I programs.

While the currently configured reauthorization of Title I may not explicitly encourage private remedial-education pilot projects, it allows public schools the flexibility to experiment with different types of Title I programs. The Department of Education's current favorite is whole-school reform. However, no legal limitations restrict how schools can use their Title I funds. As long as schools meet the accountability standards required by Title I legislation, local school administrators will be free to meet these standards using private remedial-education pilot programs. These private programs can be set up with performance standards that provide incentives for the private contractor to meet federal standards.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

## Part 8

# Conclusion

The most-striking difference between public Title I programs and public-school contracts for private remedial-education programs is the federal Title I program's failure to focus on individual low-performing students. That the federal Title I program would expect an at-risk student to make any progress without ever assessing that student's individual performance to determine what kind of remedial help the student might need is counterintuitive. In fact, evidence shows that programs that focus on individual students perform well. Yet, for over 30 years, Title I, a program whose mission is to serve at-risk students, has failed to make low-performing students its centerpiece. The 1994 reauthorization and the current pending reauthorization shift the focus farther away from individual students by encouraging whole-school reform and continues a funding mechanism based on self-reported school poverty data rather than individual student qualifications. Until Title I becomes a program focused on student outcomes with a funding system that allows public and private programs to compete for Title I students, disadvantaged students will continue to lag behind their more-advantaged peers.



# About the Author

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