

Advocates for Literacy Recommendations: *Aim Higher Act*

Advocates for Literacy is a coalition of over 60 organizations that understands the imperative role of literacy -- reading and writing -- in creating a globally competent workforce. The coalition is comprised of organizations representing teachers; parents; education researchers; unions; education publishers; nonprofits representing underserved populations and more. Advocates for Literacy supports comprehensive, birth through grade twelve literacy programs that focus on struggling students (below proficient). The Coalition works to ensure that literacy is a focus in federal education policy and advocates for increased federal resources to support states and local educator's evidence-based practices.

On behalf of the 22 organizations signed on to this letter, we recommend the following changes to the Aim Higher Act (H.R.6543 as introduced in 2018) in order to better align the legislation -- and any future reauthorization of the Higher Education Act -- with the Every Student Succeeds Act, increase the quality of literacy instruction and prepare educators to provide comprehensive literacy instruction to students.

Definitions

Recommendation: Maintain definition of "Comprehensive Literacy Instruction," which is the meaning given the term in section 2221(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6641(b)(1)).

Recommendation: Add the definition of "literacy coach" from the Literacy for All Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act.

The term "literacy coach" means a professional—

(A) who has--

- (i) previous teaching experience; and
- (ii) (I) a master's degree with a concentration in reading and writing education or demonstrated proficiency in teaching reading or writing in a core academic subject consistent with effective literacy instruction; or
(II) in the case of a literacy coach for children from birth through kindergarten entry, a concentration, credential, or significant experience in child development and early literacy development;

(B) who supports teachers to--

- (i) apply research on how children become successful readers, writers, and communicators;
- (ii) apply multiple forms of assessment to guide instructional decision making and use data to improve literacy instruction;
- (iii) improve children's writing and reading in and across content areas such as mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts;
- (iv) develop and implement differentiated instruction and teaching approaches to serve the needs of the full range of learners, including English learners and children with disabilities;
- (v) apply principles of universal design for learning;
- (vi) employ best practices in engaging principals, early learning program educators and administrators, teachers, and other relevant professionals to change school cultures that encourage and support literacy development and achievement; and
- (vii) set for children birth to kindergarten developmentally appropriate expectations for language and literacy development, and high reading and writing achievement goals for all children and select, acquire, and use instructional tools and skills to help children reach such goals; and

(C) whose role with teachers and professionals supporting literacy instruction is--

- (i) to provide high-quality professional development, consistent with the definition of comprehensive literacy instruction;
- (ii) to work cooperatively and collaboratively with principals, teachers, and other professionals in employing strategies to help teachers identify and support child literacy and language development needs and teach literacy across the content areas and developmental domains; and
- (iii) to work cooperatively and collaboratively with other professionals in employing strategies to help teachers teach literacy across the content areas so that the teachers can meet the needs of all children, including children with disabilities, English learners, and children who are reading at or above grade level.

Recommendation: Maintain definition of “Mentoring,” as currently in the Higher Education Opportunity Act under the term “teacher mentoring.”

Recommendation: Maintain definition of “teaching skills,” as it importantly incorporates students with low literacy levels.

Recommendation: Maintain the definition of “professional development,” which has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Title II

Recommendation: Maintain in Sec. 2003 (Partnership grants) provision amending Section 202 (b)(6)(H)(ii) related to how the institution will partner with the LEA to “train other classroom teachers, principals or other school leaders, school librarians, and other educators to implement literacy programs that incorporate the components of comprehensive literacy instruction.”

Recommendation: Maintain in Sec. 2003 (Partnership grants) provision amending Section 202 (d)(1)(B)(ii)(VI) to use the term “comprehensive literacy instruction.”

Recommendation: Amend Sec. 2003 to amend the original HEOA language from Title II, Part A, Section 202 (d)(6) to read: “**Comprehensive literacy instruction**. -- Strengthening the ability of prospective and new elementary and secondary school teachers -- (A) to implement **comprehensive literacy instruction....**”

Recommendation: Amend Sec. 2003 to amend the original HEOA language from Title II Part A, Section 202 (f)(1) to add a requirement that teacher leader development programs carried under this section shall involve professional development related to implementing comprehensive literacy instruction.

(F) how the partnership will prepare educators to teach and work with students with disabilities, including training related to early identification of students with disabilities and participation as a member of individualized education program teams, as defined in section 614(d)(1)(B) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to ensure that students with disabilities receive effective services, consistent with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, that are needed for such students to achieve to challenging State academic standards;

(G) how the partnership will prepare educators to teach and work with students who are English learners to ensure that students who are English learners receive the services that are needed for such students to achieve to challenging State academic standards;

(H) how the partnership will prepare educators to implement comprehensive literacy instruction;

“(I) how faculty at the partner institution will work, during the term of the grant, with mentor educators in the classrooms and administrators of high-need schools served by the high-need local educational agency in the partnership to—

“(i) provide high-quality professional development activities to strengthen the content knowledge and teaching skills of elementary school and secondary school teachers and other educators, including multi-tiered systems of support, **comprehensive literacy instruction**, and universal design for learning;

“(ii) train other classroom teachers, principals or other school leaders, school librarians, and other educators to implement literacy programs that incorporate the components of comprehensive literacy instruction; and

“(iii) provide evidence-based, high quality professional development activities to strengthen the instructional and leadership skills of elementary school and secondary school principals or other school leaders and district superintendents, if the partner institution has a principal or school leader preparation program;”;

Recommendation: Amend Sec. 2006 to amend the original HEOA language from Title II Section 205’s (Accountability for Programs that Prepare Teachers) Report Cards to include data collection and ratings that take into account the number of hours and types of preparation provided in the area of effective implementation of comprehensive literacy instruction. Specifically, maintain HEOA’s Sec. 205 (A)(1)(G) and modify slightly to read:

“(G) Teacher training.--A description of the activities that prepare general education and special education teachers to: (i) teach students with disabilities effectively, including training related to participation as a member of individualized education program teams, as defined in section 614(d)(1)(B) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (ii) to effectively teach students who are limited English proficient; **and (iii) effectively implement comprehensive literacy instruction.**

Recommendation: Amend Sec. 2006 to amend the original HEOA language from Title II Section 205’s State Report Card on the Quality of Teacher Preparation (b)(1) to add: “(M) **The extent to which teacher preparation programs prepare teachers, including general education and special education teachers, to effectively implement comprehensive literacy instruction.**”

Recommendation: Revise Sec. 2007 (Teacher Development) to amend the original HEOA’s language from Title II Section 206’s provisions to add: (b)(6) “**prospective general and special education teachers receive course work and training in providing comprehensive literacy instruction.**”

Recommendation: Maintain Sec. 2010’s Elevation of the Education Profession Study and the composition of the Membership of the Advisory Committee to include “(K) Nonprofit organizations representing subject-fields, such as STEM Educator organizations, comprehensive literacy Educator organizations, and arts and humanities educator organizations.”

Recommendation: Amend Section 261’s Graduate Fellowships To Prepare Faculty In High-Need Areas At Colleges Of Education provisions to include teachers preparing to be literacy specialists.

“(d) TYPES OF FELLOWSHIPS SUPPORTED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible institution that receives a grant under this subpart shall use the grant funds to provide graduate fellowships to individuals who are preparing for the professorate in order to prepare individuals to become elementary school and secondary school science, technology, engineering, and math teachers, **literacy specialists**, special education teachers, and teachers who provide instruction for English-learners, who meet the applicable State certification and licensure

requirements, including any requirements for certification obtained through alternative routes to certification, or, with regard to special education teachers, the qualifications described in section 612(a)(14)(C) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(2) TYPES OF STUDY.—A graduate fellowship provided under this section shall support an individual in pursuing postbaccalaureate study, which leads to a doctoral degree and may include a master's degree as part of such study, related to teacher preparation and pedagogy in one of the following areas:

(A) Science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer science, and their related subfields, if the individual has completed a master's degree in mathematics, engineering, science, or computer science and is pursuing a doctoral degree in mathematics, science, engineering, or education.

“(B) Special education.

“(C) The instruction of English-learners, including postbaccalaureate study in language instruction educational programs.

(D) **Literacy instruction.**

Thank you for considering our views as you work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, and we look forward to working with you on this important issue. Please feel free to contact the Advocates for Literacy Co-chairs (Amanda Karhuse, NASSP, karhusea@nassp.org; Rachel Niebling, Alliance for Excellent Education, niebling@all4ed.org;) or the Policy Development Committee Chair (Meghan Whittaker, NCLD, mwhittaker@nclld.org) with any questions or for further information.

Sincerely,

Advocacy Institute
Alliance for Excellent Education
Association for Middle Level Education
CAST
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Education Northwest
Every Child Reading
Grimes Reading Institute
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPIY)
International Literacy Association
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of English
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
National Writing Project
Reading Partners
Reading Recovery Council of North America
TASH