

Meeting The Challenges Of Rural Education

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Rural educators face special challenges in trying to improve student achievement. Teachers are often asked to instruct on a wide variety of subjects. They may teach to several grade levels at once. School choice and tutoring options may be complicated by logistics.

Building On Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act* recognizes and addresses the challenges of rural education. New teachers in small, rural school districts will have additional time to meet Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. Larger rural districts will have the flexibility to use federal funds that are currently available to only the smallest districts. And larger per-child Supplemental Educational Services (SES) amounts will be provided for qualified low-income rural students to receive free tutoring and after-school instruction.

Support for Rural Education:

- ❖ Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)—This program provides financial assistance to rural districts through their states to help them meet their adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals. Funds may be used to recruit and retain teachers, offer professional development, purchase education technology, support parental involvement strategies or improve school safety. For FY 2008, \$169 million has been proposed for REAP.
- ❖ Advanced Classes—A significant increase (\$85 million, for a total of \$122 million) has been proposed for FY 2008 to train teachers to lead Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes. The proposal is part of the President's Academic Competitiveness Initiative. In addition, new Academic Competitiveness Grants are providing financial incentives for students in rural areas and elsewhere to take rigorous courses in high school and college.
- ❖ Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) Requirements—New teachers in small, rural school districts will have additional time to meet the HQT requirements. The law would provide relief for eligible districts that have a single teacher instructing multiple subjects because of low enrollment.
- ❖ Teacher Incentive Fund—The Fund helps states and districts reward teachers and principals who improve student performance or close achievement gaps, or who choose to serve in the neediest schools.
- ❖ Flexibility—States will be able to prioritize their school improvement activities based on the specific needs and successes of the school. To help states and districts tailor programs for their needs, 100 percent of specified federal funds may be moved among programs.
- ❖ More Rural Districts Qualify—All rural school districts will be able to use the federal formula funds received under the following programs: Teacher Quality, Educational Technology, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and Innovative Programs. They may be used for any purpose authorized by statute. Currently, only the smallest and most disadvantaged rural districts qualify. In addition, rural districts would receive federal funds through their State Educational Agency (SEA), with which they already have a familiar relationship.
- ❖ Prioritized Support for Schools—States will be able to focus more federal resources, interventions, and technical assistance on schools with the greatest needs, such as those identified for improvement or corrective action.