

GAO

**Health, Education and Human Services
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**Education and
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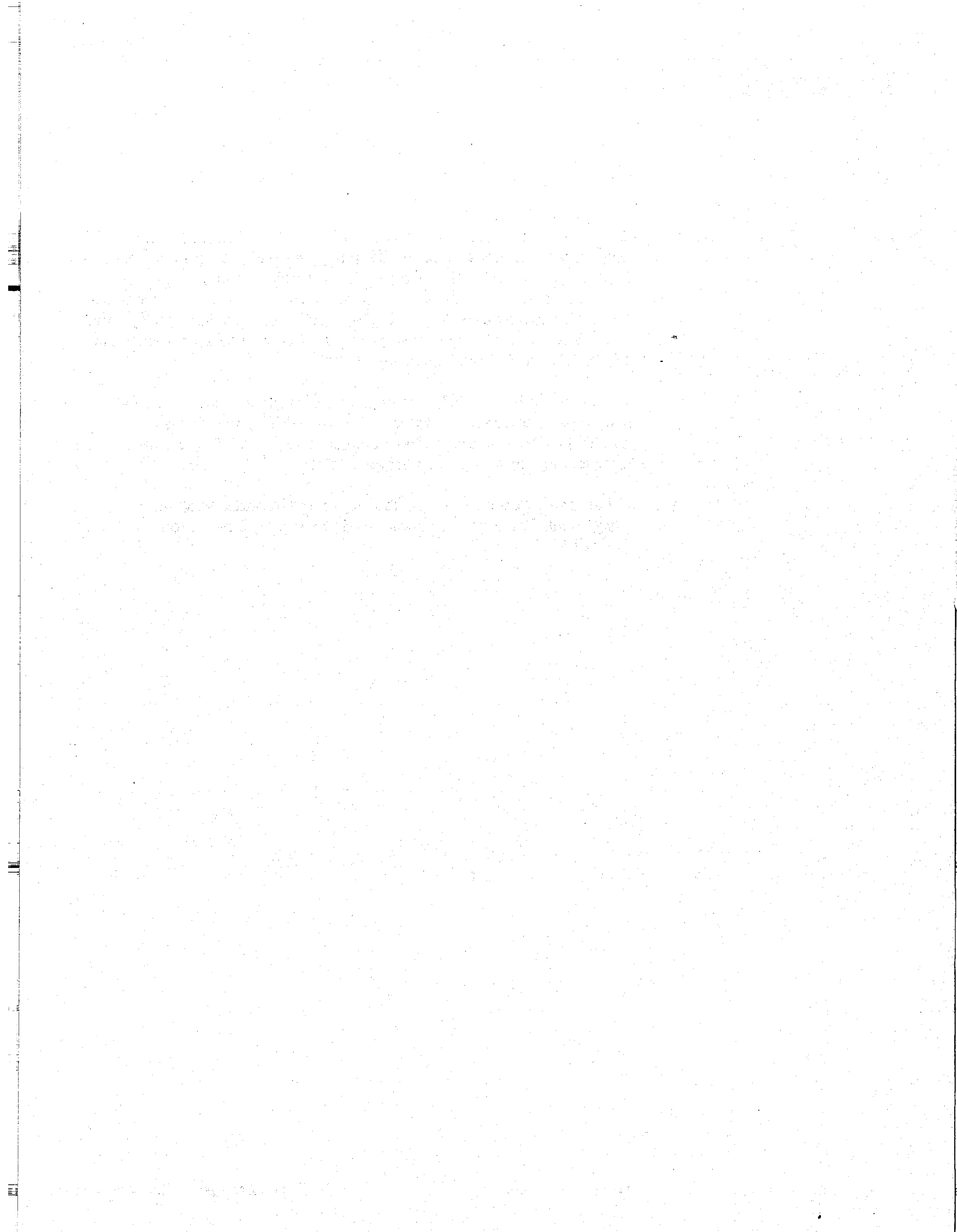
Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Education and Employment issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of August 17, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Carlotta Joyner, Director, on (202) 512-7014.



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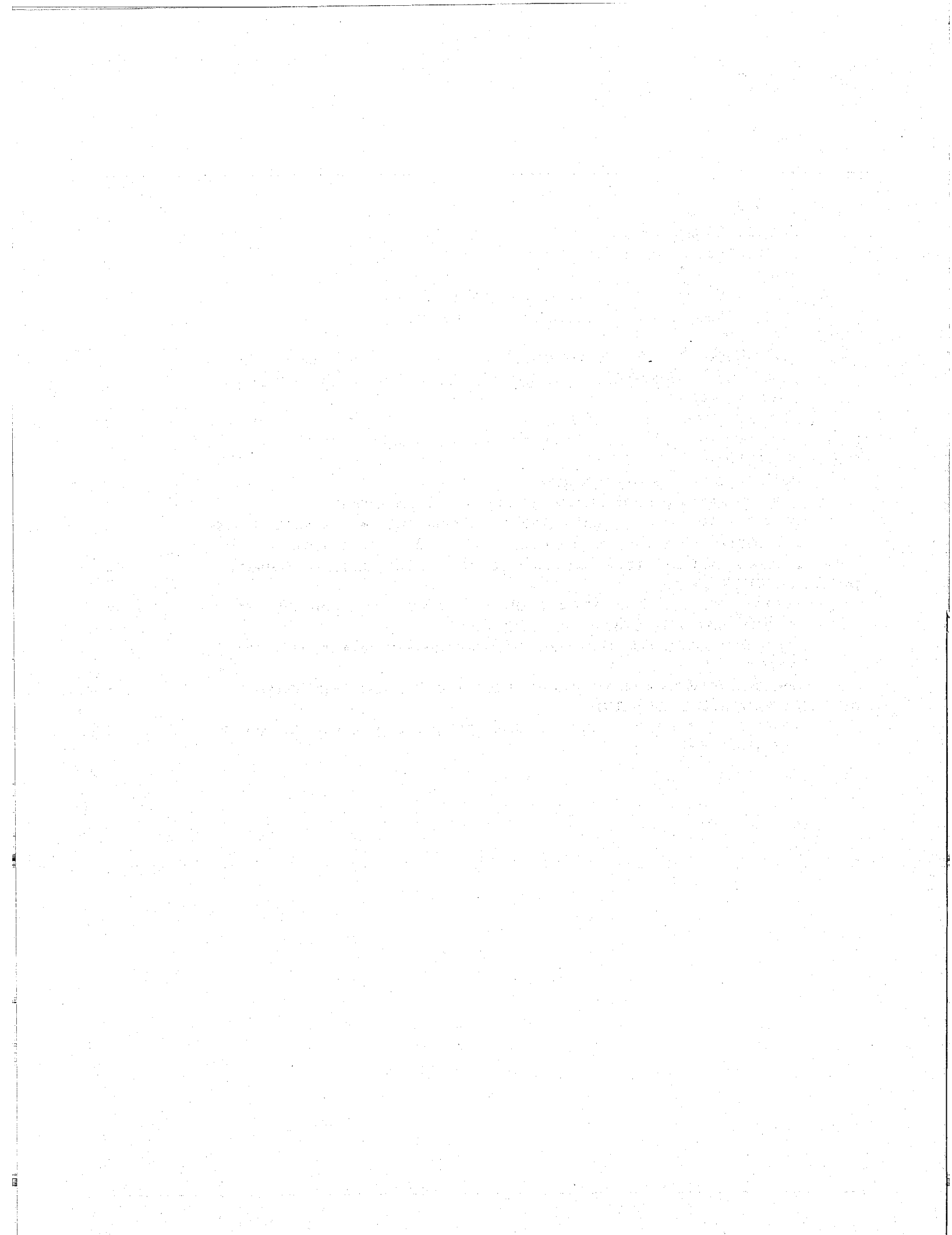
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Education and Employment

PREPARATORY EDUCATION

TITLE: DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM (104893)

KEY QUESTIONS : Congress is concerned about the degree to which federal taxpayer investments in K-12 programs--about \$20 billion in FY 96--actually reach the intended beneficiary, the student. Specifically, for 10 federal K-12 programs, how much federal funding was retained in FY 97 at the federal and state levels and how was it used? How much federal funding at the local level was used for classroom and support services, and administration? How much local staff time and money was used to meet federal requirements? What factors make it difficult to obtain this kind of information?

TITLE: IMPACT OF FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS (104901)

KEY QUESTIONS : Recent legislation has provided increased regulatory flexibility to schools. However significant requirements remain, including those pertaining to education (such as special education), school facilities (such as asbestos removal) and employment (such as anti-discrimination laws). In addition to these federal requirements, state and local governments may impose additional restrictions. (1) What major federal requirements apply to school districts, and what purposes might these requirements serve? (2) What factors appear to affect the ease or difficulty of implementing these requirements? (3) For those requirements administered by the Department of Education, what remedies are available to districts to address these implementation issues?

TITLE: GOALS 2000 GRANTS (104902)

KEY QUESTIONS : In 1994 Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Title III of the act provides grants to states to promote improvements in education. Every state now participates in Goals 2000 and over \$1.7 billion has been provided to states and localities. Because Congress has limited Education's control over Goals funds, little is known about state activities. We have been asked to (1) review the purposes for which state retained funds have been used; (2) determine what local projects have been funded, (3) determine how Goals 2000 relates to state reform (4) ascertain how much of Goals 2000 funds have been used for developing standards and assessments and what future support is needed for these purposes; and (5) find to what extent funds have been used for health education activities.

TITLE: BILINGUAL EDUCATION: FEDERAL PROGRAM SUPPORT OF LEP STUDENTS (104931)

KEY QUESTIONS : About 3.1 million K-12 students have limited English proficiency (LEP). Title VII of Improving America's Schools Act and other programs are targeted to help them. (1) What instructional methods are funded with federal dollars and what factors influence decisions about which method to use? (2) Is there a relationship between the method of instruction (bilingual or English only) used by districts, cases pursued by ED's Office for Civil Rights in the last 6 years, and their outcomes (methods of instruction adopted)? (3) What is the universe of federal programs used to help LEP children and amounts appropriated in FY 1998? (4) What does research show about the number of years that students (a) need to attain English proficiency and (b) spend in bilingual education?

Education and Employment

TITLE: EDUCATION GRANTS IN DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (104936)

KEY QUESTIONS : Questions have been raised about how well the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) have taken advantage of the Federal education dollars that the District is eligible to receive. (1) What federal education grant programs are available to D.C. public schools? (2) What program exists within the D.C. government to ensure timely application for and management of Federal education grant programs, and who in the government is charged with ensuring the success and efficiency of this program? (3) What is the status of efforts to fully optimize access to Federal education grant programs by the D.C. government?

HIGHER EDUCATION

TITLE: SCHOOLS' USE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S NATIONAL STUDENT LOAN DATA SYSTEM (104890)

KEY QUESTIONS : National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), which became partially operational in 1994, is a major effort to integrate federal student aid data. Schools are to use it to determine loan and grant recipients' eligibility and ensure compliance with federal laws. Schools reported problems using NSLDS and some have not used it at all. Nonuse or poor data could contribute to erroneous payments to students. Since, Education has spent over \$75 million on NSLDS, it should ensure that its data are accurate and complete, and is being used by schools. (1) To what extent are schools using it and for what purposes? (2) Why are schools using or not using it? (3) What problems are schools having with it? (4) To what extent is Education taking or planning to take steps to ensure that its being fully used?

TITLE: STUDY THE TREND IN COLLEGE COSTS SINCE SCHOOL YEAR 1980-81 TO 1996-97, AND THE REASONS FOR THESE INCREASES (104910)

KEY QUESTIONS : In a 1996 study, we found that, from 1980 to 1995, tuition prices at 4-year public colleges increased by 234 percent whereas the CPI rose only 82 percent. For this study, we will examine: (1) the extent that tuition increases vary by type and size of school; (2) the statistical relationships between tuition increases and various other factors such as school size, type, revenues, and costs; (3) the effects of 4-year school tuition increases on the costs of attending community colleges, and; (4) examples of strategies colleges have taken to reduce their own costs.

TITLE: TITLE IX IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS (104914)

KEY QUESTIONS : Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits federally funded institutions from discriminating on the basis of gender, including the gender of staff & students participating in intercollegiate athletics. Our objectives are as follows: (1) What action has the Department of Education taken against schools failing to comply with title IX in intercollegiate athletics? (2) What were the changes in selected athletic program characteristics, by sport and gender, over the past 10 years at the three major intercollegiate athletic associations? (3) What are current & planned squad caps, by sport, for all National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I conferences? (4) What were average athletic expenditures at NCAA schools, including scholarships, for academic year 1995-96?

Education and Employment

TITLE: HRA:6 ESTABLISHMENT OF AUCTIONS FOR STUDENT LOAN ORIGINATION RIGHTS (104937)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Congress is considering establishing an auction to originate student loans, which would allow market forces to determine the interest rate, eliminate the need for the government to set it, and capture cost savings as the industry becomes more efficient. The House bill reauthorizing the Higher Education Act includes a mandate that GAO study the issue, and staff of the committee have indicated this is a priority and we will receive a request. (1) What types of auctions does the government currently use to sell various assets, and which might be applicable to student loans? (2) What factors about the student loan market would complicate an auction? (3) How might a pilot be used to learn more about the feasibility of such a plan?

WORKER PROTECTION

TITLE: REVIEW OF CHILD LABOR IN AGRICULTURE (205352)

KEY QUESTIONS : Although concern about international exploitation of children has led to efforts to encourage the purchase of imported goods not produced through the use of child labor, there is still concern about children working in agriculture in the U.S. We were asked to: (1) determine, given the data available, the extent and prevalence of child labor in agriculture, (2) describe and analyze the legislative protections available to children in agriculture at the federal level and in selected states; (3) assess the enforcement of these laws as they apply to children working in agriculture, and (4) identify and describe how federal assistance programs address the educational needs of children in agriculture.

TITLE: LAWS COVERING MANUFACTURING FIRMS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GROWTH (205355)

KEY QUESTIONS : Various federal and state laws oversee firms in their daily operations. Earlier GAO work identified 27 major federal statutes that govern the workplace, and many other laws--e.g. environmental and tax--also regulate firms. This set of laws changes as a firm grows in size and varies depending upon a firm's industry and location. GAO was asked to describe this set of laws as it applies to manufacturing firms of different sizes in California. (1) What federal and state laws cover California manufacturing firms of different sizes? (2) What information is available to the firm to help identify applicable laws and understand their implications on operations? (3) What implications do these laws have for aerospace and high tech electronics firms' human resource operations?

TITLE: REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S IMPLEMENTATION OF DAVIS-BACON WAGE DETERMINATIONS (205376)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Davis-Bacon Act requires that construction workers on federally funded projects be paid a minimum wage set at the average or "prevailing" wage for workers similarly employed in the same geographic area. In response to concerns about the validity and reliability of Labor's process for determining the appropriate prevailing wages, the Congress appropriated funds for Labor to improve the wage determination process and required GAO to evaluate Labor's actions. What is the status of Labor's efforts to improve the Davis-Bacon wage determinations? How likely is it that these efforts will improve the timeliness, accuracy, and reliability of the Davis-Bacon wage determination process?

Education and Employment

TITLE: EMPLOYER EXPERIENCES WITH LABOR'S H-2A AGRICULTURAL GUESTWORKER PROGRAM (205378)

KEY QUESTIONS : In its comments on our recent report concerning Labor's H-2A Agricultural Guestworker Program (GAO/HEHS-98-20), USDA cited individual growers in California and Arkansas as examples of employers who had difficulties with the H-2A program. (1) What has been the experience of these and other growers with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Labor's H-2A Program, and respective state Job Services, including the growers' use of the Interstate Job Service system? (2) For each of these growers, what wages, benefits, working and living conditions were offered to prospective domestic and H-2A workers? (3) What efforts did these growers make regarding the recruitment of domestic and H-2A workers?

TITLE: REVIEW OF LABOR'S EFFORTS TO VERIFY DATA SUBMITTED FOR WAGE DETERMINATION SURVEYS (205381)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Davis-Bacon Act requires that construction workers on federally-funded projects be paid a minimum wage set at the prevailing wage for similarly employed workers. Labor initiated long-term efforts to restructure its Davis-Bacon wage determination process to improve timeliness, accuracy and reliability. Because this could take time, in 1996 we recommended that Labor, in the short term, undertake a process to verify the wage survey data to prevent employers from submitting fraudulent or inaccurate wage data. In appropriating funds for this, Congress directed GAO to evaluate Labor's verification activities. What has Labor done in response to this recommendation? To what extent do Labor's actions ensure that fraudulent or inaccurate wage data are not used to determine prevailing wages?

WORKFORCE SKILLS AND JOBS

TITLE: WELFARE-TO-WORK FORMULA AND COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO STATES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES (205362)

KEY QUESTIONS : Congress has provided funding for welfare-to-work (WtW) grants to assist eligible individuals into long-term unsubsidized employment. The WtW program provides \$1.5 billion for each of 2 years, FY 1998 and 1999. The Secretary of Labor will allocate 75% of these funds to states by formula, but some states have declined these funds. The remaining 25% of federal funds will be used by the Secretary to award competitive grants. (1) What WtW formula and competitive grants were declined by states or awarded by DOL for FY 1998? (2) How are selected states and competitive grantees planning to use the WtW funds? (3) How will these grantees better integrate workforce development services with the welfare system?

TITLE: REVIEW OF JOB CORPS VOCATIONAL TRAINING SERVICES (205364)

KEY QUESTIONS : Job Corps spends about \$15,000 each to train youths with the objective of placing them in long-term, training-related jobs at a livable wage. The extent to which they are successful is heavily dependent on the vocational training provided by the Job Corps centers, but past GAO work has raised questions about the quality of that training. As a result, we were asked to determine (1) the processes used to contract for vocational training, (2) the extent to which participants are completing vocational training and obtaining training related jobs, (3) how Job Corps centers ensure that vocational training is appropriate and linked to local labor market demands and (4) how the centers ensure that the vocational training curriculum is relevant to employers' needs.

Education and Employment

TITLE: EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN A WELFARE-TO-WORK ENVIRONMENT EARLY CASE STUDIES (205365)

KEY QUESTIONS : Federal welfare reform has resulted in an increased demand for employment and training assistance for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients. At the same time, states are being pushed to consolidate workforce programs to gain efficiency. Little is known about how states are managing these changes. (1) How have states that were early implementers of federal welfare reform and of workforce program consolidation organized their employment and training programs? (2) What employment and training assistance is provided to TANF clients by these states, and in what ways has this assistance changed, if at all, since the implementation of welfare reform efforts? (3) What sources of funding are states using to provide employment and training services to TANF clients?

TITLE: EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO VETERANS PROVIDED BY DVOP AND LVER STAFF AND LVER STAFF (205374)

KEY QUESTIONS : We will report on the information provided in our report on services provided by the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS); specifically, VETS' two primary veterans' employment assistance grants to states--the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER). We will also assess VETS' annual performance plan.

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - EDUCATION

TITLE: REVIEW OF CHANGES TO COMPLAINT CASE MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSING AND THEIR EFFECT ON OCR OPERATIONS (104939)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces laws that prohibit discrimination in programs that receive federal financial aid. An important way OCR carries out its responsibilities is by resolving complaints of discrimination promptly and appropriately. Education's OIG recommended systems and organization changes to improve OCR's complaint resolution, and we were asked to review: (1) What changes has OCR made in its complaint resolution process in fiscal years 1993-97 to improve its timeliness, efficiency and cost effectiveness? (2) What was the effect of these changes overall and at individual regional offices? (3) What additional changes is OCR making, planning or considering to further improve its complaint resolution process?

