

Policy and Program Brief

U. S. Department of Education
Office of the Under Secretary
Policy and Program Studies Service



Improving Teacher Quality In U.S. School Districts: Districts' Use of Title II, Part A, Funds in 2002-2003

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, places a major emphasis on teacher quality as a significant factor in improving student achievement. Under NCLB, Title II, Part A provides funds to states and districts to conduct a variety of teacher-related reform activities.¹ Unlike previous authorizations of Title II, which provided funds primarily for professional development in mathematics and science, under NCLB funds can be used for a variety of teacher quality activities in any subject area. In 2002-2003, Title II, Part A provided states and districts approximately \$2.85 billion for teacher quality reforms. For school districts, which receive the majority of these funds (95 percent or about \$2.7 billion), allowable uses of funds include:

- Recruiting highly qualified teachers.
- Providing financial incentives for teachers in high-need areas.
- Offering professional development in core academic areas.
- Retaining teachers through mentoring, induction and other support services.
- Reforming tenure.
- Providing merit pay to teachers.
- Testing teachers in academic areas.
- Carrying out programs that emphasize multiple career paths for teachers.
- Reducing class size.

¹Title II, Part A program replaced two existing programs within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education: the Eisenhower Professional Development and the Class-Size Reduction programs. Eisenhower program activities focused mostly on professional development in mathematics and science. The Class-Size Reduction program was primarily designed to reduce the class size of students in grades K through 3.

Evaluation Questions

To gain a better understanding of how school districts were responding to the high level of Title II, Part A funding and the wide range of teacher quality reforms allowed under it during the first year of NCLB, the U.S. Department of Education collected baseline data from districts around the nation to answer the question:

How did districts report spending their federal Teacher Quality funds in 2002-2003?

Data

Data for this brief come from a nationally representative sample of 800 school districts drawn from the 2000-2001 Common Core of Data (CCD). In drawing the sample, districts were stratified by size and level of poverty. The key findings in this evaluation brief summarize the completed survey instruments from 82 percent of the sampled districts. All weights were adjusted for nonresponse. District poverty data come from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Key Findings

The great majority of the nation's districts reported that they received Title II, Part A funds, with high-poverty districts receiving more funds than low-poverty,² and large districts receiving more than small. (Exhibits 1 and 2)

- During 2002-2003, 93 percent of all school districts reported they received Title II, Part A district funds.
- As required by law, high-poverty and large districts reported they received a disproportionate share of Title II, Part A district funds.
- The highest-poverty districts reported they received the largest share (40 percent) of Title II, Part A district funds, while the lowest-poverty districts received the smallest share (12 percent).

Exhibit 1: School District Enrollment and Share of Title II, Part A District Funds, by Level of School District Poverty, 2002-2003

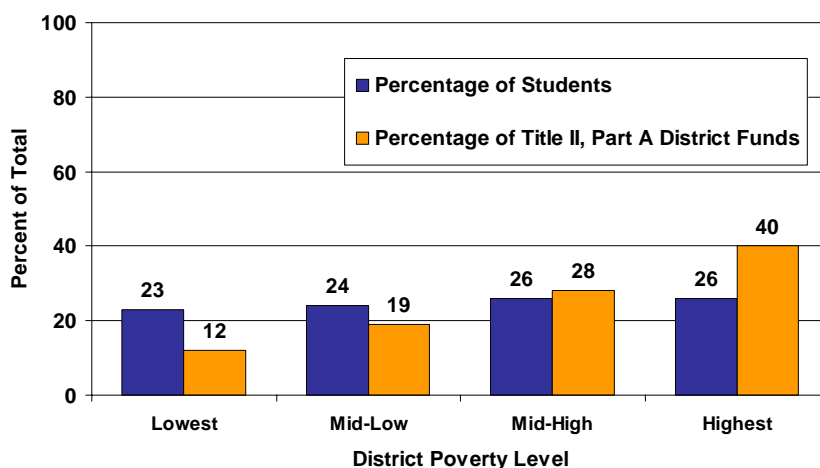
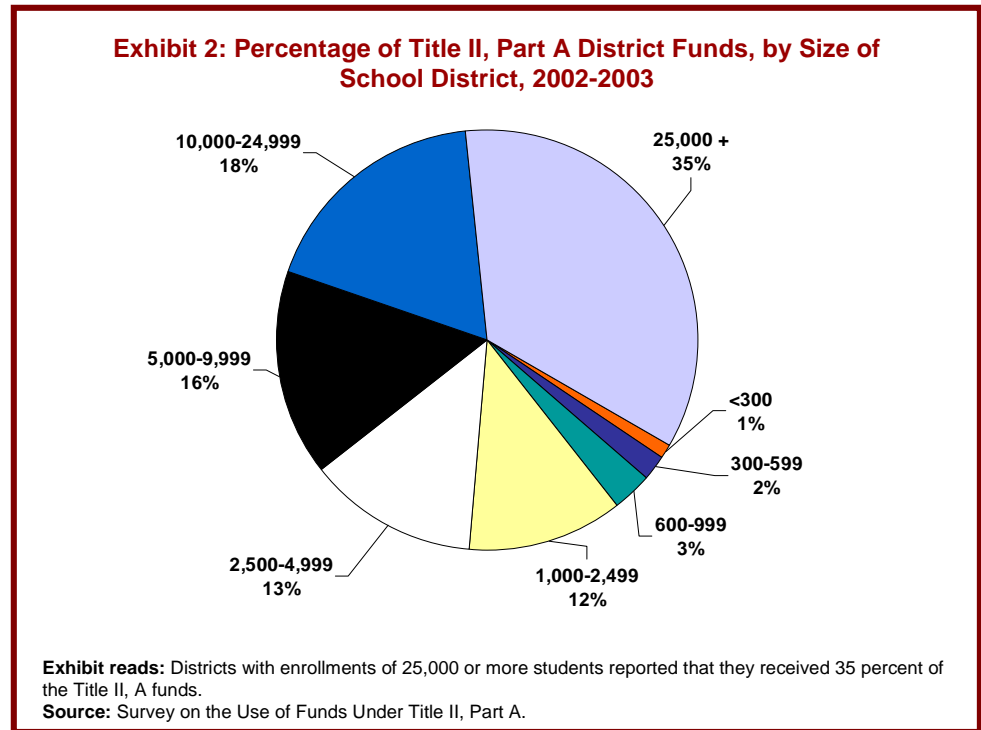


Exhibit reads: Students in the lowest poverty districts accounted for 23 percent of the total student population, but only 12 percent of the total share of district-reported Title II, Part A funds.

Source: Survey on the Use of Funds Under Title II, Part A. School District-level poverty data from the U.S. Department of Commerce Census Poverty File.

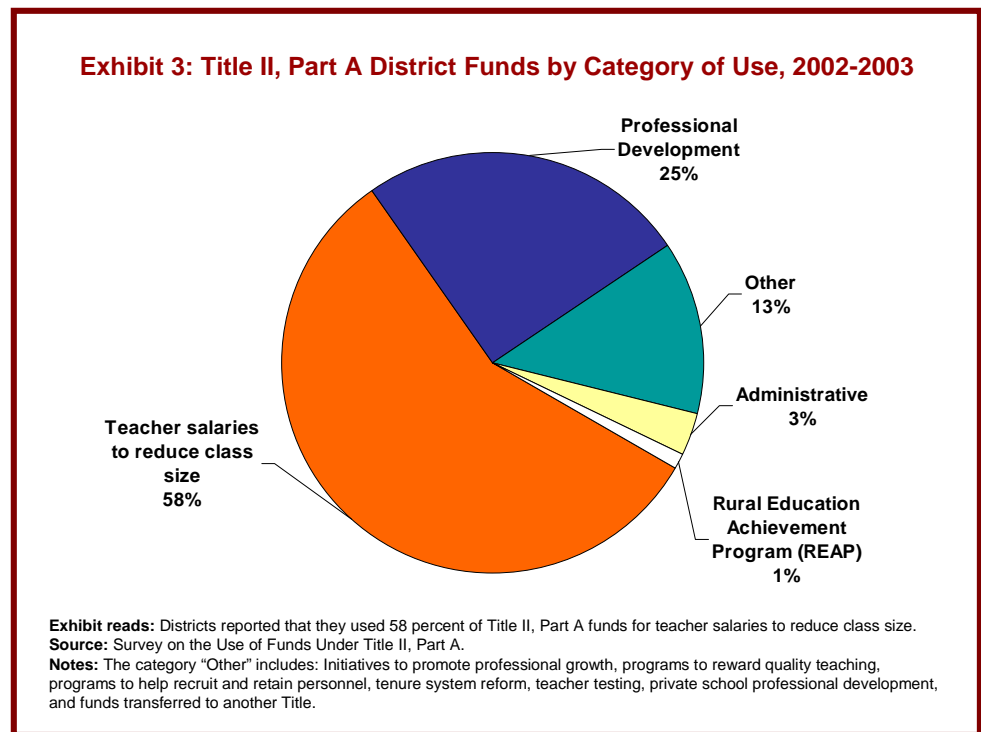
² For this analysis, districts were divided into poverty quartiles so that 25 percent of children ages 5-17 fell into each quartile. The "lowest" poverty districts are defined as those in which less than 8.8 percent of children come from families whose income is below the poverty line. The "mid-low" poverty districts are those in which between 8.8 and 15.5 percent of children come from families whose income is below the poverty level; "mid-high" poverty districts have between 15.5 and 27.4 percent of children from families below the poverty line; and the "highest" poverty districts have 27.4 percent or more of children from these families.

The largest districts, those with more than 25,000 students, reported that they received 35 percent of Title II, Part A district funds. The smallest districts (those with fewer than 300 students) reported they received less than one percent of the funds.



Districts reported using the majority of Title II, Part A funds for teacher salaries to reduce class size and for professional development for teachers. (Exhibit 3)³

- Districts reported spending 58 percent (\$1.3 billion) of all Title II, Part A district funds on teachers' salaries to reduce class size.
- Districts reported spending 25 percent (\$585 million) of all Title II, Part A district funds on professional development for teachers.

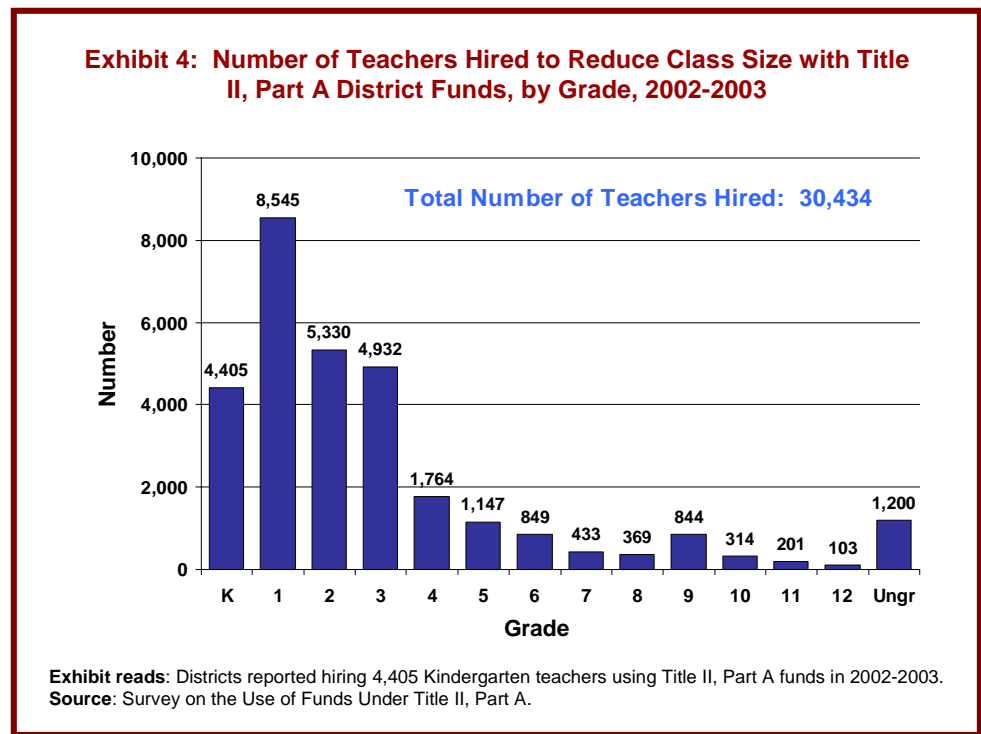


³ The figures discussed in this section regarding the usage of Title II, Part A District funds are national estimates. The weighted total funds reported by the sampled school districts made up about 85 percent of the funds allocated for this program. Throughout this brief, reported percentages are calculated using the weighted total funds reported by districts.

- All other allowable activities combined accounted for 17 percent (\$411 million) of the reported Title II, Part A district funds. In this group, no single activity accounted for more than 3 percent of all reported Title II, Part A district funds.
- No matter the size of the district or the level of poverty, all districts followed similar trends by reporting that they used a majority of their funds for reducing class size, one-quarter to one-third for professional development, and the remainder for other allowable activities.

Districts reported using Title II, Part A sources to fund over 30,000 teachers. (Exhibit 4)

- Districts reported that the great majority of these teachers (23,000, or 76 percent) were hired to teach in grades K-3.
- The highest-poverty districts reported they hired more teachers (39 percent of the total) than the lowest-poverty districts (11 percent of the total).
- As would be expected, the largest districts (more than 25,000 students) reported hiring many of these teachers (32 percent), while the smallest districts (under 300 students) reported hiring a much smaller number (just 2 percent) of these teachers.



Districts reported using their funds for professional development across a variety of subject areas. (Exhibit 5)

- Among the Title II, Part A funds that districts reported spending on professional development, 39 percent was in the area of reading or English language arts, 25 percent in math, 14 percent in science, and 8 percent in history or social studies.
- Districts reported the remaining professional development funds were spent on technology (7 percent), other academic subjects, such as arts and foreign languages (3 percent), and non-academic subjects, such as classroom management (4 percent).

