

# CRS Report for Congress

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## Goals 2000: Educate America Act Implementation Status and Issues

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# Goals 2000: Educate America Act Implementation Status and Issues

## Summary

Congress has continued to debate the funding and continuation of Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227), enacted in 1994. As originally enacted, the Goals 2000 education reform framework included codification of National Education Goals; voluntary certification of national education standards; and a grant program for development of state education standards, assessments, and reform of all key features of each state's elementary and secondary education system. In two states, local districts receive Goals 2000 funds directly from the U.S. Department of Education (ED); in all other states, funds are allocated to state educational agencies for use and distribution to local districts and schools.

Efforts have been made in the Congress to eliminate funding for Goals 2000, in some cases redirecting its funds into an education block grant. Despite such efforts in the 104th and 105th Congresses, funding has continued for Goals 2000, and, in particular, for the state grant program. The FY1997 appropriation level for the state grant program was \$476 million, substantially higher than any prior year's funding; its FY1998 funding fell slightly to \$466 million. Although the funding authority in the Goals 2000 statute expires after FY1998, the General Education Provisions Act can automatically extend the program's funding authority into the 106th Congress.

The Congress has modified the Goals 2000 legislation since its original enactment. The 104th Congress eliminated the following: the authority for a National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC), the requirement that states develop opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards or strategies (identifying the resources needed for all children to meet performance standards), and the requirement that the U.S. Secretary of Education approve state reform plans. As amended, the legislation permits local school districts, in states not participating in Goals 2000, to apply to ED for funding, if approved by their state educational agency.

Debate over Goals 2000 has focused on what should be the federal role in elementary and secondary education reform. Goals 2000 seeks to improve state school systems by supporting states' development of their own standards for content and pupil performance, as well as standards-based assessments. Opponents of Goals 2000 have argued that it would "nationalize" or "federalize" education. For example, although no state was required to submit standards to NESIC or adopt NESIC-certified standards, NESIC was identified by some as a "national school board" that would directly or indirectly impose national standards. Concern in this area was amplified by proposed national history standards that, according to some, lacked balance (these standards have been revised). Opponents of OTL standards said they focused on educational "inputs," imposing unfunded mandates on states to provide additional resources. Proponents countered that educational reform was sufficiently important for the country to warrant federal support, that standards-based reform promoted high levels of academic performance, and that the program as enacted contained multiple safeguards to prevent federal direction or control over education.



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# Goals 2000: Educate America Act Implementation Status and Issues

## **Legislative Action**

Legislative efforts in the 104th and the first session of the 105th to reduce or eliminate funding for the Goals 2000 program, particularly its state grant program, were generally unsuccessful. There may be renewed efforts in the second session of the 105th Congress to eliminate the Goals 2000 program by consolidating its funding into an education block grant. The FY1997 appropriation level for the Goals 2000 state grant program was \$476 million, substantially higher than any prior year's funding; its FY1998 funding fell slightly to \$466 million. The President's FY1999 budget request calls for \$476 million for the state grant program. The funding authority in the Goals 2000 statute expires after FY1998, although the General Education Provisions Act can automatically extend the program's funding authority into the 106th Congress.

With regard to previous legislative activity, the 104th Congress, in FY1996 appropriations legislation (P.L. 104-134), repealed and modified different elements of the school reform framework established by the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Among other changes, the appropriations legislation amended the authorizing statute to repeal the National Education Standards and Improvement Council, originally authorized by Goals 2000 to certify national education standards and any state education standards voluntarily submitted to it by individual states. It also repealed the requirement that states develop opportunity-to-learn standards or strategies, which were intended to identify what resources students needed in order to achieve state standards. State reform plans developed under Goals 2000 no longer need to be approved by the Secretary of Education. Further, the legislation was amended to permit local educational agencies, in states that are not participating in Goals 2000, to apply directly to the Secretary of Education for funding, if they receive approval from their state educational agency.

## **Introduction**

Public and political support for certain aspects of the education reforms embodied in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227) is in question. The Goals 2000 framework, as originally enacted in 1994, included codification of National Education Goals; establishment of national education standards; and

assistance in financing of state education standards, assessments, and reform of all key features of each state's elementary and secondary education system.<sup>1</sup>

This report addresses the current status of major components of the Goals 2000 reform legislation, as well as national and state level issues that surround this legislation. It considers the major steps leading to passage of Goals 2000 in 1994, the most salient facets of the Goals 2000 legislation, the legislation's current implementation status, and relevant legislative proposals and action in the 104th and 105th Congresses. This report then analyzes the following issues involving Goals 2000: the role of national curriculum content standards; NESIC and certification of standards; development of opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards; adoption of a "single model of education reform"; forging of linkages between Goals 2000 standards development and other federal education programs; and the relationship between Goals 2000 and outcome-based education (OBE).

At the outset, it is important to identify the basic themes of the Goals 2000 policy debates. The overarching themes for federal policy that have emerged with the development, enactment, and implementation of Goals 2000 center on the **role of the federal government in supporting school reform**. As policymakers grapple with the various issues delineated in this report, they are confronting substantial questions about whether the Goals 2000 legislation forces the federal government into educational matters that are solely the responsibility of states and localities; whether states and localities have the capacity, absent federal support, to implement the reform model framed by Goals 2000 (systemic school reform); and ultimately, whether the very approach to reform now included in federal legislation is the most appropriate to meet the educational needs of the country.

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<sup>1</sup>The Goals 2000 legislation contains numerous provisions. This report focuses only on the selected provisions highlighted in the text of the report. These form the heart of the reform effort supported by the legislation. The primary program among them is the state grant program described later in this report. Among the provisions **not** considered in this report are several that have direct or indirect links to the Goals 2000 reform framework: establishment of the National Skill Standards Board to facilitate creation of national voluntary occupational standards and their certification; support in FY1994 for state planning on integrating technology into education; and establishment of a program to strengthen parental involvement in education. Among other provisions of the legislation not covered here are those which authorize funding for the following programs: international education, safe schools, minority-focused civic education, and midnight basketball league training. The legislation also reauthorizes the U.S. Department of Education's research activities and includes provisions relating to gun-free and smoke-free schools. For more detailed information on the legislation as originally enacted, see CRS Report 94-490, *Goals 2000: Overview and Analysis*, by James B. Stedman.

## Steps Leading to Passage of Goals 2000

Since at least 1983, when the federally funded National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation At Risk*, states and localities have begun to improve elementary and secondary education. At the state level, a largely bipartisan effort began in 1989 to support education reform through the adoption of education standards. In that year, President Bush and the Nation's Governors, at a summit, jointly endorsed establishment of National Education Goals for restructuring education.<sup>2</sup>

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (GP) has concluded that there should be standards defining what should be taught in the core subject areas, standards for performance improvement in those subject areas, and assessments to measure student performance.

Before Goals 2000 was implemented, the core subject areas identified in the National Education Goals were underway, but the standards for mathematics and science were not. The standards for mathematics has been developed, but the math standards was not federally approved. The standards for science content standards. Through FY1994, federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, have provided at least \$13 million for the effort.

To assist in the development of standards and testing, the Commission established a National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST, P.L. 102-62). The council consists of an array of different educational policymakers and practitioners, governors from both states as well as Members of the U.S. Congress. Its final report, released on

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. *The President's Education Summit with Governors: America 2000: An Education Strategy*. 1991.

<sup>3</sup> National Governors' Association. *Progress Toward the National Education Goals*. Approved by the members of the National

National Governors' Association. *National Education Goals*. Approved by the members of the National Governors' Association on February 25, 1990.

<sup>5</sup>National Council on Education Standards and Testing. *Raising Standards for American Education*. January 24, 1992.



January 24, 1992, recommended establishment of national curriculum content standards, national student performance standards, school delivery standards at the individual state level, and national criteria for assessments. It also called for creation of a National Education Standards and Assessments Council that, in conjunction with NEGP, would have a role in certifying standards developed by various entities across the country. Until the 103rd Congress, efforts to enact federal legislation supporting standards-based reform failed.<sup>6</sup>

## Overview of Goals 2000

The framework for elementary and secondary education reform supported in Goals 2000 reflects the approach being employed in many states and localities. This framework involves setting goals to give the educational system a focus or direction; setting standards to provide guidance and benchmarks to promote, and against which to measure, progress toward the goals; establishing assessments for the actual gauging of progress; pursuing reform systemically, that is, at all levels of the education system; and increasing flexibility throughout the system. A brief description of **selected** reform provisions of Goals 2000 is provided below, noting where the provisions have been changed from their original enactment. A detailed description of the legislation as originally enacted is included in another CRS report.<sup>7</sup>

**Goals.** Goals 2000 enacts into law the six Goals originally adopted by President Bush and the Governors in 1990 and adds two new Goals (the fourth and eighth below). These Goals provide that by the year 2000:

- (1) all children will start school ready to learn;
- (2) the high school graduation rate will be at least 90%;
- (3) students will master a challenging curriculum at grades 4, 8, and 12;
- (4) teachers will have access to professional development opportunities;
- (5) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and math achievement;
- (6) all adults will be literate;
- (7) schools will be free of drugs, violence, and firearms; and
- (8) every school will promote parental involvement in education.

**Standard Setting, Assessments, Certification, and Approval.** Three kinds of education standards were addressed initially by Goals 2000:

- curriculum content standards that provide a general description of the broad knowledge and skills students should master in different subject areas, but do **not** constitute the curriculum for any subject area;<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See: *National Education Goals and Federal Policy Issues: Action by the 102nd Congress*, CRS Report 92-884, by James B. Stedman and Wayne C. Riddle; and U.S. Department of Education. *America 2000: An Education Strategy*. 1991.

<sup>7</sup>CRS Report 94-490, *Goals 2000: Overview and Analysis*.

<sup>8</sup>Among the key distinctions between a set of content standards and a curriculum, is (continued...)

- student performance standards which delineate the performance levels that students need to attain in order to demonstrate that they are proficient in the knowledge and skills embodied in the content standards; and
- OTL standards that describe the resources, practices, and conditions that should prevail at each level of the education system in order to give all students an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills included in the content standards.

FY1996 appropriations legislation amended the Goals 2000 authorizing statute to remove any requirement that states develop OTL standards or strategies as a condition of receipt of Goals 2000 funds.

To provide national oversight and direction to the standards effort, Goals 2000 authorized establishment of two entities — NEGP and NESIC. By agreement between the National Governors' Association and the Bush and Clinton Administrations, NEGP has been in operation since 1990, reporting annually on progress toward the National Goals. Its members include Governors, state legislators, Members of Congress, and representatives of the Administration.

NESIC, which was never established, would have set criteria for certifying, and would have certified, voluntary national standards for curriculum content, pupil performance, and OTL. NEGP was authorized to disapprove the criteria and national standards certified by NESIC. NESIC was also permitted to certify voluntarily submitted state standards; such certified state standards were not to be subject to NEGP disapproval. The Council was to have similar responsibilities for state assessments. Its membership would have been drawn from four groups — professional educators, business and labor, the public, and education experts. FY1996 appropriations legislation repealed the Goals 2000 provisions authorizing NESIC.<sup>9</sup>

As originally enacted, Goals 2000 authorized a grant program for development of national voluntary OTL standards. A second grant program was authorized for development and evaluation of state assessments aligned with NESIC-certified state content standards. Both of these programs were repealed by FY1996 appropriations legislation. Related to the OTL standards, the legislation also authorizes technical assistance to states for the development of plans to increase school finance equity (i.e., efforts to provide more equal funding — relative to student need, costs, and

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<sup>8</sup>(...continued)

that the former identifies only the most valued knowledge and skills that should be mastered by students in broad clusters of grades (e.g., K-4, 5-8, 9-12), while a curriculum delineates the full range of specific content knowledge and skills to be taught to students throughout the school year in every grade. The standards serve as guidance and benchmarks for the development of the curriculum.

<sup>9</sup>A discussion of the arguments made for and against NESIC are considered in the Issues section of this report.

local revenue-raising ability — in all local school districts of each state). This technical assistance remains authorized, but is not funded.

**Federal Mandates.** A substantial portion of the legislative debate over Goals 2000 centered on the extent to which Goals 2000 standards, particularly OTL standards, would be mandatory for states wishing to receive grants under this or other federal programs. Many educators and policymakers expressed concern about possible federal mandates in the legislation. **Among** the provisions included in the legislation, as originally enacted, to allay such fears are those specifying that:

- state participation in this process is entirely voluntary;
- no state standards have to be submitted to, or be certified by, NESIC;
- no state can be required, as a condition of participation in any federal education program, to have any of its standards or assessments certified or to have received assistance under the state systemic reform title of the Goals 2000 legislation;
- states have the option of adopting OTL standards **or** strategies, and are under **no obligation to implement** such standards or strategies; and
- none of the Goals 2000 provisions authorizes any federal mandates or direction of specific aspects of education at the state, district, or school levels.

**The second and fourth provisions described above have been repealed by the FY1996 appropriations legislation because they are no longer necessary.**

**State Systemic Reform.** Goals 2000 authorizes a formula grant program to support state systemic reform by financing development of state reform plans addressing such elements as teaching, learning, assessments, parental and community support for reform, and education management. Goals 2000 requires that a state plan include processes for: developing content and performance standards; developing state assessments; aligning curricula and assessments with state content and performance standards; and acquainting teachers with the state standards. OTL standards or strategies were to be an element of the state plan but, as noted above, are no longer required.

A substantial portion of the funding under this program is to support local reform initiatives, particularly in individual schools. By the second year of a grant, 90% of each state's allocation must be awarded at the sub-state level.

Goals 2000 provides that among the eligible activities for which states may use their funds are promotion of **public** school choice, including magnet and "charter" schools (public schools of choice released from some forms of state and local governance and regulation), and activities related to planning and evaluating LEA

efforts to contract with private management organizations to reform individual schools.<sup>10</sup>

**Regulation Waivers.** Goals 2000 has two waiver authorities. Under the first, regulations of several major ED programs may be waived by the Secretary of Education, for periods not to exceed 4 years, if requested by individual states or LEAs. To be eligible to benefit from these waivers, states or LEAs must be receiving systemic reform funds, or undertaking comparable reform activities. Under the second waiver authority, Education Flexibility Partnership Demonstration Act (Ed-Flex), not more than 12 states, each of which must have an approved Goals 2000 systemic reform plan, would receive authority to determine, on their own, which statutory and regulatory requirements to waive in the same group of ED programs included in the first authority. This authority is provided for a period of up to 5 years, with extension possible.<sup>11</sup>

## **Implementation Status of Goals 2000 And Related Activities**

This section provides a brief overview of selected aspects of the implementation of Goals 2000 during the 104th and 105th Congresses, as well as several related activities. The topics covered below include: funding, 1996 amendments to the authorizing statute, implementation of statewide systemic reform grants, the national history standards, and the governors' 1996 education summit. Detailed analyses of issues involving NESIC, and the reform grants are provided in a separate *Issues* section.

### **Funding**

Efforts were made in the 104th Congress to reduce or eliminate Goals 2000 funding. With regard to FY1995 funding, the 104th Congress passed a rescissions bill (H.R. 1158) that would have reduced the FY1995 appropriation for Goals 2000 state and local improvement activities (state systemic reform grants) by 19%, cutting \$70 million from the original FY1995 level of \$371.9 million. It would also have eliminated the FY1995 funding for Goals 2000 national programs<sup>12</sup> (rescinding the

<sup>10</sup>For background on school choice, see: *Federal Support of School Choice: Background and Options*, CRS Report 95-344, by Wayne C. Riddle and James B. Stedman; and *Private Management of Public Schools: Status and Issues*, CRS Report 95-461, by Liane White.

<sup>11</sup>The authorizing statute limits the number of Ed-Flex states to six; the FY1996 appropriations legislation provides that an additional six states can receive this waiver authority for FY1996 and succeeding fiscal years.

<sup>12</sup>Appropriations legislation provides a single amount for Goals 2000 national programs which include the grants for state assessments and OTL development and a number of other activities the Secretary was authorized to undertake. From the FY1995 appropriation (prior to any rescission of funds), the Administration was planning to direct  
(continued...)

entire \$21.5 million FY1995 appropriation). H.R. 1158 was vetoed by President Clinton. A revised rescission bill, signed into law as P.L. 104-19, reduced the state and local improvement activities by only \$10 million to \$361.9 million, a cut of 3% from the original FY1995 level. As with the vetoed rescission bill, the entire Goals 2000 national program appropriation was rescinded.

FY1996 appropriations legislation (P.L. 104-134, an omnibus continuing resolution funding several federal agencies) provided \$340 million for Goals 2000 state systemic reform grants, a reduction of \$21.9 million or 6% from the FY1995 level. National programs remained unfunded. Appropriations legislation for FY1996 previously passed by the House would have eliminated all Goals 2000 funding (e.g., House action on H.R. 2127). The FY1996 budget request for state systemic reform grants was \$693.5 million; the request for national programs was \$46.5 million.

For FY1997, omnibus appropriations legislation (P.L. 104-208) provides \$476 million, an increase of 40% over the FY1996 level and the same level as requested by President Clinton. The House-passed appropriation legislation for ED included no funds for Goals 2000; the Senate Committee-reported version provided \$340 million.

FY1998 appropriations legislation (P.L. 105-78) includes \$466 million for the Goals 2000 state grant program, slightly less than the program received for FY1997. The President requested \$605 million for the state grant program.

For FY1999, the President's budget requests \$476 million for the state grant program.

**Table 1. Appropriations for Selected Provisions of Goals 2000:  
FY1994-FY1999**  
(\$ in thousands)

Program	FY1994 appropriation	FY1995 appropriation (post- rescission)	FY1996 appropriation	FY1997 appropriation	FY1998 appropriation	FY1999 budget request
NEGP <sup>a</sup>	\$3,000	\$0	\$994	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,100
NESIC <sup>b</sup>	\$2,000	\$0	authority repealed			
State Systemic Reform Grants	\$87,400	\$361,870	\$340,000	\$476,000	\$466,000	\$476,000
National Programs	\$4,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

<sup>12</sup>(...continued)

\$2 million of the national programs funding to development of OTL standards and \$5 million to development of state assessments.

<sup>a</sup> NEGP — National Education Goals Panel. FY1994 appropriation covered operations through FY1995.

<sup>b</sup> NESIC — National Education Standards and Improvement Council. FY1994 appropriation was to cover operations through FY1995 if the Council had been appointed. As noted, its authority was repealed.

As noted earlier, legislative efforts have been made in the 105th Congress to terminate funding for Goals 2000, among other federal education programs, and direct those funds to states or localities in the form of block grants. To date, such legislative proposals have not been enacted.<sup>13</sup>

### **1996 Amendments to the Goals 2000 Statute<sup>14</sup>**

P.L. 104-134, the FY1996 appropriations legislation for ED and selected other federal agencies, made several substantial amendments to the Goals 2000 authorizing statute. Among these are the following:

- repealed the authority for NESIC;
- repealed the authority for a grant to the National Academy of Sciences or the National Academy of Education to evaluate the activities of the NEGP and NESIC;
- repealed the authority for federal funding for the development of national OTL standards;

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<sup>13</sup>For an overview of one such effort from the first session of the 105th Congress, see: *Education Block Grants in FY1998 Appropriations*, CRS Report 97-893, by Paul M. Irwin and Wayne C. Riddle.

<sup>14</sup>Previous efforts in the 104th Congress to amend Goals 2000 were superseded by the legislative language enacted into law with the FY1996 appropriations legislation (a section below considers other activity in the 104th Congress concerning the national history standards). In general, these previous efforts included legislative language similar to that enacted into law in the FY1996 appropriations legislation. The House passed H.R. 1045 (introduced by Representative Goodling for himself and others) to repeal the NESIC authority. Among bills introduced to modify some of the more controversial aspects of the Goals 2000 legislation are: S. 323 (Senator Kassebaum), S. 469 (Senators Gregg and Coats), S. 1301 (Senator Specter), H.R. 977 (Representative Bartlett of Maryland, identical to S. 323), H.R. 1558 (Representative Goodling), and H.R. 3313 (Representative Moran). None of these bills has been acted upon. Most are relatively similar. With the exception of H.R. 3313, each would delete the statutory provisions authorizing NESIC; all but H.R. 1558 and H.R. 3313 would repeal the authority for federal funding for development of national OTL standards and state assessments. S. 323 and H.R. 977 would add language prohibiting any federal agency from financially supporting model or national content, performance or OTL standards. S. 1301 repeals the requirement that the Secretary of Education approve state plans. S. 1301 and H.R. 3313 permit local school districts to apply for Goals 2000 funds if their states are not participating in the program. Several legislative proposals to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education would repeal Goals 2000. (See: *Education Department: Proposals to Change Its Status*, CRS Report 95-754, by Wayne Riddle, et al.; *Education Block Grants: Options, Issues, and Current Legislation*, CRS Report 95-890, coordinated by Wayne Riddle.)

- eliminated the requirement that state improvement plans establish OTL standards or strategies;
- repealed the authority for federal grants to help state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) develop and evaluate state assessments aligned with state content standards;
- authorized LEAs, in states that were not participating in Goals 2000 as of October 20, 1995, to apply for funding directly from ED, if their SEAs approve;
- eliminated the detailed description of the composition of the state and local panels that are to develop the state and local reform plans;
- authorized an SEA, in lieu of submitting a reform plan for approval to the U.S. Secretary of Education, to include in its Goals 2000 application (1) assurances from the state governor and chief state school officer that the state has a plan meeting the requirements of the legislation and that amendments to the plan will meet those requirements, and (2) state benchmarks of student improvement and progress in implementing the state plan, and timelines for measuring progress; an SEA pursuing this alternative route must report annually to the general public concerning how it used Goals 2000 funds and what progress it is making toward its benchmarks and timelines;
- specified that technology acquisition and implementation of technology-enhanced curriculum and instruction are among authorized uses of Goals 2000 funding by LEAs (these uses could have been funded under prior authority, but were not specifically identified);
- added a provision stating that nothing in Goals 2000 can be construed to require states, LEAs, or schools, as a condition of receipt of funds, to provide outcome-based education, school-based health clinics, or any other health or social services; and
- added a provision stating that nothing in Goals 2000 can be construed to permit federal or state officials to inspect children's homes, judge how parents are raising children, or remove children from their parents.

The FY1996 appropriations legislation also provided that none of the ED funds can be used to support national leadership activities (i.e., technical assistance on school finance equity, technical assistance on standards, and grants to urban and rural LEAs with large numbers or concentrations of economically disadvantaged or limited-English proficient students to help them develop and implement their local reform plans). Further, the legislation provided that the Ed-Flex waiver authority under Goals 2000 can be granted to an additional six states (raising the total to 12 states).

### **State Systemic Reform**

As of the middle of February, 1998, local school districts in two states — Montana and Oklahoma — are receiving funding directly from ED for the Goals

2000 state grant program; in all other states, ED awards funds to the state educational agency for use and distribution to local districts and schools.

Participation by some states was problematic in the early years of the program. In the program's **first year**, the state education agencies in New Hampshire and Virginia did not apply for funds. Further, although Oklahoma and Alabama applied for, and were awarded, first year funds, they spent none of this funding and were considered by ED not to have participated in that year.<sup>15</sup> Further, of those states that spent first-year funding, Montana subsequently withdrew.<sup>16</sup> Among those states that did not participate in the first year or subsequently withdrew from the program, state education agencies in Montana and Oklahoma are now permitting local school districts to apply directly to ED for Goals 2000 funds (see description of this provision in the immediately preceding section). New Hampshire did so as well, until it began state level participation in the Goals 2000 program in 1997. Reversing an initial decision to withdraw from the program, Alabama's State Board of Education voted in August, 1997, to participate directly as a state. Also in 1997, Virginia applied for, and received, first-time Goals 2000 funding.

Some other states which reconsidered their participation chose to remain in the program. For example, although California had been awarded second-year funds, the state did not initially authorize the spending of those funds. California Governor Wilson had concerns about "dictates" in the program and waited to see if the program were amended and how the debate over its continued funding was resolved.<sup>17</sup> He subsequently decided to permit the spending of California's second-year funds under conditions which have been approved by ED as permitted under the authorizing statute.<sup>18</sup> Iowa officials announced in January 1995 that the state would end its involvement if it were required to adopt statewide standards applicable to every school.<sup>19</sup> ED notified Iowa Governor Branstad that his state's approach to education standards comported with Goals 2000 requirements;<sup>20</sup> currently, the state remains in the program.

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<sup>15</sup>See, for example: Letter dated May 7, 1996, to Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Sandy Garrett from Gerald N. Tirozzi, U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.

<sup>16</sup>In April 1995, the Montana state legislature voted to prohibit spending of Goals 2000 funds after June 30, 1995. Proponents of this step reportedly asserted that Goals 2000 assistance was unnecessary for the state's reform efforts and that the voluntary nature of the Goals 2000 program could change. See: *Montana Poised to Leave Goals 2000 Reform Program*. Education Daily, April 17, 1995.

<sup>17</sup>Wilson May Reject \$42 Million in U.S. Funds for State Schools. Los Angeles Times, Oct. 6, 1995.

<sup>18</sup>Goals 2000 Changes Would Lessen ED Oversight. Education Daily, April 30, 1996; U.S. Department of Education. ED Initiatives. May 13, 1996.

<sup>19</sup>See: GOP Congress Sticking By State Standards Requirements. Education Daily, February 17, 1995.

<sup>20</sup>Letter dated April 13, 1995, to Governor Branstad from Michael Cohen, Senior Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Education.



Twelve states — Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Vermont — have been approved for participation in the Ed-Flex program. As noted earlier, under terms of the FY1996 appropriations legislation, a total of 12 states can be selected for participation.

## Controversy Over History Standards

The status of Goals 2000 and the reform framework it supports have been directly affected by the controversy surrounding the U.S. and world history standards proposed by the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California, Los Angeles.<sup>21</sup> These standards were funded in 1991 by the National Endowment for the Humanities and ED for a total of slightly more than \$2 million. Although the **funding of these standards pre-dates enactment of Goals 2000**, the criticism of their content and allegations of their political bias fueled opposition to NESIC and its potential role in certifying standards. Some critics have been led to question the wisdom or the necessity of **national** curriculum content standards.

The debate over the history standards has influenced action in the 104th Congress regarding the overall reform effort supported by Goals 2000. More specifically, on January 20, 1995, the Senate approved S.Res. 66 which expresses the sense of the Senate that:

- NEGP should disapprove, and NESIC should not certify, world and U.S. history curriculum content standards developed before February 1, 1995;
- no national content or student performance standards, or criteria for certification of such standards, should be based on standards developed by the National Center for History in the Schools prior to February 1, 1995; and
- recipients of federal funds for development of history standards or certification criteria “should have a decent respect for the contributions of western civilization, and United States history, ideas, and institutions, to the increase of freedom and prosperity around the world.”<sup>22</sup>

Originally published in late 1994 with a revision published in 1996, the standards generally identify and define standards that students should achieve in “historical thinking” and the content standards that should be attained in the

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<sup>21</sup>National Center for History in the Schools. National Standards for History. Basic Edition. 1996. (Hereafter cited as National Standards for History). Earlier versions of the history standards were published in 1994: National Standards for History for Grades K-4: Expanding Children’s World in Time and Space; National Standards for United States History: Exploring the American Experience, Grades 5-12 Expanded Edition; and National Standards for World History: Exploring Paths to the Present, Grades 5-12.

<sup>22</sup>A rela states that the House disapproves the history standards and, among other provisions, that the National Center for History in the Schools should inform school districts that its standards are not “official.” This resolution has not been acted upon.

particular field of history being addressed (history for grades K-4, U.S. history for grades 5-12, and world history for grades 5-12). For example, in the U.S. history standards for grades 5-12, one of the historical thinking standards is “Chronological Thinking,” defined as a “sense of chronology” through which students can, among other skills, establish chronological flow to their treatments of history, and link antecedent events with their consequences. For the U.S. history 5-12 content standards, the published volume divides U.S. history into 10 eras which, in the aggregate, have 31 individual content standards. Each of these standards has a **general** statement of what knowledge all students should have and what they should be able to demonstrate, and identifies **specific** demonstrations for different portions of the 5-12 grade range. For example, in Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation, the general statement of the third standard is that students should understand:

The institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Several general statements of what students should understand is then presented. Among others, students should understand “the issues involved in the creation and ratification of the United States Constitution and the new government it established.” This is followed by a list of what students should be able to do as a result of having this understanding. Students in grades 9-12, for instance, should be able to “[a]nalyze the fundamental ideas behind the distribution of powers and the system of checks and balances established by the Constitution.”

**As originally published**, the standards reports included selected **examples** of what specific tasks or demonstrations students might do at different clusters of grades (5-6, 7-8, 9-12) to show they have achieved each standard. For example, for grades 9-12, an example of student achievement was to “[a]nalyze a recent presidential election to demonstrate what elements of Anti-federalist thought surfaced in party platforms, state initiatives, and candidate speeches and assess the relevance of Anti-federalist ideas in late 20th-century politics.”

The developmental process for these standards involved the work, across the states, of an array of classroom teachers, curriculum supervisors, state social studies specialists, state superintendents, historians, professional associations, parents, and public groups.

Opposition to the versions of the standards published in 1994 surfaced prior to their release. Concerns were been raised by many observers and the media. Most prominently, Lynne Cheney, who was Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities when it contributed funding to the history standards project, concluded that the U.S. history standards were politically biased, citing a participant in the process who said the standards sought to be “politically correct.”<sup>23</sup> In so doing, Cheney argued, the standards, among other failures, slighted or ignored many central figures in U.S. history, particularly white males; were uncritical in their discussions of African and Native American societies; and were unduly critical of capitalism.

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<sup>23</sup>Cheney, Lynne V. The End of History. Wall Street Journal, October 20, 1994.

She expressed great concern that the Goals 2000 certification process (as would have been implemented by NESIC) would approve these standards with little change. In testimony before a subcommittee of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee, she reiterated her concerns about the history standards and concluded that national standards were not needed in any subject area, much less any entity to certify or approve them.<sup>24</sup> Diane Ravitch, who as Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement approved ED's financial contribution to the project, echoed many of Cheney's concerns about the history standards but stressed that most of them centered on the **examples** of student achievement that accompanied the standards, not the standards themselves.<sup>25</sup> She was critical of other aspects of the effort, such as the length of the published volumes which would make them less useful to teachers. Nevertheless, she concluded that the 31 content standards for U.S. history, "with few exceptions, are intellectually challenging."

Reacting to the critical reception accorded the standards, Marshall S. Smith, ED's Under Secretary of Education, sought to focus the concerns about the history standards on the particular set of standards, not on academic content standards in general.<sup>26</sup> He cautioned that the standards were still under development. Further, he noted that ED had not taken any position on the history standards because it would have been inappropriate, "[s]etting standards is the job of the states and local school districts, and the standards announced this week are just one of many examples states could use in the development of their own standards."

In response to the debate over its standards, the National Center for History in the Schools announced in early 1995 that it would reexamine and revise the volumes it had released.<sup>27</sup> Further, under the auspices of the Council for Basic Education, two panels reviewed the U.S. and world history standards. Although generally supportive of the standards, they recommended that, among other revisions, the examples of student achievement be deleted, and that leaders, such as George Washington, and key documents in the development of the country, such as the Constitution, be featured more prominently.<sup>28</sup>

In early 1996, the National Center for History in the Schools published a revised version of the history standards in a single volume. These revised standards do not include the examples of student achievement for each standard. Expanded materials has been included on several topics. For example, in U.S. history, among these

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<sup>24</sup>Cheney, Lynne V. Written testimony prepared for the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. March 22, 1995.

<sup>25</sup>Ravitch, Diane. Standards in U.S. History: An Assessment, Solid Material Interwoven With Political Bias. Education Week, December 7, 1994.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, Marshall S. Politics Shouldn't Undermine High Standards. U.S. Department of Education Public Affairs.

<sup>27</sup>Panel Agrees to Revise National History Standards. Education Week, January 18, 1995.

<sup>28</sup>Review Panels Find History Standards Worth Revising. News Release. Council for Basic Education, Oct. 11, 1995.

topics are science and technology, economic history, the Cold War, and the “continuing search for a common American identity.”<sup>29</sup> Diane Ravitch concluded that the “revised standards ... can be a significant stimulus to the education of our children and to the uniting of America.”<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Lynne Cheney has been quoted as saying the revised standards are “still flawed” and “shouldn’t be a model for teaching students.”<sup>31</sup>

## **Governors’ Education Summit**

In March, 1996, many of the nation’s governors met with corporate leaders to consider education standards and the current effort to improve education. At the conclusion of this summit, they agreed on a policy statement that asserted:

While we remain committed to implement at the state and local level the education goals adopted by Governors following the Charlottesville Summit in 1989, it is clear that simply setting goals is not enough.

They endorsed establishment of “clear, common, state and/or community-based academic standards,” while rejecting “mandatory, federally prescribed standards.” Further, they identified technology as a “helpful tool” in improving educational performance.

The governors committed themselves to establishing standards and accountability systems in their states within two years. They stated that funds should be available for necessary professional development, infrastructure, and new technology. The business leaders committed themselves to support the governors in their efforts; to inform students, parents, schools, and the community about the skills necessary to meet future workforce needs; within 1 year, to use hiring practices that require attention to school-based records, such as academic transcripts; to make a state’s academic standards and achievement a “high priority” element in deciding where to locate businesses; to have policies supporting parents’ involvement with their children’s education; and to support teaching through development of products, services, and software.

The governors and corporate leaders agreed to establish an “external, independent, nongovernmental effort to measure and report each state’s annual progress.” Although the duties of this entity substantially overlap those of NEGP, the latter presumably could not become this new entity because it is currently a recipient of federal funding and includes federal officials as its members. There was an agreement reached that state-level annual reports would be issued. Further, a new entity, also independent and nongovernmental, would be created to gather and share information and expertise on standards and assessments.

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<sup>29</sup>Newly Revised Voluntary History Standards Released Today, Endorsed by Leadership of National Review Panels. UCLA News, April 3, 1996.

<sup>30</sup>Ravitch, Diane and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The New, Improved History Standards. The Wall Street Journal, April 3, 1996.

<sup>31</sup>Revised Teaching Standards Shift Historical Emphasis. Washington Post, April 3, 1996.

## Issues

### Role of National Curriculum Content Standards

As has already been described, Goals 2000 authorizes a reform framework that includes creation of national education standards for curriculum content and student performance. Debate on Goals 2000 has particularly involved the curriculum content and, until their repeal by the FY1996 appropriations legislation, OTL standards.<sup>32</sup> OTL standards are considered separately later.

Efforts to develop national curriculum content standards have generated substantial debate about the role such standards might play in elementary and secondary education at the state and local levels. Although intensified by the controversy over the published history standards, this debate pre-dates their release. Many of the concerns raised about national standards also apply to state-developed standards. Brief analyses of some of the key issues in the debate over the role of national standards follow.<sup>33</sup>

**Stimulating Reform or Imposing a National Curriculum?** A tension between providing guidance and imposing control is inherent in national curriculum content standards. Debate often centers on whether national curriculum content standards would stimulate states and localities to improve education or, in contrast, would impose an orthodoxy on the curriculum, curbing innovation and experimentation. Advocates of such standards argue that they provide fertile resources from which states and localities may draw as they shape their own curriculum. Further, they assert that widely supported national standards may raise state and local standards. They stress that these standards are **national**, not **federal**, that is, although federal aid may be provided to help finance their development, they are developed by consortia of non-governmental, professional associations and, perhaps, representatives of state and local government, **not** federal officials. As such, they will not constitute an intrusion by the federal government into state and local direction of education.

Opponents contend that national standards will limit state and local flexibility in structuring curricula. There is concern that, despite being called **national**, these standards are part of a **federal** effort to centralize and standardize education in this country. Further, there is concern that even discretionary, **national** standards could lead to a detailed national curriculum in the core academic subject areas. A national

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<sup>32</sup>Student performance standards and assessments have been much less involved in the current public debate, although they, too, pose significant and difficult issues.

<sup>33</sup>Federal influence on state and local curricula has emerged as an issue in the debate over President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests of reading in the 4th grade and mathematics in the 8th grade. For further information on this proposal, see: *National Tests: Administration Initiative*, CRS Report 97-774, by Wayne Riddle.

curriculum generates opposition for a variety of reasons. It is viewed as antithetical to the decentralized nature of elementary and secondary education in this country, preventing states and localities from shaping education to meet their diverse interests.

Nevertheless, as currently conceived, national curriculum content standards would not constitute the curriculum in any content area. Rather, they would describe in a general fashion the knowledge and skills that students should attain. They may include, in addition to standards, examples of how the standards could be translated into classroom instruction and activities pursued by students and teachers. Those that have been proposed to date remain far short of a curriculum that would be taught in any grade. To address the issue of national standards leading to a national curriculum, NEGP, in 1993, adopted a statement of principles for national education standards which stressed that they were not to be a national curriculum and that they should be sufficiently broad to permit local curriculum development.<sup>34</sup>

**Effects on the Disadvantaged.** A second major issue concerning national content standards centers on whether these standards would promote or diminish educational opportunity for all students, particularly disadvantaged and minority students. National education standards are viewed by many of their supporters as providing a potentially effective approach to addressing the needs of all groups of students. Rather than responding to different levels of achievement by lowering standards for some groups, such as minorities or the disadvantaged, standards-driven educational systems would be held accountable for ensuring that **all** students have mastered the knowledge and skills encompassed by the standards. By identifying gaps between mastery of those standards and current levels of achievement, education systems would have information they need to better target resources and intervention efforts.

Opposition to national standards has stemmed, in part, from concern about the possibility of negative effects on low-achieving students. Critics note that evidence of achievement gaps has long been abundant in elementary and secondary education, leading them to wonder why they should expect any different responses from education systems if those gaps are once again documented using national standards. The impact of accountability for failure to meet standards raises concern that has often been directed to support of OTL standards (considered below). Many advocates for minority and disadvantaged groups assert that, if students are held accountable for mastery of the standards, the educational systems should be held accountable for ensuring that students have had a legitimate opportunity to master the requisite skills and standards.

**States' Capacity to Develop Their Own Standards.** Another focal point of the debate over national standards is the relationship of those standards to the capacity of states and localities to establish their own standards. National standards have been supported as necessary complements to state and local standard setting efforts. It is argued that only at the national level, through national level organizations, can the resources be assembled to undertake the expensive and

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<sup>34</sup>Goals Panel Adopts Principles on National Content Standards. Education Daily, November 17, 1993.

demanding task of preparing curriculum content standards. As NCEST concluded, “Undertaking [the standard setting] effort at the national rather than state or local levels can help to achieve cost-effectiveness and marshal the talent and scarce public resources needed to deal adequately with these issues.”<sup>35</sup> This might be especially true for development of standards that are comparable to the best **international** standards. NCEST’s Standards Task Force asserted that such national standards could “form a core, to which states, localities and schools could add standards tailored to the needs and interests of their students and communities.”<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, even as NCEST and its Task Forces were fashioning their recommendations, many states were already engaged in developing their own curriculum content standards. A survey of the states conducted in 1994, shortly after Goals 2000 was enacted, found that virtually all states had curriculum content standards under development or in an implementation stage.<sup>37</sup> This was prior to release of proposed, final versions of national standards in any subject area other than mathematics and the arts.

Specific policy responses to the issues identified in this section on the role of national content standards are likely to emerge in any resolution to the debate over NESIC and certification of standards. This debate is considered separately below.

## **NESIC and Certification of National and State Education Standards**

**NESIC’s Origins.** Originating in the NCEST report, the concept that a national entity would be established to coordinate and certify national education standards, as well as state education standards, has generated opposition. NCEST proposed that a National Education Standards and Assessments Council (NESAC) be established at the national level to oversee the coordination of national standards and assessments development, and to participate jointly with NEGP in the certification of standards and criteria for assessments as “world class.” NESAC was to be non-federal, broadly representative, and appointed by NEGP. The NCEST report did not elaborate on the specific criteria that might be used in carrying out this certification function nor on the expected effects of certification.

Two years after the NCEST report, Goals 2000 was signed into law authorizing establishment of NESIC, an entity clearly modeled after NESAC. Among the primary differences between NESIC and NESAC was selection of the membership. Rather than being appointed by the Goals Panel, NESIC’s membership was to be selected by the President from nominations submitted by NEGP, the leadership of the U.S. Congress, and ED. This appointment process coupled with the certification function triggered the debate about NESIC, leading to repeal of its statutory authority.

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<sup>35</sup>NCEST. Raising Standards for American Education. p. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. E-14.

<sup>37</sup>Council of Chief State School Officers. State Baselines for Goals 2000 Implementation. May 1994.

**Controversy Over Its Creation and Potential Impact.** Critics of NESIC asserted that it would constitute a “national school board,” intruding in areas of state and local responsibility.<sup>38</sup> The appointment of members by the President led to charges that NESIC would be an partisan entity, likely to certify politically biased education standards. Critics also noted that NESIC, under the Goals 2000 legislation, could approve national standards by a bare majority vote of its 19 members, but that, to override NESIC certification, NEGP would have to muster a two-thirds vote in favor of disapproval. The certification function, itself, sparked opposition. States and localities, it was argued, had no need for assistance in identifying challenging, “world class” national standards, that they are fully capable of developing world class state standards. Further, certification might prematurely curb debate over competing curriculum standards and, indeed, could dissuade other individuals and groups from developing alternative standards. If any information or feedback from a national entity would be of value to states, it was suggested that this could be done in an advisory, not a certification, capacity. There was concern that certification would be part of a process in which voluntary national standards become mandatory for states. This would occur, it was posited, if federal education funds were tied to state and local adoption of certified national standards.

Support for NESIC centered on the need for a national entity capable of judging the quality of various proposed national standards.<sup>39</sup> It was argued that, without an independent certification of standards by a national organization, each state would be forced to perform NESIC’s function of determining which standards are of appropriately high quality and merit consideration by states for their standard setting, and engaging in comparison of standards and performance across states and internationally. Further, some argued that voluntary certification of state standards, one of NESIC authorized activities, was critical for states to ensure that their standards are of requisite quality. An alternative to NESIC and its certification function might be the new nongovernmental entity that the nation’s governors recently agreed to establish. This organization would provide information and resources to help states in their efforts to implement standards and assessments.

## **Opportunity-to-Learn Standards**

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<sup>38</sup>For critical perspectives on NESIC and certification, see, for example: The Heritage Foundation. *The New Member’s Guide to the Issues*. p. 34; Ravitch, Diane. *Goals 2000: Four Ways to Fix It*. Washington Post, January 12, 1995; Cheney, Lynne V. Written testimony prepared for the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Mar. 22, 1995; *The Future Looks Cloudy for Standards-Certification Panel*. Education Week, January 11, 1995 (Hereafter cited as *The Future Looks Cloudy*); and Senate floor debate on Senator Gorton’s amendment no. 31 to the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act. (Congressional Record, daily edition, January 18, 1995. p. S 1025-1040. (Hereafter cited as *Congressional Record*, January 18, 1995)

<sup>39</sup>For perspectives supporting NESIC and certification, see, for example: *The Future Looks Cloudy*; *Congressional Record*, January 18, 1995. p. S 1025-1040; and Ambach, Gordon M. *Goals 2000: A New Partnership for Student Achievement*. National Issues in Education: *Goals 2000 and School-to-Work*. 1995.



During debate over the Goals 2000 legislation in the 103rd Congress, several Members proposed that OTL standards be required of grantees. OTL standards would specify the educational resources and/or techniques deemed necessary to help pupils meet content and performance standards. Examples of OTL standards might be that all teachers in an LEA must meet state certification standards in the specific subject area that they teach; or that all teachers should be knowledgeable about, and instruct their pupils in, every topic covered by state standards for the relevant subject area(s) and grade. As originally enacted, Goals 2000 did not require the development **and** implementation of OTL standards, rather, somewhat more flexible provisions were adopted regarding OTL standards. Goals 2000 required participating states to establish OTL “standards or strategies,”<sup>40</sup> and authorized ED to make one or more grants to consortia of individuals and organizations to develop “national” OTL standards. Goals 2000 did **not** require states or LEAs to **implement** OTL standards or strategies.; it also stated explicitly that the Act does not require equalized expenditures per pupil or national school building standards in participating states (section 306(d)). Provisions relating to OTL standards, including section 306(d), have been repealed under the FY1996 appropriations legislation.

**School Finance Equity.**<sup>41</sup> A related provision of Goals 2000 authorizes ED to provide technical assistance to states for the development of plans to increase school finance equity (section 313). No funds have yet been specifically appropriated for this purpose, although the Clinton Administration requested an unspecified amount for this assistance, along with other Goals 2000 national programs, for FY1996.<sup>42</sup> This provision is related to OTL conceptually because of its focus on resource inputs to the educational process, and is related politically because it was adopted in part as a substitute for more strict OTL language in Senate consideration of Goals 2000.<sup>43</sup>

**Appropriateness of OTL Standards.** Proponents of OTL provisions argued that it was inappropriate and unfair to support “challenging” standards for pupil performance without setting comparably challenging standards for the quality of the instruction, including facilities and equipment, to be provided to pupils. They stated that this was especially important in view of the large differences in spending and resources per pupil within and between most states; the educational disadvantages

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<sup>40</sup>Presumably, OTL strategies would include efforts, other than the setting of specific standards, intended to assure an adequate opportunity for all pupils to meet state content and performance standards. The distinction between OTL standards and OTL strategies was not clearly stated in Goals 2000.

<sup>41</sup>For a general discussion of school finance equity concepts and data, see: *Public School Expenditure Disparities: Size, Sources, and Debates Over Their Significance*. CRS Report 96-51, by Wayne Riddle and Liane White.

<sup>42</sup>An appropriation of \$3.2 million was made for FY1995 that is sometimes associated with the school finance technical assistance authority of Goals 2000 section 313 in ED budget documents. However, this amount was appropriated under the Education Research, Statistics, and Improvement account (not the Education Reform account with Goals 2000 programs), for “school finance equalization research,” and is being used for a study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, not technical assistance to the states.

<sup>43</sup>See discussion of amendment no. 1374 in Senate debate over S. 1150, 103rd Congress. (Congressional Record, daily edition, February 2, 1994. p. S652).

of many pupils who are poor, disabled, or from non-English language backgrounds; and the substantial gaps in average achievement levels among pupils of different races, ethnic groups, or family income levels.

In response, opponents of OTL and school finance provisions argued that they distract from what should be a primary, or even sole, focus on pupil achievement outcomes; exaggerate the extent to which differences in achievement are associated with educational expenditures or resources; and constitute a federal intrusion into state and local decisions that is unwarranted in view of the small share of elementary and secondary education revenues the federal government provides, and may even become an “unfunded federal mandate”.<sup>44</sup> Further, with respect particularly to school finance, state courts, legislatures, and Governors are already grappling actively with equity issues in a majority of the states,<sup>45</sup> and it might be argued that federal involvement is unnecessary and unlikely to be helpful in reaching resolutions.

### **Requirements for Adoption of a “Single Model of Reform”**

As noted earlier, systemic reform — the reform model supported by Goals 2000 — involves the establishment of explicit and “challenging” goals for state school systems, and the reform and alignment of content standards, specific curricula, assessment methods, pupil performance standards, teacher professional development, instructional materials, and other major school system policies in support of the goals. These efforts may be informed by, but need not be aligned with, any national efforts to set goals and standards.<sup>46</sup>

This model of reform was selected primarily due to a widespread perception that most of the reforms adopted by states and the federal government since the early 1980s were only minimally effective because they dealt, in “piecemeal” fashion, only with selected aspects of the education system. The theory underlying systemic reform is that all major aspects of the system need to be reformed together and made more coherent, as has been attempted in a few states in recent years (e.g., Kentucky). The concept has also been promoted in Goals 2000 because it is relatively broad and flexible, allowing for a wide range of state variations in implementation.

**Systemic Reform and Standards.** While the characteristics of systemic reform are broad and abstract, there are certain essential elements of systemic reform that

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<sup>44</sup>That is, an implicit requirement that relatively high and equal expenditures be made on behalf of the education of each pupil, without a commensurate increase in federal assistance. There is, however, an explicit statement in section 318 of Goals 2000 that nothing in the Act shall be construed to mandate any state or locality to spend any funds or incur any costs.

<sup>45</sup>According to several reports, in recent years state courts and/or legislatures have actively considered or ordered changes in the school finance programs of a large majority of the states. See: Recent Finance Activity Follows Disparate Patterns. Education Week, February 15, 1995.

<sup>46</sup>For additional information on the systemic reform concept, see: Putting the Pieces Together: Systemic School Reform. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, April 1991. 12 p.

distinguish it from most past practice in the states. Foremost among these key elements is the setting of explicit standards at the state level for curriculum content and pupil performance. Goals 2000 and other federal legislation do **not** require that these state standards be connected to any national standards. Nevertheless, it is required that standards be set in order for states to receive Goals 2000 grants, or to continue to receive grants under Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I (see further discussion below).

Until the recent past, state practice has varied widely with respect to curriculum content and pupil performance standards. While some states have set content and/or pupil performance standards explicitly, others have done so only implicitly through selection of approved textbooks or examinations, and still others have not done so at all. Recently, however, there has been a general trend toward more widespread and explicit adoption of state content and pupil performance standards. Recent surveys by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) have reported that virtually all states were actively involved at some stage of the development or adoption of content and pupil performance standards, in at least one or more basic academic subject areas, although there were wide variations in the status of activity in different states.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, a large majority of states appear to be in the process of at least moving toward adoption of the key content and performance standards elements of the systemic reform model. For these states, the standards-related requirements of Goals 2000 or ESEA Title I seem unlikely to be burdensome. Further, this “single model of reform” is rather broadly defined, either in statutory language or elsewhere, and appears to be in most respects inherently flexible.

However, even states that reportedly are developing or have adopted standards may resist adopting standards-based systemic reform for a variety of reasons: resistance to even indirect or implicit federal “pressure” to adopt this model of reform; a belief that explicit setting of standards is likely to have negative consequences that outweigh the benefits; a preference for a “weak” state role in education policy, maximizing LEA autonomy; or a concern that “**voluntary**” use of **state** standards may somehow eventually become “**mandatory**” use of **national** standards, in spite of the many constraints against this in current legislation.

**Requirements for State and Local Panels and Plans.** Critics of Goals 2000 argued that many of its provisions, beyond those regarding standards, are burdensome, such as those regarding state and local boards and plans. Goals 2000 requires each participating state and LEA to establish a panel to develop a reform plan. Prior to amendment by the FY1996 appropriations legislation, Goals 2000 delineated the membership of these panels. For example, the state panel had to

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<sup>47</sup>Council of Chief State Schools Officers. Status Report: State Systemic Education Improvements. August 1995. 68 p.; Council of Chief State School Officers. State Baselines for Goals 2000 Implementation. May 1994. 61 p. One state, Washington, reported that it was only in the “planning stage” of developing content and performance standards. All other states were reported as being at some stage in the process of developing or implementing content and/or performance standards in at least one core subject area.

include several specified officials (e.g., the chair of the state board of education) and types of individuals (e.g., representatives of teachers' organizations). The panel was also required to be representative of the state's overall population geographically and in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and disability. These requirements have been repealed.

The content of the reform plans are delineated in some detail. For example, the state plan must address numerous specific aspects of educational policy and practice, including not only content standards, performance standards, and assessments, but also strategies for improved governance of the state's education system, and benchmarks and timelines for implementation of the plan. It must also include procedures to improve schools not meeting the state standards.

While these requirements for state and local panels were relatively extensive and continue to be for the state and local plans, Goals 2000 provides that the state (but not LEA) level requirements may be waived in favor of preexisting panels and plans that are generally similar to those required in the Act, even if they do not meet the general requirements. Further, ED has reportedly allowed states substantial flexibility in these matters when approving state applications for Goals 2000 assistance,<sup>48</sup> and has not published federal regulations for the program.

### **Linkages to the ESEA, Especially Title I**

The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA, P.L. 103-382) links several major ESEA programs with the systemic reform efforts supported under Goals 2000, although most such provisions apply only to states that participate in Goals 2000, and no state is required to participate in Goals 2000 in order to receive aid under the ESEA (section 14514). Virtually every ESEA program that includes a state or LEA planning requirement provides that the plans be coordinated with those developed under Goals 2000, if any. Several programs also require **coordination** of ESEA activities with those under Goals 2000, if the state or locality receives a Goals 2000 grant. These types of linkages are relatively noncontroversial; they are intended to improve the coordination of federal programs with one another, and with state and local efforts.

However, a more extensive and potentially significant linkage between an ESEA program and standards-based school reform, if not Goals 2000 *per se*, is the ESEA Title I requirement that states develop or adopt curriculum content standards applicable to Title I participants, as well as all other pupils in the state.<sup>49</sup> Title I state plans must also include standards for pupil performance on assessments tied to the content standards, at least in the subjects of mathematics and reading/language arts.

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<sup>48</sup>See: E.D. Form for Goals Funding Sent to states. Education Week, May 4, 1994; and Oregon Wins Waiver Authority, Goals 2000 Approval. Education Week, February 22, 1995.

<sup>49</sup>Regulations for Title I, published in the Federal Register on July 3, 1995 (35 CFR 200.2(c)), allow states that do not wish to establish content and performance standards for all students to fulfill the requirement by establishing such standards with application only to pupils participating in Title I.

**If** a state has developed content and performance standards with Goals 2000 state systemic reform grants, then those standards are to be used for ESEA Title I programs, but participation in Goals 2000 is **not** required in order for a state to continue participating in ESEA programs. Prior to repeal by the FY1996 appropriations legislation, provisions in Title I permitted OTL standards or strategies developed by the state under Goals 2000 to be part of efforts to improve the performance of “unsuccessful” Title I programs, at a state’s or LEA’s discretion.

**Rationale for Linkages.** This linkage between ESEA Title I and content/performance standards, and Goals 2000 plans where applicable, was established for at least three reasons:

- to increase the coherence among different federal programs of aid to elementary and secondary education, as well as between federal and state/local programs;
- to raise the instructional standards of ESEA Title I programs, and the academic expectations for participating pupils, by tying instruction and pupil performance standards to state-selected curriculum content standards; and
- to make tests and evaluations used for Title I program accountability more meaningful and less time-consuming by using assessments developed or adopted by states, tied to the content standards, for determining the effectiveness of programs.

These assessments will also become the basis for implementing program improvement requirements for “unsuccessful” schools and LEA, and financial rewards to “distinguished” schools and LEAs.

Several constraints are placed on the authority of the Secretary of Education in implementing these standard and assessment provisions. The state standards need **not** be tied to any national standards. The IASA further provides that no state may be required to submit its curriculum content or pupil performance standards to ED; no state plan may be disapproved by ED on the basis of specific content or performance standards, or assessment instruments; and nothing in the Act authorizes ED to “mandate, direct, or control” a state’s, LEA’s, or school’s standards, curricula, assessments, or program of instruction as a condition for receipt of Title I aid. Finally, it is stated that nothing in Title I may be construed to mandate equalized spending for elementary and secondary education among the LEAs or schools of a state, or to mandate the implementation of national school building standards.

While not all major elements of “systemic reform” must be adopted, and a large amount of flexibility is provided to states in their selection of standards and timing for adopting them, states would have to develop or adopt content and performance standards, at least in reading and mathematics, that are applicable to all pupils, if they want to continue sharing in the \$7 billion Title I program. This is happening at the same time that many states are already adopting standards on their own. There would appear to be a substantial basis for objection to this requirement if states objected to the setting of any standards at the state level, to any comprehensive specification of what pupils are expected to learn, or to the policy approach of being indirectly

“required” to do so by the federal government, no matter how “flexible” this process might appear to be. Nevertheless, state experience with standards-based reform has been limited, and the effectiveness of the strategy has not been established or proven. As noted earlier, states are now at widely varying stages of developing instructional goals, curriculum frameworks, and assessment systems tied to these. Some states — especially those with a traditionally weak state role in public education governance — have just begun to do this, and a few may resist doing so at all.

**Alternative Provisions.** Some states may not wish to develop or adopt state standards as required to continue receiving Title I grants. Officials in these states may believe that they have no authority to set such standards, they may not wish to do so, or they may prefer to follow reform strategies that do not involve such state standard-setting. Unless such states can reach a compromise with ED, their Title I funds will eventually be jeopardized. Compromise options might include:

- allowing states to leave the setting of standards to individual LEAs that wish to receive Title I grants, without development or adoption of standards at the state level;
- extending even further the period of time allowed for states and LEAs to meet the standards requirements (now approximately 5 years);
- limiting the application of standards only to Title I programs and pupils — i.e., not requiring that they be applicable to “all pupils”,<sup>50</sup> and
- allowing individual states or LEAs to apply for a waiver of the Title I standards requirements and use alternative assessments or mechanisms to establish accountability.

However, any of these alternatives would likely weaken the strategy of applying to Title I programs challenging content and performance standards that are applicable to all pupils, unproven though the strategy may be.

## Outcome-Based Education

**The Basic Concept.** In recent years, there has been criticism by some education analysts and observers of “outcome-based education” (OBE), and an implication that this concept is associated with the Goals 2000 legislation. “Outcome-based education” is a term that was initially used in education research and policy literature to describe a general approach to instruction, assessment, and accountability that focuses on what knowledge or skills pupils have mastered, measured with respect to challenging goals and standards, rather than a more traditional emphasis on the length of time that pupils have been exposed to certain instruction.

In recent years, some LEAs and states have adopted, or moved toward adoption of, policies that, for example, replace instructional time requirements for school promotion or graduation with specified knowledge or skill mastery requirements, a

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<sup>50</sup>As noted above, program regulations for Title I now permit this alternative.

form of OBE, although that particular terminology may not be employed.<sup>51</sup> In addition, recommendations have been made by many groups such as the National Governors' Association and the Business Roundtable that school systems should move toward a strategy for accountability based on learning outcomes for pupils.<sup>52</sup>

**Criticisms.** As outcome-based accountability systems have been developed and implemented in several states and LEAs, opposition has arisen from individuals and organizations that do not necessarily oppose, and may even say they favor, an outcomes focus in principle, but reject certain aspects of specific OBE programs in practice. Most OBE critics claim that instead of focusing solely on a relatively narrow range of cognitive knowledge and skills, which they would consider to be appropriate, actual OBE policies have included a number of objectives outside the realm of "basic academic" skills — e.g., "critical thinking skills," or such "affective" or "attitudinal" objectives as appreciation of diversity among people, ability to work with others, or "high self-esteem" — that the critics felt were vague, difficult to measure, and/or potentially antagonistic to their religious or social values.<sup>53</sup> From a different perspective, other critics have claimed that instead of being challenging, many of the objectives in OBE programs have been minimal and/or ambiguous, and unlikely to increase learning or achievement.<sup>54</sup>

Because many of the critics say they favor an outcomes focus in principle, but oppose specific examples of it, and because various critics emphasize different aspects of specific OBE proposals or policies, a substantial amount of confusion has arisen around use of the term. For some people, it has become a term of art to be applied to a wide range of concepts which they disapprove or of which they are suspicious.

**Linkages to Goals 2000.** While neither Goals 2000 nor any other federal education legislation explicitly uses the term "outcome-based education," there are elements of both Goals 2000 and the 1994 amendments to ESEA Title I that are similar to this concept, at least in its abstract form. The requirements for states to set explicit content and pupil performance standards, and for local programs to be evaluated on the basis of whether the standards are met, certainly imply a focus on pupil outcomes for accountability and other purposes. Further, as noted earlier, most of the Goals themselves refer to educational outcomes.

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<sup>51</sup>Examples include such individual LEAs as Johnson City, N.Y., or Glendale Union High School District, Arizona, and states such as Florida, Kentucky, or Pennsylvania.

<sup>52</sup>Who's Afraid of OBE? Education Week, December 15, 1993. (Hereafter cited as Who's Afraid of OBE?); and From Rhetoric to Action, State Progress in Restructuring the Education System. National Governors' Association, 1991. 52 p.

<sup>53</sup>For example, in Pennsylvania, an initial version of OBE standards included a number of what some consider to be "affective" learning objectives. After substantial debate, most of the controversial objectives were eliminated.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example: Lewis, Priscilla. Outcome-Based Education: Reframing the Debate. Council for Aid to Education. 1994; Who's Afraid of O.B.E.?; and Manno, Bruno V. Educational Outcomes Do Matter. Public Interest, Spring 1995. p. 19-27.

In addition, certain of the objectives associated with some of the National Education Goals may be sufficiently ambiguous or lacking in a direct relationship to cognitive knowledge and skills as to cause concern among some critics of OBE. For example, one of the objectives for Goal 3 (student achievement and citizenship) is that “all students will be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural heritage of this Nation and about the world community” (sec. 102(3)(B)(vi)). Further, an objective under Goal 7 (safe, disciplined, and alcohol- and drug-free schools) is that “community-based teams should be organized to provide students and teachers with needed support” (sec. 102(7)(B)(vi)).

However, neither Goals 2000 nor the revised ESEA Title I specify what educational standards are to be; that is left totally to the states. States are free not only to select their standards, but also to utilize those standards or other “outcome measures” to whatever extent they wish for accountability purposes (except for certain specified uses of the standards under ESEA Title I), and to choose how and in what areas pupil performance or other outcomes are measured. Further, the sort of “non-academic” skill areas that appear to be of greatest concern to many critics of OBE are not generally included in the federal legislative provisions. Goals 2000 refers explicitly only to the core academic subject areas of English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography (section 306(c)); while ESEA Title I requires the adoption of standards only in reading and mathematics. Finally, one of the amendments to Goals 2000 in the FY1996 appropriations legislation states explicitly that nothing in Goals 2000 may be construed to require states, LEAs, or schools to adopt OBE.