



THE
SAMUEL DUBOIS COOK
CENTER ON SOCIAL EQUITY

AT DUKE UNIVERSITY

Young Scholars Summer Research Institute

3rd Year Cohort

Research Papers

Summer 2017



Samuel DuBois Cook

The Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity (Cook Center) was named after Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook, a distinguished political scientist, scholar, educator, author, administrator, civil and human rights activist and public servant. Dr. Cook, a professor in the Duke University political science department became the first African-American to hold a regular and/or tenured faculty appointment at a predominantly white southern college or university. He went on to serve 22-and-a-half years as president of Dillard University in New Orleans.

Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity

The Duke University Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity is an interdisciplinary research center within Trinity School of Arts and Sciences that is comprised of faculty and scholars from across Duke and a diverse international group of affiliated universities, research centers and non-governmental organizations. Its mission is to promote equity, across all domains of human interactions, through interdisciplinary research, teaching, partnerships, policy, and practice. The Cook Center seeks to employ the innovative use of new and existing data, develop human capital, incorporate stakeholder voices through civic engagement, create viable collaborations, and engender equity-driven policy and social transformation at the local, national and international levels.

Young Scholars Summer Research Institute

The Young Scholars Summer Research Institute is sponsored by the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University in partnership with Durham Public Schools (DPS) in Durham, North Carolina. It is a three-week program that provides middle and high-school students enrolled in DPS with training to enhance their writing, research and presentation skills. In keeping with the Samuel DuBois Cook Center's central mission as a community of scholars engaged in the study of the causes and consequences of inequality, program participants will be exposed to curriculum related to the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of inequality.

During the Young Scholars Summer Research Institute, students receive instruction from distinguished middle and high-school teachers, university professors, and leaders from community organizations. The program's main focus is on the development of the students' research, writing, presentation and critical-inquiry skills, culminating in a capstone presentation of the student's research topic and findings before institute peers, university scholars, and Durham community members.

A Two-Faced System: How Title I Has Cut American Children Short

By: Elijah King

Abstract

This analysis investigates how North Carolina's school districts use Title I (Part A, School Improvement) of the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act.” The goal of this analysis is to examine the flaws of the Title I funding system. This research has been done by examining documents such as the original Title I- Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, various online articles, and primary resources. Upon examination of these articles, I concluded that Title I-Part A is used for the wrong purpose. Through showing the effects of Title I, this research highlights the flaws of the federal funding program that is supposed to help, not hurt.

Introduction

Background:

President Lyndon B. Johnson argued that “full educational opportunity” should be “our first national goal.” In 1965, he supported the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; since then it has been the most important legislation affecting education.¹ Title I Funding provides the largest amount of federal funding for improving the academic achievement of poor children, and it is the fourth largest of all federal programs specifically for children with low-income backgrounds (along with Medicaid, food programs, and Temporary Assistance to Needy

¹ "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)," *U.S. Department of Education*, N.p., n.d. Web. 26 July 2017.

Families).² Title I Funding provides supplemental funds for school districts that serve low-income communities.

Thesis Statement:

Research has shown that Title I does not adequately address funding disparities across school districts in North Carolina, which indicates that Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is not fulfilling its purpose of supporting low-income school districts.

Research Questions:

Given the background information, I have formulated a series about Title I funding:

- How are Title I funds distributed?
- Who benefits from Title I funding?
- What, if any, are the flaws in Title I funding distribution?

Methodology and Review of Literature:

I identified several sources on funding disparities through the Title I program, which indicate that public schools that serve predominately low-income families continue to be underfunded. I looked at the original text of the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” to form the basis of my argument. Using other online resources, including scholarly articles, organizations’ websites, and other sources, I have found extensive documentation and studies on the topic of funding disparities in North Carolina.

² Weinstein, Meryle G., Leanna Stiefel,, Amy Ellen Schwartz,, and Luis Chalico, Dr. *Does Title I Increase Spending and Improve Performance?* The Impact of Title I Funding On School Spending and Student Achievement.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267876133_The_Impact_of_Title_I_Funding_On_School_Spending_and_Student_Achievement.

Analysis of Data

Section Overview:

This section will describe and explain the origins and purposes of Title I funding. There will be a clear breakdown of the formulas that go into Title I funding distribution to school districts in North Carolina. Using the information I have acquired from various sources I will analyze the flaws of title I funding and how it does not fulfill its full purpose.

History of Title I Funding:

The “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (ESEA) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 9, 1965, less than three months after it was introduced in Congress as a part of the “War on Poverty”.³ This law was considered an important breakthrough because other attempts to provide federal aid to public school systems failed, due mostly to the “two R’s”- race and religion.⁴ Southern legislators, referred to as “Dixiecrats”, resisted federal support for public education because they did not want to provide funding for black schools in the South. Some Northern Congressmen similarly opposed federal funding because they did not want to provide funding for private and religious schools. Both of their arguments rested on the Constitutional premise that gave state governments control over public education. President Johnson, however, successfully argued that the “Elementary and Secondary Act” would bring more kids out of poverty through quality education.⁵

³ "Elementary and Secondary School Act, the 'War on Poverty' and Title 1," *History of Education: Selected Moments*, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://schugurensky.faculty.asu.edu/moments/1965elemsec.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ McClure, Phyllis, "The History of Educational Comparability in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965," *Center for American Progress*, accessed July 11, 2017,

Purpose of Title I Funding:

According to the U.S Department of Education, the purpose of Title I funds is “ to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.”⁶ In simpler terms, Public schools that serve a vast group of students from a low-income background receive a certain number of Title I funds to help them meet educational goals set by the state government. The term “low-income student” is defined by whether or not that student is enrolled in the Free and Reduced lunch program. For the entire school to qualify for Title I funds, at least 40% of its student body must be enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Originally the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” was made to serve the needs of students with low-income backgrounds by supplementing local and state education funds with federal money.⁷

Formulas for Title I Funding:

Title I funds are distributed to school districts according to a set of four formulas, the Basic Grant formula, Concentration Grant formula, Targeted Assistance Grant formula, and the Education Finance Incentive Grant formula. School districts have some discretion in how they choose to distribute Title 1 funds among schools within the district, but the law requires them to prioritize the schools with the highest levels of low income students.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2008/06/10/4529/the-history-of-educational-comparability-in-title-i-of-the-elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965/>.

⁶ "What is a Title I School? Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students," *Bright Hub Education*, July 31, 2015, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/teaching-methods-tips/11105-basics-of-title-1-funds/>.

⁷ "Ibid.

The Basic Grant and Concentration Grant Formula:

The Basic Grant formula funds school districts based on the number of low income children they serve. Any school district with at least 10 poor children and 2% of its student population in poverty is eligible to receive funds through Basic Grant formula, so most school districts, even the “wealthier” districts get this type of funding.⁸ In the fiscal year 2013, \$6.2 billion (45 percent) of all Title I funding was distributed through this formula.⁹ Like the Basic Grant formula, the Concentration Grant formula provides funding to schools based off the number of poor children served, however the school district must have at least 15% of 6,500 poor children.¹⁰ Under both the Basic Grant and the Concentration Grant formulas, once schools pass the threshold percentage of poor children required to receive funding they receive the same amount of money per poor child regardless of how many poor children they serve. A school district with 15% of children from low-income backgrounds receives the same amount of money per child as a district with 99% of children from low-income backgrounds.¹¹ The funds from the Concentration Grant formula are also put added to those provided by the Basic Grant formula and in 2013, \$1.3 billion (9 percent) of Title I funding was distributed through this formula.¹²

Targeted Assistance Grant and Education Finance Incentive Grant formulas

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Title I Distribution Formulas," *EdCentral*, accessed July 21, 2017.
<http://www.edcentral.org/edcyclopedia/no-child-left-behind-act-title-i-distribution-formulas/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

The Targeted Assistance Grant formula is different because rather than providing the same amount of Title I funding per child, it provides more money per child as the district's poverty rate goes up. School districts with high amounts of impoverished students receive more money per child than lower-poverty schools districts do and each impoverished child greater than 35,515 brings 3 times as much Title I funding as its first 691 children in poverty.¹³ In 2011, \$3.1 billion (23 percent) of federal Title I funding was given through the Targeted Assistance Program.¹⁴ Unlike the 3 grant formulas before it, the Education Finance Incentive Grant formulas takes into account state's fiscal efforts and rewards “good school finance states” that spend lots of state money on public education and distribute that funding equitably and to target funds on high poverty school districts in “bad school finance states” that inequitably distribute state and local education funding.¹⁵ Within states, funding is distributed to school districts similar to the Targeted Assistance Grant formula and in 2012, \$3.1 billion (23 percent) of federal funding was distributed through the Education Incentive Grant formula.¹⁶

Flaws of Title I Funding:

The Federal government only provides 10 percent of a school district's overall budget, making up only a small slice of the pie¹⁷. The fact that local and state funds make up 90 percent of funding for schools, the environment of a district sets up a huge impact on a school's overall

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Title I Distribution Formulas," *EdCentral*, accessed July 21, 2017.
<http://www.edcentral.org/edcyclopedia/no-child-left-behind-act-title-i-distribution-formulas/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cory Turner, Reema Khrais, Tim Lloyd, Alexandra Olgin, Laura Isensee, Becky Vevea, and Dan Carsen. "Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem." NPR. April 18, 2016. Accessed July 21, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/18/474256366/why-americas-schools-have-a-money-problem>.

quality¹⁸. Local funds can either positively or negatively impact the education children receive in school because if a school is placed within a wealthier community, the school will have an ample amount of school resources to enrich the quality of teaching students receive. On the other hand, if a school is located in an impoverished area, the school will struggle to provide the kids with the amount of teaching they need because the lack of resources they have to work with. The federal funds are such a small percentage they cannot effectively counteract funding disparities in local schools.

While Title I funding is worded as a way of “Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged” and “serving the lowest-achieving schools with the greatest needs for funds”¹⁹ it is not serving up to its full purpose. The hard truth is that Title I sounds good on paper but, in practice, it is cutting students with low-income backgrounds short, being that there is simply not enough funds to be spread out because of the specific formulas used to determine Title I funding.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was meant to help schools in low-income communities, but it is actually perpetuating a widening gap between the lower-class and the upper-class. The problem with the school funding system is that districts end up relying so heavily on local property taxes and being that property taxes vary a lot from neighborhood to neighborhood, district to district which translates to tax revenues.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Title I - Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged," *Home*, Dec. 19, 2005, accessed on July 22, 2017.

²⁰ Cory Turner, Reema Khrais, Tim Lloyd, Alexandra Olgin, Laura Isensee, Becky Vevea, and Dan Carsen. "Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem." NPR. April 18, 2016. Accessed July 21, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/18/474256366/why-americas-schools-have-a-money-problem>.

In poorer neighborhoods residents pay little to no property tax at all so local schools in the surrounding area have to heavily depend on the funds they get from Title 1 funding and the little they get from state and federal governments. On the other hand, well-off neighborhoods have average, or at least higher property taxes than a poor neighborhood so local schools in the surrounding area have money to provide school resources without having to rely so heavily on the government for funding. Most superintendents and principals will tell you that whether they can afford a year-round art teacher or new textbooks depends at least in part on the property wealth around them, and if the property taxes are not sufficiently high, the quality of the school will decline accordingly.²¹

Schools like Rockingham County High School (Rockingham, North Carolina) in rural areas have seen part of this reality. Leigh Ann Cross, an art teacher at Rockingham High School, says she has to work with a budget of around \$300, but at her previous job in a wealthier school she had a budget of around \$7,000.²² While North Carolina had an increase in per-student funding for public education this year, it's not enough to make up for the huge cuts made during the Great Recession, that cut funding for various things like supplies.²³ In Rockingham County and other counties like Durham, public schools spending less than the national average per-student have hard times after changes in state and federal funding regulations, unlike their

²¹ Ibid.

²² Khrais, Reema. "Even With Extra Help, Gap Between Rich and Poor NC Schools Is Widening." WUNC. Accessed July 27, 2017. <http://wunc.org/post/even-extra-help-gap-between-rich-and-poor-nc-schools-widening#stream/0>.

²³ Ibid.

wealthy counterparts, because of the fact that they have a harder time making up the difference with property taxes.²⁴

Conclusion

This research analysis illustrates how the federal system for education funding is a “two-faced system” in which funding disparities for public schools are real not only in North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction but in other education departments across the country. Title I (Part A, School Improvement) formulas create a base for funding which is independent of the number of children enrolled in a school, thus causing the funding disparity. Within the research content I presented the main points of what the formulas are for Title I funding, who is supposed to benefit for Title I funding, and what the flaws are in Title I funding distribution. This topic is important because as time passes, more children are being cut short based on financial backgrounds they cannot really control.

²⁴Ibid.

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