

MEMORANDUM

June 16, 1981

To: Greg Humphrey

From: Marilyn Rauth

This is the beginning of the Teacher Center/Teacher Corps testimony. When I learned the hearing was canceled, I summarized our arguments at the end.

Teacher Centers and Teacher Corps

We would like to call your attention to the Teacher Center and Teacher Corps programs, slated for consolidation with 28 other programs under Title II of this Act. In the absence of close examination, incorporation of these two programs in the consolidation may seem fairly inconsequential. But this simply is not the case. To maintain standards of excellence in education and a competent teaching force, Teacher Centers and Teacher Corps must be continued and administered at the federal level.

This is true because without opportunities to improve and upgrade professional skills, there is no question that the teaching force can become stagnant, mechanized and ultimately, resigned and demoralized. Teachers support meaningful professional development programs because they are a personal form of "quality control" to which intrinsic rewards are attached. Because teaching is not a job with high extrinsic rewards, maintenance of the former is quite important.

An argument could be made that consolidating Teacher Centers and Teacher Corps under Title II will not eliminate them, but that even if it would, this would simply indicate that SEAs and LEAs had acted upon other priorities.

Our history shows us that other priorities will take precedence. As a case in point, consider what happened in implementation of P.L. 94-142 when program monies were inadequate to carry out fully the law's mandate. In annual reports to Congress, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (now OSERS) had to report that one of the biggest problems in implementation was the lack of inservice training provided the school staff, which resulted in confusion over role responsibilities, thus heightening fear and insecurity. People were also frequently being asked to do things they did not know how to do which meant that the quality of services offered children often did not improve, and in some instances even diminished. Why did this happen? Because when education dollars are short, monies flow to direct instructional services before being channeled into indirectly beneficial programs, such as inservice or professional development. This is true no matter how important or critical the indirect aid programs may be to the success of the instructional program. The financial crises our schools now face at the state and local levels coupled with the large budget cuts being made at the federal level can leave no doubt in your mind that though there will be a great deal of talk of teacher competency, there will be no accompanying appropriation of funds at either level to fund professional development programs. Such programs, in fact, have been all but eliminated.

Federally funded Teacher Centers and Teacher Corps programs are the only major exception. All that is left to fill the void are some one- to two-day anachronistic systemwide inservice days. It is impossible to meet individual personal growth needs through this type of program.

Greg, I learned the hearing was canceled here. Our general argument, based on what has already been stated, is:

1. The Teacher Center and Teacher Corps programs should remain at the federal level; the Teacher Center program should be moved into the Office of Professional Development at the Education Department, which is where Teacher Corps already is. This Office has as its responsibility to consolidate all federally-funded education programs and to help avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.
2. Without maintenance of these two programs there will be no capacity to develop model training programs at the federal level. SEAs and LEAs are unlikely to share successful practices because there's nothing in it for them.
3. Teacher Corps is one of the very rare federal programs which has an urban focus. It is well-known that many of the state legislatures are controlled by rural areas and the cities, with large numbers of disadvantaged, handicapped and minority students, go begging.
4. Teacher Centers can hardly be union hiring halls. Most have only one director. Even the largest have relatively few staff. As the LEA is the fiscal agent, it has final say over who the policy board, which again is made up of a diverse group of people including administrators, teachers, parents, and higher education representatives, hires.

Teachers support them not for personal gain but because the concept has produced recognizable results.

5. The California Department of Education says Teacher Centers have raised student achievement scores in schools the centers serve. Our experience in New York City and elsewhere is that this has been the case but we don't have the data to actually prove it yet.
6. Overall, the argument on Teacher Centers is that few federally-initiated programs have been so successful or so cost-effective. Now that they have stabilized, they were just ready to institutionalize. Documentation of process had taken place (75% of all center activities are related directly to classroom instruction) but evaluation data had not yet been collected to provide the hard statistics on effects. Now they are vulnerable to the budget-cutter's ax not because they failed but because the rug is being pulled out just as they had emerged as an entity (over three years) which could be evaluated.

If there's anything at all which could be done to keep these programs at the federal level, Teacher Centers in particular, it would be of great value to do so. There's a lot riding on this and much to be lost. We'll have to start from scratch on professional development. Please keep me advised on developments--good or bad.

Thanks.

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