Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Improving Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

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EXPERT CONVENING SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

On December 5, 2014, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's DC office hosted an invitation-only gathering of fifteen federal, state, and local education policy experts in both the public and nonprofit sectors. Participants represented a range of organizations and perspectives. The goal of the meeting was to explore strategies to improve Title II, Part A of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act in anticipation of the Act's reauthorization. Nearly every state and school district in the nation receives a portion of the over $2 billion appropriated under the program annually to strengthen the teaching workforce. The bulk of the funding—some75 percent—is spent on professional development and class-size reduction. Yet we lack proof that spending money on these activities improves the education system. Professional development runs the gamut of effectiveness from one-off, district-wide workshops to ongoing, one-on-one instructional coaching; for Title II purposes, all professional development is equal, with no way to tell what specific opportunities states and districts are providing for teachers. And, where it has been rigorously examined, reducing class size has seen mixed results, with larger benefits for younger grades and for classes that are drastically reduced in size, but smaller or no gains for older students or smaller-scale reductions. In short, there is not much evidence that Title II consistently improves teaching quality or student learning. It was this reality that motivated the Carnegie Foundation to convene experts to explore improvements to this potentially powerful policy instrument.

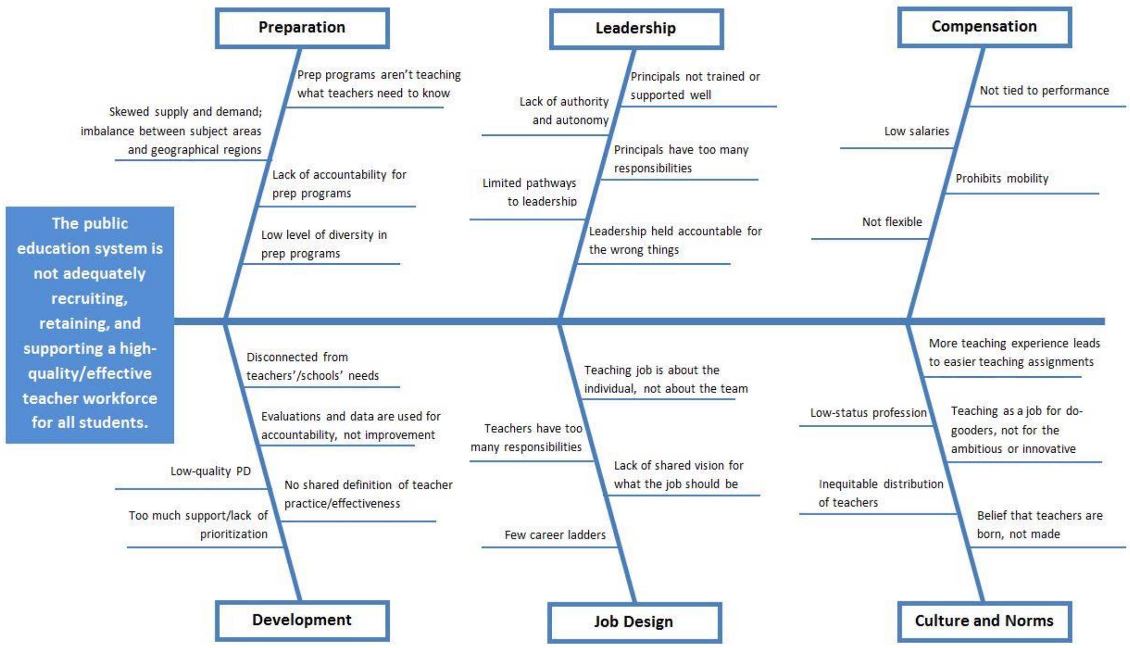
The policy experts that the Foundation brought together were already familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of Title II, and many came to the meeting with perspectives on how to improve the act. The goal of the gathering was to encourage participants to think about the teacher-quality problem in new ways by first fully exploring the root causes of the issue, which often go unexamined in the fast-moving world of public policy.

Using improvement-science techniques developed by the Carnegie Foundation to help educators and education policymakers see in their entirety the ways that systems produce problematic outcomes, we asked participants to explore the root causes this problem statement: *The public education system is not adequately recruiting, retaining, and supporting a high-quality/effective teacher workforce for all students.*

This process involved identifying the major sources of the recruitment, retention, and support problem and then producing a comprehensive mapping of the contributing factors in each major category. It yielded a variety of insights that may not have surfaced had the group jumped right into solutions without first seeing the system as a whole: Recommendations emerged on the distribution of Title II funds, spending priorities, the collection and report of spending data, and the communication of program expectations to funding recipients.

In exploring the reasons why public education does not adequately recruit, retain, and support a high quality teaching workforce, participants identified six major problem areas: preparation, leadership, development, job design, culture/norms, and compensation. They examined the first four categories during the meeting. The following graphic, known as a Fishbone or Ishikawa Diagram, was the starting point for the in-depth analysis of the teacher-quality challenge. It represents an initial breakdown of each problem area: inadequate teacher preparation, development, and compensation, weak school leadership, unfavorable culture around and unrealistic norms about the teaching profession, and the impractical design of the teacher's job.

Figure 1: High-level root cause diagram



Meeting participants said that teacher preparation is inadequate in part because teacher training programs tend to emphasize pedagogical theory over real-life practice. In addition, lack of oversight means that preparation programs are not held to high standards and are not accountable for producing a high quality, diverse workforce. In the area of school leadership, participants noted that principals sometimes lack the authority and autonomy to make decisions for their school because of distrust between district- and school-level leaders. And because the job itself is not well-defined, principals are not trained as well as they should be and their responsibilities are too many and too varied. The importance of shared definitions came up in the conversation about inadequate teacher development as well; the public education system lacks shared definitions of quality teaching, participants said.

Also contributing to the teacher-development problem is the fact that teachers are expected to do too many things, and there is a lack of focus and prioritization in their professional development as a result. Participants also pointed to a lack of opportunities for collaboration among teachers.

Though the participants did not subject the topics of compensation and culture to root-cause analyses, they had thoughts on these areas as well: compensation is too inflexible and salaries are too low; because teaching is a low-status profession, it does not attract the most ambitious and innovative individuals, and high-quality teachers are not distributed equitably among communities and schools.

A complete list of the many root causes that participants identified in each problem area is included in Appendix A.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TITLE II

Participants in the convening generated a variety of recommendations for how Title II, Part A could more effectively address the weaknesses in recruitment, retention, and professional support in public education. These ideas fell into four major categories that respond to both general concerns about the administration of Title II, Part A and to a number of the specific problems identified in the root-cause analysis: receipt of funds, use of funds, reporting and data, and communication and culture.

Changing the Way State and LEAs Receive Title II, Part A Funds

- **COMPETITIVE FUNDING**
  A number of participants suggested a competitive funding model for distribution of Title II, Part A funds. One idea was to replicate the federal Investing in Innovation model, which could aid in the scaling of effective policies and programs, such as high-impact professional development. Another idea was to provide competitive grants to states and LEAs in order for them to implement specific policies, such as licensure reform or a redesigned school day.

- **MOVE TO COMPREHENSIVE MODELS**
  The need for a more comprehensive approach to improving teacher quality was raised often during the day's discussion. States and LEAs tend to focus on distinct types of teacher needs—recruitment, compensation, professional development—rather than considering the needs of the system as a whole and the interplay between categories of spending. Some participants noted that the needs-analyses that states and LEAs are currently required to produce for Title II are insufficient to ensure that the fund's recipients consider their teachers' needs holistically and that spending plans are truly aligned to a comprehensive vision for quality improvement, backed up by evidence.

- **HIGH- AND LOW-PERFORMING LEAS**
  Some participants pushed for more flexibility for high-performing LEAs in Title II, Part A spending and others, pointing to the low quality of professional development and the marginal benefits of class-size reduction in many school systems, suggested that states should be able to dictate how Title II, Part A monies are spent in
  low-performing LEAs, using metrics such as high teacher turnover or low academic performance to identify such schools.

Changing Which Activities Are Funded by Title II, Part A

- **PRIORITIZE NEW AND EARLY CAREER TEACHERS**
  Throughout the day, participants returned to the needs of new teachers, and many ideas emerged for targeting Title II spending at this group. These included encouraging, incentivizing, or even mandating that states and LEAs spend Title II funds on things like residency programs, induction programs, and instructional coaches for new teachers.

- **PRIORITIZE IDENTIFYING AND SCALING BEST PRACTICES**
  Improvement requires taking what works and applying it to practice, but in many cases, participants realized that the field of education does not quite know what works for recruiting, developing, and retaining quality teachers. Many suggestions were made for researching and scaling best practices, such as building a what-works-clearinghouse-like entity to enhance state and district capacity to scale best practices, contracting with private entities to develop state-of-the-art professional development designs and materials, constructing a national database of exemplary teacher support models, and funding a rigorous evaluation of clinical residency programs.

- **PRIORITIZE PRIORITIZATION**
  Participants noted the tendency to spread Title II, Part A funds amongst a number of initiatives, and suggested that states and LEAs should be encouraged to instead focus their funding on high-leverage activities such as comprehensive new-teacher induction programs.

Changing the Data Systems and Reporting Around Title II, Part A

- **REQUIRE THE CAPTURE AND USE OF MORE DETAILED DATA TIED TO OUTCOMES**
  Under current requirements, states and LEAs do not report much data back to the federal government on how Title II, Part A funds are used, so we do not have a good understanding of the impact of the funds. Participants suggested that states and LEAs be required to provide meaningful and robust data on the types of activities funded and the outcomes of those activities. Participants came up with a number of metrics that could be used, including teacher effectiveness, teacher satisfaction, and retention of highly-effective educators.

- **REQUIRE A HIGHER LEVEL OF DATA REPORTING**
  Related to the recommendations about collecting detailed data are recommendations about reporting data publicly. Some participants believed that transparency of Title II spending is crucial to its effectiveness and impact. Some argued that having reporting requirements for certain metrics shows that those metrics (whatever they may be) are valued. As for which data could be reported to the public, suggestions included school-level teacher evaluation results, educator retention rates, and teacher preparation program outcomes like placement and performance.

- **TIE OUTCOMES DATA TO CONSEQUENCES**
  Some participants suggested that, given better data collection and reporting, consequences could be tied to certain outcomes. For example, if an LEA did not meet a certain goal (student performance levels or teacher retention percentages, for example), Title II, Part A funds for that LEA could be limited to certain interventions.

Changing the communication about and purpose of Title II, Part A

- **CLEARLY COMMUNICATE TITLE II AND ITS REGULATIONS TO STATES AND LEAS**
  Some participants noted that not all states and LEAs are aware of the regulations of Title II spending, and indeed that there are widespread myths about Title II rules and restrictions. Participants suggested an overhaul of how Title II and allowable uses of Part A funds are communicated and explained to states and LEAs.

- **CHANGE TITLE II TO BE AN IMPROVEMENT TOOL, RATHER THAN A COMPLIANCE TOOL**
  Most participants agreed that implementation of Title II and distribution of Part A funds is driven more by a culture of compliance than by a focus on improvement. Reporting requirements, for example, can deter educators from embracing and testing innovative solutions, they suggested. In participants' view, this warps the original purpose of this section of the act—to improve teaching and learning. This is perhaps the most ambitious idea that emerged for how to improve Title II. Many participants agreed that the Title II funds should be used to address specific problems of teaching and learning. A way to do that, participants suggested, would be to distribute Title II, Part A funds using a system that takes into account each state's or district's unique needs and priorities.

CONCLUSION

With new Congressional leaders on education signaling a desire to reauthorize ESEA, it is a good time to provide fresh perspectives on how Title II, Part A might be changed to better support improvements in teaching and learning. Drawing on their wide-ranging expertise on the challenges to recruiting, retaining, and supporting a high-quality and effective teacher workforce for all students, the convening participants provided valuable insights into how to strengthen Title II, Part A on behalf of the nation's students and teachers alike, and we hope policymakers find their insights helpful.

APPENDEX A: COMPLETE LIST OF ROOT CAUSES AS EXPANDED FROM FIGURE 1

Figure 1 represents an initial breakdown of each topic area: teacher preparation, school leadership, educator development, the design of the teacher's job, compensation, and the culture and norms surrounding the teaching profession. Using a root cause analysis, participants generated many causes for each problem area; these are presented below.

Preparation

- Prep programs aren't teaching what teachers need to know
    - Student teaching not effective preparation
        - Lack of placements in high-needs schools, so those teachers are not prepared for those environments
        - Student teaching often happens in second semester of K-12 school year, after rules and procedures have already been established
    - Theory taught in prep programs does not always align with reality
        - Schools of education don't know or don't teach what teachers will need to know on day one of teaching
        - No pressure in theory-based prep programs to focus on school-based challenges
        - Students' non-academic needs are not a part of the curriculum
    - Belief that teaching is an art, making teacher education difficult
- Lack of accountability for prep programs
    - Perverse funding incentives
        - Incentives for quantity, not quality of graduates
        - Profit margin means less practice teaching
    - Lack of pedagogical differentiation among prep programs, no clear models
    - Lack of evidence on what good prep is
- Low level of racial diversity
    - Population of teachers not diverse
    - College population not diverse
    - Raising prep program standards might decrease diversity
- Skewed supply and demand for teachers, with imbalance between certain subject areas and geographical regions
    - Unpredictable turnover
        - Economy affects hiring
    - Hiring is local, so need to improve local prep programs to improve local teaching quality

Leadership

- Principals not trained or supported well
    - Job is not well-defined
        - Definition based on old norms (principals not prepared to be instructional leaders)
        - No agreement on outcomes
        - Field lacks a clear definition of characteristics of an effective leader
    - Highly variable quality of principal preparation
    - Lack of district capacity
        - Not enough capacity to evaluate and support principals
        - Not enough money, or poor use of funds, to support principals
- Limited pathways to leadership
    - Binary between teacher or leader; in most schools, it is impossible to be a combination of both
    - Too many people in leadership pipeline, which dilutes quality

            - Only way to advance in teaching, and earn more, is to leave teaching for administration
                - Unions don't allow differentiation of roles/salaries for teachers
                    - Absent a better way to evaluate performance, we can't fairly differentiate among teachers
- School leaders held accountable for the wrong things
    - Job not well-defined
        - No agreement on expected outcomes
            - We want schools to do too much
                - We fail to address poverty and other social problems, and instead leave it to the school to address
- Lack authority and autonomy
    - Don't know how to be good consumers of data
    - Lack of information and data
        - Lack of detailed budget data
        - Without the information, can't make best decisions
    - District is ultimately accountable
        - Won't delegate important tasks to principals
        - Lack of trust between district and school-level leaders
        - Weakens power of school-level leaders
- Principals have too many responsibilities
    - Job not well-defined
        - Requires too many types of skills
            - Difficult to attract the best people
        - Requires solid "soft skills"

Development

- Low-quality PD
    - Teachers don't have all the available information on current research and best strategies
        - We don't share what we know
    - Teachers come into the classroom with different approaches
        - Tension between shared definitions and flexibility
    - The ineffable quality of good teaching
        - No shared definition of what good teaching is
            - Best practices in PD aren't shared amongst districts
    - Every school is different
        - And thus PD can vary widely from school to school
    - PD without follow-up
        - Lack of capacity at the school level to follow up to make sure teachers are implementing what they learned during PD
            - Too many competing priorities
            - Lack of time
        - School schedule doesn't allow for follow-up, or for job-embedded PD
- Disconnected from teachers'/schools' needs
    - Too many competing initiatives
        - Emphasis on the new big thing, which will likely have its own PD
            - Something doesn't work, so we move on to the next thing
            - PD is shallow
    - Too much bureaucracy
        - Too many regulations about PD—not flexible
        - We can check the box on PD initiatives without actually knowing if teachers learned it

    - Can't identify teachers' needs
        - Don't have capacity to diagnose teachers' needs
        - Don't have the time to diagnose teachers' needs
        - Lack of trust for school-level people to make decisions for their teachers
- Evaluation and data are used for accountability, not improvement
    - Teachers don't know how to use the data to take action
        - Data not meant for teacher use
    - Lack of alignment between system's data needs and classroom's data needs
        - No agreement on what data is useful for teachers
            - Data may not be useful for every teacher at every stage of his/her career
        - Even formative assessments are often not useful
            - Data doesn't explain the "why" behind the outcomes
- Too much support
    - Too many PD options
        - Lack of agreement on what activities to prioritize
            - Student learning objectives are often not prioritized
                - Lack of clarity on SLOs
                - Competing beliefs about students and/or teaching
                    - Even when there is agreement on what students should learn, we don't always agree on how to get them to learn it
    - Lack of prioritization in developing teaching
        - Drop everything on teachers all at once
            - Can't say no to anything -- everything is important
                - Takes political courage to say no, to prioritize
        - Don't have differentiated systems to serve everyone
        - Too much for one teacher to do—the design of the job gets in the way
            - Expectations for differentiation have increased, but the job and the system have not
- No shared definition of teacher practice
    - No picture of what good teaching looks like at each stage of a teacher's career
        - Divide between general public's ideas about education and education system's ideas
    - No shared sense of what schools should do
        - No fear about what our schools aren't doing

Job Design

- Too many responsibilities
    - Students with greater needs
    - Class sizes are often too large
    - Add-ons, no clear structure to manage peripheral tasks
        - Adding on tasks instead of replacing some with others
            - Lack of support for enrichment, electives, extracurriculars, other initiatives
                - Lack of coherent mandates
        - Lack of distributive leadership structure
    - Competing priorities
        - Government regulations
        - LEA and state priorities
            - Test scores
            - Attendance
            - Parent contact
            - Curriculum

- Individual vs. team job
    - Evaluations are designed to be individualistic rather than shared among a community of instructors
    - No time to collaborate
    - Interdisciplinary work is not encouraged
        - Assessments are narrow to one discipline
        - Regulatory demands in particular subject areas
    - Performance pay discourages teamwork
        - Misunderstood or mis-structured performance pay systems
            - Not explained fully to staff
            - Discourages collaboration
            - Measures don't resonate with teachers
- Few career ladders
    - Lack of clear pathways
        - Few options to move from classroom teacher role—absence of structured teacher-leader roles, hybrid roles
    - Cost of career ladders
    - Unclear or inaccurate determination of teacher effectiveness
    - Systemic barriers
        - Unions
        - Laws
    - Perception of the profession
        - Obsolete model of the factory/assembly line -- all teachers interchangeable
- Lack of a shared vision
    - Lack of alignment between IHEs, LEAs, states on what the job of the teacher is
        - Lack of shared responsibility across sectors and within education structures for determining the role of the teacher

Culture and Norms

- Belief that teachers are born, not made, lowering incentives to prioritize professional development
- Low-status profession
- Experience = easier assignments
- Inequitable distribution of teachers across schools

Compensation

- Not tied to performance
- Low salaries
- Not flexible
- Prohibits mobility

APPENDIX B: COMPLETE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS' IDEAS FOR CHANGING TITLE II

The narrative summary of the convening describes the participants' major recommendations for how Title II, Part A could more effectively address the weaknesses in recruitment, retention, and support in public education. What follows is a more comprehensive taxonomy of the participants' sense of how to improve Title II's effectiveness. Again, these ideas fell into four major categories that respond to both general concerns about the administration of Title II, Part A and to a number of the specific problems identified in the root-cause analysis: receipt of funds, use of funds, reporting and data, and communication and culture.

Changing the way states and LEAs receive Title II, Part A funds

- **COMPETITIVE FUNDING**
  - Potentially reward schools and/or districts with high impact professional development
  - Using an Investing in Innovation (i3) model to fund effective Title II programs
    - Expand effective programs
    - Invest in research for promising programs
  - Move funds to competitive grants program around:
    - i3 quality/research
    - System-wide reforms that connect all the efforts to improve teaching
  - Competitive grants to implement policies such as:
    - Compensation reform (like the Teacher Incentive Fund)
    - Redesigned school day
    - Prizes for identifying effective professional development
    - New licensure tiers, allowing untrained but talented individuals to start practicing immediately (with checks and supervision)
- **MOVE TO COMPREHENSIVE MODELS**
  - Needs assessments/analyses
    - States currently don't force real needs assessments from LEAs that have aligned spending plans backed with evidence
    - System-wide needs analyses are important
    - Title II's required "needs analyses" aren't enough—need more-comprehensive plans
    - Recipients of funding should need to articulate broader goals for their school systems and students and align application of funding to those goals with outcome measures
  - Flexibility for LEAs—federal government should ask how spending is related to their individual needs and challenges
  - Block grants for states/LEAs
- **HIGH- AND LOW-PERFORMING LEAS**
  - Establish criteria that allow states to dictate how funding is spent (assume states will then require evidence-based practices or models), eg: low performance, high teacher turnover
  - Allow states to be more directive to low-performing LEAs
    - May be difficult because of capacity issues at the state level

Changing which activities are funded by Title II, Part A

- **PRIORITIZE NEW AND EARLY CAREER TEACHERS**
  - Make big investments in new teachers and teacher preparation
  - Title II funds for high-quality residency and induction programs—teaching hospitals, pre-service, and job-embedded in-service clinical experience
  - Require/incentivize Title II money to be spent only on new teacher induction programs, like residencies with great coaches and/or video-based coaching support
    - Perhaps require this prioritization until district can show high average level of effectiveness of year-3 teachers

- **PRIORITIZE IDENTIFYING AND SCALING BEST PRACTICES**
  - Construct and maintain a national database of exemplary models of best practice
  - Spend money on figuring out what materials and programs are valuable and should be scaled
  - Invest in tools to improve professional development and make teacher work more efficient (no reinventing the wheel)
  - Provide funds to support research, case studies, and innovative practices
  - Provide contracts for people to develop quality resources for teachers, state-of-the-art professional development, on a national scale
    - Tension between this and a need to tailor things specifically for individual student populations
  - Conduct rigorous evaluation of clinical residency models vs. other models
  - Need more research on high-quality PD and other supports for teachers—what works, for whom and in what contexts
- **PRIORITIZE PRIORITIZATION**
  - There's a tendency for districts to spread Title II money too thin—a little for all activities rather than focusing on a few areas (on new teachers, for example)
  - Narrow focus of funding to high-leverage points in teacher growth system: induction, evaluation, professional development, career ladders
- **OTHER**
  - Difficult to shift spending in any district because status quo has constituencies
  - Encourage programs or activities that reduce isolation of various institutions (namely IHEs and LEAs)
  - Big investments in principals

Changing the data systems and reporting around Title II, Part A

- **REQUIRE THE CAPTURE AND USE OF MORE DETAILED DATA TIED TO OUTCOMES**
  - Require meaningful data on how, specifically, Title II funds are used (not just “class size reduction” or “professional development,” but what kinds of professional development—format, content, individual vs. collective, etc.)
  - Require meaningful data on the impact of specific activities on quality of teacher practice (effectiveness), teacher satisfaction, and student learning
  - Retention of highly-effective educators must be one of the metrics that is recorded and reported—states and districts should make an explicit link between how funds are used and how that results in improved retention of highly-effect educators, and data must back this up
  - Metrics of success need to be connected to teacher success and student outcomes - not highly-qualified status as it is now
- **REQUIRE A HIGHER LEVEL OF DATA REPORTING**
  - Focus on most important outcomes and then require public transparency of those outcomes (at minimum) and perhaps more (for example, if they don’t meet outcomes, limit flexibility in use of funds)
  - Reporting requirements give an indication of what is valued
    - But reporting requirements aren’t enough to spur change on their own; need the necessary skills and training at state and local level in order to improve
  - Public reporting of school-level evaluation results, retention rates, financial resources
  - Public reporting of teacher preparation program outcomes (such as placement, retention, performance)
- **TIE OUTCOMES DATA TO CONSEQUENCES**
  - If LEA doesn’t meet certain metrics, a “trigger” is enforced, limiting intervention choices based on data

    - Right now, little encouragement to spend funds on things that are working to improve teaching and learning process; encourage or require this for low-performing LEAs

Changing the communication about and purpose of Title II, Part A

- **Clearly communicate Title II and its regulations to states and LEAs**
    - Currently, there is a lack of clarity in states and LEAs about the purpose and regulations of Title II
    - Widespread myths in states and districts about federal rules and restrictions
    - Some states (and their auditors) have added rules or restrictions that are not required by Title II
- **Change Title II to be an improvement tool, rather than a compliance tool**
    - If Title II is driven by complying with reporting requirements instead of by teaching and learning, it can't be as effective as necessary to help support teaching and school leadership
    - The Title II conversation has to be about teaching and learning, not about checking off boxes for compliance purposes
    - Encourage a systems-level approach that takes into account all the needs of the school or district
- **Other**
    - LEAs won't spend money on professional development until professional development is seen as part of the educator's job
    - Need to address learned helplessness in states— "I can't control how LEAs spend the money"
    - Need to connect Title II, Part A to other related provisions (e.g. Title II, Part D and the connection to technology; Title II of the Higher Education Act)

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