

Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Annual Performance Report

December 2023

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) solicited comments on a proposed *Comprehensive Literacy State Development Annual Performance Report*, in a notice published in the **Federal Register** on September 27, 2023 (88 FR 66434). We describe and respond to the comment below. ED received a total of 1 public comment submission. The Office of Well-Rounded Education (OWRE) has provided a response to the commenter who was anonymous. The commenter raised concerns about the need to assess literacy rates and student learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The commenter recommends a nationwide assessment of literacy, possibly combined with incentive funding for states choosing to participate in such a national literacy assessment.

BACKGROUND:

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) program is authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), sections 2222–2225. The CLSD program awards competitive grants to advance literacy skills—using evidence-based practices, activities, and interventions, including preliteracy skills, reading, and writing—for children from birth through grade 12, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities. Eligible entities include the state education agencies (SEAs) of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Additionally, directed awards are made to four (4) Outlying Areas: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A portion of funds is also awarded directly to the Bureau of Indian Education.

CLSD requires that at least 95% of funds awarded to SEAs be distributed to local education agencies through a subgrant award process.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

1. General Comment

Comment:

One commenter is concerned about the nation's literacy rates as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to prevent further loss by assessing performance at the state and local levels. Specifically, the commenter stated that the CLSD annual performance report should determine the impact of learning loss on specific grade-levels and certain demographics.

The commenter stated that the Department of Education should ask state-level departments/agencies to both 1) conduct their own assessment at how the state is performing, which could be based on last academic year's test results and 2) forward any assessments to schools, implying that program funding could be tied to their participation. The commenter felt that schools might not take part in an assessment if they feel that negative results will reflect poorly on the school; therefore, the commenter recommended clarifying that the assessment won't affect funding decisions. Alternatively, the commenter suggested sending a survey to schools.

Response:

Although no changes were made in response to the commenter, OWRE appreciates the commenter's concerns and agrees that learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic is a concern that the Secretary of Education has been addressing via his "Raise the Bar" initiative. Raise the Bar is a call to action for state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to engage parents, families, and educators in addressing the needs of all children from birth to grade 12. ED's initiative emphasizes the need for rigorous learning standards and well-rounded opportunities to recover lost instructional time.

In terms of CLSD, SEAs that apply for discretionary grant funding under CLSD are required to subgrant, on a competitive basis, at least 95% of the funds they receive to LEAs to improve literacy from birth to grade 12. In order to track how SEAs are meeting the goals and objectives established in their approved applications, consistent with statutory and regulatory requirements, ED requires program performance reports on an annual basis that include data from state assessments.

In terms of a national assessment on literacy, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in reading comprehension is given every two years to students at grades 4 and 8, and approximately every four years until grade 12. The assessment measures reading comprehension by asking students to read selected grade-appropriate materials and answer questions based on what they have read. The results present a broad view of students' reading knowledge, skills, and performance over time. The most recent reading assessment was given in 2022 to approximately 108,200 grade 4 students and 111,300 grade 8 students. Further information can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/>.