

Aim Higher

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Remedial Education Improvement Act

Section 1. Short Title.

The Act may be titled the Remedial Education Improvement Act.

Section 2. Purpose.

The purpose of the Act is to improve remedial education in institutions of higher education (IHEs) based on evidence-based models that have proven effective on a small scale. The Act will enable researchers at the Institute of Education Science (IES) to conduct a rigorous evaluation to continue investigating the most effective methods of remedial education that enable students to progress through to credit-bearing course work and complete college.

Section 3. Remedial Education Grants

(a) Grants Authorized

Creates a five-year competitive grant program to improve remedial education programs for eligible entities. The minimum amount in total funds awarded to an eligible entity must be at least \$500,000.

(b) Application

Eligible entities are required to provide an assurance they will use multiple measures to identify students in need of remedial education, rather than the traditional method of basing the placement into remedial education on one test. Eligible entities seeking funding must also describe how they will use evidence-based strategies to improve remedial education, how the new model will be sustained once the grant program concludes, and the plan for internal monitoring and evaluation.

(c) Use of Funds

The section requires eligible entities to develop or improve remedial education programs based on one or more of five outlined models. The first model was designed for partnerships between IHEs and local educational agencies (LEAs) or state educational agencies (SEAs) to align coursework between the high school and colleges. This model also allows for early assessments to be implemented measuring a student's readiness for college. The second model requires eligible entities to redesign or improve course work that allows a student to complete in an accelerated time schedule. The third model, Modular Instructional Methods, allows the eligible entity to use or improve assessments that provide information based on specific skills needed to be ready for credit-bearing coursework. The eligible entity can then provide targeted skill instruction to students rather than requiring a student to take an entire course for specific skill deficits. The fourth model has been the most researched thus far. The co-requisite model allows students to enroll in remedial education classes while also enrolling in credit-bearing coursework. The final model, systemic reform to implement comprehensive, integrated support programs, requires a system-wide restructuring of remedial education

programs that help students find success in their remedial education course work and once in credit-bearing courses.

(d) Considerations

When making awards, the Secretary of Education is required to consult with the Director of IES and must make at least 30 awards to eligible entities. Other considerations include geographic distribution, distribution of awards in rural and urban entities, and providing awards to a range of types and sizes of institutions. Applications that primarily serve students who are low-income will be given preference. The Secretary must also equitably distribute awards across the models described in use of funds to ensure statistical comparisons are possible within and between each model.

(e) Fiscal Requirements

Funds from the grant are meant to supplement not supplant any other funding provided for remedial education. Eligible entities are required to match funding up to 10% of the amount of the grant from non-Federal sources. Tribal colleges and universities and institutions located in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, United States Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau are exempt from the matching funds.

(f) Experimental Authority

The section provides eligible entities to voluntarily use an experimental authority granted to the Secretary to extend funding for students under Title IV of the HEA to two years for non-credit bearing course work rather than two semesters.

(g) Data Collection, Reports, Evaluations, and Dissemination

Eligible entities are required to provide student-level data, and the Director of IES must disaggregate the information by race, gender, income, first-generation status, veteran or active duty status, and disability status on (i) number of students in remedial education programs, (ii) type of remedial education courses students receive, (iii) cost of courses, (iv) number of students who complete the remedial education program, (v) length of time students spend in remedial education measured by semester, trimester, or clock hours, (vi) time to advance to completion measured by semester, trimester, or clock hours, (vii) number of students that enroll postsecondary-level courses after completing remedial education, (viii) the number and percentage of students who graduate from the IHE within 150 percent of the normal time of completion, and (ix) amount of grant or loan funds awarded to students for enrollment in remedial education programs. The Secretary is then required to provide an initial report a year after the first award is distributed and another report six years after the first award is distributed. The Director of IES must conduct a multi-year evaluation on the impacts of the remedial education models to look at effectiveness, quality of outcomes, sustainability and replicability of the programs that are successful, and the effectiveness of the experimental authority in assisting students to complete remedial education programs and graduate within 150 percent of the normal time for completion.

(h) Data Privacy

It is unlawful for any person with access to personally identifiable information to share that information with any unauthorized person. Those in violation of this section will be fined or, in the case of federal employees, be dismissed. Sale of data is prohibited. The data cannot be shared with federal agencies not explicitly authorized and cannot be used for law enforcement activity.

(i) Authorization of Appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the activities \$162,500,000 for fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

(j) Definitions

Defines eligible entity as an institution of higher education per the definition in the Higher Education Act (HEA) or as a partnership between an IHE and a LEA or SEA. This section also provides a definition for remedial education as the term was not previously defined in the HEA. In this Act, “remedial education” means below-college-level courses and training in reading, writing, and math that provide the competencies necessary for a student to succeed in college level coursework. Remediation education may also be identified as developmental education.

Sec. 4. Exception to Student Unit Record Ban

Amends the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding the student unit record ban in relation to the data provided to IES for the purposes of this grant.