



DEVELOPMENTS IN FEDERAL RURAL EDUCATION POLICY & RESEARCH July 2014

Bills in the US House and Senate - No Action Since Previous Update:

H.R. 4913 Achievement through Technology and Innovation Act of 2014 (ATTAIN Act)

06/19/2014 Referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce

Sponsor: Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, D – CA

Co-Sponsors: N/A

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

The ATTAIN Act reauthorizes the Enhancing Education through Technology Act of 2001, providing \$1 billion in funding for personalized learning, education technology, school redesign, and educator training.

It would directly affect schools and students in rural communities by ensuring that subgrants dedicated to Systemic School Redesign through Technology Integration are distributed equally between rural and urban areas of the state. A small portion of the funding is set for use in schools funded or operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

This influx of funding could provide rural LEAs and charters with funding to make better use of existing technology, improve tech literacy among teachers, better use student data to improve instruction and school improvement efforts, and create distance learning opportunities. While access to broadband is increasing in rural communities, support for implementing digital learning initiatives is often lacking.

S. 2452 Strong Start for America's Children Act

06/10/2014 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 427

Sponsor: Senator Tom Harkin, D – IA

Co-Sponsors: N/A

[Bill Summary to come](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill creates a federal-state partnership intended to provide children from low-and moderate-income families access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs. Each state's application for funding must include descriptions of the technical assistance that will be provided to rural communities in order to address the unique barriers they face when implementing high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

H.R. 3984 Supporting Early Learning Act

06/13/2014 Referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

Sponsor: Representative James A. Himes, D – CT

Co-Sponsors: Representative Jared Polis, D – CO, Representative Gerald E. Connolly, D – VA

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill would create an Early Learning Challenge fund intended to support states in the development and expansion of early childhood education programs. Applications must include descriptions of how states would use grant funds to increase the number and percentage of children from low-income families enrolled in high quality state pre-kindergarten programs, including children from rural and urban areas. It does not specify the amount of funding that states would be required to dedicate to programs in rural areas.

H.R. 4159 America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2014

06/13/2014 Referred to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training

Sponsor: Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson, D – TX

Co-Sponsors: Representative George Miller, D – CA; Representative Steny Hoyer, D – MD; Representative Zoe Lofgren, D – CA; Representative Daniel Lipinski, D – IL; Representative Donna F. Edwards, D – MD; Representative Frederica S. Wilson, D – FL; Representative Suzanne Bonamici, D – OR; Representative Eric Swalwell, D – CA; Representative Daniel B. Maffei, D – NY; Representative Alan Grayson, D – FL; Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III, D – MA; Representative Scott H. Peters, D – CA; Representative Derek Kilmer, D – WA; Representative Ami Bera, D – CA; Representative Elizabeth H. Esty, D – CT; Representative Marc A. Veasey, D – TX; Representative Julia D. Brownley, D – CA; Representative Mark Taknano, D – CA; Representative Robin L. Kelly, D – IL; Representative Katharine M. Clark, D – MA; Representative Chris Van Hollen, D – MD; Representative Rush Holt, D – NJ, Representative Michael Honda, D – CA

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

The primary goal of this bill is to support the research and development in education innovation, generally, and in STEM education, specifically. In particular, the legislation could help support rural education in three ways:

First, a portion of the research and development conducted under the grant would focus on systems that support improved STEM program delivery across LEAs/states, including those located in rural areas. This research could be valuable for the many rural schools that struggle with the delivery of advanced math and science classes.

Second, the bill gives priority in the distribution of funding for higher education/workforce training programs to specific groups, including community colleges serving areas with high unemployment rates. Legislative text explicitly references rural areas, but stops short of requiring that subgrants be distributed in rural areas.

Third, the legislation would fund a competitive grant for the development and implementation of advanced manufacturing programs, for which community colleges would be eligible to apply. A portion of this funding would be set aside to support the development of centers that would serve as regional or national clearinghouses for information on advanced manufacturing education materials and methods. Some of these centers would be located in rural areas.

S. 2349 Supporting College Success through Dual Enrollment Act

05/15/2014 Read twice

Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Sponsor: Senator Bernard Sanders, I – VT

Co-Sponsors: Senator Patrick Leahy, D – VT; Senator Christopher Murphy, D – CT; Senator Tim Kaine, D – VA; Senator Jack Reed, D – RI; Senator Christopher Coons, D – DE; Senator Kristen Gillibrand, D – NY; Senator John Rockefeller IV, D- WV, Senator Mazie Hirono, D - HI

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill would create a grant program to fund the promotion and implementation of dual credit programs. In order to receive funding, states must ensure that all students enrolled in public high schools (including charter schools) have access to dual enrollment programs. Other eligibility criteria include developing plans to remove barriers to higher education for students in dual enrollment programs (including community college and workforce certification) and addressing the unique challenges faced by students in small communities (such as limited opportunities to participate in on-campus activities). The bill is silent on funding for rural schools, in particular, but the requirement to improve access for students in small communities could help ensure that a portion of funding is directed to rural communities.

H.R. 4366 Strengthening Education through Research Act

05/12/2014 Received in the Senate, read twice

Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Sponsor: Representative Todd Rokita, R – IN

Co-Sponsors: Representative John Kline, R – MN; Representative George Miller, D – CA; Representative Carolyn McCarthy, D – NY; Representative Larry Bucshon, R – IN; Representative Ruben Hinojosa, D – TX; Representative Susan Brooks, R – IN; Representative Bradley Byrne, R – AL; Representative Brett Guthrie, R – KY; Representative Joseph Heck, R – NV; Representative Luke Messer, R – IN; Representative Thomas E. Petri, R – WI; Representative Glenn Thompson, R – PA; Representative Tim Walberg, R – MI; Representative Joe Wilson, R – SC

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill ensures that 25 percent of the funding for Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) is used to serve rural areas. RELs currently work in rural communities and there are several reasons why it is important to ensure they have funding to continue this work. First, it is important to expanding the body of research on rural education. Second, RELs also provide direct services to communities, such as providing technical assistance to rural schools and districts. Third, they provide research that informs other federal programs and legislation, for

example, looking at how rural schools' experiences with the SIG program differ from those of urban or suburban schools.

H.R. 10 Success and Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act

05/12/2014 Received in the Senate, read twice

Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Sponsor: Representative John Kline, R – MN

Co-Sponsors: Representative George Miller, D – CA; Representative Reuben Hinojosa, D – TX; Representative Duncan D. Hunter, D – CA; Representative Luke Messer, R – IN, Representative Scott H. Peters, D – CA; Representative Jared Polis, D – CO; Representative David P. Roe, R – TN; Representative Todd Rokita, R – IN; Representative Larry Bucshon, R – IN; Representative Scott DesJarlais, R – TN; Representative Tim Walberg, R – MI; Representative Sean P. Duffy, R – WI; Representative Thomas E. Petri, R – WI; Representative Steve Womack, R – AR; Representative Daniel Webster, R – FL; Representative Susan W. Brooks, R – IN; Representative Bradley Byrne, R – AL; Representative Blake Farenthold, R – TX; Representative Brett Guthrie, R – KY; Representative Joseph J. Heck, R - NV; Representative Richard Hudson, R – NC; Representative Joe Wilson, R – SC

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

The federal Charter School Program provides funding to state entities, which in turn provide subgrants for the creation of new, high-quality charter schools.

H.R.10 proposes three important changes to the program that would affect rural states specifically. First, it would prioritize funding for states with high-quality charter school laws and policies and focuses on the replication and expansion of high-quality schools. Second, it would require state entities to distribute subgrants (to the extent possible) throughout urban, suburban, and rural areas. Third, it would require state entities to include in their grant applications a description of how the state will support diverse charter school models, including schools that serve rural communities.

These changes have important implications for charter schools in rural states. Rural states with weak or restrictive charter school laws (for example, those that only allow LEA authorizers, place caps on charter schools, or provide unequal funding for charters) would be less likely to receive funding. In addition, the requirements for state entities to distribute funds across urban, suburban, and rural areas and to describe how funds will be used to support diverse charter school models would provide an impetus for state entities to explore and pursue the potential of rural charter schools.

S. 2304 Expanding Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act

05/07/2014 Read twice

Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Sponsor: Senator Mark Steven Kirk, R – IL

Co-Sponsors: Senator Mary Landrieu, D – LA; Senator Lamar Alexander, R – TN; Senator Michael F. Bennet, D – CO; Senator Dianne Feinstein, D – CA; Senator Rand Paul, R – KY;

Senator Johnny Isakson, R – GA; Senator Marco Rubio, R – FL; Senator David Vitter, R – LA; Senator John Cornyn, R – TX; Senator Tim Scott, R – TX; Senator Cory Booker, D – NJ; Senator Orrin G. Hatch, R – UT; Senator Thomas R. Carper, D – DE; Senator Mitch McConnell, R – KY; Senator Ted Cruz, R – TX; Senator Richard Burr, R – NC; Senator Mark L. Pryor, D – AR

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

S. 2304 is the companion bill to H.R. 10. There are several major differences between them that would affect rural charter schools. First, S. 2304 includes a broader definition of “state entities,” including not only state education agencies but also state charter school boards, governors’ offices and charter school support organizations. This opens the opportunity for organizations based in rural areas or with missions specific to rural education to become a conduit for federal CSP funding.

S.2304 also includes a wider range of options for how CSP funding can be used, including some that may be of interest or benefit for rural schools: hiring, transportation, facilities renovation and construction, and board development. The House legislation only allows funds to be used to enhance facilities financing options such as through bonds or loan guarantees and is silent on the use of funding for transportation.

Finally, the House bill places a stronger emphasis on sharing of best practices between charter and district schools. It is also more explicit in addressing barriers to entry for youth in foster care, unaccompanied homeless students, students with special needs and English language learners. It also emphasizes the importance of subgrant applications to include parent and community input. In contrast, the Senate bill emphasizes the need for charter school autonomy and flexibility, particularly schools’ autonomy over personnel decisions.

There are a few additional, but minor, differences. For instance, the Senate bill provides for a three year grant term with the option of 1-2 year renewals; the House bill provides for a five year grant term. Additionally, the House bill calls for a GAO report on the appropriate funding level of the program.

H.R. 3916 Promoting Rural Broadband Act of 2014

01/16/2014 Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

Sponsor: Representative Derek Kilmer, D – WA

Co-Sponsor: Representative Peter Welch, D – VT

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill would require the FCC to promote the expansion of spectrum-based services to “exceptionally hard-to-serve populations in unserved and underserved geographic locations” when prescribing regulations for competitive bidding processes for electromagnetic spectrum licenses. Specifically, it would change the competitive bidding process for spectrum licenses, encouraging or requiring the expansion of broadband services in underserved rural areas. However, spectrum alone would not provide broadband to rural areas; accessing these services would also require significant investments in infrastructure.

Funding Opportunities for Rural Education

Foundation for Rural Service Grants

The Foundation for Rural Service, with the NCTA- Rural Broadband Association, seeks to sustain and enhance the quality of rural life by advancing an understanding of telecommunications issues. FRS will provide annual grants for programs in rural areas served by NCTA members, including programs to support education: education technology (such as computers and smart boards), curriculum development, extracurricular activities, and distance learning programs. Applicants may request grants from \$250 to \$5,000. These are one-time awards and may be funded at lower amounts than requested.

Priority will be given to projects that are 75 percent funded or could be fully funded by the grant; foster collaboration among different community organizations and local government; have a long-term effect in the community; promote community engagement; and make rural communities a better place to live and work.

Proposals due to FRS – October 1st – Notice of grant awards – December 1st

More information [here](#)

Sovereignty in Indian Education Grants

The Bureau of Indian Education's Sovereignty in Indian Education grants were created for tribes and tribal education agencies to promote tribal control and operation of BIE-funded schools. Grants, ranging in amount from \$100,000 to \$200,000 per fiscal year, will be awarded on a competitive basis and are intended to support the development of school reform plans to improve educational outcomes, efficiencies, and overall effectiveness within the operation of BIE schools.

This program is one of the first outputs from the American Indian Education Study Group, which was convened by the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Interior in 2013. The group has also published a comprehensive reform plan, [Blueprint for Reform](#), based in part on a listening series conducted on reservations.

Applications are due September 12, 2014 at 4 pm EST

More information from the [Department of the Interior](#) and the [Bureau of Indian Education](#)

Research, Commentary, or Other Developments in Rural Education

Understanding Experiences of Gifted Education Teachers and Fidelity of Implementation in Rural Schools

Amy Price Azano, Carolyn M. Callahan, Tracy C. Missett, Marguerite Brunner

[Article abstract](#)

This study looked at the experiences of a subset of rural teachers when implementing a research-based language arts curriculum for gifted students and how their experiences related to the fidelity of implementation. Initial findings suggest that rurality, limited resources, and time challenges presented unique challenges for these teachers, whose jobs were sometimes perceived as a “luxury” by the districts in which they work. While rural teachers made up only one fourth of the total sample in the overall study of this language arts curriculum, they represented just under half of the “low fidelity” group.

There were a number of “basic” complicating factors related to teaching gifted education in rural schools in addition to the overall lack of resources: identification of students, mixed grades/ages/abilities, limited in-class time, and traveling between schools. Because gifted education teachers are rarely assigned to one school in rural areas, students often face a gap of up to several days between their classes, which also threatens the fidelity of implementation.

The authors recommend that curriculum designers take into account the unique challenges faced by rural educators when developing programs for gifted students. This may take the form of “connectivity” activities that would help to bridge the gap between formal classes or differentiated lessons that would better fit the multi-grade structure of rural gifted classrooms.

The Move to Middle School: Parents’ Expectations and Early Adolescents’ Adjustments in Rural Communities

Jill Hamm, Kimberly Dadisman, Kathleen Day, Charlotte Agger, and Thomas Farmer

[Article full text](#)

This paper examines parent expectations for their children’s transition to middle school in two rural Appalachian communities. The researchers held focus groups with the parents who were primarily concerned with potential social consequences of the transition. Discussion focused on two social issues: “falling prey to the bad influences of older students” and changing friendships across the transition. Some parents worried that their students would be excluded or marginalized because of the feeder elementary schools that they attended. Discussions were much more focused on social and procedural issues than academic, in contrast to research conducted in affluent, highly educated regions where academic issues have been the primary area of concern. Rural middle schools tend to be large regional schools that serve broad geographic and economic areas, whether because of consolidation or location within a large county school district.

The authors examined student adjustment data for 187 6th graders. Most did not see a difficult transition, socially or academically. However, students from one feeder school, more economically disadvantaged when compared to the other schools in the study, did have a more difficult time transitioning to the middle school environment. While they did not have problems integrating into the social environment of the school, these students were more likely to face academic and behavioral problems, confirming the parents’ worries about their transition but not necessarily in the expected manner. The authors recommend that school personnel determine the recurring concerns of parents in their community and provide information to families about the elementary-middle school transition.

Rural-Urban Disparities in School Nursing: Implications for Continuing Education and Rural School Health

Mary M. Ramos, Lynne Fullerton, Robert Sapien, Cynthia Greenberg, Judith Bauer-Creegan

[Article abstract](#)

In 2009, the New Mexico Department of Health conducted a school workforce survey (71.7 percent response rate) which forms the basis of this examination of the disparities between school nurses in rural and urban areas of the state. The researchers also hoped to better understand the options for continuing education services for rural school nurses using this dataset.

They found that rural nurses are more than twice as likely as metropolitan nurses to provide clinical services to multiple campuses (67.3 percent/30.1 percent) and less likely to hold a nursing degree at the baccalaureate degree or higher (62.7 percent/82.3 percent). Rural nurses are also less likely to have received continuing education within the last five years on anaphylaxis, BMI/healthy weight, asthma, diabetes, LGBTQ health, and suicide risk identification/prevention.

Though they have access to the internet at only 4/5 of the campuses they serve, rural school nurses selected online courses and tele-health as their preferred means of accessing continuing education. The authors write that disparities in the educational attainment of rural school nurses exacerbate existing health disparities in rural children's access to care. Increasing online education opportunities would help increase rural nurses' knowledge of current topics in school health and their ability to respond to pediatric emergencies (allergies, asthma, etc.).

Preparing Special Educators Highly Qualified in Content: Alternate Route Certification for Unlicensed Teachers in Rural Georgia

Amy L. Childre

[Article abstract](#)

There is a shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers within rural schools that serve high-need student populations, resulting in situations where underprepared teachers serve students with the greatest educational needs. This article describes an alternative certification program developed by a university in rural Georgia that provides students with both special education and content certification.

With attrition rates for special education teachers in rural Georgia ranging between 47 and 53 percent in the mid-2000s (higher than the national average) the alternative certification program was developed to address this problem, serving seven counties. Recruitment efforts targeted teachers hired on provisional certificates and focused on the overall diversity of the candidate pool. The program incorporated blended learning and field-based observation/assessments. Fourteen out of fifteen candidates completed the program and were certified, with thirteen earning certification in two or more content areas.

The university incorporated some of the elements of this program into its existing special education MAT program, such as the course sequence, early emphasis on "survival skills," semester-long internship requirements (each semester), mentoring, and blended approach for coursework.

Other Developments in Rural Education

Federal Communications Commission Adopts E-Rate Modernization Order

The Federal Communications Commission has initiated the process of modernizing the 18-year old E-Rate program. The Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking has three primary goals:

- Closing the Wi-Fi gap
- Maximizing E-Rate spending
- Making the E-Rate administration and application process faster, simpler, and more efficient.

The Order would maintain the program's current \$2.4 billion funding (adjusted for inflation). It would add an additional \$5 billion for Wi-Fi expansion over the next five years through program improvements and by phasing out funding for non-broadband services such as pagers and phones. This funding would "potentially provide" a 75 percent increase for Wi-Fi in rural schools (60 percent for urban schools).

The Order also incorporates changes to E-Rate that could benefit rural schools. It incentivizes consortia and bulk spending which could help small rural districts by allowing them to form partnerships or co-ops. This could help the districts access services that they do not have the capacity to apply for individually. It also streamlines processes for multi-year applications which could potentially reduce the paperwork burden that prevents many rural districts from participating in federal programs.