

Report to the United States Department of Education Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee

By

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Section I. SDFSCA State Grants Program

Problem: Requirement to use 60% of grant funds for drug related issues and 40% for safety related issues is restrictive.

- Surveys show that safety now a greater concern than drugs for all stakeholders.
- MPS reduced 204 activities to 7; more safety than drug related priorities.
- Need for teacher training (Crisis Prevention Intervention [CPI], Classroom Management Organization Planning [COMP]) which are safety related.

Recommendation: Allow states to be more flexible with grant money (i.e. “no less than 30% to be used for safety programs”). This gives the States the flexibility they need and the USDOE some control over the funding direction.

Section II. Unsafe School Choice Option.

Problem: The term “Persistently Dangerous Schools” is too strong and creates an unnecessary backlash (i.e. “low performing schools” are not branded “persistently dumb schools”).

Recommendation: That another term be applied to this section.

Problem: Interpretation of law’s intent (unsafe schools v. unsafe school leaders?)

- This is a USDOE initiative not DOJ (no role for law enforcement?)
- Many persistently dangerous schools are the result of persistently dangerous neighborhoods.
- Note: a school on the list for two years received an award from the Safety and Security Division.

Recommendation: To be determined

Section III. Requirements for Data Under NCLB.

Problem: The formula, by design generates problems for the leader.

- Schools are inherently image conscious.
- The fight for fewer education dollars exacerbates the problem.

- Principals are required to track data that can be used against them for adverse personnel actions.
- There is pressure on the principal to admit they have trouble in the school.
- Media not very understanding or sympathetic (more reporting of danger than test scores).
- Too much leeway at the state level. Media uses broad brush to paint those states with a high number of schools on the list (i.e. Pennsylvania).

Recommendation: Mandate districts to use “some” of the criteria established at the USDOE (i.e “must include 3 of 10 established criteria). That measure would add a level of consistency to the formula and minimize the highs and the lows.