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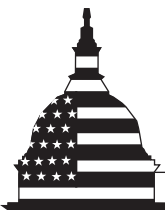
Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies, Committee on
Appropriations, House of Representatives

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Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Federal Teacher Quality Programs

Statement of George A. Scott, Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues



G A O

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Chairman Rehberg, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the findings from our recent work on fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication in federally funded programs that support teacher quality. As you know, we recently issued a report addressing fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication in federal programs that outlined opportunities to reduce potential duplication across a wide range of federal programs, including teacher quality programs.¹ Our recent work on teacher quality programs builds on a long history of work where we identified a number of education programs with similar goals, beneficiaries, and allowable activities that are administered by multiple federal agencies. This work may help inform your deliberations over how to prioritize spending given the rapidly building fiscal pressures facing our nation's government.

In recent years, the Department of Education (Education) has faced expanded responsibilities that have challenged the department to strategically allocate resources to balance new duties with ongoing ones. For example, we reported the number of grants Education awarded increased from about 14,000 in 2000 to about 21,000 just 2 years later and has since remained around 18,000, even as the number of full-time equivalent staff decreased by 13 percent from fiscal years 2000 to 2009.² New programs often increase Education's workload, requiring staff to develop new guidance and provide technical assistance to program participants. Our work examining fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication can help inform decisions on how to prioritize spending, which could also help Education address these challenges and better allocate scarce resources. In particular, our recent work identified 82 programs supporting teacher quality, which are characterized by fragmentation and overlap.³ Fragmentation of programs exists when programs serve the same broad area of national need but are administered across different federal agencies or offices. Program overlap exists when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to

¹GAO, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2011). Click on the link provided to access an interactive, Web-based version of the report.

²GAO, *Department of Education: Improved Oversight and Controls Could Help Education Better Respond to Evolving Priorities*, [GAO-11-194](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 11, 2011).

³[GAO-11-318SP](#)

achieve them, or target similar beneficiaries. Overlap and fragmentation among government programs or activities can be harbingers of unnecessary duplication. Given the challenges associated with fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication, careful, thoughtful actions will be needed to address these issues.

My testimony today draws upon the results of our recently issued report and our past work and addresses (1) what is known about fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication among teacher quality programs; and (2) what are additional ways that Congress could minimize fragmentation, overlap, and duplication among these programs?

The key points I will make today include the following:

- We identified 82 distinct programs designed to help improve teacher quality administered across 10 federal agencies, many of which share similar goals. However, there is no governmentwide strategy to minimize fragmentation, overlap, or potential duplication among these programs. The fragmentation and overlap of teacher quality programs can frustrate agency efforts to administer programs in a comprehensive manner, limit the ability to determine which programs are most cost effective, and ultimately increase program costs. In addition, our larger body of work on federal education programs has also found a wide array of programs with similar objectives, target populations, and services across multiple federal agencies. In past work, GAO and Education's Inspector General have concluded that improved planning and coordination could help Education better leverage expertise and limited resources; however, given the large number of teacher quality programs and the extent of overlap, it is unlikely that improved coordination alone can fully mitigate the effects of the fragmented and overlapping federal effort.
- Sustained congressional oversight can also play a key role in addressing these issues. Congress could address these issues through legislation, particularly through the pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA),⁴ and Education has already proposed combining 38 programs into 11 programs in its reauthorization and fiscal year 2012 budget proposals. Further, actions taken by Congress in the past demonstrate ways this Subcommittee can address these issues.

⁴Pub. L. No. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27, as most recently amended and reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).

However, effective oversight may be challenging as many of the programs we identified, especially smaller programs, have not been evaluated.

In preparing this statement, we relied on our previous work in these areas (please see the Related GAO Products list at the end of this statement). These products contain detailed overviews of the scope and methodology we used. The work on which this statement is based was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform audits to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provided a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Proliferation of Programs That Support Teacher Quality Complicates Federal Efforts to Invest Dollars Effectively

In fiscal year 2009, the federal government spent over \$4 billion specifically to improve the quality of our nation's 3 million teachers through numerous programs across the government. Teacher quality can be enhanced through a variety of activities, including training, recruitment, and curriculum and assessment tools. In turn, these activities can influence student learning and ultimately improve the global competitiveness of the American workforce in a knowledge-based economy.

Federal efforts to improve teacher quality have led to the creation and expansion of a variety of programs across the federal government. However, there is no governmentwide strategy to minimize fragmentation, overlap, or potential duplication among these programs. Specifically, GAO identified 82 distinct programs designed to help improve teacher quality, either as a primary purpose or as an allowable activity, administered across 10 federal agencies. Many of these programs share similar goals. For example, 9 of the 82 programs support improving the quality of teaching in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM subjects) and these programs alone are administered across the Departments of Education, Defense, and Energy; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and the National Science Foundation. Further, in fiscal year 2010, the majority (53) of the programs GAO identified supporting teacher quality improvements received \$50 million or less in funding and many have their own separate administrative processes.

The proliferation of programs has resulted in fragmentation that can frustrate agency efforts to administer programs in a comprehensive manner, limit the ability to determine which programs are most cost

effective, and ultimately increase program costs. For example, eight different Education offices administer over 60 of the federal programs supporting teacher quality improvements, primarily in the form of competitive grants. Education officials believe that federal programs have failed to make significant progress in helping states close achievement gaps between schools serving students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, because, in part, federal programs that focus on teaching and learning of specific subjects are too fragmented to help state and district officials strengthen instruction and increase student achievement in a comprehensive manner. While Education officials noted, and GAO concurs, that a mixture of programs can target services to underserved populations and yield strategic innovations, the current programs are not structured in a way that enables educators and policymakers to identify the most effective practices to replicate. According to Education officials, it is typically not cost-effective to allocate the funds necessary to conduct rigorous evaluations of small programs; therefore, small programs are unlikely to be evaluated. Finally, it is more costly to administer multiple separate federal programs because each program has its own policies, applications, award competitions, reporting requirements, and, in some cases, federal evaluations.

While all of the 82 federal programs GAO identified support teacher quality improvement efforts, several overlap in that they share more than one key program characteristic. For example, teacher quality programs may overlap if they share similar objectives, serve similar target groups, or fund similar activities. GAO previously reported that 23 of the programs administered by Education in fiscal year 2009 had improving teacher quality as a specific focus, which suggested that there may be overlap among these and other programs that have teacher quality improvements as an allowable activity. When looking across a broader set of criteria, GAO found that 14 of the programs administered by Education overlapped with another program with regard to allowable activities as well as shared objectives and target groups (see fig. 1). For example, the Transition to Teaching program and Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program can both be used to fund similar teacher preparation activities through institutions of higher education for the purpose of helping individuals from nonteaching fields become qualified to teach.

Figure 1: Areas of Overlap among Selected Programs Administered by Education That Support Teacher Quality Improvement

	Even Start ^a	Striving Readers ^a	Mathematics and Science Partnerships ^a	Improving Teacher Quality State Grants ^a	Title I, Part A	School Improvement Grants	Transition to Teaching ^a	Advanced Certification or Advanced Credentialing ^a	Teacher Quality Partnership Grants ^a	Language Resource Centers	Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow Program: Baccalaureate ^a	Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow Masters ^a	Foreign Language Assistance Program ^a	Teach for America ^a
Objective														
Improve Education in Specific Subjects	●	●	●						●	●	●	●		
Improve Education in General	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Improve Education for Special Populations	●	●		●	●	●	●			●	●			●
Target Group														
Current Teachers	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●	●		
Prospective Teachers				●			●	●		●	●			●
Other Education Professionals	●	●		●	●	●			●					
Activity^b														
Teacher Preparation				●			●	●		●	●			●
Professional Development	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
Recruitment or Retention			●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●			●
Certification or Licensure				●			●	●		●	●			
Induction or Mentoring				●			●		●	●				●

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Education documents and interviews.

Note: The 14 programs shown in the table are a subset of over 60 Education programs supporting teacher quality improvement either specifically or as an allowable activity. Specifically, although Title I, Part A, School Improvement Grants, and Even Start allow program funds to be used for teacher quality activities, this is not their primary focus. The 14 programs presented above overlapped with at least one other program across objective, target group, and activity.

^aEducation has proposed consolidating this program under a broader program in its proposal for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

^bThis is not an exhaustive list of activities allowed under these programs, but rather the activities GAO determined were most relevant for the purposes of this analysis.

Although there is overlap among these programs, several factors make it difficult to determine whether there is unnecessary duplication. First, when similar teacher quality activities are funded through different programs and delivered by different entities, some overlap can occur

unintentionally, but is not necessarily wasteful. For example, a local school district could use funds from the Foreign Language Assistance program to pay for professional development for a teacher who will be implementing a new foreign language course, and this teacher could also attend a summer seminar on best practices for teaching the foreign language at a Language Resource Center. Second, by design, individual teachers may benefit from federally funded training or financial support at different points in their careers. Specifically, the teacher from this example could also receive teacher certification through a program funded by the Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow program. Further, both broad and narrowly targeted programs exist simultaneously, meaning that the same teacher who receives professional development funded from any one or more of the above three programs might also receive professional development that is funded through Title I, Part A of ESEA. The actual content of these professional development activities may differ though, since the primary goal of each program is different. In this example, it would be difficult to know whether the absence of any one of these programs would make a difference in terms of the teacher's ability to teach the new language effectively.

In addition, our larger body of work on federal education programs has also found a wide array of programs with similar objectives, target populations, and services across multiple federal agencies. This includes a number of efforts to catalogue and determine how much is spent on a wide variety of federally funded education programs. For example:

- In 2010, we reported that the federal government provided an estimated \$166.9 billion over the 3-year period during fiscal years 2006 to 2008 to administer 151 different federal K-12 and early childhood education programs.⁵
- In 2005, we identified 207 federal education programs that support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) administered by 13 federal civilian agencies.⁶

In past work, GAO and Education's Inspector General have concluded that improved planning and coordination could help Education better leverage

⁵GAO, *Federal Education Funding: Overview of K-12 and Early Childhood Education Programs*, [GAO-10-51](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 27, 2010).

⁶GAO, *Higher Education: Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Programs and Related Trends*, [GAO-06-114](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 12, 2005).

expertise and limited resources, and to anticipate and develop options for addressing potential problems among the multitude of programs it administers. Generally, GAO has reported that uncoordinated program efforts can waste scarce funds, confuse and frustrate program customers, and limit the overall effectiveness of the federal effort. GAO identified key practices that can help enhance and sustain collaboration among federal agencies⁷ which include

- establishing mutually reinforcing or joint strategies to achieve the outcome;
- identifying and addressing needs by leveraging resources;
- agreeing upon agency roles and responsibilities;
- establishing compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries;
- developing mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on the results of collaborative efforts;
- reinforcing agency accountability for collaborative efforts through agency plans and reports; and
- reinforcing individual accountability for collaborative efforts through agency performance management systems.

In 2009, GAO recommended that the Secretary of Education work with other agencies as appropriate to develop a coordinated approach for routinely and systematically sharing information that can assist federal programs, states, and local providers in achieving efficient service delivery. Education has established working groups to help develop more effective collaboration across Education offices, and has reached out to other agencies to develop a framework for sharing information on some teacher quality activities, but it has noted that coordination efforts do not always prove useful and cannot fully eliminate barriers to program alignment, such as programs with differing definitions for similar populations of grantees, which create an impediment to coordination. However, given the large number of teacher quality programs and the extent of overlap, it is unlikely that improved coordination alone can fully mitigate the effects of the fragmented and overlapping federal effort. In our work we have identified multiple barriers to collaboration, including the conflicting missions of agencies; challenges reaching consensus on

⁷GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

priorities; and incompatible procedures, processes, data, and computer systems.

Options for Congress to Consider as It Addresses Fragmentation, Overlap, and Potential Duplication

As this Subcommittee considers its annual spending priorities, it may be an opportune time to consider options for addressing fragmentation and overlap among federal teacher quality programs and what is known about how well these programs are achieving their objectives. As you consider options for how to address fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication, I would like to highlight three approaches for you to consider:

1. enhancing program evaluations and performance information;
2. fostering coordination and strategic planning for program areas that span multiple federal agencies; and
3. consolidating existing programs.

Enhancing Program Evaluations and Performance Information

Information about the effectiveness of programs can help guide policymakers and program managers in making tough decisions about how to prioritize the use of scarce resources and improve the efficiency of existing programs. However, there can be many challenges to obtaining this information. For example, it may not be cost-effective to allocate the funds necessary to conduct rigorous evaluations of the many small programs and, as a result, these programs are unlikely to be evaluated. As we have reported, many programs, especially smaller programs, have not been evaluated, which can limit the ability of Congress to make informed decisions about which programs to continue, expand, modify, consolidate, or eliminate. For example:

- In 2009, we also reported that while evaluations have been conducted, or are under way, for about two-fifths of the 23 teacher quality programs we identified, little is known about the extent to which most programs are achieving their desired results.
- In 2010, GAO reported that there were 151 different federal K-12 and early childhood education programs⁸ but that more than half of these programs have not been evaluated, including 8 of the 20 largest

⁸[GAO-10-51](#)

programs, which together account for about 90 percent of total funding for these programs.

Recognizing the importance of program evaluations, as part of its high priority performance goals in its 2011 budget and performance plan, Education has proposed implementation of a comprehensive approach to inform its policies and major initiatives. Specifically, it has proposed to 1) increase by two-thirds the number of its discretionary programs that use evaluation, performance measures, and other program data, 2) implement rigorous evaluations of its highest priority programs and initiatives, and 3) ensure that newly authorized discretionary programs include a rigorous evaluation component. However, Education has noted that linking performance of specific outcomes to federal education programs is complicated. For example, federal education funds often support state or local efforts, making it difficult to assess the federal contribution to performance of specific outcomes, and it can be difficult to isolate the effect of a single program given the multitude of programs that could potentially affect outcomes.

There are also governmentwide strategies that may play an important role. Specifically, in January 2011, the President signed the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA),⁹ updating the almost two-decades-old Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).¹⁰ Implementing provisions of the new act—such as its emphasis on establishing outcome-oriented goals covering a limited number of crosscutting policy areas—could play an important role in clarifying desired outcomes and addressing program performance spanning multiple organizations. Specifically, GPRAMA requires (1) disclosure of information about the accuracy and reliability of performance data, (2) identification of crosscutting management challenges, and (3) quarterly reporting on priority goals on a publicly available Web site. Additionally, GPRAMA significantly enhances requirements for agencies to consult with Congress when establishing or adjusting governmentwide and agency goals. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and agencies are to consult with relevant committees, obtaining majority and minority views, about proposed goals at least once every 2 years. This information can inform deliberations on spending priorities and help re-examine the fundamental structure, operation,

⁹Pub. L. No. 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866 (2011).

¹⁰Pub. L. No. 103-62, 107 Stat. 285 (1993).

funding, and performance of a number of federal education programs. However, to be successful, it will be important for agencies to build the analytical capacity to both use the performance information, and to ensure its quality—both in terms of staff trained to do the analysis and availability of research and evaluation resources.¹¹

Fostering Coordination and Strategic Planning for Program Areas That Span Multiple Federal Agencies

Where programs cross federal agencies, Congress can establish requirements to ensure federal agencies are working together on common goals. For example, Congress mandated—through the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2007—that the Office of Science and Technology Policy develop and maintain an inventory of STEM education programs including documentation of the effectiveness of these programs, assess the potential overlap and duplication of these programs, determine the extent of evaluations, and develop a 5-year strategic plan for STEM education, among other things.¹² In establishing these requirements, Congress put in place a set of requirements to provide information to inform its decisions about strategic priorities.

Consolidating Existing Programs

Consolidating existing programs is another option for Congress to address fragmentation, overlap, and duplication. In the education area, Congress consolidated several bilingual education programs into the English Language Acquisition State Grant Program as part of the 2001 ESEA reauthorization. As we reported prior to the consolidation, existing bilingual programs shared the same goals, targeted the same types of children, and provided similar services. In consolidating these programs, Congress gave state and local educational agencies greater flexibility in the design and administration of language instructional programs. Congress has another opportunity to address these issues through the pending reauthorization of the ESEA. Specifically, to minimize any wasteful fragmentation and overlap among teacher quality programs, Congress may choose either to eliminate programs that are too small to evaluate cost effectively or to combine programs serving similar target groups into a larger program. Education has already proposed combining 38 programs into 11 programs in its reauthorization proposal, which could

¹¹GAO, *Government Performance: GPRA Modernization Act Provides Opportunities to Help Address Fiscal, Performance, and Management Challenges* [GAO-11-466T](#), Washington, DC: Mar.16, 2011.

¹²Pub. L. No. 111-358, § 101, 124 Stat. 3982 (2011).

allow the agency to dedicate a higher portion of its administrative resources to monitoring programs for results and providing technical assistance. Congress might also include legislative provisions to help Education reduce fragmentation, such as by giving broader discretion to the agency to move resources away from certain programs. Congress could provide Education guidelines for selecting these programs. For example, Congress could allow Education discretion to consolidate programs with administrative costs exceeding a certain threshold or programs that fail to meet performance goals, into larger or more successful programs. Finally, to the extent that overlapping programs continue to be authorized, they could be better aligned with each other in a way that allows for comparison and evaluation to ensure they are complementary rather than duplicative.

In conclusion, removing and preventing unnecessary duplication, overlap, and fragmentation among federal teacher quality programs is clearly challenging. These are difficult issues to address because they may require agencies and Congress to re-examine within and across various mission areas the fundamental structure, operation, funding, and performance of a number of long-standing federal programs or activities. Implementing provisions of GPRAMA—such as its emphasis on establishing priority outcome-oriented goals, including those covering crosscutting policy areas—could play an important role in clarifying desired outcomes, addressing program performance spanning multiple agencies, and facilitating future actions to reduce unnecessary duplication, overlap, and fragmentation. Further, by ensuring that Education conducts rigorous evaluations of key programs Congress could obtain additional information on program performance to better inform its decisions on spending priorities. Sustained attention and oversight by Congress will also be critical.

Thank you, Chairman Rehberg, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee. This concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

For further information on this testimony please contact George A. Scott, Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security, who may be reached at (202) 512-7215, or ScottG@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs offices may be found on the last page of this statement. This statement will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

Appendix I: Related GAO Products

Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Potential Duplication in Federal Teacher Quality and Employment and Training Programs. [GAO-11-509T](#). Washington, D.C.: April 6, 2011.

List of Selected Federal Programs That Have Similar or Overlapping Objectives, Provide Similar Services, or Are Fragmented Across Government Missions. [GAO-11-474R](#). Washington, D.C.: March 18, 2011.

Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue. [GAO-11-441T](#). Washington, D.C.: March 3, 2011.

Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue. [GAO-11-318SP](#). Washington, D.C.: March 1, 2011.

Department of Education: Improved Oversight and Controls Could Help Education Better Respond to Evolving Priorities. [GAO-11-194](#). Washington, D.C.: February 10, 2011.

Federal Education Funding: Overview of K-12 and Early Childhood Education Programs. [GAO-10-51](#). Washington, D.C.: January 27, 2010.

English Language Learning: Diverse Federal and State Efforts to Support Adult English Language Learning Could Benefit from More Coordination. [GAO-09-575](#). Washington, D.C.: July 29, 2009.

Teacher Preparation: Multiple Federal Education Offices Support Teacher Preparation for Instructing Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, but Systematic Departmentwide Coordination Could Enhance This Assistance. [GAO-09-573](#). Washington, D.C.: July 20, 2009.

Teacher Quality: Sustained Coordination among Key Federal Education Programs Could Enhance State Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality. [GAO-09-593](#). Washington, D.C.: July 6, 2009.

Teacher Quality: Approaches, Implementation, and Evaluation of Key Federal Efforts. [GAO-07-861T](#). Washington, D.C.: May 17, 2007.

Higher Education: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Trends and the Role of Federal Programs. [GAO-06-702T](#). Washington: May 3, 2006.

Higher Education: Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Programs and Related Trends. [GAO-06-114](#). Washington, D.C.: October 12, 2005.

Special Education: Additional Assistance and Better Coordination Needed among Education Offices to Help States Meet the NCLBA Teacher Requirements. [GAO-04-659](#). Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2004.

Special Education: Grant Programs Designed to Serve Children Ages 0-5. [GAO-02-394](#). Washington, D.C.: April 25, 2002.

Head Start and Even Start: Greater Collaboration Needed on Measures of Adult Education and Literacy. [GAO-02-348](#). Washington, D.C.: March 29, 2002.

Bilingual Education: Four Overlapping Programs Could Be Consolidated. [GAO-01-657](#). Washington, D.C.: May 14, 2001.

Early Education and Care: Overlap Indicates Need to Assess Crosscutting Programs. [GAO/HEHS-00-78](#). Washington, D.C.: April 28, 2000.

Education and Care: Early Childhood Programs and Services for Low-Income Families. [GAO/HEHS-00-11](#). Washington: D.C.: November 15, 1999.

Federal Education Funding: Multiple Programs and Lack of Data Raise Efficiency and Effectiveness Concerns. [GAO/T-HEHS-98-46](#). Washington, D.C.: November 6, 1997.

Multiple Teacher Training Programs: Information on Budgets, Services, and Target Groups. [GAO/HEHS-95-71FS](#). Washington, D.C.: February 22, 1995.

Early Childhood Programs: Multiple Programs and Overlapping Target Groups. [GAO/HEHS-95-4FS](#). Washington, D.C.: October 31, 1994.

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