

Hamline University

DigitalCommons@Hamline

---

School of Education and Leadership Student  
Capstone Theses and Dissertations

School of Education and Leadership

---

Spring 2023

## Every Student Succeeds Act Title I and III Grant Spending and Equity Work in Minnesota

Sara George

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_all](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

George, Sara, "Every Student Succeeds Act Title I and III Grant Spending and Equity Work in Minnesota" (2023). *School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations*. 4566.  
[https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_all/4566](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/4566)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education and Leadership at DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@hamline.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@hamline.edu).

Every Student Succeeds Act Title I and III Grant Spending and Equity Work in  
Minnesota

By

Sara Grace Kaler George

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree to

Doctorate in Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

February, 2023

Dissertation Chair: Michelle Benegas Ph.D.

Reader: Amy Young Ph.D.

Reader: Nicole MartinRogers Ph.D.

Copyright by

SARA GRACE KALER GEORGE, 2023

All Rights Reserved.

## DEDICATION

Thank you to my family. My husband, Andy George, has been my friend for over thirty years and my husband for sixteen years. He cheers me on as a teacher and a learner, even when it distracts us from our home life. Our child Freddy George is a ball of enthusiasm for life. He reminds me to do my homework and that delayed gratification in academic pursuits is a normal part of the learning process. My parents, Dan and Caryl Kaler have helped me see the value of teaching and learning as tireless advocates for learners. My brother, Dr. Matthew E. Kaler, shows in his career and research the value of caring for and about people who need resources and advocates.

I am grateful to my committee members. Michelle Benegas, I appreciate your support and your encouragement through this process. I feel fortunate to have someone with a strong student and teacher-education-centered sensibility. You remind me of the utility of research. Amy Young, you have been a colleague and a shining example of how to communicate and advocate for our learners. Nicole MartinRogers, your work sharing financial data and the stories of parents and stakeholders involved with American Indian education is inspiring. Thank you for sharing your insights about how to make data useful.

My eternal thanks to my students who share their stories and whose stories continue to unfold. You all inspire me to do my best work! Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your stories.

I share my deep gratitude for all educators seeking systemic change.



"My focus always has been education, and I think that's where I can make my greatest contribution to society."

- My Dad, Dan Kaler, in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on December 15, 2004

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to:

- The colleagues who have encouraged me including my former colleagues from the Minnesota Department of Education, the District 196 team of English development teachers, the amazing team of teachers in the Rosemount High School Languages of the World Department, and the administrative team at Rosemount High School.
- Thank you to my current and former students.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Hamline University Ed D cohort members.
- Teachers and colleagues from District 196 Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan Schools.
- My teachers from Grand Rapid Public Schools.
- My teachers from South Washington County Public Schools.
- My teachers from Prescott, Wisconsin Public Schools.
- Hamline University undergraduate and graduate faculty.
- The Tribal Nations Education Committee representatives.
- Minnesota Department of Education staff.
- Minnesota's English language development educator community.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	14
My Own Racial and Cultural Frame	14
Acknowledgment of My Whiteness	16
The Construct of “Real Minnesotans”	17
The Dakota and the Ojibwe Sovereign Tribal Nations in Minnesota are The Real Minnesotans	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Cognizance of My Privilege	20
<b>CHAPTER ONE Introduction</b>	26
The Problem with Characterizing Learners as Disadvantaged	26
The Role of ESEA Title Formula Grants in the K-12 Funding Landscape	26
An Overview of the Largest State-Administered ESSA Formula Grants	30
The ESEA’s Role as a Civil Rights Law within a Midcentury Assimilationist Policy Lens	31
The Researcher’s Twenty-Year Relationship with ESEA Grants	32
Coordinating ESEA Title III Grant Funded Programs	33
Monitoring and Helping Administer ESEA Grant Programs at the State Level	33
Engaging in Work Funded by and Research about ESEA Title Grants	35
The Concerns for Racial and Linguistic Equity in Minnesota Schools	35
ESEA Grant Narratives and Budgets are a Window into Equity Work	37
Minnesota’s World’s Best Workforce Summaries are a Window into Equity Work	38
The Limitations Posed by COVID-19	39
Purpose and Research Questions	41
Summary	43
<b>CHAPTER TWO A Review of the Literature</b>	45
Part One: Setting the Scene for School Equity	46
Declaring the End of School Segregation	47
Dismantling School Segregation in the Courts	47
Actions that Prompted the Growth of Federal Education Funding	52
Growth of the Legislative and Executive policymaking in the 1950s and 1960s	53

Executive Branch Actions in the early 1960s: John F. Kennedy and the Gardner Commission's Research	54
The Impetus for Passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964	55
The Civil Rights Act of 1964	56
Johnson's Public Statements and Actions to Create the ESEA	58
President Johnson's Personal Perspective on the Creation of the ESEA	61
A Contemporary Critical Lens About the Genesis of the War on Poverty and The Great Society	63
Part Two: ESEA Data Collection and Financial Reporting	64
The Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey of 1966	65
An Encore to the Coleman Report- Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America	67
Cost-Effectiveness Research into ESEA Programs	68
The Road to Assessments and Federal Oversight: A Nation At Risk, America 2000, and Goals 2000	70
IASA, NCLB, and ESSA Ballooning Federal Regulation and Accountability	72
Changes Under NCLB	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Data Collection Under NCLB	74
Title III English Learner Education Under NCLB	76
Changes from NCLB to ESSA	78
Supplement Not Supplant	78
Part Three: School Leadership Teams and Reporting about State Equity Initiatives	79
The State's Oversight and Interactions with School Leaders	80
Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Summaries are a Window into Equity Work	81
The World's Best Workforce Achievement Gap Goal	81
The World's Best Workforce as an Accountability Statute	82
World's Best Workforce Research with Regional Education Laboratory Midwest	84
American Indian Education Aid and World's Best Workforce Research	86
Speakers of Indigenous Languages and Eligibility for Title III.	87
Current Research of Equity and ESEA Formula Grant Spending	89
The Need for analysis of Minnesota Districts and Title I and Title III Spending	91
<b>CHAPTER THREE Methodology</b>	94
Prepandemic Data	94
Research Design	95
A Bounded System	96
Characteristics of the School Districts	96

The School Year of Spending	97
The Parameters of Federal and State Law	97
Selection of Sampled Districts	98
Districts Sampled for Research Question One	98
Districts Sampled for Research Question Two	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Data Collection	101
Obtaining the Public Data Sets	101
Obtaining WBWF Summary Reports and Title I and III grant applications:	102
Mixed-Methods Quantitative Finance Data and a Qualitative Scan for Themes	103
Compilation and Reporting of Title I and Title III Expenditure Data	103
Analytical Software.	104
Scanning For Equity Themes	105
Analytical Software	107
Summary	108
<b>CHAPTER 4 Results and Analysis</b>	109
<b>Financial Data Collections and Synthesis</b>	110
Portion of Minnesota’s Total Title I Part A Spending Data Collected and Analyzed	110
Portion of Minnesota’s Total Title III Spending Data Collected and Analyzed	111
Basic Staffing Needs Are Funded With Title I and Title III	112
Analysis of Staffing Expenditures Funded with ESEA Grant Awards	116
<b>Narrative Data Collections and Synthesis</b>	119
Most School Districts’ Equity Goals Sought to Close Gaps Found in Racially Disaggregated Data	121
District Leaders Used Ambiguous and Minoritizing Language to Discuss Disaggregated Data	121
District Leaders Characterized Demographic Groups Ambiguously in Equity Goals	122
District Leaders Used Otherizing and Minoritizing Language in Equity Goals	122
District Leaders Described Working to Improve Learner’s Scores on State Assessments and College Readiness	124
District Leaders Identified Several Strategies to Address Academic Achievement Gaps	124
The Most Popular Strategies to Address Equity Related to Data and Professional Development	127
Strategies Specifically Addressing Student Identity, Home Culture, and Language Were Less Frequently Cited	128

District Leadership Teams Responded to Equity-Oriented Achievement Goals with Differentiation and Remediation Strategies	130
District Leaders May Not Share a Common Vision for their District’s Equity Work	131
<b>Summary</b>	132
<b>CHAPTER FIVE Recommendations</b>	134
Research Findings Regarding Title I and III Expenditures	135
Research Findings Regarding District Leadership Teams’ Equity Narratives	136
<b>Recommendations for Educators and Educational Stakeholders</b>	138
Write Clear Equity-Related Goals	139
Select Strategies to Address Learner Equity	140
Improve Title Grant Submissions and Reporting Processes	141
Recommendations for Minnesota School and District Leadership Teams	143
<b>Areas for the Consideration of Minnesota Department of Education</b>	144
<b>Areas for the Consideration of Federal Policy Makers</b>	145
<b>Areas Recommended for Future Research</b>	146
<b>Final Thoughts</b>	148
<b>REFERENCES</b>	148
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	
GLOSSARY	166
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	
2018-2019 World’s Best Workforce Summary Report Requirements for Academic Achievement Gap Goal Reporting	169
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	
Title I Narrative Questions in 2018-2019	170
<b>APPENDIX D</b>	
Title III Narrative Questions in 2018-2019	172
<b>Appendix E</b>	
2018-2019 All Title I Spending By UFARS Fin Accounting Code Categories	175
<b>Appendix F</b>	

	10
2018-2019 All Title III Spending By UFARS Fin Accounting Code Categories	178
<b>Appendix G</b>	
Total Count of Strategies Mentioned Collectively in all Narratives Sampled	181
<b>Appendix H</b>	
School Districts and Number of Strategies Identified	183
<b>Appendix I</b>	
Concept Maps of Funding Streams for All World's Best Workforce Goals	184

## TABLE OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b> <i>Initial and Recent Authorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act</i>	28
<b>Figure 2</b> <i>1951 photograph of R.R. Morton High School English 9 class.</i>	48
<b>Figure 3</b> <i>1951 photograph of the Worsham High School Home Economics Living Room.</i>	49
<b>Figure 4</b> <i>A Comparison of NCLB Consolidated State Performance Reporting areas under NCLB and World’s Best Workforce Required Reporting</i>	84
<b>Figure 5</b> <i>Process for selection of the Districts Included in the Data Set for Question One</i>	99
<b>Figure 6</b> <i>Pathway to Title Allocation Reports in MDE’s Data Reports and Analytics Website</i>	102
<b>Figure 7</b> <i>Process Diagram of Financial Data Collection and Synthesis</i>	110
<b>Figure 8</b> <i>Federal, State, and Study Sample Title I Part A Awards for Minnesota in Federal Fiscal Year 2018</i>	111
<b>Figure 9</b> <i>State, and Study Sample Title III Awards for Minnesota in Federal Fiscal Year 2018</i>	112



<b>Figure 10</b> <i>2018-2019 Title I Part A Spending By Accounting Code Categories</i>	113
<b>Figure 11</b> <i>2018-2019 Title III Spending By Accounting Code Categories</i>	114
<b>Figure 12</b> <i>Title I Part A Spending on Salaries by Position Type</i>	115
<b>Figure 13</b> <i>Title III part A Spending on Salaries by Position Type</i>	116
<b>Figure 14</b> <i>The Process of Collecting and Coding Document Narratives</i>	120
<b>Figure 15</b> <i>The Ten Most Frequently mentioned Strategies for addressing Academic Achievement Gap Goals</i>	129
<b>Figure 16</b> <i>Graph of Continuity Between the Strategies Reported by Selected School Districts</i>	132
<b>Figure 17</b> <i>Visual Tool Created at MDE for District Leadership Teams to Identify Funding Sources to Support District Goals</i>	142

## ABSTRACT

George, S.G.K. Every Student Succeeds Act Title I and III Grant Spending and Equity Work in Minnesota (2023)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was introduced as part of President Johnson's array of suggested civil rights and antipoverty reforms in 1965. ESEA funding was intended to be a supplemental funding source to provide more equitable conditions for all learners in the United States. The last two re-authorizations of the ESEA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), have entrenched a focus on student achievement as determined by performance on standardized tests. This research had two parts. First, financial data from 67 Minnesota school districts were collected and analyzed to see how districts were spending their ESEA Title I and Title III grant awards during the 2018-2019 school year. Second, qualitative data from 16 districts' ESSA Title I and Title III grant applications and state-required World's Best Workforce documentation were coded and analyzed to determine which strategies school leaders reported using to close academic achievement gaps that existed in their disaggregated data. The financial data showed that within Minnesota most ESSA Title I grant expenditures fund teacher positions, and ESSA Title III grant expenditures fund paraprofessional positions. The findings in the qualitative data suggested that school districts considered data-related work and differentiated instruction most frequently as their strategies to address systemic inequity. This finding suggests that school leaders may be invested in analyzing data and supplying academic interventions instead of seeking anti-racist and culturally affirming strategies to address systemic inequities for minoritized populations of learners.

## PREFACE

I am a white, ethnically northern European woman from Minnesota. Due to heredity and context, I was raised with what Feagin (2013) describes as a socially inherited racial frame (p. 12). When writing about equity and race, I feel compelled to disclose the influences of the systemic racism that privileges whiteness. Like all people, I think about how my upbringing and context provided me with assets or funds of knowledge or cultural capital (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Conversely, I think about the misinformation and systemic racism I have soaked in due to the systemic constructs around racial and nationalist hegemony accompanying a white racial frame (Feagin, 2013). In this preface, I want to disclose and expose the heritage that makes me strive to be an anti-racist while acknowledging that my whiteness limits my lens or frame.

### **My Own Racial and Cultural Frame**

My mother's family traces their roots to Norway and Sweden. My father's family came from Holland, Germany, and England. All my grandparents were born in the United States. Like many recently arrived immigrant families in the early 1900s, my maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother were raised in bilingual households. Within the pervasive assimilationist cultural leanings of post-World War II America, my grandparents raised their children (my parents, aunts, and uncles) as monolingual English speakers.

My grandmothers managed their households and worked part-time jobs outside of their homes. Both of my grandfathers served in World War II and moved to northern Minnesota to work in the taconite mines of the Mesabi Iron Range. Thus, my parents grew up in Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota, a town created by Erie Mining Company (*Taconite: New life for Minnesota's Iron Range the History of Erie Mining Company*, 2019). Erie Mining Company cleared an area for workers to live, laid down paved roads, and constructed homes for their employees, taconite miners like my grandfathers to purchase (Davis, 2004).

Erie Mining Company established the town where my parents lived. It was diverse by the standard of heterogeneity in the 1950s in Northern Minnesota. There were Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches (*Taconite: New life for Minnesota's Iron Range the History of Erie Mining Company*, 2019).

The families living across the Mesabi Iron Range mining towns traced their roots to various European and Eurasian nation-states. Thus, I was raised within a family that acknowledged diversity along ethnic lines and religious lines in perhaps a more pronounced way than they did racial identity. Racial identity was less frequently a topic in my youth, and religious and ethnic identities were more commonly discussed.

From childhood, I was keenly aware that one side of my family was Scandinavian and Lutheran, and the other was predominantly Dutch, German, English, and a small protestant Calvinist Christian tradition. My parent's marriage was viewed as somewhat novel to my grandparents, given they were each of religiously and ethnically different backgrounds. Even when I married, my maternal grandmother hoped I would marry a Scandinavian Lutheran man.

## **Acknowledgment of My Whiteness**

I do not remember the first conversation I ever had about race, but I remember my older cousin's transnational adoption story being told and retold. My parents are from families with five children, and I have 19 first cousins. My cousin, Aaron's story of coming into our family, was frequently told. My aunts and uncles would reminisce about Aaron's adoption from Cambodia and how the nurses carried him and other infants to their adoptive families. Nurses took my cousin and other adopted children off the plane and into the arms of American parents. My mom and aunts discussed their collective joy in watching baby Aaron carried off the airplane and placed him into my aunt's embrace.

Transnational adoptions from Southeast Asia in the wake of the Vietnam War were common in Minnesota families. During my youth, it was not uncommon to see youngsters like my cousin who would identify racially as Asian, while the rest of the family would identify as white. In the 1970s and 1980s, many families, transnational adoptees, and refugees moved into Minnesota. Indeed, my cousin's place as a family member was celebrated fondly, and I certainly noticed that he and I did not share the same skin color.

I saw the people of color around me as interesting, unique, and special when I was young. I thought about race naively. During the early 1980s, a trendy doll called a *Cabbage Patch Kid* was introduced. They were so popular and pricey in the stores that my daycare provider supplemented her income by crafting homemade Cabbage Patch Kids. As an expert crafter, she made dozens of dolls with various skin shades and sold them at craft shows. My brother and I specifically asked for the Black doll and received it as a Christmas present. I was excited to have a black baby doll because she was unique.

Nearly all my other dolls were white. Not only did I have a Cabbage Patch doll made just for me, but she was also exceptional. I did not yearn to have skin like my cousin or my doll, but I thought skin colors other than white were unique.

My racial frame was steeped in whiteness and a white racial frame (Feagin, 2013; Joe R. Feagin, 2020). My family household embraced the 1980s values of tolerance and respect. As a child, I considered whiteness as the normative reference and non-whiteness as different or novel. My schema for race was constructed around the false dichotomy of whiteness with the characteristic adolescent egocentrism using my own identity as normative. Thus, I otherized people who were not white as a novelty. Though I realize now that the framework of appreciation and tolerance is otherizing, at the time, I thought it was appropriately open-minded. I embodied the 1980s vision for the frequently promoted values of tolerance and respect. I would never have considered myself a racist or thought of myself as someone who had come of age within a cultural atmosphere of racism (Kendi, 2016, 2019).

### **The Construct of “Real Minnesotans”**

My family members and I thought about ourselves as Minnesotans. I recall taking trips to Brainerd, Minnesota, and talking to the mythical lumberjack Paul Bunyan whose statue greeted me by name via a hidden loudspeaker. White Northern Minnesota characters like the late Governor Rudy Perpich, singer Bob Dylan, Communist party leader Gus Hall, and entertainer Judy Garland were symbolic of who *we* were.

My family thought that our language was accurately reflected in one of the most popular comedic books for adults in Minnesota at the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Howard Mohr’s humorous book, How to Talk Minnesotan (1987). The work described

the unwritten and real socio-linguistic expectations for how typically white, typically Lutheran, and Scandinavian Minnesotans spoke. The book was a comedy staple for adults in my family and was given as a Christmas gift. I remember people laughing while reading the instructions explaining how to say farewell with a long Minnesota goodbye.

Considering that the land had been home to the Ojibwe and Dakota for hundreds of years, the idea that this white German-American and Scandinavian-American English dialect took hold as the language of Minnesotans showed the inherent linguistic privilege families like mine held. The lands I have lived on were ceded to the United States in treaties with Dakota and Ojibwe people. In the schema of my youth, the Dakota and Ojibwe people were part of Minnesota's history.

### **The Dakota and the Ojibwe Sovereign Tribal Nations in Minnesota are The First Minnesotans**

As I entered sixth grade, my family moved from a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota, to Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Grand Rapids is in the north-central portion of the state, just east of the Mississippi River's headwaters. Our community's high school mascot was the *Indian*. In the early 1990s, representatives from the three Ojibwe tribal nations near the school district held differing perspectives about *using* the *Indian* as a mascot. Some of the Ojibwe elders in our community wanted the *Indian* to remain the mascot to keep American Indian people visible in Minnesota's public life and discourse of Minnesota's northern counties. Minnesota's tribal communities had and still have concerns about the visibility of our sovereign tribal nations (Native Governance Center, 2021). Schools across the state of Minnesota and Indigenous Minnesotans were trying to reach a balance in the conversation about the objectification of Minnesota's first people. The Minnesota

High School League began publicly urging the transition away from Indigenous people as mascots in a resolution in 1988 (Draper & Staff Writer, 1989). The conversation in the Grand Rapids, Minnesota, public school district was not unique, but it continued, and the *Indian* mascot was removed in 1995 (Bergstedt, 2013).

While attending school in Northern Minnesota, most of my classmates were white, a few were American Indian, and a small handful were Asian adoptees. In northern Minnesota's late 80s and early 90s, conversations about racial and ethnic identity often focused on who was Norwegian, Swedish, Bohemian, Italian, Finish, German, or American Indian. My classmates and I learned about Ojibwe culture in school, but the content presented was cursory. We learned more about the Ojibwe people from the past. For example, teachers explained that historically Ojibwe's homes were hewn from birchbark, and their past settlements were constructed where wild rice was plentiful. I learned about the first people who built their homes in the Northern wilderness. The cultures of the American Indians in our area were typically discussed in the past tense.

When I moved away from Itasca County, our family moved to Dakota County near Bdote, where the Minnesota River and the Mississippi River meet. It is land that was the center of the Dakota people's nation. As a resident of a county once inhabited by the Dakota nation, I learned more about Dakota history in Minnesota. Once again, my understanding of the Dakota people centered around their historical experiences in Minnesota instead of their recent experiences. My thinking about the Dakota people was heavily influenced by the 1990 film *Dances With Wolves* and what I had learned in my tenth-grade US History class about the largest mass execution in American history. In the city of Mankato, Minnesota, thirty-eight Dakota men were killed in 1862. My image of



the Dakota people was frozen in the 1860s. I would reflect upon the Dakota people as the people who had lived in my county and had been a part of the land's history.

My understanding of the Ojibwe and Dakota changed when I visited Poland with my college choir in 2000. We held a concert in a small town in Poland, and we lodged with host families. My fellow singers and I had maps of Minnesota to show our host families where we were from. My host family's father spoke and read English. He saw the land demarcated on Minnesota's map labeled *Red Lake Nation Indian Reservation* and had many questions. He wondered if we were safe living by Indians and if they shot bows and arrows at white people, rode horses, and lived in tipis. I was shocked at how the stereotypical portrayal of American Indians from old Western films had traveled to Poland. My Polish host family expressed genuine concerns for my safety as a person inhabiting Minnesota. I tried to explain that there were homes much like his home on the reservation land and that the land was a place for the Red Lake Nation to have as their own, but that the Ojibwe people were not required to live there. I felt ashamed of America's Hollywood culture and frustrated with myself for not explaining the problematic nature of those movies.

### **Cognizance of My Privilege**

In my sophomore year of high school, my family relocated to a Twin Cities suburb. I attended a more racially diverse school. In high school, I had friends who identified as people of color. My brother came out as gay. In our circle of academically, artistically, and dramatically inclined youngsters in the suburbs, we imagined that we were celebrating and affirming uniqueness and diversity. My brother and many of our high school friends were members of the Minnesota Young Democrats. We attended

Twin Cities PRIDE and other Queer advocacy events. We imagined that we might become like those characters our friends sang along with on our RENT soundtrack (Larson, 1996). We praised love and acceptance.

The urban liberal arts college I attended was more ethnically and racially diverse than my high school. I had close friends who identified as Black, African American, Asian, Persian, and Pakistani. During my first year of undergraduate school, I was dating a man who identified himself as Black. I remember trying to find a Valentine's Day card and noticing that there were no couples who looked like us. The cards with anthropomorphized animals showed two little white bunnies or two little brown bears. As a young white woman, I had always seen myself reflected in mass media. I could not find a Valentine's Day card that looked like my Valentine and me.

That one moment of trying to buy a card at the Hallmark store made systemic racism even more real. As a young adult, it dawned on me that I could not see myself at Hallmark. At eighteen, absorbed in all the energy and naivety of trying to celebrate a romance, I realized with greater clarity what my friends of color had been saying when they reported that they did not see themselves in the media. As a white woman in a relationship with a black man, my story was not reflected back to me. The picture of my Valentine and me was so atypical that Hallmark did not have a card.

When I was twenty-one, I student-taught in an urban high school in St Paul, Minnesota. I made a rookie mistake of creating a seating chart for my learners by alphabetical order of students' last names. As I read off the class roster, I was mortified! My act of alphabetizing separated my students by race and ethnicity. My students who were ethnically Somali had last names that began with [A] or [M], like Abdirahman,

Abdulahi, or Mohammed. My students who were ethnically Hmong had last names that began with the final letters of the alphabet, like Xiong or Yang. In my life of whiteness as an English speaker, I had not considered how much a seemingly innocent practice like alphabetizing a seating chart could have unintended impacts. I intended to organize my classroom, but my impact was segregation by alphabetization. Like many of my rookie teaching mistakes, it was indicative of all that I still had to learn and continue to learn about how my whiteness and English-speaking frame can unintentionally harm learners and their learning.

As a young teacher in my early twenties, I wanted to be conscientious as I taught US History. I wanted to present and have learners see multiple perspectives in the history of the United States. I tried to avoid an overreliance on teaching dates, battles, and the history of white men. However, the vignettes of women, people of color, and Indigenous Americans in the textbooks were brief. They often appeared in feature boxes on a page instead of being integrated into the story (Loewen, 1995). I knew I was not sharing a history fully reflective of my learners.

I also wanted my learners to understand the history of the American Indian people and the Dakota and Ojibwe people of Minnesota. I taught about the Americas before European settlement and the fur traders, the Trail of Tears, the Dakota War and executions of 1862, and the Battle of Little Big Horn. I had my students watch portions of *Dances With Wolves*.

At that time, I did not understand that my actions framed the story of American Indians as people of America's past. My version of US history defined Indigenous Americans by their relationships with white people. Though I did not vilify American

Indians, my unfortunate choices as a teacher helped perpetuate the stereotype of indigenous culture being a thing of the past instead of the enduring history and culture of America's present.

As I matured as an educator and began teaching recently arrived immigrants who were multilingual and qualified for English learner services, I realized that my teaching was centered from the White North American lens. I needed to consider teaching American history and the American government to high school students not raised in the United States. I needed to adapt my instruction and try to frame my teaching from the perspective of someone introduced to American history without a sentimental attachment to symbolic representations of the country, like the Star-Spangled Banner, the Statue of Liberty, or the Fourth of July.

My students' questions helped me understand how many ways there were to think differently about American culture. After reading about President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky and the subsequent scandal, one student who had immigrated two years earlier from Somalia asked, "Why didn't he just stay married [to Hillary] and have that girl [Monica Lewinsky] be his second wife?" When teaching American government, I had a student who had immigrated from El Salvador ask me why the military and the police were different entities. My international learners would ask questions I had never thought to ask, because my understanding of government and history was constructed from a white American lens.

When I was in my thirties, my husband and I began attending an open and affirming protestant Christian church in Saint Paul, Minnesota, that hosted Antiracism Dialogue and Study Circles. I began to understand that as a white woman, my advocacy

needed to be more robust. The ideals of affirmation and appreciation were insufficient, and I needed to strive to be an anti-racist voice. I learned there was a difference between being opposed to explicitly racist materials and acts and being actively anti-racist in my stance against systemic injustice.

Our congregation frequently partnered with the Dakota Mdewakanton Community to host the Wacipi (Powwow) gathering. Our church community took part in a lecture series about the cultural context of Dakota place names in our community and learned about the problematic portrayals of the Dakota and Ojibwe portrayals in the art on display at the Minnesota Capitol building and in the Minnesota state flag. I listened to my Dakota neighbors and friends about how much was taken from their forebearers and how much needed to be reclaimed.

My advocacy work in several spheres grew. In the school district where I worked, I brought forward culturally and linguistically responsive ideas within our literacy leadership team about how a library or school libraries and classroom libraries needed to reflect our learners. I advocated for multilingual literature to be on our library shelves and for learners of color to see themselves in our classroom library, and our young learner's guided reading books. I adamantly modeled and helped train colleagues in an assets-based approach for thinking around service to our multilingual learners. Serving at a state level on the English Learner Stakeholder Input Group at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), I shared ideas about how all schools in Minnesota could best support multilingual learners in our schools.

I have so much more to learn about being a better advocate for all learners. I can look back at my educator self in my early twenties knowing that I tried, but I was still on

a learning journey. In another twenty years, I hope to look back at my work in the early 2020s and know once again that I tried as I worked to learn more and advocate more resourcefully. I want to help Minnesota educators, including myself, know how to support our learners who were and are harmed by systemic racism.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a milestone in America's public policy landscape, bringing on what Kendi characterized as "racial progress and progression of racism at the same time" (2016, p. 369). The educationally-related extension of the Civil Rights Act was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (Spring, 2018). The law aimed to support *disadvantaged* learners (ESEA, 1965). The ESEA Title I grant was the first broadly applied federally funded education categorical aid or formula grant directed specifically to American public schools with higher concentrations of learners in poverty (Spring, 2019).

#### **The Problem with Characterizing Learners as *Disadvantaged***

The ESEA's label of *disadvantaged learner* represents an assimilationist policymaking construct (Jackson, 2011; Delpit, 1995, also see Kendi, 2016). Educators and education policy advisors often steer away from the language of *the disadvantaged*. They characterize learners as *marginalized* (Minnesota Governor's Roundtable, 2020; Yosso, 2005). Viewing all learners as humans with cultural capital and wealth prompts me to reject labels like *disadvantaged* to characterize learners of color and learners experiencing poverty (Yosso, 2005).

#### **The Role of ESEA Title Formula Grants in the K-12 Funding Landscape**

Those ESEA federal Title formula grant awards were intended to help all learners be successful without leaving any learners behind. These ESEA grants are awarded based on mathematical formulas that include federally collected data (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2021). The ESEA Title grants are “non-competitive awards based on a predetermined formula to State Education Agencies” (US Department of Education, 2003 para.1). The State Agencies then award the money to school districts (ESSA, 2015). Thus, ESEA Title I grants are called formula grants and are often referred to as categorical aid. The grants are categorical aid, because school districts may use the grant funding to pay for specific categories of learners or educational programming targeting specific learner needs (Lagemann, 2000).

State and local revenues support a much more significant percentage of public education funding in America than revenues from the federal government. Federal education spending at the school and district level is so tiny that researchers from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Biolsi et al. (2021), modeled school spending data from 1992 to 2014 without incorporating federal aid into their analysis. In a footnote, the research team explained their rationale, “Federal aid is comparatively small, and we ignore it in the present analysis” ( Biolsi et al., 2021, p.1).

During the 2018-2019 school year, \$10,772,126,978 was spent on non-capital expenditures in Minnesota schools (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). Of that money, only \$185,207,534, or nearly three percent, came from the ESEA Title I Part A, II, and III formula grants (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). The grants that states and, in turn, school districts receive from federal sources are categorical, carrying restrictions that limit both the allowable use of federal grant revenue and the groups of learners able to benefit directly from the formula grant awards (ESSA, 2015; Levin,1988,1989; Spring, 2019). Though the federal grants are large, they only represent a small proportion of K-12 public education funding from states and localities (Biolsi et



al., 2021). Given the longevity of the ESEA program (56 years), ESEA Title grant funding is now an expected revenue stream rather than a purely supplemental revenue stream. Large school districts and state education agencies (SEAs) have ESEA program coordinators who work with the programs funded by the ESEA formula grants. Today, school districts anticipate the revenue awarded in the ESEA Title grants, and they begin to forecast spending their ESEA Title grant dollars before the allocations are officially awarded (Spring, 2019).

The ESEA law has been reauthorized several times over the past half-century. The two most recent reauthorizations were the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the current reauthorized act, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (Spring, 2019). The reauthorized versions of the ESEA plainly describe what policymakers envisioned for learners.

### Figure 1

#### *Initial and Recent Authorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*

The Year	1965	1967	2002	2015
<b>Title of the Authorization</b>	This was the initial authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).	Provisions, including the Bilingual Education Act, were added to the ESEA.	The ESEA was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).	The ESEA was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
<b>Targeted Student Groups</b>	Title I federal aid began supporting schools with high percentages of learners living in poverty.	Federal aid for multilingual learners acquiring English as an additional language began.	Modern Title I and Title III programs provided categorical aid for historically marginalized learners, including learners in poverty and multilingual learners acquiring English.	Title I and Title III are both reauthorized. Categorical aid to districts continues for learners in poverty and multilingual learners acquiring English.

In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) formula grant. ESSA provided formula grants for populations of historically underserved and vulnerable learners. The act defines the specific learner groups it aims to support, naming: learners in poverty, learners experiencing homelessness, learners acquiring English as an additional language, American Indian learners, learners of color, learners placed into foster care, learners in institutions for delinquent youth, and learners who have been neglected (ESEA).

The reauthorization of the ESEA as ESSA granted more flexibility to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to allocate and spend the grant awards more flexibly (Birch & Ald, 2019; Blackborrow et al., 2018; Bulman-Pozen, 2016; Egalite et al., 2017; Kessler, 2020; and Wrabel et al., 2018). The last comprehensive study of ESEA Title I, Part A spending, *Study of Title I Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance Programs: Final Report*, was conducted and released by the United States Department of Education (2018).

Given ESSA's reauthorization in 2015 and delayed guidance around the supplement not supplant provisions, SEAs and LEAs did not take full advantage of the flexibility until after the flexibility was clarified in both rules and guidance (EDGAR, 2019; Kessler, 2020; US Department of Education, 2019). Researchers in 2018 were not yet able to see patterns of spending that were influenced by the new supplement not supplant provisions within ESSA while studying LEA spending in Title I, Part A in 2018 because the draft guidance was not released until 2018, and the final guidance was released in 2019 (Kessler, 2020; US Department of Education, 2019).

There is currently a lack of data about ESEA Title formula grant allocations and spending in the era of ESSA. Economists Gordon and Reber (2015) explain, “Unfortunately, data on school-level budgets are largely unavailable, and we know surprisingly little about whether schoolwide programs have altered how schools spend Title I funds” (p. 137). A research team from the National Center for Education Statistics, Corman et al. (2018), did a feasibility study of obtaining detailed financial data sets from schools and districts through SEAs and concluded: “there is the potential, with further work, to collect high-quality school-level finance data from SEAs” (p.60). There are federal government collections and reporting, but the categories presented in the federally reported data are not as detailed as what Minnesota collects. The state of Minnesota uses the Uniform Financial and Accounting Standards (UFARS) system (Minnesota Department of Education Division of School Finance, 2018). There are over 150 expenditure codes that are allowable within ESEA Title formula grants at the district level (Minnesota Department of Education Division of School Finance, 2018 pp.254-255).

### **An Overview of the Largest State-Administered ESSA Formula Grants**

ESSA contains several categorical grants. Of the state-administered grant programs, four account for the most significant portion of the ESSA-related spending. Titles I -IV. Each of these grant programs is designed to fund a specific learner group and or educational objective:

- Title I, Part A supports basic programs to assist learners who are not yet meeting grade-level academic targets,

- Title II, Part A funds effective instruction through professional development,
- Title III, Part A serves as a revenue stream for supplementing English language acquisition and academic language instruction, and
- Title IV, Part A contains supplemental funding for well-rounded educational programs and safe and healthy schools.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Minnesota awarded school districts and charter schools Titles I-III as formula grants. In 2020, Minnesota began awarding Title IV, Part A as a formula grant. Before 2020, Minnesota was one of only a handful of states that awarded Title IV A as a competitive grant award.

All of the grants mentioned above exist to help learners be more successful. Whether serving learners is done through teacher professional development, supporting opportunities for multilingual learners, or developing creative supplemental initiatives, the goal of all ESSA grant programs is written into the title of the law, which legislatively aims to support every student's success.

### **The ESEA's Role as a Civil Rights Law within a Midcentury Assimilationist Policy Lens**

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the ESEA into law in 1965, it was on the heels of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The ESEA is a civil rights law (Brustein & Manasevit LLC, 2018). The national conversation about civil rights in America continues; the political and social rhetoric shifted as broader visions for equity and inclusiveness emerged. Contemporary historian Kendi reminds today's educators that the

language of the 1960s era policymakers represented an assimilationist policy framework rather than an anti-racist policy framework (2016).

Jackson deconstructs the coded language for racializing students used within the act, such as disadvantaged, at-risk, weak, and in need of remediation (2011). Kendi concurs (2016). Politicians knew that in the post-Civil Rights era, they could be vulnerable to allegations of racism by using explicitly racialized language (Kendi, 2016). Instead, they opted to veil the language of racism in the language of poverty, urban-ness, and criminal activity (Kendi, 2016).

The rhetorical framework that otherizes and marginalizes learners of color and American Indian learners continues to shape American educational policy discourse appearing in *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1984), NCLB, and in ESSA (Kendi, 2016; Jackson, 2011; Vinovskis, 2009). The assimilationist policy framework held that the work of white learners was normative and that Black learners, learners of color, and American Indian learners were *at risk* or substandard (Jackson, 2011). Such language trickles into classrooms and school communities that further minoritizes learners (Jackson, 2011).

### **The Researcher's Twenty-Year Relationship with ESEA Grants**

I have had the opportunity to work with federal education grants for two decades. In 2001 I began my career as a social studies teacher and in 2002 became a part of a co-teaching project using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP®), which calls on educators to use a targeted methodology in their teaching aimed at making content comprehensible for English language learners (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2000). The co-teaching project was funded with the school district's Title III grant. As a social

studies teacher, I learned more about how I could better serve my multilingual students and went on to pursue a second teaching license in English as a Second Language. In 2004, I began teaching both English language development and social studies. I earned my Master of Arts in English as a Second Language in 2011 and supported the work of the Title III grant in a large suburban school district, teaching and coordinating our sheltered social studies curriculum development for newly arrived multilingual high school students that qualified as English learners.

### **Coordinating ESEA Title III Grant Funded Programs**

In 2012, I began serving as a representative to MDE's English Learner Stakeholder Input Group (ELSIG). As a delegate to ELSIG, I helped create the state's NCLB targets for adequate yearly progress under Title I and Title III. After ESSA passed in 2015, I again served as a part of the ELSIG group during 2016 and 2017 that assisted in standardizing entrance and exit procedures and meeting new ESSA requirements in Title I and Title III.

After the passage of ESSA, I served as a teacher on special assignment coordinating English learner programming. I also supported the district's summer programs for English learners as an administrative intern. In those roles, I helped to shape the programming, complete the budgeting, and write the program narratives for Title III program planning. The large suburban school district I worked for ran three summer school programs for multilingual learners funded in part with the Title III, part A grant.

### **Monitoring and Helping Administer ESEA Grant Programs at the State Level**

In January 2018, I was hired by the MDE as an ESEA program monitor. I assisted with implementing several ESEA Title Grants and the CARES Act grant programs that

came about as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The grants I worked with were: Title I; Title II; Title III; Title IV; the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, which was a subset of the CARES Act funds from the COVID 19 response; and the two Elementary and Secondary School Emergency grants, which were another subset of CARES Act funds to address school's needs from COVID-19.

During much of my employment from January of 2018 until February of 2020, I traveled across Minnesota visiting school districts to monitor their use of ESEA Title I and Title II grants. I reviewed expenditures and talked to school leadership teams about their use of their Title grants. Part of the work was to verify that the federal grants coming to Minnesota's learners are used appropriately in the service of learners and learning. I looked at districts' spending to see that those federal monies were used in a way that validates who learners are, including historically underserved learners; learners of color, American Indian learners, learners living in poverty, learners experiencing homelessness, learners in foster care, learners acquiring English as an additional language, and learners identified as neglected or delinquent. It was a glimpse into how districts across the state of Minnesota used their funding to provide learning opportunities for their students.

In February 2020, I shifted into the role of Title I Program Specialist for MDE. In that role, I was the co-leader of the Minnesota Committee of Practitioners for Title I, the ESEA program point person for training, and a primary provider of technical assistance to the Tribal Nations Education Committee in Minnesota during ESEA tribal consultations. I listened on behalf of the state to the needs of school districts and

Minnesota's sovereign tribal nations. Education leaders from school districts and tribal nations shared their ideas about how ESEA Title grants could be used more effectively.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to visit schools and have face-to-face conversations with educators at the end of the 2019-2020 school year and for the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year. It was unsettling to hear the concerns and be in the role of the listener rather than advocate. I decided I needed to return to a position where I could directly advocate on behalf of learners once again and did not need to preserve the opinionless face of a state government employee. I decided that to fully pursue this research and be free to engage in specific advocacy, it was vital for me to return to my role as a teacher.

### **Engaging in Work Funded by and Research about ESEA Title Grants**

Presently, I teach English language development and social studies in a large comprehensive suburban Minnesota high school. The English language development and social studies courses I teach support learners who have recently immigrated to the United States and are identified for English learner services. As a teacher, I work with programs funded partly with ESEA Title grants. As a researcher, I researched how ESEA grants are used in K-12 education settings.

### **The Concerns for Racial and Linguistic Equity in Minnesota Schools**

In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the subsequent protests of police brutality and systemic racism, Minnesota's lack of equity has been noted both nationally and internationally. There are known disparities for learner achievement outcomes on standardized assessments for learners of color and American Indian learners in Minnesota. The concern has been featured in the New York



Times (Elingon & Bosman, 2020). The following headline gave a poignant summary, *How Minneapolis, One of America's Most Liberal Cities, Struggles With Racism* (Elingon & Bosman, 2020).

Minnesota's headline-making racial disparities were not hidden behind a facade of liberalism after the murder of George Floyd. Mr. Floyd, a forty-six-year old Black man, was murdered by Minneapolis police officers on May 25, 2020. Floyd suffocated when White police officer Derek Chauvin callously put his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck while other Minneapolis police officers stood by (Hill et al., 2020). George Floyd's murder highlighted the brutality and criminality of former officer Chauvin and his three former fellow officers who watched and did nothing as Mr. Floyd died.

Across the United States and in Minnesota, conversations about police brutality, racism, and protests against institutionalized racism in public life emerged (Blad, E. & Sawchuk, S., 2020; Love, B., 2020;). Minnesota's racial disparities made national and international headlines. Minnesota has not yet equitably addressed the needs of all learners in schools.

Minnesota has a rich history as a multilingual and multiracial land (Tarone, 2014). Yet, I am concerned that Minnesota schools have not yet addressed equity by all of the means at their disposal. Educators across the state are concerned, too (Minnesota Governor's Education Roundtable, 2020). In *A Roadmap for Transformational Change in Minnesota Education* (2020), the Minnesota Governor's Education Roundtable called upon Minnesotans to identify seven priorities for learners. The group's third priority compelled Minnesotans to redesign the system, "We need to redesign and rebuild systems that are anti-racist and culturally affirming with policy and practice decisions

centering on the development of students of color and American Indian students to achieve racially equitable outcomes” (Minnesota Governor’s Education Roundtable, p.10-11). The fourth priority the group identified was, “to have a continuous pipeline of diverse, anti-racist education professionals, who are reflective of our diverse families and who are prepared and supported for students on day one and throughout their careers” (Minnesota Governor’s Education Roundtable, 2020, pp.12-13). The sixth priority of the group identified the importance of equitable educational outcomes for learners (Minnesota Governor’s Education Roundtable, 2020, pp.16-17). Minnesota leaders and teachers agree that disparities in opportunity, access to culturally aware educators, and equitable outcomes are all issues facing Minnesota’s learners (Governor’s Education Roundtable, 2020).

### **ESEA Grant Narratives and Budgets are a Window into Equity Work**

In Minnesota, ESSA Title I, part A formula grants are awarded to all eligible school districts with learners in poverty. ESSA Title III, part A grants are granted to districts with at least ninety identified English learners. Minnesota’s SEA, MDE, functions as the pass-through and monitoring agency for ESEA Title I Part A, II Part A, III Part A, and IV Part A formula grants (MN § 127A.095, 2016). Minnesota has over 500 school districts and charter schools, and under state law, all are recognized as LEAs (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). All of the eligible LEAs receive their ESEA formula grant allocations, write their budget narratives, and provide detailed budgets in a state-created grants management platform called SERVS (Minnesota Department of Education SERVS Financial, 2019). In the budget narratives, school districts describe how they will use their grant awards to support the purposes named in ESSA. Thus,

school districts describe how they plan to support learners' academic progress under Title I and for supplemental programming for English learners under Title III. Both Title I and Title III grant applications contain questions that directly relate to equity.

MDE collects proposed budgets and each school district's narrative plan in their Title grant applications (Minnesota Department of Education SERVS Financial, 2019). The system archives the kinds of spending proposed in both a narrative and a uniformly coded budget. The system records the reimbursements made to school districts for their purchases using the awarded grant money. Both the budgeting records and the spending reports become public at the close of the federal fiscal year.

Minnesota school budget data is uniformly coded, and the state publicly reports how the grants are spent (MDE, 2020). UFARS is the standardized accounting code system all LEAs in Minnesota must use to submit their budgets and draw down their expenditures (MDE, 2020). If school business officials enter their LEA's data into the system correctly, it is possible to compare using the finance coding by the category of the object purchased. Uniform accounting allows any curious person to compare and analyze budgeting and spending practices for all Minnesota school districts (MDE, 2020). The data is publicly available in MDE's Data Center files. The Title grant application narratives and budgets can be reviewed to determine if there are indications that educational equity considerations were prioritized when the district budgeted the money.

### **Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Summaries are a Window into Equity Work**

Minnesota collects a summary of five goals in prescribed goal areas mandated by Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute (Minnesota § 120B.11. 2018). The third goal area is to "Close the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups

of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty” (Minnesota § 120B.11. 2018). School districts must submit their goal or goals for this goal area and each of the other goal areas.

The World’s Best Workforce plan summaries are collected annually. They function as a state-mandated strategic planning mechanism for all of Minnesota’s districts. On an annual basis, MDE reviews the goals. The third goal is the district’s opportunity to articulate its equity work aimed at closing what the state labels as, “all racial and economic achievement gaps between students” (MDE, 2021).

Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest (REL Midwest, 2017, 2019) conducted policy scans of Minnesota’s World’s Best Workforce summaries during the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years. The data from the World’s Best Workforce plan summaries and REL Midwest’s qualitative analysis of the summaries are available to assist researchers in defining and determining the policy impact of Minnesota’s World’s Best Workforce law on school districts' budgeting practices. This data set, like many other data sets collected by MDE, has not yet been holistically analyzed as an indicator of how schools and districts go about the work of leading their systems toward equity.

### **The Limitations Posed by COVID-19**

2019-2020 would have been an ideal year to capture baseline data about Title IV A spending in Minnesota. The Title IV grant was released for use as a formula grant for the first time near the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Most LEAs in the state carried the funds from the 2018-2019 school year forward because MDE had not yet provided guidance around the allowable uses for Title IV awards. Thus, the first widely publicized award of Title IV Part A as a formula grant occurred in the 2019-2020 school year.

Studying the data from the inaugural year of Title IV A as a formula grant was one of my goals prior to COVID-19. In the fall of 2019, I looked forward to researching the whole ESEA Title package of sizable formula grants, including I Part A, II Part A, III Part A, and IV Part A. The fall of 2019 was supposed to usher in greater clarity, demonstrating how ESSA differed from NCLB (Kessler, 2020). 2019-2020 promised to be a year that could showcase typical spending in Title I, II, and III and establish baseline norms in Title IV Part A.

However, the 2019-2020 school year may be the most atypical year of ESEA Title grant spending since the program began in 1965. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent waivers to the allowable use provisions of Titles I-IV were all changed to respond to a global pandemic and the distance learning teaching model for all schooling in the state. The US Department of Education also issued an exemption to the 27-month lifespan of the ESEA Title grants, making the funding available to school districts for one additional calendar year. The CARES Act brought about three new temporary formula grants to respond to COVID-19 relief. In addition to Titles I - IV, our work at MDE expanded to include Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was suddenly approving grants for hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment, and extra toilet paper. School leaders revised their initial applications and requested atypical items and supplies. The usual spending limitations were replaced with much looser ones to respond to the global health emergency.

During March and April of 2020, many LEAs revised their budget applications for the formula grants. They rerouted funding to assist with distance learning and the

technological infrastructure, professional development, and devices to assist with the change in instructional delivery. The pandemic influenced ESEA Title grant spending during the spring of the 2019-2020 school year. Many LEAs reprioritized and made significant budget adjustments during the grant's revision window from March to early May 2020.

In typical years Minnesota LEAs are influenced by longer-range budgetary planning coinciding with the statutorily required World's Best Workforce law, a required strategic plan addressing each school district's goals (Minnesota § 120B.11., 2018). As a researcher, I wanted to explore if Minnesota school districts were linking their spending in ESEA formula grant programs to their work in strategic planning. Given the unimaginable circumstances befalling the second half of the 2019-2020 year, the introduction of the CARES Act funding streams Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, and the introduction of Title IV A as a new formula grant in Minnesota, I opted to examine Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year and forego an attempt to describe the relationships between district plans and ESEA formula grant budgets during the 2019-2020 school year.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

Research Question 1: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

Research Question 2: How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

The purpose of this study is to describe and provide an analysis of the current usage of ESEA Title grants in Title I and III in order to answer the first research question:

1. How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

This research is needed because most extensive data sets about spending at a district level look at aggregate spending (Institute of Education Sciences, 2020). Minnesota's state data sets from the SERVS financial system are uniformly coded using over 100 different budget codes. The federal data sets lack detailed uniform budget coding.

The level of budget and narrative detail collected in Minnesota's ESEA grants had not been studied. In federal surveys of ESEA grant spending, the narratives from individual district application documents are not included as a qualitative data point. Articulating an equity-related goal is part of state law in Minnesota under the World's Best Workforce Act (Minnesota § 120B.11., 2018). The grant application narratives and the World's Best Workforce state statute's goal area for the closure of "racial and economic achievement gaps between students" (MDE, 2021). The World's Best Workforce summaries for *the academic achievement gap*<sup>1</sup> goal provided data to answer my second research question: How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap<sup>2</sup>?

---

<sup>1</sup> The academic achievement gap goal is one of the five specific goal areas referenced in Minnesota statute. The *academic achievement gap goal* is therefore a specific goal requirement in state statute (Minnesota § 120B.11., 2018). In this research, it is not to be deconstructed generically as a stand-in for a discussion of the terms opportunity gap and the achievement gap .

<sup>2</sup> This refers specifically to the academic achievement gap goal required under Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Statute (MDE, 2021).

This research illuminates how ESEA Title funds are being used given the new flexibility that is allowed under ESSA the reauthorization of ESEA as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). Policy researchers, economists, health advocates, and educators (Birch & Ald, 2019; Blackborrow et al., 2018; Bulman-Pozen, 2016; Egalite et al., 2017; Wrabel et al., 2018) have noted the flexibility given to states and districts with the 2015 reauthorization of ESSA and speculated about the possibilities for LEAs to allot their ESEA formula grant monies to different initiatives and activities. Therefore the examination of the spending trends for ESEA Title formula grants in Minnesota was also timely.

I captured a snapshot from the public records kept by MDE, including a sample from 16 districts' ESEA Title formula grant narratives, the actual ESEA Title formula grant budget with UFARS object codes, and the equity goal or goals cited in each district's World's Best Workforce plans to record what is occurring in with ESEA Title grant spending in traditional geographic LEAs. My goal is to learn about the spending trends between and among districts. I also want to see how districts may or may not prioritize their own strategic equity work in their budgeting and narrative planning for the ESSA Title grants.

## **Summary**

In Chapter One, I explained the historical place of ESEA Title grants in funding for public education and as a mechanism to fund educational equity work. I discussed the relevance of the ESEA Title grant programs in relationship to my work and my own personal experience as a white educator in Minnesota. I described Minnesota's World's Best Workforce law and Minnesota's current struggles to overcome racial and economic



injustice. I reviewed the socio-political context and the research limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. That context set the stage for an overview of the research questions in this study.

Chapter Two explores the literature describing the ESSA as a reauthorization of ESEA, the Minnesota World's Best Workforce law, needs-based budgeting strategies for school districts, and the socio-political context for funding work that supports equity in Minnesota public schools.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Review of the Literature

Chapter Two explores the relevant literature in three parts. First, it explores the genesis of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Second, it describes the accounting framework and regulatory constraints of ESEA grants. The chapter concludes by reviewing the research about Minnesota's World's Best Workforce law and recent qualitative accounts of school leaders in Minnesota describing their strategic equity work.

The first segment of Chapter Two reflects upon the historical and political impetus leading to the creation of ESEA Title I and Title III grants awards. This historical analysis of ESEA Title formula grant awards illuminates the larger political context for two research questions.

Research Question 1: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

Research Question 2: How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

The second portion of Chapter Two describes the US Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) current data and accounting collection practices. I elaborate on Minnesota's K-12 accounting system, Uniform Financial and Accounting Standards (UFARS). Understanding the accounting and data collection supports my first research question: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota

spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

The last portion of Chapter Two describes the recent qualitative research on how school leadership teams describe their strategic equity work. It summarizes Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute and its context. The summary provides background for my second research question: How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

### **Part One: Setting the Scene for School Equity**

The 1950s and 1960s were pivotal times in federal education policymaking, because of the US Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the increase in federal funding to schools championed by legislators, and the prioritization of anti-poverty reforms from the Johnson administration (Egalite et al., 2017; Fowler, 2004; Spring 2019). contend that to fully understand and discuss the expanded federal role in public education, it is essential to examine the federal role of the judiciary in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, President Johnson's War on Poverty, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the passage of the ESEA of 1965 (pp. 760-761). An exploration of the eleven years between the Supreme Court ruling and the passage of the ESEA is essential to understanding where the ESEA fits into the story of federal education funding, federal education policymaking, the beginnings of America measuring student achievement based upon demographically disaggregated groups, and how racialized thinking impacted that work (Spring, 2019; Lagemann, 2000; Kendi, 2016).

### **Declaring the End of School Segregation**

In 1896, the Supreme Court's ruling on the Plessy V. Ferguson case established a principle that allowed railroads to provide separate but equal accommodations for black people thereby creating officially segregated spaces across America (Kendi, 2016; Feagin 2013). This doctrine reinforced Jim Crow era racism and allowed the racist, but legal practice of segregation based on race in American schools (Kendi, 2016). In the early 1950s, several lawsuits were put forth from the American South challenging the practice of racially segregated schooling.

### **Dismantling School Segregation in the Courts**

During the 1940s and 1950s the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) coordinated and helped finance several lawsuits to challenge school segregation, first in higher education and then in K-12 public school districts (Cottrol et al., 2004; Fowler, 2004, p.151). In the 1951 case, Davis et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia et al. the plaintiffs presented photographic evidence showing that the district's schools for white learners and their schools for black learners had visibly obvious significant differences. The differences in the investments between their school buildings' construction, equipment, and furnishings were documented for the courts (Greenhut, 2018; Warren and the United States Supreme Court 1954). The photographs in Figure 2 and Figure 3 were taken in 1951 in the Prince Edward County School District (Greenhut, 2018).

**Figure 2**

*1951 photograph of R.R. Morton High School English 9 class.*



Note. This photograph, R. R. Moton High School English 9 Class (1951) and shows the black learners seated around what appears to be a wood-burning stove. The bulletin board on the wall reminds students that it is February. The photo is now part of the National Archives Docs Teach collection which provides primary source materials for teaching history. This photograph is part of a set of photos that are in the public domain (R. R. Moton High School English 9 Class, 1951).

At the time the picture of this stove in the center of a classroom was taken, boiler systems with radiator heat were commercially available and affordable (Bases, 2011). In the United States boilers using radiator heat had been used in both residential and school applications during the earliest parts of the twentieth century and through radiators (Bases, 2011).

**Figure 3**

*1951 photograph of the Worsham High School Home Economics Living Room.*



Note. This photograph, Worsham High School Home Economics Living Room (1951), shows white high school students in a room with framed wall art, a floral arrangement on a table, padded chairs, and lace curtains on the windows. The photo is now part of the National Archives Docs Teach collection which provides primary source materials for teaching history. This photograph is part of a set of photos in the public domain (Worsham High School Home Economics Living Room, 1951).

Despite the photographic evidence, the US District Court upheld segregation under the separate but equal precedent set by the Plessy V. Ferguson decision (Greenhut, 2018; Warren and the United States Supreme Court 1954). The ruling was appealed to

the US Supreme Court. In 1953, the United States Supreme Court combined four separate challenges to school segregation including that of Davis et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia et al. case. The United States Supreme Court decided to hear the set of challenges to the doctrine of separate but equal as part of the Brown Versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas case (347 US 483). Three other cases were heard with the Brown case in 1964 including:

1. Davis et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia et al.,
2. Briggs et al. v. Elliot et al. from South Carolina, and
3. Gebhart et al. vs. Belton et al. from Delaware (Warren and the Supreme Court of the United States, 1954 p.483).

The Supreme Court's ruling in Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas declared segregating schools by race was not constitutional; the court case came to have a monumental, but not immediate impact on segregated American schools showcasing the judicial branch as a mechanism for significant educational policy change (Fowler, 2004, pp.218- 219).

Surprisingly the photographs like those featured in Figures 2 and 3, were not cited as a part of the rationale for the court's ruling. The court was not swayed by the obvious differences between the conditions of the segregated schools (Kendi, 2016, pp. 361-363). Kendi (2016) explains that in Chief Justice Warren's opinion on the decision, the Supreme Court agreed that the conditions in racially segregated schools were either equalized or were being equalized (pp.361-363). The Supreme Court did not make a decision by comparing the conditions inside the schools that white learners attended to the schools that black students attended (Kendi, 2016; Warren and the Supreme Court of

the United States, 1954). Instead, Warren applauded the strides of black Americans by comparing their circumstances in 1951 with their circumstances during the time that slavery was legal and there were legal prohibitions teaching enslaved black people to read and write (Warren and the Supreme Court of the United States, 1954). Warren wrote:

Education of Negroes was almost nonexistent, and practically all of the race were illiterate. In fact, any education of Negroes was forbidden by law in some states. Today, in contrast, many Negroes have achieved outstanding success in the arts and sciences as well as in the business and professional world. It is true that public school education at the time of the Amendment had advanced further in the North, but the effect of the Amendment on the Northern States was generally ignored in the congressional debates. Even in the North, the conditions of public education did not approximate those existing today. The curriculum was usually rudimentary; ungraded schools were common in rural areas; the school term was but three months a year in many states, and compulsory school attendance was virtually unknown. As a consequence, it is not surprising that there should be so little in the history of the Fourteenth Amendment relating to its intended effect on public education (1954, p.490).

The Supreme Court of the United States in 1954 used the opinion in the pivotal case to patronizingly applaud black Americans for their own investments in developing themselves and perpetuate the practice of what Kendi calls *Uplift Suasion*, “the idea that White people could be persuaded away from their racist ideas if they saw Black people



improving their behavior, uplifting themselves from their low station in American society” (2016, p.124).

The Warren Court was instead persuaded by the argument that black children felt inferior due to the separation itself and thus decided unanimously that segregated schools were unconstitutional (Kendi, 2016, pp. 361-373). The court’s famous statement, “We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Warren et al., 1954, p.495) comes at the end of the ten-page opinion. While the Supreme Court decided that the separate but equal doctrine had run its course, their decision clung to the ideology and telltale rhetoric of *Uplift Suasion* by making excuses for unsatisfactory learning conditions in black schools while patronizingly applauding the advancement of black learners as a novelty (Kendi, 2016).

### **Actions that Prompted the Growth of Federal Education Funding**

The expense of K-12 public education in the United States is shared by local, state, and federal governments. The nature of how each level of government-funded education underwent a substantial shift during the Twentieth Century (Jennings, 2001). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009) estimated that in 1920 over 83 percent of funding for public schools came from local sources, over 16 percent came from state revenue, and less than one percent came from the United States federal government. By 1960, 56.5 percent of funding came from local sources, 39.1 percent from state sources, and 4.4 percent from federal sources (NCES, 2009). By 2000 the majority of funds for schools in the United States came from state sources, 43 percent from local sources, and over seven percent from federal sources (NCES, 2009).

*Growth of the Legislative and Executive policymaking in the 1950s  
and 1960s*

The US federal government's growing investment in public education was accompanied by an increase in programmatic regulation, data collection expectations, and a defined research agenda to federal public education funding legislation (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Spring 2018; Lagemann, 2000; Jennings, 2001). In the late 1950s, the United States government decided to earmark money to support very specific types of educational programming. This kind of funding is often called categorical aid because it provides federal funds or aid, but only in a specific and targeted context or category (Spring, 2018, p. 252). The first large-scale test of categorical aid in public education was a response to the Space Race with the Soviets in 1958 when the US federal government enacted the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) (Lagemann, 2000, p.172).

The NDEA was the US federal government's first significant foray into attaching policy requirements to school funding (Spring, 2018, p. 252). With the NDEA the federal practice of offering targeted grant programs or categorical aid for public education in exchange for the implementation of specific programming was born (Spring, 2018, p.252). NDEA grants provided federal funding to secondary schools and higher education institutions while requiring specific educational programming like science, math, and world language classes (Spring, 2018, p. 252; Lagemann, 2000, p. 172). With the NDEA, the federal government began using funding as an incentive for the specific categories of education like math and science (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Spring 2018).

***Executive Branch Actions in the early 1960s: John F. Kennedy and the Gardner Commission's Research***

On the heels of the 1958 NDEA, John F. Kennedy assumed the office of the Presidency in 1961. Kennedy proposed that similar categorical aid initiatives in public education funding would help to improve the educational conditions in America's schools (Jennings, 2001, p. 2). In 1962 President Kennedy's Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, and a commission of researchers led by John W. Gardner, the President of the Carnegie Corporation, and overseen by Francis Keppel, the US Commissioner of Education began investigating the potential for new kinds of categorical aid to schools and the possibility of developing a national assessment to benchmark learner progress (Spring, 2018, p. 252; Jennings, 2001 p. 3-5; Lagemann, 200, p.188-189;).

The Gardner Commission's researchers and educational policy experts during the 1960s were hoping to solve social ills through investments in human capital (Jenks, 1972). The assumption that investments in human capital within a democracy could solve social problems by creating a more informed electorate is foundational to American education and was not a novel suggestion (Spring, 2019 pp.94-95). The idea had been championed for over a century by early American public education advocates like Horace Mann (Spring, 2019 pp. 94-95). Mann and Fowle (1838) sought universal public education and voting rights because of their belief that "each citizen, by virtue of this social partnership, contributes, as his part of the common-capital..." (p. 6). Economists of the 1960s also held beliefs that aligned with Mann's philosophy and endorsed the idea that human capital could solve social ills (Jenks, 1972 pp.7-8; Mann and Fowle, 1838; Spring, 2019, pp. 94-94;). Therefore, it was not surprising that the Gardner Commission's

researchers proposed the idea for making further investments in human capital through increased categorical aid to public schools (Spring, 2019, pp. 94-94).

### ***1963 and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty***

In 1963, President Lyndon Johnson offered a vision for America that would come to be known as The Great Society (Tumulty, 2014). He modeled his own set of progressive federalized programs to support public improvements on President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal (Caro, 1982). Looking at President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a model, Lyndon Johnson pressured Congress to pass legislation that would use the power of the federal government to fund and centralize his own larger Great Society set of initiatives (Tumulty, 2014).

### ***The Impetus for Passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964***

Kendi (2016) reminds his readers of the series of tragic events that prompted President Johnson to prioritize passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (p.431). On September 15th, 1963 a bomb planted by white supremacists exploded in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killing four girls (African American Civil Rights Grant Program, 2020). The 16th Street Baptist Church was targeted because most of the parishioners were Black and the church building had been used as a rallying point and civic gathering place for people within the civil rights movement (African American Civil Rights Grant Program, 2020). The bombing prompted a decrease in President Kennedy's popularity (Kendi, 2016). So, President John F. Kennedy went to Dallas, Texas two months later in an effort to champion civil rights legislation by shaking hands and kissing babies in what might be labeled today as a public relations charm offensive (African American Civil Rights Grant Program, 2020; Kendi, 2016, p.383). During his

visit to Dallas, President Kennedy was assassinated and Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as the President of the United States (Kendi, 2016).

President Johnson was a political pragmatist (Kendi, 2016; Caro, 1982; Stone, 1999). Johnson saw that he needed to appease the Democratic Party's base by taking action on Civil Rights legislation and he decided to use Kennedy's death and the Birmingham bombing to campaign for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Kendi, 2016). It took the deaths of four little girls and a president's assassination to jump-start legislative efforts on the Civil Rights Act (Kendi, 2016).

### ***The Civil Rights Act of 1964***

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a milestone in America's public policy landscape bringing on what Kendi characterized as, "...racial progress and progression of racism at the same time" (2016, p. 369). The Civil Rights Act marked the legislative reification of Brown Versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. It prohibited race-based discrimination in employment and it made segregation based on race in public settings illegal. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, applied non-discriminatory regulations to federal grant awards. Thus if institutions receiving federal grant money were found to have engaged in discriminatory practices, their federal funding would be revoked (Spring, 2019, p.252).

The Civil Rights Act also included a provision that within two years of passing (by 1966), a national study should examine racial equality in educational opportunities (Lagemann, 2000, p.193). The previous work initiated by US Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel and the Carnegie Corporation's John Gardner to develop the National Assessment of Educational Progress had already begun (Lagemann 2000 p.p188-194).

Keppel and Gardner's desire to have an educational benchmark test and the stipulation from the Civil Rights Act to survey of educational equity were combined. The mandate yielded the first comprehensive study of learner equity in American public schools led by James S. Coleman (Lagemann, 2000).

### **Johnson's ESEA of 1965 in Two Perspectives; Public and Personal**

In comic books readers can distinguish what a person is thinking and what they are saying by the kind of bubbles or balloons in the illustration. When examining historical figures like Presidents, it can be more difficult to discern what their private thoughts may have been and how sincere and deeply felt the messages in public speeches might have been. In the case of Lyndon Johnson, we have both ample source material to begin uncovering the complex duality of what the President said and what may have been on the President's mind (Stone, 1999; Jenks, 1972; Caro, 1982).

The Johnson Administration's own narrative about the Great Society and War on Poverty including the accompanying ESEA was that funding was focused on education as a remedy for societal inequity (Jenks, 1972 p.7; Loewen, 1996, p. 208 ). In mainstream American media from newspapers to high school, American history textbooks Johnson's hope for his Great Society programs including ESEA are still applauded today (Loewen, 1996). The creation of Title I under the ESEA is often explained to students of American history as a generous act by the federal government (Loewen, 1996, p. 208). As Schneider (2015) contends, the beginning of the ESEA was the largest education act of its time and a substantial step, "toward the federal government's involvement in offering earmarked money to states" (p.7).

However, there is a more personal story about Johnson's early career as a teacher and a principal in a segregated school system (Caro, 1982; Stone, 1999). Johnson's biographer, Robert Caro, explained in an interview that Lyndon Johnson did not become mean over time. Johnson did not abandon his empathy for Mexican American children, Black people, and people living in poverty (Stone, 1999). Rather, Caro characterized the duality of the President's actions, "...he [Lyndon Johnson] becomes the great civil rights, President. But at the same time, the compassion was sort of always entangled with his and intense ambition which also comes out of his youth-his ruthless ambition, his desperate need always to win" (Stone, 1999).

The way President Johnson perceived the ESEA of 1965 can be analyzed from different angles; his public statements and his personal connections to the experience he had as a teacher and principal. There is a record of what sentiments and hopes the President revealed with his public remarks about the ESEA. Understanding Johnson's own personal history as a person who had experienced poverty and was a former educator, it is also possible to speculate about how his experiences as both a student and an educator shaped his own views about the ESEA legislation.

### ***Johnson's Public Statements and Actions to Create the ESEA***

In late 1963, Johnson launched a War on Poverty (Jencks et al. 1972). As a part of the plan to eliminate poverty, President Johnson and his contemporaries championed education as a mechanism for ending the cycle of poverty (Jencks et al., 1972 p.7). Johnson proposed the ESEA of 1965 as a new set of compensatory educational funding to support learners in their development of basic skills as a part of his battle plan for the War on Poverty (Spring, 2018, p. 252; Jennings, 2001 pp. 4 -5).

The President's proposed investment in compensatory education aid aimed to help learners acquire the skills to rise out of poverty and came from the advice of an appointed commission led by John Gardner (Jennings, 2001, p.2). The Gardner Commission's suggested that the ESEA legislation be a central part of the War on Poverty and that the legislation should address educational inequities by enacting a policy that used categorical aid money as an incentive to fight poverty by bolstering reading and math instruction (Spring, 2018, p. 252; Jennings, 2001 p. 3-4). A decade later, Jencks et al. (1972) summarized the Gardner Commission's and Johnson's overarching rationale for embedding the ESEA into the War on Poverty explaining that the administration wanted, "... to give everyone entering the job market comparable skills. This meant placing great emphasis on education. Many people imagined that if schools could equalize people's cognitive skills this would equalize their bargaining power as adults" (p.7).

In President Johnson's public presentation of the rationale for the ESEA, he adhered to rhetorical themes echoing Horace Mann about the emancipatory powers of education to overcome poverty (Public Papers of the Presidents, 1966 pp.412-419; Mann, 1839). President Johnson was hopeful that the ESEA and other new educational reforms like the Head Start Program would help families overcome poverty. At the bill signing in April 1965, Johnson thanked Congress and proclaimed the promise he saw in this new law, "It will offer new hope to tens of thousands of youngsters who need attention before they ever enroll in the first grade. It will help five million children of poor families overcome their greatest barrier to progress, poverty." (p.415).

On the front lawn of the President's former school, Junction Elementary School in Johnson City, Texas, the President explained his personal closeness with the enactment



of the law (Public Papers of the President, 1966). He saw his personal life as a learner and as a teacher reflected in the legislation:

As a son of a tenant farmer, I know that education is the only valid passport from poverty. As a former teacher—and, I hope, a future one—I have great expectations of what this law will mean for all of our young people. As President of the United States, I believe deeply no law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America. (Public Papers of the President, 1966, p.414).

The idea that education is a passport from poverty is completely in keeping with the narratives of Uplift Suasion, the American themes of individualism and individual socioeconomic mobility, and the idea that the production of human capital is why schooling exists (Banks, 2016; Kendi, 2016). Notably, in his public remarks, the President did not discuss the potential ramifications of the act on behalf of his former pupils. He champions the ESEA because of how educational reforms would benefit a poor white tenant farmer, but not in terms of what increased funding could do for America's schools, which twelve years after the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, were still segregated (Spring, 2019).

When Johnson offered Congress his own summary on the importance of the legislation, he began with a review of the economic rationale for the law:

I know those of you who sat in on the hearings have heard this many, many times, but I hope the people of America can realize that we now spend about \$1,800 a year to keep a delinquent youth in the detention home; we spend \$2,500 for a family on relief; we spend \$3,500 for a criminal in a State prison—

1,800, 2,500, 3,500—but we only spend \$450 a year per child in our public schools. Well, we are going to change that (Public Papers of the President pp.415-416).

Johnson then went on to discuss the personal economics of teaching, “My first teaching job was \$55 a month and it was in a college and didn’t pay much...” (Public Papers of the President p.417). Instead of discussing the poverty, he saw when was the Principal of a school in Cotulla, Texas about sixty miles from the Mexican border, Johnson opted to continue speaking about his own salary as a principal working in Cotulla (Caro, 1982, pp.166-168). Johnson reported on his own financial circumstances as a principal, “ I became principal of a Mexican school and they paid me \$265 a month—and that is when I left and came to Washington” (pp.417-418). Johnson’s public commentary and official speeches about the ESEA did not discuss or address the racial disparities within American schools, particularly those in the American South (Public Papers of the President, 1966).

***President Johnson’s Personal Perspective on the Creation of the ESEA***

President Johnson was intimately familiar with the circumstances of racial and linguistic segregation in America’s schools and the minoritization of learners due to language and ethnicity (Stone,1999). While he commented publicly about his career, he did not go into detail about the time he had served as a principal at a school near the US-Mexico border. The learners in his school were Spanish speakers and were learning English at school (Caro, 1982). Given his familiarity with the educational disparities and

the role of poverty and race he had witnessed during his years as an educator, the ESEA can also be viewed in far more personal and teacher-centered terms.

President Johnson's upbringing, his teaching career, his time as a school principal for Mexican American children, and the research teams he worked with to formulate the legislation, are all critical in the enactment of the legislation itself (Jennings, 2001; Caro, 1982; Public Papers of the Presidents, 1966). Johnson was reflective on his professional and political work as he publically shared his hopes that the legislation would support learners (Public Papers of the President, 1966). When interviewed, Caro discussed Johnson's private reminiscences about his former Mexican American students, "... he would hear trucks pulling out into the streets of the Mexican neighborhood, and he'd know they were taking his kids away to work all day" (Stone, 1999).

It is likely Johnson saw the ESEA as a reflection of possible actions for what had worked for him, a change in practice that he hoped would work for his former students, and had the potential to improve conditions for learners across America (Jennings, 2001). This characterization of the ESEA could even align with Mettetal's (2002) definition of classroom action research, "a method of finding out what works best in your own classroom so that you can improve student learning" (p.6). Greenwood and Levin's (2008) definition of action research also seems to fit, "...a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge on designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together" (p.1).

Johnson likely understood himself as a teacher and a researcher in the enactment of a policy that could be characterized in contemporary terms as an action research project. The research that led the ESEA was collaborative and Johnson was involved

(Lagemann, 2001 pp 188-200; Jennings, 2001, pp. 4-5). It grew out of work initiated during the Kennedy administration that was led by John Gardner, President of the Carnegie Corporation and overseen by Francis Keppel, the US Commissioner of Education (Lagemann, 2000, p.188-189; Jennings 2001, pp.4-5). This collaborative focus by a team marks the second portion of the definition for action research, “The research focus is chosen collaboratively among the local stakeholders and the action researchers, and the relationships among the participants are organized as joint learning processes. (Greenwood & Levin, 2008, p.1)” Johnson highlighted his role alongside the research team when he acknowledged the collaborative efforts to launch their shared work, “Mr. Gardner is here today and we had a task force work 6 months ... and make its urgency come alive to the Congress and the American people” (Public Papers of the Presidents, 1966, p.417).

***A Contemporary Critical Lens About the Genesis of the War on Poverty and The Great Society***

Authors writing from a critical lens challenge the premise that investments in education alone that did not address systemic historical oppression, failed to address the disparities caused by both socioeconomic status and race (Street, 2005 p. 121). A purely economic focus on the educational development of human capital has been criticized for ignoring the inherent racial disparities in America’s schools (Henig et al., 1999 p. 273; Lowen, 1996, p. 208; Kendi, 2016 p. 385; Street, 2005, p.121).

Critical scholars like Kendi (2016) and Feagin (2013) have critiqued the view that the Great Society’s Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent legislative action for its

failure to adequately acknowledge the role of systemic racism in America. Kendi (2016) explained

...as much as the Civil Rights Act served to erect a dam against Jim Crow policies, it also opened the floodgates for new racist ideas to pour in, including the most racist idea to date: it was an idea that ignored the white head start, presumed that discrimination had been eliminated, presumed that equal opportunity had taken over, and figured that since Blacks were still losing the race, the racial disparities and their continued losses must be their fault (p. 385).

Kendi's (2016) characterization of a *white head start* fits in with the overall public position of Lyndon Johnson. Johnson also rallied on behalf of Head Start as another education reform to get early learners into schools (Spring, 2019; Public Papers of the Presidents, 1966). While campaigning for the ESEA and Head Start programming, Johnson employs a white lens and his public language is centered around opportunities for white people to overcome poverty (Public Papers of the Presidents, 1966).

### **Part Two: ESEA Data Collection and Financial Reporting**

In the 1960s and 1970s two studies began the conversation about educational equity in classrooms during the decade immediately following the Civil Rights Act and ESEA (Weis, 2016 p. 43). As Weis (2016) elaborates, The Coleman Report jump-started a multidecade research program on the relationship between family background and school-related outcomes, most specifically academic achievement and attainment" (p.43). Weiss adds that Christopher Jencks and his research team, "affirmed and extended Coleman's findings" (2016, p.43).

## **The Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey of 1966**

In 1964, when the Civil Rights Act was passed, it required that there be a survey of educational opportunity (Lagemann, 2000). Coleman et al., (1966) conducted a survey, Equality of Educational Opportunity popularly called the Coleman Report to examine education in the United States (Lageman, 2000, p. 193). Harold Howe II, then US Commissioner of Education authored a preface to the report and described the four central research questions:

[1] The first is the extent to which the racial and ethnic groups are segregated from one another in the public schools.

[2] The second question is whether the schools offer equal educational opportunities...

[3] The third major question, then, is addressed to how much the students learn as measured by their performance on standardized achievement tests.

[4] Fourth is the attempt to discern possible relationships between students' achievement, on the one hand, and the kinds of schools they attend on the other. (Coleman et al. 1966, pp. iii and iv).

The Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey examined both the school conditions for learners and standardized assessment results (Lageman, 2000, pp.193-194).

The Coleman Report collected data about the ethnic, racial, educational, and socio-economic circumstances of participants. Teachers were asked about the educational status of their own parents and their parents' occupations (Coleman, 1966 pp. 673-684) Learners were asked about their families, the number of siblings they had at home, the availability of print resources in the home, the communication technology resources

within the home like telephones, televisions, and record players, and the whether or not the family-owned an automobile (Coleman, 1966, pp. 643-655). The report linked children's family environments to their academic performance and seemed to suggest that schools could not help overcome inequality (Downey & Condrón, 2016, p. 207; Lagemann, 2000, p. 196. ).

Some interpreted the Coleman report as racist because of how the research could be perceived as linking a learner's academic achievement to upbringing and family affluence (Lagemann, 2000, p.197). The report's conclusions and methodology were condemned as racist (Lagemann, 2000, p.197). Some viewed the report as a mechanism to place the blame the achievement gap between white and black learners on African American families (Lagemann, 2000, pp.197-199). Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Johnson White House became Coleman's ally because he felt that Coleman's research bolstered his own claims of pathologizing black families (Lagemann, 2000, pp.196-197; Kendi, 2016, p. 391).

In the wake of Johnson's War on Poverty which tried to sell Americans on the ESEA Title programs as an equalizer for learners experiencing poverty, the results were hushed up or ignored because they were not easy policy messages. The results of Coleman's work uncovered the problem of racism at a time when there was no political will to address institutional racism in education. It was easier for politicians to either ignore the research or blame black families instead of engaging deeply in efforts to dismantle systemic racism and unpack the white racial frame of America's schools (Lagemann, 2000).

Contemporary anti-racist scholars like Kendi argue that in 1966 moderate American politicians thought that being assimilationist was enough (Kendi, 2016). Anti-racist scholar Feagin (2013) describes the political context summarizing the Presidential leadership of the 1960s and 70s, “President Johnson, and subsequent white presidents, soon backed off on this commitment to real justice and equality, for it was clear that major structural changes in racial inequities were not supported by most whites” (p.178). The notion of being anti-racist did not occur within the mainstream political discourse. Thus educational policymakers could not yet critically unpack the results of the Coleman Report with a lens that truly saw and interpreted the consequences of deep systemic racism.

### **An Encore to the Coleman Report- Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America**

In 1972 a group of eight researchers led by Christopher Jencks from the Center for Educational Policy Research conducted research about equity in American education (Jenks, 1972; Lagemann 2002; Weis, 2016). Lagemann (2000) characterizes Jencks et al.’s research as a regenerative analysis of the Coleman report. The 1972 research echoed the Coleman report and approached questions of equity differently than their colleagues had in the mid-1960s (Lageman, 2000). Jencks et al. (1972) explicitly challenge researchers' foundational assumptions about the development of human capital as a means to overcome poverty (p.7). The research team’s conclusions about how integration would play were inadequate because they rested on faulty assumptions that show explicit bias about black people, Southerners, and people living in poverty with claims like, “All in all, blacks suffer from living in the South, and they often also suffer from being in



schools that get slightly less money than the average for their district” (p.28). The researchers continue by speculating that the disparities between white children and black children would improve because more black people were moving to the North where urban school funding was better (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 28).

The researchers identified socialism and distributed wealth as one possible solution to end inequity in schools (Weis, 2016 p.43) As in the paragraph above the researchers attribute most student performance to factors like poverty, geography, and attending schools with well-connected classmates as greater factors in student outcomes than the actual funding or conditions at school sites (Jencks et al., 1972). The team unapologetically concluded that “children seem far more influenced by what happens at home than by what happens in school” (p.255).

In the researcher’s departure from the human capital model of education, they argue that thinking of students as inputs and outputs is not useful (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 256). Instead, they suggested readers consider the one-fifth of a child’s life in school and look at the equitable conditions during their schooling as a meaningful outcome in itself. (Jencks et al., 1972). “If we think of school life as an end in itself rather than a means to some other end, such differences are enormously important,” they argued (Jencks et al., 1972, p.256). Their introduction of the idea that the school environment could be the goal or one of several goals departed from the metaphor of school as the manufacturer of workers.

### **Cost-Effectiveness Research into ESEA Programs**

At the beginning of the 1970s and continuing into the 21st century, economists became a dominant voice in researching the ESEA and its effectiveness. Notably,

economist, professor, and public education policy researcher, Henry M. Levin has researched a variety of the economic aspects of schooling including the ESEA of 1965, and has written over 300 articles focusing on public education policy and finance (Levin, 1988; Columbia University, Teachers College, 2021). Levin (1989) cited his own research study from 1972 in which he estimated that to keep learners who dropped out of school in school and prepare them adequately for graduation, it would take a 50 percent increase in funding (p.53).

In the 1980s, Levin pleaded with education policymakers to engage in the economic study of cost-effectiveness analyses to examine the success of specific educational spending (1988 p. 52). In the journal of Education and Policy Analysis Spring 1988 Levin clarified that the advocacy of cost-effectiveness should not be from a policy lens but from the “specific technique [cost-effectiveness analyses] of evaluation that provides particular information on costs and effects” (1988, p.53). He urged policymakers and researchers to, “build the cost analysis into the overall study design,” and reminded them that “integration of cost analysis into evaluation designs would reduce the cost of doing such an analysis and increase its accuracy by avoiding data gaps and errors of retrospection” (1988, p.66). The next year Levin wrote another piece for the Journal of Education Evaluation about the ESEA and funding for at-risk learners (1989). In that article he summarized his view from a cost-benefit analysis, “I have argued strongly for massive investment in the educational needs of at-risk students on the basis of their rapidly growing numbers and the beneficial social consequences of improving educational outcomes for these children” (Levin, 1989 p.58) He also suggested to educators that specific new intervention protocols from that time period including:

Reading Recovery, Accelerated School, and Success for All were assessed using a cost-benefit analysis to identify the precise levels of funding for programs that help youth labeled as *at risk* (Levin, 1989 pp. 54-58).

Studies looking at the amount of federal funding in Title I programs and a correlation to the achievement gap continue. The Brookings Institute's Dynarski and Kainz (2015) reported about the kinds of interventions and programs Title I could purchase to close the achievement gap. In 2016 they discussed the kind of experienced teachers Title I could buy in service of closing the achievement gap (Dynarski and Kainz). This economic lens looked at purchasing but not at planning toward dismantling systemic inequity for children who are minoritized by the American education system.

**The Road to Assessments and Federal Oversight: A Nation At Risk, America 2000, and Goals 2000**

In 1983 during Republican Ronald Reagan's Presidency, the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was released by the federal government's National Commission on Excellence in Education. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) compared the standardized assessment scores of learners in the United States to the scores of learners in other countries (Spring, 2019). The report led to discussions about the nature of academic assessments and to the idea that the production of human capital was the main goal of K-12 education (Spring, 2019 p.116). The report prompted policymakers to look to standardized assessments as a crucial measure of academic performance. George H. Bush, Regan's Vice President, continued to lobby for standardized tests and the measurement of school funding and programming based on the assessments.

In 1991, the US Department of Education under the President George H. Bush Administration proposed six goals for education (Kozol, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education's (1991) America 2000; An Education Strategy proposed achievement tests, "We will develop voluntary national tests for 4th, 8th, and 12th graders in the five core subjects. These American Achievement Tests will tell parents and educators, politicians and employers just how well our schools are doing" (p. 9). Under America 2000, the assessment idea was a central component of how schools and thereby school programming are evaluated (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). Measures like increased graduation rates were still to be considered, but assessments and promises of testing were on center stage in the proposal (Kozol, 2005).

After Bill Clinton was sworn into office in 1993, he put forward two education initiatives in 1994, Goals 2000 and the reauthorization of the ESEA as Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) (William J. Clinton Library and Museum). The Stedman and Riddle's (1998) official Goals 2000 summary report from Congressional Research Service acknowledged that, "Goals 2000 seeks to improve state school systems by supporting states' development of their own standards for content and pupil performance, as well as standards-based assessments" (p. preface). At the same time, the reauthorization of the ESEA as IASA increased federal funding for ESEA Title program grants. IASA separated the ESEA into more specific categorically funded formula grants, notably Title II was described in a similar format to what it is today and provided for the training and continuing education of teachers. Title I gained some additional flexibility to implement school-wide programmatic changes. Additional funding for bilingual education and the education of migratory learners were also part of IASA but embedded

in Title VII, not in Titles I and III (Riley, 1995). IASA and Goals 2000 marked the beginning of a concerted effort to use compensatory education formula grants as incentives tied to educational practices that were backed by the federal government (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Spring, 2018; Fowler, 2004).

Usdan (1994) observed that educators were concerned about the possibility that there would be too much top-down policymaking in Goals 2000. The opinion piece published in Education Week urged the US government to proceed with caution and allow a balance of federal, state, and local control (Usdan, 1994). In closing, Usdan warned, “Such balance might well determine whether the standards-driven reform movement and the Clinton Administration’s new form of federalism in education will be a success or failure” (1994). Usdan’s caveat foreshadowed the ESEA standards debate that accompanied both the reauthorizations of NCLB and ESSA and ushered in a new era of top-down, federalized, standards-driven policy making in education (Egalite, Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2017).

### **IASA, NCLB, and ESSA Ballooning Federal Regulation and Accountability**

The ESEA of 1965 was a brief 32 pages while ESSA was over 450 pages and readers must reference both chapter two of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirement for Federal Awards (Uniform Grant Guidance) (2014) and chapter 34 CFR the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (2014) to fully understand which expenses are allowed to be reimbursed with funds from ESSA Title formula grants. The federal legislation and the federal government's regulatory demands have

increased significantly during the ESEA's 56-year history (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Spring, 2018; Fowler, 2004; Bulman- Pozen, 2016; Egalite et al. 2017).

Hennig et al. (1999) contended, "The twentieth century has witnessed a secular trend toward greater centralization of authority punctuated by frequent calls for decentralization; constitutional issues frame early battles and fiscal and regulatory ties become subsequently important" (p. 249). During the mid-1900s, the funding for following federal educational policy goals evolved into a powerful incentive or policy lever to shape educational practices (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Spring, 2018; Fowler, 2004) In the 1980s and 1990s a regulatory shift occurred with more state and federal legislative involvement in the creation of educational policy (Fowler, 2004, p.3). Henning et al. (1999) argued that the economics of school funding prompted the shift; "The 1980s and 1990s saw many states pull tighter on the regulatory reins... Given their constitutional responsibility and financial commitment, it is hardly surprising that state and federal governments impose a wide range of regulations on local school districts" (p. 252). Fowler (2004) cited both the promises not to create new taxes and the increased federal spending that occurred in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, as two of the economic justifications politicians gave during the early 2000s to further scrutinize federal expenditures in public education; politicians sought to be more careful with all federal spending including federal education formula grants (p.4).

When the ESEA was reauthorized as NCLB, this centralization under federal authority was clear (Egalite et al., 2017). Egalite et al. (2017) contended, "With the passage of NCLB in 2002, the federal government became increasingly involved in the nuts and bolts of schooling even at the local level by implementing a series of top-down

command and control measures such as performance reporting and outcomes-based assessments” (p.761).

Bulman-Pozen (2016) suggested that ESSA’s enactment was also a demonstration of the power and durability of the federal executive branch’s influence in dictating education policy (p.987). States were offered autonomy in their design of academic standards and the assessments of those standards under ESSA. The federal government also granted waivers to urge the policy reforms at the state level because the state plan approval processes and waiver processes needed to be approved by the US Department of Education (Bulman- Pozen, 2016). This waiver process gave states the ability to make their own plans, but the plans needed to be approved by the federal government.

### **Changes Under NCLB**

Wrabel et al. (2018) described the NCLB as changing, “the relationship between federal and state governments... to a performance-based and output-focused model of federalism that set clear school performance targets, created standards for adequate yearly progress, defined who should be tested, and established consequences for not meeting academic targets” (p.120). Schools under NCLB were assessed and adequate yearly progress (AYP) collectively measured the growth of learners toward the stated achievement benchmarks each state established.

### ***Data Collection Under NCLB***

Under NCLB, the standardized collection of assessment data was required by the act itself (U.S. Department of Education 2021, March 28). Consolidated State Annual Reports were required (NCLB 2002 §9303). The five goal areas set forth in the reporting were:

- Performance Goal 1: By SY 2013-14, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- Performance Goal 2: All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- Performance Goal 3: By SY 2005-06, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
- Performance Goal 4: All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.
- Performance Goal 5: All students will graduate from high school.  
(U.S. Department of Education 2021, March 28).

The research around the program shifted through its own mandates to collect data that was mostly outcome-oriented using graduation data and assessment growth and proficiency data.

Researchers and the U.S. Department of Education continued to look at equity based upon disaggregated achievement scores and graduation rates (outcome data) using the US government's own data collections the Consolidated State Performance Reports and the EdFacts reporting that began in 2007 (U.S. Department of Education May 2021). The Ed Facts reporting began due to the Paperwork Reduction Act and is an electronic collection of data from US States and Territories gathering predominantly quantitative data about programs funded with federal education grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2021 p. 5). The federal government's own data collections are generally



reported with large cell sizes as aggregate data and individual student level information are not collected (U.S. Department of Education, 2021 p. 5). This large-scale data collection has made it easier for policymakers, economists, statisticians, and non-educators to unpack big data associated with US federal education grants. Indeed, the National Center for Education Statistics does collect this data, but they do not yet have systems in place to standardize it and synthesize it into very specific budgeting codes (Corman et al., 2018) The focus of the government's data collection does not measure the quality of life students experience during their school day; Jencks et al. called it the experience of living a fifth of one's own life in school (1972, p. 256). Put differently, instead of evaluating schools to see if learners are cocooned in an environment of support that honors who they are, schools are measured by what students demonstrate on a test.

### ***Title III English Learner Education Under NCLB***

In policy spanning the time from 1968 through the reauthorization of ESSA as NCLB, funding for language minority students was included in Title VII of the ESEA which had been called the Bilingual Education Act (Gandara, 2015 p.112. ; Texas Education Agency, 2010). With NCLB, English language proficiency became the goal for all multilingual learners and much of what had previously been funded as a part of Title VII was moved into Title III (Gandara, 2015 p.120). English language acquisition and English language proficiency became the stated goal of Title III under NCLB (Gandara, 2015 p.120). The legal accountability provisions to measure the proficiency of English language learners were written into Title I and collected in the CSPR reporting (U.S. Department of Education 2021, March 28, NCLB, 2002).

Between 1968 and 2002 multilingual learners who were acquiring proficiency in English were labeled in a variety of ways including the following: limited English speaking, limited English proficiency, English language learner, and English learner (Gandara, 2015 pp.112-113). The disaggregated data collection prompted under NCLB highlighted in performance goal 2 the growth of language proficiency for learners identified in the NCLB legislation as Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Under NCLB Title III, Part A was focused on funding to help support students identified as LEP show growth in their English language acquisition (NCLB). The requirements for assessments to show the growth in learners' English language acquisition and proficiency were written into Title I of the law. This structure is consistent with ESSA's structure today, whereby Title I contains the assessment requirements and Title III contains the funding and mandate to serve learners acquiring English as an additional language.

NCLB was a double-edged sword for multilingual learners acquiring English (Pabon López & López, 2009). As Pabon López and López (2009) discussed, "proponents believe that NCLB was designed to help every child in school be successful" (p.104). Students acquiring English as an additional language were highlighted as a category and funded under categorical aid under Title III, Part A (NCLB). However, critics contended that the spotlight on LEP-identified students could be otherizing and create conditions for parents to move away from schools with large student numbers of LEP-identified learners (Kozol, 2005; Pabon López & López, 2009). Educators of English learners were also concerned about the LEP label because it focused on the learners' English language proficiency as a deficit rather than capitalizing on their multilingualism as a strength (Gandara, 2015 p.112).

There is widespread agreement that NCLB made students identified as LEP recognized as a group. The standard-based assessment and growth measurements required by NCLB gave rise to WIDA, a consortium comprised of over 40 states and territories that share the same standards and assessments for multilingual learners acquiring English as an additional language (WIDA, 2022). There is now a national conversation about academic language and language acquisition for learners. NCLB was the impetus for the funding and large-scale multi-state consortium, WIDA, to research and design assessments and standards for students acquiring academic English language proficiency (WIDA, 2022).

### **Changes from NCLB to ESSA**

When ESEA was reauthorized in 2001 as NCLB, it relied upon a punitive accountability system for schools that did not make adequate yearly progress toward proficiency targets in reading and mathematics (Spring, 2018). When ESEA was again reauthorized in 2015 as ESSA, schools strived for growth in math and reading proficiency and continuous school improvement (Spring, 2018). ESSA was to be more of an assets-based framework. Thus the penalties for lack of AYP went away as did the label LEP which was replaced with English learner (EL). Another significant change was in the allowable expenditures under the supplement not supplant provisions for Title I, Part A.

### **Supplement Not Supplant**

The supplement not supplant provisions for Title I were also changed. US Department of Education (2019) officials' presentation about the supplement not supplant

provisions of the ESEA Title formula grants at the ESEA national conference in February of 2019 characterized how the provision limits spending:

The ESEA requires a SEA or LEA to use Title I funds only to supplement the funds that would, in the absence of those Title I funds, be made available from State and local sources for the education of students participating in Title I programs, and not to supplant such funds (US Department of Education, 2019).

This requirement has not changed and remains for all Federal ESSA Title programs. However, the way of showing supplemental cost has changed in Title I, and now the determination of which funds are supplemental is focused on the total amount of funding allocated by the LEA to the Title I school instead of on the individual expenditures at the Title I school (Stevenson et al., 2019). In Title II and Title III, Part A programs, the supplement not supplant requirement is examined on the basis of individual programmatic expenditures instead of aggregate spending (Stevenson et al., 2019).

### **Part Three: School Leadership Teams and Reporting about State Equity Initiatives**

Education occurs and exists within a social and political context. American public education includes schools, LEAs, and SEAs that must work together and be answerable to the citizenry. Authors writing about both educational and organizational leadership discuss the creation of communities and teams in which everyone feels welcomed and respected in the decision-making process (Block, 2009; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Lindsey et al., 2006; Maslow, 1943; Pink, 2009). Such authors also remind leaders that shared leadership teams must be empowered (Fullan, 2010).

Authors also caution that a balance must also be struck in dueling understanding of the community's needs and the preservation of roles and responsibilities within the system. “A school leader will not be successful if he or she focuses solely on the bureaucratic elements of the school; however school leaders will fail if the bureaucracy is not considered” (Chance, 2009, p. 23). Empowering everyone within the system to participate as autonomous agents with the ability to enter into the conversation helps cultivate shared ownership (Block, 2009; Pink, 2009).

### **The State’s Oversight and Interactions with School Leaders**

When helping guide school leaders who represent LEAs on their use of funding, the SEA is limited by the array of tasks the law assigns to the SEA. The SEA is also limited by the requirement that 95 percent of the funds be passed through to LEAs. ESSA does give the SEAs the ability to monitor and evaluate the use of funds. ESSA is over 450 pages compared to the much leaner initial act which was only originally 32 pages. Thus, contemporary district leadership teams of administrators, finance directors, program coordinators, and other educators must follow the general federal Uniform Grant Guidance and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) education-specific grant guidance regulations. At the state level, the SEA is also charged under Title I with conducting assessments, monitoring grant expenditures, and providing training and technical assistance about the grants (ESSA, 2015).

Nationally, SEAs must provide training and technical assistance to LEAs about how formula Title grants should be used. Researching this topic will provide the MDE employees who monitor Title funds with more information about what LEAs are currently doing as they plan programming and the budget for their Title grants. The

information could be helpful to other LEAs and SEAs to look for trends in districts' practices.

### **Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Summaries are a Window into Equity Work**

In the World's Best Workforce planning process, stakeholder teams discern areas of need, create goals, specify action steps, and reevaluate their progress in a summary report. Functionally, the process and report can be viewed as a legislative maneuver to statutorily require that all school districts have a strategic plan or continuous improvement plan that is reviewed by MDE. In the annual summary, school district leaders must report how they are addressing five goal areas (MDE, 2021).

#### ***The World's Best Workforce Achievement Gap Goal***

The five goal areas are prescribed in the statute. The statute clarifies that having the:

“World's best workforce’ means striving to: meet school readiness goals; have all third grade students achieve grade-level literacy; close the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty; have all students attain career and college readiness before graduating from high school; and have all students graduate from high school. (Minnesota § 120B.11.1)

The third goal required goal is one in which school leaders must set a goal and explain how they will “Close the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty” (Minnesota § 120B.11.1; MDE, 2021). Thus, that third goal is referred to as the<sup>3</sup>academic achievement gap goal.

---

<sup>3</sup>In this research, Minnesota's World's Best Workforce academic achievement gap goal is part of the language of the state statute, and it should therefore not be viewed as this researcher's commentary on the efficacy of terms like achievement gap or opportunity gap.

The language of describing gaps between different groups of learner as opportunity gaps, performance gaps, academic gaps, or achievement gaps and the ensuing discussions thereof can be problematic. Characterizing gaps as differences between learner groups as achievement gaps can create a situation in which the lower performing cohort may be viewed as a problem (Convertino et al., 2016). The characterization of an achievement gap is frequently used not only by the state of Minnesota, but the federal government as well (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Both the state of Minnesota and the National Center for Education Statistics purport being in favor of learner equity for all learners, and do not offer a discussion of social semantic implications for the term.

### ***The World's Best Workforce as an Accountability Statute***

The World's Best Workforce statute is also an accountability law that mandates annual data reporting for determining which school districts may be in need of additional support from the state. Minnesota's World's Best Workforce law contains specific parameters of what must be reported in the summary to MDE (World's Best Workforce, Minn. Stat. § 120B.11 ). World's Best Workforce was enacted in 2013 and Minnesota uses its own North Star system to identify which schools and districts need support under the terms of both ESSA and the World's Best Workforce law (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). The Minnesota Department of Education (2021) explains that the

system is “...designed using extensive feedback from diverse stakeholders across Minnesota to satisfy the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the state’s World’s Best Workforce law.” The North Star reporting in Minnesota mirrors the federal Consolidated State Performance Reporting reporting framing the reports in the following categories:

- Academic achievement
- Progress towards English language proficiency
- Academic progress
- Graduation rates
- Consistent attendance.

Figure 4 shows that the themes of the data collections for the World’s Best Workforce state reporting required in Minnesota is very similar to the Consolidated State Performance Reporting specified in NCLB.



**Figure 4**

*A Comparison of NCLB Consolidated State Performance Reporting areas under NCLB and World's Best Workforce Required Reporting*

<b>Theme of Goals</b>	<b>The Focus of NCLB Consolidated State Performance Reporting Goal Areas</b>	<b>The Focus of the World's Best Workforce Data Collection Goal Areas</b>
Academic achievement and progress	Students will achieve academic targets in math and reading.	Students will show academic achievement on standardized assessments. Students will show academic progress (growth) on standardized assessments.
English language growth and proficiency	Students labeled as LEP will acquire minimum standards for English Language Proficiency	Students will show progress on assessments demonstrating greater English language proficiency.
Graduation	All students will graduate from high school.	Learners will show increased graduation rates.
Students attending safe and healthy schools consistently	All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.	Learners will show consistent attendance.
Highly qualified teachers	Students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.	* No specific goal required, but districts report on efforts to recruit and retain teachers.

***World's Best Workforce Research with Regional Education Laboratory Midwest***

Regional Education Laboratory Midwest (REL Midwest) has been conducting surveys of the content in World's Best Workforce plans since the 2015-2016 school year (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2017a, 2017b). Their work in partnership with MDE surveyed the summaries from the 2015-2016 school year to help MDE determine

the nature of the district's reporting about their World's Best Workforce Plan. The goals of the research were to:

1. Increase the capacity of Minnesota's districts to implement their own World's Best Workforce Plans

2. Increase the capacity of MDE staff to assist districts' implementation by enhancing knowledge about district goals across the state of Minnesota and the potential challenges districts were experiencing (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2017a, 2017b).

During the 2017- 2018 school year REL Midwest partnered with MDE to conduct a survey that focused specifically on the equity practices and goals districts reported in their 2017-2018 plan summaries. The REL Midwest team examined the portions of the summary report that described equitable access to diverse teachers, teachers teaching in their field of licensure, and the strategies districts had used and planned to use to close academic achievement gaps (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a, 2019b). Like the 2015-2016 scan the survey of World's Best Workforce Summary Reports once again sought to collect data that Minnesota school districts and MDE staff could use to strengthen their knowledge base about what conditions, strategies, and goals were being used throughout the state (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a, 2019b).

In their surveys of World's Best Workforce plans, REL Midwest found that 52 percent of Minnesota school districts whose plans were surveyed, identified achievement gaps based upon free and reduced price lunch eligibility, 42 percent identified gaps based upon race or ethnicity, 29 percent identified groups based upon Special Education status and 10 percent discussed gaps based upon English learner status. The team reported that

21 percent of Minnesota school districts did not specify any gaps between two populations of learners based upon achievement data (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a; World's Best Workforce 2020a, 2020c). Researchers noted that districts they surveyed most often framed their own equity work in one of three ways:

- A goal to increase proficiency for one group,
- A goal to shrink the gap between two groups, or
- A target to exceed the statewide average for a group (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a).

Researchers also found that the content areas of focus for equity goals were most often math and reading-related, with 90 percent of school districts targeting closing achievement gaps in their students' achievement in reading and English language arts and 76 percent targeting students' achievement in math as a measure for closing gaps (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a). Most of the schools surveyed were using summative student data to monitor the progress of learners with the stated equity goal (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2019a).

### ***American Indian Education Aid and World's Best Workforce Research***

The team of MartinRogers et al. (2021) from Wilder Research and The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development partnered with MDE's Office of American Indian Education to examine the use and impact of Minnesota's American Indian Education Aid grant. Researchers explained that their rationale for this project stemmed from concern about Minnesota's large achievement gaps between white students and American Indian Students that accompanies the systemic racism and school resource inequities (MartinRogers et al., 2021). The team

conducted interviews and reviewed school districts' records including the reported World's Best Workforce goal areas (MartinRogers et al., 2021).

The team found that in 2016 -2019 school districts reported that between 27 percent and 28 percent of the district's American Indian Education Aid was allocated to support work related to the district's World's Best Workforce academic achievement goal (MartinRogers et al., 2021). Districts reported spending the American Indian Education Aid grant award on learning supports and wraparound services like tutoring, counseling services, career exploration, and partnerships to provide learners with basic needs (MartinRogers et al., 2021). Ultimately the team recommended that American Indian Education Aid grant outcomes should be evaluated and categorized using criteria other than the World's Best Workforce framework because the framework made it difficult for district teams to explain the full range of their work on behalf of learners (MartinRogers et al., 2021).

### **Speakers of Indigenous Languages and Eligibility for Title III.**

The research team cited other sources of funding available for American Indian Education Programs to fund programming that aligned with World's Best Workforce Goals (MartinRogers et al., 2021). The report listed ESSA Title I grants but did not list ESSA Title III grants (MartinRogers et al., 2021). In Minnesota's identification procedures for English learners, heritage speakers of indigenous languages including Dakota and Ojibwe learners are not specifically referenced (MDE, 2022). However, 27,000, approximately 3 percent of learners in Minnesota identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2019). In Minnesota, Dakota and Ojibwe do not appear in the top twenty-five languages of learners who qualify for

English learner services under Title III (Villegas, 2021). Umansky et al. (2021) studied the identification and service for Alaska Native Students and English learners recommending EL classification for Alaska Native students who meet the criteria for EL because it benefits, “students by providing education supports, including specialized teachers, targeted instruction, and bilingual education” (p.17).

### **This Research of ESEA Title Grant Spending and World’s Best Workforce Equity Goals**

Knowing what school districts want to spend more money on is a focus of this study just as it was for researchers like Coleman and Jencks in the 1960s and 1970s (Coleman, J. S., United States., & National Center for Education Statistics, 1966; Jencks et al., 1972). The idea to look at how the goals of World’s Best Workforce and ESEA align with their intended stated purposes is also similar to how the Coleman Report sought to gather data about how programs were functioning as the War on Poverty was beginning (Lagemann, 2000; Weiss, 2016 p. 43). Like those researchers, I want to help practitioners reflect on how the resources the grants are funding compare with the reporting and assessment goals required by state and federal law in the current context.

Like REL Midwest’s World’s Best Workforce scans in 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, this research is intended to look for areas that can inform professional practices around budgeting and planning for the use of ESEA Title I and III grant spending (Regional Education Laboratory Midwest 2017a, 2017b, 2019a). As both federal ESEA statutes and Minnesota World’s Best Workforce Statutes require data collection, this study seeks to provide a practitioner lens about what might be learned from the data in

those required collections (Every Student Succeeds Act, (2015a); World's Best Workforce).

This research asks what districts are doing with their ESEA Title grant budgets while looking for evidence that the budget aligns with their stated equity goals. To accomplish that spending data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Equity goals from the World's Best Workforce Summaries and ESEA Title grant applications will be coded to see what themes around equity emerge.

Instead of looking at ESEA spending and assessment scores as an outcome of investments in learners and their learning. I sought to learn more about how the money is spent and what the acts are of the adults in the system to try to close achievement and opportunity gaps. The preponderance of ESEA related research from NCLB to the present focuses on assessment data (Spring, 2019). My research foci are on spending and equity narratives to learn more about the intended experience for learners rather than the assessment of learners. As learners spend one fifth of their lifetime in a K-12 learning setting, educators must reflect upon how the environments constructed for learners and learning help learners feel like they belong at school (Jenks et al., 1972).

### **Current Research of Equity and ESEA Formula Grant Spending**

The United States government collects accountability data about ESEA Title grants annually through CSPR reporting (NCLB 2002 §9303). The federal government also receives some district-level reporting through SEAs about the district and in some cases school-level spending in broad categories via the annual Common Core of Data collections, which is compiled and published by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022). ESEA grant awards must be spent over the course of 27 months.

Approximately three fiscal years after each grant is awarded the US Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics issues a report summarizing district spending data as reported by the SEAs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Corman et al., 2018; Corman et al., 2019). In the aforementioned public reports, Title I and Title III grant expenditures are reported using average expenditures by LEA averages, by per pupil unit, and as percentages of the total budget (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Corman et al., 2018; Corman et al., 2019). The reports include markers for some categories of spending like teacher salaries and employee benefits (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Corman et al., 2018; Corman et al., 2019). However, the coding is not as robust as that is in Minnesota's UFARS reporting which offers more than 100 budget codes for the expenditure allowed in ESEA Title grants (Minnesota Department of Education Division of School Finance, 2018 pp.254-255).

These data collections make it possible for institutions to look into aggregate spending with ESEA grant funds and how they might correlate to student achievement on standardized assessments. Dynarski and Kainz (2015) from the Brookings Institute used the government's own data to defend their headline as they claimed, "Why federal spending on disadvantaged students (Title I) doesn't work" (p.1). In Dynarski and Kainz's research, achievement on test scores was used as the measure for equity (2015). Using test scores as a proxy for equity is one way of examining if learners are learning. It has been and continues to be a way that states are asked to showcase how they are closing the achievement gap. However, while achievement is measured, the school environment is not examined.

There are researchers who are examining equitable practices under ESSA, who are not using test scores as a marker of equity. Access to qualified teachers and appropriate teacher-student ratios and scans for language about culturally relevant instructional practices are also being examined. Equitable distribution of qualified teachers and classroom-teacher to student ratios in schools that qualify for Title I also have been researched as a marker of equity ( Dynarski & Kaniz, 2016; Knight, 2019). Schettino et al. (2019) conducted a scan of all the ESSA state plans to look for culturally responsive practices that were named in the state's ESSA plan. Their examination of state plans found that most states emphasized testing, and that 35 of the ESSA state plans mentioned some type of culturally responsive pedagogy or culturally relevant instructional practice as part of the plan (Schettino et al., 2019 pp. 27-30). The aforementioned researchers get closer to what Jencks et al. reminded education researchers of decades ago; learners spend about a fifth of their lifetimes in classrooms and investing in the experience in itself has value (1972, p.259).

### **The Need for analysis of Minnesota Districts and Title I and Title III Spending**

Jenks et al. suggested that investing in educational institutions in order to improve the conditions for all students during their time in school-day is one way the public might think about educational equity 1972. Equity is not found solely in academic outcomes, it is found in the experiences that learners have during their time in school. Instead of looking at test scores, for growth or proficiency, I want to see if there is a relationship between school districts' investments in their federal ESEA Title I, Part A, and Title III, Part A grants and their alignment with their own stated equity goals. I wonder if there is



some evidence how districts are using their grant money to create the conditions for learner equity during their days in schools.

Research about spending in the service of learner equity is necessary because Minnesota needs a snapshot of how ESEA Title funding streams are being used post-ESSA implementation. Collecting coded budget data 2019 data, application narratives, and reviewing the equity goal from the World's Best Workforce Summary Reports can help to provide a picture of the look of ESEA formula grant spending in 2019.

The descriptive statistical data and a coded analysis of a sampling of budget applications and World's Best Workforce summaries may assist teachers, principals, ESEA Title program coordinators, and district-level leaders administering programs using the ESEA Title grant funding streams because it may show potential areas for flexible funding opportunities which are allowed in ESSA, but weren't allowed under NCLB. The data will also assist the SEA by providing a snapshot of holistic grant spending over a year instead of viewing each grant application and the World's Best Workforce Summary one at a time.

In this research I used the uniformly coded Minnesota financial data from Title I and Title III, the Title I and III grant applications, and the World's Best Workforce Summary Reports required in Minnesota state statute to learn about how money was designated for creating more equitable conditions for learners. Like the REL Midwest teams, MartinRogers et al., and Schettino et al., I conducted scans for content within both the narratives of the applications and the World's Best Workforce Plans to see if there is a connection between the equity goals of each district set and their spending (2019). I sought to learn more about what the spending looks like in finer detail and examine the

content of the application narrative plans and the World's Best Workforce Plan Summaries to determine whether there is evidence that ESEA Title funds were used in support of each district's equity work.

In Chapter Two Part One, I explained the historic place of the ESEA Title over the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. I discussed the relevant research and most influential researchers of ESEA grants and educational equity. The second portion of Chapter Two explained the current data and accounting collection practices at the state and federal level including the accounting data collected. The last portion of Chapter Two summarizes what district teams report to the state, Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute, and the research specific to Minnesota's World's Best Workforce. That context sets the stage for an overview of the research questions in this study:

1. How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?
2. How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

Chapter Three describes the research methodology and a summary of the procedures for data collection and analysis.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

This collective case study research examined spending from all of the 67 traditional geographic school districts receiving Title I and III, Part A ESEA Title formula grants to find 1.) How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year? Then, I will examine Title I and III applications and World's Best Workforce Summary Reports from 16 of the school districts to determine 2.) How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

### **Pre Pandemic Data**

The setting for this research is in Minnesota prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd. The collective case study will provide future researchers with one set of baseline data about spending in Title I and III grants prior to the landmark events of 2020 including the COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, the election of President Biden and Vice President Harris, the Capitol Insurrection of 2021, and the emergency education formula grants that were created in the aftermath of the pandemic. Any subsequent research of Title I and Title III spending patterns for the 2019-2020 school year, the 2020-2021 school year, and the 2021-2022 school year were likely impacted by the changes to allowable spending made during the pandemic. The necessity for online learning during the COVID -19 pandemic influenced purchasing decisions for the kinds of resource materials and curriculum schools selected. The national conversation about systemic racism may also have influenced how educational

leadership teams framed academic achievement gap goals. Educator conversations about systemic inequities for learners of color were also amplified in the aftermath of Floyd's murder. Future researchers will need to take into account how Minnesota's school and district leadership teams needed to make decisions about ESSA Title grant spending while frenetically grappling with a shift to digital learning, a divisive and partisan political environment, and a global pandemic.

### **Research Design**

A case study is a research design process and method of inquiry to collect and analyze specific sets of data that are bounded by the time and place and limited in scope to a particular event, process, program, or individual (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). The purpose of this case study is to provide a description of the use of Title I and III funding during the 2018-2019 school year and look for evidence that the spending was used in alignment with school districts' stated equity goals using both qualitative and quantitative data, for Yin (2009) explains that case studies can include both qualitative and quantitative data sets (pp. 132-133). Case studies can be used instrumentally to illustrate an issue at multiple sites (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). A collective or multiple case study approaches may be employed by a researcher to show what occurs in multiple contexts within one program (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2009). This investigation is bounded, specific to ESEA formula grant programs using both qualitative and quantitative data, and seeks to tell a story of how 67 school districts' explained their budgeting and spending.

## **A Bounded System**

Merriam (2009) defines a case study as an in-depth analysis of a bounded system (p.40). This study examines spending within the bureaucracy of public school districts and the spending that is allowable within the context of federal education grants. The systems for both school districts and federal grants are governed by strict timelines imposed by both state and federal reporting requirements.

This case study is bound by:

1. The characteristics of the grantees,
2. The school year of the spending, and
3. The federal and state laws and requirements pertaining to the parameters of reporting and allowable spending.

This collective case study is therefore bound by multiple parameters. The populations served by the grantees being studied are school districts with enough English learners to generate a Title III grant. The funds examined are from the 2018-2019 school year and are time-bound. Finally, the spending data and the narrative data were collected from documents that asked the same questions and allowed specific kinds of expenditures per the state and federal reporting and spending parameters.

### ***Characteristics of the School Districts***

In this research, all of the grantees are Minnesota public school districts with traditional geographic boundaries. Only school districts whose prior-year Census Bureau data shows that they have enough qualifying learners in poverty can receive Title I. Thus each district included in this study had some learners living below the US poverty level during the 2017-2018 school year. The school districts in this research had at least ninety

English learners enrolled in their district during the 2017-2018 school year, because Title III grants are only awarded to school districts with enough English learners to generate over \$10,000 based on the number of qualifying students in the previous school year.

### ***The School Year of Spending***

The grant spending coincided with the 2018-2019 school year. Schools in Minnesota typically account for expenditures on Minnesota's state fiscal year timeline which runs from July first to the end of June. However because ESEA grants are federal, they operate on the federal fiscal year timeline which runs from October first through the end of September. The sample examined in this study looks at the districts' spending of funds during the 2018-2019 school year that were reported to the Minnesota Department of Education by the fall of 2019. Most of the money originated in the federal fiscal year 2018. However, grant money is allowed to be spent for 27 months. So, the money districts reported spending may have originated in the federal fiscal year 2017 or the federal fiscal year 2016.

### ***The Parameters of Federal and State Law***

Finally, the research includes only spending in Title I and III, Part A formula grants which are labeled using the uniform finance accounting and recording standards (UFARS) financial codes 401 for Title I and 417 for Title III. The research question aligns with Merriam's characterization of a bounded system, for the Title I and III, Part A Title Grants are bounded by regulatory and statutory limitations of the formula grant opportunities (Education Department General Administrative Regulations 34 CFR §75.730; ESSA, 2015; Uniform Guidance Technical Assistance for Grantees 2 CFR §3474). The World's Best Workforce law reporting in Minnesota also has specific

parameters of what must be reported in the summary to MDE (World's Best Workforce, Minn. Stat. §120B.11).

### **Selection of Sampled Districts**

The selection of data relies on judgment sampling which is a type of purposive sampling (Maul, 2018). Purposive sampling imposes limitations on the data set that frames qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994 p. 27). Judgment sampling relies upon the researcher's expertise to efficiently acquire information from the population or populations being studied (Maul, 2018).

### **Districts Sampled for Research Question One**

Research Question 1: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

In Minnesota, there are over 500 school districts and charters referred to as Local Education Agencies (LEAs) (MDE, 2019). There are three types of school districts: traditional geographic districts, intermediate districts, and charter school districts. Of the over 500 LEAs in Minnesota, the State of Minnesota recognizes 329 school districts with specific geographic boundaries (MDE, 2019). Of those 329 traditional school districts with geographic boundaries, 67 are eligible to receive three of the ESSA Title I and III Part A formula grants (Minnesota Department of Education SERVS Financial, 2019). I limited my data sample to the 67 geographically defined school districts that receive Title I and III grant awards shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Process for selection of the Districts Included in the Data Set for Question One*



In this study, I examined spending in geographic LEAs that served mainstream learners with comprehensive K-12 academic programming. In order to look at spending patterns within and among LEAs, I wanted to include only LEAs with ESEA Title I, Part A, and Title III, Part A formula grants. Including all geographic LEAs that receive Title I, Part A, and III, Part A ensured that each LEA had multilingual learners who qualify for English learner services. LEAs receiving Title I, Part A and Title III, Part A grants limited data to school districts that possess more linguistic diversity than LEAs that do not receive Title III, Part A funding.

I did not include charter schools or intermediate special education school districts in the data set. While charter schools do have school boards, they are not elected in official local elections and are therefore not fully accountable to the local electorate. Therefore decisions within charter schools can be made absent the stakeholder concerns that present within a broader community. As Egalite et al. described the differences in the spending data collected by charter school districts, “charter schools, which essentially operate as semiautonomous districts, and thus are not subject to the same requirements for uniform budgeting and personnel decisions as their traditional public school counterparts,” (p.770, 2017). Intermediate special education school districts exist to



serve learners for learners with needs that require significant adaptations and modifications to provide successful learning opportunities. In this research, I wanted to investigate the expenditures of typical school districts that were answerable to the general public that served learners with typical educational needs.

### **Districts Sampled for Research Question Two**

Research Question 2: How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

I divided the school districts receiving ESEA Title I and III, part A grants into nine subgroups. I selected the districts by the size of their Title III, Part A grant award and the geographic location. This ensured that multiple regions of the state and several different budgets were represented in the sample. I selected the 16 districts to fit the following criteria:

1. Two urban districts with Title III awards over \$1,000,000
2. Two large suburban districts with Title III awards between \$200,000 and \$300,000
3. Two large districts in greater Minnesota with Title III awards between \$200,000 and \$300,000
4. Two suburban districts with Title III awards between \$100,000 and \$200,000
5. Two districts in Greater Minnesota with Title III awards between \$100,000 and \$200,000
6. Two suburban districts with Title III awards between \$50,000 and \$100,000

7. Two districts in Greater Minnesota with Title III awards between \$50,000 and \$100,000
8. A district with an award under \$50,000
9. A district participating in Title III, Part A as a part of a consortium

### **Data Collection**

I downloaded spending report data from the 67 traditional geographic school districts that receive Title I and III formula grants from MDE's website. The application narratives from the 16 selected school districts' World's Best Workforce Plan Summaries and the Title I and III application narratives were obtained through a public data request to MDE. The research is specifically focused on work within three federal formula grant programs, Title I and Title III, Part A (ESSA, 2015). The other specific program Minnesota's World's Best Workforce summary report for goal area three in which the district team identifies an equity goal is also being examined (World's Best Workforce, Minn. Stat. § 120B.11). School district staff write both the applications and the World's Best Workforce summaries.

### **Obtaining the Public Data Sets**

The data sets of expenditures are available to the public in both spreadsheets and downloadable files on the Data Reports and Analytics page of the MDE website under the SERVS Financial Public Reports Heading (Minnesota Department of Education 2020a, 2020b, 2020). The reports showing the initial allocations for each Minnesota district are on the MDE website and researchers are able to navigate to the reports using the pathway displayed in Figure 6.

## Figure 6

### *Pathway to Title Allocation Reports in MDE's Data Reports and Analytics Website*



To get to the allocations list, users must access the MDE Data Reports and Analytics Page and scroll down to the SERVS Financial Public Reports. Under that menu, users select Allocations and Funding then the Allocation List of all by District Specific Fin Code. That search provides expenditure data by the Uniform Financial and Accounting Standards Finance Codes (FIN Codes) to identify ESEA Title Grant funds. Reports of the allocations are by federal fiscal year. In this case, the 2018-2019 school year is federal fiscal year 18. The reports were downloaded for Title I, FIN code 401 and Title III Fin Code 417 for the federal fiscal year 2018. The report shows Minnesota school districts by name and their adjusted award amount which includes money carryover from the previous year.

### ***Obtaining WBWF Summary Reports and Title I and III grant applications:***

Minnesota collects annual summaries of each district's World's Best Workforce Goals and the progress that has been made toward each goal. The summaries are submitted to MDE in the fall and recap the district's progress on their goals from the previous school year. To illustrate, World's Best Workforce summary reports for the 2018-2019 school year were collected at the end of the 2019 calendar year, during the 2019-2020 school year. The reports are public and are archived by MDE. I submitted a data request to obtain the summary reports for the Title I application narrative, the Title

III application narrative, and the World's Best Workforce summaries for the 2018-2019 school year.

The Minnesota Department of Education has all school districts complete and submit their grant applications through the SERVS financial system. The Title I and Title III application documents are stored in the system and a PDF of the application is also stored in MDE's mainframe. The applications are available to the public upon request. I submitted a data request to obtain the application narratives for the grant applications of the 16 school districts.

### **Mixed-Methods Quantitative Finance Data and a Qualitative Scan for Themes**

I blended the descriptive statistical reporting of Minnesota districts' spending in Title I and Title III part A during the 2018-2019 school year with a qualitative scan for content named in each district's World's Best Workforce equity goal area. This blending of research methodologies is indicative of my own stance as a professional informed both by my own previous work with the SEA providing technical assistance work for school districts and my background as a teacher and lead teacher. The approach is similar to the team of researchers from Wilder Research and The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development reports examining both expenditure data and narrative data about Minnesota districts' American Indian Education grant expenditures and narratives from interviews of stakeholders involved with American Indian Parent Committees (MartinRogers, 2021).

### ***Compilation and Reporting of Title I and Title III Expenditure Data***

Quantitative data sets use standard school accounting codes to describe Title I, Part A, and Title III, Part A spending of the traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota

that received both awards during the 2018-2019 school. The qualitative data illustrates how much of the awards are being spent by UFARS object code. I report which expenditures were made and what percentage of the money was spent on each UFARS object code. The UFARS object codes describe what kind of expenditures were made. Examining the data sorted by UFARS object codes, one can see how much money from each grant was spent on paying school staff and which kinds of staff positions were funded.

This quantitative collection of a descriptive fiscal summary of district expenditures is similar to what the National Center for Education Statistics collects (Corman et al., 2018; Corman et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, 2022). However, it is specific to traditional LEAs in Minnesota, and I had the ability to parse the data into more finely-grained categories because UFARS offers more expenditure codes than the federal data collections offer (Minnesota Department of Education Division of School Finance, 2018 pp.254-255). I relied on my own experience as a former Title I and II program monitor to inform my work as I sorted through the coded expenditure data for the 67 districts.

#### **Analytical Software.**

I used a Microsoft Access database. Microsoft Access is relational database software. I used the software to pull together the fiscal data spreadsheets that I downloaded from MDE. I created tables to report and compare the fiscal data by object code and provide a descriptive statistical analysis about Title I and III grant expenditures during the 2018-2019 school year. My report is centered on my first research question: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for

Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

### ***Scanning For Equity Themes***

This research used the World's Best Workforce Summaries and Title I and Title III Grant Application Narratives from 16 school districts to scan for equity themes named in each district's equity goal. REL Midwest's scans examined World's Best Workforce summaries for themes and the actions of school districts (2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2021). Schettino et al. also scanned ESSA state plan narratives for culturally responsive themes to identify if they were present (2019). I also opted to read Title I, Title III, and World's Best Workforce documents to see if themes related to learner equity were present, for fundamentally ESSA and World's Best Workforce are legislative attempts to improve outcomes and conditions for all learners and in particular learners from marginalized populations.

This study is programmatic and includes an investigation into multiple cases. The reporting is based on the second research question; How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap? The Title I and Title III narratives are answers to questions in a narrative format that is conducive to a multiple case study report (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) explains that data in a question-and-answer format is beneficial for a comprehensive examination of a multiple case study (pp.170-173). The narrative materials that I examined and coded in this case study were the written answers to questions. They were asked to all districts as part of the application process in Title I and Title III and as part of the reporting process for World's Best Workforce annual reporting.

The World's Best Workforce summary, the Title I narrative and the Title III narrative are written responses to questions. I looked at the district leadership teams' answers to those questions in order to learn more about the strategies leadership teams employed to respond to their stated academic achievement gap goals within the three different documents:

1. The World's Best Workforce summary
2. The Title I, Part A narrative of the Title I application
3. The Title III, Part A narrative of the Title III application

The questions for the World's Best Workforce summary academic achievement gap goal are found in Appendix B. The questions for the Title I and Title III application narratives are found in Appendix C and Appendix D respectively. Thus the documents represent the district teams' perspective.

The questions from the narratives were coded to see if there was evidence about which programming and prioritization decisions crossed-over between programs. The underlying thread between the three programmatic documents is that they exist to discern how best to help create equitable conditions for learners. Coding all three documents helped me to trace lines from the districts' academic achievement gap goal to see how the district leadership told the story of their district's efforts to improve equity. As a researcher, I had the opportunity to look for connections between how the district described their own equity work aimed at reducing achievement gaps and how they did or did not use ESEA Title I or III grant funding to support their equity goals.

Given my own former role as an insider within ESEA grants, I have approached the task of coding the existing data sets for themes as if they were content from an

interview. The narrative data sets (shown in Appendices B, C, and D) I analyzed contained written answers to questions. Thus, the qualitative data, in this case, answers from application and summary questions, were written answers akin similar to the spoken answers of an interviewee. However, all three documents are written by district leadership teams, and thus represent the views of an institution, a school district rather than an individual.

One of the purposes school districts have as they answer the application questions in the narrative of the ESEA grant applications and in their World's Best Workforce Summaries is to tell the story of how their grant funds and goals support the learners in their district. Thus, I approached the narrative answers using Narrative Analysis given that, "Narrative analysis focuses on the stories told during an interview and works out their structures and their plots" (Brinkmann & Kavale, 2015 p.254). I looked for the story that each school district's response to the application questions and the summary of their World's Best Workforce Plan tell about how their money supports their goals of educational equity.

### ***Analytical Software***

I used the Dedoose (2016) application to code for themes found in the narrative application documents and World's Best Workforce plan summaries. Dedoose can support thematic coding for documents uploaded even if the documents are in different file formats (2016). Thus, World's Best Workforce and the grant applications which are saved in different file formats can be searched for the same or similar words being used to describe each district's equity work. I was able to use the application to assist me in coding and excerpting equity themes that emerge from World's Best Workforce plan



summaries and search districts' Title I and Title III grant applications to ascertain connections to answer my second research question.

### **Summary**

In Chapter Three, I explained that this is a case study of 67 traditional geographic school districts Title I and Title III spending during the 2018-2019 school year in Minnesota. The first question is quantitative and is answered using descriptive statistical finance data obtained from public reports from MDE's SERVS financial system. That data aided me in answering the question 1.) How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year? The second question was qualitative and relied upon public documents gathered from the MDE and coded to identify themes about a sampling of districts' equity goals from 16 of the 67 aforementioned districts. That qualitative scan sought to answer the second research question 2.) How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

The findings will help provide a snapshot of Title I and III spending in Minnesota and how it may have been informed by districts' equity work. In Chapter Four, I will share the results of my research and analysis of my findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As a teacher, former grants administrator, and graduate researcher I wanted to learn more about the nature of how ESEA grants were being used by traditional geographic public school districts in Minnesota. As 1965 ESEA grants originated alongside the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I also wanted to learn more about how districts envisioned using their Title I part A and Title III grants to support equity work in their district's schools. The state of Minnesota's World's Best Workforce law requires school district leaders to report about their goal or goals for equity and the strategies the district will implement in support of those equity goals. Therefore, the narratives from the ESEA Title I part A and Title III grant applications and the World's Best Workforce summary reporting about equity goals and strategies implemented to support those equity goals. I examined the narrative data from the ESEA grant applications and the World's Best Workforce Summaries to learn more about how district leaders describe their district's equity work.

This chapter's purpose is to report on the financial data about Title I Part A and Title III funding use and the strategies that district leadership teams identified using in their equity work. My investigation sought answers to two research questions.

- 1.) How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

2.) How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

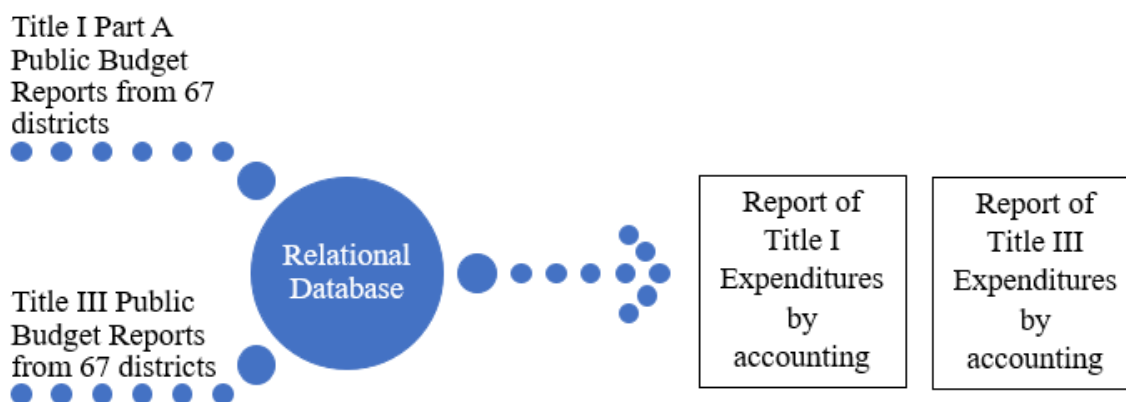
Chapter Four will be organized by research question. Findings will be presented following each one.

### **Financial Data Collections and Synthesis**

I downloaded spending reports for Title I part A and Title III grants for the 2018-2019 school year from the MDE Data Center. The spreadsheets were loaded into a relational database. Then the financial data was sorted by grant opportunity and by Minnesota's UFARS accounting code system. A visual depicting the process is shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**

*Process Diagram of Financial Data Collection and Synthesis*



Using the data I was able to identify the kinds of expenditures that districts made using their grant award during the 2018-2019 school year.

### **Portion of Minnesota's Total Title I Part A Spending Data Collected and Analyzed**

The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that the total appropriation of Title I funds to Minnesota's LEAs under Title I Part A was

\$169,612,000 for the federal fiscal year 2018. The Minnesota Department of Education’s federal fiscal year 2018 reporting shows that Minnesota LEAs accepted \$154,222,827.70 in Title I Part A funding. The 67 school districts studied were collectively awarded \$103,962,143.47 in their Title I Part A grants shown in Figure 8. Thus, Title I Part A spending from the 67 school districts studied represents 67.4 percent of the total Title I Part A funding awarded to LEAs in Minnesota.

### **Figure 8**

*Federal, State, and Study Sample Title I Part A Awards for Minnesota in Federal Fiscal Year 2018*

Federal Appropriation for Federal Fiscal Year 2018	\$169,612,000.00
Federal Fiscal Year 2018 Awards to the 67 Districts Studied	\$103,962,143.47

### **Portion of Minnesota’s Total Title III Spending Data Collected and Analyzed**

The Minnesota Department of Education data reports show that school districts accepted \$8,787,354.21 in Title III awards in federal fiscal year 2018. The 67 school districts studied account for \$7,306,955.81 in Title III spending shown in Figure 9. The districts studied represent 83.2 percent of the total Title III funds awarded to Minnesota school districts.

**Figure 9**

*State, and Study Sample Title III Awards for Minnesota in Federal Fiscal Year 2018*

State Awards Accepted by LEAs for Federal Fiscal Year 2018	\$8,787,354.21
Federal Fiscal Year 2018 Awards to the 67 Districts Studied	\$7,306,955.81

### **Findings from Research Question #1**

This section of Chapter Four presents findings and implications from Research Question #1:

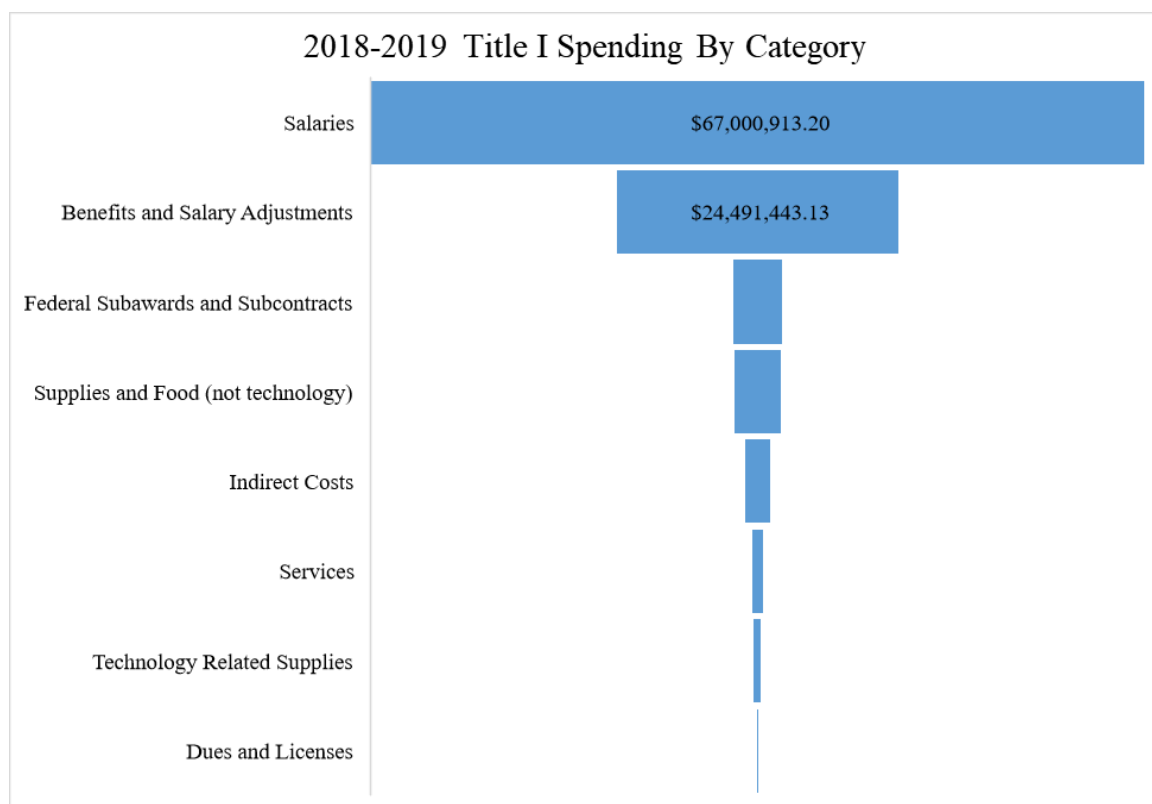
1. How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

### **Basic Staffing Needs Are Funded With Title I and Title III**

Districts used the majority of their grants to purchase more staff. While I was not surprised that most of the grant awards are used to fund staff, I was surprised to learn that staffing and benefits for employees accounted for such a large proportion of the spending. In total \$67,000,913 of the Title I part A awards from the 67 sampled school districts was spent on staff salaries including the salaries for teachers, paraprofessionals, cultural liaisons, social workers, and Title I program administrators. An additional \$24,491,443 of Title I awards was spent on the benefits for the aforementioned employees as shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10**

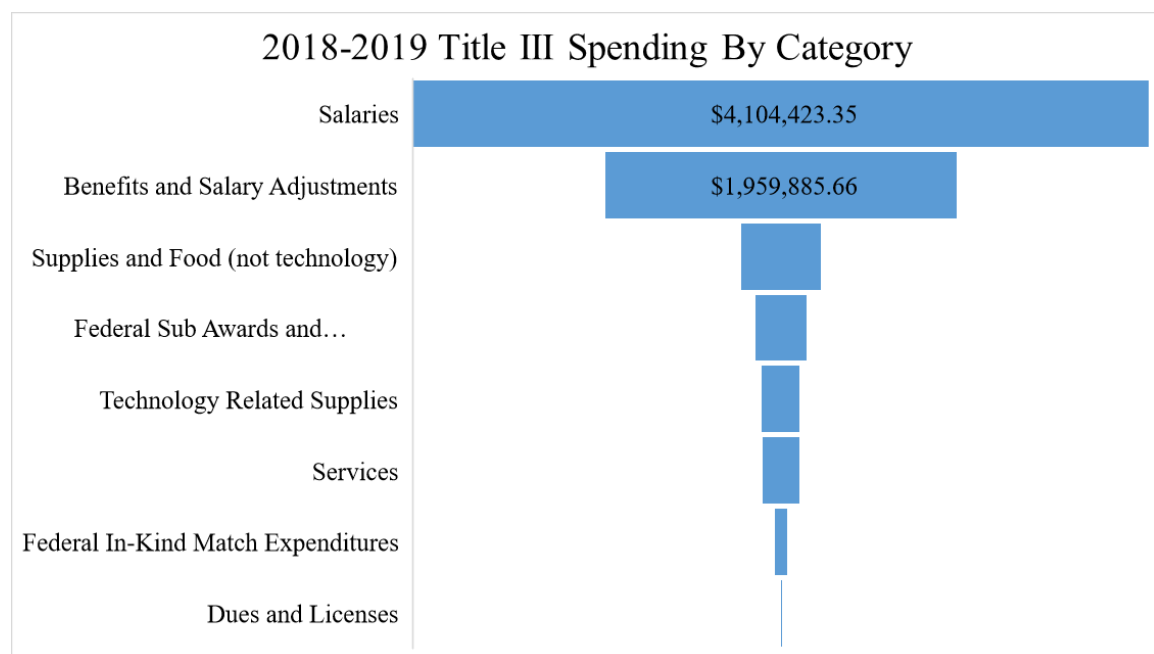
*2018-2019 Title I Part A Spending By Accounting Code Categories*



In Title III spending data for the 67 districts showed that the total staffing expenditures in Title III were \$4,104,423 and includes teachers, paraprofessionals, cultural advocates, and the administrative coordination of Title III as shown in Figure 11. Benefits for staff funded from Title III made up \$1,959,885 of the expenditures.

**Figure 11**

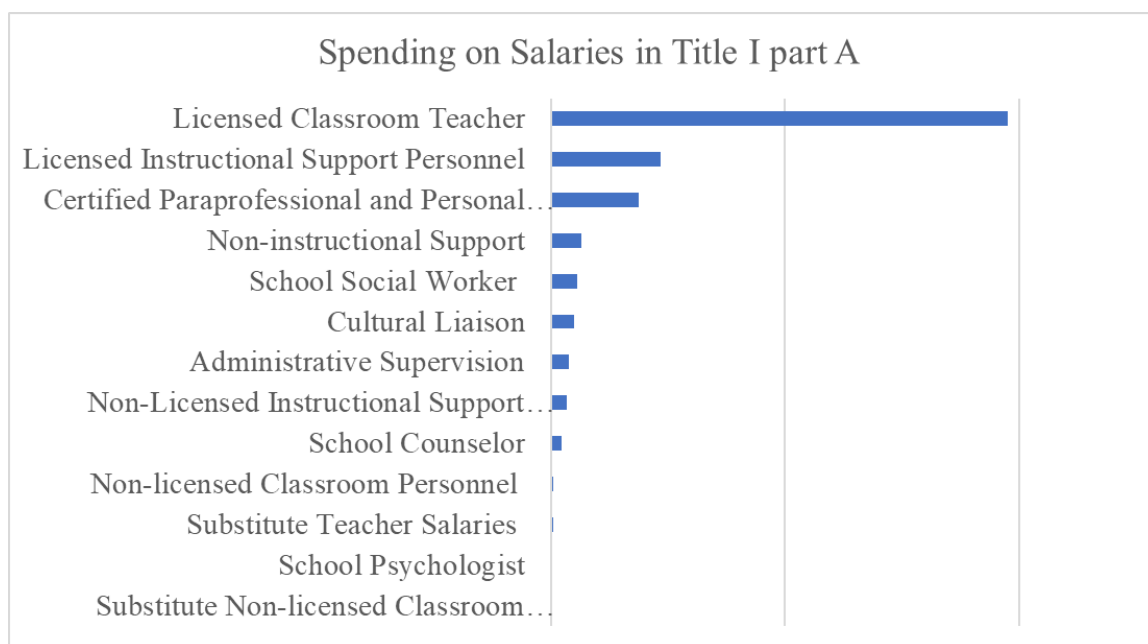
*2018-2019 Title III Spending By Accounting Code Categories*



One notable difference between Title I Part A and Title III funding of staffing is the difference in the types of positions funded. Within Title I part A spending the bulk of spending, \$39,059,350 funded licensed classroom teachers. \$16,871,255 funded licensed support personnel and paraprofessionals and \$2,630,870 funded non-instructional support staff. Other salaries were also funded using Title I as shown in Figure 12.

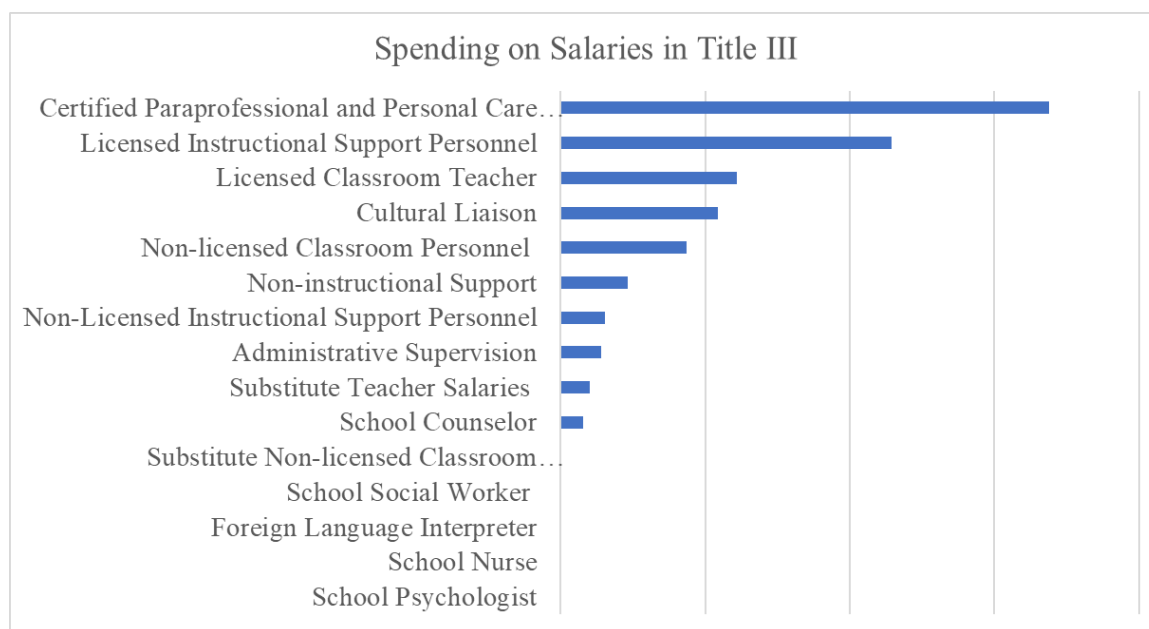
**Figure 12**

*Title I part A Spending on Salaries by Position Type*



Though salaries made up the most significant part of Title III budgets too, in Title III budgets spending on paraprofessional's salaries was the largest salary expenditure as shown in Figure 13.



**Figure 13***Title III part A Spending on Salaries by Position Type*

This difference between Title I being used to fund more teacher positions and Title III applying to fund paraprofessional positions is notable and may have implications for who is serving multilingual learners in English learner programs.

It is allowable for both Title I and Title III to fund other staff including cultural advocates, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses in the role of supporting learners. It is notable that positions for mental health support like psychologists and counselors and family engagement like cultural liaisons and social workers represent a much smaller percentage of the funds used on staffing.

*Analysis of Staffing Expenditures Funded with ESEA Grant Awards*

Outside of the federal grants world the idea of supplemental may be that supplemental spending is the purchase of something that is wanted but not needed. An

ordinary person not steeped in the regulations that govern federal grants may describe supplemental items as ones that are nice to have and perhaps include items that are unessential or superfluous. The ESEA grants test supplemental expenditures differently. ESEA grants are only supposed to supplement or add to the funding that state and local governments provide the school rather than supplant the use of other funding streams (Stevenson et al., 2019). This legal versus commonplace understanding of the nature of supplemental is problematic because schools are not adequately funded, and the federal portion of the contribution to public schools is minuscule compared to state and local contributions (Baker and Corcoran, 2012; Biolsi et al., 2021; Verstegen, 2007; Allegretto et al., 2022).

However, the original goal of the ESEA funding was to be supplemental in the ordinary or commonplace definition of the term. The funding was intended to be the extra bit of funding used to help schools support their learners (Papers of the President, 1966). The common meaning of supplemental was invoked by President Johnson and continued to be shared by Title I experts who have reflected that policymakers and Johnson himself characterized this federal compensatory assistance as a mechanism to give schools, especially schools with many learners experiencing poverty, the opportunity to bring extra supports to learners (Borman et al., 2001 p.9).

Employing the lay definition of supplemental under the original intent of the ESEA categorical aid, it appears that Title I Part A and Title III funding in Minnesota is not being used to supplant or supplement other funding. The money predominantly covers the basic need for staffing; that need is foundational. The data indicate that schools harness these awards to meet their basic needs of providing teachers, cultural

liaisons, paraprofessionals, and other support staff directly supporting learners. Title I and Title III appear to be financing a foundational need that could be considered supplemental only under the very specific and narrow vision of what the grant defines as supplemental. The grant awards are a source of funding that covers the most foundational need, the need to have staff who support learners.

### **Supplies and Subcontracts Were Funded with both Title I and Title III**

Supplies and subcontracts are the next largest spending categories funded with Title I and Title III. After staffing and benefit expenditures, the most significant expenditure categories in Title I were for subcontracts and supplies respectively. In Title III supplies and subcontracts were the largest budget categories for spending after salaries and benefits. To see the expenditures for allowable cost codes with expenditures by grant, see Appendices W and X.

President Johnson's vision for this funding was that it be supplemental (Papers of the President, 1966). It is likely that districts' expenditures for supplies could fall into this category. In the narratives for Title I and Title III grant applications, curriculum, books, and instructional supplies for learners are all mentioned and will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. Likewise, professional development is also a frequently discussed strategy and some of the subcontracts likely represent the support of those efforts.

As a part of the data requested for this research, I was unable to see each specific expenditure coded as *Federal Sub Awards and Sub Contracts*. As a former Title I monitor for the state of Minnesota, I recall seeing two types of large sub-award contracts. Typical expenses in the category were: 1) contracts with a third party for additional

staffing when the school district did not have staff available, and 2) contracts for professional development and curriculum implementation. The three less common types of contracts I saw funded with Title I or Title III money were for: 1) student transportation, 2) parking fees in urban areas when schools did not own the parking lot nearest the school, and 3) copy machine rental and service contracts. I, therefore, speculate that the budget items coded to the cost codes for these contracts overwhelmingly represent staffing and professional development services.

The spending related to both supplies and subcontracts is more likely to align with the vision of using ESEA grants to supplement school expenditures. Though the budgetary data is not provided in enough detail to see exactly what purchases were made, when coupled with the narrative data around equity from a 16 district subset of the 67 districts whose financial data was analyzed, there is evidence to suggest that these supply and subcontract expenditures were made to pay for districts' curriculum supplies and the implementation and teacher training associated with the curriculum adoption. There were also districts who indicated that they were funding an outside person or group to provide professional development inservices for school staff. I will elaborate on the possible implications of the funding and equity work in Chapter 5.

### **Narrative Data Collections and Synthesis**

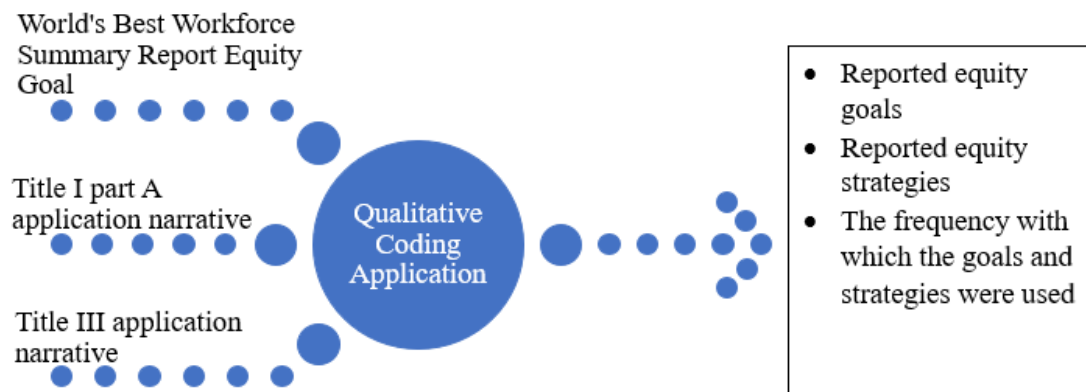
I analyzed the budgets from all 67 traditional geographic school districts in Minnesota that were awarded Title I part A and Title III part A in 2018-2019. Of those districts, I requested that MDE send me their narratives from 16 districts' Title I part A applications, Title III applications and the World's Best Workforce Summary equity goal

narratives. I then coded the narrative documents in a qualitative coding application. Using narrative analysis, I wanted to answer the question: How do district leaders describe their equity work in relation to their World's Best Workforce equity goals?

My goal was to uncover the programmatic stories that district leaders were reporting to the state about the work they planned to do in service of their equity goals. A depiction of the process is shown in Figure 14.

### Figure 14

*The Process of Collecting and Coding Document Narratives*



All 16 districts whose narratives were examined are referred to by pseudonyms in my reported findings and were sampled to represent districts with a variety of geographic locations, grant award amounts, and the size of the student population.

### Findings from Research Question #2

This section of Chapter Four presents findings and implications from Research Question #2:

2. How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

### **Most School Districts' Equity Goals Sought to Close Gaps Found in Racially Disaggregated Data**

Of the 16 districts studied, there were eighteen equity goals listed. The World's Best Workforce Equity Goals all sought to close achievement gaps. The gaps were defined differently by each district. Twelve school districts' goals focused on achievement gaps based on racially disaggregated groupings. Of the twelve districts that identified goals based upon racial subgroups, nine also had a goal aimed to address another student group, including students with English learner status, students with Special Education Status, and or students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRP). Walleye Waters Schools, Blueberry Bushes Schools, Dairy Town Schools, and Pleasant Pheasant Schools named equity goals to close achievement gaps between learners who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches and learners not eligible for free and reduced-price lunches.

### **District Leaders Used Ambiguous and Minoritizing Language to Discuss Disaggregated Data**

Of the 18 equity goals surveyed in this study, eight of the goals characterized disaggregated groups of learners in a way that was at best ambiguous or at worst otherizing and minoritizing learners by status. While it is true that federal data is

collected by specific racial groups, free and reduce priced lunch status, special education status, and English learner status. The World's Best Workforce law does not require data identifying equity goals using the federal framework. District leadership teams can identify gaps in student performance outcomes of their choosing and make priorities according to where they see the most significant needs.

### ***District Leaders Characterized Demographic Groups Ambiguously in Equity Goals***

Within the World's Best Workforce Equity Goals six of the 16 districts characterized achievement gaps by listing or naming the groups where a gap was observed in a way that was ambiguous. Wild Prairie Schools' equity goal stated that the district would decrease the gap noting that they would, "...increase the number of groups that saw a decrease in achievement gap from 5/6 in math and 5/6 in reading." Wild Prairie Schools did not mention which specific groups were in the 5 /6 group set. Monarch Meadows also mentioned subgroups and an achievement gap, but never specifically named any subgroups.

### ***District Leaders Used Otherizing and Minoritizing Language in Equity Goals***

Teachers are encouraged to look for the assets of their learners and affirm learners' identities. Unfortunately, some school leadership teams wrote equity goals using otherizing and minoritizing language. Wild Rice Schools' goal named an achievement gap, "...between white and non-white in reading as measured by the MCA reading state accountability," tests. Svensville Schools reported that the MCA test scores for their district showed achievement gaps, "...of FRP, EL, and Hispanic students and their non-

challenged peers.” The language in Sevnville school’s goal implies that students identified as Hispanic, multilingual learners receiving English language development services, and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunches are in some way challenged. It was shocking to see that implication in a public facing official school district document. Red Pine Schools did not discuss how they would disaggregate data within their goal, but reported that participation in concurrent enrollment high school and college level classes would match for, “...all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups.” White Tailed Woods Schools sought to decrease math and reading proficiency rates, “...for all economic and racial/ethnic student groups.”

The language used by some districts to discuss socio-economic status is unadvisable and runs afoul of the person-first guidance from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2020) to discuss the person or population first and then a reference to a socio-economic indicator specifically noting “students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch” as the most appropriate way reference socio-economic status (p. 147). Four districts reported that they would be looking for gaps between learners receiving free and reduce-priced lunch and those learners not receiving free and reduced-price lunch. Three of the districts reporting based on students’ lunch status named categories first instead of the learners even though free and reduced lunch status is socio-economic indicator. Thus, person-first language when discussing socio-economic status was not evident in three of the district's goals. Walleye Waters schools noted a proficiency gap between, “the Non-Free/Reduced Price and Free/Reduced student groups.” Dairy Town Schools and Pleasant Pheasant Schools used similar rhetoric also placing the descriptor of socio-economic status before the word student. Conversely,



Sleeping Giant Schools did use person-first language characterizing the disparity as one between, "...students in the free & reduced price lunch subgroup."

### ***District Leaders Described Working to Improve Learner's Scores on State Assessments and College Readiness***

The focus of each district's equity goal or goals varied. Six goals sought to close achievement gaps in mathematics. Five goals identified achievement gaps in reading. Three goals addressed reading and mathematics. Sleeping Giant Schools and Red Pine Schools had goals related to college exposure and career readiness. Eagle's Nest Schools' equity goal focused on decreasing disparities in graduation rates. Monarch Meadows had a goal that was too vague to discern and sought to, "...decrease achievement gaps between subgroups by 10%." Monarch Meadows did not specify which metrics or which subgroups showed gaps in achievement.

### **District Leaders Identified Several Strategies to Address Academic Achievement Gaps**

Each district's World's Best Workforce Summary listed strategies they planned to use in service of the district's equity goal. I looked for evidence of the same strategies to see if the strategy or strategies were mentioned again in the district's Title I and or Title III applications. I discovered more about the district leadership's story around their equity work and the strategies they planned to use. As I read the documents from each district, I coded the data and identified 26 different strategies mentioned in the documents written by district leaders:

- Achievement Via Individual Determination<sup>®</sup> ( AVID<sup>®</sup>) Program
- Career development courses
- Class size reduction
- College exposure and or participation in college-level courses
- Co-teaching
- Cultural, diversity, and or equity-related professional development
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Curriculum purchase with professional development
- Data-related process and or professional development around data driven processes
- Evidence based practices (that were not specified)
- Homework help program
- Instructional coaching
- Linguistic supports for academic language and comprehensible input strategies
- Differentiated learning models for service delivery including: Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), Response to Intervention (RtI), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Professional development (Generic)
- Professional development in core instructional practices
- Professional learning communities (PLC) or staff team implementation or refinement
- Progress monitoring
- Rising Scholars

- School climate and social emotional learning (SEL) practices and or professional development
- Sheltered Instruction Operational Protocol (SIOP<sup>®</sup>)
- Staffing of multicultural or multilingual liaisons
- Staffing of Social Workers and/ or Counselors
- Support for parent, family, and community engagement
- Teacher recruitment
- Young-Scholars Program

When coding, I began with the World's Best Workforce Summary document and the equity goal and strategies names. Then, I looked at the Title I and Title III applications respectively, and coded those documents based on the strategy and goal areas identified in the World's Best Workforce Summary as equity goal areas. The approach of mining the narratives by district helped me to understand which strategies district leaders implemented to support equity in their school districts.

All 16 districts identified strategies they planned to use in the service of their equity goals and ESEA grant plans. The number of strategies listed varied by district. Walleye Waters Schools reported nine different strategies and Blueberry Bushes Schools reported the use of nineteen different strategies. The other districts' narratives mentioned eleven to eighteen strategies (shown in Appendix H).

Of the twenty-six strategies identified in the narratives, the frequency at which were mentioned varied significantly. The most frequently identified strategies were 1) data-related process and professional development around data-driven processes and 2)

professional development. The least commonly identified strategies listed were teacher recruitment and use of the Young Scholars program.

When naming and discussing the strategies used to support the closing of achievement gaps I had hypothesized that strategies capitalizing on cultural and linguistic identities would be the most frequently used strategies. However, districts emphasized data-driven work, MTSS systems, and professional development in core instruction with greater frequency than strategies that emphasize learners' home cultures and languages.

### **The Most Popular Strategies to Address Equity Related to Data and Professional Development**

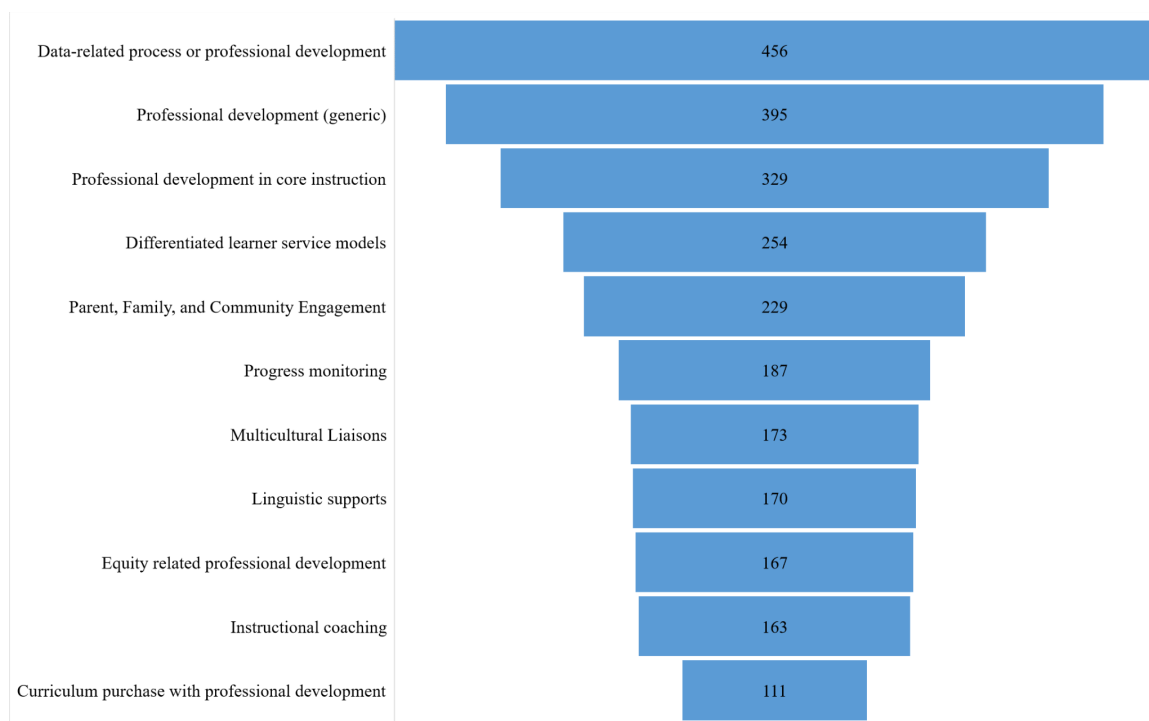
To serve equity goals, one might guess that those cultural and linguistic strategies, and strategies that support, affirm and engage families would be most prominent in the discourse. However, the strategy that all districts identified in service of their goals and the strategy mentioned most frequently was to implement data-related processes and or professional development around data-related processes. The second and third most identified strategies districts used in service of their equity goals were professional development of an unspecified nature and professional development in core instructional practices. The fourth most frequently identified strategy was around differentiation with districts citing MTSS, RtI, and PBIS related work. Support for parent and family engagement was the fifth most mentioned. A complete list of the frequency with which strategies were identified in the narratives is included in Appendix Y.

### **Strategies Specifically Addressing Student Identity, Home Culture, and Language Were Less Frequently Cited**

Data-related processes were cited 456 times, whereas support for parent, family, and community engagement was cited half as frequently with 229 mentions (shown in Figure 15). Staffing for multicultural or multilingual liaisons; linguistic supports for academic language; and cultural, diversity, and equity-related professional development were each mentioned between 160 and 170 times (shown in Figure 15). Implementation and work on Co-teaching, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and sheltered instruction had even fewer mentions as the thirteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth most frequently used strategies are shown in Appendix H.

**Figure 15**

*The Ten Most Frequently mentioned Strategies for addressing Academic Achievement Gap Goals*



Programs that specifically targeted students who are American Indian were not mentioned in the narratives. Although some school districts were specifically concerned about academic achievement gaps in the disaggregated data by racial and ethnic groups, there were no specific strategies reported that were targeted to meet the needs of learners who are Dakota, Ojibwe, American Indian, or Alaska Native. I was surprised at the absence of this data, because learners who are American Indian, Alaska Native, or are American Indian in combination with other races, have been historically underserved and have had lower proficiency outcomes than other racially disaggregated groups on Minnesota's state standardized tests (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2019). I

expected to see school leaders reacting specifically to the needs of our Indigenous scholars because the Tribal Nations Education Committee in Minnesota has requested during ESSA-required tribal consultation meetings that school districts offer culturally responsive programming to address the needs of American Indian youth.

### **District Leadership Teams Responded to Equity-Oriented Achievement Goals with Differentiation and Remediation Strategies**

The language of both the equity goals and the narratives frame equity work as remediation. Eighteen goals were examined. Six of the goals targeted learner performance in math, five targeted learner performance in reading, and three targeted goals in both math and reading. Thus, fourteen of the eighteen goals focused on performance on standardized assessments in math and reading. Learner opportunity gaps were overwhelmingly identified in relationship to achievement on standardized assessments.

The strategies district leadership teams reported using may not be addressing the root cause of the achievement gaps that districts self-identified. Minnesota has an overwhelmingly white teacher workforce. Minnesota historically and presently is struggling with institutionalized racism in the community and in education, as evidenced by the murders of George Floyd, Jamar Clark, and Philando Castile; and the staggering discrepancy between graduation rates for learners who are white caucasian and learners who have been historically minoritized and marginalized.

As a teacher of students who are multilingual and identified as English learners, I see a disconnect between the assets-based Can Do frameworks put forward around

multilingualism by consortia like WIDA and educational organizations like the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the way districts define achievement gaps based upon standardized assessments in reading and mathematics.

District leadership teams are framing the goals and the strategies to address those goals in terms of how well learners perform on a reading or math assessment on one day, and they are coming to the conclusion that discussions about data and core instruction can close the gap. When district leadership teams zero in on remediation strategies first, they fail to look at what other systemic issues may have created the gap. They also fail to look for the strengths within learners and their home cultures, home languages, and cultural identities that could be leveraged to support their academic growth and achievement.

### **District Leaders May Not Share a Common Vision for their District's Equity Work**

Districts' documents were examined to find continuity between the strategies mentioned in their narratives of World's Best Workforce Summary and their Title I and Title III grant applications. I looked for instances of continuity between two documents and three documents. If a strategy was mentioned in both the Title I and III grant narratives but not in the World's Best Workforce Summary, it was counted as having appeared two times. If a strategy was mentioned in the World's Best Workforce Summary and only one Title grant application narratives, it was counted as having been used two times. When strategies appeared in all three documents, it was tallied as being used three times.

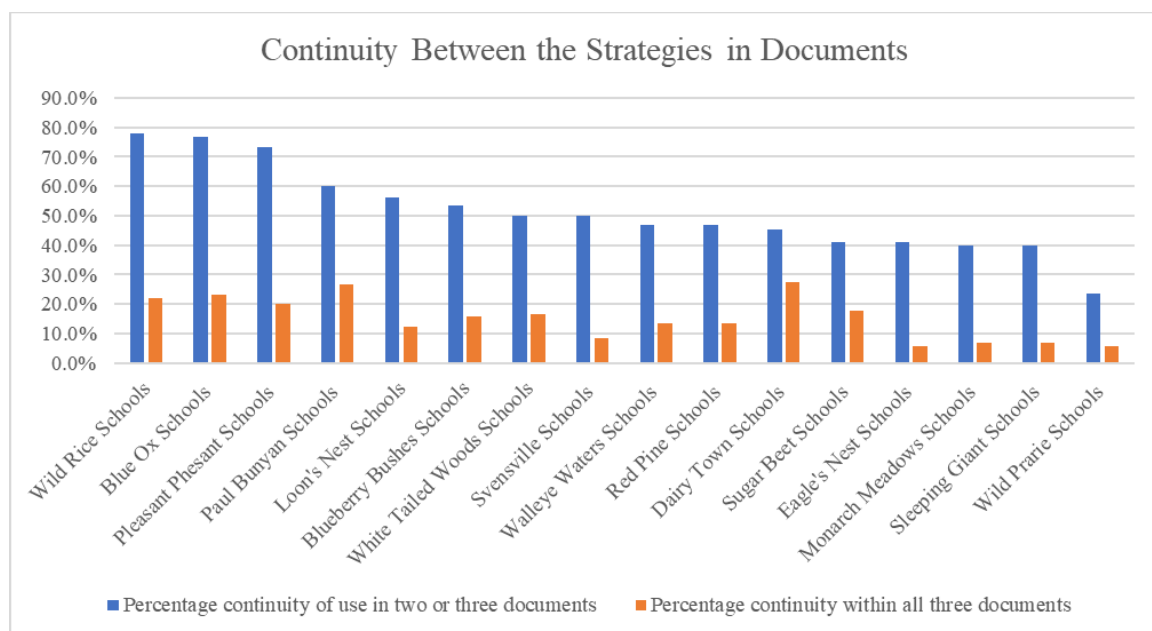
The consistency of reporting strategies across two or three documents is shown in Figure 16. Wild Rice Schools and Blue Ox Schools showed the most consistency



between the strategies they reported using. While Wild Prarie Schools showed the least consistency.

**Figure 16**

*Graph of Continuity Between the Strategies Reported by Selected School Districts*



Of the district documents studied, there was continuity in the narratives of at least two documents naming similar strategies. There was less consistency between all three narratives. This lack of consistency within the documents that all exist to capture how districts envision their equity work raises concerns that district administrative teams may not have a fully unified vision of how they are coordinating their district's equity work.

### Summary

In chapter four I set out to answer the two questions in this study. The first question: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the state fiscal year 2019? This question has a clear and straightforward answer. Most Title I and III funding was used to fund

additional teacher and support staff positions. Money was also used for supplies and for subcontracting support for the goals identified in Title I part A and Title III.

The three themes that emerge in answer to the second question are concerning. How do district leaders describe their equity work in relation to their World's Best Workforce equity goals? First, district leaders describe their equity goals and their equity work as the work of remediating learners in reading and math. In the narrative documents, district leaders employed data-related strategies and professional development in core instruction with a greater frequency than strategies that sought to affirm learner identities and account for cultural and linguistic differences within their student populations. Second, districts' equity goals showed evidence of ambiguity in how disaggregated student groups were defined. Third, the lack of correlation between the strategies mentioned by each district demonstrated that some district leadership teams might be unclear about the strategies they are using to address learner equity. All of the districts showed less than 30 percent correlation between the strategies they identified across their different grant applications and reports. Given

the official nature of the ESEA grant applications and World's Best Workforce Summary which all must be submitted to MDE annually, it is surprising to see the lack of alignment.

In Chapter 5, I will offer some conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Public school funding in the United States has been and remains inequitable. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was one way the federal government sought to provide categorical funding for equitable public education. The ESEA Title I and Title III grant programs were designed to help schools with large populations of students experiencing poverty and multilingual students identified as English language learners. As a teacher of multilingual learners and as a former ESEA grant administrator, I wanted to learn more about school districts' grant expenditures and how district leadership teams envisioned their districts' equity goals.

67 Minnesota traditional geographic school districts received both Title I and Title III awards during the 2018-2019 school year. I examined the reported expenditures by accounting codes for both Title I, Part A and Title III, Part A grants those 67 school districts reported. Analyzing the district's report helped me answer my first research question: 1.) How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in the 2018-2019 school year?

Of the traditional geographic school districts studied, I sampled the narrative documents from 16 of the districts to see how district leadership teams characterized the district's equity work. To better understand each of the 16 districts' goals to close achievement gaps, I examined the narratives from the districts' Title I and Title III grant applications alongside their Minnesota World's Best Workforce Summary Reports. The documents from these 16 school districts supported my better understanding of each district's narrative about equity work and helped me research the question:

2.) How do district leaders describe their strategies for closing the academic achievement gap?

In this final chapter, I summarize the significant findings for each question previously reported in Chapter Four. Next, I offer recommendations. Finally, I discuss recommendations for future researchers.

### **Research Findings Regarding Title I and III Expenditures**

I set out to answer the question: How did traditional geographic LEAs in Minnesota spend their ESEA formula grants for Title I Part A and Title III Part A in state fiscal year 2019? I wanted to learn more about what the spending patterns indicated about district expenditures on equity related work. However, I was unable to determine whether or not expenditures supported equity related work, because the majority of the grant awards paid for staff salaries and benefits. It is possible that the staff hired using Title I and Title III grant awards supported equity work that created an optimal learning environment for historically minoritized populations. It is also possible that the Title I and Title III grant awards supported staff positions whose work focused on remediation, behavior interventions, and academic interventions. School staff positions funded with Title I and Title III grant awards may have been engaged in both equity work and intervention work.

I found that Title I funds integral teaching positions, and Title III funds integral paraprofessional positions. Although both Title I and Title III were designed to provide supplemental funding, most of the awards are being spent on funding teaching and paraprofessional positions. As an ESEA program specialist and monitor, I never interviewed one school administrator who thought of the staff in positions funded with

Title I or Title III as being supplemental. The staff funded with Title I and Title III awards are performing vital school roles within their schools. Thus, the majority of the funding that was intended to be supplemental is being used to provide and meet basic staffing needs. A much smaller percentage of the awards are also being used toward truly supplemental expenditures such as supplies and subcontracted services like professional development, support services, and curriculum development and implementation.

The expenditures on staffing are reasonable under ESSA and the accompanying guidance. The most recent state audit of the ESEA federal program grants found minor issues with MDE's oversight of the ESEA programs and prescribed minimal corrective action (Schowalter, 2022). Therefore, I am not suggesting that the programs have been administered incorrectly. Instead, I contend that schools are underfunded and that what was designed to be a supplemental source of funding, has become a mechanism to fund integral staff positions. Moreover, the funding of paraprofessional positions rather than teaching positions in Title III could be indicative of the difference in supplement not supplant provisions. The use of Title III funding to support paraprofessional positions could also indicate how supplemental English language development instructional roles are perceived by school leaders, or the expenditures on paraprofessionals may simply be an indication of the difficulty schools have finding licensed teachers qualified to teach in English learner programs.

### **Research Findings Regarding District Leadership Teams' Equity Narratives**

The second question I sought to answer was: How do district leaders describe their equity work in relation to their World's Best Workforce achievement gap equity-focused goals? The 16 narratives I examined framed their district equity goals as efforts

to close achievement gaps identified using racially or economically disaggregated data from standardized tests. The language that district leadership teams used to discuss disaggregated racial data was sometimes ambiguous and minoritizing, casting a deficit lens on groups of learners who have been historically marginalized. Most of the narratives around equity sought to rectify performance gaps between learner groups on reading and math assessments. To close gaps identified on math and reading assessments, districts emphasized data-related processes and professional development in core instruction with greater frequency than equity-related and linguistically-related professional development opportunities. District leadership teams cited strategies like data-related processes, professional development in core areas, and differentiated instruction with far greater frequency than strategies that addressed student identity, home culture, and language.

The emphasis on data and remediation is problematic because it fails to consider the system that created the alarming data and the perceived need for student remediation. When I discussed this with my committee, N. MartinRogers (personal communication, December 20, 2022) dubbed this course of inaction *admiring the problem*. Looking at more data does not address the conditions that created the inequitable data. Having professional development to teach teachers how to look at more data or look at spreadsheets ranking learners' progress with green, yellow, and red color designations does not address the socioeconomic factors and systemic factors that created the conditions in which an academic achievement gap was identified. Color-coded spreadsheets do not interrupt systemic racism and the conditions that minoritized learner populations.

Engagement in antiracism work and an awareness of the racial prejudices that created achievement gaps is critical for teachers and school administrators (Brooks, 2012 p. 116; Delpit, 1995 p. 179). For schools to be optimal habitats for learners engaged in the work of learning, the adults in the space need to strive to be anti-racist advocates who see what learners can accomplish and can do (Delpit, 1995). An example of how to operationalize seeing student strengths is in the asset-based Can Do descriptors used by language teaching consortia WIDA and the American Council on the teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL). Language educators have used *Can Do* frameworks to name and notice the linguistic competency that learners are bringing to the classroom (WIDA, 2016; ACTFL, 2017). Noticing the strengths that learners present interrupts the inculcated notions of linguistic privilege to admire the cultural and linguistic assets and funds of knowledge that students bring into the classroom (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005).

### **Recommendations for Educators and Educational Stakeholders**

Before outlining my suggestions, I acknowledge real barriers to addressing entrenched systemic inequities. The language enshrined within ESSA does not align with contemporary assets-based language. ESSA, EDGAR, and the Uniform Grant Guidance are legally intricate and challenging to interpret. The language of ESSA is problematic because it uses phrases like *at risk* and *disadvantaged* to describe learners (Delpit, 1995 p. 178; Jackson, 2011, also see Kendi, 2016). There are legal limitations on SEAs in how far their agencies are authorized to investigate or advise LEAs. School districts and school staff are limited in their funding. District and school leadership teams are limited in their time. It takes an investment in time to gather teams of stakeholders for

conversations addressing the district's instructional goals, strategic actions, and budgeting decisions.

There are limitations at the federal, state, and district levels. Despite those genuine limitations, I believe educators and educational stakeholders can take action. First, I will offer recommendations for all education stakeholders engaged in writing equity-related goals and finding strategies to support their equity work. Next, I will discuss ways to improve Title grant applications from both a district and state lens. Then I will provide recommendations specific to Minnesota's district leadership teams and MDE.

### **Write Clear Equity-Related Goals**

Districts should use an assets-based frame when they discuss learners. Writing goals that compared "white and non-white students," as Wild Rice School's did. Employs rhetoric that minoritizes students by holding whiteness as a normative factor and non-whiteness as non-normative. For example, equity goals like Svensville's compared "... FRP, EL, and Hispanic students and their non-challenged peers." The language insinuates that learners who are not on free and reduced-price lunch, not identified as EL, and not Hispanic are not challenged. Over-simplification of learner populations is an inherent danger in disaggregation. Districts must honor their learners' gifts using assets-based rhetoric (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, school districts must work toward helping their district leaders and their teachers to embrace an anti-racist pedagogical stance (Brooks, 2012; Delpit, 1995; Lindsey et al., 2009).

Districts do not need to rely solely on math and reading test scores when setting achievement goals. When asked to look for achievement gaps, the 16 World's Best



Workforce plans overwhelmingly sought to remedy gaps between learner groups in reading and math. Districts can consider attendance, student participation in cocurricular activities arts and athletics, and student participation in advanced coursework or certificate programs. Districts can also look at student growth on assessments instead of looking for proficiency scores.

### **Select Strategies to Address Learner Equity**

Systemic inequity can be identified using data, but it can not be remedied without real engagement in addressing the home culture and home languages of learners (Brooks, 2012; Lindsey et al., 2009). I found that the most frequently cited strategy to work on equity-related goals was to engage in data-informed work. My findings showed that districts are most likely to cite data disaggregation work, professional development in core academics, and differentiation within a tiered system like PBIS, MTSS or RtI as their go-to steps to becoming more equitable.

Examining data is not a problem-solving strategy. It is a problem-identification strategy or way to admire a problem (MartinRogers, personal communication, December 20, 2022). While data-driven decision making is crucial, leaders from schools, districts, and states should use their disaggregated student data as an impetus to do the difficult work of systemic repair (Brooks, 2012).

Students spend a significant amount of time in educational institutions. Those institutions should be habitats for learners and learning. Since 1972, ESEA researchers have urged educators to consider the actual conditions and environment of schooling (Jencks et al.). Educational institutions at the school, district, state, and federal levels should not be spending the precious hours they have to do the work of teaching and

learning by lamenting disparities between learner groups. They should use the data that identifies achievement gaps as a reason for their work to help reenvision school communities and practices to welcome and affirm all learners.

Schools cannot end racism by providing interventions for students of color and multilingual students learning English when they do not perform to the standards set by white students in a system created by white people for white children. The normative whiteness that is pervasive in conversations about achievement gaps is detrimental to learners of color and multilingual learners acquiring English. Being anti-racist requires institutional leaders to work against systemic oppression. Anti-racist school leaders must ask how all children and their families experience school. Before differentiating for learners who have been historically marginalized, leaders should make sure that learners are in environments that support and nurture them, reflect their own lived experiences, and view all learners as having cultural and linguistic capital (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005).

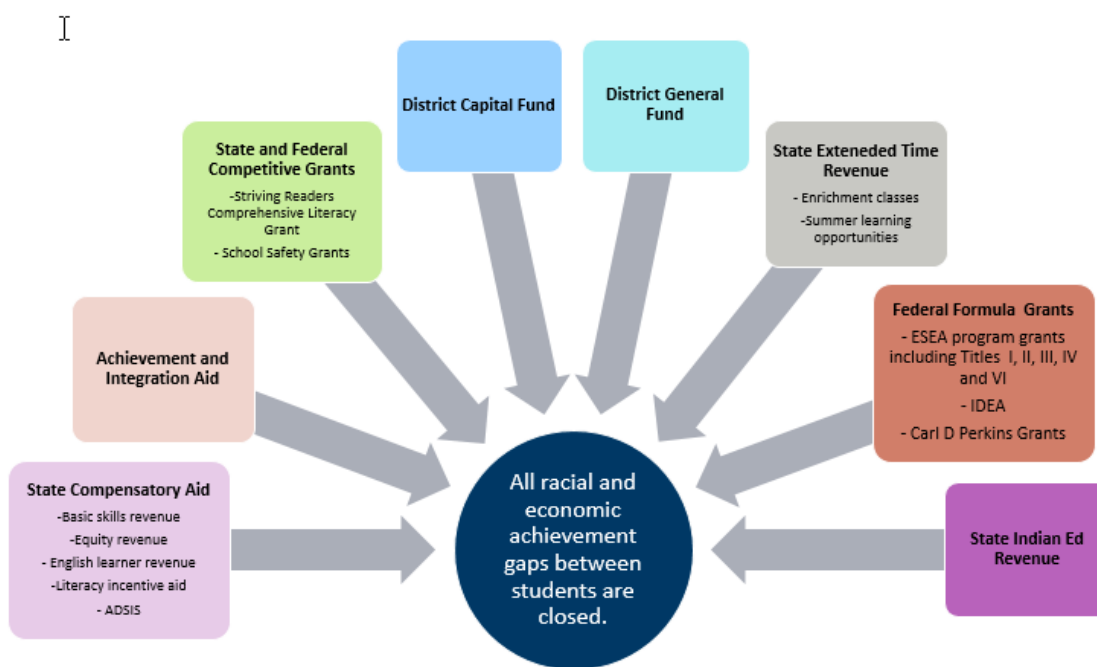
### **Improve Title Grant Submissions and Reporting Processes**

SEAs should make more dynamic grant calculators and budgeting models available to grantees. States are responsible for providing training and technical support to the grantees, and visual models for visualizing budgets and grant spending would aid districts in better managing their funds. SEAs, as the pass-through entity, carry out and monitor ESEA Title grant awards. MDE, for example shares budgeting spreadsheets with calculations for the prescribed set-asides for required expenditures required from ESEA Title grants.

While working at MDE, I worked with my colleagues to create a budget visualization graphic organizer, shown in Figure 17. Working with a grants management software developer, SEAs could create interactive budget calculator tools whereby district leaders and their teams could model a variety of spending scenarios in greater detail.

**Figure 17**

*Visual Tool Created at MDE for District Leadership Teams to Identify Funding Sources to Support District Goals*



Several grants and categorical aid applications can be consolidated into a single submission document. The ESEA requires a consolidated application, and SEAs can go further by consolidating their federal and state-required applications into a single system. SEAs could also utilize goal-setting and planning documents like Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Plan as a backbone for a single comprehensive improvement plan or strategic plan.

Districts could use dynamic data visualization tools to identify their goals and priorities in a single planning document and submit it to the state. A common plan could be given to all districts. Districts that are eligible for more federal awards or state categorical aid could add the information required for their additional funding opportunities in additional segments of the one common plan. Operating under one comprehensive plan with one shared vision of a district's work toward its identified goals could help both the state staff and district leaders realize more clarity around how all of the plans and funds are interrelated. A consolidated planning and application grants management system could free up SEA staff to spend more time providing technical support for the use of the grant award.

#### **Recommendations for Minnesota School and District Leadership Teams**

School and district leadership teams in Minnesota should incorporate questions from ESEA grant applications and World's Best Workforce Plan into their strategic planning and continuous improvement processes. In Minnesota, each district's shared leadership team is responsible for crafting their ESEA grant applications and their district's World's Best Workforce Plans with input from both parents and staff. The World's Best Workforce Plan is Minnesota's requirement for each school district to create a plan to help all learners graduate ready for career and college opportunities. The World's Best Workforce Plan and the ESEA Title grant applications tell the story of how each district plans to use its resources to address the goals for students. The World's Best Workforce Goals can be the heart, and the ESEA Title plans can be the backbone of a district leadership team's vision for serving their learners.

Minnesota districts should embed the World's Best Workforce goals in their strategic or continuous improvement plans. When leadership teams develop their district's World's Best Workforce Plans, they engage in a strategic planning and continuous improvement process. World's Best Workforce Plans should not be divorced from the district's other plans. The key components of a district's ESEA grant plans should also be embedded into each district's core strategic planning and continuous improvement planning documents. Leadership teams do not need to view the legislative requirement as only a state-required report. A holistic view of a district's plan and strategic priorities is a means by which leadership teams can ensure continuity of vision. Districts can connect their required reporting tasks while expressing a vision for greater student equity, growth, and achievement.

#### **Areas for the Consideration of Minnesota Department of Education**

To enhance continuity and help school districts see the connections between their programs, MDE should have grants management applications, budgets, surveys, and required data collections in one web-based platform. MDE collects information for ESEA Title grants in multiple locations. MDE's Title grant application narratives and budgets are submitted in the State Educational Record View and Submission (SERVS) system. A separate platform exists for the ESSA's required student counts called the Student Support Data Collection. MDE uses separate surveys using other web-based survey platforms for the required October counts of learners identified as neglected or delinquent. The World's Best Workforce Summary Report that district leaders are supposed to use to inform their decisions about their educational priorities is collected via email and stored in shared drives at MDE. Web-based grants management platforms are

commercially available that could handle all of the aforementioned submissions. Using a single platform would be more efficient and show the inherent interconnectedness of the districts' shared work toward the goals they have for their learners.

MDE's data reporting systems should be able to package reports by LEA characteristics for researchers, school district staff, and MDE staff to see data trends among similar districts easily. Currently, the MDE Data Center reporting is separate from the SERVS grant management system.

For this research, I downloaded 67 Title I spending spreadsheets and 67 Title III spending spreadsheets from the MDE Data Center. Then I added all 134 spreadsheets to a relational database. Finally, I extracted the collected data by the specific Minnesota UFARS accounting codes. The process was cumbersome and lengthy. A nimble grants management system could empower both MDE and district staff to run queries more efficiently. More flexible querying technology would enable MDE staff to use their expenditure data to inform MDE's professional development offerings for LEAs. Flexible querying would make it possible for researchers and district staff to compare the spending of similar districts.

### **Areas for the Consideration of Federal Policy Makers**

Title programs overwhelmingly spend their money on staff. Instead of asking districts to build a case for some staffing to be considered supplemental, it makes more sense to provide funding for staffing based on the number of learners experiencing poverty or the number of multilingual learners acquiring English as an additional language. The federal government's influence on public education is vast, but its contribution is quite small (Biolisi et al. 2021; Spring, 2019). The complicated

requirements for ESEA Title grants are extensive. The federal government would lessen the complexity of its grants by funding staff positions.

The federal government should recognize that the principle of supplement not supplant presupposes adequate funding. I work in one of the most well-resourced school districts in my state. Yet, like many other teachers, I use my own money to buy facial tissues, snacks, pencils, folders, and other basic tools for my students. Our school district has a foundation that buys tampons and pads for our student bathrooms. Parent groups raise money to make sure that our youngest learners have enough warm clothing to be outside at recess. Yet, federal legislators ask schools to think in terms of what is supplemental, but everything you see inside a public school building is foundational and necessary.

Update the language of the ESEA to be inclusive and asset based. The language within the ESEA that characterizes learners as *disadvantaged* is antiquated, and it minoritizes learners (Jackson, 2005; Kendi, 2016; Yosso, 2005). President Lyndon Johnson wanted to eradicate poverty using education as a tool, but the rhetorical choices of legislators in the mid-1960s is entirely divorced from and problematic in the context of anti-racist equity conversations in the 2020s.

### **Areas Recommended for Future Research**

I recommend that future researchers use this research as a pre-pandemic snapshot of ESEA Title grant spending in Minnesota. I hope future researchers will find this study a useful baseline of pre-pandemic data. This baseline data could also be used for state-to-state comparisons.

Policymakers, psychometricians, and economists should not be the only voices discussing ESEA data and expenditures. It is important for teachers and school administrators to share their holistic perspectives and concerns about how ESEA grants fit into the lifecycle of school funding. Raw numbers and spending statistics do not paint a clear picture of the lived experiences of folks in schools. I encourage future ESEA researchers to include the voices of school staff and stakeholders in their research. Economists have been a dominant voice in ESEA policy research. Conversations with school staff could serve to illuminate how ESEA program implementation and spending decisions directly impact students' environments.

The federal government has signaled and politicized test scores in the context of their ESEA grants. I urge researchers to take a longer-term view of the ESEA. Look at how ESEA changes the educational environment. Test scores do not fully help us to understand school as a habitat for learning. Consider what human services and learner supplies the money supports.

Future researcher teams could also look at ESEA Titles II and IV. They could also dig into other subparts of ESEA grants to examine expenditures in other subparts of the Title I grant. It would be helpful to learn more about what spending looks like across all ESEA grant programs and subparts.

This was very difficult research to do independently. I strongly urge anyone choosing to look at both qualitative and quantitative data sets from 67 school districts to work with a partner or a team. It was time-consuming to download the 134 financial reports, enter each report into a database, query, and create tables and figures that may be intelligible to educators who may be less familiar with school finance data.



### **Final Thoughts**

The American public educational system is emancipatory for many families. In my family and in my career, I have been surrounded by people who feel that education is an inherent good. However, cultural forces like systemic racism have shaped the educational system we swim in together. As educators and legislators work to support our educational institutions, we must all work to undo systemic racism and make our schools anti-racist habitats for learners. I hope to grow as an educator to become a better champion for learners, their learning, and the environments in which they learn.

## REFERENCES

- ACTFL. (2017). NCSSFL-ACTFL can-do statements; A collaboration between NCSSFL and ACTFL. <https://www.actfl.org/educator-resources/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements>
- African American Civil Rights Grant Program. (2020). 16th street baptist church bombing. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/16thstreetbaptist.htm>
- Alexander, N. A. (2019). Locating equity: Implications of a location equity index for Minnesota school finance
- Alexander, N. A., Holquist, S., & Kim, H. (2019). Locating equity: Implications of a location equity index for Minnesota school finance. *Journal of Education Finance*, 44(3), 140.
- Allegretto, S., Garcia, E. & Weiss, E. (2022). Public education funding in the U.S. needs an overhaul. <https://www.epi.org/publication/public-education-funding-in-the-us-needs-an-overhaul/>
- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2020: the official guide to APA style (7th ed.)*. American Psychological Association.
- Bergstedt, N. (2013, August 24,). Indian bust donation brings back mascot discussion Herald Review [https://www.grandrapidsmn.com/news/indian-bust-donation-brings-back-mascot-discussion/article\\_fcb351ba-0c3e-11e3-905f-0019bb2963f4.html](https://www.grandrapidsmn.com/news/indian-bust-donation-brings-back-mascot-discussion/article_fcb351ba-0c3e-11e3-905f-0019bb2963f4.html)

- Biolsi, C., Craig, S., Dhar, A., & Sorensen, B. (2021). Inequality in public school spending across space and time. <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai21-388>
- Birch, D. A., & Auld, M. E. (2019). Public health and school health education: Aligning forces for change. *Health Promotion Practice*, 20(6), 818-823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839919870184>
- Blackborow, M., Clark, E., Combe, L., Morgitan, J., & Tupe, A. (2018). There's a new alphabet in town: ESSA and its implications for students, schools, and school nurses. *NASN School Nurse*, 33(2), 116-122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942602X17747207>
- Blad, E., & Sawchuk, S. (2020). A tragic killing in Minneapolis prompts districts to take a harder look at school police. *Education Week*, 39(35), 4-5. <https://ezproxy.hamline.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eft&AN=143715524&site=ehost-live>
- Block, P. (2008). *Community: The structure of belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Block, P. (2009). *Community: The structure of belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publ.
- Breier, A. D. (2020). Career and technical education high school principals: Perceptions after a sudden federal policy shift (Ed.D.). . (2400288275). <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2400288275?accountid=31287>
- Brooks, J. S. (2012). *Black school, white school: Racism and educational (mis)leadership*. Teachers College Press.

- Caro, R. A. (1982). The years of Lyndon Johnson. [vol. 1], the path to power (1st ed.). Knopf.
- Coates, T. (2015). Between the world and me. Spiegel & Grau.
- Coleman, J. S. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity  
The common school journal. (1838). The Common School Journal.
- Cottrol, R., Diamond, R., & Ware, L. (2004). NAACP v. jim crow the legal strategy that brought down "separate but equal" by toppling school segregation. The American Educator, <https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2004/naacp-v-jim-crow>
- Dedoose Version 7.0.23, web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method research data (2016). Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC [www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com)
- Dee, T. S., Jacob, B., & Schwartz, N. L. (2013). The effects of NCLB on school resources and practices. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 35(2), 252-279. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373712467080>
- Delpit, L. (1995). Other people's children. New Press.
- De Witte, K., Titl, V., Holz, O. & Smet, M. (2019). Financing quality education for all. Leuven University Press.
- Downey, D. B., & Condrón, D. J. (2016). Fifty years since the coleman report: Rethinking the relationship between schools and inequality. Sociol Educ, 89(3), 207-220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040716651676>

Draper, N., & Staff Writer. (1989, ). Bid to rid schools of indian logos may be a first

// MCLU, state education agency encounter compliance and resistance:

[METRO edition]. Star Tribune

<https://ezproxy.hamline.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.hamline.edu/docview/418011230?accountid=28109>

Duff, M. (2019). Negotiating intergovernmental relations under ESSA. *Educational*

*Researcher*, 48(5), 296-308. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19854365>

Dufour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and*

*classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Solution Tree Press.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M. E., & Short, D. J. (2000). *Making content comprehensible*

*for English language learners: The SIOP model (1st ed.)*. Allyn & Bacon.

Education Department General Administrative Regulations 34 CFR (2014a).

<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text->

[idx?SID=393301a7cdcca1ea71f18aae51824e7&node=34:1.1.1.1.22&rgn=div5](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=393301a7cdcca1ea71f18aae51824e7&node=34:1.1.1.1.22&rgn=div5)

Education Department General Administrative Regulations 34 CFR §75.730

[Records related to grant funds] (2014b). <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text->

[idx?SID=393301a7cdcca1ea71f18aae51824e7&node=34:1.1.1.1.22&rgn=div5](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=393301a7cdcca1ea71f18aae51824e7&node=34:1.1.1.1.22&rgn=div5)

Egalite, A. J., Fusarelli, L. D., & Fusarelli, B. C. (2017). Will decentralization affect

educational inequity? *The Every Student Succeeds Act*. *Educational*

*Administration Quarterly*, 53(5), 757-781.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17735869>

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No.89-10, Stat.79 § 201 et seq. [Declaration of Policy] (1965).

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg27.pdf#page=1>

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C.§ 6301 et seq.(2015a).

<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C.§ 6301 §§1000 - 1017 [Title I Part A, Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies] (2015b). <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C.§ 6301 § 1012 [Title I Part A, supplement not supplant] (2015c). <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C.§ 6301 §§3001-3203[Title III, Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students] (2015d).

<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Ford, T. G., Plank, D. N., Schneider, B. L., & Sykes, G. (2009). Handbook of education policy research / edited by gary sykes, barbara schneider, david N. plank; with timothy G. ford. New York : Routledge; Washington, D.C.] : American Educational Research Association.

Fowler, F. C. (2004). Policy studies for educational leaders (2nd ed.). Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms*. Erlbaum.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410613462>
- Goodman, C. C. (2019). Class in the classroom: Poverty, policies, and practices impeding education. *The American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 27(5), 95-136.
- Gordon, N. (2004). Do federal grants boost school spending? evidence from Title I.
- Greenwood, Davydd J., Levin, Morten. (2008). *Introduction to action research social research for social change*. SAGE.
- The handbook of TESOL in K-12 (2019). In de Oliveira L. C. (Ed.), . John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Heise, M. (2017). From no child left behind to every student succeeds: Back to a future for education federalism. *Columbia Law Review*, 117(7), 1859-1896.
- Henig, J. R. (1999). *The color of school reform: Race, politics, and the challenge of urban education*. Princeton University Press.
- Henig, J. R., Hula, R. C., Orr, M., Pedescleaux, D. S., Henig, J. R. R., Hula, R. C. C., & Pedescleaux, D. S. S. (1999). *The color of school reform : Race, politics, and the challenge of urban education*. Princeton University Press.
- Hess, F. M., & Kelly, A. P. (2011). *Carrots, sticks, and the bully pulpit: Lessons from a half-century of federal efforts to improve America's schools*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Press.

- Hotakainen, R., & Staff Writer. (1992). Despite state plea, many schools using Indian nicknames: [METRO edition]. Star Tribune  
<https://ezproxy.hamline.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.hamline.edu/docview/418235800?accountid=28109>
- Jackson, Y. (2011). The pedagogy of confidence. Teachers College Press.
- Jencks, C., Smith, M., Acland, H., Bane, M. J., Cohen, D., Gintis, H., Heyns, B., & Michelson, S. (1972). Inequality. a reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America. Basic Books, Inc.
- Jennings, J. (2018). It's time to redefine the federal role in K-12 education. The Phi Delta Kappan, 100(1), 8-14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26552418>
- Jennings, J. F. (2001). Title I: Its legislative history and its promise. In G. Borman, S. Stringfield & R. Slavin (Eds.), Title I compensatory education at the crossroads (pp. 1-24). Routledge.
- Jessica Bulman-Pozen. (2016). Executive federalism comes to America. Virginia Law Review, 102(4), 953-1030. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43923328>
- Joe R. Feagin. (2020). The white racial frame. Taylor and Francis.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429353246>
- Johnson, Lyndon B., United States., President (1963-1969: Johnson), United States., Office of the Federal Register., (1967). Lyndon B. Johnson : 1966 (in two books): Containing the public messages, speeches, and statements of the president. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/68945922.html>



Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning*. Perseus Books.

Knight, D. S. (2019). Are school districts allocating resources equitably? the Every Student Succeeds Act, teacher experience gaps, and equitable resource allocation. *Educational Policy* (Los Altos, Calif.), 33(4), 615-649.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817719523>

Kvale, S. (2015). In Brinkmann S. (Ed.), *InterViews : Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing / svend brinkmann, aalborg university, denmark ; steinar kvale, university of aarhus* (Third edition. ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Levin, H. (2001). Waiting for Godot: Cost-Effectiveness analysis in education. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2001(90), 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.12>

Levin, H. M., Belfield, C., Muennig, P. A., & Rouse, C. (2007). The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America's children. ().Columbia University. <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8CF9QG9>  
<https://search.datacite.org/works/10.7916/D8CF9QG9>

Lewis, S., & Hogan, A. (2019). Reform first and ask questions later? the implications of (fast) schooling policy and 'silver bullet' solutions. *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(1), 1-18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1219961>

- Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2009). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders* (3rd ed ed.). Corwin Press.
- Loewen, J. W. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me* (1st ed.). Simon & Schuster
- Mann, H., & Fowle, W. B. (1839). *The common school journal*.
- Marshall, C., Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2005). *Re-framing educational politics for social justice*. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- MartinRogers, N., Luebeck, A., Gonzali-Lee, E., Wilder Research, Feir, S., Gregg, M., Moreno, E., The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development (2021). *Utilization of Minnesota American Indian Education Aid*. Wilder Research.
- McClure, H. S. (2020). *The realities of per pupil expenditure at the school level: Considering an alternative data collection protocol and methodology*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed ed.). Pearson.
- Merry, M. S., & New, W. S. (2017). *Is the liberal defense of public schools a fantasy?* *Critical Studies in Education*, 58(3), 373-389.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1154583>
- Michael Heise. (2017). *From no child left behind to every student succeeds: Back to a future for education federalism*. *Columbia Law Review*, 117(7), 1859-1896.  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3047994>

Minnesota Department of Education. (2020). FFY 2019 allocations list of all by district in FIN code 414 data center download. ().

<https://public.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=91>

Minnesota Department of Education. 7-point plan: Better schools for a better

Minnesota <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/about/cmsh/bsbmn/>

Minnesota Department of Education. (2020a). FFY 2019 allocations list of all by district in FIN code 401 data center download ().

<https://public.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=91>

Minnesota Department of Education. (2020b). Fiscal year 2019 expenditures- district/site level report statewide all schools ().

<https://public.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=79>

Minnesota Department of Education. (2022). Minnesota language survey administration

Minnesota standardized English learner procedures.

[https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/md](https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdy/~edisp/mde072042.pdf)

[y/~edisp/mde072042.pdf](https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdy/~edisp/mde072042.pdf)

Minnesota Governor's Education Roundtable. (2020). A roadmap for

transformational change in Minnesota education. (). State of Minnesota.

file:///C:/Users/skale/Downloads/2020%20Governor's%20Education%20Roundtable%20Report.pdf

Minnesota House of Representatives Fiscal Analysis Department. (2020). Financing education in Minnesota 2019-2020. Minnesota House of Representatives Fiscal Analysis Department.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). Digest of education statistics, table 33: Historical summary of public elementary and secondary school statistics for selected year, 1869–70 through 2006–07. ().

[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_033.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_033.asp)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Table 401.70. appropriations for Title I and selected other programs under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, by program and state or jurisdiction: Fiscal years 2017 and 2018. ().

[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_401.70.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_401.70.asp)

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. *The Elementary School Journal*, 84(2), 113-130. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461348>

New REL study examines the postsecondary education and employment pathways of Minnesota public high school graduates. (2019, Sep 9). *US Official News*

No Child Left Behind Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq. (2001).

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (eighth edition ed.).

SAGE.

- Pabon Lopez, M., & Lopez, G. R. (2009). *Persistent inequality: Contemporary realities in the education of undocumented latina/o students*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Parks, B. (2020). George Floyd's death was 'murder' and the accused officer 'knew what he was doing,' Minneapolis police chief says. Cnn  
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/24/us/minneapolis-police-chief-comment-george-floyd-trnd/index.html>
- Pasachoff, E. (2017). Two cheers for evidence: Law, research, and values in education policymaking and beyond. *Columbia Law Review*, 117(7), 1933-1972.
- Piazza, P. (2019). Antidote or antagonist? the role of education reform advocacy organizations in educational policymaking. *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(3), 302-320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1252782>
- Pijanowski, J. (2019). Historical policy influences on balancing educational equity, adequacy, and local control. *JEP : Ejournal of Education Policy*,  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/events/archived\\_events/2018/march-28.aspx](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/events/archived_events/2018/march-28.aspx) (Producer), & Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest (Director). (2018, March 28,). World's best workforce 2016 summary scan webinar [Video/DVD]

- Regional Educational Laboratory Program Midwest (Producer), & Regional Educational Laboratory Program Midwest (Director). (2019, May). World's best workforce 2018 summary training for district staff. [Video/DVD]  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/events/2019/may29.aspx>
- World's best workforce 2018 summary scan training for district staff. REL Midwest (Director). (2019, May 29,).[Video/DVD]  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/events/2019/may29.aspx>
- Schneider, Mercedes K., Burris,Carol Corbett,,. (2015). Common core dilemma : Who owns our schools?
- Senge, P. M. (2006). The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization (Revised & Updated edition ed.). Doubleday.
- Schowalter, J. (2022). Financial and compliance report on federally assisted programs for the year ended June 30, 2021. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Management and Budget. <https://www.osa.state.mn.us/media/luht5m0/2021-state-of-mn-single-audit.pdf>
- Spring, J. H. (2018). American education
- Starkey, L. (2019). Three dimensions of student-centred education: A framework for policy and practice. *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(3), 375-390.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2017.1281829>
- Stone, B. (Ed.). (1999). The round table: Fiction, biography and the use of power

Tarone, E. "Minnesota's multilingualism and English learner education: A historical perspective. Paper presented in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Tumulty, K. (2014, May 17,). The great society at 50. The Washington Post  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/05/17/the-great-society-at-50/>

Tuttle, L. M. (2016). Another perspective: The every student succeeds act: Opportunities for the music educator. Music Educators Journal, 103(2), 64-66.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.hamline.edu:2048/stable/44678233>

Uniform Guidance Technical Assistance for Grantees 2 CFR § 3474 [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards] (2014). <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=be24d843a89f91b635618eb7a061c560&node=pt2.1.3474&rgn=div5>.

U.S. Department of Education. (a). English language acquisition state grants.  
<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/english-language-acquisition-state-grants/>

U.S. Department of Education. (b). Office of formula grants.  
<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/>

U.S. Department of Education. (c). Supporting effective instruction state grants, title II, part A. <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/instruction-state-grants-title-ii-part-a/>

- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). Leveraging educational assistance partnership (LEAP) program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/leap/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017a). Indian education formula grants. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/indianformula/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017b). Student support and academic enrichment program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/ssae/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2018a). Small, rural school achievement program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/reapsrsa/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2018b). Title I, part A program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>
- US Department of Education. (2003). Formula grant definition <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/formgrant.html>
- US Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). Elementary and secondary school emergency relief fund. <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund/>
- Usdan, M. D. (1994, November 23,). Goals 2000: Opportunities and caveats. Education Week, <https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-goals-2000-opportunities-and-caveats/1994/11>
- Vinovskis, M. (2009). From a nation at risk to no child left behind. Teachers College Press.



WIDA. (2016). K-12 can do descriptors, key uses edition . WIDA.

U.S. reports: Brown v. Board of Education, 1953).

<https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep347483/>.

Umansky, I., Porter, L., Moreno, E., & Pierson, A. (2021). Alaska Native students as English learner students: Examining patterns in identification, classification, service provision, and reclassification (REL 2021–088). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Weis, L. (2016). Social class and education. In Banks, James A. and McGee Banks, Cherry A. (Ed.), *Multicultural education issues and perspectives* (). Wiley.

Wong, K. K., & Meyer, S. J. (1998). Title I schoolwide programs: A synthesis of findings from recent evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 20(2), 115-136. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737020002115>

World's Best Work Force, Minn. Stat. § 120B.11 et seq. (2020). Sec. 120B.11 MN Statutes.

Worsham High School Home Economics Living Room; ca. 1951; Civil Action No. 1333; Dorothy E. Davis, et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County et al.; Civil Case Files, 1938 - 12/31/1990; Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA. [Online Version, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/worsham-home-economics-living>, November 5, 2022]

Wrabel, S. L., Saultz, A., Polikoff, M. S., Mceachin, A., & Duque, M. (2018). The politics of elementary and secondary education act waivers. *Educational Policy*, 32(1), 117-140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904816633048>

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

## APPENDIX A

### GLOSSARY

**Categorical education aid-** State or federal education money given to assist the school in funding specific types of educational programming.

**Education formula grants-** Education grants that are awarded based upon a formula. Such grants are awarded to all eligible grantees. Grantees do not need to compete to be selected for an award.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) -** The initial authorization of categorical aid to help disadvantaged learners in order to combat poverty and provide funding for greater equity in K-12 schools.

**Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) -** The most recent reauthorization of the ESEA. Title I, II, and III, Part A grants are currently awarded under this authorization of the law.

**Local Educational Agency (LEA) -** Is a federal term defined in federal guidance, “...means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools” (EDGAR CFR 34 § 303.23(a)). In Minnesota, charter schools or charter school networks, intermediate special education districts, and traditional geographic public school districts are all LEAs.

**Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)** - The state agency that administers all K-12 ESEA, IDEA, and Carl Perkins Federal Grant Programs. In Minnesota, MDE also administers school lunch programs and early childhood education. The Minnesota Department of Education is the State Educational Agency for the state of Minnesota.

**No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)**- The authorization of the ESEA in 2001 which imposed controversial budgetary constraints for schools whose students did not show adequate yearly progress. This authorization of the act also required that school districts to disaggregate student growth and achievement scores on tests by racial groups, socio economic status, English learner status and Special Education Status.

**State Educational Agency (SEA)**- Is a federal term that, “means the [State](#) board of education or other agency or officer primarily responsible for the [State](#) supervision of public [elementary schools](#) and secondary schools, or, if there is no such officer or agency, an officer or agency designated by the Governor or by [State](#) law” (EDGAR CFR 34 § 300.41). The Minnesota Department of Education is the SEA for the state of Minnesota.

**Title I Part A Schoolwide Program Model**- Schools may choose to use their Title I funding to support a schoolwide program. Choosing to become a schoolwide program, means that the school staff and community stakeholders develop a comprehensive written plan to address student needs an improved teaching and learning throughout the school. The school staff and parents as a team work together to identify what needs are most urgent at their school and then they create a plan that the school can implement to help all learners. This plan should have clear goals, it should include steps toward implementation, and a means of evaluation. Schools must consider how their plan has worked annually by examining their learners’ progress and needs.

**Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance Services Program Model-** Schools may opt to use a targeted assistance model of service for students in Title I. Within a targeted assistance model, the school uses Title I funds solely to support students who are in need of additional academic assistance to meet grade-level proficiency targets as accorded by academic state standards (ESSA, 2015).

**APPENDIX B****2018-2019 World's Best Workforce Summary Report Requirements for Academic Achievement Gap Goal Reporting**

## 13. Close the Achievement Gap(s) Between Student Groups

**Goal**

Provide the established SMART goal for the 2018-19 school year.

**Result**

Provide the result for the 2018-19 school year that directly ties back to the established goal.

**Goal Status:****Narrative**

- What data have you used to identify needs for all students in this goal area?
- How is this data disaggregated by student groups and inclusive of all students?
- What strategies are in place to support this goal area?
- How well are you implementing your strategies?
- How do you know whether it is or is not helping you make progress toward your goal?

14. Do you have another goal for Close the Achievement Gap(s) Between Student Groups?  

---

If schools have a second academic achievement gap goal, question 15 is identical to all the parts within question 13.

## APPENDIX C

### Title I Narrative Questions in 2018-2019

#### Prompts for School Participation

1.1.1 Describe the trends from your CNA (comprehensive needs assessment) for reading (English Language Arts).

1.1.2 Using the trends and findings in your CNA list your priorities for reading (English language arts).

1.1.3 Using the data collected from your CNA, write a student achievement Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound (SMART) goal for reading (English language arts).

1.1.4 Describe the trends and findings from your CNA for mathematics.

1.1.5 Using the trends and findings in your CNA, list your priorities for mathematics.

1.1.6 Using the data collected from your CINA, write a student achievement SMART goal for mathematics.

1.1.7 Describe the trends and findings from your CNA if using Title I funds for any local education agency (LEA) activity (After School, Preschool, Instructional Program, Summer Program, Professional Development and/or Other Activity).

1.1.8 Using the trends and findings in your CNA, list your priorities if you are using Title I funds for any LEA activity (After School, Preschool, Instructional Program, Summer Program, Professional Development and/or Other Activity).

1.1.9 Using the data collected from your CNA write a student achievement SMART foal for each LEA activity if you are using Title I funds for any LEA activity (After School,

Preschool, Instructional Program, Summer Program, Professional Development and/or Other Activity).

1.2.1 Describe the strategy the district uses to coordinate Title I program/s under this part with programs under Title II and Title III (if applicable) to provide professional development for teachers, principals and other school leaders designed to address student achievement as indicated in the CNA.

1.2.2 Describe how your District Title I program (Targeted Assistance and/or Schoolwide) is developed with timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals, other school leaders, para-professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), other appropriate school personnel, and with parents of children in schools served under this part.

1.2.3 Describe how your district coordinates and integrates services for the following student populations in your district (as appropriate): English Learners (EL, students with disabilities, Migrant (MEP) students, neglected or delinquent students, students who are homeless, students in foster care, and other students.

1.2.4 Describe how your Title I funds supplement not supplant general education programs and other existing programs.



## **APPENDIX D**

### **Title III Narrative Questions in 2018-2019**

#### **1.1 Title III Description**

1.1.1 Describe the EL population highlighting demographic trends.

#### **1.2 Title III Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

1.2.1 Describe the trends and findings from your CNA for English language development.

1.2.2 Using the trends and findings of your CNA, list your priorities for English language development.

1.2.3 What measurable academic goals and objectives are designed to address identified EL needs? List Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-based, Time-based (SMART) goals which support priorities for English language development.

#### **1.3 District Goals**

1.3.1 What is the LEA Performance Target for the percentage of English Learners who have attained English proficiency and who have made progress toward proficiency by the end of the school year?

#### **1.5 Required Components of Title III Programming - Professional Development Activities**

1.5.1 List and describe how the program will use a portion of the funds to provide high quality professional development to classroom teachers (including teachers in classroom settings outside of language instruction educational programs), principals, administrators, and other school or community based personnel which is: designed to improve the instruction and assessment of English Learners; designed to enhance the ability of such teachers, principals, and other school leaders to understand and implement curricula, assessment practices and measures, and instructional strategies for ELs; demonstrating

the effectiveness of the professional development in increasing students' English proficiency or substantially increasing the subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge and teaching skills of such teachers; and of sufficient intensity and duration to have a positive and lasting impact on the teacher's performance in the classroom.

### **1.6 Required Components of Title III Programming - Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)**

1.6.1 Describe how the Title III language instruction educational program will increase the English proficiency of ELs by providing evidence-based, effective language instruction educational programs that meet the needs of English learners and will demonstrate EL success in increasing English language proficiency and student academic achievement.

1.6.2 Title III funds must be used to supplement no supplant instructional programs for ELs. Describe how Title III funds will be used to supplement existing federal and state programs serving English Learners. Explain as necessary, current core EL programs in order to demonstrate the supplemental use of Title III funds.

### **1.7 Family, School, and Community Engagement**

1.7.1 Describe how the LEA or Consortium will incorporate other effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplemental language instruction educational programs for English learners which include parent, family, and community engagement activities and may include strategies that serve to coordinate and align related programs.

1.7.2 Describe how the LEA or Constoritum will provide community participation programs, family literacy services, and parent and family outreach and training activities to English learners and their families to improve the English language skills of English learners and assist parents and families in helping their children to improve their academic achievement and becoming active participation in the education of their children.

## **2.1 Professional Development**

2.1.1 Describe the supplemental project or activity, including the performance goal it supports.

2.1.2 Describe how the data from the needs assessment influenced the decision to provide the project or activity.

2.1.3 Describe the process that is in place for evaluating the effectiveness of the project or activity supported with Title III funds.

2.1.4 Describe the anticipated timeline of the project or activity.

## **3.1 Language Instruction Educational Program**

3.1.1 Describe the supplemental project or activity including the performance goal it supports.

3.1.2 Describe how the data from the needs assessment influenced the decision to provide the project or activity.

3.1.3 Describe the process that is in place for evaluating the effectiveness of the project or activity supported with Title III funds.

3.1.4 Describe the anticipated timeline of the project or activity.

## Appendix E

### 2018-2019 All Title I Spending By UFARS Fin Accounting Code Categories

Allowable Codes	Description	Total Amount in Dollars
110	Administrative Supervision	\$ 1534110.77
140	Licensed Classroom Teacher	\$ 39059350.44
141	Non-licensed Classroom Personnel	\$ 208881.71
143	Licensed Instructional Support Personnel	\$ 9401941.09
144	Non-Licensed Instructional Support Personnel	\$ 1322623.6
145	Substitute Teacher Salaries	\$ 198823.32
146	Substitute Non-licensed Classroom Instructional Supplies	\$ 6050.88
156	School Social Worker	\$ 2197491.47
157	School Psychologist	\$ 83658.84
161	Certified Paraprofessional and Personal Care Assistant	\$ 7469314.04
165	School Counselor	\$ 943002.34
170	Non-instructional Support	\$ 2630870.04
175	Cultural Liaison	\$ 1944794.66
185	Other Salary Payments (licensed or certified)	\$ 1451870

186	Other Salary Payments (non-licensed or non-certified)	\$ 262284.75
199	Salary Adjustments- Full Cafeteria Plans or Cash in Lieu of Benefits	\$ 112098.78
200 Series	Employee Benefits	\$ 22665189.6
303	Federal Subawards and Subcontracts (amount up to \$25,000)	\$ 2006858.29
304	Federal Subawards and Subcontracts (excess amount over \$25,000)	\$ 2326014.04
320	Communications Services	\$ 417327.4
329	Postage and Parcel Services	\$ 11989.12
360	Transportation Contracts with Private or Public Carriers up to \$25,000	\$ 496061.99
364	Transportation Contracts with Private or Public Carriers over \$25,000	\$ 95.06
365	Interdepartmental Transportation	\$ 49858.66
366	Travel, Conventions and Conferences	\$ 308025.64
368	Out-Of-State Travel, Federal Reimbursed	\$ 106826.26
389	Staff Tuition and Other Reimbursements	\$ 63
401	Supplies and Materials- Non Instructional	\$ 477509.68
405	Non-Instructional Software Licensing Agreements	\$ 26928.97

406	Instructional Software Licensing Agreements	\$ 119150.35
430	Supplies and Materials- Non-Individualized Instructional	\$ 3465919.09
433	Supplies and Materials - Individualized Instruction	\$ 217124.78
455	Non-Instructional Technology Supplies	\$ 201.51
456	Instructional Technology Supplies	\$ 42648.73
460	Textbooks or Workbooks	\$ 22316.43
461	Standardized Tests	\$ 24989.41
465	Non-Instructional Technology Devices	\$ 1099.26
466	Instructional Technology Devices	\$ 92269.3
470	Media Resources	\$ 17718.32
490	Food	\$ 228765.81
506	Capitalized Instructional Technology Software	\$ 10000
530	Other Equipment Purchased (includes furniture)	\$ 668.76
555	Capitalized Non-Instructional Technology Hardware	\$ 56706.49
556	Capitalized Instructional Technology Hardware	\$ 10517.5
820	Dues, Memberships, Licenses, and Certain Fees	\$ 24901.75
895	Federal and Nonpublic Indirect Cost (Chargeback)	\$ 2307231.51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Total expenditures in Title I</b>	<b>\$ 103962143.4</b>

## Appendix F

### 2018-2019 All Title III Spending By UFARS Fin Accounting Code Categories

Allowable Codes	Description	Total Amount in Dollars
110	Administrative Supervision	111986.4
140	Licensed Classroom Teacher	488371.11
141	Non-licensed Classroom Personnel	349198.98
143	Licensed Instructional Support Personnel	916499.2
144	Non-Licensed Instructional Support Personnel	123307.76
145	Substitute Teacher Salaries	81385.38
146	Substitute Non-licensed Classroom Instructional Supplies	846.4
154	School Nurse	141.48
156	School Social Worker	562.75
157	School Psychologist	132.64
161	Certified Paraprofessional and Personal Care Assistant	1350194.52
163	Foreign Language Interpreter	550
165	School Counselor	60989.54
170	Non-instructional Support	184982.1

175	Cultural Liaison	435275.09
185	Other Salary Payments (licensed or certified)	420402.67
186	Other Salary Payments (non-licensed or non-certified)	32545.4
199	Salary Adjustments- Full Cafeteria Plans or Cash in Lieu of Benefits	15042.31
200 Series	Employee Benefits	1491895.28
303	Federal Subawards and Subcontracts (amount up to \$25,000)	269689.99
304	Federal Subawards and Subcontracts (excess amount over \$25,000)	23642.11
320	Communications Services	409.54
329	Postage and Parcel Services	1078.94
358	Foreign Language Interpreter Services (up to \$25,000)	2795.76
360	Transportation Contracts with Private or Public Carriers up to \$25,000	17772.4
365	Interdepartmental Transportation	10135.96
366	Travel, Conventions and Conferences	160367.82
368	Out-Of-State Travel, Federal Reimbursed	15777.71
401	Supplies and Materials- Non Instructional	47133.6
405	Non-Instructional Software Licensing Agreements	88509.24



406	Instructional Software Licensing Agreements	81720.35
430	Supplies and Materials- Non-Individualized Instructional	231188.93
433	Supplies and Materials - Individualized Instruction	84946.82
455	Non-Instructional Technology Supplies	70
456	Instructional Technology Supplies	3296.09
460	Textbooks or Workbooks	42981.65
465	Non-Instructional Technology Devices	1810.4
466	Instructional Technology Devices	4117.14
470	Media Resources	12052.14
490	Food	20870.68
505	Capitalized Non-Instructional Technology Software	400
530	Other Equipment Purchased (includes furniture)	2586.61
555	Capitalized Non-Instructional Technology Hardware	10381.47
556	Capitalized Instructional Technology Hardware	28265.59
820	Dues, Memberships, Licenses, and Certain Fees	8590.95
890	Federal In-Kind Match Expenditures	72054.91
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Total expenditures in Title III</b>	<b>7306955.81</b>

## Appendix G

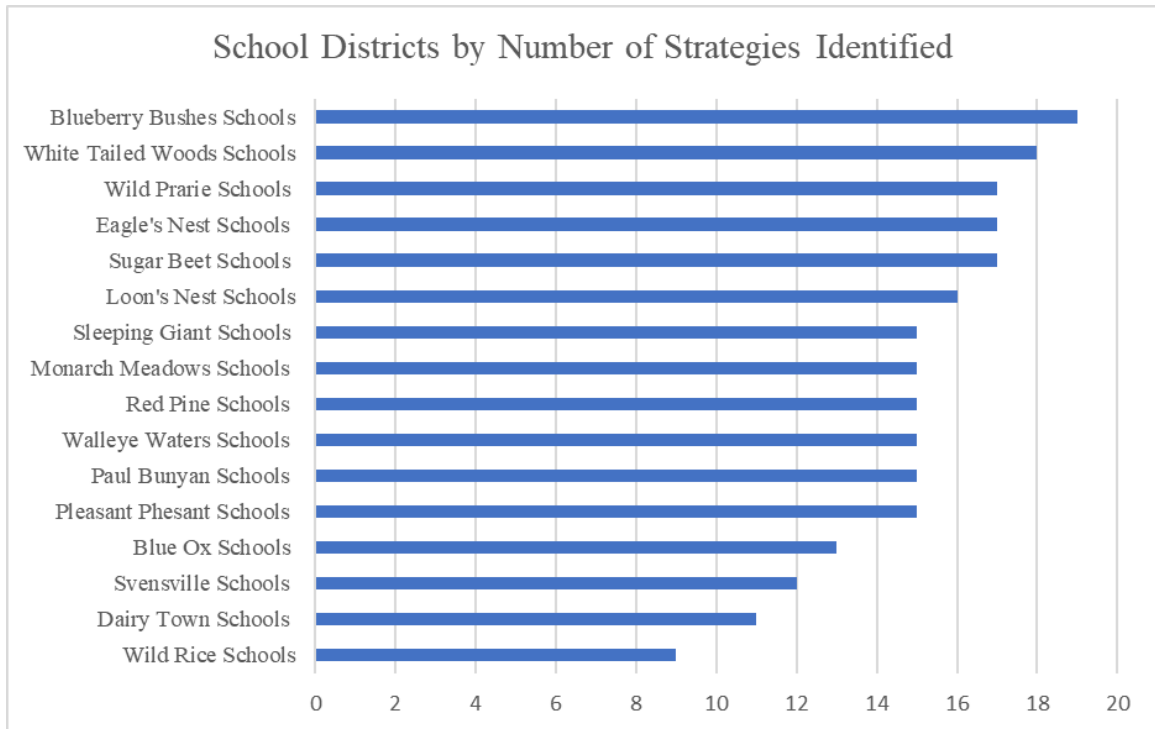
### Total Count of Strategies Mentioned Collectively in all Narratives Sampled

Strategy	Number of Times Mentioned
Data-related process and or professional development around data driven processes	456
Professional Development (Generic)	395
Professional Development in core instructional practices	329
Differentiated Learner Services including Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) including Response to Intervention (RtI) and Postitive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	254
Support for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement	229
Progress monitoring	187
Staffing of Multicultural or Multilingual Liaisons	173
Linguistic supports for academic language and comprehensible input strategies	170
Cultural, diversity, and or equity related professional development	167
Instructional coaching	163
Curriculum purchase with professional development	111
Professional learning community (PLC) or staff teams implementation or refinement	102
Co-teaching	90
Homework help program	82
Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	81
Sheltered Instruction Operational Protocol (SIOP)	69
Class size reduction	66
School climate and social emotional learning (SEL) practices and or professional development	65

AVID® Program	52
Career development courses	33
Evidence-based practices	24
Rising Scholars	16
Staffing of social workers and or counselors	11
Young Scholars	7
Teacher recruitment	6

## Appendix H

### School Districts and Number of Strategies Identified



### Appendix I

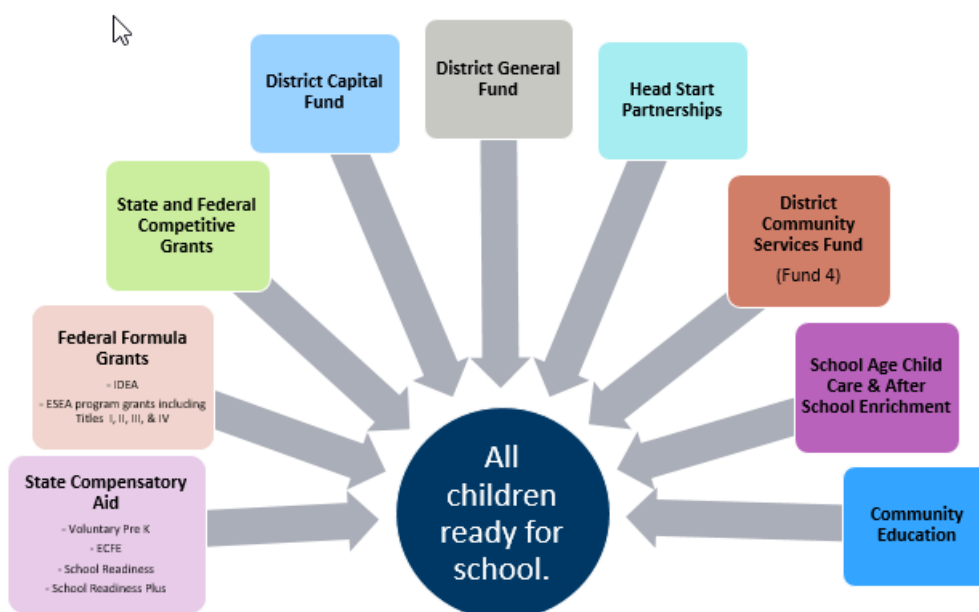
#### Concept Maps of Funding Streams for All World's Best Workforce Goals

These concept maps were presented by at Hamline University June 13, 2019 and then presented at the MN Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education ProgramMAASFEP Fall Conference 2019.

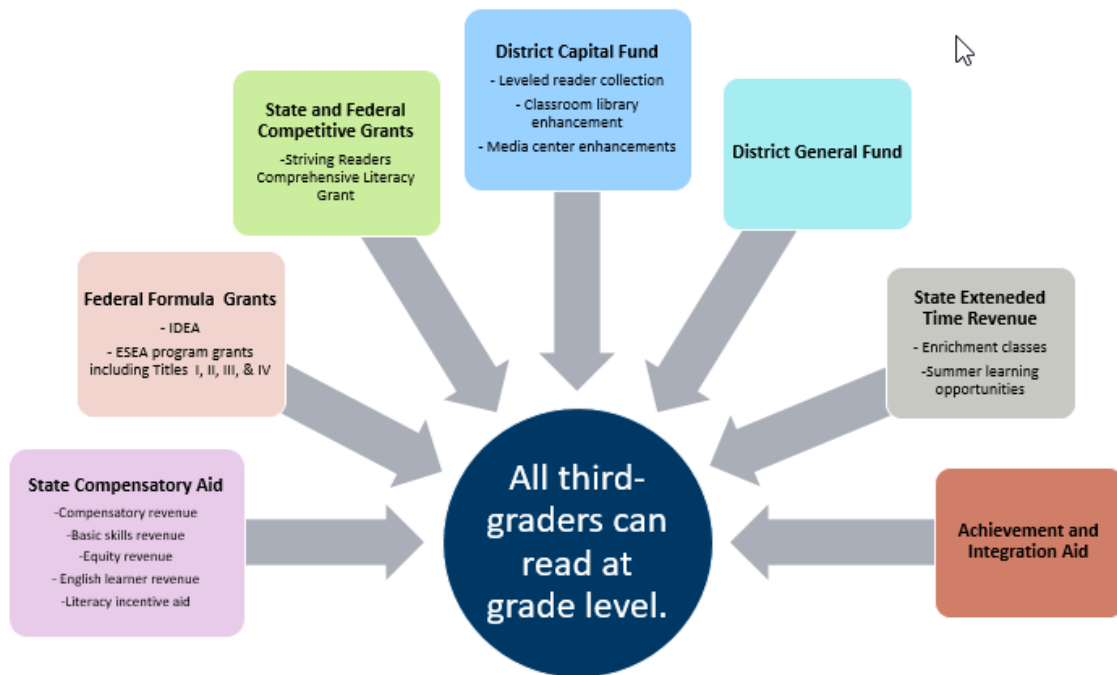
Concept Map for Funding all World's Best Workforce Goals



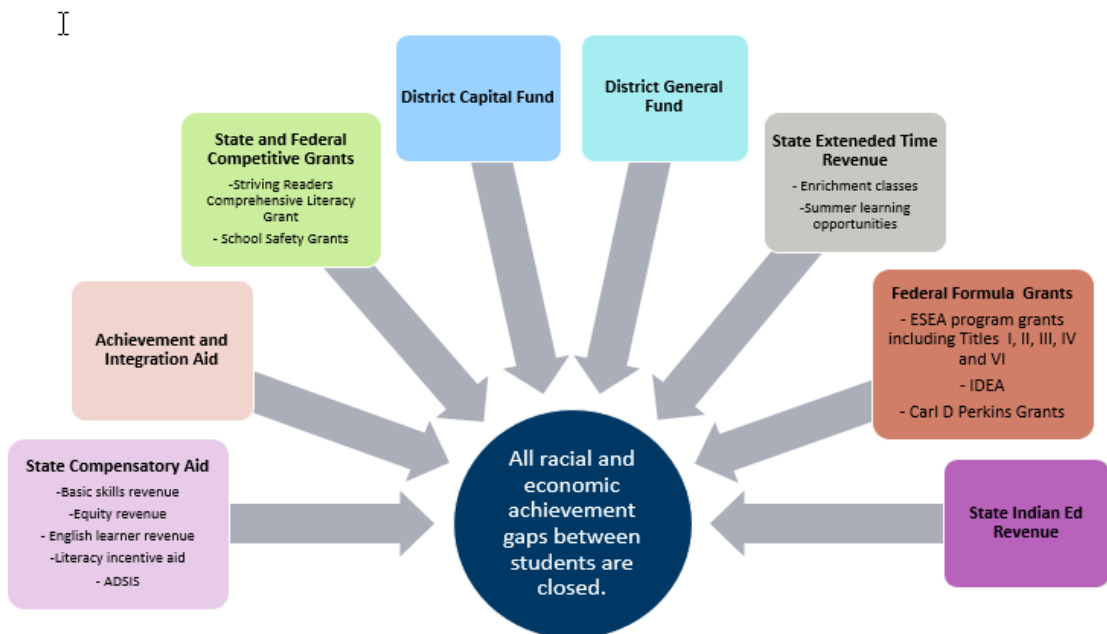
Concept Map for Funding Goal Area 1: Learner Readiness for Kindergarten



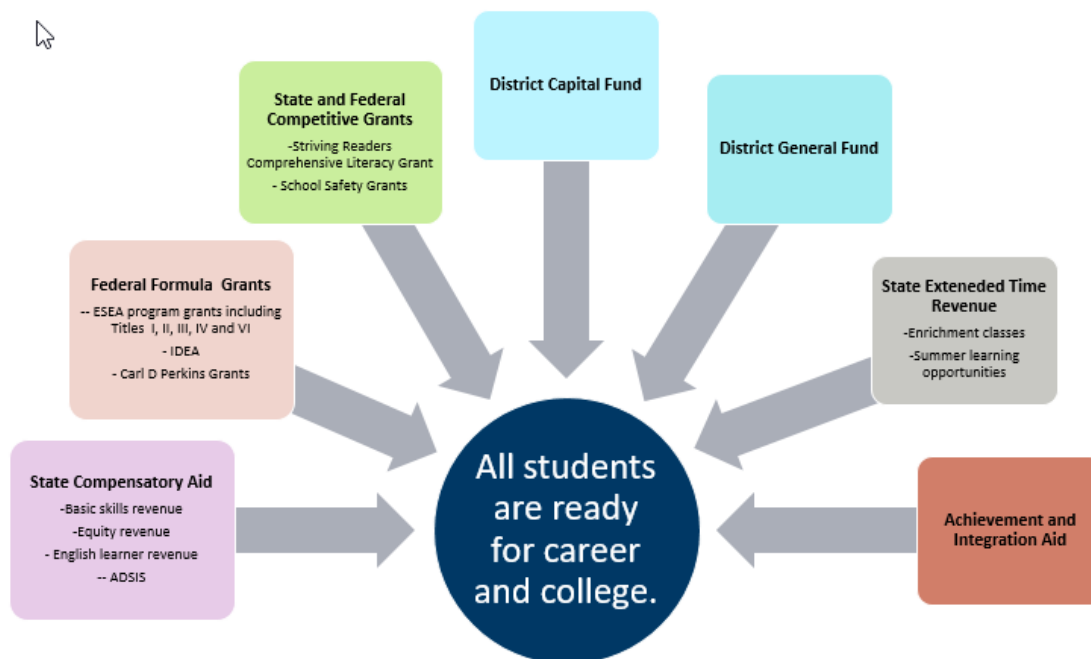
### Concept Map for Funding Goal Area 2: Third Graders Read at Grade Level



### Concept Map for Funding Goal Area 3: Academic Achievement Gap Closure



Concept Map for Funding Goal Area 4: College and Career Readiness



Concept Map for Funding Goal Area 5: High School Graduation for All

