

The State of Title I: Developing the Capability to Support Instructional Improvement



SUSAN L. MOFFITT AND DAVID K. COHEN

Title I has a mixed legacy. It helped cultivate and sustain the political salience of improving the education of children who live in poverty. It helped sweep schools, regardless of their student population's poverty levels, into the broader national standards-accountability reform effort. It has been a vehicle for liberal, conservative, bipartisan, public, and private reform agendas. It developed durable constituencies and appetites for federal funds. While Title I helped expand governments' administrative capabilities, it did much less to remedy the unevenness in instructional capability on which Title I built. The combination of Title I funds and standards based reform has enabled some interventions, such as Success for All and America's Choice, to demonstrate instructional improvement. Yet the potential for interventions like these to reduce the achievement gap remains profoundly constrained by the persistently unequal allocation of educational resources, rising income inequality, and the lack of assistance from social and economic policy.

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To consider the legacy and future of ESEA Title I, one must understand its past, and especially the past of the governance system in which any conceivable Title I would operate. Title I is situated in a federal system in which federal policies and programs depend for success on the state and local school governments that are responsible for implementation. Those governments have historically devoted relatively few staff and resources to instructional improvement: to support teaching and learning, especially ambitious teaching that treats children like active sense-makers. Those governments have also historically relied heavily on

school-based policies to address educational problems that arise in good part outside of the schools, and do so with only modest assistance from social and economic policy. This was not a problem as long as federal policies had modest expectations of what such policies should accomplish and made modest demands on state and local instructional capability. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, federal education officials began efforts to expand ESEA's Title I beyond the modest goal of fiscal transfers to include the much more ambitious goal of instructional improvement with the aim of eliminating the achievement gap, an initiative

Susan L. Moffitt is Mary Tefft and John Hazen White Sr. Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Brown University. **David K. Cohen** is John Dewey Collegiate Professor at the School of Education and Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan.

The order of authorship was determined by a coin toss: we have enjoyed contributing to this article equally. We are grateful to Kelly Branham and Ferris Lupino for their careful research assistance. All errors are our responsibility. Direct correspondence to: Susan L. Moffitt, susan_moffitt@brown.edu, Brown University, Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy, 67 George St., Box 1977, Providence, RI 02912; David K. Cohen, dkcohen@umich.edu, University of Michigan, School of Education, 610 E. University Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

that found its way into law a decade later with the Hawkins-Stafford amendments to ESEA. Yet as ESEA Title I began to grow increasingly ambitious, state and local governments did not match the pace; they did not develop the capability to effectively implement those policies and programs to support significant instructional improvement. In other nations, governments support instructional practice through national curricula and examinations keyed to the curricula that are reflected in university-based teacher preparation and in inspectorates that enable school and teacher-level quality-control. The United States does not have such forms of capability to support instruction and relies instead on a congeries of efforts provided through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and some state and local governments to encourage instructional improvement.

Limited capability to support instructional improvement has been due in part to the ways in which the governance system developed for education in the United States.¹ By governance, we mean not only government entities at all levels of the U.S. federal system, but also the nongovernmental organizations that participate in policy implementation and service delivery. During the twentieth century, state and local school governments gradually developed more financial and other administrative capabilities; but those grew with more speed and depth than the capability related to the design, management, and improvement of instruction. State and local governments developed few methods to provide teachers with rigorous opportunities to learn or to oversee teaching. That would not have been a problem had federal and state policies continued to focus on the allocation of school resources such as funds and on the regulation of those inputs. But, by the late 1980s, federal education policy began to expand to include efforts to regulate schools' results and to refocus Title I on student achievement outcomes, in addition to regulating and allocating school resources. By the mid-1990s, the Clinton administration in-

corporated that idea in a larger design for standards-based schooling—the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), which sought to engineer school improvement nationally by regulating student achievement outcomes tied to academic standards. Seven years later, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) took the core of IASA and added a much more demanding compliance schedule and penalties. Within half a dozen years, schools' success on that compliance schedule began to seem doomed. The states and several state-related agencies then shifted the political and operational center of gravity from Washington to the states and a few nongovernmental organizations with the Common Core, but preserved the frame and key elements of standards-based reform.

This, in brief, is the situation in which we find ESEA Title I: standards-based reform, which was written into Title I by the Clinton and Bush reforms, remains the frame of education policy. But the Clinton and Bush reforms and Obama's administration of those reforms did little to enable state and local school agencies to develop the instructional capability—the knowledge, norms, and communities of practice—to respond constructively to the policies' ambitions. We present our analysis of how this situation developed and conclude with a discussion of the problems it presents and some ideas about how they might be managed. We discuss one possibility for managing the inherited problems Title I faces—using Title I funds to support interventions like several of the Comprehensive School Reform Designs—as well as the problems facing those designs.

IDEAS, AMBITIONS, AND POLICY

The capability to implement policy depends on a policy's ambitions and the gap between the policy's ambitions and current practice (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, chapter 2; Moffitt 2014). Changing ideas about what schools in general and Title I in particular should accomplish created a growing imbalance between the policy aims that defined the scope of federal,

1. We approach governance in a way consistent with Theda Skocpol's definition of a state as "any set of relatively differentiated organizations that claims sovereignty and coercive control over a territory and its population" (Skocpol 1992, 43).

state, and local governments' responsibilities and authorities and the capabilities to deliver on those aims. The evolution of these ideas has been discussed elsewhere (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, chapter 4), but we revisit them here to highlight the importance of improving instruction to Title I's legacy, and what might be done to encourage greater capability for instructional improvement and implementing Title I's ambitious aims.

The expansion of education policy in the 1960s is a familiar story. In the context of growing concern with poverty, pressures from the civil rights movement and its allies, and a high tide of liberal ideas in Lyndon Johnson's administration, a stream of quite unprecedented federal and state policies took shape. The passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act facilitated the passage of other legislation (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, 48–49; Jennings 1985, 55–60), and the federal government and some states devised policies that sought to correct several of the nation's most fundamental social and educational problems. Great weaknesses in the education of disadvantaged children were the focal point of two federal programs: Head Start and Title 1 of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Like many policies, Title I combined multiple aims and purposes, and used legislative enthusiasm for antipoverty programs as a vehicle to create a breakthrough for federal aid to education (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, 49). Title I did not emerge from a rational design to end poverty, nor from a rational design to promote civil rights, nor from a rational design to improve instruction. Instead, it represented a pragmatic approach to funnel federal funds to schools—something some members of Congress had been attempting to accomplish for a decade before the act's passage—that linked federal funding for schools to concurrent ideas about promoting civil rights and addressing poverty. Roughly a decade later Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which aimed to correct the almost complete neglect of education for children with disabilities. Several states had their own programs in these two areas, and all states participated in the three federal programs. Other federal legislation sought to improve schooling for the children of mi-

grant workers, for Native American children, and for homeless children. In addition, the Supreme Court's 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* (414 US 563) decision helped break new ground for educational support for English-language learners. Erika Frankenberg and Kendra Taylor's article in this issue discusses the passage of Title I ESEA further.

These policies began to set a new course for education governance. They asserted a federal priority to help the disadvantaged, and they broke with long resistance to a significant federal role in schooling. They set new ambitions for federal and state policy, involved the federal government more deeply in the management of schooling, and expanded government responsibility. It bears remembering, however, that Title I's principal design feature is a formula grant that distributes funds to state and local education agencies, which then distribute the funds to schools. Title I was explicitly prohibited from getting in the business of federal involvement in specifying curriculum and guiding instruction. Though it is difficult to conceive of Title I as a singular treatment, in that it could be used in many different ways, studies have suggested it purchased about thirty minutes of additional instruction several days per week for children who received Title I services during the late 1970s and 1980s (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, 74). Although these policies, programs, and ideas were path-breaking and significant when we situate them in the longer history of schooling, they brought modest resources to teachers, students, and implementation in schools.

Put differently, Title I began as a way to distribute federal funds to schools and for those funds to support schooling for children in poverty. As Nora Gordon and Sarah Reber discuss elsewhere in this issue, Title I faced problems targeting those funds and ensuring that new federal resources supplemented rather than supplanted local resources. Federal and state governments developed fiscal accountability to manage these problems during the 1970s and 1980s (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, chapter 3).

But soon after federal and state governments began to manage that problem, Title I's original mission came to seem too modest. Expectations mounted for Title I to eliminate the

racial and socioeconomic achievement gap. The first major step in that direction followed the publication of a study, mandated under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, that was to report on the extent of inequality in education: *Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey* (EEOS), commonly referred to as the Coleman report (Coleman et al. 1966; Coleman 1966, 70–75).² It became an instant cause célèbre. It announced that the school inputs that were commonly thought to shape student performance had little or no differential effect on that performance. The chief influence on differences in school-level average student performance was not the educational resources that school funds purchased but school-level average of students' social and economic class.³ This was thought to raise fundamental questions about the value of investment in schooling, and about the schools' vaunted role as “the balance wheel of the social machinery” (Mann 1891, 251). Few readers understood that the report dealt only with differences among schools, and that most of the differences among students' performance were within, not among schools. The survey could not connect teachers or other resources to students within schools, and so it could not analyze the relations among student background, school resources, and student performance within schools.

A few years later, those questions were given added force as a stream of evaluations reported that government policies and programs seemed not to have the expected effects; federal efforts to repair fundamental problems in U.S. schools and society had few discernable effects. In retrospect, we can see that it would have been astonishing had they reported anything else, for the problems were fundamental, the programs were modest (despite being major departures from past policy), and the pro-

grams' chief vehicles were the schools and school systems whose weak capability was one key source of the problems. Less discouraging accounts of effectiveness appeared in studies of Title I such as *Sustaining Effects*, but generated little political or scholarly attention (Carter 1983, 1984). Current analysis from Rucker Johnson in this issue provides further evidence of the positive impact that Title I had in its early years, even though it resided at the margins of the average participating student's school day.

Despite disconfirming evidence, one important effect was the growing sense, in the late 1970s and 1980s, that ESEA Title I was not sufficiently improving students' performance. Another was the quite novel idea of what would be sufficient—that the problem that ESEA Title I should solve was the racial or social class gap in achievement. Moreover, by the late 1980s another idea had begun to gain acceptance, namely, that the source of the problem was the schools' deficiencies, not the students' disadvantage, an idea discussed further in Gloria Ladsen-Billing's article in this issue. It took most of the 1980s for a new policy frame to develop, but with the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford amendments to Title I of the ESEA, a fundamental shift in ideas about the purposes of federal education policy took shape. The aims of federal and state education policy began to shift to regulation of outcomes, thus moving beyond the original emphasis on the allocation and delivery of resources to the achievement of results. The 1988 amendments targeted poor performance in schools as the central problem for ESEA Title I, and made high-poverty elementary schools eligible for whole school grants, which were intended to encourage across the board organizational change to improve instruction.

2. This had been intended as a survey of educational resources and racial segregation. But Alexander Mood, the U.S. Commissioner of Educational Statistics selected James Coleman to lead the study; and they designed something quite different.

3. The Coleman report suggested that students' social and economic class was the chief influence on school-to-school differences in their academic performance, and that there were large differences in the average achievement of black and white students. These were things that educators, testing experts and some academics had known since tests began to be administered early in the twentieth century, but school systems had held test results closely and quietly; and problems of race and inequality in education had not been a topic of great scientific, public, or political interest.

The 1994 Clinton administration reforms built on these ideas that Title I should eliminate the achievement gap and that a chief source of the problem resided in schools' deficiencies. The 1994 IASA encouraged states and localities to hold schools responsible for weak student performance and marked a new era in education policy, in which the federal government sought to focus action on group inequality in school outcomes, and to require state and local action that was thought likely to reduce that inequality. Goals 2000 and IASA required that state and local school systems set academic standards, require assessments that were "aligned" with the standards, and hold schools accountable for students' performance on those assessments. These ideas were adopted but framed in much more rigid mandates in NCLB, President George W. Bush's school reform bill. One key idea in both the Clinton and Bush bills was that research reports of weak student performance, coupled with schools' accountability for student performance, would prompt school, school district, or state action to improve performance.

These policies marked major developments. They expanded schools' mission to ensure that there were no intergroup inequalities in achievement and that all groups met specified outcome targets. That in turn greatly expanded the responsibility of governments and school systems, from ensuring the allocation and delivery of resources to achieving results. The expanded responsibility was manifest in many ways, perhaps most strikingly that schools, teachers, and school officials would be accountable for their students' performance.

Yet this expanded responsibility collided, paradoxically, with the legacy of education governance: government grew in size and scope, but that growth was neither consistent across government functions nor did it keep pace with the demands that policies placed on government. That created Title I's current predicament: the gap between the program's great new ambitions and the capability to achieve them.

INHERITED PROBLEMS FACING TITLE I

Several inherited features of the development of governance for education help to explain the

gap between the ambitions for Title I and the capability to achieve those ambitions. These inherited features include weak teacher education, disproportionate growth in government administrative capability relative to its capability to support the practice of teaching and learning, reliance on nongovernmental organizations for the capability to support instruction, and local and state control of finances that express deep inequalities. We discuss how each of these inherited problems bears on schools' instructional capability, their capability to learn systematically from their operation and effects, and the implications for Title I. We discuss the historical roots of current predicaments to emphasize how entrenched Title I's problems of instructional improvement are.

Occupation of Teaching

One chief challenge to improved instruction—the capability to engage in rigorous teaching and learning and school, district, and state support for such capability—has arisen from the key occupation in schools: teaching. In the United States, teaching has more resembled an occupation than a profession, because teachers have less control over entry, over standards of quality and performance, and over professional education than do plumbers and electricians, for instance. As American public schooling developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the job requirements for entry to the occupation were modest. Pre-service education was also modest: universities did not invest in demanding programs for intending teachers, state legislatures oversaw this feature of higher education very lightly, and teacher education programs rarely tried to promote deep content knowledge among educators in the subjects they would later teach (for a summary of training requirements, see Bureau of Vocational Information 1924, 309–11; for illustrations of training through summer institutes, see Department of Public Instruction 1903, 1–3; 1900, 38–39.). State and local education agencies invested little or not at all in monitoring or regulating the quality of schools or classrooms, partly in deference to localism and partly for lack of expertise and staff. Hence most decisions about instruction were delegated, actively and passively, to teachers. Fed-

eral and state governments followed this pattern, devolving authority and responsibility to agencies below as they added to the agencies' missions. As expressed in the New York State Department of Education's annual report published in 1905: "It is not believed that the good of the school system is to be promoted by too much inspection; on the other hand, it is felt that local officers and teachers will grow in capacity for school work by doing it independently. It is believed that substantial improvement must come through freedom of local initiative and administration, rather than through too much direction on the part of the state" (36).

These weaknesses persisted through the post-World War II decades: most teachers reported that their pre-service education was little help to them in classrooms, few institutions of higher education tried to take teacher education seriously, and few elementary school teachers had deep knowledge of the subjects they taught. Although the technical and professional capability of teaching has generally been weak, it has been assigned a central and lightly regulated role in practice and policy implementation. For Title I, the legacy of weak teacher education has meant that the general education program on which many supplemental Title I services built has been typically weak as well (Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2002, 37–62). Title I, in other words, layers on top of this uneven and weak occupation.

Disproportion Between Administration and Instruction

A second inherited problem arises from the disproportionate growth of government capability in areas such as finance and administration relative to the capability to guide, inform, and improve instruction. Many state education agencies added staff in finance, assessment, and other areas through the first six decades of the twentieth century, but much less in the core domains of schooling—that is, teaching, curriculum, teacher education, and instruc-

tion. States delegated a great deal about these matters to localities. Many localities added capability in finance, assessment, and, later, specialized federal programs, but few had much capability in the realms most closely tied to instruction, including teaching quality and curriculum. School systems often tacitly delegated decisions about these matters to schools. School heads often left them to teachers. Although new authority and responsibility accumulated in states and localities during the twentieth century, the capability to design, organize, and improve instruction did not keep pace with the added authority.

Take, for instance, the case of New York State, which reflects where we most expect to see evidence investment in capabilities to support instruction of any governmental entity—federal, state, or local—from the Progressive era. Unlike other states, for instance, New York began to develop its statewide Regents exams in the 1860s and 1870s, and later developed curricula tied to the exams (Office of State Assessment 1987). Consistent with the standard portrait of Progressive era state expansion, the New York State Department of Education experienced considerable growth in the first four decades of the twentieth century in state administrative staff positions for tasks such as finance, communications, and supervision as well as the expansion of staff for specialized subunits, such as vocational education (State of New York 1905, 35, 56–57; State Department of Education 1912, 311–12; 1924, 321; 1925, 327; 1936, 170–71). Our estimates suggest that, in 1934, more than 25 percent of New York State staff positions were devoted to administration and finance, yet only 2 percent of positions focused on teacher education and certification: only seventeen state officials were employed to work on teacher education and certification in 1934 out of 719 total staff members.⁴ These seventeen employees were responsible for a daunting range of tasks, one of which entailed overseeing and evaluating "17,000 teachers' credentials toward teaching certificates" and

4. Recall that New York took pride in its approach to teacher education: "In the establishment and maintenance of training classes, state normal institutions, city training schools, teachers institutes, summer schools, and a system of examination and certification of teachers, [New York] has occupied a position second to no state in the Union" (State of New York Education Department 1917, 5).

issuing “more than 7000 teachers’ and principals’ certificates” over the course of the year (State Department of Education 1936, 176). Even the motion picture bureau had more employees than teacher education and certification.⁵

The disproportionate growth of administrative capability relative to instructional capability in New York leads us to expect even greater differences in other states. New York state officials did oversee the curriculum for state teacher colleges (State Department of Education 1936, 175). Yet it invested very few human resources to such oversight. Most other state agencies had too little capability to actually oversee either university teacher education or local school system operations, and the federal education agency was in most cases even weaker. Few local central offices had the capability to actually oversee either educational programs or leadership in schools. Given the structural limits of U.S. governance and political attachment to Jeffersonian ideas about the virtue of a weak state, it was easier to add to the schools’ missions than to strengthen state agencies and school systems in ways that would enable them to deliver on the missions (for challenges to the conventional view of a weak American state, see Balogh 2009; Novak 2008, 752–72). This history should be no surprise. Traditions of limited government restricted the development and oversight of instructional capability.

This legacy, however, has meant that Title I has been implemented in organizations that

had more capability and resources devoted to administrative oversight than instruction. Title I’s ability to develop fiscal accountability mechanisms in the 1970s were consistent with this tradition that focused on administration as distinct from instructional practice. Moreover, variation in the capabilities to support instruction currently appears across states. Some states such as North Carolina, a Race to the Top (RTTT) state, presently devote an impressive number of staff to school improvement, instruction, and curriculum: ninety-three positions for district and school transformation, fifty-two for teacher effectiveness, and fifty-nine for curriculum in 2013–2014.⁶ This pattern of state administration stands in marked contrast to state departments during the Progressive era or during Title I’s early years, when state investment in curriculum and instruction was thin, at best. Kansas, in contrast, makes no mention of positions devoted to teacher education or professional development in its 2013–2014 staff directory: only licensure and accreditation.⁷ Florida labels forty-one positions devoted to instructional and school improvement out of more than two thousand state positions; it devotes many more positions to accountability and measurement.⁸ Our review of organization charts from forty-five states suggests Florida is not alone: thirty-three of the forty-five have divisions devoted to accountability or performance audits.⁹ Related research finds that many states devote significantly more resources to student assessment than to capacity-

5. The Motion Picture Division consisted of twenty employees in 1934 (State Department of Education 1936).

6. Authors’ calculations based on North Carolina Education Directory, 2014–2015. Available at: www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/nceddirectory/education.pdf (accessed January 18, 2015).

7. Authors’ calculations based on Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Educational Directory, 2013–2014. Available at: <http://www.ksde.org/Home/QuickLinks/Directories/2013-2014EducationalDirectory.aspx> (accessed January 18, 2015).

8. Authors’ calculations based on directory information provided by the Florida Department of Education through an information request in November 2014. Our estimate is based on the number of positions in the Bureau of School Improvement, in the Instructional Support Services Section, and in the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support, all within Florida’s Division of Public Schools. For Florida, as with other states, we relied on the department’s organizational classifications and labels and did not conduct a study of what department employees actually did.

9. Authors’ calculations based on organization charts retrieved from state departments of education.

building interventions (Jochim and Murphy 2013, 7). States' administrative units devoted to testing, measurement and outcome accountability extend and build on the Progressive administrative architecture devoted to fiscal accountability. Holding others to account reflects an enduring component of the American governance repertoire, though accountability for what, by whom, and to whom has changed. Investments in teaching and learning that appear in *Race to the Top* states such as North Carolina may be promising, but it is much less clear whether those investments will persist when the stream of federal RTTT funds discontinues and what those investments have meant to the process of instructional improvement.¹⁰

Nongovernmental Organizations

A third inherited problem arose outside the governmental sector: a good deal of the development of capability related to instruction has occurred in private-sector professional, reform, and education organizations. For instance, early in the twentieth century the school surveys of George Strayer (a professor at Columbia's Teachers College) and his associates were influential in setting standards of school district quality and management; yet they were the creation of a nongovernmental organization (Steffes 2012). Similarly, the commission that produced the *Cardinal Principles* report in the late 1910s was quite influential in efforts to diversify high school curricula and make them more "practical"; yet this also was the work of a nongovernmental organization (Rice 1893; National Education Association 1918). General standards of occupational or educational quality also were devised by nongovernmental organizations. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is one case in point, and the six regional agencies that accredit elementary and secondary

schools—the North Central Association, the Middle States Association, and so on—are others.

Efforts to create consistency in instruction were also chiefly nongovernmental. The core elements of curriculum have until very recently been created by private publishing firms that seek national markets, and have been pushed in one direction or another by nongovernmental organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. In addition, the technology for assessing students' academic progress has been almost exclusively devised by private testing and publishing firms. The New York Regents examinations and curricula were one of the rare exceptions to that arrangement. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, nearly all research and evaluation related to public education has been carried out by private agencies; government funds for such research, which materialized well after the close of World War II, have been primarily from federal sources and private philanthropy.¹¹ In sum, the development of several central instructional elements in public education occurred almost completely outside of government. The design of governance meant that much of the core technology of schooling on which Title I layered developed beyond democratic oversight or control.

Financing Public Education

The fourth inherited challenge arises from education financing that has relied heavily on localities, with states taking an increasing share since World War II. Investment in schooling became a function of local and state wealth and elected officials' willingness to tax the citizens who elected them. For most of the history of public schooling, educational quality was tied to local wealth and appetite for schooling: wealthy districts were more likely to spend

10. In related parts of our project, we are examining state resources devoted to instructional improvement more systematically. This includes determining what fraction of state positions are devoted to the bureaucratic work of managing the increasing procedural and other administrative requirements that have grown markedly over the past fifty years, compared with the fraction devoted to the support, guidance, and improvement of instruction.

11. One early twentieth-century estimate suggests, "Several state departments of education and some fifty city departments of education have opened research bureaus for the study of current educational problems, chiefly problems of administration, in their respective jurisdictions" (Bureau of Vocational Information 1924, 304).

generously on schools and offer relatively high-quality education, but most others were likely to spend less, often much less, and offer more modest programs (Roza and Hill 2006, 246; Roza 2010; Baker and Welner 2010; Baker and Corcoran 2012; Baker 2014). These fiscal inequalities have had hugely important consequences for ESEA, because that program, which aimed to improve educational opportunity for children from poor families, was overlaid on a pattern of state and local school funding that created enormous inequality in the distribution of educational resources and thus educational opportunity. ESEA Title I has done little to correct those patterns (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, 148–52).

THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION POLICY AND ESEA

Twenty years after the Clinton standards-based reforms and thirteen years after the Bush administration's extension of those reforms, evidence is scant that standards-based reform expressed through Title I created the deep change in schools' operations and outcomes that they intended. The curriculum students receive has narrowed, and some achievement gaps have narrowed and others have widened (Barton and Coley 2010; Dee and Jacob 2011; Lauen and Gaddis 2012). We are nowhere near NCLB's goal of "ensuring that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education." The effects of standards-based reform remain uneven. Even though the policies did much to create new authorities and responsibilities for federal, state, district, and nongovernmental entities, the newly expanded scope and responsibility of governance did not build significant new capability to redress the problems Title I inherited: weak teacher education, disproportionate growth in administrative capabilities, a reliance on nongovernmental organizations for key instructional resources, and fundamentally unequal school finance.

One consequence of recent policies has been to tie various parts of the state more closely together and implicate them all in the failure to redress these inherited problems. The success of the recent policies, as with many social policies, depends on what the im-

plementers—the people and agencies with the problems—do (Cohen and Moffitt 2009, 17–44). If many, many schools fail to improve, as happened with NCLB, doubts can bubble up about the policy, its sponsors, and implementers at all levels. Once again, we are in a period of doubt about whether Title I or public education "works." As before, these doubts about Title I pay little if any attention to the first-order condition of whether the program, its governance, and its environment were structured in a way that it could conceivably eliminate the achievement gaps. At no point in history has the governance of U.S. public education been organized to provide capability for serious, sustained instructional improvement that reaches across the expanse of American schooling.

School failure became epidemic in response to NCLB because the uneven development of U.S. schooling left very large areas of weak capability at the heart of the enterprise. IASA and NCLB depended on the capability of schools and systems to respond effectively to pressure for instructional improvement, but the governance arrangements that Title I inherited meant not only that most schools and systems did not have the wherewithal to respond effectively, but also that neither the federal nor state governments could mobilize the resources to build the missing local capability. The new policies drew the layers of the federal system in education closer together, but they did not undo the inherited weaknesses (for more on state level capability problems manifest at the beginning of NCLB's implementation, see Manna 2010). The collision between ambitious policies and the weak instructional capability created something of a crisis in education policy: the ambitious federal initiatives that culminated in NCLB became politically toxic, and something had to be done.

Something was done, and policy did change, in several directions more or less at once. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CC-SSI) shifted much of the action in reform away from the federal government to the states, and the Obama administration's use of waivers to ease several NCLB requirements that cause widespread and contagious failure slowed the bad news about school failure. The Race to the

Top program, funded with monies from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, revised reform relationships from state compliance to contracts in individual states that promised to undertake sweeping reforms in return for unprecedented federal financial assistance. These measures did shift attention away from Washington to the states, and away from a one-size-fits-all federal policy, though aspects of federal policy did encourage states to adopt the Common Core. They also helped ease the crisis of perceived school failures that implicated policy in those failures. These and other changes swirled together over the past decade to produce significant changes in education governance, especially governance connected to accountability. ESEA remains the most important federal K-12 education program because it offers support to so many schools and school systems, and because it expresses a by now long-standing federal commitment to improved schooling for disadvantaged students. Hence it is unlikely to vanish from the scene. At the same time, little evidence suggests that standards-based reform now written into ESEA had much success in dramatically improving student achievement. The chief problems that Title I inherited remain, and others have emerged.

What Might Be Done to Protect and Extend the Legacy of ESEA?

The question is presumptuous, the future being quite uncertain and our ability to forecast being weak. We cannot begin an answer without stipulating several points. One, which seems reasonably likely, is that the formula grant portion of ESEA Title I will remain roughly in its present form. Another, which may be somewhat less likely, depending on the political composition of the federal legislature and the presidency, is that standards-based reform will remain stitched into the ESEA; we assume that it will remain, but it may not. A third, which seems even less likely, is that most states will try to aggressively implement the CCSSI version of standards-based reform.

We also stipulate that four problems will persist. One is that education policy is suspended between the ambitions of standards-based reform and persistently uneven capabil-

ities to develop instructional capability. The Common Core, which attempts to provide some elements of state support for instructional improvement through ambitious standards and assessments, combines political initiative and ingenuity with the most serious work on standards that the United States has yet seen. But the states that signed on to the CCSSI did so without much evidence that they understood how difficult it would be to implement much more demanding academic standards, or the capabilities that doing so would require. What standards-based reform means in practice continues to depend very much on the context in which it is implemented.

A second and related problem also has its roots in the development of educational governance. Both the Common Core and Title I of the ESEA aim to reduce inequality of educational outcomes, yet both are overlaid on patterns of unequal interstate, intrastate, and intra-district allocation of educational resources. We can discern no signs of a serious effort to deal with any of these resource inequalities and related structural problems. Hence another question for the developing egalitarian legacy of ESEA is how the states and the nation deal with the underlying unequal structure of educational resource allocation as they press to make school outcomes more equal.

A third and related problem is the growing income-achievement gap, as more advantaged Americans invest more aggressively in their children's schooling, while investment for most children has not kept commensurate pace (Reardon 2011, 91-115). When, in the 1980s, Title I's goal was shifted toward reducing the achievement gap it expressed the idea that federal policy could enable schools to overcome inequalities that the society and economy visited upon children. The IASA and NCLB have had several constructive effects, including greater attention to inequality in education. But the growing income-achievement gap reveals that the society and economy are making that task much more difficult. Moreover, U.S. social and economic policies do not aggressively attack either poverty in particular or social and economic inequality in general. Compounding problems of income inequality

and weak U.S. social and economic policy is the growing racial and ethnic resegregation of schools following districts' release from court-ordered desegregation (Reardon et al. 2012). ESEA Title I seeks to solve educational problems that arise in good part outside the schools (Downey, von Hippel, and Broh 2004, 613–35), and it does so with only modest assistance from social and economic policy.

A fourth problem is that, unlike the civil rights legislation of the mid 1960s, standards-based reform is not the expression of a social and political movement with broad and active popular support that has political clout. This reform is instead supported by government officials, by advocacy groups that lack mobilized mass membership (for more on the education advocacy organizations that lack a membership base, see Manna and Moffitt 2014), and by some elected officials and academics. It has unsteady support and opposition among organized teachers. Because it lacks deep roots, the reform and its possible legacy are politically fragile and vulnerable. Standards-based reform remains the frame of federal and state education policy, but it is not clear how it will fare as the states decide whether to persist with the CCSS, ¹² as those that do persist decide how aggressively to implement the Common Core, or, for that matter, in the newly Republican federal legislature and in the fallout from the soon-to-arrive 2016 elections.

The question, for those who wish to protect and sustain the accumulated legacy of ESEA Title I, is whether there might be a strategy that holds some promise in the circumstances that we stipulate here. As Title I looks to its future, we see some hope in the past. The governance of U.S. public education was not designed to provide serious and sustained support for instructional improvement that reaches across the full expanse of American schooling. However, some smaller-scale systems have managed to navigate the four problems of capability, local, and state funding,

growing inequality, and no mass movement; have provided serious and sustained support for instructional improvement; could not have existed without Title I funds and standards based reform ideas and accountability; have posted some noteworthy results; and have done so in traditional public schools in high-poverty areas. These are remarkable accomplishments. Moreover, they have appeared across different organizational forms, in some traditional public schools and in some charter networks.¹³ Unlike the ideas expressed in Progressive-era policies and many current reforms, which give primacy to organizational design (hierarchical or site-based) or to mechanisms of accountability (market or government), recent successful approaches to instructional improvement focus on building systems that are designed to improve teaching and learning. Organizational design and accountability mechanisms are secondary to the first-order condition of sustained support for instructional improvement. Put differently, these instructional improvement approaches started with the intention to improve instruction, and sought to build organizations to enable that support, rather than to expect instructional improvement to emerge from organizational design or accountability (Correnti and Rowan 2007, 298–338; Cohen et al. 2014; Peurach 2011).

Our suggestions are far from comprehensive, but we see real promise in efforts to invent and adapt nongovernmental organizations that could pioneer approaches to implementing the Common Core and related state initiatives, and begin to build the capability for broader implementation. This proposal builds on a long tradition in the United States, in which nongovernmental organizations were invented and used to accomplish things that weak and fragmented government could not. Given the capability problems that we have already described, some such action seems essential. Yet, we emphasize that our proposal

12. Alaska, Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia have not adopted the Common Core. Minnesota has adopted only the ELA standards. See <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/> (accessed November 11, 2014).

13. Two charter networks that have developed capability for instructional improvement are Aspire and Achievement First.

does not imply reducing governmental authority, responsibility, or capability. To the contrary, successful NGO service provision in public education depends on robust governmental engagement to fund, support, and oversee NGO implementation as well as to provide coverage and services that NGOs do not (Brass 2014; for a helpful overview of government and NGO relationships, see Cammett and MacLean 2014). Moreover, recall that such NGOs would not supplant existing governmental responsibilities and services, for chief elements of instructional improvement—common educational practices that are grounded in a common curriculum, sustained teacher education that focuses on helping teachers learn how to teach the curricula that students study, and oversight of the quality of practice (see Cohen and Moffitt 2009; Cohen et al. 2014)—are not presently provided by governments at any level in systematic fashion.

Precedents exist of nongovernmental organizations supporting instructional improvement from recent education policy in which ESEA Title I played a key role. Several cases in point are found in some of the Comprehensive School Reform Designs (CSRDs), especially Success for All (SFA) and America's Choice (AC). These were models of school improvement for high-poverty elementary schools. The designs were invented by private nonprofit organizations, and development and some continuing costs were funded mostly by private philanthropies. The designers contracted with public schools that chose to work with them, and provided extensive services and materials over the course of many years. Those services and materials were paid for chiefly by the schools' ESEA Title I funds, though schools' incentive to adopt also was encouraged by the Obey-Porter Amendment to ESEA Title I. Hence, Title I made it possible for the CSRD organizations to stay in business, and for many of the schools to improve instruction and student outcomes.

The materials included print accounts of the reform designs, examples of lessons, and implementation guides. Services included extensive assistance with implementation, continuing professional development, quality control and troubleshooting, and building

networks or communities of practice with the schools. Several studies showed that students in schools that worked with these two design organizations learned much more than otherwise similar students in otherwise similar schools (Correnti and Rowan 2007; Cohen et al. 2014; Peurach 2011; Quint et al. 2014). Success for All and America's Choice were able to help the staff in many hundreds of high-poverty schools develop the capability that enabled them to accomplish things that ordinary Title I schools usually did not accomplish. Moreover, SFA and AC were able to navigate the four problems we identify. Although these designs faced serious implementation challenges, reviewed elsewhere, they nonetheless were able to mobilize the capability to support instructional improvement, despite the unequal distribution of resources facing schools, despite growing income inequality, despite the absence of more comprehensive and supportive U.S. social and economic policy, and despite the lack of a broad social movement supporting its efforts (Cohen et al. 2014; Peurach 2011). It seems likely that these interventions could have accomplished a good deal more had any of these inherited problems been addressed in a significant way.

Although looking to these features of the past gives us hope for the future, several extraordinary circumstances coalesced to enable these two CSRDs. These include the creation of the New American Schools Development Corporation in 1991 that poured \$130 million into public-private partnerships to develop comprehensive school reform designs; ESEA's shift toward supporting schoolwide improvement which allowed schools to use their Title I's allotments for comprehensive school reform designs; the emergence of standards based accountability promoted through some state initiatives as well as nationally through IASA and NCLB; and the Obey-Porter amendments from 1997 that provided \$50,000 per school competitive grants to support comprehensive school reform designs, to the tune of \$150,000,000 overall. Should similarly extraordinary circumstances reappear in the form of federal funding and federal incentives to use CSRDs, states could authorize and regulate CSRD-type systems. States could set standards

for such systems, subsidize their operation, regulate the quality of their work, and offer schools and systems incentives to participate. Were they to take such steps, states would expand the public-private boundary space currently occupied by test and text designers and a variety of education related professional associations. With careful attention to design, regulation, and funding, these could help states and localities develop the capability that could enable broader effective implementation of the Common Core and related state initiatives. They would be no panacea, of course, and would open up some significant problems.

One would be the lack of knowledge needed to design such systems, to inform implementation, and to regulate them. Were states to take our proposal seriously, they would need to invent ways to generate knowledge of several sorts: evidence on the learning and unlearning needed for progress toward implementation; document and explain success and failure in the implementation of the Common Core and related initiatives; document the relative effectiveness of a range of systems in creating opportunities for teachers and managers to learn; and organize a program of study that could keep attention focused on patterns of educational inequality.

Sustained political support presents another problem, one that commonly confronts nongovernmental service provision (Cammett and MacLean 2014; Allard 2009, 2014). In this period of fiscal austerity and political deadlock over federal funding, it is difficult to imagine how political support for such funds may emerge. This problem is exacerbated by political ambivalence on both the Left and the Right toward instructional improvement efforts: both sides express preferences for other policy approaches (markets on the Right, or tougher regulation in some regions of the Left, and less regulation in other regions). Related political challenges arise from two very different approaches to improvement: evaluating teachers in terms of their students' test scores, and school turnaround that often requires eliminating a poorly performing school's teaching force and replacing it with a new set of teachers. These actions express the view that schools could be improved by regulating teach-

ers through additional accountability measures or by eliminating poorly performing teachers. These are very different from direct efforts to improve instruction of the sort we described earlier. Time, investment, and opportunities to learn add related political challenges, for instructional improvement does not appear in one test cycle or election cycle. It requires sustained support, commitment to the idea of students as sense-makers and thinkers, substantial resources, and patience. None of these is readily compatible with American politics.

Still other problems emerge at the level of coverage, another common problem for nongovernmental service provision (Cammett and MacLean 2014; Allard 2009, 2014). Success for All, for instance, is in operation in about a thousand schools and focuses primarily on reading. How could such instructional improvement become much more pervasive and extend to other subjects? What will happen in states, districts, and schools that do not choose to invest in instructional improvement? Moreover, as Patricia Gándara's article in this issue points out, serious instructional improvement has largely neglected English-language learners and children with special needs.

CONCLUSION

Title I's legacy is profound. It helped put improving the education of children who live in poverty on the national agenda, where it remains politically salient. Title I helped sweep schools, regardless of their student population's poverty levels, into the broader national standards-accountability movement. It has been a vehicle for liberal, conservative, bipartisan, public, and private reform agendas. Although resistance to some aspects of federal authority remains and may have intensified, Title I has developed durable constituencies and appetites for federal funds. Although Title I helped create a new politics of education and fashioned mechanisms for state development through several forms of accountability, these policies did much less to remedy most state and local systems' weak capability to design, manage, and improve instruction. That weakness is a serious threat to ESEA Title I's revised role as the key federal agent for standards

based reform. Moreover, unlike the era that accompanied the passage of the original ESEA, the era of No Child Left Behind has been marked by rising social and economic inequality and a lack of a broad-based mass movement for improved schooling, with social and political clout.

We have focused on instructional capability because it is at the heart of Title I's new mission, and because what schools do matters, as evidence from studies of the CSRDs and studies of summer learning show. The same studies of summer and school year learning also show that inequality in U.S. society means that children from different social classes and racial groups arrive in schools with large achievement gaps already in place, and that when students are not in school, during the summer, those gaps grow. If the United States had more egalitarian social and economic policies, some of these gaps would likely decrease.

Such egalitarian policies seem quite unlikely at the moment, but evidence is persuasive that states and localities could do far more to support instructional improvement with the support of ESEA. Despite the inherited problems, some CSRDs worked with high-poverty schools to use Title I to build instructional capability and improve students' learning. Such creative use of ESEA would not resolve the deep problems that many public schools face, but it could improve schooling for many children and their teachers.

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