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Science Notes - The Future of Eisenhower Funds

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The Future of Eisenhower Funds

Many local educators may be unaware that passage of the national "GOALS 2000" legislation will have a direct and perhaps dramatic effect on the Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program (IKE), the Department of Education's largest program for professional development. GOALS 2000 will permit the Secretary of Education to waive the regulatory and statutory requirements of the original IKE legislation when a state files an application to implement its statewide planning for education reform.

The waiver means that IKE funds would no longer focus explicitly on mathematics and science education or professional development, and that local districts would no longer automatically control these funds. The twin benefits of flexibility and simplified accounting which would be achieved under the new system must be weighed against the consequences to mathematics, science and technology education reform.

Eliminating IKE as a categorical program would have some of the following impacts:

1. The funds would be used for other purposes--nearly all states are searching for general school improvement funds. The original targeted needs would not continue to be addressed at their current levels, levels which are already considered inadequate by most in the field.

2. Waiver of IKE requirements would reduce the ability and commitment of local school districts to fund special professional development activities in science and mathematics.

3. The 26 states currently involved in a systemic reform effort are dependent on IKE funds to implement these initiatives. When states are faced with tough budget decisions, IKE funds may be used to save jobs or to buy materials at the expense of professional development. Eisenhower's professional development funds are intended as a tool to support state standards and frameworks by aligning training to state/national goals.

4. School reform moves slowly. Removing the direct categorical stimulus of IKE would undermine progress when many districts are just beginning to see success. Remember:

- IKE funding went up substantially only three fiscal years ago;
- NSF systemic programs are only two years old;
- mathematics standards have been in the field two years; and
- science standards are still a year away.

Funds for professional development are and will remain the No. 1 field requirement to achieve National Goals. Currently, IKE addresses that need and puts the leadership in the hands of local educators.

Information from: Garry Allen, "Legislative Report" Congressional Liaison Task Force, Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education. September 1993.