UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUNE 26, 2025

Dear Chief State School Officer:

The Trump Administration is committed to supporting parents in having the ability to select education options that best meet their children's needs. The U.S. Department of Education (Department) is pleased to provide more information regarding how States can use Federal formula funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) to support elementary and secondary school education choice initiatives. In this letter, we focus on several important aspects of Title I of the ESEA where States and local educational agencies (LEAs) have discretion to provide greater flexibility to support parents' choices for their child's education, focused on schools identified for support and improvement due to low performance (i.e., comprehensive support and improvement [CSI], targeted support and improvement due to consistently underperforming subgroups [TSI], and additional targeted support and improvement [ATSI]) as required by ESEA section 1111(d).

This letter follows previous letters we recently released on improving education choice that focused on ESEA sections 1003A (Direct Student Services)[1] and 8532 (Unsafe School Choice Options).[2]

Education Choice in Schools Identified for Support and Improvement

Upon receiving notification from the State regarding a school's identification status as CSI, TSI, or ATSI, an LEA or school, as applicable, must develop and implement a support and improvement plan to improve student outcomes in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents).

Each CSI plan must be based on a school-level needs assessment; while not required, the Department strongly encourages a school identified for TSI or ATSI to conduct a school-level needs assessment to help inform the selection of interventions and implementation of plans tailored to the school's particular context.

All support and improvement plans must:

- Be informed by all indicators in the statewide accountability system, including student performance against State-determined long-term goals;

[1]Available at: https://www.ed.gov/media/document/oese-letter-state-chiefs-title-1-part-guidance-march-31-2025-109686.pdf (March 31, 2025).

[2] Available at: https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-unsafe-school-choice-option-may-7-2025-109969.pdf (May 7, 2025).

- Include one or more evidence-based intervention(s); and
- For CSI and ATSI schools, identify and address resource inequities, which may include a review of LEA and school-level budgeting.

What LEAs can do: An LEA or school, in consultation with parents, could choose to develop a support and improvement plan that identifies activities that improve student outcomes and that allow parents to choose the best activity to meet their child's educational needs. For example, an LEA or school could offer a range of activities from which parents could choose such as dual enrollment opportunities, academic tutoring programs, and career and technical education activities.

What States can do: States can provide guidance, templates, and other assistance to the LEA and school teams responsible for developing support and improvement plans to ensure that parents, in addition to other stakeholders, have the opportunity to provide meaningful input and feedback on potential activities to include in the plan, including, as applicable, a range of activities from which parents can select. Additionally, as described more below, States can encourage LEAs applying for 1003(a) funds to describe, consistent with ESEA section 1003(e)(1)(F), how they will "modify practices and policies to provide operational flexibility" that is aligned with education choice in implementing their responsibilities under ESEA section 1111(d).

Offering Public School Choice in CSI Schools

In addition, under ESEA section 1111(d)(1)(D)(i)), an LEA may offer public school choice to a student enrolled in a CSI school to transfer to another public school served by the LEA that is not identified for CSI, unless State law prohibits such transfers. An LEA that provides public school choice for a student enrolled in a CSI school may spend up to five percent of its Title I, Part A allocation to pay for the increased costs of transporting those students to the public schools to which the students transfer. ((ESEA section 1111(d)(1)(D)(v)).

In implementing this option, the ESEA requires an LEA to:

- Give priority to the lowest-achieving children from low-income families, as determined by the LEA for the purposes of allocating funds to schools under ESEA section 1113(a)(3);
- Enroll a student who uses the option to transfer to another public school in classes and other activities in the public school to which the student transfers in the same manner as all other students at the public school; and
- Permit a student who transfers to another public school under this provision to remain in that school until the student has completed the highest grade in that school.

Priority for ESEA Section 1003(a) School Improvement Funds

Under ESEA section 1003(a), a State generally must reserve seven percent of its Title I, Part A allocation to award funds to LEAs on behalf of schools to support school improvement activities in schools identified for CSI, TSI, and ATSI. A State has discretion to make grants to LEAs on a formula or competitive basis. When awarding these funds, a State must ensure that subgrants are of sufficient size to enable LEAs to effectively implement selected strategies and that the LEAs receiving subgrants represent the geographic diversity of the State. If a State does not have sufficient section 1003 funds to make subgrants to each eligible LEA that submits an approvable application, ESEA section 1003(f) requires a State give priority to an LEA that:

- Serves high numbers, or a high percentage, of elementary schools and secondary schools implementing CSI, TSI, or ATSI plans;

- Demonstrates the greatest need for ESEA section 1003(a) funds, as determined by the State; and
- Demonstrates the strongest commitment to use such funds to enable the lowest-performing schools to improve student achievement and academic outcomes.

What LEAs can do: An LEA may use section 1003(a) funds for any activity that it determines will help a school identified for CSI, TSI, or ATSI improve student outcomes. An LEA supporting an identified school with ESEA section 1003(a) funds could use those funds to offer public school choice for students to transfer from a CSI, TSI, or ATSI school as part of its support and improvement plan. An LEA could also use section 1003(a) funds for activities such as providing parents with information about their public school choice options. However, please note that if an LEA reserves any part of its Title I allocation for public school choice under ESEA section 1111(d)(1)(D)(v), it may not use 1003(a) funds for this purpose.

What States can do: A State may, with the approval of its LEAs, directly provide for these activities or arrange for their provision through other entities such as school support teams, educational service agencies, or nonprofit or for-profit external providers with expertise in using evidence-based strategies to improve student achievement, instruction, and schools (ESEA section 1003(b)(1)(B)). A State could emphasize the importance of education choice by determining that an LEA that chooses to offer parents more choice in the education of their children is also demonstrating the strongest commitment to use its ESEA section 1003(a) funds to support the lowest-performing schools and improve achievement. For example, a State could prioritize LEA applications that provide a menu of options for students in the prioritized school, dual enrollment opportunities, academic tutoring programs, and career and technical education activities that allow parents to choose the best activity to meet their child's educational needs. These activities must be aligned with the school's support and improvement plan and the LEA's ESEA section 1003(a) application.

Thank you for your continued focus on providing meaningful options for parents to ensure that their children receive a high-quality education. The Department encourages States to reach out to the Title I, Part A team for details on how these and other strong practices can be tailored to provide more meaningful choices to parents in your State. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact us at: OESE.TitleI-A@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Hayley B. Sanon

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and Acting Assistant Secretary
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