

Backgrounder: *Higher Education Act*

The *Higher Education Act* (HEA), also known as the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, was most recently reauthorized in 2008.

The *Higher Education Act* governs the higher education system in the United States.

Congress updated some minor aspects of HEA this year. These updates did not directly impact gifted education. A complete reauthorization that would impact gifted education is unlikely this year.

Last Congress, the House Education Committee passed an HEA reauthorization called the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform Act* (PROSPER). The bill's chief co-sponsors were the former Chair of the Education and Labor Committee, now Ranking Member, Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Brett Guthrie (R-KY). There were no Democratic co-sponsors. The PROSPER Act HEA reauthorization eliminated all references to supporting gifted education in HEA.

Specifically, the PROSPER Act cut language currently in the law:

Title II – Teacher Quality Enhancement 20 USC 1021 Paragraph (23)(D)(iii) defines the term “teaching skills” to include employing “strategies grounded in the disciplines of teacher and learning” that include a “focus on the identification of students’ specific learning needs, particularly students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, *students who are gifted and talented*, and students with low literacy levels, and the tailoring of academic instruction to such needs;” for grants to higher education K-12 partnerships for teacher training where applicable.

Title II – Part A – Teacher Quality Partnership Grants 20 USC 1022a Section 202(d)(1)(B)(ii)(IV)(aa) are higher education K-12 partnership teacher training grants, where applicable, include provisions to “meet the specific learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, *students who are gifted and talented*, students with low literacy levels and, as applicable, children in early childhood education programs;”

Due to Democratic control of the House of Representatives, it is unlikely Title II of HEA will face elimination in the House of Representatives this year.

In the Senate, there is generally bipartisan support for Title II.

However, it is important Congress understands that gifted children and educators need to be included in all Federal education bills, including the *Higher Education Act*.

The needs of gifted children and their educators should be included in every aspect of education law to signal their importance and value.