

# 2017 AASA Legislative Agenda

*Proposed by AASA Executive Committee, January 2017*

*Adopted by AASA Governing Board, March 2017*



Noelle Ellerson Ng [nellerson@aasa.org](mailto:nellerson@aasa.org)

Sasha Pudelski [spudelski@aasa.org](mailto:spudelski@aasa.org)

Leslie Finnan [lfinnan@aasa.org](mailto:lfinnan@aasa.org)

**The guiding principles for federal education policy all stem from equity and the important role the federal government stands to play in leveling the education playing field for all students:**

- Privatization of public education funding undermines our nation's public school system, denies equitable educational opportunity and represents failed federal policy.
- Federal policy equity includes both policy and resources, both of which should remain available to all students, schools and states.
- The role of the federal government in education is to help ensure access to equitable educational opportunities and to supplement and support, rather than dictate, local efforts in education.
- It is unrealistic to expect all students to achieve college and career readiness without providing districts the necessary funding to do this challenging work.
- Federal funding should support the total child, from physical and mental health to the development of fundamental lifelong learning skills.

## **Ensure an Appropriate Federal/State/Local Balance**

- The role of the federal government is to support and strengthen—not dictate and prescribe to—the nation's schools and state and local policies.
- School systems should not be required to spend state and local funds for federal mandates.
- Ensure all entities receiving public dollars are subject to the same transparency, reporting, flexibility and accountability requirements.

## **Support Students, Families and Special Populations**

- Support equitable distribution of federal dollars with greater investments in formula driven programs.
- Permanently resolve sequestration through a combination of spending cuts and revenue increases.
- Oppose any proposals that would remove the ability to deduct local or state taxes from federal taxes.
- Fully Fund IDEA: By honoring its commitment to support the education of students with disabilities, Congress will enable districts to shift dollars towards new initiatives that address their local needs.
- Ensure IEP teams shape assessment determinations for students with disabilities.
- Address special education disproportionality more effectively and flexibly.
- Ensure school leaders can keep students and school personnel safe.
- Support expansion of access to affordable early college education, including expanded control over the requirements and awarding of educator credentials.
- Support federal policy that flexibly supports the unique needs of rural communities, including REAP, Impact Aid, and Forest Counties, among others.
- Support expansion of access to early education to all children without cutting into K-12 funding.
- Make available federal funding that supports high-quality early education opportunity (including head start, Pre-K, early education, professional development for personnel, and more), with ample flexibility for local authority in implementation.
- Support use of a metric that reflects the total ELL subgroup.
- Support continuation of DACA protections to eligible/appropriate students.
- Support out-of-school/after school learning opportunities (including 21<sup>st</sup> Century-like programs) with focus on ensuring district flexibility for program design and implementation.

### **Support Personnel**

- Exempt substitute teachers and other variable hour employees from coverage under the Affordable Care Act.
- Ensure licensing and certification requirements for school nutrition workers are a state responsibility.
- Ensure all licensing and certification requirements for high school teachers are flexible enough to support work in dual enrollment programs
- Provide school districts immediate access to all relevant student data, including academic, social, emotional, criminal and behavioral.
- Reduce the paperwork requirements for Perkins and E-Rate.
- Streamline IDEA procedures by permitting parents and school personnel to opt-out of processes and paperwork related to IEPs to allow more time for teaching and learning.

### **Strengthen District Operations**

- Ensure new data collection requirements, burdensome regulations and new guidance and policies issued by the U.S. Department of Education must be examined in the context of what is statutorily required of districts and with consideration of current federal, state and local education funding levels.
- In expanding and delivering early education, ensure public schools are a core partner in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation, including improving continuity to elementary level.
- Reform the special education due process system to provide more effective, less costly and less litigious means of resolving disputes.
- Ensure districts have greater flexibility to reduce local maintenance of effort levels for IDEA if the provision and quality of services for students with disabilities is unaffected.
- Ensure the IDEA burden of proof is on the moving party and not automatically the district.
- Preserve the current financing structure of Medicaid and ensure eligible mental health services in schools are reimbursable under Medicaid.
- Establish reasonable parameters around requests for Independent Education Evaluation.
- Provide reimbursement to schools when federal food service requirements result in loss of revenue.
- Refrain from increasing the administrative burden related to nutrition eligibility verification.

### **Support Students through Appropriate Curriculum and Assessments**

- Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessments to all students.
- Approach state-led accountability with an emphasis on capacity-building not punishment.
- Use tests for the purposes for which they were designed: one test cannot serve multiple measures (i.e., student achievement, accountability, and/or teacher evaluation).

### **Enhance District Technology Infrastructure & Student Data Privacy**

- Support flexibility of federal resources to ensure equitable access to affordable broadband, to better support student connectivity both in and out of school.
- Permanently exempt E-Rate from the Anti-Deficiency Act.
- Provide coherent and easy-to-understand guidance for parents and educators regarding FERPA, PPRA, and COPPA and their protections of the privacy and security of student data.
- Update definitions to address the realities of the digital age, making it possible to protect data while ensuring appropriate use of student data for legitimate educational needs and reforms.