

2010 AASA Legislative Agenda Adopted Feb. 10, 2010



AASA Positions on the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Critical Assumptions

- ESEA must be reauthorized in this session of Congress.
- If ESEA is not reauthorized, schools must be granted significant relief from ESEA's mandated punishments.
- AASA values a Common Core of Standards and the Common Core State Standards Initiative coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.
- ESEA funds must be carefully targeted and delivered primarily through formulas based on the percentage of poverty in a school system. Percentage of poverty should be determined by free and reduced lunch counts.
- The jurisdiction of ESEA regulations, guidance and evaluations should be limited to ESEA programs and required federal approval of state regulations and statutes beyond ESEA programs as a condition of receiving ESEA funds should be prohibited.
- The federal government should supplement and support, not dictate the work of local school districts.
- School systems should not be required to spend state and local funds for federal mandates.
- ESEA funds should be used to better connect federal programs aimed at children's health and personal and social development to students and families.

The following statements outline AASA's positions on a variety of education issues related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These statements guide the work of AASA's advocacy and policy efforts throughout the year.

Improving Standards and Assessments

- Improve the clarity and accuracy of accountability measures.
- Make testing for accountability less intrusive to instruction and less costly.
- Measure student progress by growth in achievement.
- Use multiple sources of valid and reliable information to measure achievement.
- Measure special education students in accordance with the Individualized Education Program and not subject to arbitrary percentage caps.
- Assess English language learners in a language they understand.
- Shift from emphasizing punishment in accountability to building capacity and rewarding success.
- Continue to disaggregate student outcomes by the categories used in No Child Left Behind.
- Permit multiple assessment opportunities to bring students served by Title I to an acceptable performance level.
- Reduce mandatory set-asides in Title I of ESEA, especially the 20 percent for Supplemental Educational Services.
- Do not mandate a four-year graduation requirement for accountability.
- Recognize alternative pathways to graduation in ESEA accountability.

Improving Struggling Schools

- Target the very lowest-achieving schools for extra assistance and funding.
- Focus state intervention in the lowest-scoring schools on building capacity.
- Plan and implement state intervention in conjunction with school districts.
- Allow for flexibility when identifying schools with the lowest achievement for ESEA accountability, in order to consider special conditions for alternative schools.

Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers and Administrators

- Ensure that evaluations for teachers and principals involved in programs funded by ESEA are created at the local school district.
- Permit school districts to use ESEA funds to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools.
- Provide additional funds to hard-to-staff schools for instructional and professional development technology.
- Distribute professional development funds in Title II of ESEA primarily by a formula based on percentage of poverty.
- Provide sufficient local flexibility in professional development programs to be effective in all settings.

Improving the Effective Use of Data

- Provide funding to school districts to implement and maintain data systems.
- Open all data systems funded by ESEA to local administrators and teachers.
- Ensure federal funds cover the costs imposed by federal requests for data, reporting and grant application requirements.
- Screen federal requests for data for appropriateness, usefulness and usability.

Services for Special Populations and Conditions

- Drive funds to school systems through formulas and maximize local control.
- Authorize and fund a dual-language pilot program for schools serving concentrations of low-income and minority students.
- Increase funding for the extended day and year programs under 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- Reinstate the Safe and Drug Free Schools program.
- Fully fund the Rural Education Achievement Program Reauthorization Act.
- Expand programs to address the unique needs of Indian/Native American, Native Hawaiian and Native Alaskan communities.
- Provide full funding of Impact Aid.

AASA Positions on Federal Programs not in ESEA

The following statements outline AASA's positions on federal education programs outside of ESEA. These statements guide the work of AASA's advocacy and policy efforts throughout the year.

IDEA

- Make IDEA funding mandatory at 40 percent of the national average per-pupil expenditure.
- Permit school districts to reduce local effort by up to 50 percent of federal funding increases.
- Eliminate the requirement for parental consent for Medicaid reimbursement or include it in the annual parental consent provisions of the Individualized Education Program.

School Food Service Programs

- Increase federal reimbursement rates to keep pace with the increased costs of food and food preparation, and to provide higher-quality food.
- Eliminate the reduced-rate lunch program, transferring all eligible students to free lunch.
- Combine applications for the many school food programs and expand the direct certification method for enrolling eligible students.
- Do not require that school food services measures, including Body Mass Index, be added to school accountability calculations.
- Improve federal rules regarding the nutritional content of food and beverages served during the school day, with exceptions for school-sponsored events, fundraisers and celebrations.
- Provide reimbursement to schools when federal food service requirements result in loss of revenue.
- Make all licensing and certification requirements for school nutrition workers a state responsibility.
- Avoid federal overreach into nutrition policies, which are best addressed at the local level.

Early Childhood Education

- Recognize that the federal government has a responsibility to help prepare children for success in school in their first five years of life by addressing an array of social factors that have been shown to affect student achievement, including poverty, health care, housing, early education and childcare.
- Improve access to high-quality federal child care programs for families in poverty and the working poor.
- Make sure federal support for early childhood education includes tax incentives for employers to provide support for child care and after-school care for children of all ages.
- Make early childhood education available to all children starting at age three as a crucial link to reducing the achievement gap.

Health Care

- Permit schools to claim reimbursement from Medicaid for health-care services to students served under section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.
- Make sure the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services work with states and local school districts to ensure a uniform and reasonable methodology for claiming reimbursement from Medicaid.
- Increase Medicaid reimbursements for low-income students, including school-based administrative and transportation claims.
- Ensure school districts have access to mental health services funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for students in need of such assistance.
- Continue the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

E-Rate and Instructional Technology

- Raise the funding cap for E-Rate to meet demand.
- Continue to include the E-Rate program in the Universal Service Fund.
- Reduce the paperwork requirements for participation in the E-Rate program while maintaining program integrity.
- Create and support a robust research and development arm in the U.S. Department of Education to address instructional technology in schools.
- Recognize the strong role that public schools can play in supporting efforts to expand broadband to all parts of the country.

Vouchers

- AASA opposes federal funding to non-public schools.
- Permit the private school voucher program in the District of Columbia, known as the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, to expire and eliminate the authorization of the program.

School Construction

- Make Qualified Zone Academy Bonds and Qualified School Construction Bonds more marketable.
- Provide direct federal grants and stimulus funds for school modernization, renovation, greening and new construction.

Seclusion and Restraint

- Allow monitored seclusion and restraint as an option of last resort for students who pose a danger to themselves and others.
- Include funding for professional development in federal mandates regarding seclusion and restraint.
- Permit engagement of parents regarding safe and appropriate seclusion and restraint in Individualized Education Plans and Behavioral Intervention Plans.

Stimulus and Fiscal Support for State and Local Revenue Shortfalls

- Ensure that states receiving State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, either now or in the future, are not able to disproportionately reduce the amount of state spending on education relative to other areas of their budget.