AASA Statement on State of the Union Address

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Contact:
Amy Vogt
Communications and Media Relations Manager
703-875-0723
avogt@aasa.org

ARLINGTON, Va. – The American Association of School Administrators, the professional organization for school superintendents and other school system leaders, today issued the following statement on President Bush’s State of the Union address:

"In his State of the Union address last night, President Bush called on Congress to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education law. Instead of rushing to renew a broken law with fatal flaws, we need to first engage in a thoughtful debate about what is best for our nation’s children.

"As the Bush Administration acknowledges, public schools nationwide are succeeding in raising student achievement. However, their success is due to state and local actions, not NCLB. While the president agrees that changes need to be made to the law, we need to overhaul -- not tweak -- the law to help every child succeed.

"We need to take a hard look at the capacity of the federal government to direct the daily operations of 95,000 public schools and 50 million children. The six years since passage of NCLB have demonstrated that neither Congress nor the president had the will to finance an expanded federal role in education.

"We must continually examine our public schools and make system-wide changes to ensure schools are teaching children the skills they need to compete in the rapidly changing global environment. These 21st century skills include collaboration, ingenuity, problem-solving, creativity and more -- none of which is tested under NCLB.

"As part of retooling our schools to prepare all children to achieve at their highest levels, we need to find new ways to measure students’ progress. Rather than assessing students on a single test score as NCLB dictates, schools should be able to use multiple measures that more accurately reflect students' individual growth and learning during the school year. In addition, schools need flexibility to meet the individual learning needs of students in special education and students with limited English proficiency.

"The devastating effects of poverty have a significant impact on student achievement. While school systems currently work hard to address the effects of poverty, they cannot eliminate the causes of poverty. Federal efforts to improve student achievement should coordinate with other systems, such as health care, housing and judicial systems, to alleviate the fundamental inequities that perpetuate poverty.

"Every year, President Bush pushes for voucher programs under a new name in a new disguise. While the president has repeatedly failed to fully fund NCLB, he has pushed for voucher schemes that would siphon resources away from public schools -- and the 90 percent of children in the
United States who attend public schools -- to pay for children who are often already in private school. Vouchers are a failed idea that has repeatedly been rejected by voters. In 10 different states, ballot initiatives to implement voucher programs have been placed before the public and in every instance public aid for private schools has been rejected by a margin of two-to-one or greater.

“Rather than race to reauthorize NCLB or implement voucher programs that weaken our education system, the president and Congress need to build a new agenda for education that will help every child succeed.”

About AASA
AASA, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders across the United States. AASA’s mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. AASA’s major focus is standing up for public education.