AASA Calls for Reframing of No Child Left Behind To Help All Children Succeed

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ARLINGTON, Va. – Education Secretary Margaret Spellings’ proposed revisions to the No Child Left Behind law represent an inappropriate attempt to bypass Congress and make minor tweaks to a law that needs major restructuring, the American Association of School Administrators announced today. As Sec. Spellings prepared to hold public meetings on the proposed regulations, AASA said a fundamental reframing, not small changes, is needed to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the law currently known as NCLB.

“To help all children succeed, we need a new and improved version of ESEA, not a ‘quick-fix’ proposal that Congress has not approved through the reauthorization process,” said Bruce Hunter, AASA associate executive director for public policy.

AASA called for a fundamental change in the federal role in education to ensure that all children will learn. “The federal government’s role in education is to help ensure equal opportunity for each child and to supplement and support, rather than dictate, state education efforts,” said Hunter. “This federal role in education needs to be revitalized under a new ESEA to benefit all children, especially low-income and minority children.”

Better targeting of the federal investment in K-12 education, combined with appropriate instruction, will result in better educational outcomes, said AASA. Specifically, the association called for:

- **A systemic ESEA based on need.** The law should move from its current structure of 93 disconnected and disjointed programs to a more systemic, focused continuum of programs based on poverty, special student populations and unique circumstances.
- **A more integrated approach to serving disadvantaged students.** Schools serving high concentrations of poor students should receive not just academic assistance but also assistance in health care and mental health care for their students as well as before- and after-school enrichment and high-quality, school-linked early-childhood programs. Federal efforts focused on communities with students in need should coordinate relevant systems, such as health care, housing and judicial systems, to alleviate the fundamental inequities that perpetuate poverty.
- **A focus on early childhood development.** Federal funds should target children in their first five years of life through social intervention, full funding for Head Start and access to high-quality child care for families in poverty, including the working poor. Additionally, it is vital to support the engagement of families in schools and recognize the vital importance of parents and guardians in the success of each child.
- **Clear and accurate accounting for results.** ESEA should encompass an academic accountability system that is transparent, fair to all students and sets high standards for all
children, while holding school systems accountable for student learning. Schools should use multiple sources of evidence and a growth measure to assess student progress. In addition, schools should measure the progress of special education students in accordance with their Individualized Education Program and measure the progress of English language learners in a language they understand, with appropriate assessments based on proficiency level.

- **Financial incentives for teachers.** AASA supports the use of financial incentives to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff positions and schools as well as funds to enhance teacher salaries. However, the federal government should leave teacher qualification requirements to the states.

**More Information**

- AASA’s public policy staff are available to discuss the proposed changes to ESEA. For more information, contact Bruce Hunter, associate executive director for public policy, at 703-875-0738 or bhunter@aasa.org, or Mary Kusler, assistant director of government relations, at 703-875-0733 or mkusler@aasa.org.
- AASA will submit detailed comments on Sec. Spellings’ proposed revisions by the June 23 deadline. The comments will be posted at www.aasa.org.

**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. For more information, please visit www.aasa.org.