AASA 2011 AASA Legislative Agenda

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

Guiding Principles

- If ESEA is not reauthorized this year, schools must be granted significant relief from ESEA's-mandated punishments for the 2011-12 school year.
- AASA supports 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. The 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 policies and responsibilities of local school districts.
- School systems should not be required to spend state and local funds for federal mandates.
- Any reduction in federal support must be accompanied by a commensurate reduction in 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.
- Federal funds should be allocated to the local level as directly as possible, with the exception of those school districts whose audits demonstrate inappropriate use of federal funds.

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 Accountability for Students Served with Federal Dollars

- Separate accountability and instructional measures, recognizing that one test cannot serve both purposes.
- 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 for both accountability and instruction.
- Use multiple sources of valid and reliable information to measure achievement and evaluate instruction.
- 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 and adjust for new student categories.
- Permit multiple assessment opportunities to bring students served by Title I to an acceptable performance level.
- Eliminate mandatory set-asides in Title I of ESEA, especially the 20 percent for Supplemental Educational Services.
- Allow calculation of three- to six-year graduation rates, without penalty.
- Include GED as a high school credential that counts toward the graduation rate.
- Recognize alternative pathways to graduation in ESEA accountability.
Improving Struggling Schools

• Target the very lowest-achieving schools in each state for extra assistance and funding, on a triennial basis.
• Focus state intervention in the lowest-achieving schools on building capacity.
• Ensure states have the responsibility for defining and identifying the lowest-achieving schools, including special conditions for alternative schools.
• Plan and implement state intervention in conjunction with school districts.
• Support a broad range of turnaround models that include flexibility, avoid universal application and are locally implemented.

Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers and Administrators

• Ensure that accountability for the effectiveness of teachers and administrators is a responsibility of state government and local school districts, not the federal government.
• Ensure that compensation based on the effectiveness of teachers and administrators is a decision of state government and local school districts, not the federal government.
• Ensure that evaluations for teachers and administrators involved in programs funded by ESEA are created at the local school district level.
• 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 technology and professional development.
• 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

• Distribute 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.
• 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 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
- Make IDEA funding mandatory at 40 percent of the national average per-pupil expenditure.
- Permit school districts to reduce local effort by up to 100 percent of federal funding increases.
- Eliminate the requirement for parental consent for Medicaid reimbursement.

School Food Service Programs
- 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 address the array of social factors that have been shown to affect student achievement (including poverty, health care, housing, early education and child care) as they work with state government and local school districts to help prepare children for success in school in their first five years of life.
- 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 as a crucial link to reducing the achievement gap.
- Support coordination of early childhood programs regardless of funding source.

Health Care
- Permit schools to claim reimbursement from Medicaid for health-care services to students served under section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.
- Require 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.
- Support permanent exemption from the Anti-Deficiency Act.
Vouchers
- Oppose federal funding to non-public schools.
- Oppose special education vouchers.
- 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-to-district federal grants and stimulus funds for school modernization, renovation, greening and new construction.

Seclusion and Restraint
- 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.
- Allow monitored seclusion and restraint as an option of last resort for students who pose a danger to themselves and others.

Foster Care
- Ensure transportation costs for foster children is the responsibility of the state.
- Ensure school districts have access to all relevant data pertaining to student academic, social, emotion, criminal, and behavioral records upon student enrollment.

Criminal Background Checks
- Support coordination of, and communication between existing federal and state criminal background databases.
- Support the development of a national database of sexual offenders and child predators that school districts can access for criminal background checks.

Stimulus and Fiscal Support for State and Local Revenue Shortfalls
- Ensure that states receiving State Fiscal Stabilization Fund or Education Jobs Fund dollars, 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.
- Ensure that additional federal education funding dollars are in addition to, not in place of, state or local effort.

About AASA
The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA’s mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. For more information, visit www.aasa.org. Follow AASA on twitter at www.twitter.com/AASAHQ. Become a fan of the AASA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/AASApage.

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