



**Position of AASA on the Reauthorization of the  
Elementary and Secondary Education Act  
March 2010**

**Overview**

- 1) Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year. If reauthorization does not happen, school districts must be given immediate relief from the harmful sanctions of No Child Left Behind.
- 2) The limited federal dollars must be focused on students in poverty. That focus should be based on percentages of students in poverty, not raw numbers.
- 3) School administrators across the country support federal funding through formulas not competitive grants. Competitive grants lead to inequality and are not financially stable in these economic times.
- 4) The accountability system should be made up of measures of growth that differentiate levels of success. We support the encouragement for states to adopt systems of assessments that give teachers and principals the information they need to improve individual student achievement.
- 5) We support the direction of the state led Common Core Standards but it must be considered one of several ways for states to adopt college and career ready standards.
- 6) AASA supports the emphasis on teachers and leaders but setting evaluation criteria should remain a local decision.
- 7) We support eliminating barriers to learning by encouraging coordination of federal agencies that provide services that impact students in poverty.

**Detailed Legislative Positions: The following statements outline AASA's positions on a variety of education issues related to ESEA. These statements guide the work of AASA's advocacy and policy efforts throughout the year.**

**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.

### **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 21<sup>st</sup> 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's Thoughts on the Administration's Blueprint for ESEA Reauthorization: The following are a summary of AASA's reactions to the Administration's blueprint, divided into areas of support and areas of concern.**

**Blueprint Components AASA Supports:**

- The Administration blueprint eliminates five major concerns for administrators:
  - AYP, a linear, mechanical calculation is replaced by growth/progress
  - All-or-nothing accountability
  - 100% proficiency mandate
  - One snap shot test for a moment in time
  - Comparison of this year's third grade with last year's third grade
- A clear, attainable, measurable goal – US will lead the world in percentage of college graduates by 2020
- Mandate to improve standards – Common core or higher education system approved – internationally bench marked, clear learning progressions from K through 12
- Mandate to improve assessments – aligned to standards and more accurate and individualized
- More accurate & differentiated accountability – not high stakes on one group of students
- Rewards as well as punishment –10% of schools who show the most growth and progress get flexibility and recognition
- Focus on improving teaching and leadership- Focus on teacher and leader preparation and development - transitions from just qualifications towards effectiveness in instruction
- Greater focus on total child – Gathering and reporting school climate and other curriculum information, more than reading and math. Focus on integrating services for students in poverty.

**Blueprint Components that Concern AASA:**

- The shift to competitive grants away from formula grants- The administration's budget proposal puts ALL of the new money in competitive grants. It is clear that while they want to create new competitive grant pipelines, they want to level fund important formulas like Title I and cut the formula funding for teachers and professional development.
- The federal role is enlarged, with many requirements: new and old – This is very prescriptive even though the text says the intent is to be tight on goals and loose on means.
- Concerned that the overemphasis and priority on adoption of the Common Core will disrupt the state leadership on this issue – Increased push (through Title I requirements and priority for competitive grants) to adopt the common core will inevitably lead to federal control.
- Continuing to use discredited tests and accountability calculations – President Obama and Secretary Duncan have criticized the current crop of state tests but use these same faulted tests to evaluate teachers and schools until new assessments are available.
- School improvement models for bottom 5% are not based on scientific evidence or predictable success in practice, while the schools in the reward category and the next two challenge categories are to use "scientifically based" interventions.
- The new data system is a huge unfunded mandate for districts - The administration proposes new state grants and state authority to take funds meant for districts to pay for state collection of data and the new data system.
- Completely unclear about how to force an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals – Language is unclear about how this would be accomplished and does not take into account the free will of teachers to teach where they want to.

We look forward to working with you on these issues as you move forward on the development of legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.