



***ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)
REAUTHORIZATION***

***CORE PRINCIPLES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS***

PREAMBLE

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) believes our country's citizens are the nation's most valuable resource. Providing a high-quality public education is of paramount importance to the country's economic strength and global competitiveness, its national security, the preservation of its democratic society, and the overall well-being of its citizens.

American fundamental values insist that every citizen has the opportunity for success, irrespective of background or genealogy. The country grows stronger when all Americans have access to opportunity and are able to participate fully in our economy. The country's commitment to equal educational opportunity means that schools must address the educational, social, and personal needs of diverse sets of students, including different racial and ethnic groups, both genders, and students with special needs. In addressing equal educational opportunity, the federal government must work to protect the constitutional and civil rights of all students and school personnel. State and territorial boards of education must strive for excellence without forsaking equity and strive for equity without forsaking excellence.

Public education is important to the country's economic strength and global competitiveness. Our country needs to provide an internationally-benchmarked, public education system that produces students who are college- and career-ready and able to successfully compete with their academic counterparts in other countries.

Given the importance of public education as the foundation of our country's national security, its vibrant economy, and a democratic society, NASBE believes the federal government has a primary responsibility to recognize the national interests and goals in education and provide the support necessary to ensure that those goals are being met. The federal government should provide this support while allowing states, the District of Columbia, and the American territories the freedom to develop and implement policies according to their individual circumstances. Goals can and should be national; the choice of means must be state and local. NASBE supports the current Administration's objective through ESEA reauthorization to be "tight on goals, but loose on means" to specifically provide states the flexibility in their implementation efforts. Further, federal legislation, regulations, and the distribution of federal funds must be respectful of and not conflict with state and territorial statutes and constitutions that establish education governance and accountability. The federal government should not mandate or promote advisory groups that duplicate or impinge upon state and territorial board of education functions.

The current iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act establishes an unprecedented level of federal involvement in state education decision-making. While state boards of education agree with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act's emphasis on educating all children and closing the achievement gaps among racial, ethnic, and socio-economic subgroups of students, state and territorial boards of education do not agree with the one-size-fits-all micromanagement of the nation's 95,000 public schools and the enormous and unproductive bureaucratic burdens this has placed on states, school districts, schools, administrators, and educators.

NASBE urges that Congress reauthorize ESEA in 2010 in a way that supports existing state education reforms, builds state capacity, and provides flexibility to states in implementing the law's provisions. NASBE supports the Administration's objectives, through on-going American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding efforts and ESEA reauthorization efforts, to encourage states to implement more rigorous standards, raise student achievement levels, close the achievement gap, and increase high school graduation rates.

However, NASBE members believe that states must continue to lead the way to meet those objectives by strengthening state standards and implementing comprehensive, balanced assessment systems designed to improve student learning; developing longitudinal data systems to measure students' growth over their entire school careers; and building responsive accountability systems designed to recognize and reward success in realizing those objectives. States and territories also must lead the way to improve educator and leader effectiveness and ensure their equitable distribution to high-need schools. Further, states and territories must identify and turn around their chronically, low-performing schools.

Congress has neglected to reauthorize ESEA since 2007. Further delay of reauthorization sends an unmistakable, negative message to the public about the priority Congress places on the country's economic strength, global competitiveness, and national security.

Please note that any reference to states also includes the District of Columbia and the American territories.

For more information on ESEA Reauthorization, please contact Tony Shivers, Director of Government Affairs, at (703) 740-4824 or tonys@nasbe.org. Further information about NASBE and State Boards of Education can be found at www.nasbe.org.

CORE PRINCIPLES FOR ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

This document revises the set of ESEA reauthorization guiding principles that were adopted by NASBE in 2007 based upon its assessment of further developments in the implementation of NCLB and current state reforms. This document also provides specific recommendations on key issues in the current law. These core principles and recommendations do not specifically address all the issues involved in the current law, nor are they meant to. Rather, they represent the fundamental priorities identified by state and territorial boards of education for any federal education reforms.

Principle One

Increase federal investment in state capacity

This would help solidify the state-federal partnership to raise student achievement levels, close the achievement gap, increase high school graduation rates, turn around chronically low-performing schools, improve educator and leader effectiveness, and ensure all children are college- and career-ready. States have lost their capacity over the years due to, among other factors, significant belt-tightening in the face of the down economy and little additional federal assistance. State educational agencies need to be revitalized with more highly-trained staff and resources to accomplish the true reforms.

Principle Two

Renew the federal and state commitment to equal education opportunity by adequately funding Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other existing targeted federal education programs

This would help address the educational, social, and personal needs of our nation's diverse set of students, including different racial and ethnic groups, females and males, students with disabilities, English language learners, and disadvantaged students along the entire academic continuum and ensure their access to highly effective educators and leaders as well as ensure their success in college- and career. When Congress enacted IDEA more than thirty (30) years ago, it set a target for the federal contribution to special education spending to be equal to 40 percent of the estimated excess cost of educating children with disabilities. However, current federal funding covers only about 18 percent of the estimated excess cost of educating children with disabilities. Further, the federal government shall not make Title I funding contingent on states adopting competitive funding reforms such as common core standards.

Principle Three

Support states in their development and implementation of rigorous college- and career-ready standards across core curricula and comprehensive, balanced assessment systems aligned to those standards

States are leading the way to define 21st century learning in terms of fewer, clearer, and higher standards that identify what students need to know and do when they graduate from high school. States will need support as they move towards aligning core curricula, instructional materials, and educator and leader professional development to more rigorous standards.

Principle Four

Strengthen state and federal accountability systems

State and federal accountability systems should have clear incentives and motivate students, educators and leaders to achieve high standards of performance and based on multiple measures producing accurate, meaningful, and valid results. States should have the flexibility to use growth model measures designed to move all students towards college- and career- readiness.

CORE PRINCIPLES (continued)

Principle Five

Help states meet their needs for highly-effective educators and leaders in high-need schools and in high-need subject areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

Ensure states have the capacity to provide the necessary professional development and supports to these educators and leaders as well as encourage states to establish alternative, high-quality pathways for working professionals to become highly effective educators and leaders.

Principle Six

Eliminate the burden on states to comply with federal requirements unnecessary or duplicative of other existing federal requirements.

The federal government should limit reporting requirements to those necessary to account for funding, to demonstrate compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, and to assist in determining the most effective use of federal funding.

Principle Seven

Increase federal investment in research, evaluation and dissemination of developments and best practices to all states in curriculum, teaching, learning and the management of schools.

The federal government should be instrumental in collecting and analyzing data, statistics, and information about education and sharing that information with states as well as providing appropriate technical assistance.

ESEA REAUTHORIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS (2010)

ACCOUNTABILITY

Federal Role: To provide states with resources and assistance within federal education laws and hold states accountable for results, while giving states the flexibility to determine the manner in which they reach the goals specific in federal education laws.

- State and federal accountability measures should serve as the basis for a full range of responses that include capacity building and robust interventions for struggling students and schools in addition to specific awards for progress and success as opposed to sanctions.
- States should have the flexibility to utilize multiple qualitative and quantitative measures, including student growth over time across the entire achievement continuum, as well as other indicators of school progress. The accountability index or composite should include long-term data that measure whether or not students have been effectively prepared for college or the workplace, including graduation data, college or workplace entry, and college completion.
- States should have the flexibility to develop and maintain accountability systems that perform the following functions: 1) focus on how the system (including school, district, and state levels) performs in a number of key areas; 2) make use of multiple indicators, of which summative assessment is only one; 3) provide multiple ways to reward success; and 4) be flexible enough to accommodate future changes.
- State and federal accountability systems should be based on broad political, business, and community support so they can be sustained over time, yet also be adaptable to necessary changes.

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Federal Role: To provide funding for research and financial support for the consortia of states in their development and implementation of common standards and related assessments that are more rigorous, aligned with college- and career-readiness expectations, and internationally benchmarked. NASBE supports the current efforts of a national consortium of education organizations and states in its effort to develop high-quality, rigorous and voluntary common standards for students across the country. The intent is to develop common standards that specify grade-level expectations based on valid, reliable research for predicting valued performances that are internationally-benchmarked and grounded on the latest advances in the sciences of thinking and learning.

- Allow states to voluntarily participate in common standards development efforts.
- Do not require the adoption of any common standards by individual states as a condition for the receipt of federal aid.
- Recognize that the State Boards of Education are at the heart of the open and inclusive common standards adoption process.
- Recognize that while common standards are an important reform, they are not likely by themselves to result in higher student achievement without concurrent state implementation efforts that include improved educator development and induction processes, aligned instructional materials and assessments, and robust student intervention systems for those struggling to meet standards.

- Encourage states to develop common standards that address the educational, social, and personal needs of diverse sets of students, including different racial and ethnic groups, both genders, and students with special needs.
- Incentivize states to use common standards as a catalyst for lowering barriers for educator certification reciprocity among states.

BALANCED ASSESSMENTS

***Federal Role:** Provide adequate funding, evidence-based research, and flexibility to states to develop a new generation of assessments that are aligned to common standards. These new assessments must adequately address the longstanding issues regarding disparities in education and the demand for a well-educated workforce for the 21st century. NASBE supports the efforts of consortia of states in their efforts to develop comprehensive, balanced assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards.*

- Provide states with the flexibility to develop assessment systems that are designed to improve student learning. Recognizing that no single test serves all purposes, states should have the flexibility to create comprehensive, balanced assessment systems that includes both assessment *of* learning (reporting on what's been learned) as well as assessments *for* learning (providing ongoing feedback to educators and students as learning progresses). The assessments—summative, formative, interim—should function as a coherent system that uses a variety of approaches to integrate assessment as part of the fabric of classroom teaching.
- Provide states with the flexibility to utilize growth and value-added assessments models to improve teaching and learning, evaluate programs, and provide for effective equitable resource allocations.
- Incentivize states to shift more of their attention to classroom-based assessments that permit a finer-grain analysis of student understanding through the use of a variety of performance-based tasks (e.g., open-ended responses, demonstration projects, portfolios, technology-based items).
- Incentivize states to provide state assessment results that indicate user-friendly, transparent information to leaders, educators, parents, and students that clearly describe differences in learning in a subject area in order to communicate effectively about student performance.
- Require states to develop appropriate assessments and accommodations for special education students and English language learners through extensive research and testing to ensure they are of high technical quality.
- Incentivize states to participate in national and state-level international assessments such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in order to examine student attainment in an international context and thereby ensure that students are receiving an education that prepares them for the 21st century global economy.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS

***Federal Role:** Share responsibility with the states to ensure that all school leaders have the skills, knowledge, and attributes to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently; that they continue to improve professionally throughout their careers; and ensure that all schools and essentially all children have access to these effective leaders. Schools across the nation face an increasing number of vacancies in the leadership position, with fewer applicants for these jobs. Yet the need for effective leaders is greater than ever. Factors contributing to the leadership shortage include increasing job responsibilities and time commitments; increased pressure to improve school performance; lack of the necessary autonomy and supports; and, in some systems, insufficient pay or recognition. NASBE supports the development and application of standards and competencies in a cohesive system for recruiting, preparing, licensing, supporting, and evaluating effective leaders with an emphasis on instructional leadership.*

- Encourage states to set professional standards that specify clear expectations for what leaders need to know and be able to do to function as instructional leaders critical to improving schools and raising student learning and achievement.
- Incentivize states to improve the quality of their leader preparation programs. Such programs should assess their impact on the effectiveness of school administrative and education leaders in improving instruction, student achievement, and school performance.
- Encourage states to develop performance-based leadership evaluation systems for purposes of initial and advanced (tiered) licensure and that provides feedback to school leaders and preparation programs, and to design professional development and supports for school leaders.
- Provide appropriate resources to help states provide ongoing support for their new school leaders through robust state mentoring and induction programs.
- Encourage states to develop and maintain school administrative models that foster distributed leadership and provide the necessary support, compensation, and decision-making autonomy commensurate with their responsibilities.

EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

***Federal Role:** Share a responsibility with the states to ensure that all educators have the skills, knowledge, and attributes to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently; that they continue to improve professionally throughout their careers; and ensure that all schools and essentially all children have access to these effective educators.*

Educator Development, Supply, and Demand

- Provide scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to attract high-performing college students into careers in public education.
- Encourage states to develop highly- effective, standards-based systems of educator preparation, evaluation, and development while recruiting promising educator candidates.
- Encourage states to continue to develop policies that improve educator retention, distribution, and diversity.
- Encourage states to continue to develop licensure and certification programs that require educators to demonstrate progressively higher-level knowledge and skills to help students achieve high standards.

- Incentivize states to work in regional and national groups to raise the quality of teaching, in recognition of the fact that educators and students move from state to state.

Educator Preparation

- Provide appropriate resources to states to help them improve educator preparation programs that include clearly articulated standards, methods of evaluation, and accountability measures framed with a focus on the effective delivery of instruction for the achievement of common standards within the K-12 systems.
- Encourage states to improve educator preparation programs that include varied, early, and sustained clinical experiences.
- Encourage states to require all beginning educators to participate in supervised entry-year programs. The programs should be cooperative efforts between educator education programs and local school districts.

Educator Licensure and Certification

- Recognize that states have authority over educator licensure and certification and to ensure that these policies are fully integrated within the state education program.
- Recognize that states have the authority to provide initial approval to educators based on completion of a state-approved educator education program (or alternative educator preparation program) and their demonstration of in-depth knowledge in specific content area, clinical skills, child development, methods of differentiated instruction, and classroom management.
- Provide state flexibility to limit and seek to eliminate the use of emergency certification.
- Provide state flexibility to develop proficiency-based approval for educator education programs framed with a focus on the effective delivery of instruction for achievement of common standards within the K-12 system. Policies on alternative approaches to certification must represent high standards and expectations in terms of knowledge of content area and clinical skills and experience.
- Require states to establish a process to examine the background, including any criminal record, of all school personnel to ensure they do not pose a threat to the emotional, psychological, or sexual well-being of students.

Educator Professional Development

- Provide adequate support to help states provide high-quality, educator professional development programs throughout educators' careers through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) and other federal education funding streams.
- Encourage states to allow their educators to develop professional development programs in conjunction with school district representatives in order to meet the identified needs of the educator, the school district, and the individual school.

Educator Evaluation Systems

- Encourage states to develop and maintain educator evaluation systems that strengthen the performance of practicing educators and be partly tied to student performance.
- Provide states flexibility to develop educator evaluation systems that are integrated with local goal setting, testing, and staff development activities.

STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEMS

***Federal Role:** To provide appropriate resources to states so they can continue providing longitudinal data-management systems that measure students' progress over time and that educators and parents can project whether a student is on a path to proficiency, college- and career-readiness, and other important benchmarks along a PK-20 continuum.*

Incentivize states and provide state flexibility to develop data systems that perform the following functions:

- Matches educator and student data;
- Holds preparation programs accountable for the performance of educators they prepare and license;
- Provides data on success rate of students' transition from secondary school to postsecondary education;
- Identifies factors that correlate to students' ability to successfully engage in and complete postsecondary-level general education coursework; and
- Informs education policies and practices in order to better align state academic content standards and curricula with the demands of postsecondary education and the 21st century workforce.

TURNAROUND OF CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

***Federal Role:** To increase its investment in school improvement research, evaluation and dissemination of best practices to all states and partner with states, school districts, and individual schools to bring successful outcomes to a larger scale. More and more schools each year are failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB. As a result, states face burdensome sanctions and a lack of technical assistance from the federal government to effectively help their schools improve. The objective is for states to continue to work to develop comprehensive, statewide plans for improving their chronically lowest-performing schools.*

Provide the necessary resources to states to help them develop intervention strategies to perform the following functions:

- Build district capacity to turn around schools and to make investments in leadership, particularly at the school level;
- Develop strategies for building the capacity of state education agencies to ensure they are able to carry out the states' plan to help districts improve low-performing schools;
- Provide guidance to school districts on turnaround options, their research base, and conditions and environments where they were proven to be successful;

- Adopt requirements that all schools develop school improvement plans which can be approved by the local education agencies and the state education agencies;
- Develop systems for tracking, analyzing, and disseminating results of ongoing restructuring efforts;
- Develop options for schools that continue to miss benchmarks after restructuring; and
- Provide on-going support for schools that exit restructuring

SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM

Federal Role: To provide states with research-based resources and technical assistance so their can provide their students with a healthy, safe and engaging education environment that prepares them for college and career. The focus should move away from high schools reform to the redesign of middle and high schools together. States, school districts, and individual secondary schools should be held more accountable in preparing students to achieve both in postsecondary education and in the workforce without remediation. Lastly, resources should be focused on attracting and maintaining highly-qualified, effective, and innovative educators and innovative leaders essential in turning around secondary schools.

- Incentivize states to increase the rigor of academic standards and high school graduation requirements to a college- and career-ready level; and offer students other high-quality pathways, such as career and entrepreneurial education and dual enrollment, that prepare them for college and entry-level technical occupations.
- Strengthen federal and state accountability measures by requiring secondary school accountability systems to be tied to college- and career-ready measures; and aligning postsecondary expectations, incentives, and performance to secondary school expectations.
- Encourage states to improve schools by providing excellent educators and leaders by connecting educator preparation, hiring, and evaluation to student outcomes, among other factors; and empowering leaders to hire and assign educators.

SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Federal Role: To support the work of the states to ensure that schools are safe and healthy environments. Research has shown that healthy students are better students, and that health and nutrition are directly linked to a student's attendance at school and ability to learn to high standards. These facts are at the heart of NASBE's nearly two decade long leadership efforts in promoting school health policies, emphasizing the links between academic performance and safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environments, and drawing national attention to the role of schools in ensuring the physical well-being of their students.

- Encourage states to require health goals in school improvement plans consistent with local wellness policies.
- Incentivize states to utilize student data systems to track both academics and health outcomes.

- Encourage states to create environments that support coordinated school health including improving nutrition environments, physical activity/ quality physical education opportunities, improved evidence-based sexual health education and support, and health education.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

***Federal Role:** To fully-fund Head Start for all eligible children across the nation. Evidence-based research shows that high-quality early childhood education has significant long-term benefits for lifetime learning. It is a cost-effective strategy for reducing expenditures on special education and remedial services, improving student achievement and increasing graduation rates. NASBE supports a wide variety of public, voluntary, and private arrangements for pre-kindergarten programs backed by a statewide vision for high quality early education.*

Encourage state pre-kindergarten systems to contain the following characteristics:

- Aligned, comprehensive pre-kindergarten through grade three early learning standards;
- Core requirements and standards for programs and professional development that reflect the research on effective early learning and development and address the capacity of programs to deliver quality instruction;
- Accountability measures based on a continuous improvement approach that includes ongoing evaluation to assess a program's plan for meeting early learning needs, the quality of its implementation, its impact on children and families, and its alignment with K-grade three assessments. Accountability systems should use multiple age-appropriate indicators of both how children are progressing and the quality dimensions of classrooms so that needed improvements and professional development can be identified;
- State standards for educators and preparation programs that require early childhood education educators to have a Bachelor's degree and specialized early childhood training at the college level consistent with a common vision of high-quality early education; and
- Plans for increasing access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, beginning with children from low-income families.

SCHOOL INNOVATION

***Federal Role:** To encourage states to be innovative and provide flexibility for states to increase high school graduation rates, close the achievement gap, and raise student achievement levels. The federal government should help states and build their schools as dynamic education institutions that graduate students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in the world. This requires a long-term commitment of time, energy, and resources at the federal, state, and local level.*

Charter Schools

- Recognize that the authority to grant public school charters primarily lies with the states and/or school districts. States and/or school districts have the ultimate oversight of all publicly-funded schools, including charter schools.
- Allow states to determine the appropriate number of charter schools in their states without adverse consequences and not tie federal education funding to the states' number of charter schools or laws that cap the number of charter schools in a given state.

- Encourage state charter laws, policies, and procedures to address students' diverse learning needs, including those of students with disabilities.
- Encourage states to prevent charter schools from becoming instruments for the segregation of students based on the level of their academic ability or socio-economic status.
- Encourage states to ensure every public charter school:
 - is nonsectarian and not-for-profit, does not assess families for additional tuition, and actively informs families of their opportunities to apply for admission and admits students on the basis of a lottery if more students apply than can be accommodated;
 - is governed by an independent board knowledgeable about education and exercising full fiduciary responsibility;
 - submits sound instructional, academic assessment, staffing, financing, facilities, and fiscal management plans to its sponsoring entity;
 - meets or exceeds state-determined content standards, is subject to state academic accountability requirements, and provides an annual audit and reports on audit results, student learning results and other indicators of school performance to its sponsoring agency;
 - endeavors to foster a cooperative relationship with its local school district;
 - employs qualified educators and administrators as per state and federal requirements; and
 - complies with all applicable federal, state, and local civil rights, public health, and safety laws and regulations, including those concerning the education of students with disabilities.

Community Schools

- Provide states the resources and flexibility to open public education facilities beyond the traditional school day to provide academic, extra-curricular, recreational, health, social services, and work force preparation programs for people of all ages.
- Encourage states to play an active role in fostering community schools by developing and/or supporting school-community programs, advocating the flexible use of state and local funds to allow for pooling of resources from different agencies and sources, and garnering support for community schools by promoting their benefits through policy statements, public dialogue, and testimony.

Choice Among Public Schools

- Encourage states to ensure their students and families have equal access to quality schools and choice among programs.
- Encourage states to foster innovation and a variety of quality education options for students.
- Encourage states to ensure that all students and families are actively informed about the alternative educational options available to them.