

ESEA Reauthorization –



There is a consensus that NCLB needs revision, but there is no consensus about what revisions should be made.

- The House and Senate Chairmen tried to move reauthorization of ESEA in 2008 with the support of President Bush but could not find consensus needed to proceed.

In general, many education groups argued that ESEA should be refocused, reframed and renamed to supplement the improvement of educational outcomes for low income and minority students:

- Over its 43 year history ESEA has become a collection of 93 generally disconnected and disjointed programs that were added in 7 succeeding reauthorizations.

Key Issues in Reauthorization

- **Accountability:** AESA and nearly all other education groups agree that improvement of ESEA requires an accountability system that is transparent; uses multiple sources of evidence and a growth measure; is fair to all students; and calls for federal authority that is commensurate with federal funding. Some civil rights groups and disability groups strongly support the current accountability language.
- **Assessment:** Most scholars and educators and their organizations, including AESA, would like to move beyond the current generation of once a year tests that are a snap shot in time that is not usually reported until a student is in the next grade level.
- **Special Learners:** AESA agrees with the majority of educators that the progress of special education students would be more accurately measured using multiple measures including tests developed for students with disabilities, and that the progress of English language learners should be measured in a language they understand, with appropriate assessments based on proficiency level. However, some civil rights groups and Washington based education think tanks strongly support current law.
- **Teachers:** AESA believes that states should define highly qualified teachers and should provide incentives for special education and for general education teachers in hard to staff urban schools and in rural isolated schools. The definition of highly qualified teachers and incentives are controversial for some Washington DC based advocacy groups that want the federal government setting qualifications. The issue of merit or performance pay based partially or entirely on state test scores is strongly opposed by teacher's organizations, but has split support among administrators. The notion of federal funding to supplement teacher's salaries in hard to staff schools is supported by AESA and AASA, but not by other groups.
- **Serving the total child:** A clear consensus among the education groups and human service groups is a new emphasis on addressing the non school factors that are barriers to academic success.
- **Child Care and Family Engagement:** Support for children in their first five years of life, including social intervention and full funding for and alignment of Head Start to public education are widely supported ideas, but those programs are not in the

Department of Education. Many groups are wary of being connected directly to schools, and some school administrators do not want to potentially dilute funding and worry about space availability. There is also a need for supporting and expanding the family engagement in schools.

- **Health:** The health programs that are in other agencies are not well tied to the development and well being that contribute to the educational progress of low income students. The needed services and supports include continued Medicaid reimbursements for school-based administrative and transportation claims; a universal health care system focused on low-income families, including prenatal care and school-based, school-linked and community health clinics; and federal funding and access to mental health care and dental care.

Talking Points:

1. Ask your Representatives and Senators to support a new framework for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that focuses the federal role on students in poverty.
2. Urge your members to support strengthening the connection between high poverty schools and federal programs providing health and mental health care for children and their families, quality services from ages zero to five and extended learning opportunities.
3. Ask your members of Congress to support efforts to improve the assessments used by the states and encourage the use of formative assessments that inform instruction and provide timely and instructionally useful information to teachers and principals to directly improve student achievement.
4. Urge your member to support a federal accountability system that is focused on useful interventions and linked to the amount of federal assistance a school is receiving.
5. Urge your member to remember the important role of ESAs in professional development for teachers and wrap around services for children and their families.