

2007

Legislative

platform



The Ohio Educational Service Center Association

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About OESCA

OESCA is the statewide organization representing the more than 8,000 administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and other personnel employed by Ohio's 60 educational service centers. OESCA provides legislative updates and coordinates member lobbying efforts, as well as coordinating communications among its member organizations. OESCA also provides professional development opportunities for service center administrators and personnel through issue-related seminars and major conferences.

OESCA Mission

OESCA and its members provide leadership and services that enable school districts to increase student achievement and improve Ohio's educational system.

OESCA Vision

OESCA will be recognized at state and national levels for educational leadership and superior member services.

OESCA's Core Policy Principles & Goals

The Ohio Educational Service Center Association is committed to working in cooperation with school districts, allied educational organizations, state and local policy makers, and others to promote and support educational reform efforts that will provide for an efficient, effective and quality system of education that is fiscally and academically accountable and which prepares all students to achieve high levels of academic success.

In so doing, OESCA has based its legislative policy recommendations on the following core goals:

- To advocate for the well-being of children as the basis of education policy decision making.
- To support safe learning environments.
- To increase student achievement and academic success for all students.
- To provide access to a thorough and efficient education to all Ohio children regardless of where they live.
- To build school district capacity.
- To facilitate the effectiveness, professionalism, and capacity of all school personnel.
- To increase the State's capacity to effectively and efficiently serve Ohio's schools.
- To promote pre-K-16 alignment with Ohio's economic development strategic plan addressing how to align curriculum with jobs of the 21st century.
- To achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of educational and professional services to schools, both academically and financially.

Beliefs that Guide the Association's Governmental Relations Activities

OESCA believes that public education is the cornerstone of our democracy. Educational service centers provide (1) leadership to help all students reach high standards of performance and (2) cost-efficient regional services. Therefore, OESCA actively promotes and supports the following beliefs:

- OESCA believes that public schools are highly successful and continue to confront and overcome the challenges of socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, and the accompanying deprivations that impact learning.
- State resources must be focused on providing support to public education. Nothing will provide a greater impact on the future of Ohio, and our nation, as developing the minds of its future citizens and leaders.
- Accountability is an important aspect in school improvement. ESCs are best positioned to assist districts with efficient and economical operational and academic resources to support school accountability.
- ESCs are best positioned to provide districts with technical assistance.
- ESCs should be eligible to receive funding from all state education formulas and grants in order to carry out state and local education initiatives.
- OESCA supports state fiscal policies that reinforce the capacity of the state government to adequately support public education.
- ESCs (ESAs) are defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as such, “(A) -The term ‘local educational agency’ means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools. (D) The term includes educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies.” OESCA supports the use of this definition in all federal laws pertaining to ESAs for clarification and consistency between federal laws and regulations. *OESCA strongly supports state recognition of this designation by the federal government.*
- Alternatives within the public school system are needed, such as public charters and inter-district school choice (open enrollment). Alternative educational systems that have public oversight and conform to state and federal laws and regulations are acceptable.

An Increased Role for Ohio's ESCs in the Deployment of State & Regional School Improvement & Related Education Initiatives

OESCA supports an increased role for ESCs in the deployment of state education initiatives including school improvement, data-driven decision making, professional development, teacher recruitment and retention and more.

ESCs are grounded in state and federal law. ESCs are defined as school districts under the Ohio Revised Code. ESCs are defined in section 3311.05 of the Ohio Revised Code. Further, section 3311.05.5 stipulates that wherever the term “school board” or “board of education” appears in Title 33 of the Revised Code, unless expressly prohibited, the term also refers to education service centers. Under federal law, ESCs (ESAs) are defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as such, *“(A) - The term ‘local educational agency’ means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools. (D) The term includes educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies.”*

Ohio's 60 ESCs can serve as a valuable, and cost-effective, conduit for the roll out of state initiatives and are important to the quality of education in Ohio for the following reasons:

- ⇒ **Capacity:** adequately staffed with varied and experienced personnel – *ESCs average more than 135 staff members in each ESC.*
- ⇒ **Accessibility:** geographically disbursed across the state – *60 ESCs serve each county and their corresponding schools across the state of Ohio.*
- ⇒ **Integrated:** In schools working with kids and teachers on a day-to-day basis.
- ⇒ **Networked:** ESCs not only operate on the local level, but also have the advantage of a statewide network through their state association committee structure and organization.

During difficult economic times, it is important to identify solutions that utilize known, existing, reliable and capable service providers to deliver vital programs and services that districts need most in their efforts to increase student achievement. The solution is not always about more money. It is also about effectively targeting resources and maximizing the state's return on investment. ESCs are a central part of that solution.

OESCA State Funding and Policy Priorities

State Funding Priorities

Tier I

1. Allow Special Education Funding to Flow Directly To Educational Service Centers

- OESCA supports a statutory change to allow special education funds to flow directly from the state department of education to ESCs for the special education students served by the ESC. The state share percentage that transfers to the ESCs would be the same as under current law; the change would insure that the funds, based on the wealth factor of the district of residence, flow to the ESC or district where the student is educated.

2. Fully Fund The Updated Special Education Cost-based Methodology

- Ohio's system of special education funding is a 6-weight system in which each weight represents a particular category of disability. The state's cost-based special education funding methodology was recently updated in preparation for the 2008-2009 biennial state operating budget. It was necessary to update the cost-based methodology for funding special education to reflect the increasing market-based personnel costs associated with delivering special education and related services. This update reveals that the cost of the updated weighted system would be an additional \$192 million in FY 2006 dollars. Currently, the 6-weight system is funded at 90% of the current standard which was established in 2001 as part of the FY 2002-2003 biennial state operating budget. Under the updated weighted system, funding of the weights at current levels is actually substantially less than 90% of actual costs. The state board of education's FY 2008-2009 budget recommendations propose funding the current weights at 92.5 percent in FY 2008 and 97.5 percent in FY 2009. This recommendation represents a policy decision by the state board of education to fund the weighted methodology, a plan adopted and supported by the state board in previous budget recommendations, at less than 100% of 2001 costs and substantially less than 100% of today's costs. OESCA supports the full funding of this updated methodology.
- OESCA supports a statutory change, consistent with language in substitute HB 431 (126th General Assembly), requiring the Ohio Department of Education to update the cost-based methodology on a biennial basis using updated rules and the most recent fiscal year ODE personnel costs, as well as actual service level data. Updating the study regularly will help ensure that special education pupils are receiving the resources necessary to succeed.

3. Provide Adequate Funding for Existing and New Preschool Special Education Units

- Fully funding existing preschool special education units and additional units as necessary to meet the needs of all preschool special education students and the districts that serve them is consistent with the recommendations of the School Readiness Solutions Group and other early care and education initiatives. Ohio's school districts are required by state and federal laws to provide preschool special education services to all identified children upon their third birth date. There are currently 2,024 funded units and 1,019 unfunded units.
- OESCA supports basing preschool special education unit funding on updated personnel costs. The state board of education's recommendations for the 2008-2009 biennial operating budget include funding of an additional 450 units in FY 2008 and 529 units in FY 2009, and funding of all units based on an updated salary schedule – this is 40 units short of the current FY 2007 identified need which is expected to increase.

- OESCA supports fully funding all existing preschool special education units.
- OESCA supports a policy shift that encourages collaboration and cooperation in the delivery of preschool special education services whereby ESCs would be eligible recipients of preschool special education units in much the same manner as school districts. This is particularly important in difficult economic times.

4. Continued Support for Implementation of the Ohio Core Curriculum Including Funding for Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs Developed by ESCs.

- The core program consists of several components to assist districts in building resource capacity: 1) funds for districts to contract with institutions of higher education in math, science, or foreign language for dual credit for high school students; 2) online resources for educational success in math, science and foreign language; 3) alternative teacher licensure program developed by ESCs in partnership with institutions of higher education; 4) intensive training to license mid-career professionals and currently licensed teachers in science, math or a foreign language; and 5) Dual enrollment grant opportunities.
- Building capacity is a key component of the Ohio Core initiative and is at the heart of this proposal. OESCA also supports policies to encourage participation by Ohio's public and private 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities.

5. Professional Development and Technical Assistance Funding Through ESCs to All School Districts

- OESCA supports the use of the ESCs and the newly created Ohio educational regional service system in the delivery of high quality programs and services to all Ohio school districts. Consideration should be given to how to best utilize the system to provide technical assistance and school improvement services to all school districts not just those identified as priority 1 and 2 academic watch and emergency school districts. Better use of existing service providers will ensure that all districts have access to state funded services necessary to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). The regional system used to deliver state funded school improvement services, technical assistance, and professional development prior to the passage of am. Sub. H.B. 115 was reactive, centrally administered and focused on a limited number of academic watch and emergency school districts – meaning that many school districts did not have access to state funded technical assistance services despite the need for all districts to continue to make progress toward adequate yearly progress (AYP). *The Ohio educational regional service system is set to become operational on July 1, 2007 and should serve as the conduit for the roll-out of statewide school improvement and related initiatives for all school districts.*

6. Determine ESC Per Pupil Base Funding as % of Basic Aid

- Per Pupil funding for ESCs should be tied to the state basic aid foundation level so the funding for ESCs automatically increases as the foundation level increases. The adequate level for school district foundation funding should carry through to an adequate level for ESC services.
- Unlike traditional public schools, ESCs are not subdivisions or taxing authorities as defined under the provisions of the uniform tax levy and uniform bond acts. ESC governing boards are not legally authorized to borrow money, issue bonds or notes, enact appropriation measures or exercise many other powers that are generally vested in the boards of education of local, exempted village, and city school districts.
- ESCs receive some state funding to support basic operations and statutorily mandated services. Ohio's 60 Educational Service Centers depend on the state subsidy(\$37 and \$40.52 per pupil) to provide an array of cost-effective educational, administrative and operational programs and services to Ohio's 613 public school districts, as well as community schools, chartered non-public schools, and county and state-run juvenile detention facilities.

- Several policy decisions over the course of the past 5-10 years have had a significant impact on ESC funding including, but not limited to, the following:
 - *the transition from unit funding to weighted funding for special education,*
 - *flat funding over the past 7 years,*
 - *the loss of facility support from boards of county commissioners, and*
 - *the elimination of the school-based Medicaid program, CAFS.*

These realities threaten the financial stability of Ohio's leading regional educational service providers. While the formula amount for local districts has increased over the last decade, the actual funding for educational service centers has decreased in relation to the formula amount.

7. Full Funding of City County Contracts

- Am. Sub. H.B. 115 (126th GA) eliminated the arbitrary deadline, in permanent statute, for city/county ESC contracts to be in effect and thereby allows funding for such agreements that have been put in place since that date. The deadline was an arbitrary deadline that has kept city/county agreements finalized after that date from being put into effect and funded. All city and exempted village school districts meeting the ADM threshold should have the opportunity to receive services from an ESC.
- The January 1, 1997 deadline currently in temporary language within HB 66, the biennial operating budget, should be eliminated to allow for funding of eligible city-county agreements.
- Consideration should also be given to funding all school districts, up to the 13,000 ADM threshold, for curriculum, school improvement, technical assistance, and other services through Ohio's educational service centers.
- *Existing state funded city/county contracts should not be reduced in order to fund new or currently existing but unfunded city/county agreements.*

Tier II

8. Raise Minimum Salary Schedule for Preschool Special Education Teachers and General Education Supervisors.
9. Maintain Existing Alternative School Grants and Allow for Creation of New Alternative School Programs.
10. Provide Adequate Support of Special Education Enhancement Funding Including Replication of Best Practice Programs.
11. Support Gifted Education Funding.
12. ESC Facility/Office Space Funding (Involvement in OSFC Program)
13. Renew Small County Guarantee.

State Policy Priorities

1. Make ESCs Eligible Recipients of State and Federal Funds for all Available Competitive Grants.

- The department of education should encourage and promote expansion of all eligible grant opportunities to ESCs. Utilizing ESCs to administer competitive grants provides for greater coordination and collaboration among school districts and regional service providers and enables services to be leveraged across a greater number of children, teachers, buildings and school districts.
- ESCs (ESAs) are defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as local education agencies. Likewise, under Ohio Revised Code §3311.055 all Revised Code references to “school districts” and “boards of education” are deemed to include ESCs and their governing boards. State department of education guidelines for grant awards should reflect ESC standing in both state and federal law.

2. Maintain and Support Increased Alignment of Regional Educational Service Providers and the Educational Regional Service System.

- Consistent with OESCA’s 2002 plan to align Ohio’s system of regional education delivery, and the recently passed Am. Sub. H.B. 115, the focus of any system change, as it relates to the delivery of state funded school improvement and technical assistance services, should continue to be on alignment of service providers and how to better utilize the state’s existing network of Educational Service Centers and regional service providers, and the newly created educational regional service system, to deliver educational services in a more effective and efficient, coordinated and systematic manner to positively impact student learning.
- OESCA supports efforts to increase greater alignment in the learning continuum from preschool through higher education and into the work force. ESCs provide services to preschool students, primary and secondary students and adult work force and can continue to partner with the state to provide support and services throughout the P-20 system.

3. Utilize ESCs in the Creation of STEM High Schools.

- OESCA supports efforts to promote and advance Science Technology Engineering and Math in Ohio’s K-12 education system.
- STEM high schools should be an integrated component of the existing K-12 public education system with similar accountability measures and not a new, separate public education system.
- ESCs can and should serve an integral part in the recruitment and retention of new and mid-career professionals with experience in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.
- ESCs can and should be utilized to provide alternative licensure pathways for mid-career professionals seeking to teach in STEM high schools.

4. Address School Psychologist and Speech/Language Pathologist Shortages including Updating the Special Education Rules to Allow School Psychologist Assistants, Speech Therapist Assistants, others.

- Allowing the use of School Psychologist and Speech-Language Assistants will enable ESCs and school districts to meet critical needs in a cost-effective manner and maintain quality programs.

5. Monitor CAFS and the transition to a new school-based Medicaid program.

- The close of the CAFS program and the inability to restart it places additional fiscal pressure on special education funding and therefore it is important for stakeholders to encourage the development of new and effective ways to address the problem. This situation compounds special education funding pressures that relate in part to the fact that the state's cost-based special education funding methodology is not fully funded because the weights are funded at 90% and have not been updated in four years. An alternative school-based Medicaid plan was rejected by the federal government. Months have since passed with little evidence that the state is any closer to approval of an alternative plan. To the extent possible, the state should continue to pursue a new school-based program. OESCA will continue to monitor CAFS and advocate for the transition to a new school-based Medicaid program.

6. Monitor Special Education Scholarships.

- OESCA supports providing students with disabilities a broad scope of opportunities to receive a high quality education. However, OESCA has some significant concerns about the current system's capacity to provide adequate services in transitioning from a system that currently does not allow students to transfer to one that would allow special education students to automatically switch school districts and/or service providers (as was proposed under HB 431 of the 126th General Assembly).

7. Eliminate outdated statutory requirements and update ESC definition/roles and responsibilities

- Numerous statutory provisions related to outdated regulatory functions of ESCs were eliminated in the last state biennial operating budget. A review of current statutes regarding ESC roles and responsibilities should be conducted and result in recommendations for the elimination of outdated requirements and the addition of new responsibilities consistent with the evolving ESC role as a full-scale service provider.
- Additional statutory roles and responsibilities for ESCs should be considered, as appropriate, to support state school improvement, technical assistance and professional development initiatives that lead to improved instruction and increased student performance outcomes, as well as programs and services that lead to increased efficiencies in school district operations.

Tier II

1. Create an ESC Accountability System aligned to the statutory required services provided by ESCs and consistent with the roles and responsibilities of the educational regional service system as established in Am. Sub. H.B. 115 (126th G.A.)
2. Establish Streamlined, Uniform ESC Accounting Procedures.
3. Provide ESCs Direct Funding as Provider of Auxiliary Services for Chartered Non-publics.
4. ESC Governance Issues – Change Governing Board Composition to include City and Exempted Village Districts with State Funded City/County (SB 140) Agreements.
5. Replicate Regional Best Practices that Improve Student Learning.

OESCA Federal Legislative Priorities for 2007

OESCA has adopted, to a significant degree, the positions of the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs), as outlined in AESA's 2007 legislative platform, in the policy areas of reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education act (ESEA), reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), IDEA, E-rate, Medicaid, HeadStart, Early Childhood Education, and other federal initiatives as outlined below.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

OESCA supports the intent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and encourages a full analysis of the Act and seeks modifications in the Reauthorization, which will strengthen local and regional flexibility and provide adequate federal funding to accomplish the goals of ESEA.

OESCA Goals:

► Title I:

○ Accountability

- We support high standards and a goal of reaching proficiency. However, we believe that it is statistically unlikely that all students will reach a universal level of proficiency by 2014. Proficiency needs to be defined realistically, taking into account the diverse needs of students, including multiple measures of accountability and means of evaluation.
- States should have flexibility in determining the means of measuring proficiency, including (but not limited to) individual student growth models.
- School improvement requirements and/or sanctions under ESEA should be graduated and targeted to address the needs of groups or subgroups identified as needing improvement.
- IDEA students' achievement should be measured based on the goals established in their individualized education programs (IEPs).
- OESCA believes that students with Limited English Proficiency should be appropriately assessed in English proficiency and content, math and other subjects specific for that child.
- Supplemental services are a critical tool for increasing student achievement and targeting additional education resources to students in need. ESAs are uniquely positioned to provide cost efficient and high-quality supplemental services to impacted schools and school districts. OESCA strongly believes that all supplemental service providers should be publicly accountable and school districts should have maximum flexibility in the use of their supplemental service dollars.
- ESAs are the nation's infrastructure for school improvement. ESAs are uniquely positioned to assist state departments of education, school districts, and schools with school improvement. ESAs should be the primary providers of technical assistance and professional development for school improvement efforts.
- OESCA supports redesign of high schools to reflect contemporary educational, social, and economic conditions at the state and local level. OESCA believes that the federal government should support the directions of the states and local education agencies, including ESAs, in their efforts to achieve high school redesign, including the use of high quality alternative strategies and programs for public high schools.
- OESCA supports the right of state and local education agencies to determine the requirements for graduation, including the definition of graduation and/or completion rates for accountability purposes.
- OESCA strongly supports a goal of literacy for all students. OESCA believes that the ultimate responsibility for determining the appropriate programs and methodology for how literacy should be taught should rest with state and local education agencies.

► Title II:

- OESCA strongly supports the right of states to define what constitutes a highly qualified educator.
- ESAs are national leaders in providing alternative licensure and certification, as well as professional development, for educators. OESCA supports the right of states to determine allowable alternative routes to licensure or certification for educators.
- OESCA supports expanded funding for technology, and supports the continued use of a combination of competitive grants and a formula for the distribution of those funds.

► Title III:

- ESAs are national leaders in both school safety and after-school programs throughout the United States. OESCA supports the continuation and expansion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools program and the 21st Century Schools After School Program. OESCA also supports flexibility in the allowable uses of funds under these programs.

► Title IV:

- OESCA supports the continued flexibility allowed under the Education Innovative Block Grant Program.

► Title V:

- OESCA supports the Rural Education Achievement Program.

► Title VI:

- OESCA supports the continuation of programs dedicated to Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Native Alaskans, and other native groups.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA)

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act presents the members of OESCA the opportunity to offer suggested changes to the law. ESAs are in a position to assist Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) with technical assistance, professional training, and other services needed by educators to comply with NCLB, IDEA and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Many programs within Title II of the HEA could be delivered by ESAs in consortium with or independent of IHEs. Data show that instructional programming delivered by ESAs is more cost effective with much lower overhead costs.

ESAs can provide a more cost effective mechanism at a regional level for ongoing, long-term training needs. Many ESAs deliver alternative certification thereby increasing the pool of highly qualified teachers as required in NCLB, IDEA and other federal laws. Delivery of such courses at the local/regional level is vitally important for school districts, especially those in rural areas, where colleges and universities are not in close proximity. It is also critical for ESAs to assist LEAs in training teachers in critical needs areas, such as special education, math and science.

OESCA supports:

- Direct funding to ESAs of Title II monies to assist with alternative certification programs for teachers and paraprofessionals. Participants in alternative certification and licensure programs should be eligible for federal student loan assistance. ESAs must be eligible to receive Stafford loans and Pell grants from students needing courses to obtain licenses and credentials as they work toward becoming highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Evaluation of alternative licensure and certification programs in the same way that traditional licensure and certification programs are evaluated.
- Internship/mentorship programs for future education leaders, including principals, superintendents and other LEA and ESA administrators.
- Allowing ESAs to be the principal fiscal agent for IHE/ESA partnership grants. This will maximize the use of funding available to the programs supported by these grants.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

OESCA remains committed to the federal government paying its full mandated share of the costs to implement IDEA.

OESCA supports:

- Modifying IDEA to require that the district of residence for IDEA students be responsible for the equitable participation of parentally placed private school students, as was the case in the 1997 IDEA law.

E-rate

The E-Rate Program provides important leveraging funds for education technology infrastructure to schools and libraries throughout the country.

OESCA supports:

- Continuing the funding of the E-Rate Program as an integral part of Universal Service and the Universal Service Fund.
- The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) and its divisions as the vehicle for governance of the E-rate.
- The Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) retaining jurisdiction of the E-Rate Program.
- Maintaining the current poverty and locality based discount system for the disbursement of E-Rate funds.
- Maintaining the eligibility of ESAs to receive E-Rate funds.
- A reduction in paperwork.
- Encouraging LEAs to consolidate the application process by ESAs, especially rural and small LEAs.
- A permanent exemption from the federal Anti-Deficiency Act (ADA) for the Universal Service Fund. The Program's ability to collect and disburse funds in a timely fashion is undermined by the ADA, which requires that E-Rate funds be "in the bank," and harms the programs viability.

Medicaid

Medicaid reimbursement is an important part of the support services that ESAs and their LEAs provide to eligible students throughout the country.

OESCA supports:

- A major cost-effective vehicle for delivering Medicaid reimbursements to eligible LEAs and ESAs and the students they serve.
- Maintaining Medicaid reimbursements for health-related services that schools provide to children, including fee for service, administrative, and transportation.
- Legislation that clarifies the connection between IDEA and Medicaid.
- The expansion of Medicaid claiming to include eligibility for 504 Vocational Rehabilitation students.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to work with states, ESAs and local school districts to ensure a uniform methodology for claiming across the country.

Choice and Charters, Not Vouchers or Tuition Tax Credits

Alternatives within the public school system are needed, such as public charters, magnet schools, accommodation schools, and inter-district school choice (open enrollment). Alternative educational systems that have public oversight and conform to state and federal laws and regulations are acceptable.

The concept of a tuition tax credit is little more than a modified voucher using public funds to pay for children to attend any private school, including those with discriminatory admissions criteria; provides financial assistance to middle and upper income, rather than low income families; and provides public funding to schools where there is no requirement for oversight and accountability. Tuition tax credits could lead toward a more segregated and segmented educational system that could ultimately have a damaging impact on our democracy.

OESCA will:

- Support only those alternatives that are accessible to all students and are not discriminatory.
- Oppose any voucher or tuition tax credit proposal that amplifies the gap between the “haves” and “have nots.”
- Advocate for uniform and consistent public oversight and accountability for all recipients of federal education funding.
- Encourage high quality, professional development programs for all personnel, including those in charter schools and other alternative programs.
- Work to focus the education debate to improve our public schools and not divert public school resources into private schools.

Head Start and Other Early Childhood Programs

The federal government rightly funds numerous early childhood (birth through age five) programs. ESAs often operate these programs on behalf of local communities and/or local school districts. Research demonstrates that quality early childhood education and development programs improve student achievement and close the learning gap, especially for high-poverty children, and are wise investments of public tax dollars.

OESCA supports:

- Universal access to high quality comprehensive pre-school experiences, which are coordinated and articulated with the public school in which the child will enroll.
- Alternative certification programs and quality teacher training and professional development programs for early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals.
- The establishment of model child care centers in schools and other community sites.
- State and local certification of child care providers, not federal certification.
- Use of developmentally appropriate assessments and curriculum programs for early childhood learners.
- Head Start and other early childhood programs. OESCA opposes proposals which would weaken their effectiveness at the local level, such as block grant programs.

Workforce Investment Act

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides for a one-stop delivery system with employment and training services for job seekers and businesses. As with all aspects of education, WIA should be part of a seamless system of articulation from K-12, adult and post secondary education, and business connections to strengthen readiness for high school and post-secondary school or work.

OESCA supports:

- Maintaining representation of key educational and vocational rehabilitation partners on local workforce boards.
- Maintaining the current balance between in-school and out-of-school youth programming, currently up to 70% of funds may be used for in-school youth and 30% for out-of-school youth.
- Additional funding and programming opportunities for ESAs for workforce and development training for adult learners.
- Maintaining all elements of WIA that support strong local partnerships.
- Requiring all providers to meet the same program and accountability requirements.

- Maintaining current requirements for youth councils or providing state investment boards with authority to determine whether and how to create youth councils. Youth councils establish policies and award funds to support emerging workers in ways that bring business, education, workforce, and other partners such as the juvenile justice system together.
- Eliminating onerous eligibility requirements in WIA Title I and allow programs to use school lunch eligibility as the criterion for participation. Additionally, allow state workforce investment boards to designate as eligible all students of schools with high concentrations of youth at risk of leaving school without critical employment skills.
- Strengthening K-12 and economic development connections to WIA to support innovation in emerging technologies and high growth professions.
- Transitioning services for students with disabilities after they are no longer eligible to be served under IDEA.

Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self Determination Act

OESCA recognized the challenges of school districts located in federal forest counties and urges the continuation of the safety-net legislation to ensure a consistent funding stream for these school districts.

School Safety

ESAs are a critical component of school and community safety efforts. Federal and state funding must be made available to support the coordination and training efforts by ESAs on behalf of their schools and communities.

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds

OESCA supports the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) program, including the expansion of funding to support new construction. Educational Service Agencies should be eligible to receive funds under QZAB under the same terms as other LEAs.