

## **AESA 2017 Federal Legislative Agenda**

*This document is to be used in coordination with the AESA policy priorities. While the policy priorities outline the organization’s overarching priorities as they relate to federal education policy, the annual legislative agenda is more time-sensitive. Subject to annual revision, the legislative agenda allows the organization to pivot and prioritize response to emerging federal policy discussions.*

**Policy Foundation:** AESA’s federal legislative agenda is premised on equity in education and educational opportunity, the appropriate role of the federal government to support and strengthen public education, and the focus on ensuring that a high-quality public education should be a viable option for all students and all communities.

### **Equity in Education and Educational Opportunity**

- While federal funding represents, on average, roughly 10 percent of a school district’s operating budget, it is a critical share of education investment. As an entity committed to equity, federal funding must be allocated to school districts and, as appropriate, educational service agencies, via formulae. Continued reliance on competitive allocation is inherently inequitable and reiterates/exacerbates a system of winners and losers.
- Given that a child is more than a test score, federal supports (both funding and policy) as well as federal accountability must include both academic and non-academic factors, including (but not limited to) physical health, mental health, student engagement, and counseling.
- Equitable access to affordable internet (broadband) connectivity is an important building block for education and learning. AESA supports the E-Rate program, for its role in providing internet to schools and libraries, and the Lifeline program, for the work it does in providing internet access in low-income homes, an important step in addressing the “homework gap”.

### **The federal government’s role is to support and strengthen the nation’s public schools.**

- Educational service agencies and the districts they serve are not liable to use state and local funds to cover federal mandates.
- Congress must meet its commitment to provide 40% of the additional cost associated with educating students with disabilities. AESA supports this push for ‘full funding’ of IDEA in both the short-term (through annual appropriations) and in the long-term (through stand-alone legislation providing a path to meet the 40% commitment). AESA



supports a long-term coordinated campaign to grow (phase-in) federal IDEA funding (goal: full funding).

- All entities receiving public dollars will be subject to the same transparency, reporting, and accountability requirements.
- AESA supports state and local education leaders exercising the flexibility and authority returned to them in ESSA. ESAs are uniquely positioned to support state and local education agencies in the implementation of the new law.
- ESAs and the schools they serve may provide Medicaid eligible services and, as such, receive reimbursement. Protect Medicaid in schools.
- Federal policy must support the unique opportunities and obstacles facing our nation's rural schools and communities, including the REAP, Forest Counties, and Impact Aid programs.
- Ensure new data collection requirements, burdensome regulations and new guidance and policies issued by the U.S. Department of Education must be examined in the context of what is statutorily required of districts and with consideration of current federal, state and local education funding levels.
- In expanding and delivering early education, ensure public schools are a core partner in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.

**Ensuring high-quality public education is a viable option for all students and all communities.**

- Access to robust early education opportunity—particularly for students in high-need/low-income situations—is a critical component to building a strong education continuum.
- ESAs have a unique role to play in supporting expanded and effective implementation of the Carl Perkins (career/technical) education program, relating to fiduciary, professional development and stackable credential responsibilities.
- Equitable access to effective teachers is a critical element for educational opportunity.
  - ESAs can support teacher preparation and licensure, and supports policy that ensures candidates are eligible for student grants/loans.
  - ESAs must be eligible entities for grants that relate to teacher training/certification/development.