

2017 Federal Advocacy Policy Priorities



IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act (IDEA) is a cornerstone of the role of the federal government in K12 education. IDEA was designed to level the playing field for a historically disadvantaged population—students with disabilities—to ensure they have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities. Advocacy around IDEA will relate to both the authorization of the underlying statute and the annual appropriations process.

- 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).
- As part of their work in implementing IDEA, ESAs and the schools they serve may provide Medicaid eligible services and, as such, receive reimbursement. Protect Medicaid in schools.

FCC/E-rate: The E-Rate program single-handedly transformed the role of technology in classrooms and libraries across the country by supporting the expansion of internet connectivity. Given the reality of ever-growing demand for connectivity and bandwidth, E-Rate remains a critical element of federal support for ESAs, schools, and libraries.

- Protect and expand funding
- Require FCC/USAC appointees who support E-Rate
- Expand scope of services (from infrastructure to classroom)
- Education about E-rate to legislature and others (ESAs) – Think tank
- Create equity and opportunity

Teacher shortages: ESAs and the schools they serve are constantly working to ensure they have the most effective staff they can hire. These efforts are complicated by the more recent pressure of a teacher shortage. AESA remains committed to the broader systemic conversation about teacher shortages, from looking at the types of candidates that pursue education and the way education programs are positioned/treated in the higher education environment to teacher sorting/retention patterns and pathways, both alternative and traditional.

- Expand all prep/licensure candidates be eligible for student loans (Ex. Alternative Licensure programs in an ESA).
- Ensure the reauthorization:
 - ESAs are eligible for grants
 - ESAs coordinate collaboration with Pk-16
- Protect Public service loan forgiveness programs for all teachers.
- Incentivize salaries for teachers in rural areas

Early Childhood Education: Just as ESAs and the schools they serve must be ready for the students they enroll, so too must the students be ready—academically, emotionally, and socially—to learn.

- Protect funding for Head Start.
- Provide 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

ESSA: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the most recent iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and remains the flagship bill establishing a role for the federal government in K12 education. Designed to level the playing field for a historically disadvantaged population—students in poverty—ESSA was signed into law in 2015 and represents a significant return to the empowerment of state and local education agencies and education professionals as it relates to education, program design and implementation, and students.

- Flexibility in ESSA implementation
- Defined role for ESAs within ESSA and specifics and state plans include and enlist ESAs
- Opposition of new voucher program

- Level playing field for schools accepting taxpayer money. (Accept all students and be equally accountable).

Secure Rural Schools: Secure Rural Schools provides funding for ESAs, schools and communities that find a portion of their land owned by federal parkland. The presence of federal land means the community has reduced ability to generate property taxes—a common source of funding for schools—and SRS helps fill some of the void.

- Long-term dedicated funding for 5-10 years
- Short-term retroactive plus 1 year
- Forest health and management and employment only if acceptable to passage (hot political issue)
- Reduced payments over time if sustained funding is not approved “last resort”
- ESA – LEAs
- “A shared services agreement” – 40 states Federal – state, county formula-based

Career and Technical Education: ESAs work to ensure all students graduate college and career ready, and CTE is the backbone of ESAs’ ability to prepare students for career or additional career-specific training in the K12 setting.

- Provide funding for career pathways for all students
- Expand opportunities consistent with expansion of dual enrollment.
- Equity of CTE opportunities – Rural/Urban CC partnerships (Iowa example)
- Role for ESA in CTE – Regionalize to ensure opportunities for all kids, maintain consortium
 - Fiduciary
 - Professional development
 - Stackable credentials
- Required collaboration – ESAs are the link between K12 and Community Colleges.