August 27, 2013

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator,

On behalf of ASCD’s 140,000 members, we respectfully ask you to cosponsor the Effective Teaching and Leading Act, S. 1063. This important legislation, sponsored by Senator Jack Reed, would help target assistance to schools and districts to provide teachers, principals, and school leaders the initial and ongoing support they need to meet today’s challenges through implementation of proven, research-based strategies.

Highly skilled, effective teachers and school leaders are essential to student learning and achievement. However, teaching well requires not just subject matter expertise, but also skills in classroom management and data analysis and tools for implementing new standards and assessments. Likewise, school leaders face unique challenges, including financial, public relations, facilities, and curriculum issues.

S. 1063 would allow the use of Title II funds of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to develop and implement induction programs to support teachers and school leaders in their first two years of employment, including ongoing mentoring with paid release time, a rigorous mentor selection process, and regular feedback. Research shows that new teachers who receive two years of induction support produce greater student learning gains. Additional studies provide evidence that comprehensive mentoring and induction can reduce costly teacher attrition and provide essential skills and strategies for school leader success.

Ongoing, job-embedded professional development scheduled during the school day can have a significant effect on student performance. S. 1063 would update ESEA’s definition of professional development to reflect best practices and ensure that teachers receive frequent and significant blocks of time scheduled during the regular school day for collaborating on successful methods to improve student learning and classroom instruction and identify student and teacher learning needs.
The effectiveness of principals and other school leaders is also crucial to improve student learning outcomes. S.1063 would enable districts to provide principals and school leaders with professional development focused on planning and implementing strategies for school improvement. The bill would also encourage educators to take on new roles and responsibilities and reward teachers and leaders who to serve as mentors, instructional coaches, or master teachers.

Preparing students for college and careers in today’s competitive global environment must be our highest national priority. Teachers and school leaders are committed to ensuring that their students succeed in school and beyond and providing these educators with the support they need to increase their capacity to effect student learning and achievement is crucial. We urge you to support S. 1063 and add your name as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

To become a cosponsor, please have your staff contact Moira Lenehan-Razzuri in Senator Reed’s office. She can be reached at moira_lenehan@reed.senate.gov or at extension 44642. For additional information, please have your staff contact Megan Wolfe, ASCD’s advocacy manager, at megan.wolfe@ascd.org or 1-703-575-5616.

Cordially,

David Griffith
Public Policy Director