



2010 Legislative Agenda



Educator Advocates

We are educators. We know what works. Together we can make a difference.





ASCD, representing more than 170,000 educators, calls on policymakers to join forces with educators, families, and communities to ensure all children become college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school so that they can lead productive, engaged, and fulfilling lives.

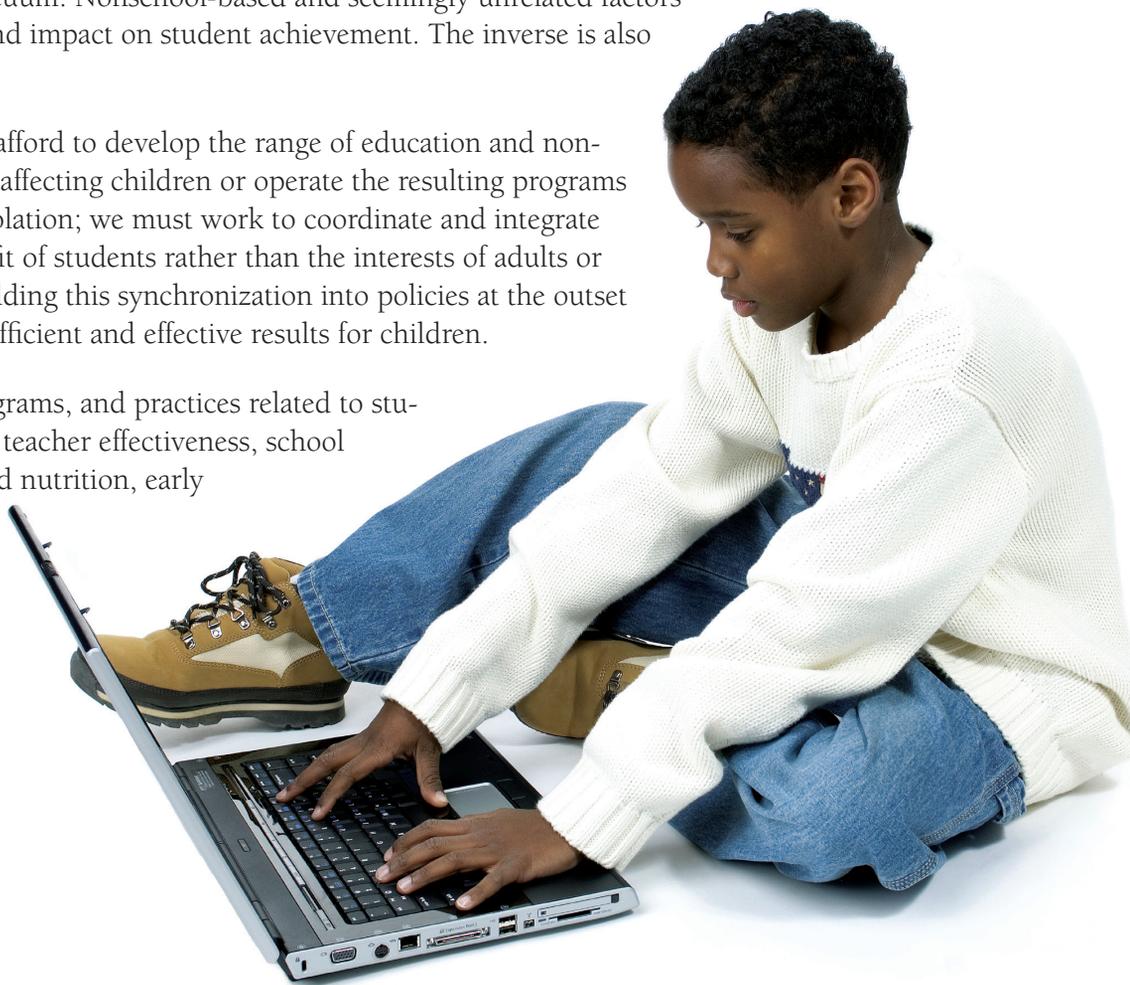
It is an ambitious goal, but one that is both worthy of a great nation and necessary for that nation to remain great. Such a goal will require real leadership, national support, new resources, and a renewed commitment to the needs of the whole child.

For too long, federal education reform has been narrowly focused on a small subset of core academic subjects: reading and math. Education improvements have been measured on an even more limited basis, through the use of standardized state tests in reading and math and a convoluted school accountability system that forsakes any type of reward but instead offers only arbitrary and punitive sanctions. It is hard to imagine a better designed scheme to ill-serve students, demoralize the good work of educators, demean schools, degrade education, and mislead the public. Aspiring to a level of the lowest common denominator inevitably leads to a race to the bottom.

What is needed is a complete overhaul of federal education policy and a new vision for a comprehensive education—well beyond the bare basics of reading and math—for all students. It will require a recognition that student learning occurs neither exclusively in school nor in a vacuum. Nonschool-based and seemingly unrelated factors can have a profound impact on student achievement. The inverse is also true.

We can no longer afford to develop the range of education and non-education policies affecting children or operate the resulting programs serving them in isolation; we must work to coordinate and integrate them for the benefit of students rather than the interests of adults or bureaucracies. Building this synchronization into policies at the outset will lead to more efficient and effective results for children.

Thus policies, programs, and practices related to student achievement, teacher effectiveness, school improvement, child nutrition, early childhood education, postsecondary opportunities, community



involvement, personalized learning, and healthy physical and emotional development, among others, should be designed to ensure that each student

- Enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
- Is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Has access to personalized learning.
- Is supported by qualified, caring adults and is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment.

ASCD is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization whose members are educators from all levels and subject areas—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members. As such, the ASCD Legislative Agenda is developed from the wide-ranging and comprehensive perspective and experience of successful school leaders and effective educators. ASCD stands ready to work in partnership with policymakers and the public to achieve these important policy goals in support of a whole child approach to education.

HEALTHY

ASCD believes each student deserves to enter school healthy and to learn about and practice a healthy lifestyle. Research confirms that students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. They miss fewer classes, are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher test scores. Unfortunately, too many students go to class in less than optimal health.

ASCD supports comprehensive policies that promote children's health. At the most fundamental level, all children should have affordable access to medical care. Last year's expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was an important step, but too many children—nearly four million—still do not have health care coverage. Parents from such families routinely face the unacceptable situation of having to forego preventative health services for their children because they simply cannot afford it.

While this complex issue extends well beyond education, schools and school leaders have a critical role to play in helping students receive the services they need.

ASCD calls on Congress to support

- Using state report cards that measure and publicly report on the health, safety, and education of children and families and that offer a comprehensive look at the circumstances (e.g., hunger, poverty, crime, literacy, and health) of children and the factors that influence student success.



- Establishing coordinated school health advisory councils as part of schools' improvement efforts.
- Giving children the opportunity to receive routine health screenings at school.
- Ensuring that physical education and health education classes emphasize lifetime healthy behaviors.
- Making healthy food choices available at school to all students and at all times of day. Meals served by schools, indeed all food offered under the auspices of schools, should meet research-based nutrition standards for children.

SAFE

ASCD believes that each student deserves to learn in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe. Feeling safe at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement, according to numerous studies. Children who don't feel safe can't concentrate on their studies, don't connect with their classmates, or don't go to school at all.

Despite media sensationalism to the contrary, schools remain one of the safest—if not the safest—places for children. But the physical safety of students, while absolutely essential, is only one component in their protection. Thus, the very definition of and the attendant measures for persistently dangerous schools under the No Child Left Behind Act are as inadequate as they are outdated in offering any information about a student's overall security and sense of well-being in school.

To promote school settings that are physically and emotionally safe for every student and adult, ASCD proposes that Congress develop a set of more comprehensive indicators of student well-being in ESEA:

- Publicly reported survey data from students, staff, and parents on the school climate, parent satisfaction, and family outreach.
- Disaggregated statistics about student security, discipline, and support to help inform teacher professional development activities and integrate climate and culture strategies into school improvement plans at the school and district level.
- Evidence of parent communication and engagement plans at both the district and school levels.



ENGAGED

ASCD believes each student deserves to be actively engaged in learning and connected to the school and broader community. To learn at their best, students must be engaged and motivated. Substantial research shows that students who feel both valued by adults and a part of their schools perform better academically and also have more positive social attitudes, values, and behavior. Plus, they are less likely to engage in drug use, violence, or sexual activity. Schools and communities have a role to play in engaging the individual through connections and activities that are purposeful, meaningful, and empowering. Successful programs require targeted investments, stakeholder commitments, focused academic support, high-quality programming, and a process of continual improvement.

To help measure engagement and foster more initiatives, ASCD proposes schools, districts, and states collect and publish data for the following indicators: student and teacher attendance rates; dropout and graduation rates; the number of students involved in cocurricular and extracurricular activities (disaggregated by demographic subgroups); and the number of students in service-learning, apprenticeships, and internships in the local community.

ASCD calls on Congress to support systemic reforms that promote

- Student learning in intellectually challenging environments that provide the foundation for future educational achievement and have opportunities for community-based service, apprenticeships, internships, or other projects.
- A middle-level curriculum that is relevant, challenging, interactive, and exploratory and that responds to the unique nature of middle-level students. Instruction should reflect high expectations and include multiple teaching and learning approaches that engage students.
- High school redesign that includes rich and rigorous curriculum, meaningful and relevant learning experiences, and relationships with caring adults who know students well.
- Incentives to businesses and local community services to become more involved in the educational process, expanding opportunities for school students.

SUPPORTED

ASCD believes each student deserves access to personalized learning and support from qualified, caring adults. Research shows that, in addition to improving students' academic performance,



supportive schools also help prevent a host of negative consequences, including isolation, violent behavior, dropping out of school, and suicide. Central to a supportive school are teachers, administrators, and other caring adults who take a personal interest in each student and in the success of each student.

ASCD calls on Congress to support

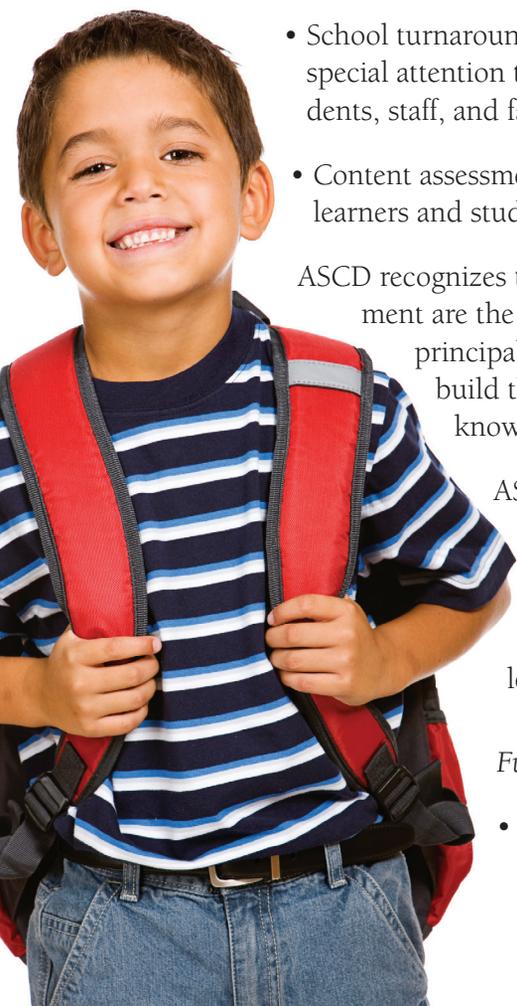
- Innovative and useful reform that requires state and local governments to dismantle the obstacles to collaboration between and among school systems and the social, health, and safety services that support children.
- Alternate pathways to graduation that are available to all students.
- An adult mentor for every student—one who supports individualized learning opportunities that engage students in relevant curriculum and challenging education plans.
- The facilitation of school partnerships with community service agencies and other local entities.
- Flexible grouping and flexible time frames to measure success, which enables schools to develop alternative approaches to the Carnegie Unit and other traditional conventions such as the traditional school day and year.
- Publicly reporting the ratio of counselors and support staff to students—with an effort toward meeting the goal of the ASCA recommended 250:1 student to counselor ratio.
- School turnaround strategies that incorporate the tenets of the Whole Child Initiative—with special attention to fortifying the relationships and interpersonal connections among students, staff, and families—to support student achievement.
- Content assessments that are valid, reliable, and comprehensible for English language learners and students with disabilities.

ASCD recognizes that the two most important school-based factors affecting student achievement are the effectiveness of the classroom teacher and the effectiveness of the school principal. From the early childhood center to the university campus, we must build the capacity to support educators in gaining and sustaining the professional knowledge, skills, and training to address the evolving needs of students.

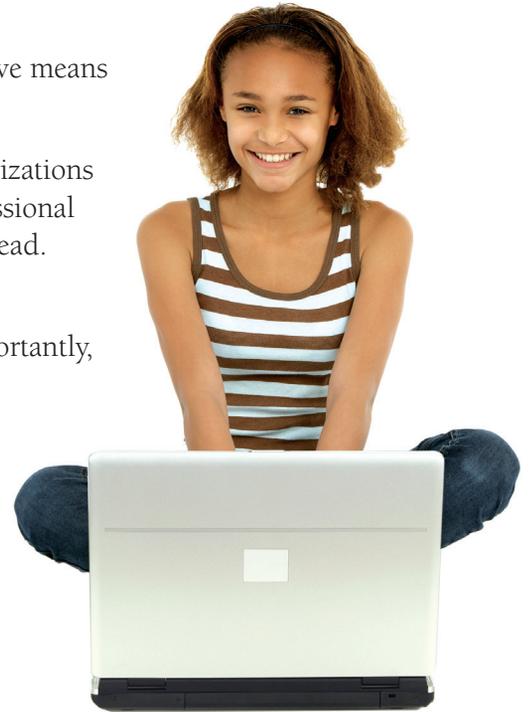
ASCD calls on Congress to support systemic approaches to the career development of educators including their preparation, induction, mentoring, coaching, ongoing professional development, and evaluation. ASCD also encourages Congress to support teacher leadership as well as creative ways to retain and use the effective, experienced educator and school leader throughout their entire careers.

Furthermore, ASCD calls on Congress to promote

- A definition of educator effectiveness that includes, but is not limited to, indicators related to student growth and proficiency.



- Incentives for school-university partnerships focusing on innovative means to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers.
- Collaborations between universities, schools, and education organizations in supporting and providing specific educational leadership professional development to ensure new principals are prepared and ready to lead.
- Differentiated recognition programs, including locally determined incentive and merit pay programs tied to educator and, more importantly, school effectiveness.
- Strategies that directly address the shortage of high-performing teachers and principals in high-need geographic and subject areas.
- Professional opportunities for teachers to assume differentiated roles such as instructional and curriculum leaders, coaches, and mentors.
- Professional development that promotes continuous learning in collaborative or self-directed activities focused on student needs, results, and best practice, such as study groups, action research, and data analysis.



CHALLENGED

ASCD believes each graduate deserves to be challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment. To succeed in college, other postsecondary education, civic society, and the workplace, students need higher-level thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills, as well as knowledge of the world and its people. These are all products of a curriculum, instructional methods, and a school climate and culture that challenge students to work harder as they investigate a wide range of real-world subjects. What's more, our high school graduates who pursue college must be adequately prepared, yet too many are taking remedial courses, which raises deep concerns about the value of their high school diplomas.

ASCD calls on Congress to support the efforts of states and local education agencies to improve educational outcomes by using research-based approaches that ensure that young children are well-prepared for school, students successfully transition from elementary to the secondary grades, and high school graduates become productive and engaged citizens prepared for success in a global society.

The current federal means to evaluate student learning and engagement are limited and do not provide a valid assessment of student skills or of overall school quality. Therefore, ASCD calls on Congress to establish an accountability system that evaluates students and schools using a comprehensive assessment system that includes multiple indicators of performance and student academic growth. Using growth models to measure student progress presents a more accurate portrayal of student achievement. Effective and accurate growth models can include a combination of state assessments, teacher-developed assessments, portfolios, and performance assessments such as essays and projects.

ASCD calls on Congress to authorize

- Growth model accountability for each child, including academic growth in core academic subjects disaggregated by demographic subgroups, English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- Access to and funding for high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for all children.
- The enrollment of all students in rigorous courses (preK–12), and the opportunity for all to participate in AP classes and the IB program.
- College- and career-readiness standards that go beyond proficiency solely in reading and math and include science, social science, the arts, foreign language, health education, physical education, technology, and all other core academic subjects.
- Enactment of the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act and the Graduation Promise Act.

Founded in 1943, ASCD is an educational leadership organization dedicated to advancing best practices and policies for the success of each learner. Our 170,000 members in 136 countries are professional educators from all levels and subject areas—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members. Our nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association provides expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

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Educator Advocates is a grassroots network of ASCD educators who speak out to ensure that education policy supports what is best for students. To join and have your voice heard, visit www.ascd.org/actioncenter.

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Printer-friendly copies of the 2010 Legislative Agenda are available at www.ascd.org/legislativeagenda. For additional information, contact the members of ASCD's policy team at edadvocates@ascd.org.

