

2012 Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy

Connecting the Classroom to the Capitol

January 22–24, 2012 Washington, D.C.

ESEA Reauthorization

Background

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is five years overdue for reauthorization. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee approved a reauthorization bill, known as the Harkin-Enzi bill, in October 2011 on a bipartisan basis, but this bill has not yet been considered on the Senate floor. The measure makes significant changes to the No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB's) testing and accountability systems, including requirements for multiple measures of student academic achievement and assessing higher-order thinking skills and understanding. The bill would allow states to administer the assessments once annually or at multiple times over the course of the year if it will result in a single, valid summative test score.

In addition, the bill would scrap NCLB's adequate yearly progress (AYP) accountability system along with the 100 percent proficiency deadline of 2013–14. Instead, states would have to ensure that all students make continuous improvement in academic achievement, and states would be given the flexibility to build their own accountability systems, which could include measures of student growth and incorporate achievement in a range of subject areas. States would also be given authority over whether and how to intervene in schools, except with the persistently lowest-performing schools, where the bill would mandate specific turnaround strategies.

In addition, the Senate bill drastically cuts back specific grant programs while giving states much greater discretion on some issues, such as teacher evaluation. Senator Bob Casey (R-PA) sponsored a successful amendment to create a \$500 million grant program to support well-rounded education, and many additional amendments are expected to be offered during the full Senate debate of the bill.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee has opted to reauthorize ESEA through a quintet of small-bore bills. The committee passed three of the bills last year, the content of which is now being consolidated into the final two pending bills. Education reform in the House looks to substantially reduce the federal role in education, most notably in accountability and teacher evaluations, moving oversight to states and districts. The House ESEA plan maintains annual student testing in math and language arts in grades 3–8 and once in high school, but it eliminates all maintenance of effort requirements for states and districts. AYP and highly qualified teacher requirements would also be eliminated and responsibility for them shifted to states. The committee is expected to vote on the two bills in February.

In the meantime, the Obama administration has instituted a waiver program (essentially bypassing reauthorization) that provides states with flexibility in some of NCLB's more onerous mandates in exchange for commitments to the administration's reform priorities, such as common standards and teacher evaluations.

With the commencement of the second session of the 112th Congress, lawmakers are faced with extremely difficult and partisan budget, tax, and education issues. Given this political backdrop, particularly in a presidential election year, completing ESEA reauthorization in 2012 is unlikely. Additional obstacles that stand in the way of reauthorization include conflicting perspectives on the federal role in education, school accountability, assessments, defining and measuring educator effectiveness, and properly meeting the needs of special populations.

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ASCD Position

There are numerous factors affecting academic outcomes for students and schools. As such, we support education programs in coordination with in-school and out-of-school services so that each child

- Is healthy and ready to learn.
- Feels physically and emotionally safe.
- Is actively engaged in learning and connected to the broader school community.
- Has access to personalized instruction.
- Is challenged academically and prepared for postsecondary success.

ESEA reauthorization needs to be completed in 2012 so that schools, districts, and states can move ahead with planning for their coming school years and not be subject to uncertainty and a patchwork system of ESEA fixes and temporary waivers.

Talking Points

- **Provide a whole child approach.** Recognize that ensuring all children are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged should be a national priority, and encourage parents, educators, and community members to support and provide a whole child approach to education for each student.
- **Support well-rounded education.** Support the well-rounded education language in the Senate HELP Committee's ESEA reauthorization bill to prepare students to be college-, career- and citizenship-ready.
- **Define readiness to include all core academic subjects.** Define college, career, and citizenship readiness to include proficiency in reading, math, science, social science, the arts, civics, foreign language, health education and physical education, technology, and all other core academic subjects.
- **Assess multiple measures of student achievement.** Replace the current federal focus on standardized testing in reading and mathematics with an emphasis on multiple measures of student achievement (other than state assessments) in all core academic subjects.
- **Authorize growth-model accountability.** Authorize a growth-model accountability system for each child in every state, including academic growth disaggregated by demographic subgroups, English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- **Support ongoing professional learning.** Support educator leaders' ongoing professional learning to address students' evolving needs.

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Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness

Background

The link between educator effectiveness and student learning is undeniable. Research shows that for teachers and leaders to be highly effective and sustain best practices, an environment of differentiated professional learning and collaborative relationships must be in place. For the last decade, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has specified that all students should have highly qualified teachers, which is defined as teachers who meet the most basic qualifications to enter the classroom.

The president, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and various national and state policymakers have spoken about the need for highly effective teachers who elicit growth in student achievement and receive comprehensive support at all stages of their careers—from preparation and induction to ongoing professional development. Although each state and district has its own unique professional development needs, one thing is certain: sustained, job-embedded professional development is essential for educators to become highly effective.

ASCD Position

ASCD supports high-quality, job-embedded, sustained professional development for all educators and school leaders. This should commence when new educators receive their initial training and should continue throughout their induction and overall professional career. Successful professional development programs for educators should include

- Comprehensive, multiyear induction and mentoring for new teachers, principals, and school leaders.
- Team-based, job-embedded, data-driven professional development for all teachers.
- High-quality support and professional development for principals and school leaders.
- Increased teacher leadership opportunities and compensation.
- Rigorous, transparent, and equitable teacher and principal evaluation systems that would provide individualized feedback and targeted support to teachers and principals about areas of improvement and that result in detailed information about performance and growth over time.
- External formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the teacher and principal evaluation, induction, mentoring, and professional development programs based on program implementation and specific outcomes.

A reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should facilitate state-developed teacher and school leader evaluation methods based on a common definition of educator effectiveness.

In the Senate, cosponsor the Effective Teaching and Leading Act, S. 1674, sponsored by Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI).

In the House, sponsor (introduce) a companion measure or cosponsor the measure once it is introduced.

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Talking Points

- **Students need access to highly effective teachers.** Each student in every subject deserves access to a highly effective teacher, and each school and school district deserves highly effective school leaders.
- **Educators need professional knowledge, skills, and training.** Congress must support educators in gaining and sustaining the professional knowledge, skills, and training to address the evolving needs of students.
- **Effectiveness should be based on research.** The essential elements of teacher and school leader effectiveness should be identified based on research.

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Education Funding

Background

Congress passed and the president signed FY12 education funding legislation that decreases federal education funding for the first time since 2007 and cuts some programs outright. To comply with the Budget Control Act (i.e., the debt ceiling deal) passed earlier in 2011, education funding (except for Pell Grants) was subject to an across-the-board cut of 0.189 percent. A few program details are below.

Program	FY11 Funding Level	FY12 Funding Level	Difference FY11–FY12
Title I	\$13.9 billion	\$14.5 billion	+ \$60 million
IDEA	\$11.5 billion	\$11.6 billion	+ \$100 million
Teacher Quality State Grants	\$2.465 billion	\$2.466 billion	-\$1 million
School Improvement Grants	\$534 million	\$533 million	-\$1 million
Teacher Incentive Fund	\$399 million	\$299 million	-\$100 million
Impact Aid	\$1.273 billion	\$1.292 billion	+\$19 million
21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$1.155 billion	\$1.153 billion	-\$2 million
Race to the Top	\$698 million	\$548 million	-\$150 million
Investing in Innovation	\$149 million	\$149 million	same
Charter Schools	\$255 million	\$255 million	same
English Language Acquisition	\$733 million	\$732 million	-\$1 million
Career & Technical Education	\$1.1 billion	\$1.1 billion	same

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However, the failure of the federally created super committee to recommend \$1.5 trillion in budget cuts this winter will trigger sequestration, or automatic, cuts that will go into effect in January 2013. These spending cuts, if left unchanged during the coming year, will require billions of dollars to be slashed from the federal education budget. For example

- Title I would be cut by \$1.1 billion (-8 percent), affecting almost 1.5 million students.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would be cut by \$896 million (-13 percent), affecting more than a half a million students.
- Head Start would be cut by \$590 million (-8 percent), affecting more than 75,000 young children.

ASCD Position

ASCD believes that all children must have an equitable share of resources commensurate with their learning needs, as well as access to personalized learning; a well-rounded education; a highly effective teacher in every subject; and support from qualified, caring adults.

Federal resources are essential to level the playing field for underserved student populations and communities and to target assistance to persistently underperforming schools. Unfortunately, Title I is not able to benefit all of the students and schools it is intended to serve; thus, its limited resources are targeted primarily to elementary schools and early intervention strategies.

Sufficient and effective federal investments are needed to serve all Title I-eligible K–12 students to help improve student achievement and school quality.

Talking Points

- **Invest in education.** This is one of the best ways to improve our current economic situation and ensure that students are fully prepared to compete in a global economy.
- **Budget shortfalls are disproportionately affecting education.** Current state and federal budget shortfalls are disproportionately and negatively affecting education. This is impeding progress in improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and increasing high school graduation rates.
- **Congress must provide a system of rewards and incentives.** When reauthorizing ESEA, Congress must provide a system of rewards and incentives—including flexibility in the use of Title I funds—to states and schools that are consistently high-performing, that close achievement gaps, or that do well in cohort comparisons.

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College, Career, and Citizenship Readiness

Background

The Obama administration's FY12 budget request and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) *Blueprint for Education Reform* propose to consolidate several grant programs that support teaching and learning in the areas of the arts, foreign languages, civics, history, geography, and economics into a single, competitive grant: the Effective Teaching and Learning for a Well-Rounded Education program. Congress responded in its FY12 omnibus spending bill by eliminating some of these programs.

Program	FY11 Funding Level	FY12 Funding Level
Teaching American History	\$46 million	\$0
Foreign Language Assistance	\$27 million	\$0
Civic Education	\$1.2 million	\$0
Excellence in Economic Ed	\$1.4 million	\$0

To further complicate matters, the Senate education committee's ESEA reauthorization package includes a provision that would create a well-rounded state grant program to provide funding for 11 subject areas, allowing the states flexibility to determine which subjects they desire to be funded. Essentially, the subjects would be pitted against one another—for example, arts against physical education—for the same pot of funds. In addition, there is no guarantee that those who review the grant applications will be experts in the fields for which they will be reviewing.

ASCD Position

ASCD, along with approximately 40 major education organizations representing a wide array of subject areas, continues to promote support for student access to a well-rounded education that sufficiently prepares them for college, careers, and citizenship.

Support the Senate ESEA bill's well-rounded education amendment language and ensure that grant reviewers are experts in the fields for which they are reviewing.

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Talking Points

- **Include all elements of a well-rounded education** in any definition of college-, career-, and citizenship-readiness standards, and provide the funding essential to ensure that students have access to these subjects.
- **Promote grant competitions within disciplines**, not among them, that prioritize underserved or high-needs schools and students and emphasize best practices, scalability, and cross-subject collaboration and integration.
- **Develop a rigorous evaluation process** that includes significant input from professional educators to measure the effectiveness of the funded activities and to propose improvements in the respective grant programs.
- **Establish meaningful public reporting and accountability requirements** regarding student achievement in each of these disciplines at the school, district, and state levels.

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