



# ASCD Educator Advocates

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



## 2009 ASCD Legislative Agenda

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ASCD, representing more than 175,000 educators, calls on policymakers to join forces with educators, families, and communities to ensure all children become productive, engaged citizens.

Toward that goal, the federal government must play a leadership role in equity and access for disadvantaged and special needs student populations, supporting the development and training of highly effective educators, promoting effective education policies and services for every stage of a student's development, and promoting innovative strategies and programs for 21st century students to be successful.

Our continued prosperity and security are predicated upon a well-educated citizenry. In today's global marketplace, human capital is a nation's most precious natural resource and ASCD believes we have a moral obligation as well as social and economic imperatives to cultivate this individual and collective potential to its fullest. For the United States to maintain its status as an economic and political leader, we must commit to being a global education leader.

President Barack Obama and the 111th Congress have a historic opportunity to achieve these goals and to transform the education system via multiple policy initiatives, most notably the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ASCD urges Congress and the administration to better align federal education policies and other initiatives affecting children into a more coordinated system that best serves the whole child, families, educators, and communities.

Such policies, programs, and practices would work in concert 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 and 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, ASCD’s 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 goals.

## **Equitable Educational Opportunities**

It is the mission of every education system—with the help and support of families, communities, and business partnerships—to prepare each student to be successful in an increasingly changing and competitive world. A student’s abilities, talents, and interests—not personal circumstances—must determine these educational and career outcomes.

In accord with democratic principles and basic fairness, ASCD supports policies that expand educational opportunities for all learners and recognize that students’ different abilities, circumstances, and needs require variable resources and multiple approaches to highly effective learning and teaching.

Equitable access to educational options and experiences—regardless of student background, socioeconomic status, race, or gender—requires adequate resources. Ensuring equity also demands creativity, varied organizational structures, diverse instructional expertise, unbiased expectations, and proactive and meaningful community engagement.



To succeed academically and thrive as individuals, *all* students must have access to

- Innovative, engaging, and rigorous coursework with the supports that build on the strengths of each learner and enable students to develop to their full potential.
- Vital educational technology and relevant career and technical programs.
- Highly effective teachers supported by ongoing professional development.
- Additional resources for strengthening schools, families, and communities.

## Highly Effective Educators

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 utilize effective, experienced educators and school leaders throughout their entire careers.

ASCD supports

- A definition of educator effectiveness that includes, but is not limited to, indicators related to student growth and proficiency.
- Incentives for school-university partnerships focused on innovative means to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers and school leaders.
- Differentiated recognition programs, including locally determined incentive and merit pay programs tied to educator effectiveness.
- Strategies that directly address the shortage of high-performing teachers and principals in high-need geographic and subject areas.
- Professional opportunities that allow teachers to assume differentiated roles such as instructional and curriculum leaders, coaches, and mentors.



- Professional development activities—such as study groups, action research, and data analysis—that promote both collaborative and self-directed continuous learning and focus on student needs, results, and best practice.

## Multiple Indicators of School Success

ASCD believes that the current indicators for evaluating student learning are limited and do not provide a valid assessment of student skills or of overall school quality. Therefore, ASCD calls on Congress to expand allowable assessment options when determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all students, including English language learners and children with disabilities, as well as for entire schools and school districts.

### Assessments

ASCD supports policies that evaluate students and schools using a comprehensive assessment system that incorporates multiple indicators of performance, including measuring student progress toward proficiency over time. Using such 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 believes that accurately assessing student achievement requires more than results on standardized tests in two or three subjects. Failing to incorporate multiple indicators yields unreliable results and may unfairly penalize students, educators, schools, and school districts.

ASCD encourages Congress to

- Provide schools and school districts with the flexibility to measure progress among subgroups, as well as entire schools and school districts, while ensuring accountability and comparability beyond the adequate yearly progress indicators currently required under the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Consider allowing indicators like student growth, graduation rates that recognize high school completion can take more or less than the traditional four years, grade point averages, number of students taking advanced placement and international baccalaureate



courses, and number of students taking dual-enrollment courses as ways to measure AYP at the building or district level.

### **Accountability and Improvement**

ASCD calls on Congress to change the current rigid measurement model to a differentiated system that distinguishes between schools or districts with dramatically disparate performance results. Such a system should also allow better apportionment of improvement assistance to where it is needed most and give greater discretion to local district educators—in partnership with parents, businesses, and community entities—who are best positioned to determine appropriate interventions for the unique needs of their students.

ASCD supports greater flexibility in the selection of research-based interventions and the use of available funding streams to meet locally identified needs to ensure student success and support.

### **English Language Learners and Children with Disabilities**

ASCD believes English language learners will demonstrate annual progress through state language proficiency assessments. Based on research on second language acquisition, ASCD recommends English language learners be given a minimum of three years, and up to five years, to make AYP. During this time, states should be free to use state language proficiency assessments instead of state reading tests until proficiency is met.

ASCD recommends that a student with disability's individualized education program team develop the benchmarks for reading and mathematics that are aligned to standards measured in state assessments. Students must make annual progress under the state's growth model.



## **Innovative Educational Redesign**

ASCD supports ongoing educational redesign to meet the lifelong learning needs of today's students. In a seamless and integrated educational system, these 21st century skills must be imparted at all levels of schooling.

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 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.

### **Early Childhood Education**

ASCD supports access to and funding for high-quality prekindergarten programs for all children. Early childhood learning activities are a cost-effective, research-based approach to ensuring all children enter school ready to learn.

### **Elementary Education**

ASCD supports student learning in an intellectually challenging environment that provides the foundation for future educational achievement. Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.

### **Middle-Level Education**

ASCD supports a middle-level curriculum that is relevant, challenging, interactive, and exploratory and that responds to the unique nature of middle school students. Instruction should reflect high expectations and include multiple teaching and learning approaches that engage students.

### **High School Reform**

ASCD supports high school redesign that includes rich and rigorous curriculum, meaningful and relevant learning experiences, and relationships with caring adults who know students well.



To achieve this systemic continuity, ASCD proposes

- School settings that are physically and emotionally safe for every student and adult.
- Personalized learning opportunities that engage students in relevant curriculum and challenging educational plans leading to proficiency, achievement, and ultimately graduation.
- Mentoring programs where every student is supported and encouraged by an adult mentor in the school building.
- Flexible use of time enabling schools to develop alternative approaches to fulfilling graduation requirements, other than the Carnegie Unit, the traditional school year, and other antiquated conventions that inhibit 21st century learning.
- Supporting business, community, and family engagement by providing incentives to businesses and community services that align with expanded student learning opportunities and innovative programs for earning credit.
- Incentives for school-university partnerships to articulate and align curriculum between secondary to post-secondary education to increase college readiness.
- Alternative opportunities for students who are not succeeding in traditional high school programs.
- Enactment of the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act (formerly the GRADUATES Act) and the Graduation Promise Act.

Printer-friendly copies of the 2009 ASCD Legislative Agenda, policy papers, and key messages are available at [www.ascd.org/legislativeagenda](http://www.ascd.org/legislativeagenda). For additional information, please contact the members of ASCD's Policy Team at [edadvocates@ascd.org](mailto:edadvocates@ascd.org).

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 Educator Advocates and have your voice heard at the federal level, visit [www.ascd.org/actioncenter](http://www.ascd.org/actioncenter).



## About ASCD

Founded in 1943, ASCD is an educational leadership organization dedicated to advancing best practices and policies for the success of each learner. Our 175,000 members in 119 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.

### ASCD as an Advocate

Since its inception, ASCD has built on a core set of values and beliefs in support of the whole child. We believe student success is dependent on academic knowledge, physical and emotional health, engagement, and school and community support. We advocate for sound education policies and best practices to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Because we represent a broad spectrum of educators, we are able to focus on policies and professional practice within the context: “Is it good for the children?”

### ASCD as an Expert Source and Content Provider

ASCD is known throughout the profession for identifying educational trends and translating research into practice. We are an award-winning publisher of books, periodicals, and a variety of online and multimedia products. ASCD’s flagship, award-winning publication, *Educational Leadership*, is recognized as a balanced and reliable source of information on trends, research, and professional practices in education.

ASCD’s professional development resources, programs, and conferences focus on specific issues such as differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and health and learning that show promise in improving student achievement. We provide educators with the tools they need to implement best practices at the district, school, and classroom levels.

