



ESEA REAUTHORIZATION PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This policy statement presents a vision for a “new deal” to guide reauthorization of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

First, states must continue to lead the way with bold, thoughtful education reforms to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career. This includes developing and adopting higher, clearer, and fewer standards; improving state assessment systems; ensuring transparent, disaggregated accountability; building educationally rich data systems; strengthening teacher and leader effectiveness; and turning around underperforming schools.

In return and to succeed, we need a new federal education law that invests in these state efforts and encourages innovation, evaluation, and continuous improvement—so that states can develop and implement policies to help districts and schools dramatically improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. This brief paper presents core principles and recommendations to guide ESEA reauthorization. More detailed legislative recommendations will follow.

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions.

CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major education issues. The Council seeks member consensus on key educational issues and expresses their view to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

BACKGROUND

Education is the single most important key to success for individuals and our nation in a global economy. We have long talked about the need for equity and excellence in education, but we have yet to live up to our rhetoric. In today's world, our ability to educate every child to high standards is a moral, democratic, and economic imperative.

Achieving our goals will require significant, holistic change and bold action. Incremental improvement is insufficient. We need dramatic and continuous improvement in student achievement for all learners, particularly poor and minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. This will require bold leadership, a focus on innovation, and a new form of state-federal partnership.

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ESEA reauthorization represents a great opportunity for a new vision and approach to achieve educational excellence and equity. We need to move beyond the important yet narrow goal of *no child left behind* to a goal of *every child a graduate*—prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college and career as productive citizens of America's diverse interconnected society and a globally-interconnected world.

States are committed to leading in education reform, with a real commitment to high standards for all students. CCSSO, in partnership with the National Governors Association, is working to establish a

common core of standards in reading and mathematics that are higher, clearer, and fewer; aligned with college and work expectations; include rigorous content and 21st-century skills; and are internationally benchmarked. This state-led effort has significant implications beyond standards to aligned assessments, curricular materials, and professional development.

To achieve our educational goals, we need a new kind of federal law that supports state leadership. ESEA began in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty, providing additional funding to states and districts to enhance

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educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. With the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, ESEA transitioned toward promoting standards-based reforms. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accelerated that effort, establishing detailed requirements for standards, assessments, accountability determinations, school improvement, data reporting, and other areas, which apply similarly across all states and (in general) to all public schools within the states.

The federal government's strategy for NCLB implementation focused on ensuring fidelity to the prescriptions in the law; it only recently allowed for limited flexibility in some areas. Today states are coming together to lead, individually and through collective action, the development of improved policies that move beyond NCLB and establish conditions for districts and schools to promote dramatic improvements



in student achievement using innovative approaches. Federal law must encourage—not block—these state efforts.

Today we need a new ESEA that encourages state innovations in developing more effective policies that can dramatically improve student achievement and close achievement gaps—so that all children graduate from high school ready for college and career. President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have stated their intent to move federal education policy in this direction. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA's) state policy assurances and Race to the Top grants evidence the potential of this model, and states are responding with bold efforts and ideas.

The federal role in ESEA is *not* to codify a single “right” answer for national education policies, as if we know exactly what it takes to promote high achievement for all students in all contexts at scale. Rather we must infuse professional judgment back into the system and build a true partnership for education reform, with state leadership

and a federal law that is tight on ends but loose on means. We need a federal law that sets broad goals and criteria in core policy areas but encourages sound state policy innovation.

We need to authorize a new ESEA that promotes college and career ready expectations, focuses on equity, encourages innovation and continuous improvement, ensures transparent accountability, encourages coherence within and across federal laws, builds

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capacity in state education systems, and supports effective and timely research, evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge so that we can scale the most successful practices toward dramatic improvement for all children.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

Principle #1: Promote College and Career Readiness for All Students.

- States are leading the way toward college and career ready standards and expectations for all students to reflect the concepts and competencies necessary for success, through the common core state standards initiative.
- *The new ESEA should recognize state leadership by supporting the development and implementation of state assessments aligned to college and career ready standards.*

Principle #2: Maintain Focus on Equity and Core Investments.

- States recognize and embrace the shared responsibility inherent in ESEA to provide additional funding to enhance education opportunities for disadvantaged students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- *The new ESEA should increase investments in supports for disadvantaged students, as well as core foundations of standards-based reform such as improved data systems and assessments, access to highly effective teachers and leaders, and supports for underperforming districts and schools.*

Principle #3: Ensure Meaningful Accountability.

- States remain committed to ESEA's focus on accountability for student achievement and believe that performance expectations should be designed to move all children to college and career readiness.
- *The new ESEA should require states to establish systems of accountability based on core principles with transparent, disaggregated, actionable results, but otherwise rely on states to develop models of accountability that best improve student achievement toward college and career readiness in each state's context.*

Principle #4: Encourage Innovation in State Policy.

- States are moving well beyond the policy floor that ESEA established and share the common goal of identifying strategies that raise student achievement and close achievement gaps.

- *The new ESEA should set a baseline for state policy (in assessments, accountability, consequences, etc.) but support state innovation along with evaluation and cross-state communication to establish proof points and drive continuous improvement in policy and practice.*

Principle #5: Ensure Coherence and Reduce Burden in and across Federal Law.

- Current federal education laws operate in silos—from law to law, program to program, and agency to agency—encouraging the same systems at the state level to respond to duplicative federal requirements.
- *The new ESEA should encourage coordinated state action—across federal laws, policy areas, and states, from birth to K–12 to higher education—by permitting consolidated planning and reporting to a single office in the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that manages all data requests and collections to avoid duplication, ensure usefulness, and promote coherence.*

Principle #6: Build Capacity to Support Comprehensive State Policy Reforms.

- States now play the leading role in developing, enacting, implementing, assisting, monitoring, reviewing, and improving education policy reforms, but ESEA has not responded with investment to support developing high-performing systems of education leadership.
- *The new ESEA should provide increased support for state education agencies to implement the core*

foundations of standards-based reform and build high-performing systems necessary to achieve high goals for all students.



Principle #7: Increase and Improve Investments in Research and Dissemination of Knowledge.

- To promote efficient and effective education reform, and fully leverage the potential of an innovative approach, we need to improve the development and sharing of knowledge—across states and districts and including international benchmarking.
- *The new ESEA should increase investment and promote new models of research, evaluation, state coordination, technical assistance, and dissemination of lessons learned by bringing even greater clarity and depth to the range of federal entities (i.e., centers and labs) that are funded to support state policy and research efforts and by investing in a range of research and evaluation as a key component of policy reform.*

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

Based on the guiding principles above, the following are core recommendations for ESEA reauthorization. These include overarching recommendations that apply to the law as a whole, as well as specific recommendations in four core areas of reform: standards, assessments, and accountability; data and reporting; teachers and leaders; and supports for next-generation learning. These four areas represent CCSSO’s core policy pillars and are greatly consistent with both the ARRA’s core policy “assurances” and NCLB’s major policy areas. The

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recommendations below address the areas of highest priority for standards-based reforms, including areas not fully addressed under current federal law.

It is important to understand that this is not an invitation for federal micromanagement or heavy regulation in these areas—just the opposite. These recommendations are premised on the new state-federal partnership outlined above, in which federal law becomes leverage for state policy leadership.

Overarching Recommendations.

Today we are raising the bar on education to move all students to college and career readiness. Achieving this goal requires a new form of state-federal partnership, with a new focus on innovation, capacity, and coherence across ESEA.

1. Make innovation a driving force of ESEA and the work of ED by amending NCLB's "waiver authority" to adopt a "state innovation authority" applicable across the act. States should be encouraged to develop and submit new policy models in assessment, accountability, supports and interventions, teacher effectiveness, etc. The U.S. secretary of education *shall* approve new policy models on the basis of sound, meaningful peer review.
2. Reinvent peer review as a core part of the new state-federal partnership to ensure that it is an engine of state innovation, particularly as states transition to new accountability models. This includes assembling a range of experienced peers, ensuring deference to state education judgments, promoting transparent evaluation and direct communication with states, and disseminating lessons learned.
3. Create new investments for enhancing integrated systems of reform across state policy by raising "administrative caps." Create a new systems enhancement grant program to promote coordinated state policy action (as in ARRA's Race to the Top as well as other federal laws, such as the Head Start Act's State Advisory Councils).
4. Establish broader buckets of funding streams around common purposes and create a new authority for state flexibility that allows state education agencies to consolidate programs and funding (of or below an established dollar amount or percent of Title I funding level), within ESEA and across other federal laws and agencies (with a particular focus on breaking down barriers between early learning, K-12, and higher education).
5. Increase investments and improve systems for research, evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge. This includes increasing support for program evaluation across ESEA (particularly as part of a "state innovation authority") as well as providing support for state networks in key policy areas. This may also require reviewing and revising ESRA along with ESEA to improve federal research efforts and make much more transparent and useful to states the full range of centers and labs available to support state leadership.

Core ESEA Recommendations (continued)

Standards, Assessment, and Accountability.

Based in part on NCLB, all states now have in place standards for reading & language arts and mathematics, assessments aligned to state standards, and accountability for all schools and districts, with disaggregated data by subgroup. CCSSO's common core effort is moving states even further. States should be expected to adopt standards aligned with college and career expectations and report certain elements as part of annual accountability determinations (results from assessments aligned to college and career ready standards, accurate graduation rates [using common reporting protocols], disaggregated data, etc). Federal law must improve adequate yearly progress (AYP) as well and its one-size-fits-all approach. Federal law should encourage states to define AYP based on multiple measures of student achievement and to differentiate categories and consequences in a manner that is most educationally sound in each state's context.

6. Base accountability primarily on school improvement and student progress (growth, value added, indexing compensatory, etc.) over time towards the goal of all students graduating college and career ready (including English language learners and students with disabilities). Encourage states to build valid models of diagnostic analysis (e.g., "inspectorate," accreditation, or other systems of evaluation) that target a range of supports and interventions.
7. Allow states to establish accountability systems that meet certain core principles (e.g., align to college and career readiness, focus on student achievement, include annual assessments, disaggregate results, etc.) and work best in each state's context to raise achievement and close gaps, including innovative models that utilize learning progressions or grade span design. ED should establish a standing process to peer review proposed state accountability systems based on rigorous review, trust for state professional judgment, and encouragement of innovation. In particular, ED should afford significant flexibility to states in transitioning assessment and accountability systems as they adopt college and career ready standards and the common core.
8. Maintain current investments in state assessments and further support the movement toward college and career ready standards, funding the creation of aligned, enhanced assessment systems. New instrumentation should be fully representative of the richness of standards and sensitive to gaps in learning that may have occurred earlier in a student's development tract.

Information Systems and Research.

NCLB highlighted inequities across key student populations by requiring the comprehensive collection and transparent reporting of disaggregated assessment and accountability data. Through ESRA, federal law has complemented state investments in the creation of longitudinal data systems. But continued investment is necessary to build the next generation of integrated, interoperable state systems, and to improve data use to drive policy and practice. This requires several reforms:

9. Continue funding the creation of enhanced P–20 data systems that utilize unique student identifiers to track student growth over time, and that provide timely, actionable data to inform instruction practices and guide school improvement strategies, and support professional development regarding the use of data to drive instruction. Ensure links across early childhood, K–12, higher education, and workforce data systems, and address provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act to protect student privacy while promoting effective use of data to improve outcomes across education entities.
10. Establish a single comprehensive reporting office in ED that manages all data requests and collections, with the mission of avoiding duplication, reducing burden, and ensuring value. These data collections should also follow common data definitions and elements established in concert with the states through CCSSO's EIMAC and the Data Quality Campaign (i.e., the "coordinated data ask").
11. Shift the state longitudinal data systems competitive grant program from IES (authorized in ESRA) to a new formula program to support the continual investment required for improved data systems and meaningful accountability.

Education Workforce.

NCLB rightly sought to ensure that highly qualified teachers were serving students in all core academic subjects. Unfortunately, “highly qualified” was narrowly defined as basic academic attainment and performance on subject-matter tests. HQT was a one-size-fits-all approach that failed to best meet the needs of students with disabilities and rural communities. Moreover, current law failed to focus efforts around the concept of effectiveness as the true barometer of classroom impact. A new ESEA should:

12. Maintain HQT’s core components and encourage more meaningful focus on educator effectiveness by requiring states to set professional standards and ensure that districts establish meaningful teacher and principal evaluation systems based on multiple measures that include returns on student achievement (which can be based on multiple data points) and that districts show progress in increasing access to highly effective teachers. Acting within core criteria, states and districts should have flexibility in establishing the evaluation systems and goals as core state and local responsibilities. Where schools do not improve teacher effectiveness *and* do not meet student achievement goals, districts should be required to target school improvement and/or professional development funds to proven strategies for improving teacher effectiveness.
13. Invest heavily in improving teachers and leaders and elevating the profession by funding ongoing quality improvement across the continuum of educator policies—from recruitment to preparation to induction to professional development to career pathways, etc. The new ESEA should also build on the Teacher Incentive Fund to support incentives for highly effective teachers and those who teach in high-need schools or disciplines, particularly STEM.

Next Generation Learners. NCLB focused great attention on the front end of standards-based reform, but only recently has focus been placed on the resources necessary for turning around underperforming schools and dramatically improving student learning progress and graduation rates across all schools. The face of education is changing to include new efforts toward personalized, anytime/everywhere learning. The new ESEA must be child-focused rather than building- or school-based and commit to improving opportunities to learn as well as accountability for results. This includes:

14. Sustain and increase funding for school improvement grants and increase support for states to build district capacity as a core part of school improvement. Implement continuation funding (perhaps at reduced levels on a sliding scale) for schools that cease to be eligible for school improvement funds as their classifications change in order to eliminate the disincentive for increased student achievement.
15. Create a new early childhood funding stream tied to expanding access to quality programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children and aligned with high standards for children’s learning and development, as envisioned in the Early Learning Challenge Fund, (soon to be) created under the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act.
16. Create a new literacy initiative formula program that spans birth through graduation and supports state- and school-based literacy efforts. Federal law should further fund corresponding high-quality professional development of teachers aligned to this new initiative.
17. Support a network of state innovation labs to design, pilot, and evaluate birth through graduation personalized, performance-based learning systems and expand learning opportunities through the use of “anytime/everywhere” community partnerships.
18. Enhance other core investments, including increased support for extended learning time and response to intervention, integration of community and student support services, increased use of technology to drive innovative practices in teaching and learning, and increased access to effective curriculum and instruction, including the expansion of broadband access.



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