

## **Reauthorize the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**

The reauthorization of the Federal Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is THE COUNCIL'S top federal policy priority. This law has not been updated since passage of the "No Child Left Behind" act in 2001.

Current actions by the United States Department of Education, as well as inflexible standards in federal law requiring state waivers, have only made the reauthorization of this outdated law that much more of a necessity.

In reauthorizing ESEA, Congress and the President must also be careful to retain important elements of local control, reject privatization and "funds portability" schemes, and ensure an adequate funding mechanism that meets the goals of educating all the nation's children.

Further, our federal representatives should be cognizant of requirements that cause over-testing of students and create too great a focus on "teaching to a test."

This law must be reauthorized in a comprehensive undertaking, not in a piece-by-piece fashion. There are many significant issues within this federal education law which can only be addressed as a singular policy. This is why waivers have been so destructive and have undermined the current law.

Finally – and most importantly – THE COUNCIL believes that fully funding "Title I" of ESEA is absolutely imperative. It is unrealistic to expect students to achieve success without providing schools the necessary funding to meet higher standards.

The knowledge and skill set of the next generation is our nation's greatest commodity. Our students must not be left needing because of short-sighted austerity or political wrangling.

We urge the House, the Senate, and the President to work together to adopt a new ESEA that meets the needs of our nation's students and to accomplish this as quickly as possible.

The Council offers the following recommendations in developing a comprehensive ESEA reauthorization bill:

- Allow for continued adoption of state standards, avoid national standards.
- Retain local control to the maximum extent possible.
- Reduce currently required annual testing to once-per-grade-span testing and utilize samples (consistent with NAEP) for accountability purposes, with the option for states to exceed if desired.
- Do not compel the use of federally required assessments for multiple purposes for which they are not designed or appropriate (i.e. student learning, accountability, and/or teacher evaluation), only the purpose for which they are designed.
- Allow for assessment of English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities based upon proficiency, not age or grade.
- Allow states to establish clear and appropriate accountability standards.
- Do not mandate portability of funds outside of a student's geographical school district.
- Emphasize the use of rewards, not punishment, in accountability.
- Disaggregate student outcomes by current categories to reflect multiple pathways to graduation.
- Fully fund Title I.