



American Association of School Administrators

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## ***Recommendations for Reauthorization of ESEA***

AASA Executive Committee

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Hyatt Regency O'Hare

Chicago, IL

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### **Recommended Positions on the Miller/McKeon Discussion Draft**

AASA views ESEA as an important instrument to promote social justice through its focus on equal educational opportunities for low-income and minority students. Unfortunately the policies and practices contained in the House Education Committee's Miller/McKeon discussion draft are not sufficient to improve achievement among low-income and minority students.

AASA is completely dismayed by the top-down, command-and-control structure governing decisions about teaching and learning. The many complex decisions related to educating individual children are too far removed from Washington and too tempered by family and neighborhood conditions to control through federal policy. Further there is little evidence that rigid, prescriptive federal policy improves achievement. The down side of a top-down, command-and-control structure also includes lost opportunities for improved achievement through individualized policies and practices for specific students that are forbidden by a rigid, one-size-fits-all law.

***Therefore, AASA will withhold support for the discussion draft until sufficient changes, additions and deletions have been made to produce the desired results.***

Among AASA's immediate priorities for change, addition and deletion in the Miller/McKeon discussion draft are:

1. Adding both a clear promise to fully fund Title I of ESEA and Part B of IDEA and a clear path to full funding for Title I and IDEA.
2. Adding real, valid, reliable and standards-based measures that accurately measure each student's actual starting point and growth over time. The value-added model in the discussion draft is a slight improvement on the once-a-year snapshot tests, but is too weak to provide the rich diagnostic data on each individual student needed to bring all students to proficiency.
3. Settling the continuing conflict between IDEA and Title I of ESEA in favor of the individualized instruction and assessment required by IDEA in the following ways:

- a. Eliminate the arbitrary caps (1% and 2%) on student assessment and add developmentally appropriate measures and assessments called for in the student's IEP; and
  - b. Include the IDEA mandate for services to high school graduation or age 21 (up to 26 in some states) in the calculation of graduation rates.
4. Permitting states to determine appropriate measures and assessments for English language learners based on state approved tests and the professional judgment of teachers and administrators.
5. Permitting local school districts to implement formative and adaptive assessments that provide instant feedback to students, teachers, administrators and parents to guide individual instructional decisions, and include the local measures in the accountability system.
6. Eliminating all plans, reports, audits and staffing mandates that are not fully funded and not critical to improved achievement for low-income students.
7. Permitting states greater latitude in selecting measures of achievement and program strength beyond the limited multiple measures options in the Miller/McKeon discussion draft.
8. Adding a requirement for complete and immediate transparency for all state and federal plans, requests, guidance, policy letters and responses to state requests, and plans; eliminating sweetheart deals with some states and school districts; and eliminating violations of the Department of Education Organization Act through better and more regular congressional oversight.
9. Sharpening the targeting of funds to school districts and schools where poverty is concentrated based on the percentage of such students.
10. Adding more assistance and support for schools and school districts that miss Annual Measurable Objectives rather than punishments that do not improve student outcomes.
11. Eliminating the comparability requirement for equal per-pupil spending on teachers. The comparability calculation mistakenly equates salary with teacher quality. Because this is a new calculation, the cost spent gathering and analyzing data will be massive. This will generate a lot of new paperwork with no benefit to student achievement because there is little connection between teacher salary and student achievement.
12. Either eliminating all teacher, administrator and paraprofessional credentialing requirements or restoring the HOUSSE provisions in current law. Rural school districts have a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining highly qualified

- teachers and nearly all school districts have difficulty finding teachers in some areas, particularly special education, math, science and world languages.
13. Eliminating the proposed extension of the definition of school of origin to the child's high school graduation, and the proposed dispute resolution procedure. Students staying in a school district over several years will make friends and build relationships in the new district rather than a place a student lived several years ago, and school districts have dispute resolution processes in place under either local or state policy. A formal dispute resolution process is an invitation to litigation and attorney's fees where the additional cost and administrative oversight will not result in commensurate benefit for students.
  14. Clarifying the high school graduation rate calculation to include:
    - a. special education students up to age 21 based on their transition plan developed as part of their IEP at age 16,
    - b. students in alternative high schools who graduate from high school, even though it may take them longer,
    - c. students who achieve a high school diploma through an adult education class of GED, and
    - d. students who have serious health problems or other issues that remove them from school for extended periods.

### **Dual Language Pilot Program for High Need Schools**

AASA also supports adding a new pilot program to ESEA that would promote world languages in high-need schools. The discretionary grant program would promote dual language programs for schools serving concentrations of low-income and minority students.