

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, non-profit 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 educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

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ESEA Reauthorization Policy Statement

CCSSO Policy Statement on the Reauthorization
of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act



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Introduction

CCSSO, on behalf of the nation's state education leaders, is committed to ensuring that reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reinforces sound state and local education practices—promoting innovation and providing increased support, along with improved accountability for results—to best achieve our core education goals.



Education is the single most important key to our nation's long-term success, and to the future of each and every child.

Five years ago, when the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted, state education reform efforts were uneven. There is a fundamentally different reality

in place today. Based on state education leadership and on NCLB, the foundations of standards-based reform are widely in place. Now we must build on those foundations, with real innovations and new investments to dramatically improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and prepare all students and our nation for success in the 21st century.

Our goal for ESEA reauthorization is to move beyond *no child left behind* and toward *every child a graduate*—prepared for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship in the 21st century. Achieving this goal will require a new state-federal partnership that includes

1. continued support and increased autonomy with regard to the foundations of standards-based reform
2. greater focus on building state and local capacity to improve learning opportunities for all students and support interventions in consistently low-performing districts and schools
3. increased investment in research, evaluation, technical assistance, and collaboration to help inform state and local efforts to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps

In sum, ESEA and its implementation must evolve to fit with the next stage of standards-based reform, shifting from the law's current focus on prescriptive compliance requirements to a law focused on providing real incentives for innovative state and local models along with fair and meaningful accountability

for results. This should be the touchstone of the next state-federal partnership—vigorously promoting innovation and a richness of rigorous strategies to best achieve our core education goals. CCSSO provides this policy statement to present our vision and guide our work on ESEA reauthorization; we will also provide a series of discrete NCLB issues for action consistent with this vision.

Background

In 2007, Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) as currently defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The reauthorization comes at a time of significant global change, and it provides a critical opportunity for the federal government to support the leadership of states and school districts in strengthening public education in the United States. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has identified as a top priority our intention to help lead the discussions and developments regarding ESEA reauthorization, consistent with the broad recommendations outlined below. In developing this policy statement, CCSSO is guided by member consensus on the following core principles:

- Education is the single most important key to our nation's long-term success, and to the future of each and every child. Education is essential to



Achieving the goal of every child a graduate will require strong state leadership and action from all levels of government, and beyond.

- ⌘ meeting our moral responsibility of providing all children with the opportunity to rise to their full potential (regardless of poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or limited English proficiency)
- ⌘ building a strong, diverse democracy
- ⌘ ensuring the economic success of our students and our nation

Never has education been more important than today in the 21st century's global society and information-age economy.

- If our nation is going to lead and succeed in the 21st century, then we must commit anew to strengthening our public school system to significantly raise student achievement, close achievement gaps, and move from *no child left behind* to *every child a graduate*—ready for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship.



...the federal government must provide greater support for state and local efforts to create new opportunities for interstate collaboration.

- Over the last several years, our nation has embraced the role of standards-based reform in education. The theory of standards-based reform involves setting high expectations for all

students, investing the resources necessary for all students to succeed, and holding all parties accountable for results. If we follow through, this approach has the potential to dramatically improve student achievement and meet our education goals for the 21st century.

- Today, based on state and local education leadership and on NCLB, key foundations of standards-based reform are widely in place in all states, and we have learned important lessons about what works. This includes standards and assessments in reading and mathematics in nearly all grades; accountability requirements for all public schools and districts; public reporting of data at the student, school, district, and state levels; minimum requirements for teacher quality; and more. In addition, the role of the state education agency has evolved to become even more fundamental to coordinating and driving efforts to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps.
- Now, we must complete and build upon what we have started, and states and districts are working to do so. This includes raising standards to reflect 21st century knowledge and skills, improving assessments to better inform teaching and learning, investing in teachers and administrators to improve effectiveness, improving data systems to help drive instruction, and building more valid accountability systems to value growth as well as status.

- At the same time, we must invest in the next stage of standards-based reform, leveraging the foundations that are in place to improve teaching and learning. This includes promoting data-informed decision making, differentiated instruction, and a range of pathways and programs to best meet the needs of each individual student. This also includes increasing the ability of state education agencies to provide assistance to all districts and schools and to intervene in consistently underperforming districts and schools.
- Achieving the goal of **every child a graduate** will require strong state leadership and action from all levels of government, and beyond. This includes a new and meaningful state-federal partnership—one in which states and districts lead. The core of NCLB establishes specific requirements on states to put in place the foundations of standards-based reform. These foundations are now largely in place. States and districts must now have greater support and autonomy to build on those foundations and promote a range of strategies to dramatically improve student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education has recently begun to focus on the need for greater state and local control and flexibility in NCLB implementation, but this flexibility exists within rigid parameters. Enabling and supporting state and local innovation should be a hallmark of federal education law. The federal government should focus on

accountability for results, with states and districts responsible for achieving those results based on innovative strategies and the most valid and reliable measures of student learning.



Enabling and supporting state and local innovation should be a hallmark of federal education law.

- It is our belief that success in the 21st century—for individuals and our nation—will require high expectations, including the ability to innovate, solve problems, and use complex data to understand and impact our increasingly complex world. In the context of ESEA reauthorization, we should expect and demand no less from our education system and our federal education laws.

Recommendations for ESEA Reauthorization

Based on the consensus around the core principles, CCSSO establishes the following broad recommendations that will guide our work with regard to specific proposals for ESEA reauthorization:

1. ESEA reauthorization must continue to support state and local implementation of the foundations of standards-based reform, including increased and continued funding for standards, assessments, teacher quality, data systems, and accountability systems. With the basics in place, however, ESEA must provide greater freedom for states to improve upon these foundations, and to develop and implement varying strategies to enhance teaching and learning, along with more valid accountability for results. For example

⌘ States and districts have developed challenging academic **standards** in core areas of reading and mathematics, and many states and districts are now working to add additional subjects, to align standards with college and work expectations (and even international benchmarks), and to raise the bar beyond proficiency.

⌘ States and districts have developed **assessments** aligned with standards, and many states and districts are now working to build more instructionally-based, formative and summative assessment systems to help inform best practices in teaching and learning.

⌘ States and districts have taken action to ensure that all **teachers** are “highly qualified,” and many states and districts are now working to strengthen teachers’ instructional strategies and deep subject-matter knowledge, strengthen the connection between teacher education and teacher quality, and incorporate innovative measures of teacher effectiveness.

⌘ States and districts have improved **data systems** and reporting, and many states and districts are now working to build individual student identifier longitudinal data systems, to improve data quality, and to use data to drive student pathways to success and graduation.

⌘ States and districts have developed **accountability systems**, including making adequate yearly progress (AYP) determinations for all schools and districts, and many states and districts are now working to improve accountability systems, including development of growth models, use of multiple measures, and differentiation of consequences to best improve student achievement.

2. ESEA reauthorization must provide greater support for states and districts to leverage the foundations of standards-based reform to help improve teaching and learning. This includes increased support for the ability of states and districts to assist all districts and schools and support interventions in consistently underperforming districts and schools. It includes increased support for individual student learning opportunities and interventions. This will require a full and open dialogue

about federal funding for education, the real costs of achieving our education goals, and the proper investment in education that is needed in the 21st century (along with accountability for results) given the returns on investment for our nation.

For example

⌘ For standards-based reform to succeed at a **systemic level**, states must have the ability to provide technical assistance to districts and schools, to intervene in consistently underperforming districts, and to empower districts to become agents of change in underperforming schools. This means that more resources must be targeted to the state level. No longer should state administrative funds be viewed as overhead to be minimized; rather, such funds should be viewed as essential to promoting data-informed decision making, accountability, and reform. While states and districts will continue to provide the vast majority of education funding and must always strive to use funds most efficiently and effectively, the federal government must be a more consistent partner in funding all requirements established under federal law.

⌘ For standards-based reform to succeed at a **student level**, each and every student must have access to the effective teachers, key resources, and options and interventions necessary to achieve to his/her full potential. This will require greater investments on the front end (on challenging curriculum, professional development and leadership, early intervention programs, early college programs, etc.) and on the back end (on adolescent literacy and mathematics programs, after-school programs, etc.).

This is not meant to invite further federal requirements in these areas, which are distinctly local, but to recognize that this capacity is integral and essential. If standards, assessments, and data systems can help tell us where every student is in his/her learning, then no student should be permitted to fail because of lack of access to the core programs and services (remedial or aspirational) that could help that student succeed to his/her full potential.

3. ESEA reauthorization must invest more in innovation, research, technical assistance, and collaboration to inform state and local implementation of standards-based reforms. For example

⌘ On the **research** side, the federal government must invest more in exemplary pilot projects, rigorous evaluations, meaningful research, and dissemination of that research and promising practices—focused on public schools—all to help inform state and local efforts to improve student achievement. This enhanced research strategy should target areas identified by state and local education leaders, include varying levels of scientific inquiry, include both qualitative and quantitative research, and more—all focused on better providing key information that can help inform and scale efforts to dramatically improve student achievement.

⌘ On the **technical assistance** side, the federal government must provide greater support for state and local efforts to create new opportunities for interstate collaboration. This should include support for significant cross-state interaction, to help states learn from each other and to foster a national movement.

Conclusion

ESEA reauthorization provides a key opportunity to move to the next stage of the state-federal partnership and the next stage of standards-based reform.

Through real innovation and meaningful accountability, we can ensure that every child graduates prepared for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship in the 21st century.

