



Empower Principals to Transform Schools

NAESP is interested in partnering with Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and enact a law that empowers principals to create and maintain high-performing schools where students learn and thrive.

Sustainable school success is dependent on effective school leadership. When given the right mix of authority, support, and resources, principals build high-performing schools where the best teaching and learning occur. All high-performing schools with a sustainable track record of success are led by effective school leaders.

According to a review of the research commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school." We know that school principals are critical to determining whole-school effectiveness and teachers are the most important factor in individual student learning. The research highlights that strong principals play an even more critical role in the improvement of underperforming schools.

The Problem: Our nation fails to support school leadership. More specifically, the No Child Left Behind Act creates barriers for effective instructional leadership by principals. An unintended consequence of the law's accountability provisions is the increase in administrative burdens for school leaders and stifling of the creative solutions needed to improve teaching and learning. The law provides misdirected incentives for school principals to focus on managerial and compliance tasks rather than instructional leadership. This is a recipe for further decline in student achievement.

The Solution: Congress must reauthorize ESEA and make critical changes as indicated below:

Empower the Principalship

According to a survey of the principalship, school leaders agree that the critical barriers to raising student achievement include lack of authority over staffing decisions, instructional time, instructional resources and methodology.

- Increase principals' authority in aligning human capital with student learning needs (Sec. 1111, Sec. 1119)
- Increase principals' authority over instructional time (Sec. 1116)
- Increase principals' authority over the selection and use of instructional materials, curriculum pacing and sequencing (Sec. 1116)

(over)

Support Principals in Leading School Improvement

Principals can be effective leaders when provided with opportunities for appropriate professional learning, growth and development. To be successful, principals need professional development in managing and analyzing data, communicating effectively, and building a community of adult and student learners.

- Upgrade pre-service training and principal recruitment (Sec. 2151(b))
- Require states and districts to provide ongoing high-quality professional development opportunities for principals, beginning with mentoring in the first years on the job, and authorize a dedicated stream of funding for this purpose (Sec. 2113, 2123)
- Increase use of Title II, Part A of ESEA for principals' collaborative professional development beyond the meager 3 percent of Title II, Part A funds currently used (Sec. 2111, Sec. 2121)
- Reduce administrative burdens that force a shift in focus from instructional leadership to management (Sec. 1116)

Create Incentives and Remove Barriers for Instructional Leadership

Principals stand by federal, state and district leadership and look for support in leading change at the federal, state, district, and school levels that will result in great teaching and learning. Effective principals are effective leaders and ready to contribute to federal policy.

- Establish a federal panel of distinguished principals, educators, and members of the private sector to support the Secretary of Education in selecting winners of Innovation Fund grants authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Sec. 1407)
- Leverage the school improvement planning process required in NCLB as a comprehensive system for holding the local educational agency and principal accountable for making critical improvements (Sec. 1116)
- Establish a competitive grant program to spur innovation at the local education agency to support principal instructional leadership as the engine for school improvement.

National Association of Elementary School Principals *Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals*

The mission of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle level principals and other education leaders in their commitment for all children. NAESP is committed to providing the research, tools, learning experiences, and networking that enable our members to understand and prepare students to be highly adaptive learners in a rapidly changing world.