



# Advocate

Legislative priorities and championing the cause

## Biden Prioritizes K–12 Funding, Policy

As President Joe Biden prioritizes his agenda for the first few months of his presidency, issues such as education funding, policy shifts, and regulatory action are at the top of his list.

**Funding:** Federal education funding could look much different under the Biden administration. During the campaign, Biden put forward proposals to triple funding for the Title I program, provide new funding for school infrastructure, increase federal spending for special education, and provide federal supports to fund universal pre-kindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-old children. He has also said he would double the number of psychologists, counselors, nurses, and social workers in schools.

**Policy:** Big shifts in K–12 policy are likely. At the top of the new administration's K–12 agenda is confronting the ongoing effects of the coronavirus



pandemic on students and schools. The Biden administration might also look to address learning loss, beef up in-school mental health supports, and strengthen access to, and the quality of, remote learning.

**Executive orders and regulatory actions:** The Biden administration will likely resort to executive orders and regulatory actions that don't require congressional consent. Addressing disparities in school discipline, boosting diversity and supporting desegregation, and reducing the role of standardized tests are the ripest areas for action.

## Principals Issue Midyear COVID Report Card

In late December, NAESP reached out to its members to gain insight into how schools are safely conducting classes and whether the necessary funding is in place to appropriately respond to the impacts of the pandemic. Principals—860 of them—responded to the survey. Here's what they said is working—and what isn't—in their school communities:

- **COVID-19 testing in schools:** Only 53 percent of respondents reported receiving training from health care professionals on conducting in-school symptom screenings for students, and the remaining 47 percent said they had not.
- **Ventilation mitigation strategies:** 59 percent of principals reported that they have been able to increase ventilation in classrooms, and 41 percent have not.
- **Funding to address learning loss with interventions:** While most schools are devoting funding to personal protective equipment and enhanced cleaning protocols, nearly 25 percent don't have funding to provide additional services,

staffing, or programming to address learning loss. Only 8 percent reported allocating "substantial" resources to addressing learning loss.

- **Concerns about sufficient school-based mental health services:** Nearly 70 percent of principals said they don't have sufficient school-based mental health professionals to adequately serve all students in need.
- **Student attendance issues:** 82 percent of respondents indicated the pandemic has hurt student attendance. The students most likely to be absent are those who had been chronically absent prior to the pandemic, those who lack internet access at home, and students with disabilities.
- **Academic testing flexibility:** When asked how the U.S. Department of Education should handle federal assessments for the school year, the majority (70 percent) of respondents said waivers should be granted to relieve states of requirements to administer standardized tests for the school year.



## Most States Earmark Vaccines for Educators

The approval and distribution of two COVID-19 vaccines could be a turning point for schools hoping to shift back to in-person instruction. As part of their vaccine rollout plans, most states have prioritized educators in hopes that getting them vaccinated will make in-person instruction safer, and widespread vaccination could lead to a sizeable portion of districts operating remotely to shift quickly to in-person instruction this school year.

Though most educators would likely jump at the opportunity, 17 percent were “very unlikely” to get the vaccine, a survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center in November said. With President Biden targeting an average of 1.5 million doses administered per day in each of his first 100 days of office, how efficiently federal, state, and local governments can distribute vaccines will be pivotal in helping more schools safely reopen for in-person instruction this year.



Cardona at the 2012 NAESP National Distinguished Principals ceremony with former NAESP President Nancy Flatt Meador.

## NAESP Applauds Cardona’s Nomination as U.S. Secretary Of Education

“On behalf of elementary and middle school principals from across the country, NAESP congratulates former NAESP member and 2012 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Miguel

A. Cardona on being nominated to serve as the next U.S. Secretary of Education. Secretary-designate Cardona’s background—from growing up in public housing to his on-the-ground experience as a public school teacher and elementary principal, as well as his current role as Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education—positions him well to be an effective voice and leader for all students and school communities.

“Cardona will assume his role at a difficult moment for America’s public schools. The pandemic has caused severe academic, social, and mental health challenges for millions of students across the country. The U.S. Department of Education can play a critical role in helping schools confront this crisis head-on by ensuring educators have the necessary resources and support to effectively respond. NAESP looks forward to working with Cardona in his role to advance equity, lift up the voice of educators, and improve educational opportunities for students across the nation.”

## Sign Up for Advocacy Text Alerts

The laws Congress passes and the funding decisions it makes have an enormous impact on you, your school, and your students.

To ensure robust funding for federal education programs and advance education policies that rightly recognize the importance of the principal’s role, it’s critical to make your voice heard.

Stay up to date on all of NAESP’s advocacy campaigns and what’s happening on Capitol Hill with new advocacy text updates that make it easy for you to take action.



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