

NASP Applauds Passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act

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Contact: See below

Bethesda, Md.—The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) applauds Congress for passing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), bipartisan legislation intended to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We look forward to this law being signed by President Obama by the end of the week. In collaboration with other key stakeholders, NASP has worked to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum, high-quality instruction, and comprehensive supports that are essential to successful learning.

“We are pleased that ESSA recognizes the importance of comprehensive learning supports and services that create safe and respectful school environments while also meeting the needs of individual students,” says NASP President Todd A. Savage. “The investments authorized by ESSA will help states and local districts implement and scale up efforts to prepare students for college or career while meeting the unique needs of their local communities.”

While this is not the bill NASP would have written on our own, we appreciate the important role of compromise in the effort to give schools and families the tools they need to ensure the well-being and school success of all students. In particular, NASP is encouraged that ESSA:

- Replaces the current overly punitive, narrow focus on students’ performance on high stakes tests with a comprehensive accountability system that values school climate and safety;
- Ensures high academic achievement in a well-rounded curriculum for *all* students and subgroups of students;
- Requires consultation with school psychologists and other specialized instructional personnel in the development of state and local plans;
- Requires evidence-based interventions for low performing schools, including comprehensive learning supports to students who are most at risk of school failure;
- Recognizes school-based mental health services as an evidence-based whole-school improvement and targeted intervention strategy;
- Authorizes significant investments for states and districts to implement: comprehensive school mental health services, efforts to improve school climate and school safety, strategies to reduce bullying and harassment, and activities to improve collaboration between school, family, and the community.

Among others, the following three factors will be especially essential to the successful implementation of ESSA.

1) ***Maintaining a commitment to evidence-based practice.*** Educators must have access to the supports and strategies that have proven effective at promoting the academic learning and social–emotional–behavioral health of students. High-quality instruction, positive school climate, and comprehensive learning supports must be a central focus. School psychologists have extensive training and expertise in appropriate assessment systems, evidence-based school improvement strategies, and effective data-based decision making and should be utilized in the development, implementation, and evaluation of these service delivery systems.

2) ***Providing full funding as authorized in the legislation.*** The authorization levels in ESSA are in line with spending levels dictated by the Bipartisan Budget Agreement and are necessary to realizing the intentions of this bill. It is imperative that Congress provide the necessary, long-term investments to provide all students with a high-quality, well-rounded education and the comprehensive learning supports they need to succeed.

3) ***Remaining vigilant regarding accountability for high standards and increased achievement for all students.*** Education is a civil right, and the original intention of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to reduce disparity and improve equity in education for all students, must be maintained. Given the lack of Federal oversight and guidance authorized in this bill, state and local jurisdictions must live up to their responsibility to set high standards and ensure increased achievement for *all* students regardless of where they live, including students with disabilities, low income students, and racial and ethnic minority students.

NASP is committed to working with our members as well as national-, state-, and district-level partners to implement evidence-based systems that meet the comprehensive needs of all students and uphold, for all students, high achievement expectations within a set of rigorous and challenging standards. However, ***we urge Congress to remain steadfast to its commitment to equity in education and act quickly to authorize any necessary actions, including increased Federal oversight, if states demonstrate that they are not able to meet this critical responsibility.***

In making ESSA law, Congress and the President will empower educators, families, and state and local leaders to create schools that give all children the genuine opportunity to succeed. NASP, along with state school psychology associations, looks forward to working with other stakeholders to implement systems that will improve school and student outcomes for all.

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