



Additional signers include:

Children's Defense Fund
Civic Builders
Education Trust – West
Foundation for Florida's Future
League of Education Voters
Stand for Children

Individual signers include:

Deborah Gist, Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Statement of Principles on Teacher Quality and Effectiveness in the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

June 3, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
House Education & Workforce Committee
2439 Rayburn, House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
House Education & Workforce Committee
2205 Rayburn, House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Miller:

As your work on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) continues, we urge you to make every effort possible to spur states and school districts to advance new policies that help ensure every child has a skilled, knowledgeable, and effective teacher and every school has an effective leader.

Research shows overwhelmingly that the only way to close achievement gaps—both gaps between U.S. students and those in higher-achieving countries and gaps within the U.S. between poor and minority students and those more advantaged—and transform public education is to recruit, develop, and retain great teachers and principals. As such, a top-notch public education system in turn requires a structure for identifying, nurturing, and rewarding greatness in classroom teaching and school leadership. Unfortunately, most existing state and local systems are not equipped to measure excellence. All too often, these systems accept mediocrity as the fullest extent of a teacher's potential.

We believe strongly that when ESEA is reauthorized it must compel states to create and implement more specific and finely tuned measures directed at improving the quality and effectiveness of teachers and principals and ensuring the equitable distribution of effective teachers across all schools, especially those with high proportions of low-income and minority students.

There are other issues that all of our organizations care deeply about, including closing achievement gaps, school turnarounds, the creation of new educational options for children and their parents through charter schools or other innovative models, and equity. The fact that they are not addressed in this document does not mean they are of lower priority.

For our purposes here, we want to focus solely on teacher quality, effectiveness, and equity. As such, we iterate the following principles that we believe are essential to any ESEA reauthorization:

NEW TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS

- All states and districts should be creating teacher evaluation systems comprised of multiple measures that are part of a single statewide assessment of teacher effectiveness. Criteria should include, at a minimum:
 - A state-determined method for measuring teacher impact on student growth in tested academic subjects and grades, as a significant factor in a teacher's evaluation;
 - A statewide model for how local education agencies will incorporate measures of student growth for teachers in non-tested subjects and grades that is targeted to the specific subject/grade taught by those teachers;
 - Multiple, comprehensive classroom observations per year, both announced and unannounced;
 - Four or more levels of teacher performance; and,
 - Evaluations conducted and incorporated in policy decisions at least annually, as defined in the state's educator evaluation system.
- States should have teacher evaluation systems fully implemented by the 2016-2017 school year. Those states that can move faster—including states that have already begun the process pursuant to other federal or state initiatives—should do so, based on where they are when these new requirements take effect;
- Evaluations, once in place, shall be used by districts to tailor professional development and other supports for teachers and shall serve as the basis for human resources decisions, including hiring, staffing, licensure, tenure, compensation, teacher assignment patterns, and dismissal;
- States must monitor and publicly report within-district and between-district inequities by patterns of access to teachers with high evaluations. Specifically, states must examine the distribution of teachers with high evaluations within and between each district by race and poverty of the students they teach;
- States and school districts should develop and implement plans to ensure that schools with high proportions of low-income and minority students have their fair share of

highly effective teachers. These must include policies that provide school principals with autonomy in all teacher hiring decisions.

INTERIM STEPS TO EQUALIZE THE DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS

- Low-income and minority students can't afford to wait until 2017 to have fair access to good teachers. Therefore, in the interim, for those states without data from new evaluation systems, the Department of Education should enforce the current Title I equity requirement;
- States and districts must use information that they already have to ensure greater equity in effective teacher assignment. They should collect and publicly report on the characteristics of the teachers in each school based on indicators in current law:
 - Percentage of teachers beyond their first year of teaching;
 - Percentage of course sections taught by in-field secondary teachers; and,
 - Percentage of certified teachers.
- Even when new evaluation systems are in place, states should continue to collect and report by school the percentage of teachers beyond their first year of teaching, as first-year teachers will not be captured by full evaluation data.
- States should also look at the data they collect and report to determine where inequities exist. The plans they devise for reducing those inequities should include policies that provide school principals in schools with a disproportionately high number or percentage of the least qualified and least effective teachers with autonomy in the hiring and dismissal of teachers;
- If a district has not significantly narrowed inequities in teacher assignment between schools within two years from the date of enactment, the district shall use all Title II funds for the sole purpose of eliminating those inequities.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. We look forward to continued work with you to revise and amend ESEA to further our shared goal that *every* child has access to a high quality education.

Sincerely,

A+ Denver
Association of American Educators
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Children's Defense Fund
Civic Builders
ConnCAN
Connecticut Parents Union
Deborah Gist, Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education
Democracy Builders
Democrats for Education Reform
Education Reform Now
Education Trust

Education Trust – West
Educators 4 Excellence
EdVoice
Foundation for Excellence in Education
Foundation for Florida’s Future
League of Education Voters
The Mind Trust
MinnCAN
National Council of La Raza
NewSchools Venture Fund
Rhode Island Mayoral Academies
Stand for Children
Students for Education Reform
Teach Plus
TNTF
50CAN