

AASA Governing Board Meeting – February 10, 2016

Initiative: Redefining Ready – AASA has embarked on a long-term endeavor to deeply consider the meaning of Career and College Readiness. The website opens with: “America’s high schools have a profound responsibility to ensure that our nation’s 14 million high school students are **college ready**, **career ready** and **life ready**. Standardized test scores – traditionally used as the primary readiness indicator – do not always provide an accurate representation of our students’ potential. Like the global economy, today’s students are driven by ideas and innovations. They should not be reduced down to, or defined by, a single test score. **Our students are more than a score.**”

More information about Redefining Ready is available at <http://www.redefiningready.org/>

Legislative Updates:

ESEA: Reauthorization as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The importance of paying attention to the regulations was emphasized because the real problems with NCLB were in the regulations. The U.S. Department of Education is engaged in the early stages of the regulatory process related to implementation of ESSA. The first round of regulation and rulemaking will engage current education practitioners and leaders. AASA is submitting two nominations to represent the nation’s public school superintendents and local system administrators in this very important process, Dr. Gail Pletnick, Superintendent of Dysart Unified School District in Arizona and AASA President-Elect (2016-17), and Dan Domenech, AASA Executive Director, to serve on the negotiated rulemaking body.

IDEA: BOLD Flexibility Act. Currently, in IDEA when a district fails to maintain effort in a given fiscal year, the district must repay the amount the district fell short. Rep. Walberg’s BOLD (Building on Local District) Flexibility in IDEA Act ensures districts have greater flexibility to reduce local maintenance of effort levels if the provision and quality of services for students with disabilities is unaffected.

School Nutrition: Working to ensure that reauthorization provides flexibility without increasing administrative burden

Perkins: AASA priorities for the Perkins CTE reauthorization have been incorporated in a draft of the bipartisan reauthorization in the Senate. AASA is working closely with Congressman John Kline’s (R-MN) staff on their re-write of Perkins.

AASA Analysis and Response to the President Obama's FY17 Budget

BUDGET RESPONSE: AASA applauds President Obama for his continued focus on education in an otherwise austere budget year and advancing a proposal focused on advancing equity and excellence, providing support for teachers and school leaders, and promoting access, affordability and completion in higher education. Increased investment in education—particularly in formula programs—is a critical step to improving education for all students and bolstering student learning, school performance and college and career readiness among our high school graduates. AASA looks forward to working with the Department and Congress through the rest of the FY17 budget and appropriations process.

1. **AASA supports the continued prioritization of formula funding over competitive grants.** The increased funding for Title I and ELL programs will support school districts across the nation in their effort to best serve all students.
 - a. Formula grants represent a more reliable and equitable stream of funding for local school districts.
 - b. The budget includes a \$450 million increase for Title I. Concerns are that it doesn't represent an actual increase in the full context of statutory changes in ESSA related to a hold harmless provision. AASA remains concerned about a shift in the hold-harmless language in ESSA for FY17. AASA understands the need to lift the hold harmless provision in FY17 to ensure that states receive adequate funding for their innovation work, but strongly believe that the overall Title I allocation must be high enough to not only realize the full state set-aside (which is increased under ESSA) but to also preserve at least level funding for local school district allocations.

2. **AASA remains concerned about the administration's continued underfunding of IDEA Part A.** When signed into law in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) authorized the federal government to pay for 40 percent of the additional costs associated with the education of students with disabilities. Level funding of IDEA in FY17 locks in the federal share of the commitment **at a mere 16%, less than half** of the authorized 40% and places significant fiscal pressure on local school district budgets, which will be forced to use local dollars to cover the federal shortfall.

3. **AASA commends the administration for its increase to the ESSA Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, but is concerned that the overall funding level is prohibitively low and will undermine the newly reauthorized program.**
 - a. ESSA Title IV represents a consolidation of multiple education programs. The sum total of the consolidated programs in FY16 was \$353 million. While AASA acknowledges that the President's \$500 million proposal represents a \$147 million increase, \$500 million is one-third of the authorized Congressional amount of \$1.6 billion.
 - b. The Title IV block grant now represents the 3rd largest program in ESSA and was strongly bipartisan as the bill moved through Congress. The overall success of ESSA will be shaped in part by the successes of Title IV, and underfunding this

critical program from the onset is far more likely to stymie than support Title IV and ESSA success.

- c. Title IV is the program under which school districts can implement myriad programs related to well-rounded education, school safety and education technology, among others. While the funds in Title IV are significantly more flexible in FY17, a prohibitively low budget request sets the stage for an overall funding level that not only mitigates flexibility, but is in direct conflict with Congressional intent.
 - d. AASA is opposed to the requested appropriations language that would allow states to allocate the Title IV dollars via competitive grant and to limit or target the allowable uses in Title IV. By more adequately funding Title IV, the administration can eliminate the perceived need for this prescriptive language and can instead provide a funding level that more closely aligns with Congressional intent and the spirit of the legislation that President Obama himself signed into law.
4. **AASA remains concerned with the administration's failure to support the nation's rural schools and federally impacted lands.**
- a. The President's FY17 budget proposal level funds the sole federal program dedicated to supporting the nation's rural schools, the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP). Even with the additional \$6 million provided by Congress in FY16, the President's FY17 level funding freezes REAP at the same dollar allocation the program received in FY10.
 - b. Impact Aid, which provides aid to school districts that are financially burdened by federal activities, is also level-funded. Impact Aid funding is an important support for districts with land that cannot be counted on for local taxes, including Indian Land.

2016 AASA Legislative Agenda

The guiding principles for federal education policy all stem from equity and the important role the federal government stands to play in leveling the education playing field for all students:

- Federal policy equity includes both policy and resources, both of which should remain available to all students, schools and states.
- The role of the federal government in education is to help ensure access to equitable educational opportunities and to supplement and support, rather than dictate, local efforts in education.
- It is unrealistic to expect all students to achieve college and career readiness without providing districts the necessary funding to do this challenging work.
- Federal funding should support the total child, from physical and mental health to the development of fundamental lifelong learning skills.

Ensure an Appropriate Federal/Local Balance

- The role of the federal government is to support and strengthen—not dictate and prescribe to—the nation’s schools and state and local policies.
- School systems should not be required to spend state and local funds for federal mandates.
- Ensure all entities receiving public dollars are subject to the same requirements, accountabilities and flexibilities.

Support Students, Families and Special Populations

- Support equitable distribution of federal dollars with greater investments in formula driven programs.
- Permanently resolve sequestration through a combination of spending cuts and revenue increases.
- Support expansion of access to early education to all children.
- Fully Fund IDEA: By honoring its commitment to support the education of students with disabilities, Congress will enable districts to shift dollars towards new initiatives that address their local needs.
- Ensure IEP teams shape assessment determinations for students with disabilities.
- Address special education disproportionality more effectively and flexibly.
- Ensure school leaders can keep students and school personnel safe.
- Support federal policy that flexibly supports the unique needs of rural communities, including REAP, Impact Aid, and Forest Counties, among others.
- Make available federal funding that supports high-quality early education opportunity (including head start, Pre-K, early education, professional development for personnel, and more), with ample flexibility for local authority in implementation.
- Support use of a metric that reflects the total ELL subgroup.

Support Personnel

- Exempt substitute teachers and other variable hour employees from coverage under the Affordable Care Act.
- Make all licensing and certification requirements for school nutrition workers a state responsibility.
- Provide school districts immediate access to all relevant student data, including

academic, social, emotional, criminal and behavioral.

- Reduce the paperwork requirements for Perkins and E-Rate.
- Streamline IDEA procedures by permitting parents and school personnel to opt-out of processes and paperwork related to IEPs to allow more time for teaching and learning.

Strengthen District Operations

- Ensure new data collection requirements, burdensome regulations and new guidance and policies issued by the U.S. Department of Education must be examined in the context of what is statutorily required of districts and with consideration of current federal, state and local education funding levels.
- In expanding and delivering early education, public schools must be a core partner in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Eliminate the requirement for parental consent for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Reform the special education due process system to provide more effective, less costly and less litigious means of resolving disputes.
- Ensure districts have greater flexibility to reduce local maintenance of effort levels for IDEA if the provision and quality of services for students with disabilities is unaffected.
- Put reasonable parameters around requests for Independent Education Evaluation.
- Provide reimbursement to schools when federal food service requirements result in loss of revenue.
- Refrain from increasing the administrative burden related to nutrition eligibility verification.
- Ensure transportation costs for foster children are the responsibility of child welfare agencies.

Support Students through Appropriate Curriculum and Assessments

- Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessments to all students.
- State-led accountability must emphasize capacity-building not punishment.
- Tests must be used for the purposes for which they were designed: one test cannot serve multiple measures (i.e., student achievement, accountability, and/or teacher evaluation)

Enhance District Technology Infrastructure & Student Data Privacy

- Expand broadband to all parts of the country and support community planning and coordination related to expanded connectivity, including as it relates to the conversation of addressing the homework gap.
- Permanently exempt E-Rate from the Anti-Deficiency Act.
- Provide coherent and easy-to-understand guidance for parents and educators regarding FERPA, PPRA, and COPPA and their protections of the privacy and security of student data.
- Update definitions to address the realities of the digital age, making it possible to protect data while ensuring appropriate use of student data for legitimate educational needs and reforms.