

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Policy Priorities

In order for the public charter sector to grow and continue to produce results through innovation, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should significantly expand support for both the creation of new charter schools and the replication of successful charter schools. ESEA reauthorization also presents an opportunity to encourage innovation and to roll back the encroachment of charter school freedoms that threaten to stifle student outcomes.

At the same time, in order for parents choose a high-quality school for their child, they need robust student achievement information about their school and easily understandable ratings. Without annual assessments, a school's performance is less clear; subgroup achievement is more difficult to report. In addition schools cannot be held accountable for growth in student academic achievement. We call on Congress to maintain its commitment to our nation's students, particularly the most disadvantaged students, through annual tests in reading in math in grades 3-8 and accountability for the achievement of all groups of students.

1. Annual Assessments and Accountability for Student Achievement

- **Measure student achievement with annual reading and math assessments in grades 3-8.** In order to ensure that parents throughout the country have access to clear, comprehensive data about school performance when choosing a school for their child, it is critical to have annual assessments in grades 3-8 (in addition to one assessment in high school).
- **Hold all schools accountable for improving student achievement of all students, as well as all groups of students.** States should be required to hold schools accountable for helping all students (including members of key subgroups) meet high standards using status and growth measures of student achievement in, at a minimum, reading and math. State accountability systems should ensure those student who are farthest behind are making significant gains towards reaching academic proficiency.
- **Close failing charter schools.** An underlying premise of a public charter school is that if it doesn't produce results, it should close or be taken over by a new educational service provider.
- **Provide parents with clear indicators of school quality.** States should provide parents with a rating system for schools that translates complex achievement data and other measures into an easily understandable framework.
- **Calculate adjusted cohort graduation rates.** States should be required to continue to calculate and report four-year and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates that are comparable across all schools in a state. Schools whose mission is to serve under credited students and dropouts should be allowed to report alternate measures of graduation success, such as a one-year cohort graduation rate.

2. Protect Autonomy and Encourage Innovation

- **Permit school-level funding flexibility.** In order to use federal funds, particularly Title I, in a manner that enables the school to meet the needs of its students, schools should have flexibility in how they demonstrate compliance with the “supplement not supplant” requirement.
- **Provide students in low-performing schools with access to seats in high-quality schools.** States and districts should have the option of using a portion of their Title I funds to expand access to high-quality public schools.
- **Expand eligibility for competitive grants.** Networks of charter schools and charter management organizations should be able to apply for federal competitive grant programs that are open to local educational agencies.
- **Ensure that charters are free to design personnel systems and hire personnel that meet the unique needs of their school.** A reauthorized ESEA should clarify that states are not required by federal statute (in either Title I or Title II) to include charters in state teacher evaluation systems, and should encourage states not to do so.
- **Encourage innovation through competitive grants to improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals.** Allocating a portion of funds under Title II through competitive grants instead of by formula would foster innovation in the recruitment, selection, preparation, and retention of effective charter school teachers and principals serving high-need students. The competitive portion of Title II should include the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program (currently created through appropriations language), which makes grants to organizations that are providing innovative training to develop teachers and leaders for high-quality charter schools.
- **Reduce paperwork.** Under current law, a state may consolidate the local application for all of the federal formula grant programs into one consolidated application for its LEAs. However, a single consolidated application can still be especially burdensome for single-school LEAs if it requires a school to do planning that is more appropriate for LEAs. The statute should clarify that states do not have to require an annual application. It should require states to exempt those schools from application requirements that do not make sense for a single school LEA.

3. Improve and Expand the Charter Schools Grant Program

A reauthorized ESEA should include the language from Senators Kirk and Bennet’s bill (S. 2304), in order to modernize this program, protect charter school autonomy, and authorize grants for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools. S. 2304 reflects the National Alliance’s principles for reauthorizing the Charter Schools Program that were outlined in our comprehensive reauthorization proposal, [Free to Succeed: Public Charter Schools and the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#). Its funding authorization, however, should be increased to \$500 million in order to ensure there are adequate funds to reach students in as many states as possible.