



Great Public Schools for Every Student

STATEMENT OF

**DENNIS VAN ROEKEL,
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

**BEFORE THE
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE**

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON

**ESEA REAUTHORIZATION:
THE IMPORTANCE OF A WORLD-CLASS K-12 EDUCATION FOR AMERICA'S
ECONOMIC SUCCESS**

March 9, 2010

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the essential role of preparing students for success in the 21st Century and how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act must be redesigned to achieve this goal. I commend the Committee for convening a hearing on this very important issue.

As a 23-year veteran classroom math teacher, I have the great honor of being here today representing 3.2 million members who all believe in the power of education to transform lives. NEA members include teachers and education support professionals, higher education faculty and staff, Department of Defense schools' educators, students in colleges of teacher education, and retired educators across the country.

Today, I will talk about K-12 education in the U.S. economy. I will also present NEA's views on revitalizing the public education system, redesigning schools and revamping accountability systems for 21st century learning, and ensuring sustainability of public education.

The public education system is critical to democracy. Its purpose is to:

- maximize the achievement, skills, opportunities and potential of all students by promoting their strengths and addressing their needs, and
- ensure all students are prepared to thrive in a democratic society and diverse changing world as knowledgeable, creative and engaged citizens and lifelong learners.

However, today, students' success in school depends in large part on the zip code where they live and the educators to whom they are assigned. There are great teachers and education support professionals at work every day in this country who show up excited to teach students and feed them nutritious meals, help them travel safely to and from school, and make sure they attend schools that are safe, clean, and in good repair.

Students who struggle the most in impoverished communities too often don't attend safe schools with reliable heat and air conditioning; too often do not have safe passage to and from school; and far too often do not have access to great teachers on a regular and consistent basis. We must address these opportunity gaps if we are to strengthen our economy, prepare our students to compete, and build the educated workforce necessary.

What we have today is an interdependent, rapidly changing world, and our public school system must adapt to the needs of the new global economy. Every student will need to graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary educational options, and focus on a lifetime of learning because many of tomorrow's jobs have not even been conceived of today.

I think we can all agree that our public schools need a wholesale transformation with the resources to match our commitment. We cannot leave a generation of students behind by continuing to deny them the best education this country has to offer. Instead of being first in the world in the number of inmates, let's work to be first in the world in the number of high school and college graduates.

As President John F. Kennedy said in 1961 and it still holds true now: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this all require

the maximum development of every young American's capacity. The human mind is our fundamental resource.”

Simply put, we need a new vision of 21st century learning. My testimony today will lay out the inextricable link between investment in education and a strong, competitive nation and will discuss how we must approach ESEA reauthorization from an economic development framework.

But I would be remiss if I did not point out that the best laid plans for 21st century learning will not succeed without a true partnership of change between educators, school boards and school districts. Simply put, reform in schools does not succeed without true collaboration among all those involved in creating, funding, and delivering quality education services to our students. We have to all shoulder the responsibility and hard work it will take to be sure schools improve dramatically, particularly for students who need the most. And we cannot continue to shun proven school improvement models because they don't generate as much press coverage as others.

We know schools improve when educators are respected, treated as professionals, and given the tools they need and the opportunity to improve as a team for the benefit of their students. For example, Broad Acres Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland is a high-poverty, previously low performing school. In April 2001, all staff at Broad Acres Elementary School had the option to make a three-year commitment to the school and its students. This commitment included working the equivalent of 15 extra days paid by a supplement to be used to extend the workday every Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. for planning sessions, study groups, and examining student work. Sixty percent of the staff elected to stay. According to the school district's website, students met the proficiency standards for adequate yearly progress in math and reading for the most recent year available. The student body is 99 percent minority and 88 percent qualify for free and reduced price meals. Furthermore, at Broad Acres, 30 percent of the teachers have more than 15 years of experience, 52.7 percent have 5-15 years, and only 16.4 percent have less than 5 years of experience. It appears from those numbers that Broad Acres has successfully retained experienced educators and probably also attracted newer ones who are staying.

K-12 Education in the U.S. Economy

Every child and young adult has surely heard the following: “To get ahead in life, get an education.” This is a belief often repeated among noted economists and education experts, and is borne out by numerous studies. As Paul Krugman, New York Times columnist and Nobel Prize winner has said, “If you had to explain America's economic success with one word, that word would be “education. ... Education made America great; neglect of education can reverse the process.” Former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has also stated, “The best approach is to give people access to first-rate education so they can acquire the skills needed to advance.”

Besides the benefits to individuals, society as a whole also enjoys a financial return on the investment in higher education. In addition to widespread productivity increases, the higher earnings of educated workers generate higher tax payments at the local, state, and federal levels. Consistent productive employment reduces dependence on public income-transfer programs and all workers, regardless of education level, earn more when there are more college graduates in the labor force. (Education Pays, The College Board, 2007.)

The provision of a quality K–12 public education plays a crucial role in the individual and economy-wide acquisition of “human capital.” The economic payoff to individuals of increased schooling is higher earnings throughout their lifetime—a market-based individual benefit. In addition, a considerable number of benefits from a quality K–12 public education—the spillover effects extend beyond individuals. Wolfe and Haveman (2002), economists noted for their efforts to put a monetary value on some of education’s spillover effects, argue that the value of these spillovers for individuals and the economy is significant and that it may be as large as education’s market-based individual benefits. For example:

- Cutting statewide public K–12 expenditure by \$1 per \$1,000 state’s personal income could (1) reduce the state’s personal income by about 0.3 percent in the short run and 3.2 percent in the long run; (2) reduce the state’s manufacturing investment in the long run by 0.9 percent and manufacturing employment by 0.4 percent. Cutting statewide public K–12 education per student by \$1 would reduce small business starts by 0.4 percent in the long run. Cutting statewide public K–12 expenditure by one percentage point of the state’s personal income would reduce the state’s employment by 0.7 percent in the short run and by 1.4 percent in the long run.
- A reduction in a state’s aggregate home values is likely if a reduction in statewide public school spending yields a decline in standardized public school test scores, if in the long run people leave or do not enter the state because of test-score declines. A ten percent reduction in various standardized test scores would yield between a 2 percent and a ten percent reduction in aggregate home values in the long run.
- Reduction in a state’s aggregate personal income is also likely if a reduction in statewide public school spending yields a decline in “quality” of public education produced and a long-run decrease in earning potential of the state’s residents. A ten percent reduction in school expenditures could yield a one to two percent decrease in post-school annual earnings in the long run. A ten percent increase in the student–teacher ratio would lead to a one to two percent decrease in high school graduation rates and to a decrease in standardized test scores.

Investing in education will help prevent harmful cuts in programs, preserve jobs and reduce unemployment, thereby strengthening state and local economies.

- According to the National Governors’ Association, “Long-term prospects for strong economic growth are hampered by the high school dropout crisis ... Dropouts costs the United States more that \$300 billion a year in lost wages and increased public-sector expenses ... the dropout problem is a substantial drag on the nation’s economic competitiveness.”
- The latest study from the Alliance for Excellent Education, *The Economic Benefits from Halving the Dropout Rate* makes a powerful connection between easing the dropout crisis and strengthening local economies. Over time, for example, budgets that provide education and other basic services to economically disadvantaged people can increase their chances for solid jobs and productive lives and thereby reduce income inequality. Social spending, including education spending, often has a positive effect on GDP, even after weighing the effects of the taxes used to finance it.
- A series of careful studies presented at the Teachers College Symposium on Educational Equity at Columbia University found that, among other things that a high school dropout

earns about \$260,000 less over a lifetime than a high school graduate and pays about \$60,000 less in taxes. These same studies also found that America loses \$192 billion—1.6% of our Gross Domestic Product—in combined income and tax revenue with each cohort of 18-year-olds who never complete high school. In other words, for each year's high school graduating class, the amount they would contribute to this nation's economy over their lifetime in terms of their income and the taxes they pay would be larger by \$192 billion if all of their same-age peers completed high school as well. The annual loss of federal and state income taxes associated with the 23 million U.S. high school dropouts (ages 18 – 67) is over \$50 billion compared to what they would have paid if they had graduated.

- A survey for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston showed that an educated, qualified workforce was by far the most important consideration of firms when deciding where to locate.
- And a study for the World Bank showed that public investments in K-12 education yielded an annual return of 14.3 percent in additional revenue and reduced expenses, while the long term return on common stocks was only 6.3 percent a year.
- Two Harvard economists, Lawrence F. Katz and Claudia Goldin, studied the effect of increases in educational attainment in the United States labor force from 1915 to 1999. They estimated that those gains directly resulted in at least 23 percent of the overall growth in productivity, or around 10 percent of growth in gross domestic product. (What's the Return on Education, Anna Bernasek, *The New York Times*, December 11, 2005). They found education programs have contributed to economic growth while also increasing opportunities for individual advancement. Near-universal public education has added significantly to U.S. economic growth, boosted incomes, and lowered inequality (Goldin and Katz, 2008).

It is clear that when faced with the choice of (1) increasing revenue statewide to continue supporting the provision of quality public K–12 education or (2) cutting support statewide to public K–12 education to forestall a tax increase, a state's long term economic interests are better served by increasing revenue. (NEA Working Paper, *K-12 Education in the U.S. Economy: Its Impact on Economic Development, Earnings, and Housing Values*. Thomas L. Hungerford and Robert W. Wassmer, April 2004). Yet, according to NEA's own research, almost no states are currently funding their educational systems adequately and most states are around 25 percent short of funding their systems at a level adequate

These findings take on a particular significance in the current economy. State budgets typically lag any national economic recovery by a year or longer and, as a result, budget gaps will continue into fiscal year 2011 and beyond. In fact, the aggregate budget gap for fiscal year 2012 is expected to be larger than the 2011 gap, largely due to diminishing federal stimulus funds. For many states, 2011 will mark the third consecutive year in which budget balancing actions will be needed to close sizable budget gaps. According to the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) just issued *Policies for Increasing Economic Growth and Employment in 2010 and 2011*, "Many states have experienced a high degree of fiscal stress and are expected to have large budget gaps in the next few years. Eighteen states have budget gaps larger than 20 percent of general fund expenditures..."

The federal government, which, unlike most state governments, is not prohibited from running an annual budget deficit, is best suited to help state and local governments maintain educational

funding during cyclical downturns. According to CBO, “Federal aid that was provided promptly would probably have a significant effect on output and employment in 2010 and 2011. Such aid could lead to fewer layoffs, more pay raises, more government purchases of goods and services, increases in state safety-net programs, tax cuts, and savings for future use.”

The evidence is clear that investment in education is essential for a strong economy and a well-prepared workforce, and that the federal government must step up at this critical juncture. This sort of investment in education as a means to stimulating economic growth is not unprecedented. In the last century, both the G.I. bill and the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which appropriated \$1 billion dollars for science education, helped propelled economic growth.

Leaving states to cut education more deeply to balance their budgets without additional federal aid is short-sighted. Lessening the quality of education a student receives today as a result may be irreversible. Long-term productivity growth and a higher standard of living are dependent on an educated workforce. Investing in education is investing in the future growth of the country.

Additional funding for public primary and secondary schools, however, will not generate greater student achievement unless the funds are used wisely. The remainder of this testimony will focus on how we must retool our education system for the 21st Century.

Revitalizing the Public Education System

It is important to recall that 1965 was one of the notable years in the history of education in America. That year, as part of his War on Poverty, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to reduce inequity by directing resources to poor and minority children and signed the Higher Education Act (HEA) to provide more opportunities and access to postsecondary opportunities for lower and middle-income families. “Poverty has many roots,” Johnson said, “but the taproot is ignorance.”

Poverty is still an issue in this country, and unfortunately we still have schools that lack resources, committed and effective leadership, and enough great teachers and education support professionals to reach every student. Schools in struggling communities too often have high dropout rates, and the cycle of poverty continues.

The federal government must be engaged in these issues, offering the only remaining leverage point to hold states accountable for remedying these untenable inequities. Later in this testimony, I will address our recommendation that the federal government require states to put together adequacy and equity plans that outline how they will address these inequities.

NEA also stands ready to help do something about it—we must break this cycle of poverty. And we are ready to work with our partners, community by community, to revitalize the public school system and redesign schools for the 21st century.

Redesigning Schools for 21st Century Learning

To be clear, however, educating every student so they can succeed in this country is not enough today. We live in a global society and our students will have to compete with people from across the world.

We need a world class education system that will prepare students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and globally competent. To prosper, graduates must learn languages, understand the world, and be able to compete globally, and we must benchmark our educational goals against other nations with strong education systems. If we collectively work toward that outcome, it is expected that the United States gross domestic product will be more than one-third higher in the next 70 years.

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must transform the system by demanding sweeping changes that changes the dynamic—significantly higher student achievement and significantly higher graduation rates for all groups of students.

Our vision of what great public schools need and should provide acknowledges that the world is changing and public education is changing too. NEA’s Great Public Schools (GPS) criteria require not only the continued commitment of all educators, but the concerted efforts of policymakers at all levels of government. These criteria will prepare all students for the future with 21st century skills; create enthusiasm for learning and engaging all students in the classroom; close achievement gaps and increase achievement for all students; and ensure that all educators have the resources and tools they need to get the job done.

The criteria are:

- ✓ **Quality programs and services that meet the full range of all children's needs so that they come to school every day ready and able to learn.**
- ✓ **High expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.** Curriculum and assessments must focus on higher order thinking and performance skills, if students are to meet the high standards to which we aspire. Students will be better prepared for the rigors of life and citizenship after school if they have had access to a broad, rigorous, relevant curriculum that prepares them for a variety of postsecondary educational and career options. Students’ access to core academic content areas that incorporate 21st century skills as well as fine arts, civics, and career and technical education helps inspire their creativity, helps connect their school work to their outside interests, and can help keep them engaged in school.

We must support innovative public school models of education that inform and accelerate school transformation efforts and prepare students for citizenship, lifelong learning, and challenging postsecondary education and careers. The federal government can play a critical role in increasing educational research and development and providing a clearinghouse for innovative promising practices.

- ✓ **Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning.** In an effort to obliterate the “corridors of shame” that exist and repair or rebuild crumbling schools, we also must focus resources on infrastructure. President Obama’s administration and Congress already have taken a giant leap forward in this respect when they passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). ARRA included billions of dollars in aid that can be used to help update schools. We are pleased that both the House and Senate have passed legislation to extend and strengthen this program.

We also know that if we are to revitalize our public schools, we must address the design of public schools. Schools today must work for students in rural, urban, suburban, and

exurban areas. In rural areas, for example, broadband access is key to ensure students have access to virtual, supplemental material and support that is not available in their physical location. By creating this technology gateway, educators can also obtain high-quality professional development to which they might otherwise not have access.

Schools and classrooms designed for 21st century learning also must be designed for universal access to ensure the inclusion of the widest spectrum of students. Every effort should be made to reduce the barriers to learning so that every student reaches his or her potential and dreams.

- ✓ **A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.** Investments in teachers' and leaders' knowledge and skills are essential to all other reforms, and pay off in higher achievement. Strong preparation, mentoring, and professional development, as well as collaborative learning and planning time in schools, are the building blocks of any successful reform. We must ensure students have access to accomplished educators by requiring high standards for entry into the profession and by offering incentives to teach in hard-to-staff schools. We recommend creating a prestigious national education institute and provide incentives to states to create world-class teacher preparation programs that attract the top tier of college graduates nationally

Teachers and education support professionals must be respected as professionals by ensuring they are part of critical decisions affecting students, schools and themselves. We also need to encourage school leadership to be effective in both operational and instructional leadership.

- ✓ **Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by stakeholders at all levels.** We must obtain the full commitment from all policymakers—at the federal, state, and local levels. We also must involve our communities and partners, including governors, state legislators, mayors, county officials, business partners, the faith-based community, the civil rights community, and parents and families, to name a few. It will take the concerted effort of all of these stakeholders working with superintendents, school boards, and educators to ensure that all of our schools become the modern, safe, vibrant centers of the community that they can become.
- ✓ **Parental, family, and community involvement and engagement.** Through more than 125 initiatives in 21 states, NEA's Public Engagement Project is demonstrating the essential role of school-family-community partnerships in student achievement. Our findings echo those of a six-year-long study of multiple data sources conducted by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University: such partnerships contribute to increased student attendance, improved performance on standardized tests, higher high school graduation rates, and college-going aspirations.
- ✓ **Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.** Resources must be adequate and equalized across schools. We cannot expect schools that lack strong and prepared leaders, well-qualified teachers, and high-quality instructional materials to improve by testing alone. We must ensure adequate and equitable funding for schools and fully fund critical programs such as Title I and IDEA and we must help states and districts to identify disparities in educational resources, supports, programs, opportunities, class sizes and

personnel (including the distribution of accomplished educators) through required Equity and Adequacy plans.

NEA is part of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills -- a unique public-private organization formed in 2002 to create a successful model of learning for this millennium that incorporates 21st century skills into our system of education. The members of this Partnership believe that policymakers today have an opportunity—and an obligation—to move forward with a new direction for teaching and learning in the 21st century (*The Road to 21st Century Learning: A Policymakers Guide to 21st Century Skills*, Partnership for 21st Century Skills).

As laid out in the Partnership's guidebook, *The Road to 21st Century Learning: A Policymakers Guide to 21st Century Skills* http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/downloads/P21_Policy_Paper.pdf) we see

“...a growing sense of urgency that the nation must act now to ensure that future generations of Americans can participate fully in the democratic process and the competitive global economy. Education is the foundation of democratic institutions, national security, economic growth and prosperity—and Americans cannot be complacent about improving the quality of education while competitors around the world are focusing on preparing students for the demands of this century. Only recently, the National Science Board, a federal advisory panel established by Congress, warned that the United States faces a major shortage of scientists because too few Americans are entering technical fields and because of the burgeoning ranks of highly competent scientists in other nations.

America risks losing its long-standing preeminence in science, engineering, technology, medicine, defense, business and even democracy. Without many more highly educated, highly skilled young people to carry the torch of inquiry, innovation and enterprise into the future, American dominance in these and other endeavors may fade...

There is broad consensus among educators, policymakers, business leaders and the public that schools today must do a better job of preparing young people for the challenges and expectations of communities, workplaces and higher education. Moreover, there is broad consensus about the knowledge and skills that are essential in the world today—and about the educational model that would make schools more relevant to the world again as well. This model emphasizes that students today need 21st century skills to guarantee America's success tomorrow.”

Incremental changes yield incremental results. We must be bolder. A legislative tweak here or a regulatory toggle there will not lead to the fundamental and transformative changes in education we all seek. When we address change, we have to focus on significant *and* sustainable improvement in the rates of achievement for all students, but especially poor and minority students.

According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, integrating 21st century skills into K–12 education will empower students to learn and achieve in the core academic subjects at much higher levels. These skills, in fact, are the learning results that demonstrate that students are ready for the world. It is no longer enough to teach students the 3Rs; we must also teach the 4Cs of creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

The Partnership calls on policymakers to imagine:

- A place where all children master rigorous core academic subjects
- A place where teaching and learning are relevant to life outside of school
- A place where all children understand and use the learning skills— information and communication skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, and interpersonal and self-directional skills—that lead to high performance in school and in life
- A place where vital new academic content is part of the common core curriculum
- A place where professional development and teaching strategies enable educators to help students gain the knowledge and skills they need
- A place where every student, teacher and administrator has on-demand access to 21st century tools and technologies and uses them to work productively
- A place where 21st century tools and context are embedded in core subjects and assessments
- A place where all students—including those with learning or physical disabilities and those who are learning English—can show what they know and can do with all of the knowledge and skills that are valued in the world

The Partnership members know that schools like these would be intellectually stimulating environments for students, teachers and administrators alike. Communities, employers, colleges and universities would be proud to welcome graduates of 21st century schools as the best prepared generation of citizens in American history. Reaching this vision is both important and possible—and it rests in the hands of policymakers today. It is this vision that Congress should have at the forefront as you reauthorize ESEA.

Revamping Accountability Systems for 21st Century Learning

In order to support public school improvement, states should have well-designed, transparent accountability systems that authentically assess both student learning and the conditions for its success, focus on closing achievement gaps, help to monitor progress, and identify successes and problems. We should not continue the unhealthy focus on standardized tests as the primary evidence of student success.

Achievement is much more than a test score, but if test scores are still the primary means of assessing student learning, they will continue to get undue weight. This is especially problematic because the tests widely in use in the United States, since NCLB narrowed the kinds of tests in use, typically focus on lower level skills of recall and recognition measured with multiple-choice items that do not adequately represent higher order thinking skills and performance. These are unlike the assessments that are used in high-achieving nations that feature essays, problem solutions, and open-ended items and more extensive tasks completed in classrooms as part of the assessment system. Achievement must take into account accomplishments that matter in the world outside of school, such as: Are you prepared for college or trade school? Can you form an

opinion about something you read and justify your opinion? Are you creative? Are you inventive? Can you come up with a variety of solutions when you're faced with a problem?

The federal government should use the ESEA implementation process, along with those associated with other federal programs, as mechanisms to incentivize states to devise comprehensive accountability systems that use multiple sources of evidence (including rich, meaningful, and authentic assessments, such as developing and/or using native language assessments as appropriate for students until they gain proficiency in English as determined by a valid and reliable measure). Instead of the current NCLB system that has resulted in a significant narrowing of the curriculum, state accountability systems should be designed to support efforts to guarantee every child has access to a rich, comprehensive curriculum. Such systems also should:

- Align with developmentally appropriate student learning standards;
- Require the use of multiple, valid, reliable measures of student learning and school performance over time and assess higher-order thinking skills and performance skills;
- Replace AYP with a system that recognizes schools that make progress toward achieving learning goals and correctly identifies struggling schools in order to provide needed support instead of punishment;
- Recognize the unique instructional and assessment needs of special populations, including students with disabilities and English language learners by designing standards and assessments that are accessible for all students; and
- Foster high-quality data systems that are both longitudinal and complete and that protect student and educator privacy and improve instruction

These state systems should evaluate school quality, as well as demonstrate improvements in student learning and closing of achievement, skills, and opportunity gaps among various groups of students. NEA has developed a comprehensive diagnostic tool called KEYS to assess school climate and success using a variety of indicators. There are also important and highly informative surveys such as the Teacher Working Conditions survey (pioneered by the Center for Teaching Quality) and the Gallup student survey that should inform states' educational approach and accountability system as it relates to school system quality.

As states design these evaluation systems, the design team must include practicing educators to ensure that the system can yield clear and useful results. The results of these evaluations should not be used to punish and sanction schools. Results instead should be used to inform state, local, and classroom efforts to identify struggling students and problematic school programs so that states, districts, and educators can provide appropriate interventions and supports for improvement.

When considering individual schools that need significant reform or turn-around efforts, I strongly urge you not to be too prescriptive—as we believe the US Department of Education's regulations in Race to the Top have been—in outlining specific methods of transforming schools. For example, we believe that turnaround assistance teams, such as those so successfully employed in North Carolina and Kentucky, serve as a highly effective, proven model of turning around low performing schools. We also believe that teacher-led schools have shown remarkable results in improving student learning. These two models were not included in the RTTT rules as allowable turn-around approaches. Such narrow prescriptions for school overhaul

are predictive of one thing: diminished opportunity and tools to reach and turn around MORE schools.

Ensuring Sustainability of Public Education

Transforming America's public schools is a daunting task. It will take the concerted efforts of all stakeholders and the commitment to continue the effort until every student has access to a great public school.

At the core of this effort is ensuring the fiscal stability of the educational system so that the energy of stakeholders can be spent on how best to serve students.

As we have said in the past, the federal government should require states, as part of their application for federal education funds under ESEA, to develop "Adequacy and Equity Plans." Through these plans, states will demonstrate where there are disparities in educational tools and services, as well as opportunities and resources. The plans will outline steps underway or planned to remedy the disparities. The process of developing the plans should bring together stakeholders within the state to devise a plan to meet adequacy and equity goals, and for the first time significant federal resources could serve as a powerful incentive that spurs action on this issue. This effort will help elevate the commitment to all students and build a shared understanding of what it will take to support them.

The design of federal approval and monitoring should be one that sensibly supports adjustments and flexibility as states pursue their goals and work toward eliminating disparities, without ever losing sight of the fact that the richest country in the world can provide every student with a quality education.

Conclusion

We know the road to economic stability and prosperity runs through our public schools, and we know that every student deserves the best we can offer. It is now time to deliver. NEA stands ready to do its part.

Attached to this testimony are a series of fact sheets on key elements of ESEA reauthorization, as well as NEA's overriding principles for reauthorization.

Thank you.



**NEA'S MESSAGE TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF ESEA
February 2010**

The purpose of public education:

The public education system is critical to democracy and its purpose is to:

- maximize the achievement, skills, opportunities and potential of all students by promoting their strengths and addressing their needs,
 - ensure all students are prepared to thrive in a democratic society and diverse changing world as knowledgeable, creative and engaged citizens and lifelong learners
-

To fulfill the purpose of public education, we must:

1. PROMOTE INNOVATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Support innovative public school models of education that inform and accelerate school transformation efforts and prepare students for citizenship, lifelong learning, and challenging postsecondary education and careers
- Increase educational research and development and provide a clearinghouse for innovative promising practices

2. PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE WAYS TO SHOW WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED

- Require the use of multiple, valid, reliable measures of student learning and school performance over time
- Replace AYP with a system that recognizes schools that make progress toward achieving learning goals and correctly identifies struggling schools in order to provide needed support instead of punishment
- Foster high-quality data systems that are both longitudinal and complete and that protect student and educator privacy and improve instruction
- Recognize the unique instructional and assessment needs of special populations, including students with disabilities and English language learners by designing standards and assessments that are accessible for all students.

3. ELEVATE THE PROFESSION: GREAT EDUCATORS AND LEADERS FOR EVERY PUBLIC SCHOOL

- Respect teachers and education support professionals as professionals by ensuring they are part of critical decisions affecting students, schools and themselves
- Ensure students have access to accomplished educators by ensuring high standards for entry into the profession and by offering incentives to teach in hard-to-staff schools
- Encourage school leadership to be effective in both operational and instructional leadership
- Create a prestigious national education institute and provide incentives to states to create world-class teacher preparation programs that attract the top tier of college graduates nationally

4. CHAMPION ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Ensure adequate and equitable funding for schools and fully fund critical programs such as Title I and IDEA
- Help states and districts to identify disparities in educational resources, supports, programs, opportunities, class sizes and personnel (including the distribution of accomplished educators) through required Equity and Adequacy plans
- Provide support and foster research-based turnaround strategies for high priority schools

To view NEA's comprehensive agenda and priorities for ESEA Reauthorization, go to

<http://www.nea.org/esea>

For additional information please contact: Erin Duncan, NEA Government Relations

(EDuncan@nea.org), or Robert Kim, NEA Education Policy and Practice (RKim@nea.org)



Promote Innovation in Public Schools
FACT SHEET
February 2010

It is clear that if we are to achieve world-class schools for every student within the next decade, we will need fresh approaches and ideas that produce dramatic leaps in achievement and growth among students, educators and communities. The federal government must embrace its role as a supporter of local and state initiatives to transform schools, rather than a micro-manager.

“Institutionalizing” innovation is a paradoxical goal, and yet this is the federal government’s solemn responsibility: it must craft policies that are strict in their flexibility, incentivize change as a fixed concept, and establish continuity in the pursuit of continuous transformation.

- **How can we promote innovation in schools?**

The federal government should increase and sustain funding in programs that are designed to foster innovation (such as the Investing in Innovation (i3) program funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009). Innovative proposals should be developed in collaboration with educators and include a sustainability plan. We believe that research, development and pilot programs in the following areas are particularly useful and necessary:

- ✓ Unique governance models for public schools, including staff-led schools
- ✓ Wraparound, before- and after-school, summer programs and services
- ✓ High-quality formative student assessments
- ✓ Curricular reform that includes 21st century learning skills
- ✓ Effective and rigorous teacher preparation and induction
- ✓ Education delivery systems for students in rural or low-income school districts
- ✓ Incorporation of education technology into classrooms and schools
- ✓ Educator evaluation systems based on multiple, valid measures of performance and used to improve educators’ practice through use of professional development systems that are job-embedded, aligned, and research-based
- ✓ Longitudinal data systems that assist in determining students’ instructional and other needs
- ✓ Alternate structures to the school day and calendar year
- ✓ Magnet and themed public schools – e.g., science, technology, the arts
- ✓ Flexible high school pathways integrating preparation for career technical education and higher education

In addition to incentivizing pilot activities in the above areas, the federal government should sponsor its own research and establish a public clearinghouse for innovation and promising practices.

- **What kinds of innovative models of education have proven successful?**

We know that successful, innovative and autonomous models of public school education already exist. Such models invariably include deep and mutually beneficial partnerships with government, higher education, parent and community organizations, education unions, and businesses or philanthropic

entities. These models also have produced new and imaginative ways to develop professional development, deliver student instruction and assessments, and offer time for team curricular planning.

One promising example is the Math & Science Learning Academy (MLSA), a new, union-designed, teacher-led public school within the Denver Public School System. Other examples of innovation that feature strong union-administrator-school district partnerships include:

- ✓ Say Yes to Education Foundation (Syracuse, NY)
- ✓ Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (Evansville, IN)
- ✓ Hamilton County Public Schools (Chattanooga, TN)
- ✓ University of Connecticut - CommPACT Schools (Hartford, CT)
- ✓ Milwaukee Partnership Academy (Milwaukee, WI)
- ✓ Seattle Flight School Initiative (Seattle, WA)

- **Why should we care about school “transformation” as part of innovation efforts?**

School “transformation” is not a silver bullet. Rather, it entails numerous, coordinated and aggressive changes in policies, programs and behavior within school systems. School transformation must address school organization and structure; leadership and governance; staff recruiting, development and retention; instructional and curricular practices; support services and resources; parent and community involvement; overall school infrastructure, culture and climate; and other factors.

While intervention models that call for the replacement of existing leadership and the majority of staff, reorganization as a charter school or school closure are avenues to consider in limited circumstances, in many communities and regions they are not feasible options. Moreover, the choice of an intervention “model” alone does not equal reform: all of these models must be accompanied by transformation strategies described above if they are to improve and sustain student achievement and growth.

NEA Recommendations to Congress:

- **Support and promote innovative public school models and programs that accelerate school transformation efforts and prepare students for citizenship, lifelong learning, and challenging postsecondary education and careers**
- **Encourage innovation developed through partnerships—primarily between educators’ unions, administrators, and school districts—that focus on helping student thrive and develop critical 21st century skills**
- **Increase educational research and development to provide a clearinghouse for innovative promising practices**



Provide Students with Multiple Ways to Show What They Have Learned
FACT SHEET
February 2010

There is widespread consensus that NCLB placed a necessary focus on the achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged student populations. It, however, has wreaked havoc on schools by mislabeling successful schools as failing, under-serving those schools that are truly struggling, and placing undue emphasis on federally mandated standardized student assessments as the accountability yardstick for entire school systems. This has resulted in intense discontent among educators and parents and scant, if any, gains in a narrow range of skills and content areas among students.

The next iteration of ESEA must prize authenticity above all else. That is, it must transparently identify and scale up valid measures of student learning in its totality—not just student performance on a test, and not just student growth in a series of tests, but all essential components of student learning as demonstrated by reliable and varied sources of evidence, beginning with the professional “assessment” of the classroom teacher. These valid measures of student learning must then be analyzed as one, but not the only, important facet of overall school effectiveness.

Accountability systems should be used primarily as part of a continuous improvement system designed to improve instruction rather than to punish schools. Promising instructional methods should be shared among colleagues and scaled up, and assessment systems should be used identify which struggling schools are most in need of support, with the goal of delivering that needed support. Most importantly, accountability systems must be limited so as not to subsume the character of education itself. We must measure school performance, but we must do so in a way that enhances, rather than stifles, the educational process.

- **Can states develop authentic assessment systems that use multiple measures of student learning and school performance?**

A complete and balanced authentic student assessment system is one factor essential to education improvement. A complete system should incorporate the concept of assessment purposes encompassing assessment *of, for, and as* learning. This concept is espoused by several experts in student assessment, and is used by several high-achieving countries such as Singapore, New Zealand, and Canada.

Research and evidence show that the current test-and-label system under NCLB is fundamentally flawed and recommend that states be allowed to develop their own accountability systems using student growth models instead of having to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” by group status or successive group improvement (currently NCLB “safe harbor”). Beginning in 2005, the U.S. Department of Education approved a pilot program to allow states to use growth models to measure AYP. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia have since applied to use growth models, and 15 states now have approved growth models: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. We recommend that all states be given the option to set attainable performance goals and be given credit for demonstrating growth in student learning.

In addition, we recommend three important changes to the current accountability framework:

(1) Expand the current student growth models to include other valid indicators of student learning. Student growth on standardized assessments is but one out of multiple indicators of student learning. Evidence of student growth (as measured by accurate and reliable assessments and differentiated by subgroup) must be augmented with other measures, which may include district-level assessments; school-level assessments; classroom-level written, oral, performance-based, or portfolio assessments; grades; and written evaluations. All measures must be rigorous and follow common protocols to allow comparisons across classrooms.

(2) Require states to monitor multiple indicators of school performance beyond student learning. These include graduation rates; postsecondary and career placement rates; attendance rates; student mobility or transfer rates; the number and percentage of students participating in rigorous coursework (including honors, AP, IB, dual enrollment, early college); and the number and percentage of students participating in sciences, STEM, humanities, foreign languages, creative and fine arts, health, and physical education programs. This robust system would provide the public with a more complete picture of the performance of schools in their community and their state, instead of the current system, which holds schools accountable based solely on how many students reach an arbitrary cut score on a standardized test in reading, math, and science on a particular day.

(3) Replace the current “AYP” system¹ and corrective framework with a Continuous Improvement Plan that features multiple indicators to help states accomplish the following goals:

- recognize areas of growth in all schools and states as part of a continuous improvement paradigm that all schools can improve
- identify schools and programs that may offer innovative approaches or platforms for other schools
- provide basic feedback to all schools on areas of possible growth or improvement (including support in one or more areas if warranted)
- identify which schools are or are at risk of becoming high priority (i.e., either “persistently low-achieving” or that demonstrate “significant educational opportunity gaps”) in order to direct intensive resources and intervention supports to them

High priority schools (as identified by the state) would be required (and would be provided additional resources) to collect and submit additional data related to key school climate and success factors, including: leadership and staff experience and turnover statistics; class size (student-teacher ratio); number of National Board certified teachers; number of certified counselors, nurses and other support staff per student; school building and environmental ratings; school bullying violence statistics; descriptions of professional development and instructional improvement strategies, description of access to libraries, science laboratories, quality health care in the community, nutritional meals, before- and after-school, and community and family engagement activities. The primary purpose of providing such additional data would be to direct appropriate resources and interventions to such schools. Such schools would have to provide such additional data until they are no longer deemed a high priority school.

¹ NCLB currently requires schools to attain 100% student proficiency in math and literacy by the 2013-14 school year. Schools must demonstrate AYP by setting and attaining increasingly higher target goals. Improvement must occur for every subgroup of students, i.e., low socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Schools that receive Title I funds and consistently fail to make adequate progress are then subject to a series of progressively harsher sanctions that range from allowing students to transfer to higher achieving schools and funding private tutoring to reconstitution, dismissal of staff, or even closure.

- **Can states and/or districts establish reliable longitudinal data systems that inform student learning and instruction in a timely manner?**

The NEA supports state and local efforts to achieve high-quality longitudinal data systems that connect early learning to postsecondary (P-16) education systems and that provide timely and accurate information to educators about students to improve instruction. We support key aspects of high-functioning data systems, provided that such data systems sufficiently protect both student and educator privacy. No educational or performance data related to any individual should be made public, nor should ratings or levels be made public if there is a significant possibility that individuals could be identified through such publication. All ratings of educators informed by data systems that connect students to individual educators should be developed by and with educators, based on multiple means of evaluating educators, and should be aligned with collective bargaining agreements. All data systems must be associated with job-embedded professional development and planning time as an essential component in order for the data to be used for its intended purpose of improving instruction.

- **Can current efforts to revamp standards and assessments actually improve accountability systems?**

The NEA supports the current effort among states to band together in consortia to voluntarily adopt a common core of high-quality standards and high-quality assessments aligned to those standards. Standards and assessments must be aligned with each other and with curricula, teacher preparation and professional development, and they must address the whole student and foster critical and high-order thinking skills and knowledge that will prepare students for a global and interdependent world in the 21st century and beyond. Assessments must include formative and summative components and be designed from the outset to accommodate the needs of special populations, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

- **Can we revise accountability systems to recognize the individual needs of students, such as those with disabilities or who are English language learners?**

Recent developments in education have converged to create a critical need for valid, reliable, unbiased methods for conducting high-stakes assessments for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners (ELL). Foremost is the movement toward ensuring accessibility, fairness and accountability for all students. In this effort, assessments play a key role in supplying evidence to parents, policymakers, politicians, and taxpayers about the degree to which students meet high standards.

To appropriately assess students with disabilities and ELLs, states should: 1) ensure that appropriate accommodations are available for students who need them, 2) use the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) in developing assessments for all students to increase accessibility, 3) ensure that valid, alternate assessments are available for those students who are unable to participate in regular assessments, 4) ensure that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams understand the impact of alternative assessments on students' programs and graduation options, and 5) include measures of growth toward grade level targets, such as growth models that represent student progress over time.

NEA Recommendations to Congress:

- **Require the use of multiple, valid measures of student learning and school performance**
- **Use student growth over time—not simply a one-day snapshot of standardized test performance—as one component of student learning**
- **Replace AYP with a Continuous Improvement Plan system that recognizes schools that achieve growth and correctly identifies struggling schools in order to provide meaningful support**

- **Foster high-quality, longitudinal data systems that improve instruction and protect student and educator privacy**
- **Recognize the unique instructional and assessment needs of special populations, including students with disabilities and English language learners**



**Elevate the Profession:
Great Educators and Leaders in Every Public School
FACT SHEET
February 2010**

A growing body of research confirms what school-based personnel have known for years—that the skills and knowledge of teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) are the greatest factor in how well students learn. In turn, the presence of strong and supportive school leaders is one of the most important factors for recruiting and retaining accomplished teachers and ESPs. But for too long, we have neglected the most important factors in ensuring a strong and healthy pipeline of qualified educators. Today, the average person will change jobs between three to five times in a lifetime.² Half of all teachers leave the classroom after five years.³ Fewer schools have experienced educators. As an entire generation of educators enters retirement, there is an urgent need to address all aspects of working in public schools. It is time to elevate the profession.

The federal government must assist states to help seed future generations of educators at the earliest stages of undergraduate education and teacher recruitment all the way through teacher placement and retention. In particular, it is clear that we need a bold new center of excellence to bring prestige to the teaching profession: a national education institute to attract top college graduates and second-career professionals from across the country.

Also, we know that even the best teachers struggle to perform well without the presence of an effective instructional leader. Primarily principals and other administrators, school leaders could include other colleagues who serve as mentors and coaches. Federal policies, therefore, must foster well-prepared and effective administrators as well as leadership skills within school professionals of different ranks and positions. And it is time that we recognize and support education support professionals, without whom no school would be able to succeed.

Finally, we must ensure that great educators exist in every school, whether high- or low-achieving. The federal government must develop policies and provide funding that enables struggling schools and districts to offer incentives and conditions that will attract and retain the best educators in the nation.

- **Why should we focus on each stage of the pathway from undergraduate education all the way to retention of veteran educators?**

Research shows that, in order to infuse the educational system with great educators, each segment of the educator pipeline is important, including undergraduate education, recruitment of top graduates, graduate preparation, rigorous standards for entry into the profession, induction and placement, certification and licensure, mentoring, professional development, advancement and retention. Ultimately, we must develop systemic ways to recruit legions of top undergraduate students and professionals leaving other professions, to prepare them effectively, and to nurture and safeguard their path to and longevity within the classroom.

² See Department of Labor.

³ See National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

- **Can we foster excellence while establishing attainable standards within the teaching profession?**

Teachers need to receive more than high-quality preparation within schools of education. The bulk of their learning comes from their experience in the classroom. We need policies that foster continuous learning in the form of high-quality, job-embedded professional development, mentoring programs, common planning and reflection time, and timely and continuous feedback from peers and school leadership.

Funds should be provided so that more teachers receive the opportunity to earn certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; Board-certified teachers should be deemed highly qualified for accountability purposes.

Federal policy also should recognize that some teachers must teach multiple subjects because of their geography or student population. This may include rural, special education, or elementary and middle school teachers. Therefore, teacher quality standards, while rigorous, also must provide accommodations for teachers in special circumstances and give them reasonable, common sense opportunities to improve or increase their skills and breadth of certification.

- **What can we do to improve school leadership?**

Similar to other educators, we must ensure that school principals and other administrators receive adequate preparation, mentoring and continuous professional development and support to improve their craft. They must receive timely and useful feedback from school staff as well as other administrators and be evaluated fairly and comprehensively. And they must have the resources and the staff necessary to manage a successful school.

We must also advance policies that advance the leadership skills of teachers and education support professionals. All staff benefit from opportunities to both exhibit and receive leadership and mentoring within their specific profession or job category.

- **Why do we need a national education institute as well as state and local reform within teacher and principal preparation programs?**

Elevating the profession means ensuring that the most talented individuals in the nation have access to world-class education preparation programs. The establishment of a National Education Institute (NEI), a highly competitive public academy for the nation's most promising K-12 teacher candidates in diverse academic disciplines, would allow the federal government to attract and retain top undergraduate scholars as well as second-career professionals and prepare them as leaders of school reform within school systems around the nation. NEI would provide an intensive one-year path (free tuition, room and board in exchange for seven year commitment to service in select public schools) to full licensure, school placement, induction and lifetime professional development and mentoring opportunities from NEI faculty/ graduates/master teachers, and annual meetings with other NEA alumni.

NEI also would partner with existing teacher preparation programs to establish a highly competitive "National Scholars" program in select universities and to foster regional and local excellence in teacher preparation, licensure and induction.

NEI would also sponsor a principal or leadership development program for top candidates who have served as teachers for at least 3 years and wish to enter an intensive program to become a principal or school leader in a priority school.

- **Can we do more to recognize and support education support professionals?**

Education support professionals (ESPs) comprise a critical part of the education team. They include school secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, teacher aides, food service personnel, paraprofessional laboratory technicians, telephone operators, medical records personnel, bookkeepers, accountants, mail room clerks, computer programmers, library and reference assistants, audio-visual technicians, and others. Schools cannot function without high-functioning ESPs. The federal government should create incentives and provide funds to recruit certified and qualified ESPs, and ensure they are included in job growth and professional development opportunities.

- **Can we recruit and create incentives for high-quality educators to work in hard-to-staff schools?**

The NEA supports financial and other incentives to encourage top educators to work in hard-to-staff schools. Such incentives are most effective when they are voluntary, locally agreed upon, and include non-financial incentives such as the availability of continuous professional development, mentoring, paraprofessional assistance, effective school leadership, sufficient resources, planning time, class size reduction, and other factors that improve job quality and effectiveness. Inexperienced or new teachers should not automatically be placed in hard-to-staff schools until they have attained sufficient preparation and classroom experience.

NEA Recommendations to Congress:

- **Focus on intensive efforts in the areas of undergraduate preparation and educator recruitment, preparation, certification and licensure, induction, professional development, mentoring, tenure, advancement and retention**
- **Foster continuous learning and rigorous yet attainable standards within the teaching profession**
- **Prioritize school leadership at all levels and positions within schools**
- **Create a prestigious national education institute and provide incentives to states to create world-class teacher preparation programs that attract the top tier of college graduates nationally**
- **Recognize and support the contributions and achievement of education support professionals**
- **Offer financial and non-financial incentives to teachers who teach in hard-to-staff schools**



Champion Adequate, Equitable, and Sustainable Funding for All Public Schools
FACT SHEET
February 2010

States and local school districts play a critical role in providing adequate and equitable resources to all of their schools. Likewise, the federal government must play an active supporting role to ensure that a student does not miss out on key opportunities by virtue of their zip code. Programs like Title I and IDEA must be fully funded because they are critical in providing necessary and sustained funds to schools serving disadvantaged students and special populations. States must be required to develop “adequacy and equity” plans that would measure and address disparities in educational resources, opportunities, programs and quality among communities and districts. Additionally, the federal government should reserve a portion of its funds to provide intensive support to struggling schools and provide research, assistance and guidance to foster sustainability of high-quality education programs, even in times of economic hardship.

- **What is the federal role in ensuring adequacy and equity in schools?**

The original goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was to provide educational opportunities to poor and disadvantaged students. That goal should endure in the future. While the bulk of educational funding comes from state and local coffers, the federal government must increase, concentrate and sustain formula funding in schools whose students lack the same opportunities and resources as other schools. In addition, it can provide competitive funding to encourage states to bridge gaps in educational, skills and opportunities among schools.

Finally, it can develop policies that encourage states to play a more active role in monitoring and addressing (through “Adequacy and Equity Plans”) specific success factors and disparities in schools that are persistently low-achieving or that have significant educational opportunity gaps. By requiring states to detail plans for helping close these fiscal and resource gaps in their Adequacy and Equity Plans, the U.S. Department of Education and the public can begin to provide critical support for state and local efforts to provide adequate and equitable funding for all schools.

- **Can we reserve our most intensive focus and resources for our high priority schools?**

The Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG) Program should be revamped to require use of only research-based models of school reform to help meet the needs of more high priority schools—those at risk of becoming persistently low-achieving or that have significant educational opportunity gaps. The SIG program should be modified to allow state and local educational agencies clearer and immediate access to use local, state or regional turnaround teams, to provide for intensive team teaching and collaborative instructional strategies rather than firing half of the staff, and to require parental/caregiver and community engagement rather than closing a school or turning it over to a charter management organization.

NEA Recommendations to Congress:

- **Ensure adequate and equitable funding for schools, and sustain and fully fund critical programs such as Title I and IDEA**

- **Help states and districts to identify disparities in educational resources, supports, programs, opportunities, class sizes and personnel through Equity and Adequacy plans**
- **Provide support and foster research-based turnaround strategies for high priority schools**



PRINCIPLES FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA) 2010

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) must focus on policies that would help transform public schools into high-quality learning centers by recognizing the shared responsibility among local, state, and federal governments. Given the law's complexity, each proposed change must be carefully considered to fully understand its effect on our nation's schools and students. Therefore, the National Education Association encourages Congress to listen to the voices of educators in developing legislative proposals and offers these principles for ESEA reauthorization:

- **The federal government should serve as a partner to support state efforts to transform public schools.**
 - The 21st century requires a partnership among all levels of government—federal, state and local—to make up for the historic inequitable distribution of tools and resources to our nation's students.
 - We should support effective models of innovation (such as community schools, career academies, well-designed and accountable charter schools, magnet schools, inclusion of 21st century skills, and educational technology), and create a more innovative educational experience to prepare students for challenging postsecondary experiences and the world of work.
- **The federal government plays a critical role in ensuring that all children—especially the most disadvantaged—have access to an education that will prepare them to succeed in the 21st century.** The federal government should focus on high-quality early childhood education, parental/family involvement and mentoring programs, as well as quality healthcare for children to help overcome issues of poverty that may impede student progress. It should support community school initiatives in an effort to address these issues comprehensively; must invest in proven programs such as knowledge-rich curricula and intensive interventions; and must provide resources to improve teaching and learning conditions through smaller classes and school repair and modernization.
- **A revamped accountability system must correctly identify schools in need of assistance and provide a system of effective interventions to help them succeed.** The schools most in need of improvement deserve targeted, effective, research-based interventions designed to address their specific needs. States and school districts should be given significant flexibility through a transparent process to meet agreed-upon outcomes, using innovative data systems and a variety of growth models based on movement towards proficiency. School quality and student learning must be based on multiple valid and appropriate measures and indicators.
- **The federal government should respect the profession of teachers and education support professionals by providing supports and resources to help students succeed.** Hard-to-staff schools, especially those with high concentrations of disadvantaged students or those that have consistently struggled to meet student achievement targets, need significant supports and resources, including additional targeted funding to attract and retain quality educators; induction programs with intensive mentoring components; and professional development for educational support professionals.
- **The federal government should require states to detail how they will remedy inequities in educational tools, opportunities and resources.** Funding should be targeted to schools with the highest concentrations of poverty. To build on the historic investment through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal government should guarantee funding for critical federal programs, such as Title I of ESEA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- **State and local collective bargaining for school employees must be respected.**
- **Targeted programs that support students and schools with unique needs—such as English Language Acquisition, Impact Aid, rural schools and Indian education—should be maintained and expanded.**
- **The federal government should serve as a research clearinghouse, making available to educators a wealth of knowledge about how best to teach students and help schools improve practices.**