



Priorities for Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

JANUARY 2015

The federal government has a limited but critical role in ensuring that all students are held to high expectations and provided with the supports necessary to meet those expectations. Specifically, federal policy has been instrumental in ensuring that the needs — and potential — of low-income students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities are front and center in decisions about school and district quality, improvement efforts, and resource allocation.

As Congress considers a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it is imperative that the lawmakers stay true to this vision and work toward a law that helps raise achievement for all students, especially our most vulnerable. To accomplish this, The Education Trust believes the following six principles should be included in any reauthorization of ESEA:

- 1. Statewide, annual assessments for all students in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in both reading and math, and at least once in elementary, middle, and high school in science**
 - Assessments should be aligned with statewide standards.
 - Appropriate accommodations should be available for English learners and students with disabilities, and there should be strictly limited exceptions for which of these students should take alternate assessments.
- 2. Statewide accountability systems that expect and support all students to graduate from high school ready for college and career**
 - Accountably ratings should be based predominantly on performance on statewide assessments, high school graduation rates, and other measures of college and career readiness for all groups of students, with an expectation of more progress for groups that are behind.
 - States should reward schools that perform well for all groups and ensure supports and interventions in those in which any group consistently underperforms.
- 3. Equitable access to strong teachers**
 - States and districts should set a goal of ensuring that low-income students and students of color are not disproportionately assigned to novice, out-of-field, or ineffective teachers and should take concrete action toward meeting that goal.
- 4. Sustained investment in public education, and targeting of Title I dollars to the highest poverty schools and districts**
 - Districts and schools serving the biggest concentrations of students in poverty should be prioritized in funding allocations.
- 5. Transparent data reporting to parents and the public**
 - Disaggregated data on student achievement, graduation rates, school climate and discipline, teacher quality, and per-pupil expenditures should be publicly reported at the state, district, and school level.
- 6. An effective role for the U.S. Secretary of Education in enforcing the law.**