



The leading advocate for public education

**New Mexico School Boards Association
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MEMBER GUIDE TO NSBA PRIORITY AREAS

NSBA thanks Congress for its commitment to sustained federal support for programs that enable each student's success in our nation's public schools. As students face challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, NSBA urges federal policymakers to maintain and expand that support so that local school districts can address student needs and provide an environment where they can learn and thrive. We look forward to working with members of Congress to address the nation's school children's needs in 2024 and beyond.

I. Prioritizing Student Health and Well-Being

NSBA urges Congress and the Administration to prioritize student health and well-being by continuing and increasing federal resources that help schools support student physical health, mental health, safety, and social needs. NSBA urges Congress to (1) sustain school-based Medicaid services and other governmental programs that ensure access to health care for economically disadvantaged students and their families; (2) provide greater and sustained resources for locally devised programs that are critical to the safety of students, such as school resource officers, school counselors, and the provision of emergency preparedness training; and (3) provide funding and programmatic resources for states and districts to use trauma-responsive training, to provide other mental health resources, and to support restorative justice programs in schools.

I. Prioritizing Student Health and Well-Being

NSBA Resolutions

- Resolution 2. School Safety and Crime Prevention
- Resolution 13. Trauma Informed/Trauma Responsive
- Resolution 14. Supporting Students' Social and Emotional Needs
- Resolution 15. School-Based Medicaid and Affordable Care Act Penalties
- Resolution 16. Medicaid
- Resolution 34. Restorative Justice/Practices
- Resolution 40. Mental Health Resources for America's Students

I. Prioritizing Student Health and Well-Being

- 1. Educational Outcomes:** Research consistently shows that students' physical and mental health directly impacts their educational outcomes. Students who are healthy and well-supported tend to have better attendance and higher academic achievement, and are more likely to graduate and pursue post-secondary opportunities.
- 2. Economic Impact:** When students suffer from chronic illnesses, mental health challenges, or lack access to basic health care, their ability to participate fully in their education and later contribute to the workforce is compromised. Investing in student health will help ensure a healthier and more productive future workforce, leading to long-term economic benefits.
- 3. Health Access:** Health disparities among students are a pressing concern. Many students, particularly those from rural, marginalized, and low-income communities, face barriers to accessing quality mental and physical health care.
- 4. Mental Health Crisis:** There is growing recognition of the mental health crisis among students, with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide. Congress can address this issue by supporting mental health initiatives in schools, improving access to mental health services, and investing in prevention and early intervention programs. By prioritizing student mental health, Congress can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and create a supportive environment for students.
- 5. Long-term Public Health:** Students' health is closely tied to public health outcomes. By addressing health issues at the student level, Congress can contribute to the overall well-being of communities and the nation.
- 6. Interconnectedness of Health and Education:** Health and education are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Students cannot reach their full academic potential if their health needs are neglected. By recognizing the intrinsic link between health and education, Congress can promote a comprehensive approach that supports students' holistic well-being and maximizes their educational opportunities.
- 7. Social Media:** Social media can have a significant impact on student mental health. Excessive use of social media can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, as students may compare themselves to idealized versions of others online. Cyberbullying and online harassment on social media platforms can further exacerbate mental health issues among students. Educators, parents, and policymakers need to promote healthy social media habits and provide support systems to mitigate the negative effects on student mental health.

II. Securing Full Funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

NSBA urges federal policymakers to maintain and build on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) purpose to assist local school districts in providing for the education of children with disabilities. Congress must support the promise of a Free Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities by fulfilling its commitment to support no less than 40% of the excess cost of educating eligible students, and by providing flexibilities for local school districts to fulfill their funding requirements. IDEA should be updated and reauthorized to promote informed and informal collaboration between parents and schools in identifying, evaluating, and serving students with disabilities; encourage more collaboration through effective and efficient due process systems to ensure precious resources are directed toward services for students; and eliminate unnecessary and overburdening requirements for local school districts that do not directly impact educational outcomes for students.

II. Securing Full Funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

NSBA Resolutions

- Resolution 1. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Resolution 10. Changing Students' Placement Under IDEA (Part One – Harm to Self)
- Resolution 11. Changing Students' Placement under IDEA (Part Two – Bodily Injury)
- Resolution 35. Full Funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Resolution 4. 21st Century Skills

II. Securing Full Funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- 1. Ensuring Equal Opportunity:** IDEA is a crucial federal law that guarantees equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities. Full funding is necessary to ensure that all eligible students receive the support and resources they need to succeed in school and beyond.
- 2. Legal and Ethical Obligations:** Congress has a legal and ethical obligation to fully fund IDEA. The law was enacted to protect the rights of students with disabilities and ensure they receive a free and appropriate public education. Federal law requires serving all students but does not fully fund the goal of 40%. By adequately funding IDEA, Congress can fulfill its commitment to these students and their families.
- 3. Long-Term Cost Savings:** Investing in special education services through full funding of IDEA can result in long-term cost savings. When students with disabilities receive appropriate support early on, they are more likely to succeed academically and become productive members of society. This reduces the need for costly interventions and support services later in life.
- 4. Improving Educational Outcomes:** Full funding of IDEA enables schools to provide necessary resources, including qualified teachers, specialized instruction, assistive technologies, and individualized education plans. These resources can significantly improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities, leading to higher graduation rates, better employment prospects, and increased independence.
- 5. Promoting Inclusion:** IDEA promotes inclusivity by ensuring that students with disabilities can access and participate in mainstream educational settings to the maximum extent possible. Full funding enhances schools' ability to provide necessary accommodations and supports, fostering a more inclusive learning environment for all students.
- 6. Meeting the Needs of an Increasingly Diverse Population:** The number of students with disabilities in the United States continues to rise. Full funding of IDEA is essential to meet the needs of this growing population adequately. Without sufficient resources, schools may struggle to provide appropriate services and may be forced to deny or limit access to necessary accommodations.
- 7. Compliance with Federal Mandates:** IDEA is a federal law, and Congress has a responsibility to ensure its proper implementation. Full funding is necessary to comply with the requirements of the law and prevent potential legal challenges or violations.
- 8. Supporting Parental Engagement:** Full funding of IDEA can empower parents and guardians to engage in their child's education. It enables schools to provide necessary support to parents, such as training, information, and assistance in navigating the special education system, thereby fostering a stronger partnership between families and educators.
- 9. Creating a More Inclusive Society:** By fully funding IDEA, Congress can send a powerful message about the value and importance of inclusion for individuals with disabilities. It demonstrates a commitment to creating a society where all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.
- 10. Upholding Basic Civil Rights:** IDEA is not just about education; it is about upholding the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. Full funding of IDEA ensures that these rights are protected and that students with disabilities have the same opportunities for success as their peers.
- 11. Aiding Regular and Special Education Students:** When IDEA is not fully funded, resources must be taken from other educational programs to meet the requirements of the law. All students benefit when IDEA is fully funded.

III. Advocating for Continued Title Funds

NSBA urges Congress to strengthen the Title Acts by reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education ACT (ESEA), and to fully fund the current law to support states and local school districts in achieving the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Congress should continue to support teacher and principal effectiveness by providing funding for innovation, research, and implementation of locally developed strategies to improve it. Congress should authorize and fully fund Impact Aid to local school districts to help support education for all students whose parents or legal guardians reside in or work on federal tax-exempt property or within local school districts that include federal tax-exempt property.

III. Advocating for Continued Title Funds

NSBA Resolutions

- Resolution 8. Elementary and Secondary Education Act Implementation (ESEA)
- Resolution 6. Teacher and Principal Effectiveness
- Resolution 12. Federal Impact Aid

III. Advocating for Continued Title Funds

1. **Educational Access and Improvement:** ESSA aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographic location. By funding ESSA, Congress helps to bridge the achievement gap and to ensure that students from disadvantaged communities have access to quality education.

2. **Local Control:** ESSA emphasizes local control and decision-making in education. It empowers states and school districts to develop their accountability systems, set goals, and create strategies tailored to their unique needs. By funding ESSA, Congress supports the principle of local control while still holding schools accountable for student outcomes.

3. **Accountability and Standards:** ESSA maintains a focus on accountability and sets high academic standards for students. It requires states to develop challenging educational goals and measure progress through quality assessments. By funding ESSA, Congress enables the implementation of robust accountability systems that ensure schools are meeting these standards and providing quality education.

4. **Well-Rounded Education:** ESSA recognizes the importance of a well-rounded education by supporting programs in areas such as arts, music, physical education, and foreign languages. These programs contribute to the holistic development of students and foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. By funding ESSA, Congress demonstrates its commitment to providing a comprehensive education that prepares students for success.

5. **Support for English Language Learners:** ESSA includes provisions to support English language learners (ELLs) and ensure they receive the necessary language instruction and academic support to succeed. It requires states to implement effective programs and use appropriate assessments to monitor ELL progress. By funding ESSA, Congress helps schools provide targeted resources and support to help ELLs thrive academically.

6. **Innovation and Flexibility:** ESSA encourages innovation and flexibility in education. It provides opportunities for states and districts to implement evidence-based practices, pilot programs, and innovative strategies to improve student outcomes. By funding ESSA, Congress enables educational institutions to explore new approaches and tailor education to the specific needs of their students.

7. **Support for Educators:** Nearly all schools are experiencing a shortage of teachers and leaders. ESSA recognizes the critical role of educators in student success. It promotes professional development, teacher training, and support for educators to enhance their instructional practices. By funding ESSA, Congress invests in the growth and development of teachers, ensuring they have the necessary tools and resources to provide high-quality education.

8. **Long-Term Economic Benefits:** Investing in education through ESSA funding has long-term economic benefits. Quality education equips students with the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to thrive in the workforce and contribute to the economy. By supporting ESSA, Congress helps create a well-prepared and competitive workforce for the future.

IV. Promoting Equitable Access to Technology and Technology Education

NSBA urges Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to continue to modernize and strengthen programs that improve the capacity, quality, and speed of connectivity in our nation's schools and communities. Federal programs should close technology gaps that hinder students in rural and low-income communities from accessing information and innovative instruction options, such as personalized learning, and prioritize students' access to crucial instruction in STEAM areas, including computer science.

IV. Promoting Equitable Access to Technology and Technology Education

NSBA Resolutions

- Resolution 17. E-Rate and Education Technology Gaps and Open Internet
- Resolution 22. Federal Support for STEAM Education
- Resolution 31. Access to Computer Science Education
- Resolution 32. Connectivity for All Students

IV. Promoting Equitable Access to Technology and Technology Education

1. **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Access to technology and the internet has become essential for education, job opportunities, and civic participation. However, many underserved communities lack access to reliable internet connections and devices. By promoting equitable access to technology, Congress can bridge the digital divide and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and succeed in the digital age.

2. **Enhancing Educational Opportunities:** Technology has the power to enhance educational opportunities by providing students with access to digital learning resources, online courses, and interactive tools. By promoting access to technology, Congress can empower students to explore new learning avenues, engage in personalized learning experiences, and develop crucial digital literacy skills that are increasingly important in the modern workforce.

3. **Fostering Innovation and Creativity:** Technology has the power to foster innovation and creativity by exposing students to coding, robotics, digital design, and other emerging fields. By promoting equitable access to technology education, Congress can inspire and prepare the next generation of innovators, problem solvers, and entrepreneurs, driving economic growth and technological advancement.

4. **Closing the Skills Gap:** Many jobs in today's economy require digital skills and technological literacy. However, there is a significant skills gap, with many individuals lacking the necessary competencies to thrive in the digital workforce. By promoting technology education, Congress can help local schools equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a rapidly evolving job market, thus closing the skills gap and fostering economic mobility.

5. **Access to Career Opportunities:** Technology-related fields offer lucrative career opportunities, but underrepresented communities often face barriers to entry. By promoting equitable access to technology education, Congress can help level the playing field and ensure that all students, regardless of their background or geography, can pursue careers in technology and innovation.

6. **Promoting Digital Citizenship and Safety:** As technology becomes increasingly pervasive, it is crucial to educate students about responsible digital citizenship and online safety. By promoting equitable access to technology education, Congress can support initiatives that teach students about digital ethics, online privacy, cybersecurity, and responsible internet use, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

7. **Global Competitiveness:** In an interconnected world, nations that prioritize technology education and access gain a competitive edge. By promoting equitable access to technology and technology education, Congress can position the United States as a global leader in innovation, research, and technological advancement, driving economic growth and maintaining its global competitiveness.

V. Advocating for Student Nutrition and Funding Needs

NSBA urges Congress to prioritize student health by reauthorizing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act with increased flexibilities for schools so that they can successfully administer the program. Congress should cover the full cost of implementing and complying with programs that provide breakfast to all eligible students in districts that implement it; implement and fully fund a Universal School Meals Program that would make breakfasts and lunch free to all children without adversely affecting the federal funding formula; and amend the poverty level requirement for the free and reduced lunch program to utilize the area median income requirement used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the national federal poverty line.

V. Advocating for Student Nutrition and Funding Needs

NSBA Resolutions

Resolution 18. Childhood Nutrition

Resolution 19. Breakfast for All Eligible Students

Resolution 36. Funding of the Universal School Meals Act of 2023; 2021

Resolution 38. Free-Reduced Lunch Qualification

V. Advocating for Student Nutrition and Funding Needs

1. **Health and Well-Being:** Proper nutrition is essential for students' overall health and well-being. By supporting student nutrition programs and funding needs, Congress can ensure that students have access to nutritious meals, which can improve their physical health, cognitive abilities, and overall academic performance.

2. **Academic Achievement:** Research consistently shows that there is a strong link between good nutrition and academic achievement. Hungry students are more likely to have difficulty concentrating, exhibit behavior problems, and experience lower test scores. By providing adequate funding for student nutrition programs, Congress can help create an environment where students are well-nourished and ready to learn.

3. **Reducing Food Insecurity:** Sadly, food insecurity is a significant issue affecting many students and their families. By supporting funding for student nutrition programs, Congress can help alleviate food insecurity by ensuring that vulnerable students have access to nutritious meals during the school day. This support can also ease the burden on families struggling to provide adequate food for their children.

4. **Closing the Achievement Gap:** The achievement gap between students from low-income backgrounds and their more affluent peers is a pressing concern. Adequate nutrition plays a crucial role in addressing this gap. By investing in student nutrition programs, Congress can help level the playing field, help give all students an equal opportunity to succeed academically, and reduce disparities in educational outcomes.

5. **Support for Vulnerable Populations:** Many students rely on school meals as their primary source of nutrition. This is particularly true for students from low-income families, homeless students, and those in foster care. By ensuring adequate funding for student nutrition programs, Congress can provide critical support to these vulnerable populations, helping to meet their basic needs and promoting their overall well-being.

6. **Community Connections:** Flexibility in student nutrition programs allows students to learn about food production and access in their communities. Farm-to-table programs develop relationships between local producers, schools, and students.

VI. Promoting Protection/Accountability for the Use of Public Funds

NSBA believes that public education is a civil right and is necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people. All students should have equal access to an education that maximizes their individual potential. Public education has been entrusted to states and local school boards, and school boards are accountable to their communities for providing programs of educational excellence and demonstrating accountability through student achievement. NSBA believes that local accountability for this public service of the highest order, education, is a crucial component of its success. Private schools or other entities that receive public subsidies, funding, or support under state or federal law, whether directly or indirectly, should be held to the same reporting and accountability standards, including the same annual assessments of student proficiency, required of public schools as a condition of continued eligibility to receive public subsidies or funding.

VI. Promoting Protection/Accountability for the Use of Public Funds

NSBA Resolutions

Resolution 7. Use of Public Funds for Non-Public Education

Resolution 27. Protection of 529 Savings Programs for Children and Students

VI. Promoting Protection/Accountability for the Use of Public Funds

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** Public funds should be used transparently and responsibly, regardless of the type of school receiving them. By promoting protection and accountability for the use of public funds in all schools, Congress can ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively to achieve educational goals. This includes requiring all recipients of public funds to report financial information, adhere to auditing standards, and demonstrate responsible fiscal management.

2. **Safeguarding Taxpayer Dollars:** Public funds are derived from taxpayers' contributions; they should be allocated and utilized responsibly. By promoting protection and accountability, Congress can safeguard taxpayer dollars and maintain public trust in the education system. This oversight can help prevent fraud, wasteful spending, and misuse of funds in both public and private schools.

3. **Equal Treatment:** All educational institutions that receive public funds should be subject to the same standards of accountability and oversight. Promoting protection and accountability for all schools, irrespective of their public or private status, ensures fairness and equal treatment. It helps prevent any potential loopholes that could enable mismanagement or misuse of public funds in private schools.

4. **Educational Outcomes:** Ultimately, the goal of public funding for education is to improve educational outcomes for all students. By promoting protection and accountability, Congress can ensure that public funds are being used to support high-quality education in both public and private schools. This focus on outcomes helps to measure the effectiveness of funding and holds all schools accountable for providing quality education to their students.

5. **Non-Discrimination and Equity:** When public funds are allocated to private schools, it is essential to ensure that these institutions do not discriminate against students based on race, religion, disability, or other protected categories. Congress should promote protection and accountability to ensure that public funds are not used to support discriminatory practices. This principle upholds the values of equal access and equity in education.

6. **Parental Choice and Information:** Families choose to send their children to different schools for various reasons. By promoting protection and accountability for public funds in private schools, Congress can provide parents with the necessary information to make informed decisions about their children's education. This includes transparency on how public funds are utilized, academic performance, and compliance with applicable regulations.

7. **Effective Resource Allocation:** Promoting protection and accountability for public funds in all schools helps ensure that resources are allocated effectively to address the needs of students. By monitoring and evaluating the use of funds, Congress can identify areas where additional support or intervention may be required. This focus on resource allocation helps maximize the positive impact of public funds and improve educational outcomes.