

‘All Children Will Learn’

Association’s legislative agenda calls for focus on low-income and minority children

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The American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the professional organization for school superintendents and other school system leaders, looks forward to working with the new presidential administration and Congress to shape education policy on behalf of all children. As the new administration transitions into its leadership position and Congress resumes its legislative work in 2009, AASA will emphasize its legislative agenda, “All Children Will Learn.”

The change in leadership coincides with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind. This overlap represents an excellent opportunity for the executive and legislative branches of government to refocus the education legislation to its original intent: improving education for low-income and minority children. AASA calls on the administration and Congress to consider seriously the proposed changes in the role of the federal government in public education.

AASA’s legislative agenda embodies the belief that each child will learn through an emphasis on high-quality programs rather than test-taking. The title is consistent with AASA’s mission to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children.

The key points of “All Children Will Learn” are:

- **A systemic ESEA based on need.** The law should target the relatively small federal investment in K-12 education to schools serving larger concentrations of low-income and minority children. It should move from its current structure of 93 disconnected and disjointed programs with myriad purposes to a more systemic, focused continuum of services based on a continuum of need—that is, a continuum of programs based on the level of poverty in schools, the challenges of meeting the needs of special groups of students and the challenges posed by unique local circumstances.
- **A more integrated approach to serving disadvantaged children.** Schools serving high concentrations of poor children should receive not only academic assistance, but also assistance with physical and mental healthcare for their students. They should also receive assistance with before and after-school enrichment and high-quality early-childhood programs.
- **Clear and accurate accounting for results.** ESEA should encompass an academic accountability system that is transparent and fair, and sets high standards for all children. It should be commensurate with the relative contribution of the federal government to the school district.

If implemented, “All Children Will Learn” would provide a seamless array of services for children in need, and it would reframe the federal role in education to be commensurate with the federal financial contribution to the school system budget. AASA believes the federal government’s role in education is to help ensure equal access and opportunity for each child, and to supplement and support—rather than supplant—state education efforts.

For more information about AASA, its legislative agenda or how your district can adopt a resolution in support of the legislative agenda, visit the organization’s website at www.aasa.org.