



## **The National Asian American Education Advocates Network Platform for Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) must seek to improve and transform the nation's public schools so all students have equal and ample opportunity to excel. Our public education system must fully address our students' diverse needs and help all students fulfill their greatest potential. In accordance with these goals, the National Asian American Education Advocates (NAAEA) Network sets forth the following platform for meaningful and inclusive school reform, reflecting the needs and priorities of underserved Asian American students from low-income and immigrant or refugee communities:

### **End High Stakes Standardized Testing**

Standardized testing should not be used to penalize schools or jeopardize students by cutting resources, or hastily shut down or drastically restructure schools. Instead, it should be one of a variety of ways to assess curricula, identify groups with special needs, and inform solutions based on providing resources rather than imposing sanctions. Testing should be one among multiple indicators (including ongoing student work and portfolios) of individual student growth and development aligned to classroom content.

Recent proposals have scaled back somewhat on punitive accountability and possibly move toward more accurate assessment of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Unfortunately, however, they have kept largely intact the general framework of high stakes test-driven school classification and reorganization.

### **Maintain and Protect Critical Funding Streams**

ESEA must maintain and protect critical funding streams for public education, and in particular to support populations with special needs.

Some recent proposals merge specific funding streams for vulnerable populations such as ELLs, American Indian students, migrant students, rural students, and neglected and delinquent students into general funding for all disadvantaged students. Such comingling of resources would make it difficult to hold school districts accountable for addressing these populations' unique needs.

Other proposals end a requirement that states maintain their own education funding to access federal education grants, and cap spending on class size reduction efforts. Such changes would put at risk important programs that strive to achieve educational equity for all public school students.

### **Require States to Collect and Disseminate Disaggregated Data**

ESEA should require states to collect and report educational data disaggregated by ethnic categories within racial subgroups to the greatest extent possible. Such disaggregated data would document differences in educational needs and attainment among diverse Asian American communities.

Current law and recent reauthorization proposals contain disaggregation by racial subgroup, but not ethnic categories. Some recent proposals do include a provision for cross tabulation of data by gender, which is a step in the right direction and should be expanded to include ethnic categories.

### **Explicitly Promote Bilingual Education Programs**

ESEA should provide incentives for states to develop high quality, innovative and research-based bilingual programs (including both dual-language and transitional bilingual programs) in states with large English Language Learner (ELL) populations, and designate resources for bilingual curriculum development, teacher hiring, and teacher training.

Recent reauthorization proposals do prioritize hiring and training of bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers through coursework leading to bilingual and ESL licensure and professional development opportunities on ELL teaching methodologies. However, more must be done to encourage the development and expansion of high quality, innovative, research-based bilingual education programs and curricula.

### **Enact Meaningful Teacher Effectiveness Measures**

ESEA should increase resources to train all teachers in ELL teaching methodology and multicultural awareness. Such training should be required for teacher certification, especially in districts with high or growing ELL populations, and should also be provided on an ongoing basis. Further, the federal government must increase funding ESL and bilingual education specialists, and encourage states to promote a more diverse education workforce reflecting the student population. As discussed above, recent reauthorization proposals do seek to expand bilingual and ESL teacher certification, hiring and training.

Unfortunately, some recent reauthorizations proposals require teacher evaluation measures (including those impacting personnel decisions) to take into account student achievement and seek to hold teacher training programs accountable for their graduates' ability to increase student test achievement. We oppose such measures, which would only further accentuate the current emphasis on testing and scores.

### **Protect Students in the School Restructuring Process**

ESEA must require districts to fully support the continued, undisrupted education of students at restructured schools. Such students must receive regular and adequate instruction, and be allowed to transfer schools where appropriate. ESEA or other federal legislation should allocate funding for restructured schools to maintain academic programs and services tailored to special populations, and require districts to notify parents and community members of milestones and decisions in school restructuring. Districts must provide parents and community members a forum to provide input, and make a meaningful effort to incorporate and respond to such input.

Some recent proposals scale back mandated school interventions altogether, and others seek to codify the school turnaround approach set forth in the Obama administration's ESEA reauthorization blueprint. The Obama blueprint model would include interventions for the bottom 5% of schools as well as those with persistent achievement gaps and dropout factories, and mandate – among other things – beneficial initiatives like professional development and parent engagement. Care should also be taken to consider the needs of special populations like ELLs and to meaningfully incorporate parent input into all efforts at school turnaround and restructuring. Finally, ESEA should not constrain effective, research-based options for school improvement by limiting school districts to a handful of turnaround models.

### **Give All Students the Same Opportunities**

ESEA should provide all students access to courses meeting state college admissions requirements, and expand funding for states to hire and train significantly more guidance counselors. Further, counselors serving ELL populations must have appropriate linguistic capacity.

Some recent proposals mandate equitable access to top teachers, implementation of college and career ready standards, and alignment of test score cutoffs with credit bearing courses at state higher education institutions and career and technical education standards. These policies must be paired with the expansion of access to courses meeting college entry requirements, and of linguistically accessible counseling services for ELL students.

### **Hold Charter Schools Accountable**

Federal legislation must hold charter schools more accountable. Recent studies indicate that charter schools are highly segregated, and less likely to enroll ELLs and students with disabilities. Charter schools must uphold the same standards of integration and access as other public schools. Parents and communities must also have a meaningful voice in charter school governance. Additionally, while many charter schools are excellent, research shows that charters are no more effective overall than traditional public schools. Therefore, federal funding should not promote the unfettered proliferation of privately run charter schools at the expense of traditional public schools.

Some recent proposals encourage replication of “high quality” charters and autonomous public schools. Care must be taken to only allow the expansion of racially integrated charters and autonomous public schools that provide equitable access to all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

### **Protect School Safety**

ESEA should require districts to issue comprehensive anti-harassment/bullying policies as well as mandate collection and reporting of comprehensive data concerning incidents of harassment and bullying. Such data should be disaggregated by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the victim’s actual or perceived race, ethnicity, ELL status, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Further, the federal government should designate funding for states to create and implement meaningful multiculturalism and diversity programs, as well as specific harassment and bullying prevention programs. Such programs should be integrated into student curricula, teacher professional development, and parent outreach.

Some recent reauthorization proposals spell out the importance of freedom from violence and harassment at fostering optimal learning conditions. Other specific proposals for inclusion in ESEA include the creation of uniform and more comprehensive definitions for “harassment” and “bullying,” as well as improvements to anti-bullying policies, data collection and public reporting about incidents. We applaud and support such efforts.

### **Enable Parent Engagement by Increasing Language Access Funding**

ESEA and other federal legislation must designate funding for community outreach and training, as well as adult ESL and literacy programs for limited-English proficient parents in Asian immigrant enclaves. It must promote parent engagement by encouraging school districts to formalize parent roles in school decision making, particularly from vulnerable populations like limited-English proficient parents.

Under some recent reauthorization proposals, maintenance of and funding for Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) have been jeopardized. Not only must PIRCs be maintained and funded, but ESEA should encourage and fund the above additional parental engagement strategies.

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**The National Asian American Education Advocates Network** is a broad collaborative of direct service providers, youth and parent organizers, education lawyers, policy advocates, youth development workers, and community based organizations that work with and for Asian American public school students across the country. The NAAEA Network is housed at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), and together, we collectively tackle issues affecting Asian American youth both at the local and national level.

**The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)**, founded in 1974, is a national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all.