

ESEA Reauthorization a Game Changing Moment for Community Schools

The new Every Student Succeeds Act that replaces No Child Left Behind contains key provisions that advance the vision of community schools. The bill's passage is a pivotal moment for the community schools movement. It empowers State and district leaders to rethink strategies to support all students to succeed and to see their communities as vital partners in that effort.

We extend a special thank you and congratulations to our partners who helped us achieve these wins and advocate for a broader approach to student success.

The following provisions in the bill in particular will bolster the community schools vision:

- **Broader indicators beyond academics** in accountability systems: States and districts must incorporate non-academic indicators in their accountability systems, such as school climate and safety and student and educator engagement. These indicators can drive a whole-child approach to education and encourage school leaders to meet the conditions for learning necessary for academic achievement. This kind of data will present a more comprehensive picture of school success through state and district report cards, and shed light on schools' progress toward educational equity.
- **Supportive programs including Full Service Community Schools, Promise Neighborhoods, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.** These federal programs help to seed and sustain community schools across the country, and their inclusion in a new ESEA is recognition of the impact they have demonstrated. Full Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhoods, joined together in Title IV under "Community Support for School Success," authorizes Full Service grants and Promise Neighborhood grants. 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a program that funds out-of-school time activities and a vital source of funding for after-school and community schools, authorizes \$1 billion annually.
- **A new set of tools and resources to strengthen results-focused school-community partnerships for young people's success.** The bill includes several provisions that will boost school-community partnerships, such as: needs assessments, including by districts to plan for their use of Title I and Title IV funds; integrated student supports; use of Title II professional development funds to prepare educators to more effectively engage families and communities and connect school and community resources; consultation with families and community partners to plan for use of funds; references to partnerships with nonprofits, community-based organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education to support student learning; a call for districts to consider strategies to improve school conditions for student learning and to examine school-level resource inequities in accountability plans; and an emphasis on experiential learning opportunities and personalized learning.

Together, these provisions support a comprehensive strategy to address the multiple factors in young people's lives. The three buckets of the community school strategy-expanded learning,

health and social supports, and family and community engagement- can now be woven together more readily in ways that were not possible under No Child Left Behind.

We look forward to working with you at the national, state and local levels to ensure that the implementation of this new and promising federal policy translates into the vision of schools as centers of flourishing communities where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives.

Our Coalition partners also express support:

Dan Domenech, Executive Director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association: “AASA is proud to support the Every Student Succeeds Act. One of the biggest drivers of our support is the return of state and local control, allowing local education leaders to exercise their expertise in implementing education programs. In a broad ESSA that offers comprehensive reauthorization, we are proud to continue to support the Community Schools model and commend Congress for including the program in the reauthorization. The Full Service Community Schools program encompasses more than just academics—it ensures success beyond the inside of school buildings. Only when children have support for all their needs will schools have a real chance of helping every student master required education concepts and skills.”

Stacey D. Stewart, U.S. President of United Way Worldwide: “United Way Worldwide applauds the inclusion of the Full-Service Community Schools program in the Every Student Succeeds Act. We are glad that Congress recognizes both the important role community organizations play in meeting the comprehensive needs of students, and the efficacy of full-service community schools model. We look forward to our continued partnerships with full-service community schools across the country as we work to ensure the success of every student!”

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers: “We’re thrilled that through Rep. Hoyer’s leadership, the ESSA bill includes the Full-Service Community Schools program. This is a big win for students, families and educators because the wraparound services that are part and parcel of community schools help level the playing field for disadvantaged students and their families. In addition to providing a strong academic program, community schools provide social, emotional and health services needed to educate the whole child and mitigate the impact of poverty. This is particularly important today since more than half of all public school students are poor.”

Jeffrey Levi, PhD, Executive Director of Trust for America’s Health: “It’s great to see the Full-Service Community Schools legislation included in ESEA reauthorization. The legislation will expand the number of full-service community schools, which perform the vital service of connecting students and their families to community organizations that offer primary, dental and mental healthcare, literacy help and career counseling, among other services. This will result in healthier students—who do better in school— and happier and more productive families.”

Bruce Lesley, President of First Focus Campaign for Children: “Providing educational spaces where children’s academic, health, and mentoring needs are met benefits the students, their families, and the schools. By including the FSCS in the ESEA reauthorization, we move closer to eliminating a blind-spot in federal policy, recognizing that what happens outside the classroom affects what happens inside the classroom.”