



A new ESEA: What parents value and how Congress should act

PAA recently published a position paper, "What is a Quality Education?" which clearly describes the kind of education we want for our children. Here are our recommendations for changes in ESEA that will move us closer to making sure every child receives the kind of education that parents envision:

Because a quality education is child-centered, a new ESEA should:

- **Curb high-stakes use of standardized tests** by:
 - replacing federal annual testing mandates with **grade span testing**;
 - prohibiting the use of standardized test scores as significant determinants for **grade promotion**; and
 - **specifying parents' right to opt their children** out of any standardized test without consequence.
- Require that states develop **high-quality assessment systems** with significant input from parents and the community that are based primarily on students' actual work and include multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency.
- Provide incentives and support for schools to **enrich the curriculum** rather than reduce learning to tested material.
- Align the law with **developmentally-appropriate educational practices**, such as the need for play in early childhood classrooms.
- Provide funding for **lower class sizes**.
- Promote **positive, non-discriminatory discipline policies and practices**.
- Increase funding for in- and out-of-school **services and activities** that benefit students and their families.

Because a quality education requires skilled professionals, a new ESEA should:

- **Cut funding for programs** that put unprepared teachers in classrooms, most often in schools with the most challenges.
- **Call for limits in the use of adaptive technology and on-line learning**, recognizing that the teacher/student relationship is paramount to supporting quality learning.
- Fund high-quality teacher evaluation tools which avoid the **misleading use of standardized test scores**.

Because a quality education promotes justice, equity, and democracy, a new ESEA should:

- **Increase Title 1 funding** targeted to low-income children and promote more **equitable school funding** from the appropriate government sources.
- Fund programs that **encourage students to engage in civic activities**.
- Encourage community stability by providing **extra support for and not closure of struggling schools**.
- Strengthen elements of the law that **include parents in school policy decisions** at the school, district, state, and national level.
- Specify that parents have a right to **keep their children's school data private**.
- **Stop funding the privatization of our public schools**, including but not limited to such programs as charter schools, vouchers, and virtual learning, which place public resources into private hands without accountability.
- **Respect community governance of public education through elected school boards**, while guarding civil rights and promoting a level educational playing field.