

Business Coalition for Excellence in Education*

Principles for K-12 Education Legislation

In a world of global competition and rapid technological advances, U.S. schools must prepare all students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. **To achieve this goal, our school systems must adopt higher standards, use high-quality assessments aligned to these standards, and hold schools accountable for results, so that all students have the opportunity to succeed.** Federal investments must help each state implement a standards-based, performance-driven education system that is carefully aligned to the goal of higher student achievement. The Business Coalition for Excellence in Education urges Congress to enact bipartisan legislation that embodies the following principles.

Achieving Systemic Reforms

- **Standards:** All states should have high-quality, rigorous academic standards that reflect the levels of student achievement necessary to succeed in society, higher education, and the workplace. The federal government should provide all states with the information and resources to develop, continuously improve, and benchmark rigorous academic standards that can be used to raise individual student performance to world-class levels.
- **Assessments:** All students should be tested annually with high-quality assessments aligned to state standards. The purpose must be to measure the progress of school, teacher, and student achievement against standards and to identify where additional support is needed for students to reach them.
- **Student Achievement:** Assessments should be used as diagnostic tools to ensure that all students, particularly those identified as under-performing, receive the assistance they need to succeed in reaching high academic standards. Similarly, federal leadership should ensure that pre-school aid focuses on helping prepare children to enter school ready to learn.
- **Accountability:** States, districts, and principals should ensure that all students, including disadvantaged and under-performing students, meet high academic standards. States should have policies of rewards and sanctions to hold systems accountable for improving the performance of students, teachers, and principals. Such policies should be based on performance, including student achievement.
- **Flexibility:** States, localities, and schools should have flexibility for their educational organization, innovation, and instruction while being held accountable for raising student achievement.
- **Alignment:** States must ensure that high quality assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, and curriculum are aligned with high state standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student achievement.
- **Data, Research, and Best Practices:** Student achievement data should be collected regularly, and made public in formats that can guide the decision-making of teachers, parents, and students to improve performance. Research must be pertinent to standards-based education systems to enable teachers to apply proven findings in the classroom.

Areas of Special Focus

- **Math and Science Excellence:** Efforts must be undertaken to increase significantly the number of skilled math and science teachers in K-12 by substantially improving the quality of their preparation and professional development and by expanding recruitment incentives. Investments must focus on raising student achievement in math and science by encouraging the use of world-class educational materials and instructional practice.
- **Teacher Preparation and Training:** It should be a national priority to increase significantly the quality, professionalism, and career opportunities within teaching. States should ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and expertise in the content areas in which they teach. They should ensure that teacher preparation and professional development programs include training to integrate relevant technologies into the classroom. Professional development programs should include principals.
- **Technology:** Technology and the Internet must be integrated into all appropriate aspects of teaching and learning to improve students' 21st century skills as well as educational accountability and administrative effectiveness. Aid should be provided to states and districts to help identify, acquire, and utilize the best available technology and to help teachers integrate it into the curriculum.

* An ad hoc coalition of leading U.S. corporations and business organizations that support these principles in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Business Interests in Education Excellence

For the 107th Congress

Leading U.S. corporations and national business organizations have formed a coalition to work with the Congress and the Administration to address critical issues in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Our commitment to this endeavor is driven by years of experience working jointly with educators at the state and local levels.

Schools must prepare students for success in the 21st century world of global competition and technological change. **To keep pace, our school systems must adopt higher standards, use high-quality assessments aligned to these standards, and hold schools accountable for results, so that all students have the opportunity to succeed.** Business seeks effective solutions that will ensure education excellence. We urge the federal government to form a new compact with the states and local districts through the framework of ESEA legislation to ensure educational excellence.

New Compact with the States

Federal funds should be provided to states with clear goals about the desired outcomes sought from the federal investment without prescribing detailed processes and rules of compliance. Federal funding should be linked to state investments on a common agenda of priorities with clear accountability for achieving results. This compact should seek to achieve the following priorities.

- ***Align education institutions, roles, and processes.*** To achieve success in a performance-driven system, states must align teacher preparation programs, professional development, curriculum, assessment, accountability, and institutional responsibilities to rigorous academic standards.
- ***Increase student performance.*** States must establish challenging academic standards with assessments aligned to those standards, have clear accountability systems that hold districts, schools, teachers, and students to higher academic achievement, and that provide rewards for success and consequences for failure.
- ***Increase the quality of instruction and curriculum content.*** Substantially improving the quality of instruction and curriculum are national priorities as well as state and local responsibilities. Reforms should be based on proven research.
- ***Flexibility to Achieve Results.*** States, districts, and schools must have the flexibility for education organization, innovation, and instruction, while being held accountable for raising student achievement.

Achieving Systemic Reforms

Standards

All states should have high-quality, rigorous academic standards that reflect the levels of student achievement necessary to succeed in society, higher education, and the workplace. The federal government should provide all states with the information and resources to develop, continuously improve, and benchmark rigorous academic standards that can be used to raise individual student performance to world-class levels.

- ***Require all states to continuously improve rigorous academic standards in all core subjects.*** Federal funds should be authorized for states to continually develop and improve academic standards in core subjects. Since the quality and rigor of standards currently vary widely among states, all states should have high, rigorous standards within a specified period of time. States should be encouraged to collaborate on the development of standards
- ***Direct states to use academic standards to align components of education systems.*** Federal legislation should direct states to align systems of teacher preparation, professional development, curriculum development, assessments, and accountability to high state academic standards. The federal government should invest funds in each state's efforts to align the critical components of a standards-based education system, but allow states the flexibility to achieve this goal.

Assessments

All students should be tested annually with high-quality assessments aligned to state standards. The purpose must be to measure the progress of school, teacher, and student achievement against standards and to identify where additional support is needed for students to reach them.

- ***Promote annual testing of all students in grades 3-8.*** States should test all students in reading and math in grades 3-8, both to measure student progress and to identify points of intervention for schools, teachers, and individual students who need additional educational assistance. All states should meet this requirement within a specified period of time.
- ***Provide funding for continuous improvement and alignment of assessments.*** Federal funds should be provided for states to ensure that high-quality, standards-based assessments are developed and used. Assessments should be fair, valid, reliable, and adhere to well-recognized professional standards. Continuous improvement of standards will require corresponding improvement of curriculum and assessments. Aligning tests and other assessments to standards should be a key requirement and expected result under federal aid.
- ***Assess for student performance and remediation needs.*** Assessments also should be used to measure student progress against state academic standards and to identify where additional educational assistance is needed for students to reach the standards.
- ***Support a national benchmarking system and state collaboration.*** The federal government should provide states with high-quality, research-based data, including international data, to benchmark assessments. Expert help should be provided to states so that such data can be used to benchmark their standards and assessments to world-class levels. Such benchmarking data should focus on reading and math standards initially, and then on science standards. Consortia of states should receive financial incentives to collaborate voluntarily on common assessments that can be shared to accelerate the development of quality assessments in other regions that can be used comparably across state lines.
- ***Invest in expansion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).*** Federal investments should be applied to increasing the number of states participating in NAEP, and the frequency in which it is given in reading, math, and science.

Student Achievement

Assessments should be used as diagnostic tools to ensure that all students, particularly those identified as under-performing, receive the assistance they need to succeed in reaching high academic standards. Similarly, federal leadership should ensure that pre-school aid focuses on helping prepare children to enter school ready to learn.

- ***Direct federal support toward under-performing students.*** Federal aid, particularly under the current Title I program, (Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards), should be directed primarily at providing additional educational assistance for students identified through assessments as needing help to reach academic standards.
- ***Learning Readiness.*** Early childhood programs (pre-Kindergarten) should ensure that all children are fully prepared for school, especially those living in areas of high concentrations of poverty. Programs should include academic content and be expanded so that more children can participate.

Accountability

States, districts, and principals should ensure that all students, including disadvantaged and under-performing students, meet high academic standards. States should have policies of rewards and sanctions to hold systems accountable for improving the performance of students, teachers, and principals. Such policies should be based on performance, including student achievement.

- ***Require that state accountability systems be based on increasing student performance.*** Superintendents, principals and teachers should be held accountable for increasing achievement and be supported by aligned systems of assessments and standards for academic content. Supplemental support should be provided to students who do not meet these standards. Performance data should reflect student progress toward high standards.
- ***Establish systems of rewards for school and teacher performance.*** States should design accountability systems that offer financial rewards for high performing schools, principals, and teachers who improve student achievement, especially for schools located in areas of high concentrations of poverty.
- ***Provide student support for meeting standards.*** Federal funds should be made available for remedial help for teachers and individual students falling behind.
- ***Establish sanctions for persistently failing schools.*** States should establish accountability systems with clear consequences for schools, principals, and teachers failing to meet standards. Sanctions may include replacing personnel, restructuring or closing schools, and providing options for students to enroll elsewhere.
- ***Promote state accountability for schools of education (and new teacher performance).*** State colleges and universities with public schools of education should be held responsible to track over a period of time the performance of graduates eligible for certification to measure their impact on student achievement. Such institutions should be encouraged to follow-up with necessary training, technical assistance, and professional development as needed.

Flexibility

States, localities, and schools should have flexibility for their educational organization, innovation, and instruction while being held accountable for raising student achievement.

- ***Establish a new compact of assistance to states.*** The Federal government should establish a new federal compact with the states that clearly defines what states must achieve with federal funds, but provides flexibility in how they achieve the results.
- ***Consolidate current categorical programs into flexible grants.*** Legislation should consolidate categorical programs into flexible grants to the greatest degree appropriate. Flexible funding should be allocated to states with clearly defined national priorities for what the states must address with the funds, but state and local systems should be freed from individual program reporting, regulation, and paperwork in achieving those goals. Reporting should primarily account for the results achieved.

- **Promote innovation with charter and magnet schools.** Support proven innovation with charter and magnet schools, holding them accountable to the same high standards as all other schools.

Alignment

States must ensure that high quality assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, and curriculum are aligned with high state standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student achievement.

- **Align education institutions, roles, and processes.** To achieve success in a standards-based, performance-driven system, states must align teacher preparation programs, professional development, curricula content, assessment systems, accountability, and institutional responsibilities to rigorous academic standards.
- **Align data with standards.** Data collected on student achievement should show what progress is being made on achieving the state standards.
- **Promote accountability for aligning systems.** States should report on systemic alignment of educational system components showing how they contribute to raising student achievement.

Data, Research, and Best Practices

Student achievement data should be collected regularly and made public in formats that can guide the decision-making of teachers, parents, and students to improve performance. Research must be pertinent to standards-based education systems to enable teachers to apply proven findings in the classroom.

- **Provide real-time performance and other data at the school and student levels.** State and district data collection should focus on student performance, which can be used for decision-making about instruction, curricula, materials, and classroom results. Data should be disaggregated by population characteristics.
- **Make data accessible to parents and the public.** Public disclosure of performance data should be provided by schools in ways that can be easily understood by the community, especially by parents.
- **Make research directly available to school leaders and teachers.** Research undertaken with federal funds should be summarized in ways that are readily accessible to school officials, teachers, and the public. Dissemination of research should be improved substantially from current practice.
- **Focus research on schools and student performance.** Federal research agendas should focus on the practical information necessary to support higher student achievement.
- **Invest in systemic identification and distribution of best practices.** Federal funds should be used to promote programs that work in schools and districts, so that education leaders around the country can quickly learn and apply what has proven successful.
- **Continue to invest in timely, accurate data about American education.** Federal investments in good national data should continue, including efforts like the trend data and proficiency levels under the independently administered National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), international measurements and comparisons of student achievement such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). As noted in earlier points, the NAEP should be administered more frequently for science, in addition to math and reading.

Areas of Special Focus

There is widespread agreement within the employer community that more needs to be done to support math and science excellence, improve teacher quality, preparation, and retention, and ensure that technology is integrated appropriately into the classroom. Most of the following recommendations draw heavily from recent studies that have addressed these issues.

Math and Science Excellence

Efforts must be undertaken to increase significantly the number of skilled math and science teachers in K-12 by substantially improving the quality of their preparation and professional development and by expanding recruitment incentives. Investments must focus on raising student achievement in math and science by encouraging the use of world-class educational materials and instructional practice.

- ***Expand recruitment incentives for talented individuals to enter K-12 teaching.*** Create full-tuition, competitive scholarships for talented high school students who commit to teach math or science for five years in high shortage areas; forgive student loans contingent on students' agreement to teach for five years in high shortage areas; provide competitive post-baccalaureate fellowships, leading to certification, to recruit participants in a national network of Teaching Academies.
- ***Create national network of research-based teaching academies.*** Create a network of math and science "teaching academies" to annually train academy fellows, who will be nationally recruited for a one-year, intensive course on effective teaching methods in math or science. Individuals at mid-career, with content knowledge in math or science, would be trained for jobs in school districts facing math and science teacher shortages.
- ***Increase the quality, amount, and alignment of professional development for math and science teachers.*** Support state and district efforts to implement an on-going system of high quality professional development tailored to the needs of teachers for science and math in grades K-12.
- ***Provide summer institutes aligned with state standards and teachers' needs.*** Create institutes that will upgrade content knowledge for out-of-field teachers, integrate technology into teaching, and introduce new teaching methods. States should use institutes as a required component of teacher recertification and as a means of continually increasing teachers' science and math knowledge.
- ***Provide "professional study groups" for ongoing study among teachers.*** Provide funds for states and school districts to create communities of learning, where teachers get continuing, collegial contact, peer reinforcement, and input from experts to sharpen their skills and deepen their subject knowledge.
- ***Provide leadership training to master teachers.*** Provide leadership training opportunities for master teachers in math and science to ensure that summer institutes, internships, study groups, and professional development are well guided. Expand access to master teachers in math and science among all schools, especially elementary schools, to ensure that mentoring for other teachers is available.
- ***Provide summer internships with business in areas related to teaching assignment.*** Fund opportunities for teachers to have field-based learning experiences with businesses to enhance teaching and to expand their skills and knowledge in applying math and science knowledge to workplace challenges.
- ***Increase partnerships with higher education institutions.*** Promote partnerships between higher education and K-12 education systems to collaborate on improving curriculum and instruction, including inquiry-based curricula, and promoting other research-based effective practice in the classroom.
- ***Establish a clearinghouse for improving math and science curricula.*** Authorize the Secretary of Education to create a clearinghouse for proven research and best practices that includes math and science curricula.

- **States should review math and science instructional materials.** Support efforts to convene the states to review textbooks and instructional materials to ensure that they are aligned with state standards and assessments.
- **Expand the frequency of, and participation of states in, science assessments under the NAEP.** Invest in expanding the use and frequency of the science assessment administered by the NAEP.

Teacher Preparation and Training

It should be a national priority to increase significantly the quality, professionalism, and career opportunities within teaching. States should ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and expertise in the content areas in which they teach. They should ensure that teacher preparation and professional development programs include training to integrate relevant technologies into the classroom. Professional development programs should include principals.

- **Create recruitment incentives and subsidies.** Provide scholarships to talented college-level students who agree to become teachers and teach for a minimum of five years; forgive student loans contingent on students' agreement to teach for five years in high shortage areas.
- **Align teacher preparation with state academic standards.** Support teacher preparation programs that train candidates to teach in a standards-based system focused on student achievement, and align courses between arts and sciences and schools of education. Encourage states to require an academic major and at least one minor for certification.
- **Establish a performance-based licensing system.** Encourage states to require all prospective teachers to pass rigorous exams that test subject matter knowledge as well as teachers' understanding of how to teach those subjects effectively to students.
- **Promote quality alternative certification systems in states.** Promote high quality alternative certification programs in the states, including those that draw from mid-career populations. Require that graduates of alternative certification programs also pass performance-based licensing exams.
- **Provide technology competency training for teachers.** Provide professional development for every teacher in the use of technology. Supplement teacher preparation programs to provide core competencies in the use and application of technology for learning.
- **Invest in master teachers.** Increase investments that expand opportunities for teachers to gain advanced certification as master teachers with the goal of having master teachers working in each school in the nation.
- **Increase quality, amount, and alignment of professional development.** Increase investments in professional development, the quality of knowledge and skills offered in professional development, the amount of time provided to teachers for this activity, and ensure that the content and skills are aligned with state academic standards. Design professional development programs around improving the skills necessary to help all students reach standards. Expand professional development services to include services for school leaders, principals, and instructional leaders. Encourage districts to create induction programs for new teachers with experienced teachers as mentors.
- **Provide incentives for states to create performance-based pay and career opportunities.** Provide funds for states to design systems that award compensation and bonuses based on teachers' contributions to student learning. Expand teachers' career opportunities by expanding professional roles through differentiated staffing and career ladders, offer year-round options for teachers, and offer pay incentives to teachers who teach in shortage areas and hard-to-staff or low-performing schools.
- **Create exchange programs for teachers with business in fields that apply to the subject matter they teach.** Create opportunities for paid internships with businesses where teachers can experience applications of knowledge in the workplace and where teachers and business experts can partner in the classroom.

- ***Raise standards of accreditation and require that all teacher preparation programs be accredited.*** Encourage states to require that teacher education programs be accredited and that states and districts hire teachers from accredited institutions.
- ***Provide opportunities to earn National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.*** Increase opportunities in each state for teachers to become certified as master teachers.

Technology

Technology and the Internet must be integrated into all appropriate aspects of teaching and learning to improve students' 21st century skills, as well as educational accountability and administrative effectiveness. Aid should be provided to states and districts to help identify, acquire, and utilize the best available technology and help teachers integrate it into the curriculum.

- ***Make powerful new Internet resources widely and equitably available for all learners.*** Allow federal funds to be used to improve access to virtual learning environments, including new technologies that improve the speed and quality of access to the Internet in any school location. (This recommendation does not address the policies of the E-rate program authorized separately under the Telecommunications Act).
- ***Allow flexible use of funds for technology infrastructure, software and content, operation, and training.*** Federal funding should empower local districts and schools to obtain and effectively utilize the best available education and information technologies, and provide them flexibility to meet unique local technology needs and learning goals.
- ***Provide continuous and relevant training and support for educators and administrators at all levels.*** Promote training and technical support for teachers and school administrators to enable their expert use of various types of technologies on education and learning and the innovative applications constantly being developed. Promote the innovative use of technology and new ways of learning which can engage students who may have had difficulty reaching standards otherwise.
- ***Fund research and development that leads to adopting high quality educational content for use online.*** Invest in helping schools and districts keep pace with the highest quality educational content, software, and learning applications that are aligned with academic standards.
- ***Fund state innovations to promote anytime, anywhere, any pace distance learning.*** Fund innovations in distance learning including making advanced courses available to all students, ways of accepting cross-state courses, and creating virtual schools. Provide incentives for significant collaboration among states on these and other priorities that examine and implement the future "school."
- ***Promote state education standards in technology.*** The particular goal is to ensure that students have the 21st century technology skills necessary to succeed in higher education, society, and the modern workplace.