

2021



Legislative Agenda

Education is the most essential of services in every community. Our schools and educators have responded with extraordinary measures this year to help meet the needs of their students, families, and communities. Moving forward, these primary responders will be the pillars upon whom the recovery from the pandemic and resumption of regular school operations will depend. While a welcome return to full-time, in-person schooling may look familiar on the surface, the past year has helped educators discover new ways of engaging with and supporting their students.

We must reimagine school expectations and practices to embrace personalized learning and build upon what students have gained while also working to recover all that they have lost. This moment also calls for a renewed commitment to equity in and across our entire education system. We call on Congress and the Biden administration to support educational leaders in these efforts by providing the support, flexibility, and resources called for in these recommendations.

Invest in Students

Long existing inequities have become more apparent than ever and can no longer be ignored. It is imperative to address the underlying root causes of these inequities in a systemic, coordinated, and sustainable way. Students with disabilities and socio-economically disadvantaged students have been most negatively impacted by the pandemic. Providing targeted and additional resources to meet their needs will benefit them most of all but all students and schools will gain from these equity investments.

- Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Fully fund Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- Increase funding for federal K-12 formula programs, notably ESSA Title III (English language acquisition), Title IV (student support and academic enrichment), and Perkins career technical education (CTE).
- Subsidize school building construction and modernization to improve ventilation, plumbing, other infrastructure, and decrease student population density.
- Ensure a full-time registered nurse in every school.
- Increase the number counselors to reach the recommended ratio of one for every 250 students.

Foster Flexibility and Innovation

Schools have embraced change and creatively overcome countless challenges to serve their students this year. Some of these changes will be lasting. Indeed, the pandemic has fundamentally and permanently altered some traditional school notions and operations. Educators are implementing new and better concepts like addressing the whole child and educating student through multiple modalities.

- Expand access to support programs for all students like social-emotional learning, re-acclimation supports, school-based “wrap-around” services, and extra-curricular activities.
- Encourage state and local adoption of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model and facilitate school-community partnerships that support a Whole Child approach to education.
- Ensure all students have access to the Internet through technological upgrades, connectivity, and hardware so that they can learn in whatever mode best suits their learning needs and style
- Create the conditions for improved, balanced, and more comprehensive state assessments and accountability systems that are less high-stakes and provide more useful information to educators and students.
- Create new opportunities and pathways for students to graduate high school college and career-ready.
- Collect and report at the state and local levels a larger range of learning conditions that effect student achievement like advanced coursework and postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety surveys, and student and educator engagement.

Support Educators

Educators are what make school, learning, and student success possible. This simple fact has never been more apparent and will remain so moving forward. Educators have been, are and will continue to be essential personnel and should be recognized and rewarded as such. As students return to school after a year like no other, support for the professional needs and well-being of educators must be a paramount priority to ensure that a well-prepared, supported, and accomplished teacher is in every classroom.

- Fund ESSA Title II at \$3 billion to bolster job-embedded professional development activities to help teachers and school leaders deliver effective instruction that provides personalized learning for students.
- Incentivize and further support professional learning by offering tax credits for expenses related to courses, events, and activities.
- Support strategies and goals to ensure every student is taught by an effective teacher and to increase the number of educators with advanced professional certification.
- Redouble recruitment and retention efforts like loan forgiveness to elevate the profession, address staffing shortages, and increase the diversity of all school personnel.

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To learn more about how ASCD supports educators as they learn, teach, and lead, visit www.ascd.org. Printer-friendly copies of the 2017 Legislative Agenda are available at www.ascd.org/legislativeagenda.

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