



ESEA Reauthorization Recommendations: State Role

Policy Recommendations

- Focus the role of the state education agency on technical assistance, professional development, dissemination of best practices, and other mechanisms for ensuring better results for children.
- Require states to provide state education agencies with the full federal set-aside in each program to ensure effective technical assistance, professional development, and dissemination of best practices.
- Create an initiative to build SEA capacity for technical assistance, professional development, and dissemination of best practices.
- Maintain major federal-to-state formula programs; oppose proposals to dismantle these programs in favor of new large federal-to-state competitive programs.
- If Race to the Top funding is continued, (1) amend guidelines to make it a formula-based program; (2) allow state applicants to focus on a few key reforms, but allow flexibility for states to choose from a variety of reforms with proven results; and (3) lift the requirement that certain laws and policies have to be in place prior to the application process.
- Allow pooling and more flexible uses of federal funds from multiple sources.

Rationale for Improvements

Even with Federal support and incentives to drive reform and student achievement, States remain the focal point of education in our country. State policies and procedures drive change at the local and school building level. States, in addition to their role of ensuring compliance and accountability for Federal funds, must play a greater role in improving and reforming districts and schools.

California Overview

California has more residents and public school students than any other state. As a state education agency, California serves over 1,000 school districts, 9,900 schools (including over 6,000 Title I schools), 300,000 teachers, and 6 million students.

Nearly half of California's student population is Hispanic/Latino and has larger percentages of Asian and American Indian students than the other three largest states (Texas, New York, and Florida). While around 9% of students nationwide are English language learners (ELLs), a full 25% of California's students are ELLs, representing more than 50 different languages. Students receiving special education services consistently make up almost 11% of the school population in California.

In recent years, the California Department of Education has largely focused on ensuring that schools and districts comply with Federal regulations, but recent changes in educational leadership in the state provide an opportunity for a transformation in our

educational culture. California serves a large portion of our nation's students, inevitably making a significant impact on the future of our country. Moving forward, our vision of the state's future role is to provide the essential support and mechanisms to ensure every district and school has the ability to meet the needs of its students and families.

We therefore want to improve and customize technical assistance and professional development for administrative leaders throughout the state, rather than simply driving compliance with Federal requirements. Additionally, the dissemination of best practices will be critical in implementing programs that are already proven to work and increase student achievement and family engagement. While compliance with Federal requirements is important and necessary, the state must also ensure it is providing the necessary supports to districts and schools so they can improve and educate their students.

The state cannot implement this vision without the support of the federal government. The shift to competitive programs away from formula programs will eliminate many of the required resources to develop capacity and fund innovation within the state. Rather than competitive programs, states need increased flexibility to leverage resources from various existing funding streams.