COMMON-SENSE FLEXIBILITY

The federal government should support states, districts, and schools — not micromanage them

- It is time to redefine the role of the federal government in education so that it is consistent with — and supports — state and local initiatives to transform struggling or “priority” schools, enhance student learning, and improve instruction.

- National leaders should reaffirm the original mission of the U.S. Department of Education while supporting innovation, best practices, and policies that encourage development of the 21st century skills students need to succeed in school and in life.

- The federal role in education is fundamental — a basic civil right grounded in our nation’s pledge to provide equal educational opportunity for all.

School transformation

- States, districts, and schools are the engines of transformation, not the federal government.

- To accelerate the pace of transformation, states, districts, and schools need sustained resources and well-designed policies.

- States and districts need flexibility to design intervention strategies that meet the specific needs of particular schools.

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), rigid transformation models, and other one-size-fits-all approaches should not be used because they do NOT work.

Assessment and accountability

- Assessments should capture growth over time in student learning and school performance; be based on multiple, valid sources of evidence; and augment fill-in-the-bubble standardized tests with instruments that demand higher-order skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

- Common-sense flexibility should govern how students with disabilities and English-language learners (ELLs) are assessed — and how their test scores are counted.

- The federal government should encourage locally-designed assessments and allow states to decide the grades in which students take standardized tests.
AYP should be replaced by comprehensive, transparent accountability systems that strive to enhance learning, improve instruction, identify successful schools, and support struggling schools; protect the privacy of students and educators; and provide timely feedback to educators, students, and parents.

Teacher quality

- Systems for assessing and evaluating teachers should be developed and implemented at the local level based on the input of multiple stakeholders, including practitioners; a shared vision of teaching effectiveness; and an expanded concept of student learning that research supports.

- More flexibility is needed in “highly qualified” teacher requirements, especially for teachers of multiple subjects, special education teachers, and educators in rural/small districts.

NEA’s complete Message to Congress on ESEA reauthorization addresses the federal government’s role in public education, the purpose of public education, and asks: How will we fulfill that purpose? The answer has three parts: (1) Champion student success: Prepare all students to thrive in college, careers, and life; (2) Elevate the profession: Support great teachers and education support professionals; and (3) Fight for social justice: Ensure equitable educational opportunities and safe schools for every student.

For additional information, go to www.educationvotes.nea.org and click on the “resources” tab.