



CSBA 2017 Federal Priorities

January 31, 2017

Every Student Succeeds Act

Passed by Congress in December 2015, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) establishes college and career readiness expectations by requiring that state education standards be aligned with the entrance requirements set by each state's public higher education system. The law also sets important new requirements intended to strengthen instruction, assessment and student supports, to ensure that students graduate from high school with essential skills in addition to mastering rigorous content.

One of the most significant changes of ESSA is the reduction of the federal role in public education and the greater responsibility given to states, school districts and county offices of education on critical policy elements, such as the setting of annual targets for student academic performance and decisions on how to identify, support and intervention in struggling schools.

CSBA has been an early champion of ESSA, in part because it seeks to place the state and local districts in the position to make decisions that address the specific needs of schools. Similarly, California's new Local Control Funding Formula is the result of a collaborative effort involving the Governor, lawmakers, educators, administrators, students, parents, civil rights advocates, business leaders, and community groups. Together, we have created a system that takes a coherent approach to equitable funding, accountability, and continuous improvement for PreK-12 schools serving nearly 6.2 million students.

As implementation of ESSA gets underway, CSBA will work with the US Department of Education to:

- Clarify statutory provisions that are unclear or inadequately defined;
- Ensure timely, detailed information on the transition to full implementation, including key dates for submission of plans under Title I; and
- Provide ongoing attention to the need to reduce the regulatory burden on local districts such as through the elimination of duplicative or unnecessary reporting requirements.

CSBA appreciates the focus of Congress on passing the ESSA and the continued oversight of its implementation.

Education Funding

In mid-December, Congress passed a partial-year Continue Resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year 2017 that will be in effect through April 28, 2017. The CR sustains funding for education and other federal programs at levels comparable to FY2016. The budget and appropriations process for FY2017 is halfway complete, pending a subsequent appropriations measure that must be enacted after the current CR expires in April.

Looking ahead to the FY2018 budget, there are two major issues that are outstanding:

- Concerns about another round of across-the-board budget cuts (sequestration) governed by the Budget Control Act of 2011.
- The need to emphasize the importance of maximizing federal investments in Title 1, special education (IDEA) and related education programs.

Special Education Funding

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted nearly 40 years ago, Congress promised to provide 40 percent of the average per-pupil expenditure to pay for the new federal mandate. That promise has never been fulfilled. For California, 40 percent of the current average per-pupil expenditure is just over \$3 billion per year. In 2014, the federal government provided only \$1.2 billion, which only equated to 10.32 percent of the total amount spent in California.

CSBA appreciates recent Congressional actions to increase special education funding, but continues to strongly support legislation that provides the glide-path to the 40 percent promise, addresses the needs of high-cost students, places a cap on attorney's fees, increases opportunities for expanded infant and preschool programs, as well to increase intervention services to address growing special education populations.

Secure Rural Schools Program

To help counties and school districts in rural communities impacted by federal forest land recover revenues lost since the mid-1980s, Congress passed HR 2389 in 2000, otherwise known as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) (PL 106-393). When first enacted, SRS provided nearly \$60 million annually to California's forest counties, with half of the funding allocated to school districts and the other half to counties for county roads. In early 2015, Congress approved a two-year extension of SRS. The SRS extension is estimated to provide California counties and schools nearly \$27.3 million in 2014 and \$25.9 million in 2015.

For schools in forest counties, the SRS has restored programs for students in rural schools and prevented the closure of numerous isolated rural schools. It has been a primary funding mechanism to provide rural school students with educational opportunities comparable to suburban and urban students. CSBA strongly supports a multi-year reauthorization and full funding of the Federal Secure Rural Schools Act and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, to ensure that forest counties have the ability to appropriately support local education programs. Further, CSBA supports long-term forestry reform that would include appropriate funding for schools in areas of California that are heavily impacted by federal forest land.

Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (PL 111-296) put in place a number of program improvements for child nutrition programs that support the academic achievement and overall health of our students. Currently, the Healthy Kids Act allows for local flexibility and community-level decision making. Reauthorization presents an important opportunity to build on these positive changes and to ensure that federal law appropriately addresses shortcomings in law and policy.

CSBA supports good nutrition for children and programs to educate them about healthy choices. In reauthorization, Congress must ensure that local school districts have flexibility in implementing the program and that the program is cost-neutral to districts by increasing reimbursement levels or by other measures that makes implementation feasible within available federal resources.