



Great Public Schools for Every Student

Common–Sense Flexibility for States and Local Districts in Education

NEA believes it is time to reanalyze and redefine the federal role in education in a way that is consistent with and supportive of the critical role of state and local governments in education, and continues to help state and local governments. Federal leaders have the opportunity to recalibrate the role of the federal government. They should reassert the original mission of the U.S. Department of Education, but do so in ways that meet the needs of 21st century students.

The federal government has long had a vital role in supporting public education, ensuring equality of opportunity, and providing targeted assistance. The federal government should be a supporter – not a micro-manager – of state, district, and school responsibilities. Schools, districts, and states – not the federal government – are the engines of school transformation. But to accelerate the pace of transformation, they need sustained resources and well-designed federal policies.

School Transformation

- The federal government should support state-led public school transformation through authentic accountability that is publicly transparent.
- The federal government should support innovation and best practices to accelerate **state** and local improvement efforts and improve student learning.
- States and districts should have flexibility to design appropriate interventions for struggling, priority schools that will address the specific needs of particular schools. A one-size-fits-all approach to school improvement, including rigid intervention “models,” will not work.

Assessment and Accountability

- States should have flexibility to design accountability systems that produce results, including deciding in what grades to administer standardized tests, rather than being subject to a rigid one-size-fits-all approach. The federal government also should encourage locally-designed assessments crafted to improve instruction and provide timely feedback to educators, students, and parents.
- There is a great need to increase flexibility around AYP and the allowance of multiple measures of accountability. A large percentage of schools have been designated or remain “in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring” only a few years in advance of the unrealistic deadline for 100 percent proficiency among all students and schools. Many schools have been either mislabeled or overly broadly labeled as in need of improvement.
- Common-sense flexibility is needed for assessing and counting test scores of students with disabilities and ELL students.

Teacher Quality

- Development, implementation, and revision of a teacher assessment and evaluation system should be done at the local level with the input of multiple stakeholders, including practitioners, using a shared vision of teaching effectiveness and an expanded concept of student learning supported by research.
- NEA supports increasing flexibility for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements, including teachers of multiple subjects, special education, and rural/small district educators.