



July 6, 2011

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, Education and Workforce Committee
2181 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

The American Association of School Administrators, AASA, proudly supports the State and Local Funding Flexibility Act which provides local school districts greater control over use of funds from formula programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA. This approach to federal policy, based on trust and confidence in teachers, principals, superintendents and school boards, will result in smarter investment of dollars aimed at helping low-income and minority students reach new educational heights.

The State and Local Funding Flexibility Act's intrinsic trust in the skill, knowledge and motivation of state and local educators holds true to the original purpose of ESEA—helping to level the educational playing field for low-income and minority students—while providing educators the local control and flexibility they need to help those students most in need achieve the skills and knowledge they need in the 21st century. Maintaining the disaggregation of test results and graduation rates of the current statute underscores the continued focus on the original purpose of ESEA and helps maintain a sharp focus on improving the educational outcomes of low-income and minority students. Further, the carryover of all program reporting requirements is a prudent check on the proposed expansion of flexibility, providing a transparent mechanism for giving local educators the flexibility they need while allowing for state and federal oversight of expenditures and activities.

Over the last nine years, current law has used punishment and shame as motivators for educators to improve educational outcomes for low-income and minority students. There are volumes of research demonstrating that punishment and shame neither inspired educators nor moved student achievement, especially in the areas so crucial to 21st century success: critical thinking and application of knowledge. Punishment and shame, based on a lack of trust of educators, moves without regard to local conditions and dooms the policy, educators and the students they commit their careers to, to failure. Your proposal, based on an inherent trust in educators and their commitment to doing what is right, is a breath of fresh air and represents a strong step forward in helping to inspire educators and move schools and students toward the 21st-century skills and knowledge that are crucial to not only their success, but also our nation's ability to maintain a strong economy.

This change in policy will come with a change in culture, as policymakers and education leaders—including teachers, principals, administrators and school boards—transition from a nine-year history of lack of trust and confidence to a climate of trust and support. Your proposal can be summed up as 'trust but verify', providing flexibility to the local level while maintaining a sharp focus on the disaggregation of data and program reporting needed for prudent state and federal oversight.

AASA applauds your trust in state and local educators and your bold step toward rewriting ESEA for a new century and stands ready to support the State and Local Funding Flexibility Act.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Bruce Hunter
Associate Executive Director for Advocacy and Communications
American Association of School Administrators