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Position Statement in Support of the Reauthorization of The No Child Left Behind Act

The Association of American Publishers (AAP) School Division and its member companies strongly support the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), most recently amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Members of the AAP School Division are the nation's leading developers of educational materials, technology-based curricula, and assessments. As leaders in education, School Division members create instructional solutions in a variety of media that help students, teachers, and schools succeed. The instructional programs, services, and assessments developed by AAP members play a critically important role in No Child Left Behind.

AAP members believe that the reauthorization and expanded investments in our education systems are necessary at this time. NCLB plays an essential role in helping *all* students attain academic proficiency and in closing achievement gaps. At the same time, the law and its core principles form a key component of our nation's competitiveness agenda for meeting successfully the challenges of this 21st Century. We urge reauthorization to be considered as a national priority and to be completed this year. The following are our integrated recommendations for reauthorization.

AAP Reauthorization Priorities

1. Instructional Materials Access & Opportunity

All students should have the opportunity to learn. Textbooks and other instructional materials are the primary learning tools in the classroom. Students should have an adequate opportunity to learn the content required to be tested under NCLB and teachers should have the resources necessary to teach that content. Unfortunately, teachers consistently report many students lack the materials they need to learn -- that their students do not have access to important up-to-date instructional materials in their classes or that while some schools provide a full set of materials for home use as well as in school, others do not have enough for each class. Even with NCLB less than 1 percent of current education spending is spent on instructional materials. To remedy this situation, AAP recommends:

- State and district plans show that the instructional materials available are not outdated; if state standards have changed, new instructional materials reflecting those changes are available; and that there is access to instructional materials in the classroom and at home.
- State and district report cards provide information on adequacy and availability of instructional materials.
- Every child in a school not making adequate yearly progress should be provided access to up-to-date and aligned instructional materials.

2. Authorize & Expand Reading Programs for Adolescents

Recent improvements in student performance in lower grades are not sustained when students reach middle and high school. Only approximately one-quarter of Title I funds go to the 6th grade and above, even though these grades are where reading and writing in academic content areas becomes most important and are where most testing under NCLB now occurs. AAP recommends:

- Authorization and expansion of the Striving Readers Program for adolescent reading and writing programs to enable students in high risk middle and high schools to be served.
- Require and provide dedicated resources for sustained professional development for secondary school content-area teachers for reading and literacy instruction. This professional development should be aligned with instructional materials used in the classroom to promote fidelity of implementation.
- Include professional development in adolescent literacy as an explicit requirement of the authorization of the Math Now program.

3. Continue & Strengthen Reading First

AAP supports the Reading First and Early Reading First programs and their expansion. At its current funding level, Reading First reaches only about 6 percent of the children at risk for academic failure due to weak reading skills. Instructional materials used and programs implemented under Reading First should continue to meet rigorous and scientifically based criteria. To strengthen it, AAP recommends:

- Selection of instructional programs under Reading First and federal oversight must be transparent and fair.
- Schools and school districts must be afforded flexibility in choosing from a variety of research-based instructional programs.
- Reading First criteria should encourage the development and use of new and innovative instructional programs.

4. Expand Math & Science Programs

New investments must be made in math and science education if the United States is to remain competitive in the global economy. AAP recommends

- Authorization of the math intervention programs such as Math Now with explicit inclusion of funding for literacy instruction as part of professional development programs and for instructional materials, with the same procedural protections included in Reading First to provide transparency and protect against undue federal influence of selection of curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments.
- Ensure eligibility for research-based instructional materials, interventions, assessments, and professional development.
- Continue funding for the Math and Science Partnerships.

5. Strengthened & Expanded Assessment Systems for Improved Teaching and Learning

AAP supports the continued use of annual assessments to measure student achievement. What is measured then can be improved. Annual assessments provide teachers and parents with the information they need to make sound decisions regarding the education of students. Instruction and learning also is supported by “formative” classroom assessments that utilize the latest technology to enable teachers to

administer frequent assessments whose results are used to improve classroom instruction and to engage students in their own learning. The assessments must be valid, fair, and reliable. They must meet the highest technical standards, and they must be aligned with rigorous state standards. AAP recommends:

- Continued funding for state assessment systems to:
 - Continue improvements and updates.
 - Improve assessment for students with disabilities and English language learners.
 - Integrate with data systems to enable determining and reporting growth attaining standards.
 - Link assessments to improving instruction.
- Authorize explicit eligibility of formative and diagnostic assessments for federal funding and require that they meet the same rigorous technical and content quality standards as for annual state testing.
- Require use of high quality, formative assessments in schools not making adequate yearly progress.
- Require states and districts to report how they have used both state and local assessments for the purpose of improving academic achievement, in accordance with section 1111(b)(10) of the Act.
- Incorporation of growth models to measure individual student's progress toward grade level proficiency.
- Fund expanded state and district data systems to enable teachers to use formative and summative assessment information to focus instruction and make a measurable impact on student achievement.

6. Leverage Technology

Target investment in innovative and systemic school improvement that apply technology to build educator capacity, differentiate instruction, assess student performance, target interventions, and engage students.

7. Teacher Quality

AAP supports NCLB's focus on the need for highly qualified teachers. We believe that one of the best ways to improve teacher quality is to train teachers and those learning to be teachers how to effectively use and integrate instructional materials, assessments, and data. However, only 28 percent of Title II funds have been used for professional development in 2004-2005. [Ed Daily, Feb. 5, 2007] AAP recommends:

- Provide funding under Title II exclusively dedicated for professional development. Priority should be given to literacy instruction, math and science, understanding and using assessments and data, and using technology.
- Require professional development be aligned with instructional programs to promote fidelity of implementation of the programs.

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