

2010



National PTA[®] Public Policy Agenda

Association Overview

Founded in 1897, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is comprised of more than five million members, including parents, students, educators, school administrators, and community leaders. With more than 24,000 local units, PTA flourishes in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense schools in Europe and the Pacific.

As the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States, PTA's legacy of influencing federal policy to protect the education, health, and overall well-being of children has made an indelible impact in the lives of millions of children and families. PTA continues to be a voice for all children within the federal policy arena; in 2010, PTA will focus on three policy priorities.

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement in Education

One of PTA's founding principles is its dedication to engaging parents in the education of their children. Since the PTA's inception, it has provided workshops and resources on child development to parent groups and community leaders. In 1911, PTA advocated for a home education division within the U.S. Bureau of Education. Quite different from the present-day home schooling movement, home education was an international movement that encouraged parents to become knowledgeable on child development and education issues. The U.S. Bureau of Education created the division and named the PTA president as its director until 1919, when the division became a separate government agency. In recent years, PTA has developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as well as assessment tools to measure the success of these standards in schools.

Recognizing the importance of parent engagement in a child's education, PTA has worked to ensure that provisions encouraging parental involvement were included in the 2001 reauthorization of the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, now known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). PTA looks forward to having the opportunity to strengthen parent involvement and family engagement in the upcoming reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB) and the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**.

Opportunity and Equity for All Children

From the outset, PTA has championed the importance of equal opportunity for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, and addressed associated problems of child labor, childhood diseases, and the unfair and punitive treatment of children involved in the justice system. In the 1920s, PTA supported the establishment of a new organization, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, to provide PTA services in states that maintained separate schools by ethnicity. PTA provided training and literature to the newly established organization so that all parents could be advocates for their children. The organizations continued to work collaboratively until the groups formally merged in 1970.








PTA continues to advocate for all children to have the opportunity to grow and achieve through education. To that end, PTA will advocate for adequate funding for schools, an improved juvenile justice system, and internationally-benchmarked, voluntarily-adopted common core state standards that ensure all children are college and career ready. As part of its 2010 Public Policy Agenda, PTA will advance its opportunity and equity platform with the implementation of state advocacy efforts for the **Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI)**, the reauthorization of the **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)**, and federal appropriations to support student achievement and family engagement.

Child Health

PTA has been closely involved with federal health policy since its inception, including pivotal roles in the creation of both the U.S. Public Health Service and the Department of Health and Human Services. In 1923, PTA worked to ensure the provision of hot lunches in schools. In the 1940s and 1950s, PTA was involved in the establishment and expansion of the school milk programs. PTA also worked to ensure the original passage of both the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act.

More recently, PTA and its coalition partners fought successfully for the inclusion of language mandating the creation of local school wellness policies in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. In 2010, PTA will be advocating to improve child health and wellness through the reauthorization of the **Child Nutrition Act**.

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Parental Involvement Provisions Within ESEA-NCLB

Research indicates that students with engaged families are more likely to score higher on tests, earn higher grades, attend school regularly, have better social skills, demonstrate improved behavior, adapt well to school, graduate from high school, and pursue postsecondary education, regardless of their income level.¹

Recognizing the importance of family engagement in a child's education, PTA worked to ensure that provisions encouraging parent involvement were included in the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). However, there is no central mechanism to translate federal parent involvement policies into general practice in states and local communities. Thus, there is little evidence that states, districts, and schools are implementing ESEA-NCLB's parent involvement provisions to meaningfully engage families in the education of their children.

ESEA-NCLB is now up for reauthorization, which presents opportunities to address these and other challenges in effectively partnering with families to support student achievement. The National PTA 2010 Public Policy Agenda will focus on the key parent involvement provisions under Section 1118 of Title I and the Department of Education's Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC) program.

Section 1118, Title I

Section 1118 of Title I requires school districts and schools receiving Title I funds to: 1) develop written parent involvement policies in partnership with parents to establish district expectations for parent involvement and describe how schools and parents will meet those expectations; 2) build capacity for parent involvement by providing technical assistance to parents to improve their children's academic achievement, educating school personnel on effective parent involvement strategies, integrating parent involvement efforts with other programs, and ensuring that information communicated to parents is in a format and language parents can understand; and 3) inform parents and organizations of the existence and purpose of Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs).

Schools must also provide parents with timely, understandable information on such matters as school programs, curricula, academic assessments, expectations for student performance, and, if requested, flexible opportunities for meetings. Schools are also required to develop, in partnership with parents, written school-parent compacts outlining each party's responsibility in meeting state academic standards and supporting children's learning.

Districts receiving more than \$500,000 in Title I funds must set aside at least 1 percent for parent involvement activities, and distribute at least 95 percent of the reserved funds to participating schools. Districts are also required to ensure schools' compliance with ESEA-NCLB, while state education agencies are required to review districts' parent involvement policies and practices to ensure they meet ESEA-NCLB requirements.

Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs): Subpart 16, Part D, Title V

Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), which were established in 1995 and later authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB), are funded through a competitive grant process to nonprofit organizations and/or consortia of nonprofits and school districts administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement. PIRCs provide statewide leadership, capacity-building, technical assistance, training and support in the implementation of effective parent engagement policies, programs, and activities to improve student academic achievement. Currently, there are sixty-two PIRCs across the nation, with at least one in each state.

PIRCs must serve rural and urban areas, use at least half of their federal grants to serve areas with high concentrations of low-income children, and use at least 30 percent of their grants for early childhood parent programs. From June 2007 to July 2008, PIRCs served 16.4 million parents. Over 70 percent of these parents were low-income and 60 percent were parents with children who are limited English proficient.²

Key Facts

- Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education improves a child's academic achievement, behavior, attendance at school, and emotional and physical well-being.³
- Effective family engagement can be the great equalizer for students, contributing to their increased academic achievement regardless of parents' education level, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.^{4,5}
- Family engagement can raise student academic achievement so substantially that schools would need to increase spending by more than \$1000 per pupil to gain the same results.⁶
- Teachers are much more likely to remain in schools where many parents are involved with the school and where they report high levels of trust with parents.⁷
- Chronic early absenteeism for children predicts lower levels of academic achievement for low-income children by the end of fifth grade⁸ and has highly negative consequences for youth in middle and high school as well as negative effects on their employability as adults.⁹ Family outreach and strength-based services are an effective intervention in combating early chronic absenteeism.
- School districts' use of "zero tolerance" policies have led to the near doubling of the number of students suspended from school annually, increasing from 1.7 million to 3.1 million per year, between 1974 and 2003.¹⁰

Recommendations

For Congress and the Administration:

- Retain the parent involvement provisions of Section 1118 of Title I and strengthen the provisions by creating incentives on the state, district, and school levels to meaningfully engage families in their children's education.
- Codify PTA's National Standards for School-Family Partnerships and provide a statutory definition and framework on effective family engagement in Section 1118 of Title I. Leading researchers, expert practitioners, and advocates define family engagement in education as: *a shared responsibility of families and schools for student success, in which schools and community-based organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development. This shared responsibility is continuous from birth through young adulthood and reinforces learning that takes place in the home, school and community.*
- Increase Local Education Agencies' minimum reservation for parent involvement from 1 percent to 2 percent of allocation under subpart 2, Title I and provide guidance on allowable uses of funds to support best practices and innovation in the field.
- Require states to include building statewide capacity for the implementation of effective family engagement as part of their State Plan and to align with the proposed statutory definition and framework in Section 1118.
- Establish state-level Family Engagement Coordinating Councils, comprised of family members and other stakeholders, to coordinate and integrate systemic family engagement initiatives that support children from cradle to career.
- Modify the purposes, assurances, and governance of the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) to align with the new quality framework that supports state-wide leadership, capacity-building, training, and technical assistance on effective parent engagement strategies and implementation of Section 1118.
- Pilot a local family engagement demonstration program that provides direct services to families and removes barriers to family engagement by amending Title V, Section 5566 and establish a separate program authorization and funding stream outside of the PIRC authorization.
- Prepare, train, and recruit teachers and principals in effective models of family engagement that increase student achievement by amending Title II.
- Extend family engagement to neglected and delinquent youth by requiring each State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agency (LEA) receiving funds under the Neglected and Delinquent Youth program to include a strategy for family engagement in education within their application and state plan and for each correctional facility to prepare an educational services and transition plan for each child or youth served and establish family engagement policies consistent with Section 1118 of Title I.

- Require the U.S. Department of Education to establish performance standards and indicators that will support states, districts, and schools in the implementation and evaluation of effective family engagement practices and policies. Disseminate and publicize standards to family and parent groups and other stakeholders, and include a public comment period to improve proposed standards.
- Establish within the U.S. Department of Education an Office of Family, School, and Community Engagement to articulate a national vision of family engagement in education, provide interagency and intra-agency coordination, and establish a family engagement research agenda and grants administration.
- Require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to produce a report on the current status, barriers, and successful strategies in state and district implementation of parent involvement provisions under Section 1118.
- Require “school-parent” compacts to support school and family partnerships in the development of recommendations for student attendance, expectations and supports for student behaviors. Compacts must include rational disciplinary policies that include the implementation school-wide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) or similar evidence-based programs and phase out zero tolerance and out-of-school suspension policies that contribute to the achievement gap.
- Increase the investment for technical assistance, training, and implementation of the PBIS model of addressing behavioral problems in schools, making it an allowable use of funds under ESEA-NCLB.
- Assist states in the development and implementation of integrated data systems in schools and districts, allowing for:
 - a. Improved accuracy and consistency of local data on attendance maintained by individual schools and district-wide;
 - b. Improved monitoring and reporting on chronic absenteeism by school; and
 - c. Use of data to inform implementation of school-wide strategies and to trigger supports and strength-based interventions for students and their families.
- Develop and encourage states to adopt a common definition of chronic absenteeism. Experts suggest defining chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the school year, including excused and unexcused absences.¹¹
- Assist states in developing, and schools and districts in implementing, a universal student identifier to track the attendance and performance of students from prekindergarten through grade 12.

Rationale

Family engagement raises student achievement, decreases the dropout rate, and is cost effective.

- Despite socioeconomic variables, meaningfully engaging families in their children's education substantially raises student academic achievement such that schools would need to increase spending per student by more than \$1,000 to achieve the same results.¹² It also improves student attendance and behavior, decreasing the likelihood that students will drop out and disengage from school.

Key parent involvement provisions of the law are not being implemented.

- Federal monitoring of Title I implementation has determined that many states, school districts, and schools are not fully implementing the parent involvement provisions in ESEA-NCLB. Some common findings include states not reviewing school districts' parent involvement policies and practices to determine if districts have met requirements; schools not notifying parents that their child has been assigned or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by an instructor who is not highly qualified; school plans not addressing parent involvement requirements; schools not providing parents with required information about school programs, options, and performance; and states not monitoring or providing technical assistance to districts and schools for effective parent involvement.¹³

Current law needs to be aligned with the PIRCs' quality framework in order to improve statewide capacity for systemic, effective family engagement in education.

- The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization at the Department of Education in order to increase its efficacy and tighten its responsibilities. The new framework shifts PIRCs' scope from providing direct services to parents to providing state-wide leadership, technical assistance and training and capacity-building for state education agencies, school districts, and schools to promote effective family engagement.

Local community-based organizations are best suited to provide direct services that meet families' unique needs and remove barriers to family engagement.

- During the last reauthorization of ESEA, Congress determined a critical need for direct services for families, which would be provided by community-based organizations. In response, Congress added a funding trigger that would establish Local Family Information Centers if PIRCs' funding reached \$50 million. Unfortunately, this threshold was never met and it has become clear that one statewide entity cannot meet the needs of the diverse families and communities in a state. Piloting a demonstration program for local family engagement centers separate from the PIRCs would ensure that local families and students received services that met their unique needs and removed barriers to family engagement, such as language, literacy, transportation, or work schedules.

Partnering with families improves teacher retention.

- Research has demonstrated that teachers' relationships with parents are key factors in determining if a teacher will stay in the classroom.¹⁴ Federal guidance released on the Race to the Top funding also includes positive family engagement in its definition of an effective principal. Providing professional development for teachers and school leaders on how to meaningfully engage families to improve student achievement will help recruit and retain high-quality teachers and principals.

Family-focused, strength-based interventions and classroom-based interventions such as PBIS are effective in improving student behavior, attendance, and achievement.

- PBIS has met rigorous, scientifically-validated evaluation standards for effectiveness and helps prevent problem behavior before it starts. This system complements the use of school-parent compacts, in which both parties work together to lay out clear expectations for a child's attendance, behavior, and homework. Also, family-focused interventions that are supportive and strength based (rather than punitive in nature) for chronically absent and truant children and youth can dramatically reduce absences, substantially improve academic achievement, and increase school districts' average daily attendance revenue. Zero tolerance policies, however, lead to out-of-school suspension and delinquency. A more appropriate response to classroom misbehaviors is family-focused outreach and services that ensure that students are engaged in school.

Data systems must consist of comprehensive, cradle to career indicators of student success, including attendance, in order to prevent dropouts before they happen.

- At the national level, one out of every ten children is chronically absent during the first two years of schooling, but the rates vary widely depending on the school district and school studied.¹⁵ As students grow older, the ramifications of chronic absenteeism become more severe—chronic absenteeism and truancy in middle and high school have highly negative consequences for youth, including negative effects on their employability as adults. Investing in statewide longitudinal data systems that identify early warning signs of students disengaging from school is critical to dropout prevention efforts. By using chronic absenteeism and truancy data to identify students and families in high-risk situations, states and districts can provide appropriate interventions that extend across a child's lifespan and in all learning settings.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Reauthorization

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the main federal program authorizing state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. IDEA requires states to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities so that they can be educated to the greatest extent possible, along with all other children.

IDEA has been updated several times since its first enactment as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. In the 1986 reauthorization, Part C (Infants and Toddlers) was developed as part of the law, and in 1990, transition planning was introduced as a requirement. In 1997, Congress authorized grants for parent training and provided a dispute resolution process for parents who file grievances with their state or local education association, thereby strengthening the role of parents in their child's education. In 2004, President George W. Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, a major reauthorization that worked to remove the barriers separating special education from general education.

Through the years, National PTA has worked to ensure that parental involvement remains a fundamental principle of IDEA and that the rights of children with disabilities, and the rights of their parents, are fully protected. PTA has ardently supported school-family collaboration as an important component of successful learning for all children.

Parental Rights Provisions Under Current Law

IDEA requires children to have an individualized education program (IEP), in order to receive special education services. The IEP includes information about a child's present levels of performance on various tests and measures and includes information about goals and objectives, specifically how the child's education problems will be addressed. The purpose of the IEP is to set reasonable learning goals for the child and to state the services that the school district will provide.

Parents have the right to be actively involved in the development of their child's IEP. Parents also have the right to be notified of the IEP meeting early enough to ensure that one or both of the child's parents have an opportunity to attend. Parents may also request that the IEP meeting is scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and have access to an interpreter if their native language is not English. The 2004 IDEA includes provisions that allow parents and the local education agency to agree to use alternative means of meeting participation such as video conferences or conference calls.

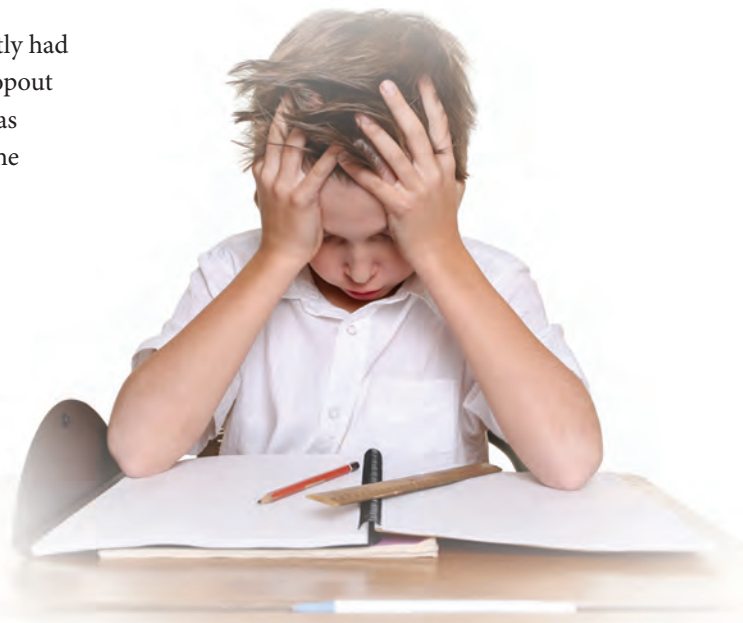


Parent Training Information (PTI) Centers

Parent Training Information (PTI) Centers provide training, information and support to parents who have a child through the age of 26 with special needs. PTI Centers are authorized in Part D of IDEA and are funded by the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). There is a PTI Center in each state and some states also have Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs). The CPRCs have the same scope of work as the PTI Centers, but the CPRCs focus on reaching underserved populations, including low income families. Currently there are 104 PTI Centers, 32 of which are CPRCs, which operate under a unified system to provide technical assistance and resources for parents, family members, professionals, and school personnel. Each PTI Center is mandated to assist parents to better understand the nature of their children's disabilities and their educational, developmental, and transitional needs. PTI Centers assist parents in the development of their child's IEP, as well as assist parents in obtaining the appropriate information about the range, type, and quality of programs, services, and resources for children with disabilities both in school and at home.

Key Facts

- Almost 6 million students in the United States receive special education services under IDEA Part B.¹⁶
- Of the 6 million students that receive special education services, 79 percent spend 40 percent or more of their time in the regular classroom.¹⁷
- One-third of students with disabilities have experienced disciplinary actions at school, such as suspensions, expulsions, referrals to the principal's office, or detentions, and they are more likely than their peers in the general population to have faced these types of disciplinary actions.¹⁸
- According to a recent report on post-secondary outcomes for youth with disabilities, two in five youth with disabilities continue on to post-secondary education within four years of leaving high school.
- From 1994-95 through 2003-04, the percentage of students with disabilities who graduated with a regular high school diploma increased from 42.2 percent to 54.5 percent.¹⁹
- Students with emotional disturbance consistently had the highest dropout rates. In every year, the dropout rate for students with emotional disturbance was substantially higher than the dropout rate for the next highest disability category.²⁰





- Youth with disabilities were more likely to live in low-income households than youth in general. More than one-third (37 percent) of youth with disabilities come from households with incomes of \$25,000 or less, compared with 20 percent of the general population.²¹
- Compared with the general population, youth with disabilities are twice as likely to have a head of household that has not graduated from high school (21 percent versus 10 percent) and their head of household was much more likely to be unemployed (17 percent versus 11 percent).²²
- According to a recent report, school staff reported that nearly 25 percent of parents with 17 or 18 year old special education students are not provided with information about their child's post school services as part of transition planning.²³
- Families of students with disabilities are more involved in assisting with homework, and they are as involved, and at times more involved, in school-based activities, when compared with their peers in the general population. Many families of youth with disabilities hold high expectations for their children's future success in several aspects of education and independence, which have been shown to relate to higher engagement and achievement among students with disabilities while in high school.²⁴

Recommendations

For Congress and the Administration:

- Include and codify a statutory definition of family engagement in education in IDEA Part A Section 602. The term “family engagement in education” means: *a shared responsibility of families and schools for student success, in which schools and community-based organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development. This shared responsibility is continuous from birth through young adulthood and reinforces learning that takes place in the home, school and community.*
- Codify PTA's research-based *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships* as a best practice model for family engagement in special education. Disseminate and publicize these standards to family and parent groups and other stakeholders.
- Increase the investment in training and professional development on effective family engagement for special education teachers and administrators.
- Encourage school districts to employ transition planning coordinators to assist in the facilitation of transition planning services for special education students and their families.
- Amend IDEA to require transition planning services for special education students to begin no later than the age of 14.

- Require the inclusion of a classroom-based behavioral management plan that focuses on prevention during the development of every student’s IEP and 504b plan. Require that both general and special education teachers know how to respond to behavioral problems with positive behavioral interventions and supports.
- Require the U.S. Department of Education to issue a comprehensive report on best practices on behavior management plans for students with disabilities.
- Require that each student’s IEP includes short-term goals that are actively monitored, measured by time-framed benchmarks, and specify indicators of success as a component of the student’s annual yearly goals.
- Require the U.S. Secretary of Education to convene a national body of family engagement researchers and expert practitioners to develop indicators on effective family engagement in special education. Require the U.S. Department of Education to implement a robust data collection effort that captures data and improves monitoring and reporting systems on effective family engagement in special education.
- Require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to produce a report on the number of suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary actions for students with disabilities.

Rationale

Family engagement produces positive outcomes for special education students.

- Studies show that high levels of family engagement in education are associated with better school outcomes for students with disabilities. While family engagement remains a fundamental principle of IDEA, there is no definition for effective family engagement in education listed in the current IDEA statute.

Student performance is directly linked to effective teaching.

- Recent data identifies teachers’ relationships with parents as a factor in teacher retention and stability.²⁵ A commitment to the ongoing professional development and training of teachers on effective family engagement research-based strategies and best practices is essential to improve student achievement.

Data on effective family engagement models in special education is lacking.

- Data collection efforts must include performance standards, indicators, and measures that support states in the implementation of effective family engagement practices and policies. Many school districts struggle to develop a data collection and evaluation strategy that assesses the true impact of their family engagement efforts. School districts need support in capturing data on family engagement outcomes under their IDEA Indicator 8 surveys. Incentives for data collection and the provision of technical assistance to districts to build robust evaluation plans and to set annual performance goals around family engagement systems are necessary to ensure both accountability and effective implementation.

IDEA should provide a clear and structured framework for transition planning services.

- The need for more training and support in transition planning is supported by both state and national data. IDEA requires parental involvement in all aspects of their child's transition planning; however, very little guidance exists on engaging parents and families in the transition planning process. An effective transition plan should provide a framework that identifies community resources, services, and supports; identifies vocational rehabilitation and post-secondary training opportunities; provides assistance for application to a post-secondary educational or vocational institution; promotes the student's self-sufficiency; and aligns with the student's desired goals for the successful transition to adulthood.

Transition planning services under IDEA should begin at a younger age.

- Disabled youth drop out of high school at twice the rate of non-disabled students. Earlier versions of IDEA required that transition planning services begin by the time a student reaches age 14. However, under IDEA 2004, language was amended to require that transition services must begin by the time a child reaches age 16. The upcoming IDEA reauthorization provides an opportunity to amend current law to require transition services to be in effect by the time a child reaches the age of 14.²⁶ Delaying transition planning until age 16 for students who are already at risk of dropping out does not allow enough time to pursue critical transition opportunities.

IEPs should include measurable short term objectives that are linked to the student's annual yearly goals.

- Past reauthorizations of IDEA required IEPs to include a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives. However, the 2004 IDEA eliminated the IEP requirement for benchmarks and short-term objectives, with the exception of children who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards. IEPs must now merely include a statement of measurable annual goals. Parents need to know how to best support their child's learning at home, school, and other learning settings. PTA encourages the use of benchmarks and short-term objectives that inform parents of specific progress in their child's IEP. Benchmarks act as performance markers, provide direction and foster collaboration among students, educators, and parents.

Evidenced-based positive behavioral support strategies increase learning and decrease classroom disruptions.

- Students with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled students to be involved in the school disciplinary process. In a given year, about one of every ten students with disabilities receives multiple in-school suspensions, with 1 percent being expelled.²⁷ Studies have shown that improved behavior support is related to improved academic outcomes.²⁸ A well-designed behavior management plan takes a prevention approach rather than a reactive approach to disruptive behavior. Behavior management plans should be implemented during the development of the student's IEP, prior to any behavioral issues or classroom removal. Special and general educators should be fully apprised of a student's behavioral management plan and should be notified when changes are made to the plan.



Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization

After a one year extension in the First Session of the 111th Congress, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act will be up for consideration in 2010. The 2010 reauthorization comes at a pivotal time in our nation's understanding of the role of nutrition in the lives of American children.

In 2006, approximately 17 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 11 and 17.6 percent of children between the ages of 12 and 19 were obese.²⁹ Meanwhile, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that nearly 15 percent of all American households were food insecure at some point in 2009.³⁰ The statistics on child obesity and hunger demonstrate the need for Congress to address the needs of both long-term health and the immediate poverty-related inadequacy in the availability of affordable, nutritious food during the next reauthorization.

PTA is resolved to make the 2010 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization an opportunity to comprehensively address the conditions contributing to childhood obesity, hunger, and other child health issues, rather than taking a piecemeal approach.

This legislation, which expires on September 30, 2010, covers many essential programs, including the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs, the Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Local Wellness Policies

PTA and its coalition partners fought successfully for the inclusion of language mandating the creation of local school wellness policies in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. These wellness policies give parents, students, school nutrition representatives, school board members, school administrators, and the general public the opportunity to formulate local policies that are tailored to the specific needs and capacity of their communities.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Over 30.5 million students participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) each day, in over 101,000 schools, with nearly 60 percent of participating students receiving a free or reduced-price lunch. NSLP meal pattern requirements are becoming increasingly healthy as they are being updated to meet the recommendations under the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This is evidenced by the fact that students in the NSLP eat twice as many servings of vegetables at lunch as nonparticipants according to the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services.

School Breakfast Program

Established in 1966 as a pilot project, the School Breakfast Program currently provides breakfast to nearly 10.5 million students in approximately 87,000 schools nationwide, with over 8 million students receiving a free or reduced-price breakfast daily. Like the NSLP, school breakfast meal patterns are being updated to reflect the recommendations of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Created in 1968, the Summer Food Service Program served approximately 129 million free, nutritious meals in the summer of 2008 to low-income children. In addition, the Child and Adult Care Food Program provides nutritious meals and snacks each day to approximately 2.9 million children and over 85,000 adults, making day care of children and elderly adults more affordable for millions of low-income families.

Key Facts

- According to the data collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services, approximately 30.9 million children participated daily in the National School Lunch Program in 2008, and nearly 60 percent of them received their meals for free or at reduced prices.
- According to the School Nutrition Association's "School Nutrition Operations Report: The State of School Nutrition 2009," nearly 60 percent of school districts increased the price of school lunches this past year to offset increasing costs.
- Approximately 22 percent of local education agencies have yet to implement a system of direct certification under the National School Lunch Program for eligibility for free and reduced price meals as required by federal law.³¹
- For our nation's 5th and 6th graders, the risk of being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes at some point in their lifetime is estimated at 33 percent for boys and 39 percent for girls.³²
- A 2003 study showed that the overweight and obese account for approximately 9 percent of total U.S. medical spending.³³

Recommendations

- Require policies for the provision of recess, physical education, and regulation of food marketing in schools to be included in local wellness policies.
- Require periodic assessments of the development, notification, implementation, and content of local wellness policies.
- Provide competitive grant funding through the USDA Team Nutrition Network contingent upon the achievement of local wellness policy goals.
- Require the USDA to update the national nutrition standards for school foods sold outside of the school meals programs in order to keep pace with emerging scientific evidence about nutrition.
- Increase reimbursement rates for school meals.
- Authorize additional non-food assistance grants to allow schools to purchase food preparation equipment and address some of the start-up costs associated with improving kitchen facilities.
- Encourage the employment of qualified nutrition professionals, or the consultation thereof, at the district level for school food services.
- Increase direct certification for meals programs, support universal meals programs, and reduce the administrative barriers that limit participation.
- Increase funding for the Department of Defense Fresh Program, or its equivalent, placing an emphasis on the purchase and procurement of local produce wherever possible.
- Require the development of best practices for the processing of USDA commodities in order to align these products more closely with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.

Rationale

Local wellness policies should be expanded and effectively implemented.

- Wellness policies provide parents, students, school nutrition representatives, school board members, school administrators, and the general public the opportunity to formulate local policies that are tailored to the specific needs of their communities. All of these contributors can play a critical part in the promotion of student health and the prevention of childhood obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity. PTA continues to encourage the involvement of parents in school wellness councils and other committees working to improve school meals programs. Not only is it the right of parents to be involved in the major decisions affecting their children's health and well-being, but parent involvement has the additional benefit of engaging, and in many cases educating, parents and the surrounding community about the importance of healthy nutrition in the daily lives of their families.

Competitive foods sold in schools must meet updated nutrition standards to improve child health and leverage the federal investment in the school meal programs.

- School meals must meet detailed nutrition standards set by Congress and be updated regularly by the USDA in order for a school food service program to receive federal subsidies. The meals are typically balanced and contain recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals. In contrast, the nutrition standards for foods sold outside the meal programs have not been updated since 1979. Such foods include those sold in vending machines, cafeteria a la carte menus, and school stores. The only nutritional criteria for school foods sold outside of meals are that “foods of minimal nutritional value” (FMNV) may not be sold in the food service area during meal times. FMNV are foods that provide less than 5 percent of the Reference Daily Intake for eight specified nutrients per serving. Many low-nutrition foods are not considered FMNV despite their high contents of calories, saturated fat, salt, or added sugars, and can be sold anywhere on school campuses at anytime during the school day. For more than 50 years, school meals have been regulated at the federal level. Each year, the federal government invests billions – over \$11 billion in fiscal year 2008 – in school lunches and breakfasts. Selling low-nutrition foods in schools undermines that investment.

School meal reimbursement rates are inadequate at current levels.

- In order to improve the nutritional content of school meals, USDA initiated the “School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children” in 1995. Since that time, the nutritional content of school lunches and breakfasts has improved. Unfortunately, many school meals still contain elevated levels of saturated fat and sodium. In addition, the availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grain offerings remains at a lower level than that called for in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. One major challenge to the increased availability of nutritious school meals is the increased cost associated with the improvement. Even without changing the nutritional content of the meals, cost increases related to food, labor, and energy have become increasingly burdensome. While the mean cost of providing school lunches is often reported to be below the reimbursement rate, full costs require support from the school district general fund, raising the full costs above the reimbursement rate. According to a 2007 report by the School Nutrition Association, over 78 percent of school districts surveyed have experienced increased costs while implementing enhanced nutrition standards. Additional funding streams, like the \$125 million federal investment in non-food assistance grants to allow purchasing of food preparation equipment, and enhanced nutritional requirements during commodities processing can help to relieve this burden on those that feed our nation’s children every day.



Federal Funding for Education

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment, the United States ranks near the bottom of 30 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries in math (25th) and science (21st).³⁴ There are significant differences in academic achievement between students of different ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds in the United States. These “achievement gaps” are found in nearly every measure of achievement, including math and reading test scores, high school graduation rates, and rates of college enrollment and college completion.³⁵ The achievement gaps are further widened by inequitable distribution of resources in publicly funded schools.

Despite recent increases in funding for U.S. Department of Education programs, not enough resources are allocated to serve all students and families who are eligible for critical elementary and secondary education programs, including Parental Information and Resource Centers, Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and teacher-quality initiatives.

PTA believes that to ensure that schools and districts can provide a quality education to all children, meet the accountability standards set forth in ESEA-NCLB, and prepare students for employment in our global economy, greater financial support is critical. With state and local government budgets tightening, schools are struggling to continue providing basic education services. At the same time, demands have been placed on schools to improve student achievement. Without sufficient resources to engage parents, hire qualified teachers, expand compensatory education programs, and address other challenges they face, schools cannot make needed improvements. Additional targeted federal funds are needed to help schools implement specific interventions designed to improve student achievement.

Key Facts

- In Fiscal Year 2009, Department of Education discretionary and mandatory funding – including all K-12, special education, career and technical education, higher education, and departmental administration expenditures, as well as ARRA funding – totaled 3 percent of the federal budget.³⁶
- Increasing a country’s average level of schooling by one year can increase economic growth by 5 to 15 percent.³⁷
- During the postwar years from 1948 to 1973, education accounted for 29 percent of the increase in gross domestic product (GDP), and economic innovation accounted for 37 percent. Together, the direct and indirect benefits of increases in education accounted for two-thirds of the increase in U.S. economic growth.³⁸

Recommendations

- Increase funding for the Parental Information and Resource Centers (Title V, Part D, Subpart 16 of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act) by \$3.9 million or 10 percent for FY 2011.
- Increase funding for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act by \$3 billion for FY 2011 and an additional \$3 billion for FY 2012, moving towards doubling Title I funding within five years.
- Increase funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act state grants so that the federal government provides for 20 percent of the excess cost of educating children with disabilities (average per pupil expenditure or APPE). For FY 2010, this would require an investment of \$2.3 billion above the FY 2008 and FY 2009 appropriated levels of \$10.95 billion. This must be the first step in reaching the 40 percent of APPE Congress promised to pay when the law was first enacted.
- Restore funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act national programs to FY 2003 levels (\$338 million), adjusted for inflation.
- Increase funding for Parent Training Information (PTI) Centers (IDEA Part D) by \$2.6 million, or 10 percent, for FY 2011 to keep pace with the rate of inflation and enrollment growth.
- At a minimum, maintain funding for Improving Teacher Quality State Grants at FY 2008 levels (\$2.935 billion), adjusted for inflation.
- Restore funding for Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants to FY 2007 levels (\$60 million), adjusted for inflation.



Rationale

Funding for Parental Information and Resource Centers should be increased.

- The Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) funding is the only source of federal funding intended exclusively to help schools and communities meet the requirements of parent involvement mandated in ESEA-NCLB. More than 35 years of research has demonstrated that when parents are involved in their child's education, student achievement increases. The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization at the Department of Education, expanding the role of PIRCs to act as state-wide centers for leadership, technical assistance and training, and capacity-building for effective parent engagement. Despite these changes, the program has been flat-funded at just under \$40 million for the last four fiscal years. A substantial increase in funding by \$3.9 million, or 10 percent, for FY 2011 is needed to effectively implement the expanded and critical role of PIRCs.

Title I funding should be increased by \$3 billion for the next two fiscal years.

- As the cornerstone of ESEA-NCLB, the Title I program provides funds mainly to school districts to help disadvantaged children achieve proficiency and to improve the performance of low achieving schools. In Fiscal Year 2009, Title I provided \$14.5 billion (as well as an additional \$10 billion in ARRA funding)³⁹ to more than 54,000 schools nationwide.⁴⁰ As the primary vehicle for federal involvement in K-12 education, it is critical that adequate funding be appropriated in order to assist schools in meeting the high standards asked of them.

IDEA state grant funding should be increased to provide for at least 20 percent of the excess cost of educating children with disabilities.

- The assumption underlying IDEA is that, on average, the APPE for children with disabilities is twice the APPE for other children. Congress has determined that the federal government would pay up to 40 percent of this "excess" cost, which is referred to as "full funding." Since 1981, the first year for which full funding was 40 percent of APPE, the federal payment has remained less than half of the federal promise, leaving states and localities to bear the burden of paying the shortfall. This rate should be increased to provide at least 20 percent of the excess cost of educating children with disabilities.

Funding for IDEA national programs should be restored to Fiscal Year 2003 levels (\$338 Million), adjusted for inflation.

- Part D of IDEA programs provides an infrastructure of practice improvements that support the implementation of IDEA. In order to better serve students with disabilities, it is imperative that Congress provide more funding for Part D of IDEA.

Funding for improving teacher quality state grants and teacher quality enhancement grants should be appropriately supported.

- Teachers play an integral role in facilitating student success. The level of professional development available for educators is directly affected by the amount of funding available for teacher quality initiatives. These programs must be adequately funded in order for teachers to be able to meet the goals under ESEA-NCLB. In addition, professional development opportunities like those supported by these funding streams are a key factor in teacher retention.

Funding for Parent Training Information (PTI) Centers should be increased

- Funded by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, PTI Centers provide free training, information, referral, and assistance to parents to improve results for children with disabilities. Data from FY 2007-2008 indicates that the parent centers had 1.9 million contacts with parents and professionals through trainings, presentations, phone calls, letters, home visits and emails.⁴¹ The PTI Centers are currently underfunded at the level of \$26 million per fiscal year. An increase in funding by 10 percent for FY 2011 is needed to support the PTI Centers to provide critical services to disabled youth and their families.



Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) Reauthorization

Protecting the rights of children and youth involved in the justice system has long been at the core of PTA advocacy work. In 1899, for example, National PTA Convention delegates passed a resolution supporting the extension of juvenile courts and probation systems, relatively new initiatives at the time, to protect children and youth accused of offenses from being locked up with adult criminals.⁴²

First passed in 1974 and reauthorized in 2002, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) is the primary federal law regarding juvenile justice reform. The law provides grants to states to implement juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention programs. JJDP is due for reauthorization, providing opportunities to improve the law for children and youth. Of particular interest in the National PTA 2010 Public Policy Agenda are two critical issues for juvenile justice reform: the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core requirement, and the Jail Removal and Sight and Sound core requirements that protect children from being locked up with adults.

The Detention of Status Offenders (DSO) Core Requirement

Children arrested for non-criminal behaviors, such as truancy, are in need of family-focused, school and home-based interventions, rather than being securely placed in dangerous, overcrowded juvenile detention centers that expose them to delinquent youth. Congress recognized this in 1974 when it included the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core requirement in JJDP to ensure that youth with non-criminal offenses would be treated differently than delinquent children.⁴³

However, JJDP was amended in 1980 to include the Valid Court Order (VCO) exception, which allowed children with status offenses to be jailed for violating a court order not to commit subsequent status offenses. This has undermined the DSO core requirement, leading to significant numbers of children being held unnecessarily in secure detention when other community-based interventions are more appropriate.

Jail Removal and the Adulthoodification of Juveniles

Though the Jail Removal and Sight and Sound core protections keep most children out of adult jails, approximately 7,500 children are held in adult jails before they are tried.⁴⁴ The reason for this is because JJDPA is not applicable to children under the jurisdiction of adult criminal courts.

Key Facts

- More than 400,000 children were arrested or held in limited custody by authorities for status offenses in 2004, representing roughly 18 percent of all juvenile arrests for the year.⁴⁵
- In 2006, the average daily number of youths detained in juvenile facilities for a status offense was 4,717.
- Truancy cases accounted for more than one third (35 percent) of all petitioned status offense cases handled in 2004, followed by runaway ungovernability (27 percent), liquor possession (19 percent), and curfew (10 percent) offense cases.⁴⁶
- Family-focused, strength-based alternatives to detaining children with status offenses are less costly and more effective, while detention frequently leads to interruption of education, children failing to return to school after release, and future delinquency.⁴⁷
- Boys are slightly more likely to be sent to court for truancy than girls, accounting for 54 percent of all petitioned truancy cases between 1990 and 1999.⁴⁸
- Almost 40 states allow children prosecuted in adult courts to be held in adult jails prior to their first hearing,⁴⁹ despite the fact that youth placed in adult jails are at high risk of assault, abuse, and death.⁵⁰
- In 2005 and 2006, 21 percent and 13 percent, respectively, of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence victims in jails were children under the age of 18; yet only 1 percent of all jail inmates are juveniles.⁵¹
- Children are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility.⁵²
- Research indicates that 40 percent of adult jails provide no educational services, 89 percent provide no special education services, and 93 percent provide no vocational training.⁵³
- Children prosecuted as adults are on average 34 percent more likely to commit crimes again than children retained in the juvenile justice system.⁵⁴

Recommendations

- Eliminate the Valid Court Order exception to the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders Core Requirement of JJDPDA to ensure that youth who are truant are kept out of secure juvenile corrections facilities.
- Update JJDPDA to decrease over-reliance on secure detention and to promote effective family-focused, school-based interventions for youth who are truant.
- Require the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to report annually the number of children charged with status offenses and held in secure detention, including the average length of stay in secure detention disaggregated by state.
- Ensure Jail Removal and Sight and Sound Separation core protections are extended to all children under 18 years of age who are held pre-trial, regardless of whether they are charged in juvenile or adult court.
- Change the definition of “adult inmate” so that states can place children convicted in adult court into juvenile facilities instead of adult prisons, without risking federal funding.

Rationale

Locking up children for noncriminal acts increases their risk of victimization, abuse, and suicide.⁵⁵

- Detention facilities are overcrowded, understaffed, and breed violence and neglect. Though such conditions are not appropriate for any child to experience, they are particularly inappropriate for children who are charged with non-criminal status offenses, such as truancy.

Secure detention is costly and strains public resources.

- The annual average cost per detention bed ranges between \$32,000 and \$65,000.⁵⁶ The cost to the public is overwhelming, given that there are 591 juvenile detention facilities across the country.

Detaining children for noncriminal behaviors leads to children failing to return to school after release and a decrease in family functioning.⁵⁷

- A Department of Education study found that 43 percent of incarcerated children receiving education services in confinement failed to return to school after release, and another 16 percent that did enroll in schools after release dropped out five months later.⁵⁸ Alternative responses, such as family-focused, school-based, or community-based interventions for children with status offenses are less costly and more effective.

Children prosecuted in adult courts are often being prosecuted for low to medium level offenses, not serious offenses.

- Researchers estimate that as many as 200,000 children are prosecuted annually in adult courts, despite the fact that state laws are typically intended to only prosecute the most serious offenders.⁵⁹ Regardless, the majority of children who are tried in adult courts have not committed a serious offense.⁶⁰ The hardship of being locked up with adult criminals frequently proves unnecessary, as many children held in adult jails are eventually transferred back to juvenile court or their cases get dismissed.⁶¹

Trying children as adults is ineffective and damaging to their future.

- Children tried as adults have been found to be more likely to reoffend than those not exposed to the adult criminal court system, as they receive little or no education, rehabilitative programming, or mental health services. To compound the problem, children are given an adult criminal record significantly limiting future education and employment opportunities, and they face similar penalties as adults, such as life without parole.⁶²



Common Core State Standards Initiative

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is an effort designed to improve educational outcomes for students by developing a set of common, voluntary, internationally-benchmarked academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. The development and implementation of the common core standards is a state-level effort, led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. Currently, every state has its own standards, which has resulted in varying expectations and academic rigor for students based on geography. Moreover, research has found that many states' standards and assessments are not aligned to college and workplace demands. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, we must ensure that all American children have access to an excellent education that prepares them for college, career, and citizenship. As of November 2009, 48 states and three territories have signed a Memorandum of Agreement in support of the common core state standards.

Common core state standards are a first step to leveling the playing field to allow for equal access to an excellent education and ensuring that our nation's students have the opportunity to compete in a global economy. Ensuring high academic expectations for all students, regardless of their zip code, is aligned with PTA's public policy priority of equity and opportunity for every child.

Key Facts

- Student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an exam that is administered to a sample of students nationwide, indicate that student proficiency varies greatly between states. A state-by-state comparison of NAEP 2005 average scale scores for 4th grade reading reveals that more than half of the states in the nation scored about one grade level below the highest scoring state of Massachusetts.⁶³
- In 2009, only 23 percent of high school graduates were college-ready, meaning they were likely to earn a "C" or better in college courses.⁶⁴
- The cost of providing remediation for college students is high. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that it costs \$1.4 billion to provide remedial education to students who have recently completed high school.⁶⁵
- American ninth and tenth graders' performance ranked 21st out of 30 in science and 25th out of 30 in mathematics on an internally-benchmarked assessment administered to developed countries.⁶⁶

Recommendations

- Establish college and career readiness as the common goal for all students.
- Ensure that accountability systems are aligned with evidence-based indicators of college and career-readiness.
- Incentivize the adoption of common core state standards by providing states with greater flexibility in the use of federal funds and offering financial supports for states to effectively implement the standards.
- Provide additional long-term financial support for states to collaborate on related educational initiatives, such as:
 - a.) The development and implementation of common assessments and curriculum.
 - b.) Teacher and professional development and supports.
 - c.) A research agenda that can continually improve the quality of the common core state standards over time.
- Ensure that parents and families are meaningfully supported and engaged in the implementation of common core state standards.
- Promote innovation and local solutions by ensuring states grant districts flexibility in using curriculum and professional development that reflects the needs and culture of the communities the district serves.

Rationale

Common Core State Standards will ensure that all students, regardless of zip code, have access to an excellent education and postsecondary opportunities.

- The current system in which each state is responsible for setting its own academic standards has resulted in 50 different standards for students of varying rigor and breadth. Research has found that many states' standards and assessments are neither aligned to college nor workplace demands.⁶⁷ Aligning K-12 standards with college and career expectations ensures that all students, no matter where they grow up, have an opportunity to become successful in college, career, and life.

Common Core State Standards will provide parents, students, and teachers with fewer, clearer, and higher expectations for student achievement.

- The evidence is clear—research has demonstrated that families are critical to closing the achievement gap.⁶⁸ Common core state standards will provide parents with clear expectations for what their children should be able to know and do, and will allow them to support student learning at home and hold their schools accountable for providing a high-quality education. Moreover, common core state standards will help teachers know what students must learn and communicate these expectations to parents and other stakeholders in order to share the responsibility of improving student achievement.

Ensuring that all U.S. students who graduate from high school are ready for college and career is necessary to secure the United States' future success in a globally competitive marketplace.

- The United States can no longer claim widespread educational success abroad or on the home front. Once the global leader in education, the United States has fallen behind other industrialized nations in both math and science.⁶⁹ A recent report by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics revealed that the literacy scores of America's fourth graders rank 11th among industrialized nations.⁷⁰ The United States is also losing over \$1 billion a year due to the cost of providing remedial education to college students.⁷¹ Federal investment and support in ensuring that students are prepared for the global workforce is needed to ensure the United States' security and prosperity for years to come.

Supporting a state-led effort to develop, adopt, and implement Common Core State Standards allows states to develop and collaborate on related educational supports that meet their unique needs.

- State officials have the best understanding of their state's culture and context and are best suited to work with one another to lead the common core state standards movement and get buy-in from local stakeholders. Also, after states have adopted the standards along their own timeline, they may be able to collaborate to produce aligned curriculum and assessments, creating an economy of scale that reduces costs.

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