

## NASSP Advocacy Update – July 2008

### **No Child Left Behind Act**

Although Sen. Kennedy had hoped to release a new draft of the NCLB reauthorization bill this year, delays in completing the Higher Education Act reauthorization bill and his recent illness prevented this from happening in the spring. It is 100% guaranteed that Congress will not consider the reauthorization bill this year, and because the presidential candidates are not talking about NCLB, some fear that the law won't be reauthorized until 2010 at the earliest...

As was mentioned in the April 2008 Advocacy Update, NASSP took the position that Congress should have reauthorized NCLB this year with significant changes. We had concerns that if the reauthorization did not take place this year, educators would be forced to comply with current law for many years to come. In addition, we felt that Congress had an opportunity to make a much-needed investment in middle level and high schools with this reauthorization. An action alert was sent to all NASSP members explaining our position in late-February, and over 1,740 letters have been sent to Congress through the Principal's Legislative Action Center (PLAC).

In early April, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced that she would take administrative steps "to ensure that all states use the same formula to calculate how many students graduate from high school on time, and how many drop out." In response, NASSP Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi wrote an editorial for NewsLeader and sent a letter to the Department outlining the association's position on calculating graduation rates:

[http://www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1407&DID=57425](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1407&DID=57425).

In June, NASSP also submitted formal comments to the Department of Education regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the Title I regulations issued April 23, 2008:

[http://www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1140&DID=57740](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1140&DID=57740).

### **Striving Readers Act**

There is a very slim possibility that the House will approve the Striving Readers Act (H.R. 2289/S. 958) this year as a stand-alone bill. The program is in a very unique position because it is currently being funded through the annual appropriations process (\$35 million in FY 2008), but it has never actually been authorized by Congress. In addition, the Striving Readers program has never been a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently NCLB) so we feel it makes sense for Congress to consider this bill outside of NCLB reauthorization.

NASSP has taken a lead role in the informal Striving Readers Coalition, which was created to help reauthorize and expand the Striving Readers program. Other coalition members include the International Reading Association, the National Middle School Association, Scholastic, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, the National Council of Teachers of English, Knowledge Alliance, and the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

This spring, the Coalition has been working to increase the # of bipartisan cosponsors on the House bill by targeting Republicans in states that currently have a Striving Readers grant (CA, IL, KY, MA, NJ, OH, OR, and TN), former members of the Congressional Reading Caucus, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. The following offices have been visited in 2008: Biggert (R-IL), Keller (R-FL), Jackson (D-IL), Dent (R-PA), Gerlach (R-PA), English (R-PA), Porter (R-NV), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Peterson (R-MN), Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Deal (R-GA), Kingston (R-GA), Putnam (R-FL), Pryce (R-OH), Neal (D-MA), Mario Diaz-Balart (R-

FL), Ehlers (R-MI), Tiberi (R-OH), Timothy Johnson (R-IL), Wamp (R-TN), Shimkus (R-IL), Kirk (R-IL), Van Hollen (D-MD), Jordan (R-OH), LaHood (R-IL), Blackburn (R-TN), Markey (D-MA), Lynch (D-MA), Davis (R-KY), LaTourette (R-OH), Langevin (D-RI), Weller (R-IL), Whitfield (R-KY), Tsongas (D-MA), Tierney (D-MA), and Olver (D-MA).

The Striving Readers Act has 25 Senate cosponsors (in addition to sponsor Sen. Jeff Sessions [R-AL]) and 47 House cosponsors (in addition to sponsor Rep. John Yarmuth [D-KY]).

### **Success in the Middle Act**

NASSP is one of the lead organizations in the Middle Grades Coalition on NCLB, which is actively advocating for the Success in the Middle Act (H.R. 3406/S. 2227). Although NCLB reauthorization has been postponed, the coalition continues to meet with the bill's House and Senate sponsors and to seek additional cosponsors.

The Success in the Middle Act has 28 House cosponsors (in addition to sponsor Rep. Raul Grijalva [D-AZ]) and 3 Senate cosponsors (in addition to sponsor Sen. Barack Obama [D-IL]).

### **FY 2009 Education Funding**

#### *FY 2009 Budget*

In June, Congress approved the FY 2009 budget resolution (S. Con. Res. 70), which contains \$84.3 billion in FY 2009 for education, job training, and social services. Policymakers also agreed to \$3.7 billion in advance FY 2010 funding for Title I, special education, school improvement, and career and technical education, bringing the total to approximately \$88 billion, which is \$8.4 billion more than President Bush requested.

Although non-binding, the budget resolution serves as a blueprint for the later appropriations process, and acts as a statement of the congressional majorities' priorities.

Included in the resolution is an NASSP-supported provision that was offered by Sens. Mark Pryor (D-AR) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) that would create a deficit-neutral reserve fund targeting middle school completion, high school dropouts, and preparing high school students for postsecondary education and the workforce.

Deficit-neutral reserve funds are also included for school construction and renovation, reducing teachers' out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies, and providing tax incentives for highly qualified teachers to serve in high-need schools.

An action alert supporting the FY 2009 budget resolution was sent to all NASSP members prior to the vote, and over 640 letters were sent to Congress through PLAC.

#### *FY 2009 Appropriations*

Later in June, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. A House subcommittee also approved its version of the appropriations bill, but the full committee markup was postponed after an argument between the committee's chairman and ranking member.

Funding levels for all programs will not be available until the committees have filed their respective reports, but here is a snapshot of programs important to NASSP members:

Unofficial and Approximate FY 2009 Budget—Education Highlights (in millions)			
Selected Programs	FY 2008	House FY 2009	Senate FY 2009
Title I	13,898.9	15,788.2	14,500
IDEA	10,947.5	11,551.5	11,424.5
School Leadership Program	14.5	10	19.0
Striving Readers	35.4	39.31	35.4
Dropout Prevention	0.0	N/A	N/A
Comprehensive School Reform	1.6	N/A	N/A
Smaller Learning Communities	80.1	88.0	0.0
Safe and Drug Free Schools	513.4	448	N/A
Elementary and Secondary School Counseling	48.6	48.6	52.0
Math and Science Partnerships	179.0	N/A	N/A
Teacher Quality State Grants	2,935.3	N/A	2,935.3
Rural Education	171.9	N/A	N/A
21st Century Community Learning Centers	1,081.2	N/A	1,081.2
Perkins Vocational Education	1,160.9	1,160.9	1,160.9
Advanced Placement	43.5	N/A	43.5

### **Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization**

Although a final conference report on the HEA reauthorization bill was expected to be completed in April, Congress recently passed legislation extending the current law until July 31. This the 7<sup>th</sup> short-term extension of the HEA, which was last reauthorized in 1998.

### **School Construction**

In late April, the House Education and Labor Committee took a step towards providing critical funding for school construction and modernization when it passed the 21st Century High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act (H.R. 3021). The bill now goes to the House floor, where it is currently awaiting consideration.

H.R. 3021 would provide \$6.4 billion in grants to states and local school districts for school construction, renovation, and modernization, while encouraging schools to become more energy efficient. The bill would require most funds to be used for school improvement projects that meet widely recognized green building standards and encourage schools to track their energy use and carbon footprints.

NASSP has endorsed the 21st Century High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act and in a letter of support to the committee, NASSP Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi stated, “The demands of today’s educational programs and services are overwhelming the structural capacity of schools in America—many of which were built nearly fifty years ago. Growing communities across our country cannot build schools fast enough to accommodate increasing student populations. Too many of America’s children go to school in overcrowded buildings with leaky roofs, faulty electrical systems, and outdated technology, all of which compromises their ability to achieve, succeed, and build the educational foundations necessary for the 21st century workforce. Modern, more efficient schools will improve the learning environment for students, enhance the workplace for school administrators, teachers, and other school staff, and most

importantly will help advance student achievement in urban, rural and suburban communities in every state.”

H.R. 3021 faces an uphill battle in the full House where there is Republican concern regarding the appropriate role of the federal government in education “The federal government has always maintained a limited role in education, focusing on key academic priorities such as closing achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers and ensuring services for children with disabilities. The construction and maintenance of schools are among the most fundamental rights and responsibilities belonging to communities, and the idea that we would move to federalize this role is nothing short of a stunning federal power grab,” said Rep. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), the senior Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee.

McKeon and other Republicans on the committee offered several amendments that sought to derail the legislation, however Democrats blocked these efforts.

The average school building is over 40 years old, and a 2000 study by the Department of Education found that it would take \$127 billion to bring schools into overall good condition. Moreover, with state and district budgets tightening, there is a clear need for a stronger federal presence in school construction and modernization funding.

Despite broad support from education and labor groups, Republican opposition combined with the bill’s price tag and reluctance from fiscally conservative Democrats to support additional spending, may slow or even halt passage of this legislation.

### **School Safety**

On June 11, the House Judiciary Committee approved a bill that would allow more funds to flow to low-income schools to improve school safety.

The School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007 (H.R. 2352) would allow more low-income schools to participate in the Secure Our Schools (SOS) program by lowering the local matching grant requirement to 20%, and increasing the federal share to a maximum of 80%. The bill would also authorize \$50 million annually for SOS grants. In addition, the bill would add to the list of allowable uses of grant funds by including a hotline for students and others to report dangerous incidents. Currently funds may be used to help schools pay for metal detectors, lighting, locks, security assessments, training for administrators, students, and teachers, coordination with law enforcement, and other measures designed to improve school safety.

The bill now goes to the House floor for consideration. Information on when the bill might be considered is not yet available. There is a companion bill in the Senate (S. 1217); however, no action has occurred on this bill since its introduction in 2007.

### **News from the U.S. Department of Education**

On July 1, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings addressed the Education Commission of the States (ECS) National Forum on Education Policy and announced the approval of six states -- Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland and Ohio -- to use the Differentiated Accountability Pilot aimed at helping states differentiate between underperforming schools in need of dramatic interventions and those that are closer to meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind.

Differentiated Accountability will allow states to vary the intensity and type of interventions to match the academic reasons that lead to a school's identification for improvement. In addition, some states and districts have a large percentage of their schools identified for improvement, thus impacting their capacity to provide meaningful, intensive reforms. Differentiated Accountability will assist those states by targeting resources and interventions to those schools most in need of intensive interventions and significant reform.

When choosing the six states, the Department used a rigorous peer review to ensure that the selection process was fair and transparent for all participating states. Recommendations were given to Secretary Spellings, who made the final approvals. In return for this flexibility, states participating in the pilot must commit to build their capacity for school reform; take the most significant actions for the lowest-performing schools, including addressing the issue of teacher effectiveness; and use data to determine the method of differentiation and categories of intervention.

The Department intends to invite states to submit additional Differentiated Accountability proposals in fall 2008. Further details about this next round of review will be forthcoming.

#### OVERVIEW:

- 17 states submitted a Differentiated Accountability proposal: Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.
- The Department submitted the proposals of all 17 states to a peer review panel of nationally recognized experts
- The peer review panel was comprised of nationally recognized experts in accountability who represented a wide range of perspectives from academia to the private sector to state and local organizations.
- In June 2008, the peer teams began reviews of state proposals and held conference calls with state representatives. June 13-14, 2008, the peer panel met in Washington, D.C., to review each state's Differentiated Accountability proposal using the Department's Peer Review Guidance, which can be found at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/daguidance.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/daguidance.doc).
- After considering the peers' comments, the Secretary approved six states to participate in the Differentiated Accountability Pilot program-Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland and Ohio.

As a condition of participation, the states must share data, participate in an evaluation and provide timely information to the Department regarding how the Differentiated Accountability model is implemented and its effects on student achievement. To learn more about the pilot program, visit: [www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/differentiatedaccountability/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/differentiatedaccountability/index.html).

#### **NASSP Board Position Statements**

In May, the NASSP Board of Directors adopted the following position statements:

- Professional Compensation for Principals:  
[http://www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57527](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57527)
- National Academic Standards in K-12 Education:  
[http://www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57526](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57526)

The position statements were sent to committee staff for the House Education and Labor and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees, and a press statement was sent to

national media. NASSP received very good coverage in *Education Daily* (pasted below) and *Education Week* (e-mail attachments).

### **NASSP recommends performance-pay guidelines**

Group seeks to get jump-start on NCLB reauthorization debate

#### **By James Michael Brodie**

While not endorsing pay-for-performance plans for school leaders, the National Association of Secondary School Principals is offering advice on how such a system should look.

In a newly released policy statement, NASSP recommended several approaches for states and districts looking to set up performance-based systems, including:

- Develop infrastructures.
- Offer guidelines and financial incentives.
- Develop systems for principals in conjunction with similar systems for teachers.

“It is the position of NASSP that performance-based compensation systems for principals should not be mandated. This position statement should not be misconstrued as an endorsement of such systems,” read the Reston, Va.-based organization’s statement. “Rather, the recommendations offered herein represent a template for states and districts considering the implementation of such systems.”

The move is meant as an opening salvo, as NASSP seeks to make sure it is involved in the conversation when NCLB comes up for reauthorization, most likely in the next Congress, said NASSP Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi.

“When NCLB was passed, hardly any education group was involved in its formation. We want to be on the playing field early. We have an obligation to be proactive,” said Tirozzi, who admitted that even raising the issue of performance-based pay standards could rankle some of his membership. “To be frank, we will have a few of our members who will be upset about this.”

Pressure to meet NCLB requirements is driving districts to consider for principal pay-for-performance plans. In a national survey conducted by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, about 17 percent of 193 responding school districts used performance-based pay components for principals, while 16 percent were considering such a system.

Tirozzi said the approach is a mistake. “Performance-based pay is not a quick fix,” he said. “We are not afraid of accountability. But if we want to be sensitive about this, we want to pay them for what they do.”

Tirozzi said educators have been concerned that pay-for-performance plans would only take high-stakes test results into account, disregarding other school and student performance factors, such as graduation rates, number of AP classes offered, college attendance, school and district improvement objectives, school climate, and parent participation.

“All of these things should be taken into account,” Tirozzi said. “To say that state test results are the one and only criteria is myopic and wrong. States have different standards. You have to establish a floor that says, ‘Here is a living wage,’ and then we can start.”

### **NASSP's performance-pay guidelines**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals set forth a number of guidelines for districts considering using performance-pay standards. These are a few of the recommendations. NASSP recommends:

- States and districts should collaborate with principals, superintendents, professional associations and unions to develop and implement systems.
- Systems should be one component of the district school improvement plan and be linked to recruiting and retaining principals.
- Performance awards should be substantial, and compensation should be budgeted and sustainable.
- Districts should provide performance awards to all principals who meet designated criteria.
- Districts should assist principals in developing individual professional growth plans and job-embedded professional development.
- School districts should examine quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to academic and nonacademic indicators.

*To read the complete position statement, go to*

[www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57527](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=33&DID=57527).

### **NASSP latest group to endorse national academic standards**

By Stephen Sawchuk

The National Association of Secondary School Principals announced Tuesday its support of national academic standards in reading and math, a move aligning its 30,000 members behind a diverse coalition of organizations that favor the concept.

NASSP Director Gerald Tirozzi said the country must shift to national standards to resolve the longstanding inability of educators, administrators and policymakers to make accurate state-by-state student performance comparisons under NCLB. The law allows each state to define its own content standards in reading and math and set its own definition of proficiency attainment relative to those standards.

“In that wonderful year 2014, we’re going to have 50 ships showing up at Lake Wobegone and waving a different flag saying they’re proficient,” Tirozzi said, referencing NCLB’s overarching deadline for having all students scoring on grade level. “Reading is reading, and no legislature can change the defining law of algebra. All states should be held accountable to address higher standards.”

NASSP’s board voted unanimously to endorse national standards, Tirozzi said. Specifically, the organization recommends that Congress:

- Appoint an independent, diverse group of researchers, teachers and experts to develop national standards in reading and math for grades K-12 and assess the feasibility of standards for other subjects.
- Provide incentive grants for states to adopt the standards and to prepare students to meet them.
- Fund the development of national assessments aligned to the common standards to replace state tests.
- Require the Education Department to oversee state progress in adopting the standards.

Although such standards should be voluntary at first, all states ultimately should be required to adopt them, Tirozzi said. “My concern is that if it takes a couple of years to develop the standards and then you leave this to states to adopt voluntarily, it may take another 10 years for states to do,” he said. “I don’t think we can write off that number of kids.”

But the federal government should leave other responsibilities to states and districts, he emphasized.

“The critical point we want to make is that this is not more federal control of education. I think it’s much less,” Tirozzi said. “Once the standards are done, it’s up to the states and districts to develop curricula, professional development, and hold schools accountable to these standards.” During the past two years, groups from various parts of the political spectrum have endorsed national standards — a significant boost for a concept long considered unworkable for the country’s decentralized education system. The groups include the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank; the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents 66 large urban school districts; and the Alliance for Excellent Education, a high school reform advocacy organization.

On Capitol Hill, the strongest proponent of national standards is Sen. Christopher Dodd, (D-CT), the second-ranking Democrat behind Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In 2007, Dodd introduced a bill that would charge the National Assessment Governing Board with developing model math and science standards as well as authorize incentive grants to states to adopt those standards.

### **NASSP Federal Grassroots Network**

The NASSP Federal Grassroots Network was officially launched in April with just over 30 members. The Office of Government Relations initiated the first conference call of the Network in May, and a Moodle community has been created to help Network members communicate with each other and with NASSP staff.

Any NASSP member who would like to join the Federal Grassroots Network should complete the Web-based reply form at [www.principals.org/grassroots](http://www.principals.org/grassroots). Questions or comments should be directed to Mark Ames at 703-860-7338 or [amesm@principals.org](mailto:amesm@principals.org).