March 9, 2005

The Honorable
Attn: Staff
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.  20515

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) - the preeminent leadership organization representing middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals - I am writing to request your support for S.250, the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2004*.

The Perkins programs serve more than 10 million Americans across the country, in comprehensive high schools, vocational-technical (vo-tech) high schools, area vo-tech centers, and in postsecondary institutions providing technical programs, such as community colleges, technical institutes, skills centers, and other public and private two and four-year colleges.

NASSP is pleased to see many of the changes made in provisions of the Senate bill. Secondary school principals agree with:

- Maintaining Title II, the Tech Prep Program as a separate defined program.
- The creation of Graduation and Career Plans for students in the Tech Prep program, with allowed flexibility for the inclusion of regular vocational education students. This program will provide funding to equip teachers, faculty, administrators, and counselors with the knowledge, skills and occupational information needed to assist students and parents with career exploration, educational opportunities, education financing options, and exposure to high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations and nontraditional fields.
- New accountability measures that will require recipients to:
  - Negotiate performance measures with the states and report progress in achieving these performance levels on an annual basis.
  - Negotiate adjusted levels of performance for the 1st and 2nd years, and then re-negotiate performance levels with the state prior to the 3rd and 5th years.
  - Make continual and substantial improvement in the academic and vocational and technical achievement of vocational students.
  - Create an improvement plan based on the results of assessment, if they do not meet performance measures.
- Requiring recipients to report progress on a yearly basis.
- The modification of local improvement plan language to specify that the improvement plan is an agreement between the state and local school district for
the first year the school district fails to meet *more than one* of the performance levels.

- The inclusion and expansion of comprehensive professional development funds that may be used for vocational and technical, academic, guidance, administrative personnel and most importantly principals.

While many of the changes made in the legislation will positively affect the Perkins program and secondary schools, some of the changes may have unintended consequences. For example, NASSP is concerned that if the cap is removed on the amount of money that can be spent from state leadership activities on state correctional institutions and nontraditional fields, that there will not be adequate funds left to support other activities such as professional development.

Most importantly, NASSP requests that the Senate consider increasing Perkins funding to $1.5 billion for 2005. Perkins is the single largest federal investment in the nation’s high schools- level funding the program does not represent an appropriate federal commitment to meeting the needs of high school students.

NASSP appreciates Senator Enzi’s leadership and the commitment of other Senators, who are working to improve education for our nation’s high school students. We ask that you support S.250 when it is brought to the floor for a vote. In addition, we strongly urge that you take swift action in working with the House to appoint conferees and finalize a conference report.

Sincerely,

Gerald N. Tirozzi
Executive Director