Dear Senator:

As you prepare to approve a Fiscal Year 2006 appropriations bill, I encourage you to retain and increase funding for programs that help high schools implement school improvements. Historically, Congress has invested in the elementary grades and higher education, but has paid too little attention to the nation’s secondary schools.

Title I of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act provides the primary source of federal support for K-12 schools. Despite significant increases to the Title I program within the past few years, secondary schools receive far less funding under this program than elementary schools. In fact, based on U.S. Department of Education statistics, of last year's Title I appropriation of $12.7 billion, approximately only $635 million was directed to the high school level. That amounts to roughly 5% of the entire Title I funds.

Policymakers have often chosen to target resources on the early years to promote child development and address learning problems before they become too severe. NASSP strongly supports this early intervention strategy but also believes such an approach does not inoculate children from later academic and learning difficulties. For this reason, it is important to retain and increase the following federal programs, which are primarily secondary school-focused:

**Advanced Placement (AP)**
**NASSP recommends an FY 2006 funding level of $52 million**
Supports state and local efforts to increase access to AP classes and tests for low-income students, and to cover part or all of the cost of test fees for low-income students enrolled in AP courses.

**Comprehensive School Reform**
**NASSP recommends an FY 2006 funding level of $206 million**
Designed to help all students in a school to meet challenging academic content and performance goals through research-based, replicable strategies for whole-school improvement.

**Elementary and Secondary School Counseling**
**NASSP recommends an FY 2006 funding level of $84.5 million**
Helps improve school safety and increase academic achievement by expanding students’ access to counseling services. (Despite the name of this program, all funds are currently directed to elementary schools. The program must meet a $40 million lever before any funds can go to secondary schools.)
Smaller Learning Communities
NASSP recommends funding the program at $174 million
Supports school districts and large schools to help plan and implement smaller, more personalized learning environments.

State Scholars
NASSP recommends an FY 2006 funding level of $12 million
Provides assistance to states to create initiatives to increase academic rigor across the curriculum, and requires high school students to take at least 3 years of math and science, 3 ½ years of social studies, 4 years of English, and 2 years of foreign language.

Striving Readers
NASSP recommends an FY 2006 funding level of $200 million
Addresses the needs of 6 million students who reach the secondary school level unable to read and write at grade level.

Equally important to the success of secondary school improvement programs is ensuring we have school leaders who are well prepared to perform the instructional leadership role required to effectively lead. NASSP asks that the Congress fund at an FY 2006 level of $16 million, the School Leadership Program authorized under No Child Left Behind. Attracting and retaining qualified school leaders, especially in rural areas and high poverty areas, continues to be a tremendous challenge.

Schools cannot be transformed, restructured, or reconstituted without strong leadership. The School Leadership program is filling an important need in the areas of recruitment and professional development. Although the Title II (ESEA) program is often referenced as a source of funds for this purpose, the vast majority of these funds are directed to other priorities. The U.S. Department of Education reports that 58% of Title II funds are used for teacher salaries to reduce class size, 16% of funds are directed to administrative and “other” categories, 1% to the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), leaving only 25% for professional development which school districts report as being spent on teachers.

Secondary school principals across the nation look to you for support as they implement school reform strategies that will enhance every student’s achievement. I encourage you to provide the resources needed to bring middle level and high school improvement to fruition.

Sincerely,

Gerald N. Tirozzi
Executive Director