November 9, 2005

RETAIN AND INCREASE FUNDING FOR VITAL PROGRAMS
THAT SUPPORT SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM

Dear Conferee:

As you prepare to negotiate a Fiscal Year 2006 appropriations bill, I strongly encourage you to retain funding for three small yet critical programs that help high schools implement school improvement:

- **Comprehensive School Reform**: Helps all students in a school to meet challenging academic content and performance goals through research-based, replicable strategies for whole-school improvement.
- **Dropout Prevention**: Implements research-based, sustainable, and coordinated school dropout prevention and re-entry programs for students in grades 6-12.
- **Smaller Learning Communities**: Supports school districts and large schools to help plan and implement smaller, more personalized learning environments.

NASSP is very concerned that current budgetary constraints and specific lists of programs targeted for elimination will influence Members of Congress to terminate these programs without realizing the value of the activities supported. Discussion of eliminating these programs is perplexing and frustrating for secondary school leaders and takes place during a time when Congress should be focusing more, not fewer resources to secondary schools.

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. But 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 years 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.

NASSP supports an early intervention strategy but also believes such an approach does not inoculate children from later academic and learning difficulties. If our nation is to address high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and low college attendance rates—especially with regard to low income and minority students—we must provide school improvement resources for all schools across the education continuum. Please do not discount secondary school student needs in the FY 2006 budget.

Sincerely,

Gerald N. Tirozzi
Executive Director