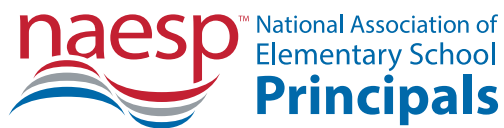




2024
NAESP-NASSP
Federal Legislative Agenda



EDUCATOR SHORTAGES AND THE PRINCIPAL PIPELINE

• **Widespread shortages among principals and school support staff professionals continue to grow in states across the country.**

- » Nearly 9 in 10 public school districts reported struggling to hire teachers this school year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) "School Pulse Panel."
- » Principal turnover more than doubled to 16% by the end of the 2021–22 school year, with roughly 19,000 more school leaders leaving than the previous year. Departure rates were even higher for high poverty (23%) and rural districts (32%), according to a 2023 RAND research brief survey.
- » NASSP's 2022 "Survey of America's School Leaders and High School Students" revealed that one out of two school leaders expect to leave the profession within three years.
- » NAESP's national "Leaders We Need Now" research series found that post-pandemic job stress would lead to an increase in retirements, departures, and shortages.
- » The 2022 "State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal Surveys" (RAND) found poor personal well-being and unfavorable working conditions were associated with educators' intentions to leave their jobs. Supportive environments were linked to better well-being and decreased likelihood of intent to leave.

• **Congress can address these challenges by:**

- » Bolstering investments in the educator pipeline to attract educators to the profession, strengthening pre-service preparation, and expanding professional development opportunities to retain high-quality principals.
- » Improving financial incentives for principals commensurate with their role and responsibilities as school leaders.
- » Enhancing on-the-job coaching and other professional development opportunities for principals.

NASSP and NAESP urge members of Congress to cosponsor and enact the following legislation to address nationwide shortages:

• **Loan Forgiveness for Educators Act (S. 963/H.R. 1757)**

- » Incentivizes candidates to serve in early education programs and high-need public schools by paying educators' monthly student loan payments and removes the existing Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (TLFP) cap (\$17,500) to provide complete forgiveness of all federal student loan debts at the end of five years of qualifying service.
- » Expands eligibility to include school leaders in TLFP for the first time.
- » Sponsors: Sen. Luján (D-NM) and Rep. Leger Fernandez (D-NM)

• **Educators for America Act (S. 1341/H.R. 2992)**

- » Invests \$1 billion annually in the educator pipeline to ensure schools have a diverse, profession-ready workforce of teachers, principals, and specialized instructional support personnel. The legislation would boost outreach efforts to future teachers, expand educator residency programs, and invest in educator preparation programs.
- » Doubles the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant to \$8,000 per year.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Reed (D-RI), Casey (D-PA), Luján (D-NM) and Rep. Adams (D-NC)

• **Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (S. 722/H.R. 1477)**

- » Expands qualified expenses under 529 college savings plans to include postsecondary training and credentialing, including teacher and principal certification programs.
- » Provides valuable tax-advantaged resources that already exist for undergraduate education to workers across hundreds of industries, including K-12 education, incentivizing them to pursue career growth.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Klobuchar (D-MN), Braun (R-IN), Duckworth (D-IL), Collins (R-ME), Manchin (D-WV), Heinrich (D-NM) and Reps. Spanberger (D-VA) and Wittman (R-VA)

• **Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals (PREP) Act (S. 2369)**

- » Expands the definition of "high-need" districts under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to include schools experiencing teacher shortages in rural communities as well as in areas like special education, English language, science, technology, engineering, math, and career and technical education (CTE) in order to give schools access to additional support.
- » Encourages school districts to create partnerships, including Grow Your Own programs, with local community colleges and universities to ensure their programs are educating future educators in areas where there is a shortage of teachers and school leaders.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Kaine (D-VA) and Collins (R-ME)

• **Preparing and Retaining All (PARA) Educators Act (S. 3681)**

- » Provides funding to support state and district efforts to retain paraprofessionals, prioritizing high-need rural and urban areas.
- » Provides paraprofessionals with access to high-quality professional development programs.
- » Sponsors: Sen. Markey (D-MA) and Rep. Kuster (D-NH)

• **Retaining Educators Takes Added Investment Now (RETAIN) Act (S. 1567/H.R. 3265)**

- » Creates a fully refundable tax credit for teachers, paraprofessionals, mental health providers, and other education professionals working in Title I schools and early childhood education programs.
- » Increases the tax credit as professionals become more experienced, incentivizing retention.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Durbin (D-IL), Baldwin (D-WI), Smith (D-MN) and Reps. Schneider (D-IL) and Stevens (D-MI)

IMPROVING SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND SAFETY RESOURCES

- **The U.S. Surgeon General recently called youth mental health “the defining public health issue of our time.” The Surgeon General’s warning comes as startling data highlighting the student and educator mental health crisis continues to be released.**

- » According to NASSP’s 2022 survey, three-quarters of school leaders (73%) and students (74%) reported they needed help with their mental or emotional health the previous year. One-half of school leaders also reported student behavior is worse than before the pandemic, with more than 80% concerned about bullying and/or drug use in their school.
- » A 2022 RAND survey found that 86% of principals named supporting their teachers’ mental health as a source of stress.
- » Nearly three in five teen girls said they felt “persistently sad or hopeless,” in the “CDC’s 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey,” the highest rate in a decade.
- » A 2022 National Center for Education Statistics study found 69% of public schools reported an increase in students seeking mental health services, and 76% of schools reported an increase in staff voicing concerns about students exhibiting symptoms including depression, anxiety, and trauma. Meanwhile, only 56% of public schools agreed they could effectively provide mental health services to all students in need.
- » Research released by the Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health suggests that unlike general absenteeism, the majority of students who are chronically absent have one or more depressive or anxiety disorders. More than one in four public school students missed at least 10% of school days in the 2021–22 school year (up from about one in seven pre-pandemic).

- **Congress can address these challenges by:**

- » Significantly increasing federal support to promote the physical and emotional well-being of educators and students as a critically important factor in the safety, security, and comprehensive success of students.
- » Empowering principals who are uniquely positioned to leverage trauma-informed schoolwide strategies to address the enormous wave of social, emotional, and mental health needs among students and staff.

NASSP and NAESP urge members of Congress to cosponsor and enact the following legislation to provide support for mental health, wellness, and safety in schools:

- **Supporting the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act (S. 2530/H.R. 744)**

- » Modeled after the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act, the legislation requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education to identify and disseminate evidence-based best practices for preventing suicide and improving mental health and resiliency among educators and training for educators and school staff in appropriate strategies to promote their mental health.
- » Establishes new grant programs to promote mental health and wellness support among the education professional workforce.
- » Sponsors: Sen. Casey (D-PA) and Reps. Bonamici (D-OR), Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Wild (D-PA)

- **Mental Health Services for Students Act (S. 1884/H.R. 3713)**

- » Provides \$130 million in competitive grants for schools, expanding the scope of the Project (AWARE) Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education program by providing on-site licensed mental health professionals in schools across the country.
- » Sponsors: Sen. Smith (D-MN) and Rep. Napolitano (D-CA)

- **Mental Health in Schools Excellence Program Act of 2023 (S. 1574/H.R. 3228)**

- » Establishes a new program to expand the mental health services workforce in schools by requiring the U.S. Department of Education to contract with higher education institutions to pay a part of tuition for graduate students pursuing careers in the school-based mental health profession.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Shaheen (D-NH), Young (R-IN), Cramer (R-ND) and Reps. Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Golden (D-ME)

- **Protecting Kids on Social Media Act (S. 1291/H.R. 6149)**

- » Requires social media platforms to verify users' ages and limits children's access, obtain consent from parents for children under 13 attempting to create accounts, and provide them with the ability to revoke consent.
- » Prevents social media companies from using the personal data privacy of minors for marketing purposes.
- » Sponsors: Sens. Schatz (D-HI), Cotton (R-AR), Murphy (D-CT), Britt (R-AL) and Reps. James (R-MI) and Ryan (D-NY)

- **One School, One Nurse Act (H.R. 305)**

- » Directs the U.S. Department of Education to award competitive grants to eligible entities for recruiting, hiring, and retaining school nurses. An eligible entity is a local education agency (LEA) or a partnership between a state education agency and a consortium of LEAs in the state.
- » The U.S. Department of Education must specify in regulation the recommended nurse-to-student ratios for elementary and secondary schools.
- » Sponsor: Rep. Wilson (D-FL)

FEDERAL K-12 EDUCATION BUDGET PRIORITIES

- **Robust federal investments in preK-12 education are essential to our national goals that all children enter school ready to learn and graduate college, career, and citizenship ready.**

- » Congress passed the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act, which maintains overall federal government funding at FY23 levels for FY24 and FY25.
- » Federal K-12 programs already receive less today in inflation-adjusted dollars than they did a decade ago. Students and educators have made immense sacrifices in recent years and should not suffer any further reductions in funding with the needs they face.
- » 53% of district leaders anticipate they will be forced to cut or reduce staffing, summer learning programs, and compensation as ESSER funds expire later this year, according to an AASA survey.

- **Congress can address these challenges by:**

- » Maintaining level funding for all programs under ESSA in FY24 and FY25.

NASSP and NAESP urge members of Congress to prioritize funding for the following programs:

- **TITLE I, Grants to Local Education Agencies**

- » **FY24 request: \$18.4 billion**

- Provides financial support to LEAs and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children receive support. Any reduction to Title I grants would hurt the most vulnerable students and school districts.
- NAESP and NASSP strongly support increasing Title I funding as the pillar of federal support to K-12 schools.

- **TITLE II, PART A, Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants**

- » **FY24 request: \$2.2 billion**

- Provides formula grants to states and districts to strengthen professional development opportunities for teachers and principals, making them more effective educators and more likely to stay in the profession.
- Helps districts fund principal residencies, expand job-embedded and cohort-based professional learning, and boost mentorship opportunities for aspiring principals.

- **TITLE IV, PART A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants**

- » **FY24 request: \$1.38 billion**

- This flexible ESSA block grant program supports schools in funding activities in three broad areas: 1) Providing students with a well-rounded education, including music, the arts, social studies, and computer science; 2) Supporting the safety and health of students; and 3) Encouraging the effective use of technology in schools.
- Title IV has become a key source of funding for school-based mental health and safety funding in recent years and is critical to ongoing violence prevention efforts.

• IDEA STATE GRANTS, PART B

» FY24 request: \$14.19 billion

- Assists state and local education agencies in educating children with disabilities.
- Supports implementing, expanding, and improving access to high-quality special education services.
- Current funding is only 13% of the national average per-pupil expenditure, far below the 40% goal when IDEA was enacted. It is time for Congress to fulfill its promise and pass the IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 2217/H.R. 4519).

• CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) STATE GRANTS

» FY24 request: \$1.43 billion

- Provides support for states and communities to implement high-quality CTE programs to meet the demands of the 21st century economy and workforce.
- According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, almost all high school students participate in CTE, and more than half take three or more credits. Additional data also show that students participating in CTE programs have graduation rates of more than 90%.

• HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

» FY24 request: \$12 billion

- Head Start helps prepare children to succeed in school by providing early learning, health and development services to families with children from birth to age 5.
- Currently serves close to 800,000 children.
- Children enrolled in Head Start enter kindergarten better ready to learn and are more likely to graduate high school.

• AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP) EXTENSION ACT (S. 3565/H.R. 6929)

- » Extends funding for the ACP, which currently serves more than 22 million households with more than 3 million K-12 students by providing a \$30 monthly subsidy for internet access.
- » ACP funding is currently projected to run out as soon as April.
- » Would provide \$7 billion to extend the program through the remainder of 2024.

