



September 25, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 2051

Dear Chairs Alexander and Kline and Ranking Members Murray and Scott:

On behalf of the National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Personnel, we thank you for your efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NASISP is a coalition of national professional organizations whose members provide and support a variety of school-based prevention, early identification, and intervention services that remove barriers to learning and assist students in becoming effective learners and productive citizens. Our organizations represent over a million professionals, including school counselors, school nurses, psychologists, school psychologists, social workers and school social workers; occupational and physical therapists; art, dance/movement, and music therapists; and, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists. The major national organizations representing general and special education teachers and student support administrators are also coalition members.

NASISP provided detailed recommendations to both the HELP Committee and the Committee on Education and the Workforce. We were pleased to see that all recommendations but one were included in the draft of the Every Child Achieves Act, which ultimately passed the Senate on a strong bipartisan vote.

These provisions have clear bipartisan support. As you work toward developing a final bill, we urge you to retain the following specific language related to specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) and services. Unless otherwise noted, legislative citations refer to language in the Every Child Achieves Act.

1. Maintain the following provisions that explicitly require consultation with specialized instructional support personnel in the development of Title I State and local education agency plans and Title IV plans and needs assessments.

Sec. 1111(a)(1)

Sec. 1111(a)(3)(ii)(I)

Sec. 1112 (a)(1)(A)

Sec 1112(b)(11)

Sec. 1113 (e)(2)(B)

Sec 4104(b)(2)(A)

Sec 4103(c)(3)(A)(i)

Rationale: Input from specialized instructional support personnel into the development and implementation of State and local plans and as part of the peer review process in the development of the State plan must be maintained. Since specialized instructional support personnel provide direct services to students and consultative services to other staff members, their input is necessary to ensure the local district plan adequately addresses how these services will be provided. Further, consultation with SISP under Title IV LEA subgrants is essential. SISP are the personnel specifically trained to work on improving school climate, addressing barriers to learning, providing professional development to other staff on crisis intervention, and developing and implementing prevention models. These personnel must be included from the outset in developing programs to ensure funds are well-spent and address the goals of improving academic performance.

2. Allow use of Title I funds for early identification of students with learning and behavioral challenges and provide targeted instruction through the use of multi-tiered systems of support, including positive behavior [a] interventions and supports, response to intervention, and early intervening services.

Sec. 1111(c)(1)(D)

Sec 1112(b)(12)

Rationale: These tiered approaches have been shown to improve school climate, decrease negative behavior, and improve student academic achievement. Specialized instructional support personnel are uniquely trained to develop and implement tiered, evidence-based interventions that address academic and behavioral challenges for all students and must be named in any language that encourages or directs the use of these intervention models.

3. Maintain the inclusion of counseling, school based mental health programs, specialized instructional support services and mentoring as evidence-based strategies for schoolwide programs.

Sec.1113(e)(2)(F)(ii)(aa)

Rationale: Rigorous curriculum and high quality instruction are central factors in school success, but even the best teachers will face barriers to instruction if the school climate is not supportive and students are not ready and able to learn. Student connectedness and student mental wellness are integral to safety, behavior, attendance, socialization, and learning—all of which directly impact academic achievement. A large body of research documents the effectiveness of these strategies in improving student outcomes.

4. Retain inclusion of specialized instructional support personnel in all high-quality professional development opportunities under the statute.

Sec 2101(d)(2)(I)

Sec 2102(b)(2)(B)(v)

Sec 2012(b)(C)(A)(i)

Rationale: Continuous improvement for *all school staff* is a key component in ensuring student success. Specialized instructional support personnel, as critical members of the school multi-disciplinary team, should be afforded equal opportunities for ongoing, high-quality professional development. We would urge you to add specialized instructional support personnel wherever professional development opportunities are afforded to "teachers, principals, and other school leaders" throughout the bill. Specialized instructional support services exist in schools for the sole purpose of helping students reach graduation and prepare for further education and employment. Ongoing professional development with other members of the team – teachers and administrators – is necessary to meet this goal.

5. Retain programmatic authorization for the following:

Section 4301- Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

Sec 4402- Physical Education Program

Rationale: It is imperative that ECAA authorize these critical programs that help schools address students' social/emotional, physical and mental health needs to ensure they are prepared to learn. [or make a complete sentence] Retaining authorization for these programs will allow high need school districts to increase the number of students receiving the comprehensive supports they need to succeed.

6. Allow Title IV funds to be used for activities and programs to support chronic disease management led by school nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, and other appropriate specialists or professionals to help maintain the well-being of students.

Sec 4105(a)(V)

Rationale: The health care needs of students with chronic health conditions are complex and continuous. Students with a chronic condition are identified by school nurses and other specialized instructional support personnel who then coordinate evaluation and intervention services. SISP work together to assist students in learning to manage chronic illness, increasing seat time in the classroom and decreasing student absenteeism, resulting in cost savings to the school district and an increase in the overall academic success of the student.

7. Retain ECAA's literacy program.

Title II, Part D

Rationale: S. 1177 contains a new comprehensive literacy program that replaces the NCLB Early Reading First and Reading First programs (S. 1177, Title II, Part D, the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program). S.1177 provides schools with the flexibility to use all professional staff, as appropriate, to support literacy instruction in schools. This includes specialized instructional support personnel, such as audiologists and speech-language pathologists, who can provide a variety of supports, screenings, and interventions for students who are struggling to gain literacy skills. Therefore, we strongly request that the House concurs with the language found in S. 1177, Title II, Part D, and retain the references to specialized instructional support personnel.

8. Retain the following definitions:

"PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.—The term 'professional development'—
(A) includes evidence-based, job-embedded, continuous activities that—
(xv) include instruction in ways that teachers, school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, other staff, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents."

"(A) SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL.—The term 'specialized instructional support personnel' means — "(i) school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists; and

"(ii) other qualified professional personnel, such as school nurses, speech language pathologists, and school librarians involved in providing assessment, diagnosis, counseling, educational, therapeutic, and other necessary services (including related services as that term is defined in 3 section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) as part of a comprehensive program to meet student needs."

"SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES.—The term 'specialized instructional support services' means the services provided by specialized instructional support personnel."

"OTHER STAFF.—The term 'other staff ' means specialized instructional support personnel, librarians, career guidance and counseling personnel, education aides, and other instructional and administrative personnel."

9. Remove extension of transferability provision:

Regarding proposed Title VI, Sec. 6102, "Transferability of Funds," NASISP opposes extending and expanding the ability of states to transfer funds from the titles for which specific funds are allotted. We are particularly concerned this provision focuses on Titles II and IV, both of which are critical to the successful implementation of the law. Title IV programs, already limited through the block grant approach of the bill, must receive adequate funding to ensure appropriate services are available to students. Title II supports efforts to ensure teachers and principals are well-prepared and provides assistance for ongoing training to all school personnel. Transferring funds from either title will seriously diminish the impact of the law. We would urge you to remove this provision.

Again, we greatly appreciate your attention to this language and strongly encourage you to maintain these valuable provisions in the conference bill.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association (AATA)
American Counseling Association (ACA)
American Council for School Social Work (ACSSW)
American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Music Therapy Association (AMTA)
American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
American Psychological Association (APA)
American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
National Association of Pupil Services Administrators (NAPSA)
National Association of School Nurses (NASN)
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Education Association (NEA)
School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)

NASISP Co-Chairs

Libby Nealis, School Social Work Association of America (libbynealis@yahoo.com)

Neil Snyder, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (nsnyder@asha.org)

Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, National Association of School Psychologists (kvaillancourt@naspweb.org)