



STATE-LED COMMON CORE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

June 2009

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) recognizes the importance of rigorous state and local academic standards to ensure that students enrolled in our public schools are competitive in the global society. Additionally, recent federal investments in our public schools as a result of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* will make it possible for states and local school districts to intensify their efforts to accomplish these goals.

There appears to be a strong consensus that improved efforts must be directed to ensure rigorous standards, strong curricula aligned with those standards, and a valid and reliable system of assessments that fairly and accurately reflect the performance of students, schools and school districts. However, policy differences exist among major stakeholders regarding whether such standards should be developed and mandated by the federal government or whether such efforts can be taken by states and local school districts individually or collectively by groups of states to achieve this goal. NSBA strongly urges Congress to provide maximum authority and flexibility to the states in this effort.

We believe that in order to further ensure global competitiveness the federal government must take on a new role. The new role must be one of partnership and support to states not only in terms of funding for those students with the greatest needs, but also serving as a clearinghouse to share and promote ideas and best practices regarding actions to overcome shortfalls in student achievement. The federal government must increase incentives to states and local school districts to create constructive remedies rather than to continue to employ the “top-down approach” that has not worked.

With respect to academic standards, NSBA believes that the federal government should play a supportive role to the states in the raising of state academic standards, but should not be involved in the actual development of those standards. Further, the federal government should provide technical support to states, if requested, to identify essential skills that students should have to compete successfully in college and in the global workforce; and to develop and assess those state standards.

Therefore, NSBA urges Congress to take the following actions:

- (a) support state and local efforts to provide students with an education that is appropriately focused on the skills and uses of knowledge needed for success in the global and technological world of the 21st century by funding multiple education entities, including regional education entities, to develop model standards for voluntary adoption for those purposes;
- (b) support 1) funding for research; 2) financial assistance to states or groups of states, when requested, to assist them in developing and implementing standards around the skills and uses of knowledge that students will need in the 21st century; and 3) direct financial assistance to states or groups of states, when requested to assist them in developing and implementing content standards provided;
- (c) oppose efforts to make the aforementioned activities mandatory on states or local school districts or as a condition for the receipt of other federal aid;

- (d) oppose efforts to involve the federal government directly or indirectly (e.g. through an entity over which it can exercise control) to develop mandatory or model national content standards or to mandate the development of common content standards among groups of states; and
- (e) ensure that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and international tests do not exceed their current use to provide comparative data through sampling and oppose requiring or coercing the use of these assessments by states in developing their own standards or for high stakes accountability purposes.

By assuming this new federal role, states and local communities would be much more engaged in the development of more rigorous standards and would be more likely to invest more of their own resources – rather than to defer to the federal government for greater funding because of the perception of yet another unfunded federal mandate.

States and local communities are very much committed to substantive improvements in academic standards. What states and local communities expect and desire from the federal government is a strong national vision – but not one that simply conveys or equates a national vision to national mandates or directives. The national vision must reflect the understanding of current authority and Constitutional responsibilities to states and re-define the role of the federal government so that it promotes national policies within a framework that supports states and local communities. This must include sufficient flexibility in their operations to effectively and efficiently address the unique challenges of their local communities.

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