

(14)

**TAKING ACTION ON THE PROMISE OF THE EVERY STUDENT  
SUCCEEDS ACT**

**WHEREAS:** The failed test-and-punish accountability system created by the No Child Left Behind Act discouraged educational innovation, demoralized teachers, narrowed instruction and, most importantly, failed to address the needs of children, particularly the most disadvantaged; and

**WHEREAS:** The burdens of poverty and societal failures have long been unfairly placed squarely on the shoulders of teachers, and educator morale is at an all-time low; and

**WHEREAS:** The American Federation of Teachers vigorously fought for the long-overdue reset of the federal role in preK-12 education policy, and further fought, successfully, to ensure the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act addressed the priorities of our nation's students and educators; and

**WHEREAS:** the AFT successfully fought for the new law to:  
Retain its roots in equity and civil rights; maintain federal funding for public schools that educate large populations of disadvantaged students; expand early childhood education; increase funding opportunities and visibility for English language learners; end the test-and-punish accountability system, giving schools and educators the latitude to teach rather than simply require them to test; get the federal government out of the business of teacher evaluation; ensure that paraprofessional qualification requirements remain intact; require states to develop and implement plans for schools to reduce suspensions and expulsions by providing appropriate supports; and improve accountability and transparency in charter schools; and

**WHEREAS:** The spirit of the Every Student Succeeds Act aligns with the AFT's commitment to reclaim the promise of public education, and, if implemented properly, ESSA has the potential to ensure every public

school is a place where parents want to send their kids, where students are engaged, where educators want to teach, where the curriculum is rich, where there is joy in teaching and learning, and where all children are successful.

**WHEREAS:** It is essential that states are equipped to take on the responsibilities that have been returned to them, including funding, teacher evaluation, accountability and interventions.

**WHEREAS:** It is essential that districts are equipped to take on an increased role under ESSA to determine the approach to help their schools that have been identified as needing additional supports or intervention.

**WHEREAS:** Educator and school staff input as well as community voices are essential for policymaking, and ESSA appropriately requires meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Ohio AFL-CIO will support and engage members and affiliates, as more responsibilities and decision-making are returned to states and districts, to use the opportunity created by the Every Student Succeeds Act to:

- Fight for neighborhood schools that are safe, welcoming places where teachers and school staff are well-prepared and supported; that have engaging curricula that include project-based learning, the arts, music, physical education, social studies, civics, the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, and career and technical education; that offer or connect to neighborhood prekindergarten; and that offer wraparound services to meet the social, emotional and health needs of students;
- Fight for effective implementation of the law, and continue to assist state and local affiliates in advocating for proper implementation of ESSA, through efforts including but not limited to convening members and leaders for strategy sessions; disseminating tools and resources for educators and the public to understand the law and opportunities for activism; educating

state legislators on issues important to students, parents, teachers and school staff; and partnering with community and parent groups;

- Fight to elevate teacher and paraprofessional voice and ensure educators, parents and other stakeholders are meaningfully involved as states and districts make decisions on the implementation of ESSA, including but not limited to the allocation of program resources, the activities to be carried out under such programs, the students to be served and the methods for holding programs accountable for results;
- Fight for a framework of indicators for school success that includes academic and other outcomes, opportunity to learn, engagement and support;
- Fight for fewer and better assessments of student learning—and to broaden use of assessments to performance-based assessments, authentic tasks and other competency-based assessments, including teacher-developed formative assessments;
- Fight for the creation and implementation of state and local teacher evaluation systems that are based on trust and primarily designed to engage teachers in professional discussions about their practice and to be supportive through relevant and timely feedback; are aligned to curriculum, reliable and fair; are based on research and multiple measures; and prevent the use of discredited value-added methodologies;
- Fight to include, as a component of any school improvement initiative, provisions of educator professional development that incorporate and value teacher and paraprofessional voice, build on strengths, and give them the additional skills, knowledge and tools needed to improve student learning;
- Fight for high-quality and meaningful professional development for school support staff that aligns with the goals of ESSA and provides them with the tools and resources they need to fulfill their important role in supporting the successful implementation of ESSA, and also work to ensure that paraprofessionals can

access the ESSA funds that can be dedicated to career advancement and para-to-teacher preparation programs;

- Fight for the development and implementation of intervention strategies, in partnership with educators, that provide the flexibility to address the particular needs of schools and their students, and are designed to improve teaching and learning, such as community schools;
- Fight for safe and welcoming learning and working conditions in schools, taking advantage of the ESSA provision that allows for funds to develop feedback mechanisms to improve a school's climate and culture, including through student, parent and educator support surveys; and
- Fight for all students to have full, rich learning experiences that prepare them for life, citizenship, career and college, and for the resources needed to make that vision a reality.

**Submitted by: Ohio Federation of Teachers**