

National Council of La Raza
Principles for Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESEA

CONTEXT

NCLR works to improve educational opportunities for Hispanic children in the U.S. Latino children are 25% of the school-age children in the U.S. and are the fastest-growing portion of this population. Moreover, in 2010 nearly 4.6 million students were classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) and of those nearly 80% were from a Spanish speaking background. To ignore their education is to neglect preparing a large portion of our nation's future workforce. Given their importance to the success of our school system, it is critical to have programs and policies that encourage Latino children to succeed in school. This includes programs that help students master a new language while meeting the same high standards that apply to all students for learning content. Our school system must succeed for Latinos so that it can succeed for our nation.

Fifty years ago, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) acknowledged the vital role the federal government will play to ensure all children have access to quality and equal education that will bridge "the gap between helplessness and hope." With the impending reauthorization of the ESEA, preserving strong federal oversight that adheres to the principles of equity of opportunity and outcomes is essential to assure Latino and ELL students receive the necessary resources and supports to promote enduring achievement and success.

PRINCIPLES

Based on this context, the National Council of La Raza outlines the following principles for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

- **A renewed and intentional commitment to equity.** Enacted at the height of the civil rights movement, the ESEA was premised on the recognition that not all students enter school with the same readiness to learn. Congress must adhere to the legacy of the ESEA and ensure that targeted investments remain in the reauthorization to support the unique backgrounds and needs of Latino and ELL students to eliminate equity gaps that prevent them from reaching their full potential.
- **Increased access to early care and education is essential for Latino children.** Although Latino children are the fastest growing segment of the child population, they have the least access to early care and education programs with only 46% of 3- to 4-year Latino children enrolled in school. Proactive investment in early childhood acknowledges that learning begins at birth.
- **Latino and English Language Learners have equitable access to educational opportunities and supports to successfully meet college and career-ready standards.** The adoption of college- and career-ready standards provide students with the necessary access and support to meet

the demands of 21st century jobs. The reauthorization of ESEA must therefore ensure that these new expectations are sufficiently supported, particularly in resource-poor communities. These supports will increase the number of Latino and ELL students accessing specialized instructional supports such as AP courses, dual enrollment opportunities, and college advisement.

- **A robust accountability system is enacted to support Latino and ELL student achievement.** Access to opportunity is insufficient without a strong and reliable system of accountability that ensures students are achieving to their fullest potential. Any accountability system must include outcomes for ELL student performance in a manner that accounts for language proficiency, time in program, and rigorous academic standards. Equally important is the continued collection and disaggregation of data by subgroup to ensure annual learning targets are met and achievement gaps are detected and eliminated.
- **Parents are essential partners in the education experience of Latino and ELL students.** The inclusion of parent voices and perspectives are crucial to broad reform and decision-making processes. We see parents as not just recipients of knowledge, but as critical partners in the work that we do. ESEA reauthorization must therefore require increased transparency of school processes, testing and promotion, district and local decision-making as well as resources to provide such information to parents.
- **Latino and ELL students have access to culturally- and linguistically-competent teachers.** The growth of Latino and ELL students in our nation's schools demands a teaching force that is sufficiently prepared to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of this emerging population. Yet, as the data show, there is a shortage of teachers that are adequately prepared to work with Latino and ELL students. To ensure equity of outcomes is achieved, new legislation must provide ample resources to support the ongoing professional development of teachers who work with Latino and ELL students.