



Today, President Barack Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (S. 1177) into law, reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, most recently known as *No Child Left Behind*.

This action resulted from a year of sustained advocacy from the Academy and partner organizations as well as significant bipartisan compromise among lawmakers. The law includes several hard-fought AAP priorities for education reform. However, given the complex nature of the bill and other areas for needed improvement, challenges remain that will require renewed momentum and action from Congress and the Administration to remedy.

### **Gains to Highlight: AAP Priorities in Education Reform**

Top AAP priorities addressed included in the legislation include:

- Including **health and physical education as “well-rounded subjects,”** a category that makes them eligible for new and expanded funding;
- Requiring schools to **improve conditions for students** by reducing incidences of bullying, overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, and the use of behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety;
- Ensuring **accommodations for students with disabilities** and requiring that assessment results be disaggregated so that parents can see how these students compare to students without disabilities. The law also limits the number of students with disabilities taking alternative assessments to 1% of the student population;
- Listing tobacco, spit tobacco and e-cigarette products under the definition of a “drug,” which makes **tobacco prevention programs** eligible for expanded funding;
- Authorizing early literacy models like **Reach Out and Read** in federal education policy by providing federal funding support for **pediatric early literacy programs serving children from infancy to five years;**
- Providing **foster care children with important academic support,** like ensuring they can remain in their same school when they enter or change a foster care placement unless it is not in their best interest

### **Area for Improvement: Early Childhood Education**

These gains are significant improvements for children’s education, and the law also for the first time establishes federal policies around early childhood education in a law that previously only addressed K-12 education. While this is a major step toward recognizing the importance of early childhood education, the law represents significant compromise and leaves substantial opportunities for improvement in this area. In particular, the funding and structure of the law’s early childhood education provisions are not sufficiently designed to ensure they are complementary to existing programs that have been proven to work, such as Head Start.

The AAP plans to work closely with the Administration and advocacy partners to ensure federal early childhood care and education programs operate complementarily and draw upon the expertise and best practices in existing federal programs, without inadvertently reducing access to or the quality of other important early childhood programs.

Looking ahead to implementation, the Academy will continue to support education policies and programs that help every child succeed inside and outside the classroom.