



2011 Legislative Platform

Doing What's Best to Support and Encourage Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

A strong commitment to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education will continue to be the driver of American economic growth and innovation. Triangle Coalition believes that there are numerous opportunities available through the legislative process. This year is critical because of the increasing call for the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. This process provides additional opportunities for the 112th Congress to demonstrate leadership in STEM education. Many of the items listed below should be part of that reauthorization process while others may be dealt with through other legislative avenues, but they all represent ways to help keep America competitive in a global economy.

▲ Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

ESEA is four years past its planned reauthorization. There is little disagreement that No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the current version of ESEA, has been flawed in its implementation. Under the current iteration of the law it is suspected that as much as 80% of the schools in America will fall short of their expected outcomes marking them as in need of improvement. While comparisons of the U.S. education system with our international counterparts might support this concern, it is clear that the law needs to be corrected so as to encourage educational innovation and to foster an environment in which schools, districts and states are inspired to seek creative approaches to student achievement and teacher certification that lead to significant progress.

For all these reasons, it is imperative that ESEA be reauthorized this year. There is a strong bipartisan agreement that the current law, while making progress in some areas is in need of adjustment and restructuring. Triangle Coalition strongly supports the reauthorization of ESEA.

▲ Clearly Define STEM in ESEA

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) must be clearly defined in the reauthorized ESEA. Engineering and technology education must be fully integrated inside and outside the STEM classroom at a level of rigor sufficient to produce critical thinkers and problem solvers across all fields of endeavor. In the reauthorization of ESEA, Congress should clearly define STEM educators to include all teachers of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Each of these disciplines has a key role in fostering creative problem solving, encouraging critical thinkers and creating a new generation of innovators which are the building blocks of America's competitive future.

▲ Include Science in the Accountability System

Science is a core subject that all students should learn and for which all schools should be held accountable. The revised ESEA should contain a provision that would include science scores as a required component of a school/state accountability system. The legislative language should also encourage States to be flexible when assessing student performance, skill, and knowledge in the sciences by utilizing a broad spectrum of measures, including written assessments, performance based testing, project-based work, and portfolio projects.

▲ Expand and Strengthen State Grants for STEM Initiatives

The consolidation the Math and Science Partnership grants into competitive grants, as the Administration has called for in its ESEA blueprint, would result in the loss of dedicated funding to each state for math and science education programs. These programs are often the sole source of funding for teacher professional development in the STEM fields and are often a critical component of state initiatives to make progress in science and mathematics achievement by students. In the Department of Education's Blueprint for ESEA, they anticipate approximately only 15–25 awards could be made to states that are competing for this funding.

While the Administration's other competitive grant programs in education have promoted innovative solutions to issues confronting student achievement and have helped to foster significant changes at the state levels, Triangle Coalition seeks to ensure that federal STEM education initiatives continue to support STEM efforts in each of the states.

Triangle Coalition's mission is to bring together the voices of government, business, and education to improve the quality and outcome of mathematics, science, and technology education

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