EXCERPT FROM NEA'S POSITIVE AGENDA FOR THE ESEA REAUTHORIZATION
(http://www.nea.org/lac/esea/images/posagenda.pdf)

Quality Educators In Every Classroom and School

A growing body of research confirms what school-based personnel have known—that the skills and knowledge of teachers and support professionals are the greatest factor in how well students learn. The credibility of each and every educator is damaged when one of us is unprofessional or unprepared.

Our proposals would help meet the Great Public Schools criteria of quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning; and a qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.

Our policies are focused on maximizing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of school-based personnel, creating the conditions to allow educators to do their best work, and making sure that the right people are in the right place to meet the needs of all students. In addition to teachers, many other educators and school staff, including paraeducators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, librarians and media specialists, bus drivers, food service workers, school maintenance staff, security personnel, and secretaries all play an important role in improving student learning by meeting the educational and other needs of students.

Our specific proposals for increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers are focused on professional development and on National Board Certification. Federal policy should be directed toward providing states and school districts with the resources and technical assistance to create an effective program of professional development and professional accountability for all employees. Effective professional development should promote continuing growth. It should create opportunities to acquire new knowledge and apply the best pedagogical practices consistent with the school's goals.

Specifically, we propose revision of the ESEA Title II—Teacher Quality State Grant program—by refining the program criteria and ensuring alignment of federally funded teacher professional development with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards. We also propose federally funded salary enhancements for teachers who achieve National Board Certification, with a smaller salary incentive for teachers who complete this rigorous process and receive a score, but do not achieve certification.

Our second set of proposals is focused on creating the conditions in which teachers and education support professionals can apply their knowledge and skills most effectively to help children learn.

We propose a grant program to states willing to encourage skills- and knowledge-based staffing arrangements in schools. This program should encourage collaboration between the school administration and the local organization representing teachers and other educators, as well as increased collaboration among teachers and between teachers and other education staff, to promote innovation in the way teachers' and support professionals' roles and responsibilities are defined. The development and implementation of such programs must respect existing collective bargaining agreements.

Teachers with specific knowledge and skills should be encouraged to assist their colleagues to become better at what they do, and should receive additional compensation for taking on new roles

However, we remain opposed to pay systems that directly link teacher compensation to student test scores. Such merit pay systems fail to recognize that teaching is not an individual, isolated profession. Rather, it is a profession dependent on the entire network of teaching professionals, where the foundation for student achievement is built over time from each of the student's educators. Further merit pay undermines the collegiality and teamwork that create a high-performing learning institution.

Education support professionals should be afforded every opportunity to broaden and enhance their skills and knowledge through training/professional development offerings, mentoring, and programs designed to support them as they assist the classroom teacher. They should be compensated for taking additional courses or doing course work for advanced degrees to assist in the classroom and to support student learning.

We propose federal grants that support innovation in addressing teacher workload issues, especially in struggling schools.

These grants should allow districts and schools to experiment with proposals such as assisting new teachers by pairing them in a classroom with an experienced teacher, and compensating the experienced teacher to induct and mentor the new teacher. Co-teaching—two qualified teachers in one classroom—can benefit students by effectively reducing the class size per teacher allowing for more individual attention. Co-teaching also allows increased mentoring opportunities for teachers, can reduce the need for less qualified substitute teachers, and can enhance parental involvement and communication.

Hard-to-staff schools should be provided with an adequate number of well trained administrators and support professionals, including paraeducators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and clerical support. Teachers and support professionals in these schools should have access to targeted professional development focused on the specific needs of the school and community. These proposals would reduce the costly and disruptive turnover common in struggling schools.

Paraeducators who are involuntarily transferred to a Title I school and who had not met the highly qualified standard required under NCLB in Title I schools, should be given adequate time to meet the requirement. The school district should be responsible for any remuneration required for meeting the standard (i.e., taking an assessment or taking continuing or higher education courses).

The third set of proposals focuses on distribution of the educator workforce—ways to ensure that all schools, no matter how challenging, are staffed by high quality education professionals.

We propose that teachers and support professionals who work in schools identified as "in need of improvement" or high-poverty schools, and stay in such schools for at least five years, be eligible for financial incentives—both direct federal subsidies and tax credits—for retention, relocation, and housing.

We also propose that the definition of "highly qualified" teachers be revised to respect state licensure and certification systems, and eliminate nonessential requirements that

create unnecessary obstacles for talented and skilled teachers and loopholes in the scope of coverage for some charter school teachers, alternative route teachers, and supplemental education service provider instructors.

Specifically, we propose that all fully licensed special education teachers be designated as highly qualified; that broad-based social studies certification count as meeting the highly qualified requirements for any social studies discipline; and that additional flexibility be provided for middle school teachers, including accepting an academic minor to demonstrate subject matter competence. We also propose expanding the definition of "rural schools" used in the current rural school timeline extension. Finally, we propose that all teachers employed in programs authorized and/or funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including those in charter schools and supplemental education service providers, be required to meet the same definition regarding qualifications.

Due to numerous rules and guidance changes by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), as well as DOE's recent notification to some states that their definitions were not in compliance, some teachers will have an extremely limited amount of time to meet the new definitions imposed upon their state, or may still not know the exact rules they must meet. In several states, teachers were told by their state that they met the highly qualified rules but now, years after the fact in some cases, the federal government is ruling their states' definitions out of compliance. As a result, tens of thousands of teachers have already been notified they were highly qualified and may suddenly find themselves classified as not highly qualified. DOE appears to believe that content knowledge trumps all other forms of knowledge and skills (including decades of successful teaching).

Teachers who may not meet the highly qualified standard by the end of the current deadlines due to these significant implementation problems should not be penalized, but instead should be provided with assistance and additional time to meet the requirement.

Additionally, we propose that paraeducators who meet the highly qualified standard be granted reciprocity if they move to another state or district, where assessment scores or qualifications are different. Paraeducators should be able to provide documentation that they have met the requirements from a previous state or district to the receiving state or district. Documentation should be provided within 12 months of their hiring.

ESEA: IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE!

NEA's Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization

July 2006

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary of the Positive Agenda highlights the recommendations contained in the full report. The full report, starting on page 8, provides the rationale and additional background for each recommendation.

Great Public Schools Criteria

All children have a basic right to a great public school. Our vision of what great public schools need and should provide acknowledges that the world is changing and public education is changing too. Meeting these Great Public Schools (GPS) criteria require not only the continued commitment of all educators, but the concerted efforts of policymakers at all levels of government. We believe these criteria will:

- Prepare all students for the future with 21st century skills
- Create enthusiasm for learning and engage all students in the classroom
- Close achievement gaps and raise achievement for all students
- Ensure that all educators have the resources and tools they need to get the job done

These criteria form a basis for NEA's priorities in offering Congress a framework for the 2007 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The reauthorization process must involve all stakeholders, especially educators. Their knowledge and insights are key to developing sound policies.

- ✓ ***Quality programs and services that meet the full range of all children's needs so that they come to school every day ready and able to learn.***

  Students must have access to programs such as public school pre-K and kindergarten programs; afterschool enrichment and intervention programs; nutrition, including school breakfast and lunch programs; school-based health care and related services; counseling and mentoring programs for students and families; safe and efficient transportation; and safe and drug-free schools programs.
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 8–11]

- ✓ ***High expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.***

  All students should have access to a rigorous, comprehensive education that includes critical thinking, problem solving, high level communication and literacy skills, and a deep understanding of content. Curriculum must be aligned with standards and assessments, and should include more than what can be assessed on a paper and pencil multiple choice test.
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, page 12]

- ✓ ***Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning.***

  Quality conditions for teaching and learning include smaller class sizes and optimal-sized learning communities; safe, healthy, modern, and orderly schools; up-to-date textbooks, technology, media centers, and materials; policies that encourage collaboration and shared decisionmaking among staff; and the providing of data in a timely manner with staff training in the use of data for decisionmaking. [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 12–13]

- ✓ ***A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.***

  A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce in our schools requires a pool of well prepared, highly skilled candidates for all vacancies; quality induction for new teachers with mentoring services from trained veteran teachers; opportunities for continual improvement and growth for all employees; working conditions in which they can be successful; and professional compensation and benefits. [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 13–14]

- ✓ ***Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by stakeholders at all levels.***

  Appropriate accountability means using results to identify policies and programs that successfully improve student learning and to provide positive supports, including resources for improvement and technical assistance to schools needing help. Schools, districts, states, and the federal government should be financially accountable to the public, with policymakers accountable to provide the resources needed to produce positive results. Accountability systems should be transparent so that policies are determined and communicated in an open, consistent, and timely manner. [See ESEA Positive Agenda, page 14]

- ✓ ***Parental, family, and community involvement and engagement.***

  Policies should assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to be actively involved and engaged in their public schools; require professional development programs for all educators to include the skills and knowledge needed for effective parental and community communication and engagement strategies; provide incentives or require employers to grant a reasonable amount of leave for parents to participate in their children's school activities. [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 14–15]

- ✓ ***Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.***

  School funding systems must provide adequate, equitable and sustainable funding. Making taxes fair and eliminating inefficient and ineffective business subsidies are essential prerequisites to achieving adequacy, equity, and stability in school funding. ESEA programs should be fully funded at their authorized levels. [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 15–16]

NEA's Priorities for ESEA Reauthorization

[See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 17–29]

A great public school is a basic right of every child. NEA's priorities for the 2007 reauthorization of ESEA focus on a broad range of policies to ensure every child access to a great public school.

The current version of ESEA—the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—is fundamentally flawed. It undermines existing state and school district structures and authority, and shifts public dollars to the private sector through supplemental educational services and takeovers of public schools by for-profit companies.

However, its stated goals—to improve student achievement and help close the achievement and skills gaps that exist in our country—are important to NEA and our society. We want to retain the positive provisions of ESEA, both those that existed prior to NCLB and those that were added by NCLB, in the 2007 reauthorization.

Congress must shift from the current focus that labels and punishes schools with a flawed one-size-fits-all accountability system and severely underfunded mandates to one that includes common-sense flexibility and supports educators in implementing programs that improve student learning, reward success, and provide meaningful assistance to schools most in need of help.

The following five priorities are crucial to realizing the goals of improving student achievement, closing the achievement gaps, and providing every child a quality teacher.

- **Accountability That Rewards Success and Supports Educators to Help Students Learn**
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 19–22]
  - Accountability should be based upon multiple measures of student learning and school success.
  - States should have the flexibility to design systems that produce results, including deciding in which grades to administer annual statewide tests.
  - States should have the flexibility to utilize growth models and other measures of progress that assess student achievement over time, and recognize improvement on all points of the achievement scale.
  - Growth model results should be used as a guide to revise instructional practices and curriculum, to provide individual assistance to students, and to provide appropriate professional development to teachers and other educators. They should not be used to penalize schools or teachers.
  - Assessment systems must be appropriate, valid, and reliable for all groups of students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, and provide for common-sense flexibility for assessing these student subgroups.

- States, school districts, and schools should actively involve teachers and other educators in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards, curriculum, assessments, accountability, and improvement plans.
- Accountability systems and the ensuing use of the results must respect the rights of school employees under federal, state, or local law, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Accountability systems should provide support and assistance, including financial support for improvement and technical assistance to those schools needing help, with targeted assistance to those schools and districts most in need of improvement.
- Assessment and accountability systems should be closely aligned with high standards and classroom curricula, provide timely data to help improve student learning, and be comprehensive and flexible so that they do not result in narrowing of the curricula.
- A federal grant program should be created to assist schools in ensuring all students access to a comprehensive curriculum.
- A comprehensive accountability system must appropriately apply to high schools without increasing dropout rates.
- Standards and assessments must incorporate the nature of work and civic life in the 21st century: high level thinking, learning, and global understanding skills, and sophisticated information, communication, and technology literacy competencies.
- Schools that fail to close achievement gaps after receiving additional financial resources, technical assistance, and other supports should be subject to supportive interventions.
- If certain elements of the current AYP system are maintained, specific flaws must be corrected. These corrections include: providing more than one year to implement improvement plans before subjecting schools or districts to additional sanctions; designating schools or districts as "in need of improvement" only when the same subgroup of students fails to make AYP in the same subject for at least two consecutive years; targeting school choice and supplemental educational services (SES) to the specific subgroups that fail to make AYP; providing SES prior to providing school choice; and ensuring that SES providers serve all eligible students and utilize only highly qualified teachers.

➢ **Smaller Class Sizes To Improve Student Achievement**
[See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 22–23]

- Restore the Class Size Reduction program that existed prior to NCLB to provide an optimum class size of 15 students.

- Schools should receive federal support—through both direct grants and tax subsidies—for school modernization to accommodate smaller classes.

- **Quality Educators in Every Classroom and School**
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 23–26]
  - Provide states and school districts with the resources and technical assistance to create an effective program of professional development and professional accountability for all employees.
  - Revise the ESEA Title II Teacher Quality State Grant program to ensure alignment of federally funded teacher professional development with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards.
  - Provide federally funded salary enhancements for teachers who achieve National Board Certification, with a smaller salary incentive for teachers who complete this rigorous process and receive a score, but do not achieve certification.
  - Create a grant program that provides additional compensation for teachers with specific knowledge and skills who take on new roles to assist their colleagues.
  - Expand opportunities for education support professionals to broaden and enhance their skills and knowledge, including compensation for taking additional courses or doing course work for advanced degrees.
  - Provide federal grants that encourage districts and schools to assist new teachers by pairing them with an experienced mentor teacher in a shared classroom.
  - Provide financial incentives—both direct federal subsidies and tax credits—for retention, relocation, and housing for teachers and support professionals who work in schools identified as "in need of improvement" or high-poverty schools, and stay in such schools for at least five years.
  - Provide hard-to-staff schools with an adequate number of well trained administrators and support professionals, including paraeducators, counselors, social workers, school nurses, psychologists, and clerical support.
  - Provide paraeducators who are involuntarily transferred to a Title I school and who have not met the *highly qualified* standard with adequate time to meet the requirement.
  - Grant reciprocity for paraeducators who meet the *highly qualified* standard when they move to another state or district, with different qualifications.
  - Revise the definition of *highly qualified* teachers to recognize state licensure/certification, eliminate nonessential requirements that create unnecessary obstacles, and eliminate loopholes in the scope of coverage.

- Provide teachers who may not meet the *highly qualified* standard by the current deadlines, due to significant implementation problems, with assistance and additional time to meet the requirement.

- **Students and Schools Supported By Active and Engaged Parents, Families, and Communities**
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 26–27]
  - Provide programs that encourage school-parent compacts, signed by parents, that provide a clearly defined list of parental expectations and opportunities.
  - Provide programs and resources to assist in making schools the hub of the community.
  - Expand funding for the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRC) program in ESEA.
  - Include as a requirement for professional development programs funded through ESEA, training in the skills and knowledge needed for effective parental and family communication and engagement strategies.
  - Provide incentives or require employers to provide parents a reasonable amount of leave to participate in their children's school activities.

- **Resources to Ensure a Great Public School for Every Child**
  [See ESEA Positive Agenda, pages 27–29]
  - Fully fund ESEA programs at their authorized levels.
  - Enforce Sec. 9527(a) of NCLB, which prevents the federal government from requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds—beyond what they receive from the federal government—to implement federal mandates.
  - Protect essential ESEA programs by:
    - Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for school improvement programs to assist districts and schools
    - Providing adequate funding to develop and improve assessments that measure higher order thinking skills
    - Establishing a trigger whereby any consequences facing schools falling short of the new accountability system are implemented only when Title I is funded at its authorized level
    - Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for supplemental education services and school choice, if these mandates remain in the law
    - Providing adequate funding to develop and improve appropriate assessments for students with disabilities and English Language Learner students
    - Providing technical assistance to schools to help them use money more effectively

    - Providing adequate funding to assist state and local education agencies in administering assessments, and collecting and interpreting data in a timely manner so it can be useful to educators
- Important children's and education programs outside of ESEA, including child nutrition, Head Start, IDEA, children's health, child care, and related programs, must be adequately funded.

NEA's Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization

PART ONE: Great Public Schools Criteria

All children have a basic right to a great public school. Our vision of what great public schools need and should provide acknowledges that the world is changing and public education is changing too. Fulfilling these Great Public Schools (GPS) criteria require not only the continued commitment of all educators, but the concerted efforts of policymakers at all levels of government. We believe these criteria will:

- Prepare all students for the future with 21st century skills
- Create enthusiasm for learning and engaging all students in the classroom
- Close achievement gaps and increase achievement for all students
- Ensure that all educators have the resources and tools they need to get the job done

These criteria form a basis for NEA's priorities in offering Congress a framework for the 2007 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The reauthorization process must involve all stakeholders, especially educators. Genuine involvement taps a breadth of knowledge, insights, and experiences that form the basis of sound educational programs and fosters commitment and success.

- ✓ ***Quality programs and services that meet the full range of all children's needs so that they come to school every day ready and able to learn.***
- ✓ ***High expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.***
- ✓ ***Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning.***
- ✓ ***A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.***
- ✓ ***Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by stakeholders at all levels.***
- ✓ ***Parental, family, and community involvement and engagement.***
- ✓ ***Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.***

The Details of the Great Public Schools Criteria

- ✓ ***Quality programs and services that meet the full range of all children's needs so that they come to school every day ready and able to learn.***

  Children need a broad array of programs so they are ready to learn every day they are in school. Students must have access to programs such as public school pre-K

and kindergarten; afterschool enrichment and intervention; nutrition, including school breakfast and lunch; school-based health care and related services; counseling and mentoring for students and families; safe and efficient transportation; and safe and drug-free schools.

Brief descriptions of each area follow:

Preschool
Numerous studies have shown that high quality early care experiences, both classroom practices and teacher-child relationship, enhance children's abilities to take advantage of the learning opportunities in school.

A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences notes that much of the human brain develops in the first five years of life and a stimulating environment during this stage changes the very physiology of the brain. High quality early care leads to the development of more advanced learning skills in language and math, as well as social skills.

NEA supports polices and resources for quality, voluntary, universal preschool and pre-K programs that provide a safe environment, well prepared teachers, small class size, interactive relationships among teachers and children, emphasis in both social and learning skills, and that involve parents.

Kindergarten
Kindergarten is a year of transition from home and early childhood education programs to formal school programs. At least a half-day of kindergarten is a near-universal experience for American children, with nearly 98 percent of youngsters attending, Some children have access to full-day, half-day, and alternate-day programs while others have access to only one of these options. Recent research has shown that children who attend full-day kindergarten are better prepared to succeed in the first grade and beyond.

NEA supports policies and resources that provide high quality full-day kindergarten programs for all children.

Afterschool
Afterschool hours are the peak time for juvenile crime and risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Most experts agree that afterschool programs offer a healthy and positive alternative. These programs keep kids safe, improve academic achievement and help relieve the stresses on today's working families. They can serve as important youth violence prevention and intervention strategies. Yet, every day, at least eight million children and youth are left alone and unsupervised once the school bell rings at the end of the school day.

NEA supports policies and resources to ensure all children and youth access to high quality afterschool programs that both provide a safe environment and help improve student learning.

Nutrition
While the National School Lunch program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to more than 28 million children each school day, too many schoolchildren still lack access to a hot breakfast or other adequate nutrition.

Malnourished children have impaired concentration and greater challenges in learning. In addition, improving the nutritional quality of school lunches and other meals can promote healthy eating habits in children.

NEA supports expanding child nutrition programs and enhancing their nutritional quality to ensure that all children have access to healthy, nutritious meals at school.

Health Needs

In response to a need for student health services, a number of communities have established school-based health centers (SBHCs). The more than 1,000 SBHCs nationwide are popular as providers of affordable, convenient, confidential, and comprehensive services at the school. These programs overcome barriers that discourage adolescents from utilizing health services (such as lack of confidentiality, inconvenient appointment times, prohibitive costs, and general apprehension about discussing personal health problems). Unfortunately too many children, especially children from low-income families, lack access to such services.

NEA supports policies and resources that enable communities to expand the number and the quality of school-based health centers so that all children have access to medical care, counseling, health education, and preventive services provided in a familiar and "teen-friendly" setting on or near school grounds. Such services should be provided by health professionals who are experienced and trained to work with adolescents.

Counseling

Counseling programs staffed by professional school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers help *all* students in the areas of student learning, personal/social development and career development, ensuring that students become productive, well-adjusted adults. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and in improving student achievement. Too often, however, these professionals have unreasonable caseloads, but counselors are expected to attend to the individual needs of students. In addition, many counselors are serving as testing coordinators, diverting their time away from meeting students' needs. The American School Counselor Association recommends a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250; the National Association of School Psychologists recommends a school psychologist-to-student ratio of 1:1,000; and the School Social Work Association of America recommends a social worker-to-student ratio of 1:400 for an effective program.

NEA supports policies and resources to states and school districts enabling them to achieve this important goal.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs for students are an important resource for students and their parents or guardians. Parents are the most important influence on their children's lives. But parents often need help. Mentoring offers parents the support of a caring one-to-one relationship that fosters their child's healthy growth.

Mentoring programs have been shown to contribute to better attitudes toward school, better school attendance, and a better chance of going on to higher education. They also show promise in preventing substance abuse and appear to reduce other negative youth behaviors.

NEA supports policies and resources to expand programs, such as the mentoring program in Title IV of ESEA to provide mentoring services to all students who would benefit.

Transportation

Every school day, millions of parents and their children rely on the "yellow" school bus to provide safe and dependable transportation to and from school and school-related activities. In fact, according to the National Safety Council, school buses are the safest form of ground transportation—40 times safer than the family car.

Most states, except for the transportation of students with special needs, have no mandate to provide students with transportation to or from school. Even in states where transportation of students to and from school is required by law, distances set forth in the law fail to take account of hazardous pedestrian crossings, and funding shortfalls create problems in maintaining an adequate school transportation program.

As a result of budget constraints, many schools are seeking alternative transportation services for students. NEA agrees with the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services that the safest way to transport children to and from school and school-related activities is in a school bus.

NEA supports policies and resources that ensure all students have access to needed transportation in safe and modern school buses, and that all buses be provided with radios to ensure communication between drivers, schools, and other authorities in case of emergencies.

School Climate

A positive school climate encourages positive behaviors with rewards for meeting expectations and clear consequences for violating rules. Research shows that schools with a positive and welcoming school climate increase the likelihood that students succeed academically, while protecting them from engaging in high risk behaviors like substance abuse, sexual activities, and violence.

Most students and teachers report feeling safe in their schools, yet a 2002 study of school safety revealed that about one-fourth would avoid a specific place at school out of fear that someone might hurt or bully them. More than one-quarter (27%) of teachers in middle and high schools reported that the behavior of some students kept them from instructional activities during significant amounts of the school day.

NEA supports policies and resources, including safe and drug-free schools programs, to assist all schools in creating and maintaining safe and disciplined school sites.

- ✓ ***High expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.***

  NEA supports policies and resources to ensure all students access to a rigorous, comprehensive education. A rigorous curriculum, as defined by NEA, means that critical thinking, problem solving, and high level communication and literacy skills are included, as well as deep understandings of content. Rigor includes life skills and dispositions that support lifelong learning, such as persistence and thoroughness. Rigor does not mean simply a certain number of courses, more difficult courses, more time in class, or more test preparation.

  NEA is not alone in calling for a broader definition of rigor. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a broad-based coalition of education organizations and major businesses states: "Rigor must reflect *all* the results that matter for all high school graduates today. Today's graduates need to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and effective communicators, who are proficient in both core subjects and new, 21st century content and skills."

  A comprehensive curriculum includes social skills, arts, health, physical education, a range of content understandings, and opportunities to practice and develop creative and divergent thinking.

  The curriculum must be aligned with standards and assessments, and should include more than what can be assessed on a paper and pencil multiple choice test.

  NEA continues to advocate the use of a variety of assessments aligned to the standards and appropriate to the purposes for which they are used. Assessment systems should include classroom assessments and multiple measures rather than a single standardized test. Increasingly, both educational researchers and the corporate world are concerned that teaching, focused on what is most conveniently tested, limits our students' ability to succeed in school and life, and threatens our nation's competitiveness globally.

  Students held to high expectations need access to instructional systems, strategies, and programs that enable them to be successful learners. Teachers need flexibility in programs and a range of materials and tools to support their work in recognizing and addressing the diversity of students, and to enable them to reach all students.

- ✓ ***Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning.***

  Quality conditions of teaching and learning include smaller class sizes; optimal-sized learning communities so that students can receive individualized attention; safe, healthy, modern, and orderly schools; up-to-date textbooks, technology, media centers, and materials; policies that encourage collaboration among staff, with increased planning time and shared decisionmaking; and the providing of data in a timely manner, with staff training in the use of data for decisionmaking about student instructional plans, educational programs, and resource allocations.

  Class size has a direct impact on student achievement. The preponderance of research evidence indicates that achievement increases as class size is reduced.

Smaller classes allow more time for teaching and more individualized attention for students. Studies have shown that smaller class size provides lasting benefits, especially for minority and low-income students, and for students with exceptional needs. Students in smaller classes in the early grades (such as K-3) continue to reap academic benefits through middle and high school.

NEA supports policies and resources to achieve a maximum class size of 15 students in regular programs, and a proportionately lower number in programs for students with exceptional needs, including children with disabilities and English Language Learners.

- ✓ ***A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.***

NEA believes all newly hired teachers must have received strong preparation in both content and how to teach that content to children.

A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce in our schools requires a pool of well prepared, highly skilled candidates for all vacancies, and high quality opportunities for continual improvement and growth for all employees.

The federal government should fund programs that provide financial incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession, and for collaboratives between school districts, teacher unions and institutions of higher education for the development of programs that would facilitate the recruitment and retention of a qualified diverse group of teacher candidates.

All newly hired teachers should receive quality induction and mentoring services from trained veteran teachers, to ensure a successful experience in the first years and decrease the turnover of new teachers.

Veteran classroom teachers must be intimately involved in every phase of the training and preparation of teacher candidates. A high quality professional development program, designed by school-based practitioners and supported by higher education faculty, should be a right of all teachers and other educators, including paraeducators, pupil support personnel, and administrators. High quality and effective professional development should follow the guidelines and standards of the National Staff Development Council.

Additionally, there should be effective processes in place to identify and train teachers as leaders, so they can lead school improvement efforts, create collaborative teacher communities, and build momentum for change among their colleagues.

Peer assistance should be available to help struggling teachers improve professional practice, retain promising teachers, and build professional knowledge to improve student success.

To attract, retain, and support the highest quality teachers, paraeducators, and other school employees, schools must have a healthy environment, supportive climate, and working conditions that support success, and provide professional compensation and benefits.

Too many teachers leave the profession because of poor working conditions. All educators—teachers, paraeducators, and others—should have appropriate workloads/caseloads that enable them to provide the individual attention their students' diverse needs require. Additionally, programs should promote teacher collaboration and empowerment, and foster effective principal leadership.

- ✓ ***Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by stakeholders at all levels.***

  States and schools are accountable in how they educate children. Flawed accountability systems are destructive. Sound school accountability systems must be effective and fair; ensure high levels of student achievement, excellent teacher practices and continual improvement; be based on multiple measures of success; use multiple assessment tools and sources of data; reflect growth over time; and be appropriate, valid, and reliable for all groups of students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

  Accountability results should be used to identify policies and programs that successfully improve student learning; surface and diagnose problem areas; and, provide positive supports, including resources for improvement and technical assistance to schools needing help.

  Teachers, other educators, and parents should have an active role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of accountability systems at all levels. Policymaking should incorporate existing processes, including collective bargaining. Improvements in instruction and quality can be better accomplished through bargaining and other forms of collective joint decisionmaking.

  We support financial accountability to the public from schools, districts, states, and the federal government, as well as accountability from policymakers to provide the resources needed for positive results.

  Finally, we propose a transparent accountability system for policymakers so that policies are determined and communicated in a consistent and timely manner.

  Too often, especially at the federal level, how and why decisions affecting states and school districts are made is unclear. Critical policy decisions are often not made in a timely manner, and once decided are not always made public or readily available.

- ✓ ***Parental, family, and community involvement and engagement.***

  NEA supports policies to assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to be actively involved and engaged in their public schools.

  Research demonstrates that family education programs help to enhance the likelihood of parental involvement. For example, programs that illustrate to parents their role in helping their children learn to read encourage early and sustained literacy. In addition, for parents who are unfamiliar with the educational system in the United States, parental education helps to enhance their understanding of what

is expected of them and their children in our public schools, how to access assistance, and how to become engaged in their children's schools.

Using schools as a community hub brings together public and private organizations to offer a range of services, assistance, and opportunities that strengthen and support schools, communities, families, and students—before, during, and after school.

We support policies and resources to expand and improve such community schools.

Positive relationships between families, communities, and schools are of central importance to students' success. Educators need opportunities to build the skills needed to cultivate these relationships.

NEA supports policies encouraging the building of skills and knowledge needed for effective parental and community communication and engagement strategies in professional development programs for all educators.

Time and availability are two obvious challenges to parental involvement. *Employers should receive incentives or be required by policymakers to allow parents to take a reasonable amount of leave to participate in their children's school activities.*

In addition, many parents have strong needs for leadership, communication, and decisionmaking skills. Employer and community-based organizations often have skill-building resources that can be tapped to help teach such skills to employees. Employers would see that engaged and knowledgeable parents are an asset to public education and be reminded that quality public education is an asset to business.

✓ ***Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.***

Schools must have the necessary resources to fulfill their broad and growing responsibilities in a changing and increasingly complex society.

Schools are held accountable for helping students to meet federal and state standards, while also fulfilling myriad other requirements and expectations placed on them by policymakers. To ensure that the necessary resources are available when and where needed, school funding systems must provide adequate, equitable and sustainable funding.

Adequate funding, at the very minimum, is the level of resources needed to ensure that all students have a realistic opportunity to meet federal and state performance standards, taking into account the varied needs of different types of students. "Adequacy" requires a determination of the appropriate amount of resources needed to meet *all* students' needs to obtain a quality education.

NEA supports fully funding ESEA programs at their authorized levels, to ensure that states and schools have adequate funding for the programs and services needed to help close achievement gaps and improve student learning for all.

While less than 10 percent of overall funding for K-12 public education comes from the federal government, ESEA funding for urban, rural, and other school districts

with concentrated poverty and hard-to-staff schools that rely heavily on these supplemental federal funds, is especially crucial.

School funding that is merely adequate in the aggregate is insufficient. School funding formulas must also be equitable for both students and taxpayers. For students, equitable funding means that the quality of their education is not dependent on the wealth of the school district where a child lives and attends school. For taxpayers, equity in school funding means that the tax effort across all districts should be equal to produce the same level of funding. ESEA's Title I program has built into its funding formulas incentives for states to increase their education funding effort and steer funds to where they are needed the most. Adequacy and equity can be accomplished with additional incentives to states and districts to reduce financial disparities.

To function efficiently, while also meeting the increased demands being placed on them, schools need funding streams that are stable and sustainable. Year-to-year fluctuations in available resources and last-minute uncertainties hamper school districts' efforts to plan, to hire, and to retain highly qualified and experienced educators, to keep class sizes small, and to provide other essential resources, ranging from curriculum materials to transportation.

Making taxes fair and eliminating inefficient and ineffective business subsidies are essential prerequisites to achieving adequacy, equity, and stability in school funding.

More than 90 percent of funding for public schools comes from state and local governments. Ultimately the most important questions regarding funding for schools are decided at the state and local levels. The best way to maintain America's competitive edge in this global, knowledge-based economy is to invest in our ability to produce and manage knowledge. That means investing in education. Economic models show clearly that, dollar for dollar, investing in public education increases the economy more than equal amounts of tax cuts and subsidies. To date, however, too many lawmakers and policymakers believe that tax cuts and development subsidies are the best way to step-up the economy. Thus we see state tax structures that are increasingly regressive and that produce structural deficits. Similarly, state economic development policies too often emphasize inefficient and ineffective corporate subsidies. Together, these undermine state and local capacity to invest adequately in public education. Should these trends continue, America's competitive edge in the global, knowledge-based economy will continue to erode.

PART TWO: NEA's Priorities for ESEA Reauthorization

A Great Public School Is a Basic Right of Every Child

NEA's priorities for the 2007 reauthorization of ESEA focus on a broad range of policies, as articulated in this report, to ensure every child access to a great public school.

ESEA, originally passed on April 9, 1965, was a key component of the "War on Poverty" launched by President Lyndon Johnson. Title I provided resources to meet the needs of educationally deprived children through compensatory education programs for the poor. President Johnson said it would help "five million children of poor families overcome their greatest barrier to progress: poverty."

The original ESEA was authorized through 1970. Congress has since rewritten—or reauthorized—this landmark law eight times. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is the most recent version. Since the law's inception in 1965, NEA has strongly supported ESEA and its programs: Title I; professional development; afterschool; safe and drug-free schools; bilingual education; and others.

The 1994 ESEA reauthorization—called the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)—shifted the focus of Title I from providing financial support to schools with high concentrations of children in poverty, to standards-based reform. (For a more detailed history of ESEA see Appendix 1.)

The current version of ESEA—the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—is fundamentally flawed. It undermines existing state and school district structures and authority, and shifts public dollars to the private sector through supplemental educational services and takeovers of public schools by for-profit companies.

However, its stated goals—to improve student achievement and help close the achievement and skills gaps which exist in our country—are important to NEA and our society. NCLB represents a fundamental shift in ESEA that greatly expanded the federal role in education. The 1994 ESEA required all states to develop content and performance standards in reading and math and to measure the progress of student achievement in Title I schools through adequate yearly progress reports. NCLB, however, expanded the law's requirements to *all* schools, regardless of whether they received federal funds, and thus affects every public school in America.

It dictates to states how they measure student achievement and the timelines they must use; establishes the requirement that 100 percent of all students be proficient in reading and math by the 2013–14 school year; mandates certain consequences or sanctions for failure to meet AYP; and for the first time, requires that both teachers and paraeducators meet a federally defined standard of *highly qualified*. Under Title I alone, it establishes 588 federal requirements for states and schools.

The law's principal flaws revolve around its one-size-fits-all system for measuring student achievement and school system success, and its rigid definitions of highly

qualified teachers and paraprofessionals. Further, the law is incomplete because it fails to provide the additional tools and supports educators and students need to accomplish the law's stated goals of improving student achievement and closing the achievement gaps. To address the law's stated goals, Congress must: 1) substantially improve the measurement system for adequate yearly progress to reduce reliance on statewide paper and pencil tests and to recognize growth and progress over time; and 2) provide states, schools, and students with programs and resources to support their work in improving the level and quality of all students' skills and knowledge.

We want to retain the positive provisions of ESEA—both those that existed prior to NCLB and those that were added by NCLB—in the 2007 reauthorization. These positive provisions include: targeting funds in both Title I and other programs to schools with the highest concentrations of students in poverty; an increased focus on closing achievement gaps through disaggregated student achievement data; grants for school improvement; strengthened rights of homeless children to access public education; protection of school employees' rights during school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring; strengthened parental involvement requirements in Title I; requirements for high quality professional development for teachers; help for small, high-poverty rural schools; and programs for dropout prevention, math-science education, safe and drug-free schools, mentoring, school counseling, and school libraries. Unfortunately, while written into the law, virtually all of these programs are severely underfunded.

Congress must shift from the current focus, that labels and punishes schools with a flawed one-size-fits-all accountability system and severely underfunded mandates to one that includes common-sense flexibility and supports educators in implementing programs that improve student learning, reward success, and provide meaningful assistance to schools most in need of help.

The following five priorities are crucial to realizing the goals of improving student achievement, closing the achievement gaps, and providing every child a quality teacher.

- **Accountability That Rewards Success And Supports Educators To Help Students Learn**
- **Smaller Class Sizes To Improve Student Achievement**
- **Quality Educators In Every Classroom And School**
- **Students And Schools Supported By Active And Engaged Parents, Families, And Communities**
- **Resources To Ensure A Great Public School For Every Child**

A growing chorus of voices is calling for corrections to this law. An alliance of 75 national organizations—including the NAACP, the Children's Defense Fund, the

American Association of School Administrators, the National Council of Churches, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the Council for Exceptional Children—representing education, civil rights, special education, various religions, children, and citizens have joined together through the Forum on Educational Accountability in proposing 14 specific changes to the law. Other education groups that have issued policy proposals for amendments to the law include the National School Boards Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

The National Governors Association (NGA) in March 2006 issued its proposals for change. The NGA statement notes that, "Maximum flexibility in designing state accountability systems, including testing, is critical to preserve the amalgamation of federal funding, local control of education, and state responsibility for system-wide reform."

The National Conference of State Legislatures in February 2005 issued a report calling on Congress to make substantial changes to the law. The report states:

> "Administrators at the state, local and school levels are overwhelmed by AYP because it holds schools to overly prescriptive expectations, does not acknowledge differences in individual performance, does not recognize significant academic progress because it relies on absolute achievement targets, and inappropriately increases the likelihood of failure for diverse schools."

I. Accountability That Rewards Success and Supports Educators To Help Students Learn

The current Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) model is a fundamentally flawed system that fails to accurately measure student learning and school success. Schools are held accountable based solely on a one-day snapshot of student performance on a standardized reading test and a standardized math test.

The law's AYP model uses overly narrow measures and contains unrealistic timelines for school improvement. It results in improperly labeling many schools as low-performing and imposing punishments on them. AYP holds all schools accountable based solely on how many students reach a specific point on the achievement scale on one standardized test in each of two subjects—reading and math.

It fails to account for a school's results in improving student achievement over time. Instead of measuring each individual student's growth over time, it compares, for example, the snapshot of test scores for this year's fourth-grade class to the snapshot of test scores for last year's fourth-grade class, a different group of students with different strengths and different weaknesses.

It fails to recognize that all children can learn, but all children do not learn at the same rate. It fails to include fair, valid, and reliable measures for students with special needs, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. It fails to differentiate between those schools that are truly struggling to close achievement gaps and those that fall short on only one of 37 federally mandated criteria. Finally, it fails to

include a comprehensive set of measures for school quality and student learning, focusing only on one statewide standardized test in two subjects.

Consequently, it overidentifies thousands of schools as low-performing. Several studies project that well over 90 percent of public schools will eventually fail to meet federal standards and be subjected to severe sanctions. This overidentification hampers efforts to target limited resources to the neediest schools and students. Further, the focus on overidentification and accompanying sanctions diverts attention from assistance to states, districts, and schools that need to develop systemic improvement plans. Finally, NCLB's mandated sanctions are not research-based, divert money away from classroom services, and generally have not improved student achievement.

NEA supports the following policies that would meet the Great Public Schools criteria for stakeholders at all levels to share appropriate accountability and for high expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students:

School accountability should be a measurement beyond just scores on statewide assessments.

Accountability systems should be based upon multiple measures, including: local assessments, teacher-designed classroom assessments collected over time, portfolios and other measures of student learning, graduation/dropout rates, in-grade retention, percent of students taking honors/advanced classes and Advanced Placement exams, and college enrollment rates. *States should have the flexibility to design systems that produce results, including deciding in which grades to administer annual statewide tests, rather than being subject to a rigid federal one-size-fits-all system.*

An improved accountability system should allow states the flexibility to utilize growth models and other measures of progress that assess student learning over time, and recognize improvement on all points of the achievement scale. Growth models should use measurement results as a guide to revise instructional practices and curriculum, to provide individual assistance to students, and to provide appropriate professional development to teachers and other educators. They should not be used to penalize teachers or schools.

NEA is working with the Forum on Educational Accountability and a panel of experts in assessment to develop in greater detail models of effective systems that utilize multiple measures and growth models.

Assessment systems must be appropriate, valid, and reliable for all groups of students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Appropriate systems *provide for common-sense flexibility in assessing these student subgroups*, including more closely aligning ESEA assessment requirements with students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under IDEA, and eliminating arbitrary federal limits on the number of students who may be given assessments based on alternate or modified achievement standards. For ELL students, we propose exempting from AYP their scores on reading and math tests not given in their native language for at least their first two years in the United States, while continuing to require

that their progress in reaching English language proficiency be measured through annual assessments.

Policies should ensure that states, school districts, and schools actively involve teachers and other educators in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards, curriculum, assessments, accountability, and improvement plans. Their training and experience represent a valuable resource in designing programs that work for students. Accountability systems and the use of the ensuing results must also respect the rights of school employees under federal, state, or local law, and collective bargaining agreements.

Accountability systems should provide support and assistance, including financial support for improvement and technical assistance to schools needing help, target assistance to schools and districts most in need of improvement, and provide realistic timelines for making improvements.

In addition, accountability systems must be sensitive to the specific needs of rural and urban schools.

Assessment and accountability systems should be closely aligned with high standards and classroom curricula, provide timely data to guide teaching strategies and help improve student learning, and be comprehensive and flexible so that they do not result in narrowing of the curricula.

As a result of the growing emphasis on achieving AYP and the need to reallocate resources toward accomplishing that, many school districts have de-emphasized and even eliminated courses in the liberal arts, humanities, and performing arts. We deplore this tendency that limits a child. These subjects create the appropriate context to develop the whole child. Redefining the art of teaching so narrowly significantly reduces creativity and critical thinking and diminishes a child's enthusiasm and motivation to explore and to learn.

NEA advocates the creation of a federal grant program to assist schools in ensuring all students access to a comprehensive curriculum that provides a broad range of subjects and deep knowledge in each subject. Students in high-poverty schools must not be limited to an instructional program that is narrowly focused on basic skills, as is happening too often under NCLB.

A comprehensive accountability system must appropriately apply to high schools without increasing dropout rates. High schools need programs and resources for adolescent literacy, dropout prevention, counseling, smaller learning communities, and expansion of AP and IB courses if they are to meet the diverse needs of all of their students. In order to measure high school graduation rates meaningfully, all states and school districts should report such data on a disaggregated basis, using the definition proposed by the National Governors Association and supported by many groups, including NEA.

Standards and assessments must incorporate the nature of work and civic life in the 21st century: high-level thinking, learning, and global understanding skills, as well as sophisticated information, communication, and technology literacy competencies.

Corporate America is telling us that a total focus on the most basic of skills is threatening our education system and our economic viability. Meaningfully assessing 21st century

skills will require tests that measure higher-order thinking and problem solving, utilizing more than multiple choice questions. Too often we are holding students to obsolete standards that don't reflect contemporary challenges.

If a school, after receiving additional financial assistance, technical assistance and other supports, fails to demonstrate that it is closing the achievement gaps, supportive interventions need to occur.

The most successful learning strategies are grounded on advice and coaching. School improvement teams, which include teachers and other educators from similar schools that have been successful, can function as mentors and examples. These teams should provide assistance based on the fact that profound, long-term, and sustained improvement of schools is the result of efforts that recognize essential principles:

- ✓ *Incentives are better than mandates in producing change.*
- ✓ *Increased student achievement should encompass more than just increased test scores. It should also reflect deep and broad learning.*
- ✓ *Teachers must play a central role in school reform efforts because of their firsthand knowledge of their students and how their schools work.*
- ✓ *Rather than starting from scratch in reinventing schools, it makes most sense to graft thoughtful reforms onto what is healthy in the present system.*

NEA is proposing a new and improved system of accountability. If certain elements of the current AYP system are maintained, specific flaws must be corrected. Necessary corrections include: providing more than one year to implement improvement plans before subjecting schools or districts to additional sanctions; designating schools or districts as "in need of improvement" only when the same subgroup of students fails to make AYP in the same subject for at least two consecutive years; targeting school choice and supplemental educational services (SES) to the specific subgroups that fail to make AYP; allowing schools to provide SES prior to providing school choice; and improving the quality of supplemental education services, ensuring that SES providers serve all eligible students and utilize only highly qualified teachers.

II. Smaller Class Sizes To Improve Student Achievement

S*maller class size is a key element to achieving the Great Public Schools criterion of quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning*.

The classroom is the nexus of student learning and class size has a direct impact on student achievement. Smaller classes allow more time for teaching and more individualized attention for students. The preponderance of research evidence indicates that learning increases as class size is reduced, especially in the early grades. Studies have shown that smaller class size provides lasting benefits for students, especially for minority and low-income students, and for students with exceptional needs. Even in the upper grades teachers can be more successful in increasing student learning when they can provide more individualized attention.

NEA recommends an optimum class size of 15 students in regular programs, especially in the early grades, and a proportionately lower number in programs for students with exceptional needs including children with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Fewer than 15 students is an optimal class size, especially in kindergarten (K) and grade 1. Researchers have documented benefits from class size of 15–18 students in K and of fewer than 20 students in grades 1–3. Students in smaller classes in the early grades (such as K-3) continue to reap academic benefits through middle and high school, especially if they are minority or low-income students.

NEA supports restoring the Class Size Reduction program that existed prior to NCLB.

Closing the achievement gaps requires that teachers have more opportunities to work with students who need greater assistance. ESEA should provide a dedicated funding stream to complete the job of hiring 100,000 highly qualified teachers to reduce class size.

An innovative way to ensure that students receive more individualized assistance is pairing two teachers in the same classroom. This strategy is discussed in more detail in the next section.

We support a combination of federal programs—through both direct grants and tax subsidies to states and school districts—for school modernization to accommodate smaller classes.

III. Quality Educators In Every Classroom and School

A growing body of research confirms what school-based personnel have known—that the skills and knowledge of teachers and support professionals are the greatest factor in how well students learn. The credibility of each and every educator is damaged when one of us is unprofessional or unprepared.

Our proposals would help meet the Great Public Schools criteria of quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning; and a qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.

Our policies are focused on maximizing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of school-based personnel, creating the conditions to allow educators to do their best work, and making sure that the right people are in the right place to meet the needs of all students. In addition to teachers, many other educators and school staff, including paraeducators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, librarians and media specialists, bus drivers, food service workers, school maintenance staff, security personnel, and secretaries all play an important role in improving student learning by meeting the educational and other needs of students.

Our specific proposals for increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers are focused on professional development and on National Board Certification. Federal policy should be directed toward providing states and school districts with the resources and technical assistance to create an effective program of professional development and professional accountability for all employees. Effective professional development should promote continuing growth. It should create opportunities to acquire new knowledge and apply the best pedagogical practices consistent with the school's goals.

Specifically, we propose revision of the ESEA Title II—Teacher Quality State Grant program—by refining the program criteria and ensuring alignment of federally funded teacher professional development with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards. We also propose federally funded salary enhancements for teachers who achieve National Board Certification, with a smaller salary incentive for teachers who complete this rigorous process and receive a score, but do not achieve certification.

Our second set of proposals is focused on creating the conditions in which teachers and education support professionals can apply their knowledge and skills most effectively to help children learn.

We propose a grant program to states willing to encourage skills- and knowledge-based staffing arrangements in schools. This program should encourage collaboration between the school administration and the local organization representing teachers and other educators, as well as increased collaboration among teachers and between teachers and other education staff, to promote innovation in the way teachers' and support professionals' roles and responsibilities are defined. The development and implementation of such programs must respect existing collective bargaining agreements. Teachers with specific knowledge and skills should be encouraged to assist their colleagues to become better at what they do, and should receive additional compensation for taking on new roles

However, we remain opposed to pay systems that directly link teacher compensation to student test scores. Such merit pay systems fail to recognize that teaching is not an individual, isolated profession. Rather, it is a profession dependent on the entire network of teaching professionals, where the foundation for student achievement is built over time from each of the student's educators. Further merit pay undermines the collegiality and teamwork that create a high-performing learning institution.

Education support professionals should be afforded every opportunity to broaden and enhance their skills and knowledge through training/professional development offerings, mentoring, and programs designed to support them as they assist the classroom teacher. They should be compensated for taking additional courses or doing course work for advanced degrees to assist in the classroom and to support student learning.

We propose federal grants that support innovation in addressing teacher workload issues, especially in struggling schools.

These grants should allow districts and schools to experiment with proposals such as assisting new teachers by pairing them in a classroom with an experienced teacher, and compensating the experienced teacher to induct and mentor the new teacher. Co-teaching—two qualified teachers in one classroom—can benefit students by effectively reducing the class size per teacher allowing for more individual attention. Co-teaching also allows increased mentoring opportunities for teachers, can reduce the need for less qualified substitute teachers, and can enhance parental involvement and communication.

Hard-to-staff schools should be provided with an adequate number of well trained administrators and support professionals, including paraeducators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and clerical support. Teachers and support professionals in these schools should have access to targeted professional development focused on the specific

needs of the school and community. These proposals would reduce the costly and disruptive turnover common in struggling schools.

Paraeducators who are involuntarily transferred to a Title I school and who had not met the highly qualified standard required under NCLB in Title I schools, should be given adequate time to meet the requirement. The school district should be responsible for any remuneration required for meeting the standard (i.e., taking an assessment or taking continuing or higher education courses).

The third set of proposals focuses on distribution of the educator workforce—ways to ensure that all schools, no matter how challenging, are staffed by high quality education professionals.

We propose that teachers and support professionals who work in schools identified as "in need of improvement" or high-poverty schools, and stay in such schools for at least five years, be eligible for financial incentives—both direct federal subsidies and tax credits—for retention, relocation, and housing.

We also propose that the definition of "highly qualified" teachers be revised to respect state licensure and certification systems, and eliminate nonessential requirements that create unnecessary obstacles for talented and skilled teachers and loopholes in the scope of coverage for some charter school teachers, alternative route teachers, and supplemental education service provider instructors.

Specifically, we propose that all fully licensed special education teachers be designated as highly qualified; that broad-based social studies certification count as meeting the highly qualified requirements for any social studies discipline; and that additional flexibility be provided for middle school teachers, including accepting an academic minor to demonstrate subject matter competence. We also propose expanding the definition of "rural schools" used in the current rural school timeline extension. Finally, we propose that all teachers employed in programs authorized and/or funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including those in charter schools and supplemental education service providers, be required to meet the same definition regarding qualifications.

Due to numerous rules and guidance changes by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), as well as DOE's recent notification to some states that their definitions were not in compliance, some teachers will have an extremely limited amount of time to meet the new definitions imposed upon their state, or may still not know the exact rules they must meet. In several states, teachers were told by their state that they met the highly qualified rules but now, years after the fact in some cases, the federal government is ruling their states' definitions out of compliance. As a result, tens of thousands of teachers have already been notified they were highly qualified and may suddenly find themselves classified as not highly qualified. DOE appears to believe that content knowledge trumps all other forms of knowledge and skills (including decades of successful teaching).

Teachers who may not meet the highly qualified standard by the end of the current deadlines due to these significant implementation problems should not be penalized, but instead should be provided with assistance and additional time to meet the requirement.

Additionally, we propose that paraeducators who meet the highly qualified standard be granted reciprocity if they move to another state or district, where assessment scores or qualifications are different. Paraeducators should be able to provide documentation that they have met the requirements from a previous state or district to the receiving state or district. Documentation should be provided within 12 months of their hiring.

IV. Students and Schools Supported By Active and Engaged Parents, Families, and Communities

NEA supports inclusion of programs in ESEA that help to enhance family and community involvement.

Adult and family literacy programs encourage parents to model reading, which promotes early and sustained literacy, and enable parents to be more involved in their children's education, particularly with homework. Parenting classes can explain the significance of adequate sleep, appropriate nutrition, and other factors, so that children come to school ready to learn and can help parents understand their role as partners in their children's education.

An engaged community is a supportive community. Community engagement programs can expand the stakeholders in public education to include community organizations. Parent leaders can bring greater awareness of school issues to review boards, panels, oversight committees, and public officials.

Language barriers serve as an obstacle to school/family partnerships in growing numbers of communities. Strategies that have worked well include providing a bilingual teacher or other translator for parent conferences and other parent involvement activities, and multilingual school-to-home communications. In addition, for parents who are unfamiliar with the U.S. educational system, parent education helps to enhance their understanding of what is expected of them and their children in their public schools.

All schools should be encouraged to institute school-parent compacts—signed by parents—that provide a clearly defined list of parental expectations and opportunities for involvement.

NEA supports policies and resources that assist communities in making schools the hub of the community.

Community schools bring together public and private organizations to offer a range of services, programs, and opportunities—before, during, and afterschool—that strengthen and support schools, communities, families, and students. Community schools improve the coordination, delivery, effectiveness, and efficiency of services provided to children and families. These schools and communities develop reciprocal and mutually supportive relationships. In addition to building strong connections between schools and families and enhancing student learning, community schools help to make schools and communities safer and more supportive places; and they use scarce public, private, and community resources more efficiently.

As an essential component of a highly qualified workforce, NEA supports including training in the skills and knowledge needed for effective parental and family

communication and engagement strategies as a requirement for professional development programs funded through ESEA.

The case for the importance of parent and community engagement in bolstering public education is well documented. However, the research base could be strengthened by supporting more research designs that would enable firmer conclusions to be drawn about the specific effects of different types of programs.

Parent and community engagement can also be bolstered by more effective implementation of the parent and community engagement requirements in Title I of ESEA. Technical assistance to schools and financial rewards for exemplary involvement or improvement in involvement would help broaden the ethnic, language, and racial diversity of those involved in planning parent involvement and would help ensure that the full community is represented.

We also support expanded funding for the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRC) program in ESEA. The PIRC program supports school-based and school-linked parental information and resource centers that help implement effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities; develop and strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the educational needs of children; and develop and strengthen the relationship between parents and their children's school.

Time and availability are two obvious challenges to parental involvement. *Employers should receive incentives or be required to provide parents a reasonable amount of leave to participate in their children's school activities.*

V. Resources To Ensure a Great Public School For Every Child

When NCLB was enacted, Congress promised to provide the resources necessary to meet the many mandates contained in the law, provide school improvement funds to schools that failed AYP, and provide increased resources especially for Title I and Title II Teacher Quality to help close achievement gaps, improve overall student achievement, and ensure all students have a quality teacher. NCLB has never been funded at the authorized levels. And, after an increase in funding in the first year (FY 2002), funding for NCLB programs is on the decline, with most states and school districts facing unfunded mandates, real cuts in resources, and no federal funds to turn around low-performing schools. Note the following illustration of ever-diminishing resources:

- In the 2005–06 school year, two-thirds of all schools districts are receiving less Title I money than they did the previous year. In the 2006–07 school year, an additional 62 percent of school districts will have their Title I funding cut—most for the second consecutive year—because Congress reduced overall Title I funding.
- Up to 20 percent of school districts' Title I money must be diverted from classroom services to pay for transportation for school choice and supplemental services. This mandatory set-aside compounds the impact of continued reductions in funding. Thus, many districts are experiencing severe reductions in Title I funds available for classroom services to help our neediest students

improve their learning, and even districts slated for an increase in Title I funding have less money available for classroom services after this set-aside.

- Under the President's proposed budget for FY 07, 29 states will receive less Title I money than they did in FY 06, with some states actually receiving less money than they did three, four, or even five years ago.
- NO money has ever been provided for the school improvement state grants program. The only money available for school improvement comes off the top of states' Title I allocations, taking funds from the few school districts that have not yet had their Title I funding cut.
- Funding for teacher quality state grants in FY 06 is less than the level provided three years ago. The President's budget proposes to continue funding in FY 07 at this reduced level.
- Overall, Title I funding proposed for FY 07 is only roughly half of the authorized level promised when NCLB was passed, leaving almost 4.6 million low-income students denied Title I services.

To help meet all the Great Public Schools criteria, and in particular adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding, NEA supports the following:

- Fully funding ESEA programs at their authorized levels so that states and schools have adequate funding for programs, including professional development for teachers and paraeducators, needed to help close achievement gaps.
- Enforcing Sec. 9527(a) of NCLB, which prevents the federal government from requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds—beyond what they receive from the federal government—to implement federal mandates. NEA is joined in this position by school districts, several states, the American Association of School Administrators, and other state and local officials.
- Protecting essential ESEA programs by:
    - Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for school improvement programs to assist districts and schools
    - Providing adequate funding to develop and improve assessments that measure higher order thinking skills
    - Establishing a trigger whereby any consequences facing schools falling short of the new accountability system are implemented only when Title I is funded at its authorized level
    - Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for supplemental education services and school choice, if these mandates remain in the law
    - Providing adequate funding to develop and improve appropriate assessments for students with disabilities and English Language Learners
    - Providing technical assistance to schools to help them use funds more effectively
- Adequately funding important children's and education programs outside of ESEA, including child nutrition, Head Start, IDEA, children's health, child care, and related programs. Each of these programs makes an important contribution

to a child's ability to learn. Further, reduced federal funding for social services programs erodes funding for education by pitting funding for education against health care and other needs at the state level, undermining the states' ability to adequately fund their public schools.

Appendix 1

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION nea.org

Great Public Schools for Every Child

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: From the War on Poverty to No Child Left Behind

The largest source of federal support for K-12 education is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Passed in 1965 as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, ESEA has provided federal funding to the neediest students and schools for over 40 years. It has been reauthorized eight times—usually every five or six years—since 1965. In announcing his plan to construct a "Great Society," President Johnson stated, "Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty."[1] Bolstered by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, elections yielding an increase in the number of Congressmen from northern, more urban areas, and his own landslide election victory, Johnson quickly won passage of ESEA. Representative John Brademas summarized the congressional sentiment behind Johnson's legislation, stating, "Many of us in Congress and some presidents of both parties perceived that there were indeed genuine needs—in housing, health, and education—to which state and city governments were simply not responding. It was this inattention by state and local political leaders, therefore, that prompted us at the federal level to say, 'We're going to do something about these problems.' And we did."[2]

ESEA created for the first time a partnership among federal, state, and local governments to address part of the larger national agenda of confronting poverty and its damaging effects by targeting federal aid to poor students and schools. It also was based on a "grand" compromise concerning federal aid to private and parochial schools. To avoid directly sending public dollars to parochial schools, ESEA instead directed public school districts to use a portion of their Title I funds to provide services to low-income students enrolled in private schools. This provision—known as equitable participation—has stood for over 40 years.

Since then, ESEA has evolved in three major phases. From 1965 to 1980, the reauthorizations of ESEA focused on whether Title I (providing the bulk of ESEA funds for targeted help to poor students and high-poverty schools) was to be considered truly targeted funding or whether it was cleverly disguised as general aid to education (today over 90 percent of school districts receive Title I funding). This period was also marked by evolving lists of "allowable uses" of Title I funds, from equipment to professional development to health services.[3]

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[1] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, *U.S. Government Printing Office 1965*, Lyndon B. Johnson, Book I (1963-1964): 704-707.

[2] John Brademas, *The Politics of Education: Conflict and Consensus on Capitol Hill*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (1987), p. 77.

[3] Elizabeth DeBray, *Politics, Ideology, and Education: Federal Policy During the Clinton and Bush Administrations*, Teachers College Press (2006), p. 7.

The second phase of ESEA—from about 1980 to 1990—saw no significant increases (when adjusted for inflation) in funding for the Act, and President Reagan block-granted and consolidated several ESEA programs. Also during this time, *A Nation at Risk*—a Reagan Administration commission report—was released and catapulted education onto the national political scene as an important issue to voters. The report clearly linked the state of America's schools to the nation's economic productivity. In the 1988 reauthorization of ESEA, the first significant shift in the distribution of Title I dollars occurred, conditioning the states' receipt of the funds upon some accountability for improved outcomes. Congress allowed Title I funds to be used for schoolwide programs (to support systemic improvement in schools where 75 percent of students were in poverty) as a way to respond to the urgent call for more wide-sweeping reform outlined in *Nation at Risk.*

Finally, from 1990 to the present, the education debate has been dominated by the desire of policymakers to see evidence that federal investments in education programs yield tangible, measurable results in terms of student achievement and success. The two main examples of this approach occurred in 1994 and in 2001, with the passage of President Clinton's Goals 2000 and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) and President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Not surprisingly, the Clinton reauthorization built upon the standards-based reform initiatives of many governors, including many who in 1989 attended President Bush's first-ever education summit of the nation's governors to discuss national standards or goals. Goals 2000, passed in 1993, required all states to develop challenging standards for all students in reading and math, as well as issue school report cards. IASA went a step further and required states to develop and administer statewide assessments to all low-income students at least once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school and to develop plans to improve their educational outcomes. While this policy movement occurred, congressional Republicans adopted a platform called the "Contract with America," which called for, among other things, the abolition of the U.S. Department of Education. By early 1999, however, only 36 states issued school report cards, 19 provided assistance to low-performing schools, and 16 had the authority to close down persistently low-performing schools.[4] Ironically, President Clinton's Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Tom Payzant, remarked later, "The underlying policy direction of NCLB is consistent with the 1994 reauthorization, but there's a level of prescriptions with respect to implementation that [Democrats] would have been soundly criticized for trying to accomplish, had we done so."[5]

In May of 1999, the Clinton Administration forwarded its ESEA reauthorization proposal to Congress (a proposal that called for more funding, particularly for class size reduction, school modernization, and after school programs). A group of centrist Democrats, led by Senators Joe Lieberman (D-CT) and Evan Bayh (D-IN) developed an alternative proposal. At the same time, conservative Republicans authored the "Straight A's" plan, which would have block-granted most federal education programs, shifting power and money to the state level. Due to these fractures, ESEA was not reauthorized in 1999. During the 2000 Presidential campaign, Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore both embraced continued emphasis on standards-based reform, but it was Bush who grabbed the Lieberman/Bayh blueprint, attached a large voucher proposal to it, and campaigned to "leave no child behind."

In February of 2001, shortly after Bush assumed office, Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) sent a letter on behalf of several centrist Democratic Senators to the President indicating their support for the basic thrust of the Bush accountability proposal. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), knowing that Democrats were not united around

[4] Ibid.
[5] Frederick Hess and Michael Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind*, Peter Lang Publishing (2006), p. 15.

a common ESEA reauthorization plan, met shortly thereafter with the White House to begin negotiating a compromise. Throughout the spring of 2001, Senator Kennedy and Representative George Miller (D-CA) had ongoing discussions with the White House in which the Administration agreed to abandon quietly the fight for its voucher plan (helped tremendously by 5 Republicans voting with all Democrats on the House Education and Workforce committee to strike voucher provisions from the Committee bill) in exchange for supplemental services and significantly more funding. By the summer, however, negotiations had slowed tremendously due to the difficulty in crafting an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) definition that did not over-identify schools. White House advisor Sandy Kress (a Texas Democrat who had helped Bush usher in an NCLB-like accountability system in Texas) met with an NEA-led task force of several major education groups to discuss the AYP definition. Kress stated that the White House did not wish to identify as low-performing so many schools that it would become impossible to target help to the schools most in need. Despite this expressed goal, the White House's involvement in actual negotiations began to lessen.

In August, congressional staff had begun conference negotiations on the House and Senate bills. Following the September 11th terrorist attacks and the receipt in Senator Daschle's office of an anthrax-laced letter, most congressional buildings were locked down for intensive cleaning. As a result, the "Big Four"—Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), Senator Kennedy, Representative John Boehner (R-OH), and Representative Miller—began intensive, private negotiations and drafting sessions. By the time they concluded, ESEA's reauthorization, the "No Child Left Behind Act," was 1,100 pages long. Members of both parties literally had a few days to review all of its contents before votes on the final legislation. In December 2001, the Senate voted 87-10 to approve the legislation, and the House approved it by a vote of 381-41.

The ESEA in Historical Context

Year	Public Law #	Title
2002	107-110	No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110) requires annual testing in reading and math in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school, requires science standards and assessments in at least three grades, requires that teachers and education support professionals meet new quality requirements, and sanctions schools that do not make adequate yearly progress.
1998	105-277	The 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, including the FY 99 Budget for the Department of Education. The Reading Excellence Act and legislation authorizing the class size reduction initiative were also included.
1997	105-17	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to reauthorize and make improvements to that Act, which is designed to improve access to education for those with disabilities.
1994	103-382	Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA]. Covers Title I, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Eisenhower Professional Development, bilingual education, impact aid, charter schools, education technology and many other programs; also reauthorized the National Center for Education Statistics, amended General Education Provisions Act [GEPA] and several other acts.
1994	103-239	School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994
1993	103-227	GOALS 2000: Educate America Act, also included reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI]). Passed in 1993.
1993	103-33	To authorize the conduct and development of NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) assessments for fiscal year 1994.

Year	Public Law #	Title
1991	102-119	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1991 (IDEA)
1990	101-476	Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990
1989		President George Bush convened the first education summit of the nation's governors. This summit led to the creation of the first-ever national goals for education: every child would come to kindergarten "ready to learn," America would have a 90% graduation rate, students would master five core subjects before advancing past grades 4, 8, and 12; America's students would lead the world in math and science; all adults would be literate and prepared for the workforce; and every school would be safe and drug-free.
1988	100-297	ESEA Reauthorized as the "Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988" —major change was allowing Title I funds to be used for "schoolwide" programs in schools where at least 75% of the students were at or below the poverty level.
1987		Gallup poll reported that 87% of Americans believed that the federal government should require states and localities to meet some minimum national standards with respect to education.
1984	98-211	Education emerged as a top issue in the Presidential campaign; however, the Administration's political platform remained opposed to expanding federal involvement in education. ESEA reauthorized with rather technical changes. (Education Amendments of 1984).
1981		President Reagan's Secretary of Education, Terence Bell, appointed the commission that issued the widely-publicized report, "A Nation at Risk." The report, which characterized America's public schools as mediocre at best, called for increased salaries and professional development for teachers, tougher standards and graduation requirements, and a more rigorous curriculum.
1981	97-35	ESEA reauthorized as the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act – block-granted several programs.
1980	96-88	Department of Education Organization Act, creating the USED. NEA helped author this legislation and promoted it as a top organization priority.
1978	95-561	Education Amendments of 1978
1975	94-142	Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the origin of today's IDEA.
1974	93-380	Education Amendments of 1974. Adds the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, also often called the Buckley Amendment).
1972	92-318	Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). Prohibits sex discrimination in education.
1967	90-247	Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1967. Title IV of this act is known as the General Education Provisions Act [GEPA].
1966	89-750	Elementary and Secondary Amendments of 1966. Adult Education Act is Title III.
1965	89-10 89-329	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 Higher Education Act of 1965
1964	88-352	Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IV covers education.