



ASCD Policy Recommendations **Biden-Harris Presidential Transition Education Agency Review Team**

ASCD empowers educators to achieve excellence in learning, teaching, and leading so that every child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. ASCD is one of the largest education associations in the nation and whose members span the professional education spectrum—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, central office staff, and professors of education. ASCD is also one of the leading voices and originators of the Whole Child framework for student success.

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The 2020-21 school year has been one of historic educational, social, and economic challenges. Educators have responded heroically in this time of crisis. But what is most needed right now is decisive federal leadership and a strong set of policy and resource supports from the Biden administration.

The coronavirus pandemic has only served to highlight and exacerbate systemic inequities that have existed well before Covid-19. In responding to the immediate needs of students and educators, we must be mindful that any solutions should address the underlying root causes, be coordinated, and be sustainable after this current emergency has passed.

In that regard, the Biden administration should view all its policies through the lens of supporting a Whole Child approach to education. A Whole Child policy framework recognizes the need to integrate the array of comprehensive and complementary supports that best serve students and families. This strategic approach also emphasizes the saliency of educators in achieving this vision and requires additional supports for them in this system, notably in the form of enhanced and expanded professional development opportunities. Towards that end, ASCD offers the following specific policy recommendations.

1. Promote the adoption of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) school-health model in all states.

This coordinated school-health model was developed in conjunction with the CDC. It addresses the symbiotic relationship between learning and health by providing a framework for state and local leaders to align, integrate, and collaborate education and health services to improve each child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.

2. Invest in educator professional development for effective instruction in a variety of modes and to provide personalized learning for students.

The two most important in-school factors for student achievement are an effective educator and school leader. Expanded and robust professional development opportunities are essential for educators to meet the current and future needs of students. Educators require on-going and job-embedded support to enhance their professional skills in areas such as leadership and management, integration of technology, curriculum and instruction, equity and cultural competency, and social-emotional learning.

3. Require and provide funding for a full-time nurse in every school and an increase in counselors to reach the recommended ratio of one for every 250 students.

Student and educator health are critical focus areas in this year of crisis. However, these concepts are essential elements of school success which should not diminish in importance after the pandemic ends.

Every student should have access to qualified support staff that are dedicated to their physical and social-emotional well-being.

4. Establish a White House Office of Children and Youth

A coordinating entity in the White House would highlight the needs of children, youth and their families and help to integrate relevant federal funding, programs, and strategies across agencies that effect child well-being. The Whole Child approach is grounded in the integration and alignment of services, having an operational body at the federal level will help ensure policy and funding alignment as well.

5. Maintain test administration but waive ESSA accountability requirements for the 2020-21 school year, including accountability determinations and consequences.

Provide states and districts the option of administering federally required assessments this year if they determine they have the capability to do so in a safe and secure environment that produce results that are valid and reliable which can inform decision-makers and the public about student achievement. But suspend any accountability determinations for this school year—subgroup accountability, 95% eligible population testing requirement, and required ranking and classification of schools—due to the unprecedented nature of the national public health crisis that prevents any meaningful comparability of performance or progress to previous school years.

6. Increase annual regular appropriations in key federal elementary and secondary education programs for FY22.

Increased federal education funding is necessary to help provide equity for students and support for the programs and policies established for schools. The college- and career-ready expectations for students have never been higher, while the needs of these students—the majority of whom now come from low-income families—have never been greater. In addition, growing income inequality and health disparities have only exacerbated educational inequities for underserved communities.

- Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B state grants.
- Triple Title I-A funding to local school districts.
- Increase Title II supporting effective instruction state grants to \$2.6 billion.
- Increase Title IV student support and academic enrichment grants to \$2.1 billion.
- Provide \$4 billion for the E-rate program.

7. \$100 billion for school building and modernization to improve ventilation, plumbing, other infrastructure, and decrease student population density.

A 2020 GAO report found that more than half of the nation's school districts "need to update or replace multiple building systems or features in their schools" and that more than 36,000 schools need to update or replace their HVAC systems. Improving school facilities to be safe, healthy, and modern learning environments is critical to the long-term success and well-being of all students, but particularly those in low-income and minority communities where dilapidated buildings are concentrated.

8. Extend school meal waivers (currently set to expire at the end of the calendar year) to serve all students and families through the end of the school year.

One of the great inequities revealed during this year's school closures was the staggering scope of food insecurity among the nation's students and their families. Regular, nutritionally balanced meals are the foundation of child development and adolescent growth. Given greater food insecurity among families created by the current financial insecurity, schools should continue to provide a free, nutritious meal to students through the end of the pandemic.