

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization

The link between health and learning is clear. Healthy, active and well-nourished children are more likely to attend school, be engaged, and be ready to learn. Today, more than 31 percent of all American children and adolescents are obese or overweight. Healthy eating and physical activity starts at home with parents and families. But schools have a major role to play in helping to address this epidemic, as well as other public health issues our nation's students face, such as asthma, chronic absenteeism, prescription drug, tobacco and other substance abuse. Our federal and state education policy must recognize the connection between health and education and support policies and programs towards the twin goals of healthier schools and improved student achievement.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority, recommends the following policy priorities to Congress as it continues the important work of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):

- Ensure that the U.S. Department of Education has the resources and organizational capacity to address student health and wellness, including by expanding the mandate of Office of Safe and Healthy Students
- Prioritize physical activity, including through physical education, recess, and before-and after-school opportunities, as a necessary component of a child's day by:
 - Preserving the Carol M. White Physical Education Program grant program
 - Promoting joint-use agreements to provide safe and structured environments to facilitate community-organized physical activity during non-school hours
 - Preserving funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers for afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs
 - Deeming physical education as a core subject eligible for Title I funding
 - Supporting increased physical education and health educator training
- Ensure that health objectives and metrics are explicitly included into educational data systems
- Authorize and appropriate funding for full-service community schools
- Incorporate health metrics and data into educational data systems
- Explore and, where appropriate, encourage linkages to school-based health centers and co-location of health clinics within schools, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded programs, state Medicaid agencies, and other health services.
 - ESEA-funded schools should support implementation of evidence-based Screening Brief Intervention, Treatment and Referral (SBIRT) in school settings to help identify young people who may be in the early stages of substance abuse addiction.
- Provide for adequate teacher, principal, and other school staff professional training and increase support for school safety to ensure that all students are safe from violence, in part by providing resources to help teachers create safe and affirming learning environments
- Develop and promulgate best practices for schools and school districts to support LGBT children

We urge Congress to seize this opportunity to improve our education system by promoting the health of America's children, adolescents, and young adults.