



NABSE'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION: The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), a nonprofit organization with more than 7,000 members, is the largest network of African-American educators dedicated to improving the educational accomplishments of African-American youth.

To realize the full importance of NABSE's mission, one needs only to consider the following statistics: *Nearly 53 percent of African Americans are under the age of 30, nearly 40 percent are under the age of 20, and 10 percent are under the age of 5.* These age groups span the educational spectrum from preschool to doctoral programs. As long as African-American participation in education falls below that of the general population, it places the future of this community and the fabric of our nation at risk.

We understand that the Constitution is silent on the federal role in education and leaves responsibility for the education of its citizens to the states. Yet we strongly believe that the role of the federal government in education is clearly proclaimed in the Fourteenth Amendment. The framers' basic aim, we believe, was to preserve the rights of citizens from discriminatory action at the hands of the state. We take that to mean preserving those rights socially, politically, and financially. In reality, if Congress and the executive branch do not assume the role of providing equity for access and equal protection to all students what business do they have in education?

In an era driven by the language of accountability, standards, and choice, and an era inadequate in reducing inequities in learning and to achievement, the words of Thomas Jefferson take on added meaning for those who advocate for African-American children. Jefferson stated, *"We should build an aristocracy of achievement based on a democracy of opportunity."*

- We agree with the current voices in Congress who discuss the federal role in education as one of providing support to the states and to the local communities. But we do not agree that the federal role is simply to disburse dollars to states and localities to use freely at the wishes and whims of the governors.
- We applaud the efforts of the Congress and of the current administration to look at research as a lever for informing and influencing policy and legislation. But we would request that Congress **review all research**, in a bipartisan way, not just research that supports a particular perspective.
- We support accountability. In fact we believe that schooling for all students should be geared toward high-quality and rigorous standards. However, we observe that standards and accountability have become equated with measures and initiatives that impose a retributive penalties framework rather than a supportive framework.
- We support choice for parents that is within the public sector; including public charter and magnet schools. However, we are concerned that each state recognize and consider the extent to which the state's policies and support of charter schools, are in fact parallel systems.
- We support federal legislative language that maintains the state's "statutory and constitutional" role of responsibility for its citizens' education at the local level. However, we advocate that states and local institutions be held accountable for all of our citizens' civil rights.
- We argue that public schools and public education historically have been the bedrock of our country's robust democratic institutions. We therefore believe that among the federal roles the ideal of equity must remain paramount. **Excellence is undermined if equity is ignored.**
- We support full funding for Title I. It has been carefully documented that Title I is currently meeting the needs of one-third of the eligible students nationwide. We will not discuss here in any detail the barrage of comments that label Title I as a failure. We are able to respond with compelling evidence that Title I (as a funding stream; it is not a program) has demonstrated substantial progress for a significant number of poverty-stricken students. (See The Unfinished Agenda: Full Funding for Title I).
- We expect that no high-stakes construct will be put in place until there are more advances in high stakes resources that provide equitable and educational.



Reauthorization

1. Support for full funding of Title I (The current appropriation discussion leaves Title I with a loss. 90% of the Nation's school districts participating in the federal Title I program will have their Title I funding cut or frozen for school year (2007-08). Half of the states will also lose funding (See Center on Education Policy Report Aug 2006). In fact, 25 states and the District of Columbia will see their federal Title I funding reduced, compared to only 9 states in the 2005-06 school years.
2. We support accountability. In fact we believe that schooling for all students should be geared toward high and rigorous standards. However, we observe that standards and accountability have become equated with measures and initiatives that impose a retributive penalty framework rather than a supportive framework. We have signed on to the joint organizational statement on the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) submitted to Congress and updated on July 18, 2007. We strongly recommend that states be able to develop multiple measures of accountability. We ask that Congress in writing the legislation consider the rationale put forth by Jane Herman of CRESST1.
3. We support Programs of Professional Development for educational leaders.
4. We support Targeted and Sustained investment, at the federal level for financial equity and human capital for every student.
5. We support Congresspersons (and work cogently and effectively with them) who will assure that Congress provide substantive funding to prevent further educational crisis for students of African descent.
6. We oppose any choice or voucher programs that use public taxpayers' dollars for private and parochial school education, even when the dollars are targeted to a select number of poor children.
7. We continue to support the E-Rate. The E-rate program continues to make advanced telecommunications services affordable to our nation's schools and libraries.
8. We support choice for parents within the public sector that includes public charter and magnet schooling. However, we are concerned that each state recognize and consider the extent to which the state's policies supporting charter schools are in fact parallel with those for non-charter public schools.

