

Public Hearings: ESSA Quality Educators

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Good afternoon. I am Kristy Moore a Durham Public Schools mentor for new teachers, as well as currently serving on the National Education Association Board of Directors.

One of the major improvements over No Child Left Behind's one-size-fits-all approach to educating students is that the Every Student Succeeds Act ensures that teachers' voices are part of decision-making at the federal, state, and local levels. Using the expertise of educators is critical to NCAE members. NCAE looks forward to being engaged in conversations during the deliberations and creation of the State plan. An attractive component of ESSA is local educational agencies will have access to apply for funds in supporting initiatives to improve academic achievement and student engagement, including protecting student safety. At the same time, the teacher voice must be included when discussing and deciding the kinds of initiatives that are needed in their school community. Moving decision-making to the people who know the names of the students they educate while maintaining supports to ensure zip codes do not determine the quality of education can be accomplished in many ways.

1. Schools with the most vulnerable students; those that face poverty, disabilities, English-language learners, or other emotional issues need supports and interventions that are tailored to local needs and not a one size fits all program. We believe having local Committees of Practitioners where educators, parents, and community members come together to work on improving their local schools not only empowers the educator voice but will strengthen community partnerships, that will enhance the learning conditions for all students. The local Committees of Practitioners could reflect the state COP and have the regional state members work with local and/or regional committees in regards to the needs of Title I schools. Should we also consider flexibility of LEAs sharing resources across county or school district lines? Becoming more efficient with scarce resources could have a positive impact on communities where borders don't matter.
2. In reference to possible grants that could be used to support initiatives to increase diversity in the teaching workforce, NCAE supports a scaled down version of the former NC Teaching Fellows program. The intent of such a grant program could have the focus of not only attracting educators of color, but men. Young male students need positive role models.
3. Funds allocated from ESSA plus state and local funds must be used to enhance collaboration and teacher-led professional development aligned with students' learning needs. Again, the teacher voice and experience based on best practices, positive observations and knowing the need of their students should be considered. Our state is blessed with many accomplished National Board Certified teachers. Locals need to include NBCTs in decisions regarding teacher-led professional development. Professional development should also become more embedded into

the daily work schedule, whether it is during a Professional Learning Community or a flex day. It should not just be an afterschool sit and get with little or no follow up.

4. An area near and dear to my heart is having strong, supportive induction and mentoring programs. ESSA ensures resources are made available to states to strengthen teacher induction and mentoring programs. Our state has comprehensive mentor program standards and the standards should be adhered to in every local. Locals must provide resources for new hires to ensure we don't continue to lose young, compassionate and skilled teachers. Creating a Peer Review program where teachers take a leave from the classroom for two or three years to mentor/coach new teachers is an approach to consider with flexible resources. Creating these types of leadership roles will strengthen the school's working and learning conditions. Currently, in North Carolina we are losing our teachers within 5 years, if not earlier, and one reason is lack of support. They are overwhelmed and it is extremely hard for school-based mentors or administrators to give our new teachers the support they need. Enabling our new teachers to take on strong leadership rolls will allow them to gain the confidence they need, become more vested in the school, and in turn will make them want to stay in the profession longer.
5. Under the infamous NCLB law, Teacher Assistants in Title I schools had to become highly qualified by 2004. ESSA also mandates that Teacher Assistants in Title I schools be highly qualified. Our state must provide options that meet the needs and economic situations of our TAs in Title I schools. There were many efforts in our state early on under NCLB, but currently those efforts are almost non-existent. Possibilities could include allowing TAs to earn a specific number of CEUs when attending all staff professional development sessions or other learning experiences related to their specific work. Allowing TAs permission to take some of the online courses in connection to literacy or other skill sets needed for their work in grades K-3. TAs in the classrooms assists students daily with the learning. They are simply there to conduct clerical duties. Enabling TAs to accumulate CEUs will allow them to learn more about the instruction within the classroom and truly assist with student achievement.

We now have an opportunity in NC to change the lives of our students as we will focus less on assessment and more on learning. Now is the time to work as one to move North Carolina public education forward. I am confident the new Every Student Succeeds Act will create the teamwork needed to enhance all school communities, no matter the zip code. As we tell our parents, we have to work as a team to move students forward. So now is the time, this is the place and we are the people to ensure our state's future is solid for all children.

Thank you!