



The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

April 9, 2015

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray:

On behalf of the member organizations of the National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (NASISP), we applaud your recognition of the importance of specialized instructional support services and personnel in the *Every Child Achieves Act of 2015*. These professionals, (e.g school counselors, school nurses, psychologists, school psychologists, social workers and school social workers; occupational and physical therapists; art, dance/movement, and music therapists; and, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists) provide and support a variety of school-based prevention, early identification, and intervention services that remove barriers to learning and assist students in becoming effective learners and productive citizens. Students must have access to these professionals, in addition to effective teachers, principals, and school leaders, to be successful.

During the public comment period on the draft of *Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015* we offered the following recommendations, and we are extremely pleased that they have been incorporated into ECAA:

- Inclusion of a definition of specialized instructional support personnel
- Explicit references requiring consultation with specialized instructional support personnel in the development of Title I state education agency plans, local education agency plans, school wide programs, and Title IV plans
- Explicit reference to multi-tiered systems of support, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and early intervening services as allowable uses of Title I funds
- Encourage the use of school climate indicators in state and local accountability plans, and as part of the principles of effectiveness in Title IV activities.
- Incorporation of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), as defined in the Higher Education Act of 2008, principles in instruction and assessment methods
- Inclusion of specialized instructional support personnel in professional development activities provided in Title II.

We offer the following suggestions and ask that they be addressed either in statute, or in report language that will accompany this bill.

1. Include meaningful consultation with specialized instructional support personnel in the 'principles of effectiveness' provisions in Title IV.
2. Sec. 4105 a(4)(C) (pg. 364) refers to school based mental health programs. The current language states that services must be provided by qualified school OR community based providers, we ask

that “or” be changed to “AND”. School employed mental health professionals have a specific set of skills needed to deliver academic, behavioral, social, emotional, and mental health services in a school setting. Effective, comprehensive school based mental health programs require the availability of school employed mental health professionals who can provide services for all students as well coordination with community providers, who can provide specific services for those students with the most intense needs.

3. Specialized instructional support personnel encompass a large number of staff categories with a broad set of responsibilities in schools. A number of State departments of education already provide leadership for specialized instructional support services by employing coordinators and/or specific departments for all or various subsets of these professions. The Assistant Secretaries for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and for Elementary and Secondary Education currently have authority over these personnel through the IDEA and the ESEA. However, no specific point of contact – office or individual –within the U.S. Department of Education is assigned to administer, coordinate, or carry out programs and activities concerned with providing specialized instructional support services in schools. Additionally, no one is designated to work with State coordinators, or with SEAs in general, on issues related to specialized instructional support services. We ask that you encourage the U.S. Department of Education to designate a staff person with leadership responsibility for specialized instructional supports in order to provide leadership and guidance, technical assistance and to be a specific point of contact on these services for State and local education agencies and education-related national organizations.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you toward a comprehensive reauthorization of ESEA.

Sincerely,
NASISP Co-Chairpersons



Libby Nealis, NASISP Co-Chair
School Social Work Association of America
Association



Kelly Vaillancourt, NASISP Co-Chair
National Association of School Psychologists



Neil Snyder, NASISP Co-Chair
American Speech Language Hearing

CC: Senate HELP Committee

The National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (NASISP) represents over a million Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) nationwide. SISP professionals provide and support school-based prevention and intervention services to address barriers to educational success, ensure positive conditions for learning, and help all students achieve academically and ultimately become productive citizens. SISP work with teachers, administrators, and parents to ensure that all students are successful in school. NASISP seeks to empower SISP professionals by encouraging multidisciplinary collaboration, and affirming their role in education's best practices and their involvement in school improvement efforts.

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