

Talking Points on Potential Disability-Specific Amendments to the
Every Child Achieves Act
Educating ALL Students with Disabilities

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the 40th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The combination of these two groundbreaking laws are our nation's commitment to educate every single child in this country no matter what their abilities and disabilities. The combination of ESEA and IDEA created a commitment to children with disabilities, economically disadvantaged children, and children learning English, that our schools are open to ALL students, including all students with disabilities.

As ESEA is being considered for reauthorization, some are calling for the law to include special treatment for subgroups of students with disabilities, such as those with dyslexia, specifically saying that resources, training, and staff time should go to prepare teachers to screen, identify and instruct students with dyslexia at the expense of other groups of children with disabilities. This is not in the spirit of equal opportunity and equal access to education that has been the guiding principle of education for the past 50 years.

To single out one group of students with disabilities over all others is bad policy for many reasons:

- Singling out one disability category creates a precedence in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that Congress has actively avoided so that states and districts have the decision making authority to allocate and use federal, state and local resources;
- Singling out one disability category may divert limited resources from addressing the needs of all students and uses those resources for one group of students over others; and
- Singling out one disability category over another in an era where there is agreement we need to educate all students, creates public policy that prioritizes one group of children with disabilities over others which is unfair and discriminatory.

Efforts to provide enhanced education resources to one group of children with disabilities over another should be opposed and defeated. As the Senate considers reauthorization of ESEA in the coming weeks, we urge you to let your Senators and their staff know that you do not want to put one group of children with disabilities ahead of any other group of children with disabilities.