



## Supporting Linked Learning Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides a critical opportunity to support high school reform efforts such as Linked Learning. Linked Learning is a systemic approach to high school reform that combines college-focused academics, work-based learning, and integrated support services. This document outlines provisions within the Every Child Achieves Act (S. 1177) and the Student Success Act (H.R. 5) that support and reinforce such efforts. It also offers recommendations to strengthen the legislation's capacity to prepare students for both postsecondary education and the workforce.

### **Accountability**

The use of multiple measures within state accountability systems, as proposed by the Every Child Achieves Act, provides the opportunity to recognize and incentivize efforts, such as Linked Learning, that foster readiness for both postsecondary education and the workforce. In particular, the Alliance appreciates language within the legislation that explicitly allows state accountability systems to include an indicator of “student readiness to enter postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for postsecondary remediation” (section 1111(b)(3)(B)(ii)(IV)(aa); page 55, lines 6–9).

**Recommendation:** In order to promote preparation for both postsecondary education and the workforce and prevent the practice of tracking students into a “workforce-ready” pathway or a “postsecondary education-ready pathway,” the Alliance encourages both H.R. 5 and S. 1177 to include an integrated measure of readiness for postsecondary education and the workforce. (Specific legislative language appears on page two of this document.)

**Recommendation:** Both H.R. 5 and S. 1177 lack sufficient support for low-performing high schools. Nationwide, there are 1,235 high schools that do not graduate one-third or more of their students. ESEA must ensure that these schools are identified and prioritized for support in order to implement systemic reform approaches such as Linked Learning.

### **Assessments**

The Every Child Achieves Act includes important provisions that will improve the quality of state assessments and allow these assessments to measure more accurately the knowledge and skills gained by students participating in Linked Learning. Specifically, the Alliance appreciates the following provisions of the Every Child Achieves Act:

- the explicit allowable use of projects, portfolios, and performance tasks as a part of state summative assessments (section 1111(b)(2)(B)(vi); page 38, lines 16–18); and
- the inclusion of a targeted funding stream supporting state assessments under section 1201, and in particular, the grants for enhanced assessments under section 1202 that allow funds to be used for the development of assessments that include projects, portfolios, and performance tasks.

### **Local Educational Agency Plans**

The Student Success Act includes important language calling upon local educational agencies to describe how they will use funds from Title I to support programs that coordinate and integrate career and technical education aligned with the state's academic standards and work-based learning opportunities (section 1112(b)(14); page

58, lines 1–12). This provision will support applied learning opportunities such as those provided by Linked Learning that make education more engaging to students and relevant to employer needs.

### **Funding for Next-Generation High Schools**

Current law includes a program supporting high school reform (ESEA Title I, Part H–School Dropout Prevention). Rather than eliminating this program as proposed under the Every Child Achieves Act and Student Success Act, this program should be replaced with the Next Generation High Schools Act (S.696), introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Tim Kaine (D-VA). This program would provide grants to partnerships among school districts, institutions of higher education, and employers to create and support pathways to postsecondary education and the workforce. Students would graduate from high school with postsecondary credit and exposure to the workplace.

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### **Recommended Legislative Language**

Recommendation: Explicitly allow state accountability systems to include an integrated measure of readiness for postsecondary education and the workforce.

S. 1177, page 55, lines 6-9: Insert the following language:

“(aa) student readiness to enter postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for postsecondary remediation, **which may include**

**(AA) measures that integrate preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, including performance in coursework sequences that integrate rigorous academics, work-based learning, and career and technical education;**

**(BB) measures of a high-quality and accelerated academic program as determined appropriate by the State, including measures of gains in measurable skills as described under the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act of 2014 and measures of technical skill attainment and placement as described under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006;**

H.R. 5, page 37, lines 21–22: Insert the following language:

**(III) other measures of school success, ~~and~~ which may include**

**(aa) measures that integrate preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, including performance in coursework sequences that integrate rigorous academics, work-based learning, and career and technical education; and**

**(bb) measures of a high-quality and accelerated academic program as determined appropriate by the State, including measures of gains in measurable skills as described under the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act of 2014 and measures of technical skill attainment and placement as described under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006;**