

# BUSINESS COALITION FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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September 19, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
House Committee on Education and the  
Workforce  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable George Miller  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Education and the  
Workforce  
2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Enzi, and Ranking Member Miller:

With the economic vitality of the United States directly dependent upon the quality of today's public schools, strengthening the nation's system of public education must be a top, bipartisan priority for Congress. The Business Coalition for Student Achievement (BCSA), a coalition of leading corporate CEOs, urges a swift, bipartisan, and comprehensive reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Improving the quality of education is essential to ensuring that all Americans are well prepared for the jobs of the future. BCSA is very concerned about students' low level of achievement and especially troubled by the nation's persistent achievement gap – between low income and affluent students and between white students and students of color. All students must receive a college- and career-ready education regardless of their background or where they live in order for America to sustain its competitive edge in the global economy.

ESEA, the primary federal education law for K-12, has not been updated since 2002 and is in critical need of revision and reform. Congress must maintain the law's focus on strong accountability in public education, including strong accountability for the academic achievement of student subgroups, while also providing states and local school districts with the flexibility to implement effective and innovative instructional practices that ensure continuous academic progress for all students.

As you work to reauthorize ESEA, we urge you to re-write the law in accordance with the following principles:

- Require states to adopt internationally benchmarked standards and aligned assessments that reflect readiness for college, the workplace, and international competition;

- Ensure that schools are held accountable for the academic achievement and graduation rates of all students and all subgroups of students;
- Increase the focus on chronically low-performing schools and schools that fail to improve graduation rates for all students, including student subgroups;
- Encourage the development of state systems for evaluating and enhancing teacher effectiveness and providing effective teachers and school leaders with a process to measure and reward success that is tied to student achievement;
- Include provisions for providing clear information and choices for parents and students such as access to school academic performance information and charter school networks;
- Support the development and improvement of data systems that can help to inform academic instruction, improvement, and interventions; and
- Eliminate redundant, costly, and ineffective programs and regulations that impede educational innovation and that do not improve student achievement.

More details on each of these principles are provided in the attached document. Updating federal education policy must be viewed as an economic priority. Business leaders and educators are increasingly called upon to work together to meet the expectations of the ever escalating skill demands of new jobs. The nation's business leaders call for a swift, bipartisan, and comprehensive reauthorization of ESEA that will help prepare students for college and career and equip them to compete in the knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We welcome the opportunity to work with you during the reauthorization process and we thank you for your attention to this request.

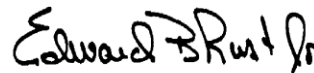
Sincerely,



**Craig Barrett**  
Former Chairman, Intel  
Co-Chair, BCSA



**William D. Green**  
Chairman, Accenture  
Co-Chair, BCSA



**Edward B. Rust Jr.**  
Chairman & CEO, State Farm  
Co-Chair, BCSA

C: The Honorable Arne Duncan

Members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce

Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions