



ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

Requests:

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

We urge Congress to...

- Ensure that a reauthorization of ESEA values experiential education by encouraging school districts to facilitate museum visits to help teach the curriculum.
- Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning.
- Expand connections among museums, educators, and students to ensure schools are able to take full advantage of museums' unique human and material resources.
- Continue to expressly include museums in applicable sections of ESEA Title I, and Title II and other subject specific program where appropriate and justified.
- Recognize holders of advanced degrees in museum education as qualified to work directly with students.

Museum-Friendly Legislation

We urge Congress to...

- Co-sponsor the No Child Left Inside Act of 2009, H.R. 2054, which encourages environmental literacy through experiential environmental education.
- Co-sponsor the Access to a Complete Education Act, H.R. 597, which supports a well-rounded education, including the subjects of music and arts, civics and government, and history, through school partnerships with public or private cultural entities such as museums.

Introduction:

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was the name given to the law that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the principal federal education policy for kindergarten through high school. This legislation is expected to be reauthorized this year. NCLB was designed to re-focus federal policy on reading and math, with strong accountability provisions, including annual standardized testing (developed by each state) for all students in certain grades. Schools that do not achieve test scores showing "Adequate Yearly Progress" in tests focused on reading and math are subject to a host of sanctions.

Almost immediately after NCLB took effect in 2002, school districts began devoting more time to reading and math at the expense of other subjects.

Talking Points:

No Child Left Behind has had Unintended Consequences

- More than one third (36 percent) of all school districts have cut elementary social studies instruction – by an average of 76 minutes a week. Arts education is down at 16 percent of the schools, and science instruction is down at 28 percent of the schools.
- As a result, museum visits and instruction related to art, science and history education have decreased.

Museums are Critical Partners in Education

- Each year, museums provide more than 18 million instructional hours to students and educators, including the following:
 - Educational programming for students
 - Museum staff visits to schools
 - Traveling exhibits in schools
 - Professional development for teachers
 - More than 90 million visits each year from school students
- In some states, museums write part of the educational curriculum for the entire state school system.
- Museums design educational programs in coordination with state and local curriculum standards in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.
- Educational museum visits reach students in ways that textbooks and classroom instruction cannot. Experiential learning in museums activates students' curiosity and imagination.
- In recognition of the strong role museums play in the education of children, museums are expressly included in several sections of ESEA/NCLB – including Arts in Education, Teaching American History, Technology, and Professional Development.

The Partnership between Museums and Schools Should Be Strengthened

- The partnership between museums and schools has served and benefited students, teachers and communities immensely.
- Many museums already participate in 21st Century Community Learning Centers and magnet and charter school programs (under the rubric of “community-based organizations”). However, museums should be expressly included as eligible entities in these programs for clear association and recognition to be drawn by state and local education agencies and other key stakeholders in education.
- Positions that have been established within school districts with the responsibility of ensuring that museum resources are well utilized by students and educators have proven extremely successful.
- Educators report a desire to continue educational visits to museums, but are under increased pressure to devote more time to drilling for standardized tests.
- Budgetary constraints, fuel costs and other factors are leading school officials to approve fewer educational visits to museums, to the detriment of both students and educators.