

**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD – 114<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION**  
**Senate – December 8, 2015**

**EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT**

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to support the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

I would like to commend Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and their counterparts in the House, Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott for their commitment to finding common ground and a path forward on this critical legislation.

When President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law 50 years ago, he noted that, “From our very beginnings as a nation, we have felt a fierce commitment to the ideal of education for everyone. It fixed itself into our democratic creed.”

Yet many communities across the nation, including my home state of Rhode Island, are still wrestling with how to address large achievement gaps based on wealth, race, ethnicity, and disability status.

Underlying the achievement gaps we see are gaps in opportunity.

We need to ensure our students have access to critical resources for

learning, strong teachers, counselors, and principals; a well-balanced program of study that includes arts, humanities, and environmental education; and safe, healthy schools equipped with libraries, technology, and science labs.

We also need to support and promote greater parent engagement.

These are the issues that I have focused on for many years, and I am very pleased the Every Student Succeeds Act makes important improvements in these areas.

This legislation will replace the badly flawed and increasingly unworkable No Child Left Behind Act with a new framework – one that stays true to the transparency and focus on closing achievement gaps that were the hallmarks of No Child Left Behind while eliminating the one-size fits all approach to school improvement and allowing states to develop more holistic and robust accountability systems that move beyond test scores as the sole measure of school success.

Increasing accountability for resource equity was the goal of the first bill I introduced this Congress – the Core Opportunity Resources for Equity and Excellence Act. I worked with Senators Baldwin, Brown, and Kirk to push for its provisions on the Senate floor.

I am pleased that the conference report includes stronger measures to require school districts address resource inequities in schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement than the bill we passed in the Senate.

The original Elementary and Secondary Education Act recognized the vital role that school libraries play in supporting student success, and this is an area I have worked on during several of the past reauthorizations of this law.

Senator Cochran and I introduced the Strengthening Kids Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLS) Act to ensure that federal resources continue to support student access to effective school library programs. The Every Student Succeeds Act includes key provisions from our legislation, including authorizing grants

for high need school districts to support effective school library programs and including support for such programs in school district level Title I and professional development plans.

In addition to school libraries, children need to have access to books in their homes from a very early age.

Senator Grassley and I introduced the Prescribe a Book Act to help address this issue, and I am glad key provisions are included here.

We know that teachers and principals are two of the most important in-school factors related to student achievement.

It is essential that teachers, principals, and other educators have a comprehensive system that supports their professional growth and development, starting on day one and continuing throughout their careers.

Senator Casey and I introduced the Better Education Support and Training Act to create such a system.

I am pleased that the Every Student Succeeds Act includes many of the provisions of our legislation – particularly the focus on equitable access to experienced and effective educators.

I remain concerned, however, that the failure to define “inexperienced teacher” could mask inequities and limit the usefulness of the reporting and that some of the provisions related to educator preparation could lower standards in our highest need schools.

Soon I will be introducing legislation to strengthen educator preparation and ensure that teachers in our high need schools are profession-ready.

The Every Student Succeeds Act also supports access for all children to a well-rounded education, including environmental literacy, as I proposed in the No Child Left Inside Act.

Family engagement is another critical area this bill addresses. This legislation will support more meaningful, evidenced-based family engagement, encourage school districts to dedicate more resources

to these activities and provide a statewide system of technical assistance for family engagement – similar to the Family Engagement in Education Act that I introduced with Senators Coons and Whitehouse.

Chairman Alexander and Senator Murray have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in crafting this legislation and steering it through an open and inclusive process.

This bill is an important step forward, and I encourage all my colleagues to support it.

Moreover, I hope that this spirit of bipartisanship and compromise will also translate to the appropriations process and result in robust resources to implement the new and improved law, unlike what happened with the No Child Left Behind Act.

Thank you, and I yield the floor.