

# 118<sup>th</sup> Legislative Priorities

## Who we are

At New Classrooms we are on a mission to personalize education for every student by redesigning how a classroom works. For more than 100 years, our nation's central approach to schooling has oriented around an individual teacher guiding the instruction of a cohort of same-aged students through a uniform curriculum, often with the aid of a textbook. But this model makes it nearly impossible to meet the unique strengths and needs of each student. The COVID-19 Pandemic has

only added new challenges that make this existing industrial paradigm unsustainable for teachers, students, and their parents. It is critical we not only address these immediate challenges, but begin to focus on a longer-term vision for schooling. To do so, the 118th Congress must invest in education research and development (R&D) in order to develop new innovative learning models, as well as create the space for states and districts to implement models to move towards a competency-based education system.



## What is an innovative learning model?

An innovative learning model is a school-based program that bundles together an interconnected set of tools, resources, systems, and instructional practices in order to shape student learning experiences toward clear objectives. Learning models may encompass the operation of an entire school or focus on a specific subject (e.g., math) or function (e.g., schoolwide culture and practices).

## I. Invest in Sustainable R&D for Education

Innovative approaches to learning, such as innovative learning models, simply cannot emerge without a sustained public investment in educational research and development (R&D). Federal investment in early-stage R&D has led to breakthrough innovations in defense, health care, and energy. Now is the time to bring the same approach to the K-12 sector.

### A. Pass the Developing and Advancing Innovative Learning Models Act

The Developing and Advancing Innovative Learning Models Act would create a National Center for the Development of Innovative Learning Models within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to support and sustain development and research of innovative learning models (ILMs). It would authorize \$570 million in annual competitive funding to support the development of new ILMs, the organizational capacity of model providers, and research into the impact of ILMs on student outcomes. Subsequently, it would authorize \$180 million in annual formula funding to support the adoption of innovative learning models by states, local school districts, schools, and school communities.

### B. Create and Fully Fund the National Center for Advanced Development in Education (NCADE)

New Classrooms strongly supports the funding included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to support a new funding opportunity for “quick turnaround, high-reward scalable solutions intended to significantly improve outcomes for students.” Suggested research activities include the research and development of breakthrough technologies, new pedagogical approaches, innovative learning models, and more efficient, reliable, valid forms of measurement of student learning, experiences, and opportunities. For IES to continue to support high-reward research on transformative solutions needed to accelerate learning recovery from COVID-19 disruptions in instruction and eliminate longstanding achievement gaps, Congress must continue to appropriate funds in FY24 to establish and operate NCADE.

### C. Pass the New Essential Education Discoveries (NEED) Act

Introduced in the 117th Congress, the NEED Act would create a National Center for Advanced Development in Education (NCADE) within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) dedicated to developing and disseminating innovative, cutting-edge practices and tools such as innovative learning models. NCADE would be required to share best practices, better coordinate student data, and undertake periodic assessments on the center’s effectiveness. The bill would authorize \$500 million annually for seven years to establish, staff, and operate NCADE.

### D. Fully Fund the Centers for Transformative Education Research and Translation authorized in the CHIPS and Science Act

The CHIPS and Science Act is a historic investment to address U.S. competitiveness in a growing global economy. We strongly support report language included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 that encourages the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to collaborate with the National Science Foundation (NSF) on several STEM K-12 education provisions authorized in the CHIPS and Sciences Act. To ensure successful collaboration, Congress must provide robust funding for the Centers for Transformative Education Research and Translation. Through these centers, NSF — in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education — is authorized to make grant awards to “support research and development on scaling, practices, partnerships, and alternative approaches” as well as implement “promising, evidence-based STEM education practices, models, program, curriculum, and technologies.”

## II. Create the Space to Reimagine Education at the State and Local Level

A sustained public investment is needed to shift the landscape to allow for more competency-based approaches to both emerge and succeed. For a student-centered approach to emerge that rewards a student's learning growth across multiple years towards college and career readiness, federal policies related to assessment and accountability also need to be modernized to better measure comprehensive learning growth vs. grade level and support competency-based pathways for students. States and locals need the funding and the time to execute on a student-centered approach.

### A. Modify the Innovative Assessment and Demonstration Authority (IADA) within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

IADA was intended to provide the foundation for longer term innovation. However, current limitations in the structure are inadvertently preventing the types of innovation our students need. States are still required to demonstrate comparability and accountability reporting that are wholly reliant on state grade-level standards. In math, for example, the number of items required to achieve that objective can make it nearly impossible to measure performance outside of students' enrolled grade level. For this Congress, we propose the following changes to the statute in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

- First, modify IADA to allow states to simultaneously create innovative accountability pilots through innovation zones that align with innovative assessments centered on meeting individual student needs. Currently, the law restricts innovation since ESSA does not allow for competency-based accountability systems.
- Second, fund IADA at levels that allow states to plan and pilot innovative, competency-based assessments that would align with innovative new learning models.
- Third, amend the law to lift the current cap of states who can participate in IADA, provided new states provide a competency-based assessment and accountability pathway within an amended IADA.

### B. Reauthorize Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Expand ESSA to allow for new innovative assessment frameworks to create more transparency and data on student learning in real time, coupled with a research and development (R&D) agenda focused on building educational models.

### C. Quadruple Funding for the Competitive Grants for State Assessment Program

Congress must quadruple funding for the Competitive Grants for State Assessment program and direct the U.S. Department of Education to prioritize state assessment designs that emphasize the mastery of standards and aligned competencies in a competency-based education model as described in Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

### D. Extend Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) / American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funds

Similar to how the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 extended the date by which state and local governments could use their Coronavirus Relief Fund allocations, Congress should extend the deadline for states to use their ESSER/ARP funds. Extending the timeline to the end of FY28 would allow State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to invest in sustainable recovery practices and innovative approaches to learning. Any funds extended to the end of FY28 must be allocated to address learning loss.