

**Written Testimony to Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on
“ESEA Reauthorization: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student”**

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Purpose Statement. The purpose of this testimony is to endorse efforts within the ESEA Reauthorization that

1. Authorize *flexible education funding* (e.g., Title I) for local education agencies to improve school-wide climate with prevention-based approaches, like school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS)¹.
2. Increase *school-based mental health funding* to encourage (a) collaboration with community mental health agencies and (b) implementation of prevention-based approaches, like SWPBS.
3. Extend scope and funding for *comprehensive implementation coordination and technical assistance* to states and schools (e.g., OSEP National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports).
4. Establish policy for more *positive and preventive approaches* to substantially decrease the use of highly aversive procedures, like restraint and seclusion.
5. Give priority to school practices and systems that are *data-driven, evidence-based, outcome-oriented, and supported to be implemented with high integrity*.
6. Collect and report at least annually school-level *data on discipline*, disaggregated by ESEA subgroups (race, gender, special education, SES, English learner status) to guide local decision-making regarding state and district technical assistance and the adoption of prevention-based approaches when high rates and/or disparities are noted.
7. Increase *family involvement in and contributions to* establishing effective teaching and learning environments for all students.
8. Promote effective and relevant *professional development, technical assistance, and implementation approaches* that give priority to (a) evidence-based practices, (b) data-based decision making and evaluation, (c) measurable and meaningful outcomes, (d) continuous training and coaching, (e) sustained and accurate local implementation, (f) continuous improvement and regeneration, and (g) culturally and contextually appropriate practices and implementation.

Rationale. These endorsements are important because

1. Meeting the needs of the “*whole student*” requires consideration of the *academic and social behavioral success of all children and youth*.
2. *Academic and social behavioral successes* are inextricably *intertwined*.
3. *Prevention-based* (teach, prompt, monitor, acknowledge) approaches are more effective and durable than reactive “get-tough” (punishment) methods.

¹ SWPBS is a comprehensive framework for enhancing implementation of evidence-based practices and interventions to achieve meaningful academic and behavioral outcomes for all students

4. Individual student success is linked to *classroom and school-wide environments* that are *positive, preventive, predictable, engaging, respectful, responsible, and safe*.
5. *Sustained, effective, and comprehensive implementation capacity* (e.g., training, coaching, evaluation, expertise, coordination) is needed to maximize the impact of acquired knowledge and skills.
6. *Long-term systemic supports are needed at the federal, state, and local levels* to achieve meaningful improvements at the classroom and individual student levels.
7. *General and special education* should be *operating as "one-for-all"* rather than as competing priorities and mandates so the (a) needs of the whole student are addressed, (b) all students can be successful, and (c) students with disabilities can receive specially designed instruction and behavior supports.
8. More competent, effective, and relevant teaching and learning environments are associated with classroom and school climates that are *more culturally and contextually appropriate for all students, families, and communities*.

Outcomes. If we give priority to *important student outcomes, evidence-based practices, data-based decision-making, and efficient implementation systems*, we should expect

1. Improved student *attendance, engagement, and completion*.
2. Improved *resource utilization* for accurate, sustained, and systemic implementation of evidence-based practices and systems.
3. Increased teacher *instructional time* and student *academic engagement and opportunities to learn*.
4. *More respectful, responsible, and safe student behavior* at the individual student, classroom, and school-wide levels.
5. *Decreased rates* of problem behavior and use of *reactive behavior management practices* (e.g., in-school detention and out-of-school suspensions).
6. Improved implementation of academic and social behavior supports for students who have characteristics that might place them *at high risk for academic or social behavior failure*.
7. Improved *academic achievement* in basic, core, and specialized content areas.
8. Enhanced *family and community satisfaction and relations*.

Abbreviated Biography. George Sugai, Ph.D., is Professor and Carole J. Neag Endowed Chair in Special Education in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. He also is Co-Director with Dr. Robert Horner of the the OSEP National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Prior to receiving his Ph.D. in 1980 at the University of Washington, Dr. Sugai held positions as program administrator, treatment director, special education teacher, and camp counselor and supervisor. Professor Sugai conducts research, teaches coursework, and provides technical assistance and consultation related to classroom and behavior management, school-wide discipline, applied behavior analysis, special education, educating students with emotional and behavioral disorders, and organizational and systems improvement.

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