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National Education Groups Draft Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in ESSA

Alexandria, Va. – June 21, 2016 – For the first time, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognizes the expertise that educators can bring to the policymaking process and calls for collaboration by practitioners and policymakers – but it gives few details on how those groups should work together. To facilitate that process, Learning First Alliance (LFA) today proposes principles to guide stakeholder engagement.

ESSA requires states and localities to bring together educators, parents, and other leaders to determine policies and practices under the new law.

“We appreciate that lawmakers have recognized the shared and overlapping responsibilities of education decision making,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward and chair of the Learning First Alliance. “ESSA creates a process to integrate the expertise and firsthand experiences teachers, principals and other school staff can bring to policymaking. Ultimately, this collaboration will bring more stability to our education systems as it ensures the expertise of those who have the greatest stakes in our public schools have a hand in developing policies and practices.”

ESSA gives little guidance on how the process should take place, so further steps are needed to ensure that the right people are at the table and the process works as the lawmakers intended, Hirsh said.

Among the principles proposed, LFA is requesting that the consultative process:

- Be a discussion process that includes goal-setting and development of principles aimed at defining and executing policy, not just information sharing;
- Be sustained, with stakeholder participation in discussions at the decision-making, implementation, and evaluation stages;
- Include participants who have a stake in the law and represent groups or individuals who will hold their representatives accountable;
- Be initiated or reinitiated by a participant if the process stalls;
- Be transparent and open to the public

The principles are intended for the states and districts that have not yet started the consultative process or are in the beginning stages, or those who are undertaking the work in a manner inconsistent with the intention of the law.

About The Learning First Alliance

The Learning First Alliance is a partnership of leading education organizations with more than 10 million members dedicated to improving student learning in America's public schools. Alliance members include: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; AASA: The School Superintendents Association; American Federation of Teachers; American School Counselor Association; Consortium for School Networking; International Society for Technology in Education; Learning Forward; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Education Association; National PTA; National School Boards Association; National School Public Relations Association; and Phi Delta Kappa International. To learn more about LFA, visit www.learningfirst.org.

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