



## **NASPO HEA Reauthorization Recommendations: Loan Forgiveness**

Elementary and secondary school students and their families should be assured that appropriate services critical to academic success will be delivered by qualified school personnel, including pupil/related services personnel. Incentives such as loan forgiveness – as proposed in Section 114 of S. 1793, the “College Quality, Affordability, and Diversity Improvement Act of 2003” – can be a tool for addressing critical shortages of pupil/related services personnel, and must be available to help local districts to recruit and retain such personnel.

Loan forgiveness for pupil/related services personnel has been recommended by Tom Hehir, former Director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education.. Hehir recommends that Congress

...provide loan forgiveness for special education *and related services personnel*. In the teacher training area, there is a need to address the increasing shortage of special education and related services personnel. The law [IDEA] is meaningless without qualified people to implement it.

Traditionally, IDEA has addressed personnel shortages through grants to universities, which provide stipends to small numbers of students. This has been inefficient and ineffective. A more aggressive approach would be to allow for loan forgiveness for special education and related services personnel who work a minimum of five years within the field upon completing school. This approach has been successful in the past with other programs.

Loan forgiveness would create a powerful incentive to enter the field and could help greatly to reduce shortages.<sup>1</sup>

Other information about special education personnel needs is available through the U.S. Department of Education Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Center on Education Policy, *A Timely IDEA: Rethinking Federal Education Programs for Children with Disabilities*, (January 2002), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, *Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education* (2001), available at <http://www.spense.org>.