

Forum on Educational Accountability

www.edaccountability.org

December 4, 2007

Member
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act/ No Child Left Behind Act

Dear Member of Congress:

The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA)* recognizes that, notwithstanding major congressional efforts to find agreement, the process for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), has run into at least a temporary impasse. We also understand that further work on ESEA reauthorization bills may be done in committee, and bills may be brought to floor votes, in 2008.

As you consider what would be the most effective federal role in education, and thus the content of the new ESEA, FEA asks that you to include the following key components in any final legislation:

- Replace the arbitrary adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements with ambitious achievement targets based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective Title I schools. FEA has provided detailed guidance on implementing this approach.
- Shift from an overwhelming reliance on test scores in reading and math to using multiple indicators of student achievement in addition to these tests. The multiple indicators must be sufficiently powerful and attainable to make a difference, which is not the case with the House discussion draft. A composite indicator of multiple indicators would be the best way to go.
- Authorize federal resources to help states develop assessment systems that include district- and school-based measures. The House discussion draft took strong steps in this direction, but that progress is under attack; it must be preserved and improved. The Senate should follow suit.
- Decrease the amount of required testing.
- Make consequences and interventions helpful rather than punitive. Allow flexibility for states and districts to target assistance. Allow schools at least four years for new approaches to take effect, while monitoring their progress.
- Make well-funded, high quality professional development integral to what Title I schools do. All Title I schools should have strong, locally administered, collaborative programs for all

teachers, with additional support for mentoring, career ladders, working with families, and leadership development.

- Strengthen parent involvement and provide for adult literacy and parenting skills programs to help parents nurture their children's learning at home, along with adult mentoring for children who do not have sufficient family support.
- Provide federal funding to help states develop appropriate curricula for English Language Learners; design and implement valid and reliable assessments for them; and ensure that academic assessments of ELLs are valid and reliable before using them to make judgments about schools.
- Ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all assessments in a balanced accountability system, including general assessments, assessments with accommodations, or alternate assessments. Ensure that individualized education program teams are empowered and trained to determine which assessments and accommodations are most appropriate for individual students with disabilities, provided that the IEP itself is not used for accountability.
- To expand and equalize educational opportunity, fully fund ESEA and fund a significant share of the improvements called for by FEA.

Sincerely yours,



Chair, Forum on Educational Accountability

* The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA) is a working group of the 140 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, parent, civic and labor organizations, representing more than 50 million Americans, that have signed the Joint Statement on NCLB. All signers agree to the goals of the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB* and seek to implement its recommendations. Additional statements made by FEA reflect this commitment, but may not reflect all individual positions taken by signatories. (The Joint Statement and FEA materials are at FEA's website, www.edaccountability.org.)

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