

Forum on Educational Accountability

<http://www.edaccountability.org>

for further information:

Dr. Hilda Crespo (ASPIRA) - 202-835-3600, Ext. 114
Dr. LaRuth Gray (NABSE) - 212-998-5137 or 212-998-5105
Dr. Deborah Ziegler (CEC) - 703-264-9406
Dr. Monty Neill (FairTest) - (617) 864-4810

for immediate release Tuesday, August 7, 2007

CIVIL RIGHTS, DISABILITY ORGS. CALL FOR “MULTIPLE MEASURES” IN “NO CHILD” OVERHAUL LEGISLATION; FORUM ON EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRAISES GROUPS’ LETTER AND REP. MILLER’S LEADERSHIP ON THIS ISSUE

Nearly two dozen major civil rights and disability advocacy groups today called on Congress to include “multiple forms of assessment” and “multiple measures or indicators of student progress” in legislation currently being drafted to overhaul the controversial “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) federal education law. In a letter delivered to members of the Senate and House education committees, the groups wrote, “If education is to improve in the United States, schools must be assessed in ways that produce high-quality learning and that create incentives to keep students in school.”

Signers of the letter included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Learning Disabilities Association of America, National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), ASPIRA Association, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, National Alliance for Bilingual Education, National Urban Alliance, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Civil Rights Project, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Indian School Board Association and ACORN,

The groups’ letter continued, “A number of studies have found that an exclusive emphasis on (primarily multiple-choice) standardized test scores has narrowed the curriculum. An unintended consequence has been to create incentives for schools to boost scores by keeping or pushing low-scoring students out of school. Push-out incentives and the narrowed curriculum are especially severe for special needs students, English language learners, and students without strong family supports.”

Among the arguments made for including multiple measures:

- * attention will be given to a comprehensive academic program and a more complete array of learning outcomes;
- * higher-order thinking and performance skills can be assessed;
- * checks and balances will be added to ensure that emphasizing one measure does not come at the expense of other important educational goals; and

* schools will be encouraged to attend to the progress of students at every point of the achievement spectrum, not just those near a test cut-point labeled “proficient.”

The letter concluded, “A multiple measures approach that incorporates a well-balanced set of indicators would support a shift toward holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement. This is a necessary foundation for genuine accountability.”

The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), a group formed to advance the proposals made in the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB* (now signed by 138 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, parent, civic and labor organizations), praised the letter and cited a recent National Press Club speech by House Education Chairman George Miller as indicators of the wide support for making multiple measures of achievement an important part of any federal education law.

“Clearly, there is an emerging consensus that judging our schools largely on the basis of simple-minded reading and math tests undermines educational quality and equity,” said FEA Chair, Dr. Monty Neill.

Two of the Joint Statement's principles explicitly support the use of multiple measures:

* “Provide a comprehensive picture of students' and schools' performance by moving from an overwhelming reliance on standardized tests to using multiple indicators of student achievement in addition to these tests.”

* “Help states develop assessment systems that include district and school-based measures in order to provide better, more timely information about student learning.”

The full list of organizations that have signed the letter: ACORN, Advancement Project, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, ASPIRA Association, Civil Rights Project, Council for Exceptional Children, Japanese American Citizens League, Justice Matters, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Learning Disabilities Association of America, National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., National Association for Asian Pacific American Education, National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA), National Coalition of ESEA Title I Parents, National Council on Educating Black Children, National Federation of Filipino American Associations, National Indian Education Association, National Indian School Board Association, National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN), National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA).