

Forum on Educational Accountability

www.edaccountability.org

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COMPREHENSIVE OVERHAUL OF “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND” URGED ON SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF CONTROVERSIAL FEDERAL MANDATE; EDUCATION, CIVIL RIGHTS, RELIGIOUS, DISABILITY, PARENT, CIVIC, AND LABOR GROUPS ASK CONGRESS TO PURSUE NEW EDUCATION LAW

On the sixth anniversary of the January 8, 2002 signing of the federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law, leaders of education, civil rights, religious, disability, parent, civic and labor groups are calling on Congress to comprehensively overhaul the controversial federal mandate.

In a letter delivered to the offices of all U.S. Senators and Representatives today, the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA) wrote, “the message is loud and clear . . . the law is not working to substantially improve learning for the students Congress most intended to help.” FEA seeks to implement the goals of the Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB, now signed by 142 national groups representing more than 50 million Americans.

The FEA letter to Congress explained, “Since the signing of NCLB . . . reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have stagnated, and the rate of improvement in math has slowed. The neediest children in our nation continue to receive an unequal and inadequate education. Incremental changes will not fix the law's structural flaws of unrealistic mandates, high-stakes testing and punitive sanctions.”

As an alternative to NCLB, the Joint Statement endorses an approach that would:

- Replace the law's arbitrary proficiency targets with outcome and improvement goals based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective public schools.
- Overhaul assessment to reduce testing, support multiple indicators of student learning, including state and local assessments, and utilize growth models, while funding development of a new accountability system.
- Focus on improvement, not punishment; eliminate sanctions that do not have a record of success and allow improvement efforts sufficient time to succeed.
- Support continuing high-quality professional development and other actions necessary for schools to ensure strong learning outcomes for all students.
- Fully fund Title I and supply the additional resources needed to ensure all schools can develop the capacity to serve their children well.

A series of FEA reports and legislative recommendations offer details on how Congress can:

- Improve school capacity through professional development, parental involvement, and support for families.
- Create a model of "balanced accountability" that factors in both capacity-building efforts and improved outcomes as shown through multiple measures.
- Construct a sound and educationally beneficial assessment system.

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- the NCLB anniversary letter to Congress is online at <http://www.edaccountability.org> along with background information about the Joint Statement and FEA proposals.

