

Forum on Educational Accountability

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EXPERT PANEL ON ASSESSMENT OFFERS PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAWMAKERS REWRITING “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND”

Authors urge lawmakers to rethink federal testing and accountability requirements

Washington —A panel of national education experts today released a report outlining guiding principles and recommendations for lawmakers rewriting the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. *Assessment and Accountability for Improving Schools and Learning* calls for replacing the one-shot tests used to impose sanctions under NCLB with multiple measures that better support high-quality teaching and increased student achievement.

“This report aims to fix serious flaws in No Child Left Behind while preserving its laudable goals,” said Dr. James Pellegrino, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago. “Developing fair and helpful assessment systems will encourage student learning across the curriculum instead of narrowing instruction to a few tested subjects.

“Our recommendations reflect the reality that a rigid ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to accountability does not work,” added panel member Dr. Brian Gong, Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. “They would lead to creation of high-quality assessment systems that use a rich range of evidence to help schools improve, not just test scores to label them passing or failing.”

Among the guiding principles in *Assessment and Accountability for Improving Schools and Learning*:

- Help states, districts and schools fulfill their educational responsibilities to foster learning by ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need to succeed and by building capacity to improve teaching.
- Construct comprehensive and coherent systems of state and local assessments of student learning that work together to support instruction, educational improvement and accountability.
- Shape the design, construction, and application of assessment systems so they are valid and appropriate for an increasingly diverse student population.
- Use multiple sources of evidence to describe and interpret school and district performance fairly, based on a balance of progress toward and success in meeting student academic learning targets, thereby replacing the current Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) structure.
- Improve the validity and reliability of criteria used to classify the performance of schools and districts to ensure fair evaluations and to minimize bias in accountability decisions.
- Provide effective, targeted assistance to schools correctly identified as needing assistance.

“These principles recognize that we must combine research, fairness and common sense to create assessment systems that are responsive to the increasing number of students with special needs in schools today,” explained Dr. Alba Ortiz Professor of Special Education and Director of the Office of Bilingual Education at

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the University of Texas, Austin. “We would never consider teaching students in English and then giving them exams in French to evaluate the quality of schools. Yet, testing all students in English, even if they are just learning the language, is now common practice.”

“Assessment can be a powerful tool to promote learning but only if the information gained can be used first to inform teaching,” concluded Dr. Pat Roschewski, Director of Statewide Assessment in Nebraska. “If used appropriately assessment can also provide accountability for that learning. At the same time, resources must be devoted to assuring that all teachers are prepared to provide quality learning experiences.”

The nine-member Expert Panel on Assessment was convened by the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), a group working to implement the *Joint Organizational Statement on the NCLB Act*. The *Joint Statement* has now been signed by 134 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, labor and civic organizations representing more than 50 million members.

“This report offers solutions to key FEA concerns about NCLB, including AYP, one-shot tests, and unhelpful sanctions, by promoting reasonable improvement requirements, multiple measures, and support for schools,” said Dr. Monty Neill, co-Executive Director of FairTest: the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, who chairs the FEA. “It is a valuable complement to FEA’s earlier report, *Redefining Accountability: Improving Student Learning by Building Capacity*. Together, the reports offer policymakers and other education stakeholders a roadmap for overhauling NCLB.”

Members of the Expert Panel on Assessment and leaders of the FEA will deliver copies of *Assessment and Accountability for Improving Schools and Learning* to members of the Senate and House education committees at briefings scheduled for later this week.

The other members of the Expert Panel on Assessment are:

- Dr. Jamal Abedi, Graduate School of Education of University of California, Davis, and research partner at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing.
- Dr. Pete Goldschmidt, assistant professor in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education at the California State University Northridge and Senior Researcher at the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA.
- Dr. Margo Gottlieb who specializes in the design of assessment systems for English language learners in pre-K-12 settings, the evaluation of language educational programs, and the development of English language proficiency standards.
- Dr. Pedro Pedraza, educational researcher at the Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos, Hunter College, City University of New York, working in the area of K-12 public education, with a focus on Latino students.
- Dr. Jim Stack, former Director of Achievement Assessments for the San Francisco Unified School District who now works nationally and internationally on instruction and assessment of English language learners.

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- An Executive Summary of the principles and recommendations from *Assessment and Accountability for Improving Schools and Learning*, the full text of the report, the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, and related materials are online at <http://www.edaccountability.org>