

## Letter in Support of Civil Rights Groups Letter on Multiple Measures in NCLB

August 13, 2007

The Honorable George Miller  
Chair, Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives  
2205 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon  
Ranking Member, Committee on Education  
2351 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Ranking Member, HELP Committee  
379A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sirs:

We are writing in support of the letter you have received from national civil rights organizations advocating the inclusion of multiple indicators (or measures) of school performance in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We concur with the position taken by these groups that any accountability measures must include *multiple assessments of learning* and *multiple indicators of school performance*.

We are concerned that the current administration of federal educational policy has, through its exclusive emphasis on (primarily multiple choice) standardized test scores, both narrowed the curriculum in many schools and led to a focus on lower level intellectual skills. This has been particularly true in schools that serve our most school-dependent students, the very ones who need a rich and broad curriculum and a school experience that engages them in using their minds well. Further, this focus has also discouraged the use of performance assessments which would focus teaching and learning on the higher-order thinking skills our democracy and economy require. It has also discouraged the development of valid and appropriate measures for tracking the progress of English language learners as well as students with learning differences.

We believe that the reauthorization of ESEA should explicitly address these issues through both developing a multiple measures approach to accountability and encouraging states to move to performance-based measures of student achievement, including more valid measures of learning for English language learners and special needs learners. Many of us have previously provided your committee with information on both multiple measures and performance-based assessments. In this letter we want to reiterate several ways in which these measures will help schools and districts improve student outcomes:

1. Including multiple measures of school performance in an index that can assess overall school progress will focus attention on all the aspects of the educational program, including, for example, a full curriculum and school continuation and graduation rates across all student groups;

2. Using multiple measures of school performance supports a balanced approach to school improvement, making sure that a single-minded focus on standardized test scores does not lead to inappropriate practices such as keeping or pushing out of school students who do not test well;
3. Multiple measures that include a range of assessment types and that evaluate the full continuum of achievement are the only means for assessing a comprehensive range of content and skills expected of students across the full of range of ability and achievement levels;
4. Using performance assessments will provide for a focus on higher-order thinking skills and the application of these skills in ways that will prove critical as our children take their place as citizens in our knowledge economy.

We are encouraged that you and the House Committee on Education have been considering both the use of multiple forms of assessment and multiple measures of accountability. Initially the No Child Left Behind legislation called for multiple measures of student performance and a focus on teaching for high order thinking skills. But our experience with the law as educators, policy makers, and parents over the past five years has shown us that the current legislation and its administration has not encouraged the kinds of state and local assessments and reporting systems needed to make progress in these areas and to validly assess all of the students in our schools.

Thus, we are calling on you to ensure that any reauthorization of ESEA include both *multiple measures*, including performance based assessments of learning, and *multiple indicators of school performance*, including students' progress through school to graduation. We encourage you to develop an index that combines these measures into a single target for schools to strive for each year as both students and schools are evaluated in a continuous progress model that measures their growth. We believe such an approach will help schools to undertake the steps that are necessary for systemic improvement and for us to provide for our children the education they each deserve.

Respectfully (Affiliations for purposes of identification only),

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