

Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA)

<http://www.edaccountability.org>

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“NO CHILD” OVERHAUL MUST INCLUDE PROVISIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY THAT ADVANCES LEARNING

As Congress takes up President Obama’s proposals to update the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law, national education experts today offered recommendations to overhaul NCLB’s controversial testing and accountability provisions.

Speaking at a Washington, D.C. forum, Richard Rothstein, Research Associate at the Economic Policy Institute and author of *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*, explained why such changes are needed, “When high stakes are attached to standardized tests of math and reading, incentives to narrow the curriculum are irresistible, both within the math and reading domains, and across the entire curriculum. This narrowing is most serious for the disadvantaged children that federal policy purports to want to help. Further, if schools are identified as failing primarily by their standardized test scores, the percentage of misidentified schools will be unacceptably large.”

Doug Christensen, former Commissioner of Education for the state of Nebraska and Professor of Leadership in Education at Doane College, added, “We must decouple accountability from testing or we will never escape the current models of external prescriptions that result in regimentation of the system and require high stakes compliance, both of which restrict the capacity of system to embrace all children and trivializes their education. We must think in terms of a larger and more descriptive accountability that creates a comprehensive picture of the school, its capacity, its performance and the level of learning of the students.”

Beth Foley, Senior Policy Analyst in the Education Policy and Practice Department of the National Education Association spoke on behalf of the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), which sponsored the panel. Foley said, “The law’s emphasis needs to shift from applying sanctions for failing to raise test scores to holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement. FEA has provided a blueprint and detailed recommendations to ensure a strong but appropriate federal role in improving schools and student learning.”

Today’s panel was the third in a FEA series “Transforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): Helping Schools Improve.” FEA seeks to advance the goals of the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, now signed by 151 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, parent, labor and civic groups representing more than 50 million Americans. More information about FEA’s proposals for ESEA reauthorization is available at <http://www.edaccountabiity.org>.