

Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA)

<http://www.edaccountability.org>

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“NO CHILD” OVERHAUL MUST ADDRESS SCHOOL EQUITY SAY NATIONAL REFORM LEADERS; “ALL KIDS DESERVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN”

As Congress begins the process of overhauling the controversial “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law, national education experts are urging policymakers to include Opportunity to Learn as part of the effort to narrow achievement gaps. Speakers at a Capitol Hill briefing organized by the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA) said that NCLB did not address vastly unequal inputs, the huge gaps in learning resources that underlie achievement gaps.

John H. Jackson, President of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, explained, “Adopting an Opportunity To Learn Resource Accountability System is necessary to ensure that all students can achieve high outcomes and stimulate sustainable growth in the U.S. economy.” A recent Schott Foundation study found that students from low-income homes are less likely to have access to highly effective teachers, early childhood education, and college preparatory curriculum.

Molly Hunter, Director of Education Justice at Education Law Center, added, “State funding systems often provide three times as much money per student to wealthy school districts compared to low-wealth districts, creating resource inequities that hold students back.”

Students who are just learning the English language have large, unmet needs, according to Patricia Gandara, UCLA Professor and Co-director of the Civil Rights Project, “At least 30% of all teachers of English learners have no preparation to teach them. The majority of the rest say they have inadequate preparation. English learners students, under NCLB, must demonstrate significant annual progress in their learning, without a fair opportunity to learn or to be assessed accurately. It is absurd to expect these students to prosper under such circumstances. It is time to change the law to reflect this reality.”

The Opportunity to Learn panel was the second in an FEA series titled “Transforming ESEA: Helping Public Schools Improve.” The next topic is “Accountability that Advances Learning.” That forum will take place on Wednesday, March 17 at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in Washington, DC from 1pm until 3pm. Featured speakers include: EPI Research Associate Richard Rothstein, who authored “*Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*”; former Nebraska Commissioner of Education Doug Christensen, a leading advocate for performance assessment; and Beth Foley, a Senior Policy Analyst at the National Education Association.

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>.