

# Forum on Educational Accountability

<http://www.edaccountability.org>

## **Primary Assessment Ideas from the FEA**

Schools should be learning communities that educate the whole child, with attention to individual and group needs. The federal government has a limited but important role in supporting these schools. FEA believes there are three key components to the federal role:

- equity and opportunity to learn;
- capacity building and school improvement processes; and
- student learning outcomes.

Schools should be accountable to the public along these dimensions, but the public and government must simultaneously be accountable to schools and children, thus ensuring "reciprocal accountability." [Cross City Campaign, "Beyond Finger Pointing and Test Scores" – at [http://www.issuelab.org/organizations/cross\\_city\\_campaign\\_for\\_urban\\_school\\_reform](http://www.issuelab.org/organizations/cross_city_campaign_for_urban_school_reform)]

Assessment primarily addresses the third component, student learning outcomes, though good assessment is part of opportunity to learn, and assessment information is vital to school improvement. Capacity building also speaks to strengthening teachers' ability to assess and evaluate all students well and their use of assessment information to improve teaching. Thus, professional learning is closely intertwined with assessment – as, inevitably are curriculum (what our society wants youth to learn) and instruction (how people best learn).

### **From the "Joint Organizational Statement on No Child Left Behind":**

Provide a comprehensive picture of students' and schools' performance by moving from an overwhelming reliance on standardized tests to using multiple indicators of student achievement in addition to these tests.

Help states develop assessment systems that include district and school-based measures in order to provide better, more timely information about student learning.

Allow states to measure progress by using students' growth in achievement as well as their performance in relation to pre-determined levels of academic proficiency.

Decrease the testing burden on states, schools and districts by allowing states to assess students annually in selected grades in elementary, middle schools, and high schools.

Strengthen enforcement of NCLB provisions requiring that assessments must:

- Be aligned with state content and achievement standards;
- Provide multiple, up-to-date measures of student performance including measures that assess higher order thinking skills and understanding; and
- Provide useful diagnostic information to improve teaching and learning.

## **From the Expert Panel Report on Assessment and Accountability:**

### ***Principle II: Comprehensive State and Local Assessment Systems***

Construct comprehensive and coherent systems of state and local assessments of student learning that work together to support instruction, educational improvement and accountability.

1. Provide incentives for states and districts to develop comprehensive and coherent assessment systems that inform instruction and decision-making in ways that state tests alone cannot and do not. Coherent and comprehensive assessment systems provide evidence of student and school performance in relation to rich and challenging educational goals, using multiple indicators of student learning from a variety of sources at multiple points in time.
2. Provide states incentives and supports to include high quality local assessment systems in meeting ESEA's accountability requirements, alone or by augmenting state assessments. Fund pilot projects in which interested states demonstrate how they can meet ESEA's accountability requirements through standards-based, locally-developed assessments of students' learning or by integrating local assessments with state assessments. Fund expansion of the number of supported projects as states indicate interest. Provide incentives for states to work together.
3. Provide tools for states and districts to self-evaluate and improve the coherence and effectiveness of their local comprehensive assessment systems. The assessment and instructional components should work together to support instructional improvement and educational accountability.
4. Design state and district reports that include all components of their comprehensive assessment system. State reporting should reflect the presence and weighting of the results from each measure that comprises its assessment system, including those unique for ELLs and SWDs. District level reporting should mirror the results of measures, both local and state, used in its accountability system.

### ***Principle III: Assessment and Accountability for Diverse Populations***

Shape the design, construction, and application of assessment systems so they are valid and appropriate for an increasingly diverse student population.

1. Design assessments based on principles of universal design, but ensure that the unique factors that impact the performance of subgroups (e.g., English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities (SWDs), students from major racial and ethnic groups, or economically disadvantaged students) are specifically addressed in the assessments that are used to measure the academic achievement of these students and reporting of the results.
2. Require states to provide research-based recommendations for selecting and using appropriate accommodations for ELLs and SWDs to ensure that these students have access to valid assessments of their content knowledge.
3. Require states to validate assessment systems for each subgroup.
4. Support research to address major issues that complicate the design of appropriate assessment systems for subgroups.

***Empowering Schools and Improving Learning*** sums up key components of this report; see point 5, "Assessment."

The documents are all on the web at <http://www.edaccountability.org>.