

Forum on Educational Accountability

<http://www.edaccountability.org>

2011 Recommendations for Improving ESEA/NCLB- Summary

The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA) has released recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, currently “No Child Left Behind” or NCLB). These will strengthen public schools, improve learning, enhance equity and empower educators by improving federal policy in the areas of assessment, accountability, capacity building, and opportunity to learn. Our more detailed agenda is at <http://www.edaccountability.org/Legislative.html>. Our alliance carries forward the *Joint Organizational Statement on NLCB*, signed by 153 national organizations.¹

Our plan, summarized below, ensures that schools have the capacity to help all children achieve success while outlining a reasonable federal role in educational policy instead of federal mandates that are too often overly prescriptive and fail to help schools reach desired educational and societal goals.

On assessment:

- Reduce the amount of mandated testing (e.g., return to requirements in the 1994 federal law of once each in elementary, middle and high schools), thus aligning the U.S. with the practices of most nations in which fewer but better assessments produce superior results.
- Support development of state and local assessment systems that include classroom-based evidence as part of public reporting and accountability, and for improving teaching and learning.
- Support development of improved assessments and assessment elements, such as performance tasks and projects, which states can make available to educators to use when appropriate and incorporate into large-scale assessments.
- Require states to use multiple sources of evidence of various types (“multiple measures”) in evaluating students, schools and educators, and in constructing any growth/improvement/value-added approaches.
- Ensure that new assessments consider the needs of diverse learners, including use of the principles of universal design for learning.

We urge stakeholders to ensure that the Education Department-funded assessment consortia end the overuse of standardized testing, incorporate multiple measures and local evidence of student learning, and clarify that growth measures must be multiple. We encourage the consortia to continue current efforts to infuse assessments systems with performance tasks and universal design principles.

On accountability:

- Eliminate “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) requirements and sanctions, but continue reporting important data disaggregated by demographic group. Avoid tying goal of ensuring all students are on track to be college and workforce ready to any arbitrary deadline. Expect demonstration of reasonably attainable rates of improvement (e.g., those now achieved by schools in the top quarter on improvement rates).
- In evaluating and recommending interventions in and changes to schools or districts, use both multiple sources of evidence (comprehensive indicators) and periodic reviews of schools and districts by qualified state teams.
- Allow a broad, flexible range of “turnaround” options. Use indicators and reviews to tailor change actions to schools’ needs. Build improvement plans from elements demonstrated to be essential

to school improvement--e.g., collaborative professional development, strong leadership, parent involvement, and rich and challenging curriculum--and allow schools and districts to determine how they will address these areas to help build their capacity for long-term improvement.

- Establish the principle of holding schools and districts accountable through monitoring and appropriate public reporting to ensure consistent, successful efforts to fulfill improvement plans.
- Set the percentage of schools required to engage in turnaround activities based on standards for intervention and federal appropriation levels, rather than set percentages regardless of funding.
- Assist states and districts in developing and implementing sound and fair schoolwide evaluation policies aimed at schoolwide improvement, rather than the Blueprint model, which largely shifts test-based accountability from schools to educators. Educator evaluation programs should include evidence of student learning and other measures of educator competency, but the federal government should not mandate the inclusion of scores from large-scale tests.

On public school improvement/capacity building:

- Require Title I funded schools to provide staff collaboration time and serve staff-identified professional development needs, including assessment and working with diverse learners. Require those with highest poverty and lowest achievement also to provide: individualized mentoring for beginning and experienced teachers; career ladders for mentor and other teacher support specialists; and intensive staff training in instructional leadership and family engagement. Allocate amount equal to 20% Title I funding, plus comparable States' match, to such staff development.
- Require that all Title I-funded schools provide programs to strengthen parent involvement in schools. Require all Title I-funded highest poverty and lowest achievement schools to provide parenting skills and adult literacy programs to support their children's learning at home, and adult mentoring for children without families available. Allocate amount equal to 5% new Title I funding.
- Provide Title I funding to assist states to strengthen ability to support systemic school improvements. Allocate sum equal to 2% of Title I. Enhance provision of specialized instructional support personnel/services directly to students, teachers and administrators. Condition teacher preparation grants on programs' providing one-year intensive clinical placements.

On opportunity to learn and equity:

- Make Title I and IDEA Part B mandatory, fully funded federal budget items. Use formulas ensuring that all high-poverty public schools receive significant funding support. Significantly increase support for professional development, the education of English learners, school improvement, parental involvement, and the capacity of states to assist districts and schools. Avoid use of competitive grants, which reduce equity and real-dollar funding for necessary programs and privilege districts with greater grant-writing capacity.
- Require states, with federal support, to develop comprehensive indicator systems on the distribution within and across districts of resources important to schooling. Compile data on out-of-school indicators such as poverty, health care, unemployment and student/family mobility rates. Require states to consider this evidence in evaluating student outcomes and schools, and to develop strategies for providing resources to overcome inequities identified by the indicators.
- Provide increased access to opportunity through early learning and high quality preschool; work with the states to ensure adequate school facilities, tools, and services; and promote school discipline policies that ensure a school climate conducive to learning.

ⁱ FEA is an alliance furthering the concepts found in the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, signed by 153 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, parent and civic organizations. This document may not reflect all individual positions taken by signatories to the *Joint Statement*. Additional relevant materials are at www.edaccountability.org.