



# FACT SHEET

## **No Child Left Behind Act: In Need of a Fundamental Overhaul**

In the six years since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which is the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), its many policy flaws, false assumptions, unintended consequences, and botched implementation have become all too apparent. Congress needs to make fundamental changes to the law as articulated in NEA's principles for ESEA reauthorization. (Available online at: <http://www.nea.org/esea/policy.html>).

### **NCLB has failed in its own fundamental purpose - to raise student test scores and close achievement gaps.**

- Reading and math test scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrate that there was a faster rate of improvement in student achievement before NCLB than since its enactment.
- According to a July 2007 article in the Educational Researcher, "progress in raising test scores was stronger before No Child Left Behind was approved in 2002, compared with the four years following enactment of the law." (available online at: [http://www.aera.net/newsmedia/Default.aspx?menu\\_id=60&id=3444](http://www.aera.net/newsmedia/Default.aspx?menu_id=60&id=3444))
- A new book by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA,  *Holding NCLB Accountable*, finds that "the No Child Left Behind Act's current accountability system provides insufficient evidence that the law has succeeded in raising student achievement levels or closing the nation's racial achievement gap..." (available online at: <http://www.newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/new-book-provides-examination-42772.aspx>)

### **NCLB is narrowing the curriculum.**

- According to a July 2007 Center on Education Policy report, 44 percent of school districts reported cutting time from one or more other subjects or activities (social studies, science, art and music, physical education, lunch and/or recess) at the elementary level to devote more time to reading and math (available online at: [http://www.cep-dc.org/\\_data/n\\_0001/resources/live/Curriculum%20Release%20Final.pdf](http://www.cep-dc.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/Curriculum%20Release%20Final.pdf)).

### **NCLB is too focused on standardized tests.**

- Schools are measured and held accountable solely on the results of the statewide reading and math tests. New research by a University of Maryland professor finds that NCLB's focus on high-stakes testing "has actually undermined the quality of teaching in reading and math." The research further found, "There were declines in teaching higher-order



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thinking, in the amount of time spent on complex assignments, and in the actual amount of high cognitive content in the curriculum. We believe these declines are related to the pressure teachers were feeling to 'teach to the test.'" (available online at: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/536881/>)

## **NCLB is a severely underfunded mandate that is shortchanging our students and public schools.**

- In the seven years of funding provided for NCLB (Fiscal Years 2002-2008), the cumulative funding gap between actual funding and the amounts authorized in the law has grown to a staggering \$70.9 billion. President Bush's proposed FY 09 budget would increase that gap to \$85.7 billion.
- The single largest NCLB program, Title I, for example: in the current school year, 59% of all Title I school districts will receive less funding than they did the previous year.
- With districts and states denied federal funding and support for schools to follow the mandates of NCLB, NEA filed suit over the issue. In January of this year, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the Secretary of Education's interpretation of the law violates the Spending Clause of the Constitution.

## **NCLB will eventually result in almost all schools failing.**

- Independent studies by highly qualified researchers in 11 states conclude that under NCLB's label-and-punish structure, most schools will fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by 2014, based on the law's requirement that 100 percent of students achieve proficiency in both reading and math.
- There is a growing chorus of voices calling for fundamental changes to the law. "There are now 142 national organizations that have signed the Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB that calls for significant reforms to the law.

## **The American public and educators agree with the need for changes.**

- According to an August 2007 PDK/Gallup poll, 7 in 10 Americans believe the current emphasis on testing encourages teachers to teach to the test. Of those that believe this, 8 in 10 feel that teaching to the test is a bad thing. In addition, "One in two Americans believes that NCLB's focus on reading and math has reduced instructional time on other subjects." (available online at: <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm>)
- Educators hold similar views. A June 2006 poll of NEA members found that 69% disapprove of NCLB and 85% believe there is too much reliance on standardized testing.

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