



NCPIE Update

A Publication of the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

May-June 2007

An Inside Look at the National Education Association's Agenda for Reauthorizing ESEA-NCLB



Great Public Schools for Every Child

The May NCPIE meeting provided a unique opportunity for those present to find out the details on the National Education Association's (NEA) thoughts on how the ESEA-NCLB can be strengthened as apart of an upcoming reauthorization to realize its stated goals of improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and providing every child a quality teacher.

The NEA is a membership association representing 3.2 million educators in public school and institutions of higher education throughout America. It has long stood as one of the country's leading organizations in support of public education. To that end, the association has developed an agenda, called the *Positive Agenda*, which sets forth a view of the policies needed at the federal and state levels to achieve a great public school for all children.

Culled from seven criteria for great public schools and the key indicators to meet each criterion; the *Positive Agenda* proposes five Priorities for changes to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The *Positive Agenda* was developed over a period of one year and includes the input—thoughts and opinions of thousands of members of NEA shared at open hearings, workshops, on-line surveys and professional practitioner discussion. The report is a comprehensive strategy that the NEA believes will put educators at the forefront of efforts to improve America's public education system and is being promoted as an excellent tool for Congress to use as a guide during the deliberations for the reauthorizing of ESEA. Below please find an overview of each criterion.

Criteria #1: Accountability That Rewards Success and Supports Educators to Help Students Learn

- Accountability should be based upon multiple measures of student learning and school success.
- States should have the flexibility to design systems that produce results, including deciding in which grades to administer annual statewide tests.
- States should have the flexibility to utilize growth models and other measures of progress that assess student achievement over time, and recognize improvement on all points of the achievement scale.
- Growth model results should be used as a guide to revise instructional practices and curriculum, to provide individual assistance to students, and to provide appropriate professional development to teachers and other educators. They should not be used to penalize schools or teachers.
- Assessment systems must be appropriate, valid, and reliable for all groups of students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, and provide for common-sense flexibility for assessing these student subgroups.
- States, school districts, and schools should actively involve teachers and other educators in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards, curriculum, assessments, accountability, and improvement plans.

- Accountability systems and the ensuing use of the results must respect the rights of school employees under federal, state, or local law, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Accountability systems should provide support and assistance, including financial support for improvement and technical assistance to those schools needing help, with targeted assistance to those schools and districts most in need of improvement.
- Assessment and accountability systems should be closely aligned with high standards and classroom curricula, provide timely data to help improve student learning, and be comprehensive and flexible so that they do not result in narrowing of the curricula.
- A federal grant program should be created to assist schools in ensuring all students access to a comprehensive curriculum.
- A comprehensive accountability system must appropriately apply to high schools without increasing dropout rates.
- Standards and assessments must incorporate the nature of work and civic life in the 21st century: high level thinking, learning, and global understanding skills, and sophisticated information, communication, and technology literacy competencies.
- Schools that fail to close achievement gaps after receiving additional financial resources, technical assistance, and other supports should be subject to supportive interventions.
- If certain elements of the current AYP system are maintained, specific flaws must be corrected. These corrections include: providing more than one year to implement improvement plans before subjecting schools or districts to additional sanctions; designating schools or districts as “in need of improvement” only when the same subgroup of students fails to make AYP in the same subject for at least two consecutive years; targeting school choice and supplemental educational services (SES) to the specific subgroups that fail to make AYP; providing SES prior to providing school choice; and ensuring that SES providers serve all eligible students and utilize only highly qualified teachers.

Criteria #2: Smaller Class Sizes To Improve Student Achievement

- Restore the Class Size Reduction program that existed prior to NCLB to provide an optimum class size of 15 students.
- Schools should receive federal support—through both direct grants and tax subsidies—for school modernization to accommodate smaller classes.

Criteria #3: Quality Educators in Every Classroom and School

- Provide states and school districts with the resources and technical assistance to create an effective program of professional development and professional accountability for all employees.
- Revise the ESEA Title II Teacher Quality State Grant program to ensure alignment of federally funded teacher professional development with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards.
- Provide federally funded salary enhancements for teachers who achieve National Board Certification, with a smaller salary incentive for teachers who complete this rigorous process and receive a score, but do not achieve certification.
- Create a grant program that provides additional compensation for teachers with specific knowledge and skills who take on new roles to assist their colleagues.
- Expand opportunities for education support professionals to broaden and enhance their skills and knowledge, including compensation for taking additional courses or doing course work for advanced degrees.
- Provide federal grants that encourage districts and schools to assist new teachers by pairing them with an experienced mentor teacher in a shared classroom.
- Provide financial incentives—both direct federal subsidies and tax credits— for retention, relocation, and housing for teachers and support professionals who work in schools identified as “in need of improvement” or high-poverty schools, and stay in such schools for at least five years.

- Provide hard-to-staff schools with an adequate number of well trained administrators and support professionals, including paraeducators, counselors, social workers, school nurses, psychologists, and clerical support.
- Provide paraeducators who are involuntarily transferred to a Title I school and who have not met the highly qualified standard with adequate time to meet the requirement.
- Grant reciprocity for paraeducators who meet the highly qualified standard when they move to another state or district, with different qualifications.
- Revise the definition of highly qualified teachers to recognize state licensure/certification, eliminate nonessential requirements that create unnecessary obstacles, and eliminate loopholes in the scope of coverage.
- Provide teachers who may not meet the highly qualified standard by the current deadlines, due to significant implementation problems, with assistance and additional time to meet the requirement.

Criteria #4: Students and Schools Supported By Active and Engaged Parents, Families, and Communities

- Provide programs that encourage school-parent compacts, signed by parents, that provide a clearly defined list of parental expectations and opportunities.
- Provide programs and resources to assist in making schools the hub of the community.
- Expand funding for the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRC) program in ESEA.
- Include as a requirement for professional development programs funded through ESEA, training in the skills and knowledge needed for effective parental and family communication and engagement strategies.
- Provide incentives or require employers to provide parents a reasonable amount of leave to participate in their children's school activities.

Criteria #5: Resources to Ensure a Great Public School for Every Child

- Fully fund ESEA programs at their authorized levels.
- Enforce Sec. 9527(a) of NCLB, which prevents the federal government from requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds—beyond what they receive from the federal government—to implement federal mandates.
- Protect essential ESEA programs by:
 - ** Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for school improvement programs to assist districts and schools
 - ** Providing adequate funding to develop and improve assessments that measure higher order thinking skills
 - ** Establishing a trigger whereby any consequences facing schools falling short of the new accountability system are implemented only when Title I is funded at its authorized level
 - ** Providing a separate ESEA funding stream for supplemental education services and school choice, if these mandates remain in the law
 - ** Providing adequate funding to develop and improve appropriate assessments for students with disabilities and English Language Learner students
 - ** Providing technical assistance to schools to help them use money more effectively
 - ** Providing adequate funding to assist state and local education agencies in administering assessments, and collecting and interpreting data in a timely manner so it can be useful to educators
- Important children's and education programs outside of ESEA, including child nutrition, Head Start, IDEA, children's health, child care, and related programs, must be adequately funded.

To view NEA's comprehensive *Positive Agenda for ESEA Reauthorization*, go to:
<http://www.nea.org/lac/esea/images/posagenda.pdf>

NEA's Message to Members of Congress on the Reauthorization of ESEA

NEA is asking Congress to make three fundamental changes in the law so that it works for children. Included here is the association's condensed message to Congress on the most vital components of the law.

1. Use more than test scores to measure student learning and school performance.
2. Reduce class size to help students learn.
3. Increase the number of highly qualified teachers in our schools.

NEA would oppose an ESEA reauthorization bill if any of the following non-starters were included:

(These are non-starters, not a part of any negotiations)

Private school vouchers

Undermining of collective bargaining

Mandated federal requirements for "effective teachers" - any new mandates for highly qualified definition, including evaluations directly tied to student performance or growth model results

Additional mandated federal testing requirements

Any mandated merit pay/pay-for-performance requirements, including those directly tied to student performance or growth model results.

For more information about the NEA, the Positive Agenda or the Reauthorization of ESEA-NCLB please visit the NEA web-site at: www.nea.org
