

“No Child Left Behind” – the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Are you ready for a change?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), renamed “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) in 2001, established laudable goals - high standards and accountability for the learning of all children, regardless of their background or ability.

However, the law must be fundamentally improved and federal lawmakers need to provide adequate funding if NCLB is to achieve its goal. Congress has to reauthorize the legislation in 2007, offering an opportunity to make it more workable and more responsive to the real needs of children.

NEA is in the forefront of the effort to improve the “No Child Left Behind” Act. We have developed a comprehensive [Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization](#) available at www.nea.org that spells out detailed recommendations to make the law better.

NEA’s goals for our nation’s children and public education are America’s goals:

- All children must have access to quality programs and services that meet the full range of their needs so they come to school every day ready and able to learn.
- High expectations and standards with rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.
- Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning in every school, with a qualified, caring, diverse and stable workforce for all children.
- Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by all stakeholders, with parents, families and communities actively involved and engaged in our schools.
- Adequate, equitable and sustained funding for our children’s present and future success.

NEA will oppose an ESEA reauthorization bill if any of the following are included:

1. Private school vouchers
2. Undermining of collective bargaining
3. Mandated federal requirements for “effective teachers”—any new mandates changing the definition of highly qualified teacher, including evaluations directly tied to student performance or growth model results
4. Additional mandated federal testing requirements
5. Any mandated merit pay/pay-for-performance requirements, including those directly tied to student performance or growth model results.

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NEA's Top Legislative Priorities for ESEA

1. Inclusion of multiple measures in a revised Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) accountability system so that AYP is not based solely on standardized test scores.
 - 1.1 States would be permitted to develop a research-based school accountability formula or matrix that considers multiple measures.
 - 1.2 Each state shall incorporate into its accountability system additional measures beyond the current use of just two statewide test scores. Other measures states could include are: district-level assessments, graduation rates (for high school), attendance rates, school-level assessments, performance or portfolio assessments, and the percent of students participating in rigorous coursework, which may include dual enrollment, honors, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.
2. Use of growth models to measure changes in student performance.
 - 2.1 Allow every state to implement a transparent growth model methodology that recognizes continuous improvement for all students, grants schools credit for improving student achievement at all points on the achievement scale (for example, credit for schools that move students from below basic to basic or from proficient to advanced), and for improving student achievement over time. Such systems could track individual student performance or cohort performance.
 - 2.2 The Federal government should not designate the specifics of such a system, but should grant states flexibility to develop growth models, subject to state peer review and review by an independent expert body, such as the National Council on Measurement in Education, the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association or the Joint Committee on Testing Practice.
 - 2.3 In order to use a growth model, states would provide assurances that they have: a rich data system capable of collecting the data: individual student identifiers; and professional development/training for educators and administrators on how to interpret the data and use it to modify instruction; and curriculum offerings, and drive other school or student-based supports and interventions. The specific methodology of any growth model should be transparent.
 - 2.4 Data from growth models in an accountability system should be used exclusively to improve instructional and curriculum decisions and professional development for educators.
3. Shift AYP from a system that labels and penalizes schools to one that rewards success.
 - 3.1 Provide for differentiated outcomes for schools so that a school that falls short in just one or two criteria would be required to develop and implement a targeted improvement plan for the specific subgroup of students.
 - 3.2 If a parent exercises his or her rights to have their children opt out of taking required tests under state law, then eliminate any associated penalties against schools and districts.

- 3.3 Provide supports and assistance for schools, including financial support and technical assistance, with assistance targeted to those schools and districts most in need of improvement.
 - 3.4 Reverse the order of Supplemental Educational Services (SES) and public school choice, and allow districts in need of improvement to be approved as supplemental service providers.
 - 3.5 Target both SES and public school choice to students in the particular subgroups that do not make AYP.
 - 3.6 Provide a separate funding stream for public school choice and supplemental educational services requirements so funding for these programs does not divert funds from classroom services.
 - 3.7 Improve the quality of SES services by allowing school districts to monitor provider quality, ensure that SES providers serve both students with disabilities and ELL students, and require that they be fully covered by federal civil rights laws.
4. Provide additional common-sense flexibility for assessing and counting test scores from both students with disabilities and ELL students.
- 4.1 Allow the IEP teams to determine the appropriate assessment and standards (regular, alternate or modified) that the assessment should be based on for each child; remove the current arbitrary one percent and two percent limits.
 - 4.2 For newly arrived immigrant EEL students, for whom native language assessments in the required core content subjects are not available, extend to three years the period of time before their test scores are included in AYP.
5. Add a separately funded class size reduction program with class size limits of 15 to improve student learning, with priority given to high poverty schools and which could be phased in over time.
- 5.1 Fund a national class size database for the submission of student and teacher data that will permit the accurate calculation of class size for every school building, district and state.
6. Increase flexibility for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements, including teachers of multiple subjects, special education and rural educators.
- 6.1 Deem fully licensed/certified special education teachers as highly qualified.
 - 6.2 Recognize social studies as a core academic subject.
 - 6.3 Expand current flexibility provided for rural education teachers.
 - 6.4 Deem National Board Certified teachers as highly qualified.
7. Advance teacher quality at the highest poverty schools providing funding to attract and retain quality teachers and improved teaching and learning conditions.
- 7.1 Improve teaching and learning conditions at these schools, including school safety and enhanced, focused professional development for educators.
 - 7.2 Provide financial incentives, college student loan forgiveness, housing subsidies, and federal salary supplements for teachers, including National Board Certified Teachers.

Note: These priorities relate to specific changes to the No Child Left Behind provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NEA’s Positive Agenda for the entire ESEA reauthorization is found at: <http://www.nea.org/lac/esea/images/posagenda.pdf>

What can you do?

- 1) Choose two or three key points from the previous pages that mean the most to you. If you have a personal story to tell – write it down.
- 2) Call, write, or e-mail both U.S. Senators from Missouri (They represent all of us). Let them know why you want their support in making these changes to ESEA – No Child Left Behind. Mention your key points and share your stories.
- 3) Find your U.S. Representative from the list below. E-mail or write them to list the changes that will mean the most to you and your students.

CONGRESS KNOWS THAT CHANGE IS NEEDED – BUT ONLY YOU CAN ARM THEM WITH STORIES ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS. THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE WATCHING AND WAITING FOR POSITIVE CHANGES.

Some of our efforts have already paid off

Missouri NEA is actively lobbying our congressional delegation for the changes noted in this flier. Some successes are already apparent. On February 15, 2007 Senator McCaskill was one of nine U.S. Senators to write a letter to Chairman Kennedy stating ... federal education law "should not take the form of one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach. Every state and every school district is different, and we are concerned that the mandates of the law (NCLB) and the Department (of Education)'s rigid approach to its implementation over the past five years do not take into account, and could undermine, the variety of successful and innovative teaching methods that exist around the country."

A note to thank Senator McCaskill would be appreciated.

U.S. Senators from Missouri

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