



NCLB FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED CHANGES

North Carolina has worked to ensure that its pioneering accountability system, in place since 1996, aligns with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. To comply with the law's requirements, North Carolina has also revised its licensing requirements for teachers and dramatically broadened technical assistance for schools and districts.

Today, North Carolina is working to take its system of public schools to the next level. In that effort, it is imperative that NCLB does not impede our progress. The State Board of Education wants the federal law to support and enable North Carolina to reach new levels of learning, achievement, and accountability. The provisions of NCLB have had unintended consequences, and the experiences of the last five years have identified several areas in which revisions and modifications are needed in the reauthorization.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Overemphasis on technical provisions undercuts innovation.** There has been an overemphasis on implementation and technical compliance with the law's provisions. This has led to an unprecedented level of federal involvement in what should be state level decision-making. NCLB should set appropriate federal goals and provide enough technical flexibility for states to make reasonable decisions about how to reach federal goals. This allows for important reform and innovation, while assuring that all states are accountable. One size does not fit all.
2. **The "all or nothing" approach guarantees static standards.** NCLB's AYP measure does not encourage bold and important steps toward higher standards. Despite major disincentive in the law, North Carolina has dramatically raised its math standards and plans to raise its reading standards this coming year. In doing so, North Carolina will increase significantly schools sanctioned under the law. NCLB should not punish efforts to raise standards.
3. **The law favors short-term approaches instead of sustainable reforms.** Significant reform takes time and major improvements cannot be expected overnight. Schools and systems need at least one complete school year for improvement plans to work before they are subjected to additional sanctions.
4. **Requiring teachers to be "highly qualified" has not helped to improve teacher quality.** NCLB has rightly focused attention on the role of the teacher in student achievement, but it has focused on the technical aspects of teacher credentialing. The teacher quality provisions are not helping to improve teaching. The law should stay focused on student outcomes, recognize state licensure requirements, and refocus on ways to support states to encourage and reward educators who work where they are needed most.
5. **States and districts need greater authority over sanctions.** The law's approach on sanctions dilutes state and district effectiveness by overly broadening the number of schools required to participate. Further, the lock-step approach to sanctions ignores individual school needs. State and districts need greater latitude over where intervention is required and the character of that intervention.
6. **The monitoring and technical assistance requirements of NCLB exceed the resources provided and need review.** Increased federal resources are needed to better support the monitoring and compliance required by the law. At the same time, human, fiscal, and time resources spent on monitoring and compliance would be better spent providing technical assistance and support. A review of ongoing federal requirements is imperative.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES

State Authority and Flexibility

- Recognize and reinforce state (not federal) authority over K-12 education. Hold states accountable for student achievement, but minimize federal regulations. Put federal focus on support and assistance rather than punitive sanctions.
- Revise the peer review process of state assessments. States that have received initial approval of assessments should be provided more flexibility for subsequent peer reviews. States should retain authority for determining the appropriate testing instruments for assessing student performance.
- Avoid additional federal testing mandates.

Improving Accountability Determinations/ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

- Revise the "all or nothing" determination of AYP. Make a distinction between schools and systems that meet almost all targets, those that meet some targets, and those that meet few targets.
- Base AYP calculations determining if a school enters Title I School Improvement Status on the same student groups not making AYP in the same subject area over time.
- Revise AYP calculations to include the use of a growth model.
- In a year in which new assessments are implemented, hold schools and districts harmless from AYP sanctions in the subject area of the new assessment to allow for delayed reporting to ensure appropriate standard setting and data analysis of the new assessment.

School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services (SES)

- Allow Title I School Improvement schools to offer supplemental educational services (SES) before the option of school choice (transfer).
- Limit the option of school choice to the student groups within the school whose needs are not being met as evidenced by not making AYP.

- Allow all students in a Title I School Improvement school who are not proficient to be eligible for SES regardless of their economic status.

Support for Schools and Districts/ Technical Assistance

- Allow appropriate time for school/district improvement strategies to work before sanctions escalate. There should be at least one school year's time allotted for improvements to take place before sanctions increase.
- Give states the authority to differentiate and determine consequences and interventions for schools and districts that fail to make AYP.
- Reassess funding levels to ensure they not only cover the costs that states and districts incur in complying with the technical requirements of NCLB (e.g., assessments, data collection, monitoring), but that they are adequate to allow states and districts to implement programs and activities (e.g., Response to Intervention [RtI]) to meet NCLB goals.

Special Populations

- Revise Title III (LEP) accountability measures to focus only on English language progress and proficiency.

Teacher Quality

- Revise public reporting of teacher credentials so that it is based on state licensing requirements, not federal definitions.
- Give highly qualified status to all teachers in the areas in which they have earned National Board Certification.
- Provide incentives (e.g., federal subsidies, scholarships, expanded student loan forgiveness, tax credits) to encourage teachers, administrators, and other instructional support staff to work where they are most needed and to reward them for doing so.