
Framework for Reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act:
Recommendations to Improve and Strengthen the Law

The Business Coalition for Student Achievement—representing business leaders from every sector of the economy—believes that improving the performance of the K-12 education system in the United States is necessary to provide a strong foundation for both U.S. competitiveness and for individuals to succeed in our rapidly changing world. We are committed to working with all stakeholders on this essential task.

The coalition views the No Child Left Behind Act as one of the critical tools needed to transform U.S. education so that all students graduate academically prepared for college, citizenship and the 21st century workplace. NCLB and related federal, state and local policies and resources must be aligned to ensure that all students are challenged by a rigorous, well-rounded core curriculum in safe and engaging learning environments. It also must be supported by policies that bolster U.S. scientific and technological leadership.

We call on Congress to strengthen and improve NCLB provisions and funding, while respecting the fundamental features of this historic education law that are designed to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps:

- All students proficient in reading and math by 2014;
- Accountability for all groups of students reaching proficiency on annual assessments;
- Public report cards that include data on the performance of each student group;
- Highly qualified teachers in every classroom;
- Options for students in persistently low-performing schools; and
- Identification and intervention in schools that need improvement.

FOCUS ON COLLEGE AND WORKPLACE READINESS.

- Provide incentives for states to raise academic standards and improve assessments to align them with college and workplace expectations. These incentives should enable states to:
 - Improve state standards and assessments regularly, with input from business and higher education, so that students graduate from high school with the core knowledge, advanced problem-solving skills and critical thinking capacities needed to succeed in both postsecondary education and the workplace.
 - Develop state consortia to collaborate on the development of standards and assessments benchmarked to the best in the world.
 - Reform secondary schools and hold them accountable for increasing the graduation rate, using the common definition adopted by the nation's governors, and graduating students who are ready for college and work.
- Increase opportunities for high school students to participate in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors and appropriate industry-recognized certification courses.

EMPHASIZE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH (STEM).

- Increase and align STEM funding with the goals of NCLB and require rigorous program evaluation.
- Focus funding on scaling up programs to improve teaching and learning, such as Math Now and Math and Science Partnerships.
- Add science to the adequate yearly progress (AYP) accountability system and support state participation in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science assessments.

ENHANCE DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING.

- Based on commitments from states, provide resources to develop statewide data systems that offer timely and accurate collection, analysis and use of high quality longitudinal data that align to district systems to inform decision making and ultimately to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- Provide educator training on the use of data to differentiate instruction for students, especially for those who are not yet proficient and those who are more advanced.

INCREASE TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS.

- Shift current definition of “highly qualified teachers” to a focus on “highly effective teachers.”
- Focus resources on supporting and rewarding both teacher and principal effectiveness at improving student achievement by funding programs that:
 - Align preparation, recruitment, induction, retention and professional development with the knowledge and skills needed to improve student performance and to enable all students to graduate from high school ready for postsecondary education and the workplace.
 - Require the institutions and other entities that receive funding for these purposes to evaluate their impact on increased educator effectiveness.
 - Institute performance- and market-based pay programs that: reward educators whose performance contributes to substantial growth in student achievement, attract and retain effective math and science teachers and adjunct faculty, and draw effective teachers and leaders to high-need schools.
 - Develop evaluation systems based principally on improved student performance.
 - Implement policies and practices to quickly and fairly remove ineffective educators.

STRENGTHEN AND REFINE ACCOUNTABILITY.

- Amend the NCLB accountability system to:
 - Provide guidance on ways that States can differentiate among districts and schools that are close to or far from making adequate yearly progress, and ensure that resources for improvement focus on those with the highest concentrations of underperforming students.
 - Permit states to use rigorous measures of year-to-year growth in student academic achievement and other methods verified by the Secretary that are consistent with the goal of all students reaching proficiency in reading, math and science.
 - Close loopholes that allow states to use statistical means to “game” the accountability system and undermine the intent of school restructuring.
 - Require districts to provide parents with timely and easily understood information on their options and allow them to choose either supplemental education services or moving to a higher performing public school.
- Fund development of better assessments for special education students and English language learners.

INVEST IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND ENCOURAGE INNOVATION.

- Increase capacity of states and other entities to better assist schools that need help making AYP and that are facing corrective action and/or restructuring.
- Target funding, assistance and distribution of effective educators to high-need schools.
- Continue support for innovation, such as charter schools, diverse provider models and techniques that effectively integrate technology into appropriate aspects of teaching, learning and management.
- Fund R&D on promising ways to improve school and student performance.