

# FairTest

## National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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for more information:

Dr. Monty Neill (617) 864-4810

Robert Schaeffer (239) 395-6773

### **ASPEN COMMISSION PROPOSALS ARE “NCLB ON STEROIDS;” SIDE-EFFECT WILL BE MORE “TEACHING TO THE TESTS” REACTION OF MONTY NEILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAIR & OPEN TESTING (FairTest)**

The Aspen Commission's recommendations for reauthorizing the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, released today, amount to little more than NCLB on steroids.

Their predictable side-effect will be the further reduction of education to coaching for narrow exams that fail to support or assess high-quality student learning.

While the Commission claims that the public now accepts NCLB, numerous state and national surveys find that educators overwhelmingly reject the test-and-punish dictates of the law while parents reject the side effects of teaching to the test. The more the public knows about the law, the more they oppose it.

The Commission report contains numerous examples of flawed logic, unreasonable requirements and bad policy. These include:

- Using standardized test scores to evaluate teachers and principals. This will only intensify teaching to the test, narrowing and dumbing-down education most severely for the nation's neediest children.
- Creating multiple additional ways for schools to fail by mandating that science scores count in AYP and that subgroup scores count toward accountability when subgroup size reaches 20 – a number so small as to guarantee statistically inaccurate results.
- Making assessment and accountability for students with disabilities more rigid, countering a demand by parents that their children be included in ways that are flexible and reasonable.
- Encouraging uniform state tests, which will pave the way to reducing education to preparation for one national test instead of many different state tests

Our nation deserves a federal law that encourages a rich education for all rather than mindless test-preparation. A more rational approach is found in the Joint Organizational Statement on No Child Left Behind, now endorsed by 106 national education, civil rights, religious, disability and civic organizations. Follow-up reports with detailed recommendations will soon be released by the Forum on Educational Accountability, a working group of the Joint Statement signers.

The Joint Statement and other information on the failures of NCLB may be found at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org).