

FairTest

National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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NCLB ADMINISTRATIVE TINKERING FAILS TO ADDRESS FLAWED

**“TEST-AND-PUNISH” POLICIES INITIATED BY *NATION AT RISK* MISDIAGNOSIS;
25-YEAR TESTING FIXATION HAS NOT IMPROVED ED. QUALITY OR EQUITY**

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings should mark the 25th anniversary of *A Nation at Risk* by seeking an overhaul of the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law, which stemmed from the report’s misdiagnosis of educational problems. Instead, the administrative changes she proposed today fail to address the deep flaws in NCLB, according to the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest).

“*A Nation at Risk* launched the country’s high-stakes testing movement,” explained FairTest Executive Director Jesse Mermell. “The resulting test-and-punish policies have not led to significant improvements in the quality of public education. That’s particularly true for the minority, low-income, disabled and immigrant students society has left behind.”

“The major problem in U.S. schools was not the ‘rising tide of mediocrity’ blamed by *A Nation at Risk*,” added FairTest Deputy Director Dr. Monty Neill. “Then and now a yawning gap in educational opportunity dragged down academic achievement.”

“National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data demonstrate the failure of NCLB, the latest phase of the over-testing trend,” Dr. Neill continued. “Since it became law, progress has slowed or stopped entirely in both reading and math. That’s because repetitive drilling for tests undermines high-quality learning.”

“It’s time for a different approach,” FairTest’s Mermell concluded. “Government must mandate fewer standardized tests. Instead, we should help teachers use high-quality assessment tools to diagnose student needs and improve learning. Schools need better support, not counter-productive sanctions.”

The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), chaired by FairTest, has offered detailed recommendations for overhauling NCLB. FEA’s proposals are based on the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, signed by more than 140 national education, civil rights, religious, disability, civic and labor groups.

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Proposals for overhauling NCLB are online at www.fairtest.org and www.edaccountability.org