

FairTest

National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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**SEC. SPELLINGS “DIFFERENTIATED ACCOUNTABILITY” PLAN
IS “FUTILE EFFORT TO RESCUE A COLLAPSING LAW,”
SCHEME IS EQUIVALENT TO “REARRANGING DECK CHAIRS ON TITANIC”
REACTION OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAIR & OPEN TESTING**

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings’ plan to allow ten states to pilot “Differentiated Accountability” approaches to comply with federal “No Child Left Behind” mandates is a futile effort to rescue a collapsing law. Though it correctly recognizes that NCLB identifies far too many schools as failing, the proposal is the political equivalent of rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, not changing its misguided course. It will not slow the ever-growing demand for complete overhaul.

At its core, “No Child” is unworkable. It makes impossible demands such as expecting all children to attain proficiency by 2014, relies too heavily on educationally destructive standardized tests which narrow curriculum while encouraging “drill-and-kill” test prep, and imposes counterproductive punishments.

Simply imposing a state-by-state patchwork of new rules onto the top-down federal bureaucracy created by “No Child Left Behind” will not lead to improved education for the communities that most need it. Far more fundamental changes, focusing on identifying the real causes of weak academic performance and building schools’ capacity to address them, are required.

FairTest initiated the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, a set of principles for overhauling the federal law, which has been signed by 143 national education, civil rights, religious, parent, disability, civic and labor groups. FairTest also facilitates the Forum on Educational Assessment, which works to implement the Joint Statement.

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The *Joint Statement* and other materials concerning NCLB, including FairTest’s six-year “Report Card” on the law’s impact, are online at: <http://www.fairtest.org>