

FairTest

National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND 10TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT -- MISGUIDED POLICY CREATED "LOST DECADE" FOR SCHOOL PROGRESS; TEST-AND-PUNISH STRATEGY UNDERMINES REAL REFORMS

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law "failed badly both in terms of its own goals and more broadly," leading to a decade of educational stagnation. That is the central conclusion of a major new report marking NCLB's tenth anniversary. President George W. Bush signed the program into law on January 8, 2002.

The report, "NCLB's Lost Decade for Educational Progress," summarizes data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and dozens of independent studies. It was written by staff of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest).

Among the report's major findings:

- NCLB failed to significantly increase average academic performance or to significantly narrow achievement gaps, as measured by NAEP. U.S. students made greater gains before NCLB became law than after it was implemented.

- NCLB severely damaged educational quality and equity by narrowing the curriculum in many schools and focusing attention on the limited skills standardized tests measure. These negative effects fell most heavily on classrooms serving low-income and minority children.

- So-called "reforms" to NCLB fail to address many of the law's fundamental problems and, in some cases, may intensify them. Flawed proposals include Obama Administration waivers and the Senate Education Committee's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill

"NCLB undermined many promising reform efforts because of its reliance on one-size-fits-all testing, labeling and sanctioning schools," explained FairTest's Lisa Guisbond, the new report's lead

author. “A decade’s worth of solid evidence documents the failure of NCLB and similar high-stakes testing schemes. Successful programs in the U.S. and other nations demonstrate better ways to improve schools. Yet, policymakers still cling to the discredited NCLB model.”

“It’s not too late to learn the lessons of the past ten years. Now is the time to craft a federal law that supports equity and progress in all public schools,” added FairTest Executive Director, Dr. Monty Neill. The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), which FairTest leads, is promoting a comprehensive plan to overhaul NCLB. The proposal calls for using multiple measures to assess student and school performance. It also targets resources to improve teaching and learning. More than 150 national education, civil rights, disability, religious, labor and civic groups signed the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, which FEA seeks to implement.

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- the NCLB 10th Anniversary report is posted at <http://fairtest.org/NCLB-lost-decade-report-home>

- Forum on Educational Accountability recommendations and the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB* are available at <http://www.edaccountability.org>