

FairTest

National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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TEST REFORMERS URGE PRES. OBAMA TO OVERHAUL EDUCATION POLICY: “RELY ON RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE, NOT FAILED IDEOLOGY,” TO SET NEW NATIONAL DIRECTION

On the eve of a State of the Union speech which is expected to emphasize education, the nation's leading assessment reform organization called on President Barack Obama to "set a smarter course for student testing." The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) said the federal government should reduce high-stakes standardized exam mandates. Instead, the nation should support fairer, more accurate ways to assess students and teachers to help improve schools.

"President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan continue to promote failed policies, such as excessive testing and judging teachers by student test scores," said FairTest Director Monty Neill. "Stagnant results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress show this approach does not work. President Obama needs to support reforms based on research and experience, not ideology. He must work with Congress to overhaul the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called 'No Child Left Behind.'"

FairTest, which collaborates with many other major civil rights and education groups that have signed the *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, called for President Obama to:

- Reduce federally mandated testing to once each in elementary, middle and high school, consistent with the practices of nations where fewer but better assessments produce superior results.
- Stimulate development of improved assessments, such as performance tasks and projects to assess how well children solve problems, apply knowledge, and think creatively.
- Support assessment systems that include classroom- and school-based evidence of student learning.
- Require states to use multiple sources of evidence of various types ("multiple measures") in judging students, schools, teachers and principals.
- Ensure that new assessments consider the needs of diverse learners, such as English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Eliminate "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) test score gain requirements and sanctions, but continue reporting important data disaggregated by demographic group.
- Stop pressuring states to use student test scores to evaluate teachers and principals. Instead, help states develop high-quality teacher and principal evaluations.
- Use multiple sources of evidence and on-site reviews by qualified state teams ("school quality reviews") to judge school and district quality.
- Allow states to use federal funds for efforts that focus on improving curriculum, teaching, assessment, professional development, school climate, and parental involvement.

“These are the types of genuine reforms that would benefit all the nation’s children, especially the most vulnerable,” Dr. Neill concluded. “Unlike current Administration policies, they are backed by reams of evidence from the U.S. and other nations.”

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- More information on these proposals is available at www.fairtest.org and www.edaccountability.org (the website of the Forum on Educational Accountability, chaired by FairTest).