Joint Organizational Statement on *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*
October 21, 2004

The undersigned education, civil rights, children's, disability, and citizens' organizations are committed to the No Child Left Behind Act's objectives of strong academic achievement for all children and closing the achievement gap. We believe that the federal government has a critical role to play in attaining these goals. We endorse the use of an accountability system that helps ensure all children, including children of color, from low-income families, with disabilities, and of limited English proficiency, are prepared to be successful, participating members of our democracy.

While we all have different positions on various aspects of the law, based on concerns raised during the implementation of NCLB, we believe the following significant, constructive corrections are among those necessary to make the Act fair and effective. Among these concerns are: over-emphasizing standardized testing, narrowing curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation rather than richer academic learning; over-identifying schools in need of improvement; using sanctions that do not help improve schools; inappropriately excluding low-scoring children in order to boost test results; and inadequate funding. *Overall, the law's emphasis needs to shift from applying sanctions for failing to raise test scores to holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement.*

Recommended Changes in NCLB

Progress Measurement

1. Replace the law's arbitrary proficiency targets with ambitious achievement targets based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective public schools.

2. Allow states to measure progress by using students' growth in achievement as well as their performance in relation to pre-determined levels of academic proficiency.

3. Ensure that states and school districts regularly report to the government and the public their progress in implementing systemic changes to enhance educator, family, and community capacity to improve student learning.

4. Provide a comprehensive picture of students' and schools' performance by moving from an overwhelming reliance on standardized tests to using multiple indicators of student achievement in addition to these tests.

5. Fund research and development of more effective accountability systems that better meet the goal of high academic achievement for all children

Assessments

6. Help states develop assessment systems that include district and school-based measures in order to provide better, more timely information about student learning.

7. Strengthen enforcement of NCLB provisions requiring that assessments must:

- Be aligned with state content and achievement standards;
- Be used for purposes for which they are valid and reliable;
- Be consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical standards;
- Be of adequate technical quality for each purpose required under the Act;
- Provide multiple, up-to-date measures of student performance including measures that assess higher order thinking skills and understanding; and
- Provide useful diagnostic information to improve teaching and learning.

8. Decrease the testing burden on states, schools and districts by allowing states to assess students annually in selected grades in elementary, middle schools, and high schools.

Building Capacity

9. Ensure changes in teacher and administrator preparation and continuing professional development that research evidence and experience indicate improve educational quality and student achievement.

10. Enhance state and local capacity to effectively implement the comprehensive changes required to increase the knowledge and skills of administrators, teachers, families, and communities to support high student achievement.

Sanctions

11. Ensure that improvement plans are allowed sufficient time to take hold before applying sanctions; sanctions should not be applied if they undermine existing effective reform efforts.

12. Replace sanctions that do not have a consistent record of success with interventions that enable schools to make changes that result in improved student achievement.

Funding

13. Raise authorized levels of NCLB funding to cover a substantial percentage of the costs that states and districts will incur to carry out these recommendations, and fully fund the law at those levels without reducing expenditures for other education programs.

14. Fully fund Title I to ensure that 100 percent of eligible children are served.

We, the undersigned, will work for the adoption of these recommendations as central structural changes needed to NCLB at the same time that we advance our individual organization's proposals.

Advancement Project
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of University Women
ASPIRA
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Campaign for Fiscal Equity/ACCESS

Children's Defense Fund
Citizens for Effective Schools
Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
Council for Exceptional Children
Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform
Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children (DLD/CEC)
FairTest: The National Center for Fair & Open Testing
Forum for Education and Democracy
International Reading Association
International Technology Education Association
Learning Disabilities Association of America
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Teachers of English
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
National Urban League
Service Employees International Union
School Social Work Association of America
Stand for Children