

FACT SHEET: ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

NEA Position: Replace the “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) system with one that recognizes schools that make progress toward achieving learning goals and correctly identifies struggling schools — to provide meaningful support instead of punishment. Base determinations of school success on multiple measures, not just limited test scores.

- ▶ The current NCLB testing and accountability system has been recognized as flawed by policymakers on both sides of the aisle.
- ▶ NCLB’s undue emphasis on federally mandated, narrow student assessments as the primary accountability yardstick has led to mislabeling and sanctioning schools based on test scores and providing inadequate funding and support for schools that are struggling.
- ▶ School performance determinations must be made using multiple measures, rather than relying on existing state tests. Multiple measures may include factors such as graduation rates, student mobility or transfer rates, and the number and percentage of students participating in rigorous coursework.
- ▶ Assessment systems should:
 - Be used primarily as part of a continuous improvement system designed to improve instruction rather than to punish schools.
 - Serve the purpose of promoting student access to a comprehensive and challenging education.
 - Promote learning of deep understanding and complex skills.
 - Help teachers and students determine what real progress has been made in learning, what is working, and what needs to be addressed.
- ▶ ESEA reauthorization should replace AYP with a continuous improvement plan that:
 - Bases determinations of school success on multiple measures.
 - Recognizes areas of growth in all schools and states.
 - Identifies schools and programs that may offer innovative approaches.
 - Provides feedback to schools on areas of possible growth or improvement.
 - Identifies which schools are “persistently low-achieving” or demonstrate “significant educational opportunity gaps” in order to direct intensive resources and intervention supports to them.
- ▶ “[P]ublic schools are expected to promote a variety of outcomes, of which academic achievement as measured by standardized tests is only one. Additional goals of schooling include the preparation of students for life after school, which includes not only readiness for college or the workplace but also social and behavioral outcomes, such as displaying self-regulating behavior, taking personal responsibility, and demonstrating an ability to work in teams... [A]n expanded set of measures could increase the validity of inferences about schools’ effectiveness and offer relevant information to principals and teachers about how to improve their schools’ performance.” (Source: Heather L. Schwartz, Laura S. Hamilton, Brian M. Stecher, and Jennifer L. Steele: *Expanded Measures of School Performance*, RAND Corporation, 2011. Complete report available at <http://bit.ly/kniI57>.)