

Citizens for Effective Schools

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CITIZENS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS JOINS COALITION OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CALLING FOR REFRAMING *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT*

Key is Shifting Emphasis From Sanctions for Inadequate Test Scores to Making Structural Changes Needed to Improve Student Achievement

Washington, D.C. - In its Joint Statement issued today, an unprecedented [group] of more than 20 national education, civil rights, children's, disability and citizens' organizations calls for major changes to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) so that it can accomplish its purposes. Citizens for Effective Schools, Inc. (CES), a national citizens' advocacy organization for school reform, enthusiastically joins with the National School Boards Association, American Association of School Administrators, NAACP, ASPIRA, Children's Defense Fund, NEA and others in signing this statement of principles for reframing NCLB.

"The Statement's central theme is that: '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,' said Gary M. Ratner, CES' Executive Director and a nationally recognized authority on school reform law and policy. "That is, NCLB needs to be refocused from merely pressuring schools to produce high test scores to instead inducing them to make the structural changes needed to dramatically raise the curriculum level, improve teaching effectiveness and increase family support for high student achievement."

As noted by Clesont Mitchell, President of the Parent Partnership Network of New York City and a member of CES' board of directors: "The time for pointing fingers is over. It's time to work on the solutions. The people involved in education know what needs to be changed: greatly improving teacher, principal and superintendent preparation and ongoing professional development and strengthening families' capability to support their children's high achievement." As Mitchell says, "We can't wait another generation. Otherwise, we will be a third world country."

CES has already identified the specific policy changes needed nationwide to greatly enhance our educational human resources in its October 2003 Open Letter to President Bush and Congress. See www.citizenseffectiveschools.org. These include steps such as: vastly increasing the time most teaching students spend in supervised placements observing, assisting and practice teaching in schools, and correspondingly reducing the time spent on “theory” and “methods” courses, integrating them into the field experience; and replacing traditional staff development workshops unrelated to the needs of individual teachers with individualized mentoring and peer collaboration among teachers.

The [group] has sent the Statement to all Senators and Congressmen, urging them to hold hearings and implement its principles into law during the next Congress, 2005-2006. “Now we must get the message out to the rest of the country to refocus the debate on NCLB along the lines of the Joint Statement,” said Ratner.

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