

Building On Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act*

"Five years ago, we rose above partisan differences to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, preserving local control, raising standards, and holding those schools accountable for results.... Now the task is to build on the success, without watering down standards, without taking control from local communities, and without backsliding and calling it reform."

-- President Bush

With President Bush's signing of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2002, Americans united behind the idea that "every child can learn." Now, as Congress begins to reauthorize the law, we take the next step to ensure that every child *does* learn.

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush discussed his plans for the law's reauthorization. **Building On Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act*** is designed to provide additional tools to our schools and educators to help America's students read and do math at grade level by 2014.

We know what works: high standards, accountability, more choices for parents, and sound, proven methods of instruction. These principles have yielded real and sustainable results. Under *No Child Left Behind*, our students have made strong academic progress, particularly in the earlier grades. **Reading and math scores are at all-time highs and achievement gaps are closing.**

The *No Child Left Behind Act* has evolved from idea to law to a way of life. It's the foundation upon which we must build, and the time to act is now. To strengthen the law, the President proposes to:

- ❖ Strengthen efforts to close the achievement gap through high standards, accountability, and more options for parents.
- ❖ Give states flexibility to better measure individual student progress, target resources to students most in need, and improve assessments for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.
- ❖ Prepare high school students for success by promoting rigorous and advanced coursework and providing new resources for schools serving low-income students.
- ❖ Provide greater resources for teachers to further close the achievement gap through improved math and science instruction, intensive aid for struggling students, continuation of Reading First, and rewards for great progress in challenging environments.
- ❖ Offer additional tools to help local educators turn around chronically underperforming schools and empower parents with information and options.

HIGHLIGHTS OF *BUILDING ON RESULTS*:

Every Child Performing at or Above Grade Level by 2014

- ❖ **Accountability**—States will be held accountable for ensuring that all students can read and do math at grade level by 2014. They will disaggregate test scores, participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and report state and NAEP results to parents on the same report card.

Flexibility for Innovation and Improvement

- ❖ **Growth Models**—States will be able to use growth models to measure individual progress towards grade-level proficiency by 2014, as long as they have robust data systems and well-established assessments, and set annual goals based on proficiency, not on students' backgrounds.
- ❖ **Prioritized Support for Schools**—States will be able to focus more federal resources, interventions, and technical assistance on schools with the greatest needs, such as those identified for improvement or corrective action.
- ❖ **Flexibility**—States will be able to prioritize their school improvement activities based on the specific needs and successes of the school. To help states and districts tailor programs for their needs, 100 percent of specified federal funds may be moved among programs.
- ❖ **Students With Disabilities**—Allows states to tailor assessments to small groups of students with disabilities with modified or alternate achievement standards as long as they are of high technical quality and promote challenging instruction.
- ❖ **English Language Learners**—Schools will be recognized by state accountability systems for making significant progress in teaching limited English proficient (LEP) children critical English language skills.
- ❖ **Safe Schools**—In order to create safe and healthy learning environments, states will be given funds to provide districts with training, technical assistance, and information on best practices. In addition, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant program will be consolidated and focused.

Challenging Our Students and Preparing Them to Succeed

- ❖ **Graduation Rates**—All 50 Governors have agreed to use a more accurate graduation rate. By 2011-12, this school-level data must be disaggregated and reported in state accountability calculations.
- ❖ **Rigorous Coursework**—By 2010-11, states must develop course-level academic standards for English and mathematics that prepare high school students to succeed in college and the global workplace. By 2012-13, states will administer assessments aligned to these standards for two years of English and mathematics and publicly report the extent to which all students are on track to enter college or the workplace fully prepared.
- ❖ **Advanced Classes**—More teachers will be trained to lead Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes. In addition, Academic Competitiveness Grants will continue to provide financial incentives for students to take a rigorous course of study in high school and college.
- ❖ **High School Students**—Federal Title I funds will be substantially increased to serve low-income high school students. Funding for low-income elementary and middle schools will be protected.
- ❖ **Adjunct Teacher Corps**—Talented and qualified professionals from math, science, and technology fields will be encouraged to teach middle and high school courses, especially in low-income schools.

Helping Teachers Close the Achievement Gap

- ❖ **Teacher Incentive Fund**—The Fund will help states and districts reward teachers and principals who make progress in raising student achievement levels or closing achievement gaps, as well as educators who choose to serve in the neediest schools.
- ❖ **Math Achievement**—To improve math achievement, the President's *Math Now for Elementary School Students* and *Math Now for Middle School Students* programs will provide competitive grants to train teachers in proven instructional methods, including upcoming findings of the National Math Panel.
- ❖ **Science Achievement**—Beginning in 2008-09, disaggregated results from science assessments will factor into state accountability calculations, with grade-level proficiency expected for all students in science by 2019-20.
- ❖ **Reading Achievement**—The Striving Readers program, which provides intensive intervention to students in grades 6-12 who are struggling to reach grade level in reading / language arts, will be expanded to reach more students. We will continue to invest in Reading First, the largest, most successful early reading initiative ever undertaken in this country.
- ❖ **Rural School Districts**—New teachers in small, rural school districts will have additional time to meet Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. Larger rural districts will have the flexibility to use federal funds that are currently available to only the smallest districts. Finally, larger per-child Supplemental Educational Services (SES) amounts will be provided for qualified rural students.

Strengthening Public Schools and Empowering Parents

- ❖ **School Improvement Fund**—Funds will be targeted to ensure improvement in some of the nation's most challenging schools. School Improvement Grants will support implementation of the schools' improvement plans and will assist states' efforts to closely monitor and review those plans while providing technical assistance to turn around low-performing schools.
- ❖ **Promise Scholarships**—Public schools that go into restructuring status will be required to offer private school choice, intensive tutoring, or inter-district public school choice through Promise Scholarships to low-income students in grades 3-12. Federal funds will follow the child to his or her new school, to be supplemented by a federal scholarship of \$2,500.
- ❖ **Opportunity Scholarships**—This new program will support local efforts to expand public and private school choice options within a set geographic area. Modeled after the Washington, D.C. choice program that the federal government has funded since 2004, it would enable students to attend a private school through a locally designed scholarship program. Families could also seek additional tutoring for their children.
- ❖ **Staffing Freedom at the Most Troubled Schools**— Schools that are required to be restructured will be able to remove limitations on teacher transfers from their collective bargaining agreements, similar to contract revisions permitted under bankruptcy law, so that the school leadership is able to put the most effective staff in place.
- ❖ **Charter Schools**—The federal charter school program will support all viable charter applications that improve academic outcomes. In addition, local decisions to convert schools identified for restructuring into charter schools will be allowed, even if the total number of charter schools would then surpass a state's charter cap.
- ❖ **Supplemental Educational Services (SES)**—Tutoring and after-school instruction will be offered to all low-income students who attend a school in improvement status from the first year forward, one year earlier than before. In addition, districts will be asked to spend all relevant federal funds or risk their forfeiture, eliminating the disincentive to support SES and choice programs.