



# NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



## Building Partnerships To Help English Language Learners

July 27, 2006

*"As our nation grows more diverse, we depend on our schools to ensure that future generations have the knowledge and skills to succeed."*

– U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

The *No Child Left Behind Act* puts students first. Its purpose is to improve student achievement by setting a goal of full grade-level proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014. It also aims to close the achievement gap that for generations has robbed students of their opportunities for success.

The Department of Education takes a critical step toward meeting these goals, announcing a new initiative that will enable schools to more accurately measure the progress of Limited English Proficient [LEP] students. America's 5.4 million LEP students represent the fastest-growing student population, expected to make up one of every four students by 2025. Since success in the 21st century calls for all students to be fluent in English—as does *No Child Left Behind*—schools must be prepared to identify English language learners, measure what they know and teach them effectively.

The best tool for this effort is a valid, reliable and appropriate content-based assessment in every state. The U.S. Department of Education will bring together experts from around the country to help states address the challenges of developing high-quality assessments for LEP students. As part of this effort, the Department announces an LEP Partnership with states to improve accommodations and content assessments in reading and mathematics for LEP students.

### The Partnership will:

- Help states measure what LEP students know and what they have yet to learn in all subjects so instructional decisions can be based on valid and reliable data.
- Provide technical assistance and support to states to allow them to continue their ongoing development of valid and reliable assessments.
- Identify best practices in providing accommodations to LEP students that do not compromise accuracy or academic achievement.

### States Coming Together As Partners

All states are welcome to participate in the LEP Partnership. The Department is immediately inviting **approximately 20 states** to participate in intensive work on assessments. These states submitted evidence for the Department's 2005-06 peer review of state assessment systems, focused on tests tailored to LEP students. In many cases, the tests designed for LEP students have not yet met with full approval under NCLB. States with approved LEP assessments and accommodations will be invited as well so that partners can share with them their successes and challenges. This partnership will provide an avenue for the Department and the states to work as a team to improve accommodations and assessments with an eye toward **full approval for all states**.

Call 1(800) 872-5327 or visit [www.nclb.gov](http://www.nclb.gov) for more information on *No Child Left Behind*.

### Through the Partnership, states will:

- Receive recommendations for improving their assessments and accommodations and a commitment from the Department to help them qualify for approval;
- Have the opportunity to work with experts within and outside the Department to resolve outstanding issues identified through the peer review process;
- Participate in focused technical assistance; and
- Participate in forums on best practices regarding assessment and instruction of LEP students.

States will agree to a **Plan for Improvement**, negotiated with the Department. They also will agree to implement LEP content assessments and accommodations by the time of the 2006-07 administration of state assessments in reading and math.

### Kicking Off The Partnership

To kick off the partnership, the Department is inviting teams from each of the states that submitted evidence for peer review on LEP assessments to attend a meeting of partner states in Washington, D.C. on **August 28-29**. At the meeting, State Teams will be given the opportunity to:

- Hear from and interact with the nation's top researchers and practitioners on LEP assessment and instruction; and
- Meet with Department officials, technical assistance providers and assessment experts who will consult with individual states to develop state-specific plans and a timeline for improving LEP assessments.

On **October 28-29** the Department will sponsor a meeting in which all states are invited to participate in the LEP Partnership so that every state can benefit from the very latest in research and practice on assessment and instruction for LEP students.

### Improving Academic Achievement And Closing The Achievement Gap

The *No Child Left Behind Act* made closing the achievement gap an urgent national priority, including the gap between Hispanic and LEP students and their peers, which had grown wider during the 1990s. NCLB calls for:

- All students in grades 3-8 (and at least once in high school) to take annual assessments, beginning in the school year just ended (2005-06);
- Parents to be offered detailed, easy-to-read report cards on school and student performance; and
- Eligible families to be given real options, including free tutoring or transfer to another public school, if their child's school underperforms several years in a row.

Thanks to NCLB, all states now have accountability plans in place, as well as reading / language arts and math assessments for students in grades 3-8 and high school. Early data shows that NCLB is working. National reading scores for English language-learning fourth-graders increased by 20 points in the last five years, more than triple the average progress of their peers. According to the Nation's Report Card:

- Reading and math scores for Hispanic nine-year-olds, and math scores for Hispanic 13-year-olds, have reached all-time highs.
- Achievement gaps between white and Hispanic 9-year-olds in reading and math are at all-time lows.
- 4th- and 8th-graders in 7 of 10 urban school districts made larger gains in reading than national average.
- Overall, more reading progress was made by 9-year-olds in the past 5 years than in the previous 28 combined.

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