

FIXING No Child Left Behind



In 2005, the National Council of Churches Committee on Public Education and Literacy released a statement, *Ten Moral Concerns in the Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act*, that proclaimed, “As people of faith we do not view our children as products to be tested and managed but instead as unique human beings to be nurtured and educated. We call on our political leaders to invest in developing the capacity of all schools.”

Now as Congress debates the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, we affirm that the law should uphold high expectations for all children but honor every child’s accomplishments; shift the focus from punishing public schools to strengthening them; reduce high stakes testing; and fully fund the law.

We lift up ten changes in the No Child Left Behind Act, each directed to one of the original “Ten Moral Concerns.”

1. Set ambitious and realizable student achievement targets to set high expectations for all children.
2. While setting the highest standards, honor every child’s accomplishments. No child or school should be labeled a failure.
3. Stop stigmatizing demographic groups of children by naming them as the problem because of their aggregate test scores.
4. Manage and assess the education of special needs children through their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
5. Teach English Language Learners the English language and other academic subjects at the same time their native culture and language are honored.
6. Support teachers by ensuring adequate resources, enriching staff development, and developing strong school leadership.
7. Require a rich curriculum for all children that includes reading, math, the humanities, the sciences, the social studies and the arts.
8. Focus federal investment on improving public schools by reducing sanctions that privatize services. Any remaining federally funded, privatized services must be federally regulated.
9. Focus support services and federal funding, including all Title I funding, on improving the public schools serving our nation’s poorest children, many of them children of color in big cities.
10. Fully fund the mandates of this law and press states to address school funding inequity.

