

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*, (<http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/LeftBehind.pdf>) 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 in 2007 as Congress prepares to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, we ask our elected representatives to 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.

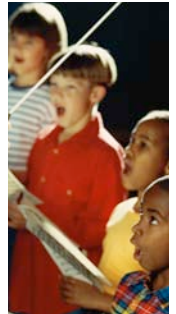
We lift up ten changes in the No Child Left Behind Act, each directed to one of the original "Ten Moral Concerns."

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.



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SAMPLE LETTER – Encourage Congress to Fix No Child Left Behind

As a citizen who believes my faith speaks to the ways our nation should bring justice and compassion into our civic life, I write today with deep concern about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which is currently scheduled for reauthorization in 2007.

While I affirm the stated goals of this law—to raise academic expectations for children who have been left behind and to close achievement gaps, I do not believe NCLB has been accomplishing these goals. Because the law operates through sanctions for school districts that struggle to raise test scores for every subgroup of children as measured on standardized tests, the school districts being most severely punished are those with very diverse populations, where there are many more opportunities to fail. NCLB's sanctions operate by directing funds away from educational programming in Title I schools, the very schools where investment in school programming is most urgently needed.

I ask you not to reauthorize NCLB until the law is rewritten to address these concerns:

- While the law should set ambitious expectations for all children, the reauthorized NCLB should measure and honor growth in each child's learning, not just average group scores.
- The reauthorized NCLB should reduce reliance on standardized testing and consider additional ways students can demonstrate learning.
- The reauthorized NCLB should shift the focus from punishing public schools and blaming teachers to strengthening school communities and supporting teachers.
- In the reauthorized NCLB, Congress should fully fund all the programs the law mandates.

While many of the final sanctions of NCLB currently prescribe takeover by charter schools, private management companies or state managers, I believe it is instead our obligation as citizens to improve the quality of public schools themselves through equitable funding and enhanced efforts to support teachers and principals.

Public schools are among our most important community institutions. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns and for your efforts to strengthen public education through reform of NCLB.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Addressing Correspondence

To a Senator...

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

To a Representative...

The Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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