

PTA Position Overview for the Upcoming ESEA-NCLB Reauthorization

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including the No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB), went a long way in providing accountability for schools to ensure every student is going to be proficient in math and reading. Soon, science will be included in the equation, and, hopefully, this will help create more jobs and opportunities for students in cutting-edge fields of study. Staying competitive in a global market seemed to be a major priority during the last reauthorization, and the PTA hopes this priority will continue when Congress looks to reauthorize the law. In addition, PTA continues to support the original intent of ESEA in helping children of low-income families receive a high-quality education equal to their economically-advantaged peers.

No Child Left Behind provided an excellent outline of accountability, and this reauthorization of the law will hopefully shore up some of the items that were overlooked or found to be flawed. Congress has an excellent opportunity to fine-tune this law to make it more effective in reaching the goal of 100% proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year. The PTA hopes to be a strong partner in moving this bill along, and we look forward to working with the many parties who will have a significant amount of influence over this legislation.

Many issues—some of which have already been mentioned—will most likely make their way into the bill. Those issues include growth models, transparency in state accountability, support for school improvement, increased attention to the arts, helping teachers remain highly qualified, and more funding and expanded supplemental services. All of these items are issues the PTA looks forward to discussing and hopes a reasonable outcome can be reached.

Because the PTA is the preeminent voice for parents and children across the country, our main focus will be improving the parental involvement policies in the next reauthorization. While the PTA applauds the previous version in recognizing the importance of parental involvement, it is disheartened to find that there is very little accountability for schools to include parents and to keep them involved throughout their child's education.

The PTA believes it is imperative that parents know exactly why their child's school is failing, what the state is doing about it, and what parents' options are—all in a very clear and understandable manner. The bill in its current form does not give explicit instructions to the state or local education agency (SEA or LEA) regarding how and when the parents should be involved. Moreover, there is no unified, consistent method for an LEA to keep their parents notified of how their child's school is doing and what actions the school is taking to become proficient under NCLB.

The PTA believes that, along with these other objectives a state shall implement, including parental involvement specifically within those objectives would go a long way in helping involve more parents in their child's education. In addition, expansion of Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) will also help improve parental involvement in Title I schools. A PIRC can be extremely useful in not only helping parents with their questions and concerns, but also in providing "technical assistance" to those schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two years. By supporting this provision, PIRCs can continue to be a vital tool for parents, teachers, and the LEA.

In conclusion, there seems to be very little accountability in the current law making sure the SEA and the LEA include parents in every decision that will affect their child's learning. While no state can force a parent to get involved, the more opportunities that exist, the better chance a parent will become active. By mandating what a state MUST do and by having some part of the state and federal Departments of Education ensuring all parent involvement sections are being followed, more parents will find opportunities to take a much larger role in their child's education.

PTA National Office of Programs and Public Policy

Contact: Craig Stevens, Public Policy Specialist

(202) 289-6790, ext. 215 ❖ cstevens@pta.org

(800) 307-4PTA (4782) ❖ www.pta.org