

The No Child Left Behind Act: Opportunities for the Latino Community

National Council of La Raza



NCLB: Testing and Accountability

Although there should be a role for assessments in school reform, tests must be used appropriately and not be viewed as the sole measure of student achievement or school system accountability.

NCLB: The Debate on Testing

Proponents of testing believe:

- Rigorous tests lead to more challenging curricula.
- Tests force schools to improve services to poor and minority children.
- Tests provide objective data for accountability.
- Poor results will lead to additional resources for poor children.

NCLB: The Debate on Testing

NCLR's concerns with testing include:

- Test validity and reliability
- High-stakes testing/high-stakes decisions
- Watered-down curricula
- Lack of resources for poor children
- Inclusion/exclusion of ELLs

The Compromise on Testing

General Testing Provisions

- Academic assessments in reading, math, science for grades 3-8
- Test quality

ELL Testing Provisions

- Native-language tests
- English-language tests after 3 years
- English-language acquisition tests

General Testing Provisions: Advocacy Opportunities

Academic assessments must:

- Be aligned with state academic standards
- Be valid and reliable for the purposes they are being used
- Be consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical standards

General Testing Provisions: Advocacy Opportunities

Academic assessments must:

- Be useful for diagnostic purposes (although not restricted to this use)
- Allow for test data to be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, English proficiency, gender, migrant, disability, and socioeconomic status

ELL Testing Provisions: Advocacy Opportunities

- ELL students must be tested, to the extent practicable, in the language and form most likely to yield accurate results
- ELLs who have attended U.S. schools for at least 3 consecutive years must be tested in English (case-by-case waivers for 2 years)
- ELL students must be tested each year for English-language acquisition

The Debate on Accountability

- Proponents of increased flexibility argued for states to have the freedom to use federal funds for purposes they identify as important for their states.
- Skeptics of this approach countered that scarce federal funds should be targeted to enhancing educational opportunities for low-income students and those students at the low end of the test-score gap.

The Compromise on Accountability

- States define their own measures of student academic progression which the states will be judged.
- States must help all students and students from different backgrounds make progress.
- States must report their results to the public.
- States must improve outcomes for ELLs.

Adequate Yearly Progress: Advocacy Opportunities

AYP must be defined by each state and must:

- Include separate measurable goals for all students, including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and LEP students.
- Be measured primarily by state academic assessments

Accountability Provisions

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Sanctions
- Report Cards
- ELL Provisions

Adequate Yearly Progress: Advocacy Opportunities

AYP must be defined by each state and must:

- Take into account graduation rates for secondary schools
- Take into account 1 additional indicator, in addition to performance on state assessments for elementary schools

Sanctions: Advocacy Opportunities

Key areas for advocates to watch:

- School improvement plans (targeting the area causing a school to fail to make AYP)
- Professional development
- Parental involvement
- Right-to-transfer
- Supplemental services
- Reconstitution

State Report Cards: Advocacy Opportunities

State report cards must include:

- Disaggregated student achievement data
- Academic objectives for each subgroup
- The percentage of students not tested
- Information on other indicators of progress
- High school graduation rates
- Professional qualifications of teachers in the state

School District Report Cards: Advocacy Opportunities

District report cards must include some of the state-level information and district- and school-level information, including:

- How many schools in the district have been identified for school improvement
- How students in the district fared on the state assessment and other AYP measures
- At the school level, whether a school has been identified for improvement

ELL Provisions: Advocacy Opportunities

States must set measurable objectives for ELLs' progress toward English-language proficiency and meeting AYP in content areas

Sanctions for failing to meet these objectives include:

- School improvement plans
- Reconstitution of staff
- Revamping of language program

CBO Opportunities in the NCLB

- Academic Services: After-School Services through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st Century) Program
- Parental Involvement: Parent Assistance Programs

CBO Opportunities in the NCLB: 21st Century Program

Why Community-Based Academic Services?

- The NCLB requires schools to help all students meet tougher academic benchmarks.
- Hispanic children can meet these benchmarks, but many will be exposed to rigorous curricula for the first time.

CBO Opportunities in the NCLB: 21st Century Program

Why Community-Based Academic Services?

- The schools Latinos attend do not always have the resources necessary to help students "catch up."
- CBO-run after-school programs can provide Latino students with more "time on task" so that they can meet the new benchmarks.

21st Century Program

21st Century program changes include:

- New definition of "community centers" allows CBOs to operate these centers.
- The new law also explicitly defines these centers as entities that help students meet academic standards.

21st Century Program

21st Century program changes include:

- Funds go to states, which provide funds to school districts, CBOs, or district-CBO partnerships in areas with Title I schools.
- The new law also allows these centers to provide family literacy services, which includes adult ESL services.

21st Century Program

21st Century program activities include:

- Academic enrichment services
- Arts and music education activities
- Tutoring services (including those provided by senior citizen volunteers) and mentoring programs

21st Century Program

21st Century program activities include:

- Programs that provide after-school activities for limited-English-proficient students that emphasize language skills and academic achievement
- Recreational activities
- Telecommunications and technology education programs

Parental Involvement Opportunities: Parent Assistance Programs

Why Community-Based Parent Services?

- The NCLB includes strict new “top-to-bottom” accountability provisions for schools.
- Unless there is “bottom-up” grassroots accountability, schools may not improve services for Latinos.
- Independent CBOs can help Latino parents understand the NCLB enough to hold schools accountable at the local level.

Parental Involvement Opportunities: Local Family Information Centers

- The LFI Cs would enable parents to help their children meet high standards and hold schools accountable.
- Through the LFI Cs, parents would receive meaningful communication about issues such as curriculum, standards, instruction, assessments, and school report cards.

Parental Involvement Opportunities: Local Family Information Centers

- The LFI Cs established in the NCLB would help parents of English language learners make informed decisions about their children's education, such as which program of study is best for helping them learn English and academic course work.