

## **The National Council of La Raza's Position on the No Child Left Behind Act and English Language Learners**

**T**he National Council of La Raza (NCLR) believes that English language learners (ELLs) must be included in the No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB) system of assessment and accountability. Prior to enactment of NCLB, ELLs received little attention from the education community, outside of Title VII directors and other bilingual education advocates. NCLB has raised the visibility of ELLs among policy-makers and educators.

NCLR believes that including ELLs in NCLB's assessment and accountability system can reverse negative trends and conditions that affect ELL student achievement and can ensure that ELLs leave high school prepared to compete for seats at the nation's top colleges. For example:

- While NCLR believes Latino and ELL students can meet higher academic standards, these students have not received sufficient opportunities to do so due to inequities in the distribution of resources and inadequate access to rigorous coursework.
- Insufficient teacher development, recruitment, and ongoing training funds are targeted to preparing teachers to work with ELLs.
- Debates on the education of ELLs have focused too much on the politics of language and have impeded the development and dissemination of strong curriculum and pedagogy.
- Few existing standardized tests accurately assess ELL student achievement.
- Parents of ELL students have not been adequately informed about or encouraged to participate effectively in the development of education reform policies or in basic school-level decision-making that affects their children.

Properly supported and implemented, NCLB encompasses high expectations for ELLs, the appropriate use of assessments to measure and improve their levels of achievement, increased accountability and resources for school systems serving ELLs, and a greater role for the community in ensuring that these components are in place. However, important questions of policy and practice remain that must be answered to fulfill the promise of NCLB for ELLs.

NCLR intends to work with policy-makers, researchers, administrators, teachers, and parents to provide the public schools with the tools to effectively implement NCLB. For NCLR, this begins with the proposition that ELLs will be included in NCLB and ends with providing the schools that serve them the funding that they need to meet the needs of ELLs, the assessments to accurately measure how well ELLs are being served, and resources to help Latino parents and community members work with their local schools more actively. We believe exempting ELLs from NCLB's assessment and accountability system would make it more difficult – if not impossible – to provide these important tools to ELLs, educators, and parents.