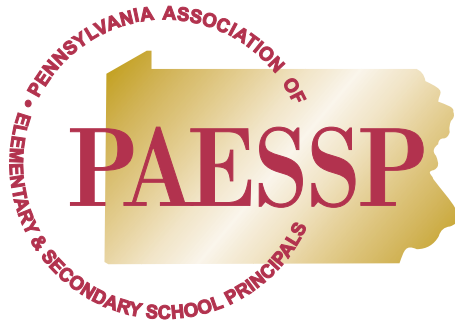


*No Child Left Behind  
Reauthorization*

**White Paper**



**Pennsylvania Association of Elementary  
and Secondary School Principals  
July 2007**

*Reauthorization of the  
No Child Left Behind Act*

**WHITE PAPER**

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## *Mission Statement*

*The mission of the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals is to:*

*Assist members in fulfilling their role as instructional leaders and effective managers who promote the best educational program for all students.*

*Give members an effective voice in the educational decision-making process at the local, state and federal levels. Make your voice heard.*

*Improve members' working conditions so that their rights are protected, their job descriptions are reasonable, the importance of their instructional leadership role is recognized and their salaries and fringe benefits are equitable.*

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## *Selection of the No Child Left Behind Task Force*

A call went out to the membership, in the form of a broadcast e-mail, requesting volunteers. Participants were selected to guarantee a representative sample from large, small, urban and rural districts. In addition, an equal number as far as practice from elementary, middle and secondary level were selected. Consideration was also given to include representation from various geographical areas of the state.

While many more members volunteered for the task force than were needed, it was gratifying to the PAESSP board of directors and staff that so many were interested in this important issue.

PAESSP plans to develop task forces for other important issues in the future.

## *No Child Left Behind Task Force Members*

Joseph Yarworth, Ph.D.	Facilitator, Albright College
Margaret M. Place	Facilitator, Albright College
Jill Beckley	Susquenita School District
Ann Bisignani	South Fayette Township School District
Dr. Dennis Booher	Spring-Ford Area School District
Dr. Robert M. Burt	Abington School District
Patricia Cernicky	Deer Lakes School District
Samuel Cessna	Sayre Area School District
Cathy Fanelli-Andrews	Hazleton Area School District
Leonard Ference	Mechanicsburg Area School District
Margaret (Peg) Foster	Bear Creek Community Charter School
Dr. Timothy Glasspool	Burrell School District
Ronald Grevera	Crestwood School District
Richard Gulas	Gettysburg Area School District
Terri Harpster	Bellwood-Antis School District
Dave Helinski	Canon-McMillan School District
Dr. Regina Holley	Pittsburgh School District
Dr. Marianne Kaemmer	Abington School District
Dr. Jayne Legore	Red Lion Area School District
Richard Maggs	Delaware Valley School District
Claudia Mahon	Bensalem Township School District
Laura Milarch	Jersey Shore Area School District
Mary Peterson	Franklin Area School District
Leonard Rich	Sharon City School District
Pamela Slatcoff	Commodore Perry School District
Richard Slonaker	Pittsburgh School District
Dr. James Snyder	Antietam School District
Kate Taylor	Morrisville School District
Le Roy Whitehead	West Chester Area School District
Dr. Robert Williams	Williamsport Area School District

### **PAESSP Staff Support**

Joseph Acri	Assistant Executive Director
Sheri Thompson	Director of Communications
Laurie MacAskill	Receptionist/Secretary
Mary Snyder	Office Manager

# *Reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act*

## **WHITE PAPER**

A task force of the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP) met April 26, 2007 in Harrisburg to discuss issues and concerns related to the forthcoming reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

During the day, four sessions were conducted:

- 1) a full group discussion of NCLB and its impact on education in the Commonwealth's schools;
- 2) a break-out session by school level - elementary, middle school/junior high school and high school;
- 3) a breakout session by geographic location - rural/small town, suburban and urban; and
- 4) a full group discussion of final issues and concerns related to NCLB which were generated by the day's activities.

The major areas of discussion were as follows:

### ***Focus on Growth***

The current testing model for NCLB compliance needs to be recast with a focus on student growth and change in achievement over time—not a continuation of a static model of achievement against pre-set norms with its emphasis on out-of-level testing.

The current system does *not* fit our concept of developmentally appropriate targeted teaching, curriculum and testing which attempts to recognize the level at which a child enters our schools and attempts to take that student as far as his or her abilities allow.

For all students, a growth-based model of assessment would allow schools to be measured in terms of progress made by

children during a year of instruction; the child's entry-level of achievement would be the benchmark against which to measure Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

For students included in the disaggregated groups, especially students classified as Special Education and English Language Learners (ELL), the growth-based model provides a true baseline against which to measure progress. Each Individualized Education Program (IEP) child would have an opportunity to show growth not against the benchmarks set for non-IEP students, but against his or her entry baseline; ELL students would then be provided adequate time to show improvement in acquisition of language skills and not be held to unrealistic expectations currently used for these students.

Subgroups within buildings should be based on a percent of the local school population and not a pre-set number as in Pennsylvania's "40;" therefore, each building would have the appropriate subgroups and students not added together at the district level when small buildings do not possess "40" students for each subgroup.

The growth-model would allow schools as well as districts to be measured on the number or percentage of students who showed positive "growth" toward proficiency rather than being measured against a pre-set standard of AYP set for all students.

### ***100% Proficiency***

Although good for political rhetoric, the concept of 100% proficiency by 2014 is not sound. What is "proficiency?" It is a concept defined 50 different ways by 50 different states. The national playing field is not level. States such as Pennsylvania are penalized for setting certain standards for schools when other states set standards which may be easily reached by schools and districts.



Unless there is a national curriculum and a national test to level the playing field among the states, a growth-based model within our state is the only possible way to resolve the “proficiency” issue. This is plausible by centering the focus on the child’s entry level, testing the child at a developmentally appropriate level and making a “proficiency” determination based on continuous academic achievement.

The Pennsylvania Legislature is called upon to recall its own testing history, in particular, the TELLS (Testing for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills) era. This mandated state test focused upon a limited number of objectives; however, Pennsylvania’s students never achieved 100% “proficiency” in a decade-long testing period during which the state provided funds targeted specifically to provide remediation for those students who did not reach the “cut” score on the annual state test. Given the greater scope of the current standards, the type of test used to measure proficiency and the disaggregated grouping of students, the predominant question that remains is: *How can 100% proficiency be expected by any year, much less 2014?*

### ***Loss of Curriculum***

With the focus on reading, writing, mathematics and science, the richness of the public school experience curriculum is being lost as schools “teach to the test” in order to avoid the steps into “School Improvement.” Time spent on art, music, social studies, physical education and interdisciplinary projects is being reduced to focus more teacher and student time in preparation for and administration of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

Testing time has expanded at the expense of instructional time: benchmark testing to predict PSSA scores and diagnostic testing to identify areas of weakness and practice testing for the PSSA reduce instructional time in the curriculum for all other subjects as well as school activities and clubs.

## ***Highly Qualified Teachers***

Prior to NCLB, states defined what certification was required to teach appropriate subjects at a particular grade level in public schools. Now NCLB drives states' certification decisions. NCLB has federalized the certification decision-making process as it defines what it means to be "highly qualified." Pennsylvania was forced to rescind a rule that allowed local superintendents to decide what teachers could teach certain subjects in the middle school grades based on the superintendent's evaluation of the teacher's credentials, transcript and experience. As the state continues to struggle with the issue, there is now a current proposal before the State Board of Education that drastically changes Chapter 49, which outlines not only how teachers will be prepared for teaching but also defines who may teach in a particular curricular area January 1, 2013. Upon review of the most recent history for special education certification, local educators asked if "*we have seen enough bridges to reach a definition of highly qualified status for experienced classroom teachers?*"

## ***Funding***

Many districts within Pennsylvania continue to lose NCLB dollars. Districts that have been labeled as School Improvement districts must earmark dollars for staff development and/or transportation in implementing a "choice" system—dollars which cannot be used to hire new or pay for existing NCLB teachers. Once again, this has resulted in less instruction for children. *How are schools to improve achievement when NCLB dollars continue to decline while levels for proficiency continue to rise?*

In addition to these major areas of concern, the following questions surfaced during the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting and are offered to give some insight into the complexity of NCLB and its unintended consequences:

- Why are there continued incompatibilities between NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?
- What is the role of the parent in improving the child's achievement before the school/district enters the latter stages of school improvement?
- Why is the NCLB model of education NOT in line with accepted educational concepts of developmentally appropriate instruction or curriculum-based assessment?
- How do we deal with both teacher and student test anxiety and burnout?
- How do we teach art, music, social studies, physical education and/or health education as they are cut from the school program so that core area teachers may teach to the PSSA test?
- Are the PSSA exams true "criterion-referenced" tests since so few items are available to test the students' "proficiency" on the state's standards?
- Why does the PSSA change annually? When does the moving target stop moving?
- Are current and pre-service teachers appropriately educated in what constitutes "best practices" for teaching?
- What is the reward for students who are "proficient?"
- If the student does not score "proficient," what is the incentive to "improve?"

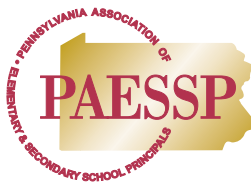
- How much conflict exists in comparing individual progress/improvement as opposed to full grade progress/improvement?
- Why are all school entities such as private, charter, cyber and/or home school students not held to the same state/federal standards?
- As we “teach to the test,” what message do we send to students, parents and taxpayers as to the quality of public school education in the Commonwealth?

### ***PAESSP’s Recommendations for NCLB Reauthorization***

- NCLB should move to a growth-based assessment model which allows for the recognition of student and school improvement based on the entry level for each student.
- NCLB should remove the requirement of 100% proficiency by 2014; this is an unrealistic expectation for public schools.
- NCLB should require that adequate time within the curriculum be devoted to art, music, social studies and physical education as well as other subjects required within the state’s curriculum standards (e.g. world languages at the high school level).
- NCLB should allow the states alone to determine “highly qualified” teacher guidelines.
- NCLB should be fully-funded by the federal government before the federal government imposes sanctions on school districts for failing to meet AYP, in particular, schools and/or subgroups of the school.

- NCLB should continue funding districts at current levels and hold districts “harmless” to prevent further loss of NCLB dollars in subsequent years of funding.
- NCLB should provide additional funding for districts moving into School Improvement to absorb all costs associated with the School Improvement Process, e.g. transportation for students of families electing “choice,” staff development costs, etc. to guarantee that districts would not have fewer NCLB dollars to spend on the education of children remaining in the building/district of assignment.

**PAESSP stands ready to enter the dialogue on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. PAESSP supports the concept of school accountability and will continue to serve the citizens of Pennsylvania in order to assure and provide a quality education for all students of the Commonwealth.**



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