



*A Union of Professionals*

## **What You Need to Know about the Every Child Achieves Act**

Passed by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, the Every Child Achieves Act represents a vast improvement over current law. It will end No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers, and the aspects of these policies that have left a destructive, divisive climate that has affected our schools, our students, our educators and our communities.

The Every Child Achieves Act moves away from the test-and-punish system that has taken the joy out of teaching and learning. It will help end the overuse of high-stakes tests, punitive sanctions for schools, including school closings, and federal mandates for teacher evaluation.

It moves us toward collaborative strategies that maintain the law's original intent to address poverty and educational inequality with targeted funding for children in poverty.

AFT members have been living under the constraints of NCLB and its accompanying regulations for more than 13 years, and they are desperate to move public education in the right direction. By improving on current law, the Every Child Achieves Act provides a foundation that will enable local educators, communities and parents to do what is best for their students.

### **Why the Bill Is Better than Current Law/Race to the Top/Waivers:**

#### **It restores the original intent of the groundbreaking 1965 ESEA law.**

- When ESEA was passed in 1965 as a key component of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," the intent was to address poverty and educational inequality. This bill ensures that resources continue to be directed to where they are most needed.
- Maintains the formula that targets funding for poor children, and eliminates portability that would have diverted vital resources away from the poorest districts to more-affluent districts.
- Expands access to early childhood education.

#### **It takes a crucial first step toward smarter assessments and accountability.**

- Eliminates the rigid "adequate yearly progress" system and its mandatory sanctions—like replacing staff and closing schools.

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- Maintains the current law's annual testing requirements, but allows assessments to be delivered in the form of portfolios, projects or extended performance tests. Also allows for the development of a performance assessment system.
- Requires states to audit their testing policies to decrease unnecessary tests, and requires parents to be given full information about testing requirements, including the ability to opt their children out.
- Allows English language learners up to three years to take language arts assessments in their native language before taking such tests in English.
- Allows accountability systems to include multiple non-test measures.
- Gives states authority to determine interventions for struggling schools.

### **It takes the federal government out of teacher evaluations.**

- The federal government will not be the human resources department for every school district nationwide.
- Prohibits the federal government from mandating or prescribing teacher evaluations.
- Retains paraprofessional qualification standards. These requirements ensure that paraprofessionals receive appropriate training, professional development and supports so they can best work with students and teachers.
- Expands collective bargaining protections to include both school improvement initiatives and teacher quality provisions.

**There are plenty more steps before the real changes outlined in this bill can be realized. The bill has to pass the full Senate. The House has to finish its bill (which, in its current state, is much worse than the Senate bill in terms of ensuring schools get needed resources). Then, both bills have to be "reconciled" so that they match. Throughout this process, we will continue to fight for improvements for students and educators.**