



Citizens for Effective Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS AND CITIZENS CALL ON BUSH,
CONGRESS, 2004 CANDIDATES TO PUSH AMENDMENTS TO
*NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT***

**Open Letter to President Bush, Congress Says Not More Money, But Time
Spent Preparing Teachers, Principals is Key to Education Reform**

**Ad Running in *Roll Call*, Leading Congressional and Political Newspaper, to
Mobilize Congress to Implement Changes**

Washington, DC – A new group of education experts say that achieving school reform will take more than an infusion of money – it will require a fundamental shift in how teacher educators, teachers, principals, parents and students spend their time. In an open letter sent today to President Bush, members of Congress, the 2004 Candidates, and the American Public more than 100 leading national educators, public figures, and citizens under the auspices of Citizens for Effective Schools, Inc. (CES), call for an Amendment to the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The educators outline a specific program of measures needed to raise the competency level of teachers so that students who are bored in class will be inspired to learn. The letter, which is signed and endorsed by the NY Urban League, makes clear that much of CES' plan does not require additional funding; it can be accomplished by redirecting existing resources and priorities.

“The No Child Left Behind Act offers superficial solutions that end up making the education crisis worse,” said Gary M. Ratner, Executive Director of Citizens for Effective Schools and a nationally recognized authority on school reform law and policy. “Even if you were to freeze funding right now, we could still vastly improve schools by simply restructuring how teachers, principals, teacher educations, parents, and students use their time.”

CES is appealing to Congress today with a full-page ad in *Roll Call* to mobilize lawmakers to embrace and define the central changes needed to enable virtually all students to become academically competent.

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CES' specific recommendations include:

1. Make improving teacher instruction the central focus of principals and superintendents' time spent on management.
2. Organize teacher collaboration to address common challenges in the classroom.
3. Encourage peer-to-peer teacher education by having teachers monitor the classrooms of successful teachers to hone their skills, and providing additional opportunities for collaborative learning.
4. Reduce time spent teaching theory and methods and instead provide opportunity for more hands-on clinical training.
5. Teach teachers how to help parents become more actively engaged in their children's learning.

“This is not rocket science. You increase student learning by having better prepared teachers,” said Barbara K. Radner, Director of the Center for Urban Education at DePaul University. “With vouchers, charter schools, and class size, we're still not getting to the fundamental problem of effectively allocating the time we spend preparing our teachers and administrators to educate our children.”

Numerous studies have shown that family involvement and encouragement are critical to student learning. The letter argues that parents can use more guidance and assistance from teachers and school administrators to make it happen.

“It's time we move ‘parental involvement’ beyond a catch phrase and turn it into an action plan,” said Clesont Mitchell, President of the Parent Partnership Network in New York City. “While all parents want their children to be successful in school, many lack the time, skills and knowledge to assist their children. Administrators need to be trained in how to design programs to engage parents.”

About Citizens for Effective Schools

Founded in 1998 by public interest lawyer, Gary M. Ratner, Citizens for Effective Schools (www.citizenseffectiveschools.org), is a non-partisan, non-profit organization of citizens committed to attaining the national education goal that all public school students shall be academically competent.

Before founding CES, Mr. Ratner, a long-time public interest lawyer and school reform advocate, wrote the seminal law review article that made the case for establishing urban public schools' legal duty to effectively educate all students in basic skills. As a senior executive in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, he was awarded a Presidential Rank Award and was named one of Boston's prized lawyers for his impact on city and state government by the *Boston Globe*.

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