

Debating over more money to implement “No Child Left Behind” misses the point.

AN OPEN LETTER TO
PRESIDENT BUSH AND
CONGRESS FROM MORE THAN
100 DISTINGUISHED
EDUCATORS AND CITIZENS

The No Child Left Behind Act has a laudable goal—Information Age academic competence for all students. But, as written, it is inadequate to accomplish that goal and needs to be amended.

The current Act fails to remedy the underlying problem: the need to dramatically improve the level and quality of Industrial Age teaching and family support for the millions of students the system never previously expected to perform well academically.

Instead, the Act’s reliance on sanctions, such as transfers and tutoring for schools failing to make “adequate yearly progress” in test scores, is superficial and ineffectual overall. While sanctions do impose pressure on all stakeholders, they have not and will not significantly improve student learning. Moreover, this approach is already generating destructive results. For example, many

states have lowered or postponed their “proficiency” goals, and schools have “pushed out” struggling high school students to avoid federal sanctions.

More than an infusion of money, what is needed is a fundamental shift in how educators, teachers, principals, superintendents, parents and students

spend their time. Time must be refocused on improving: teachers’ instructional knowledge and skills; administrators’ capacity to lead school and community transformations; families’ capacity to provide motivation and assistance for high level student learning; and students’ concentration on academic learning at school and at home.

Under the auspices of Citizens for Effective Schools, Inc., a non-partisan, non-profit organization, our open letter identifies key changes in federal policy that would remedy these underlying problems. To see these solutions, read the letter at www.citizenseffectiveschools.org.

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