

MODIFICATION OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT (NCLB)

Modification of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) relies on peculiar politics that were built on an historic bipartisan coalition that first passed the law. The fraying public support for the law's implementation threatens this bipartisan coalition and undermines its delicate support. It is important to sort the discussion of the reauthorization of NCLB into two related parts: when and what. The "when" addresses the actual date of a reauthorization and considers the politics of reauthorization. The "what" addresses the development of legislative language leading up to the final bill. In both parts, Congress has a lot of work remaining, but the substantive work, of "what" is apparently well under way. Democratic leadership now has to convince its freshman to stay the course on accountability. Republican leadership now has to convince its base to support a large federal role in education. Holding the bipartisan coalition will be difficult. The devil is often in the detail.

We think reauthorization's critical issues are:

State accountability systems: The emerging consensus is to allow states more flexibility to design an accountability system that is fair and accurate. "Growth models" are popular, but the technical criteria of a growth or progress model are often very open-ended.

Assessments: The emerging consensus is for multiple measures of accountability keyed to the development of longitudinal assessment systems. The devil, of course, is in the criteria of allowable multiple assessments.

Consequences: The emerging consensus is for more targeted interventions for the neediest schools and districts and for providing more corrective intervention options. There is also growing momentum for expanding the role and quality of Socioeconomic Status (SES) services. **Uniform academic content standards or national standards:** The emerging consensus is in support of national standards and more cross-state comparison. That consensus, however, is laden with political battles that echo the national standards movement of the late '80s.

Students with disabilities: The emerging consensus is for NCLB to provide more deference to the assessment determinations of Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. There is an important relationship between the deference and the continued development of fair and accurate growth models, which of course throws it into the varying definitions of growth models.

English language learners: The emerging consensus is for more flexibility for the testing of new immigrant students and for the time a student may be included in the English Language Learners (ELL) subgroup for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) purposes. The development of growth models will, no doubt, play a vital role in the policy development.

Teacher quality: There is emerging consensus for the reauthorized law to grant more common sense exceptions to the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) credentialing requirements and to design incentives that would attract teachers into high-need subjects and districts. There is no consensus over the inclusion of a teacher effectiveness measure keyed to student performance.