

Education NEWS & NOTES

Education Reform: Measuring Success

by Kurt Landgraf

(NAPSA)—The passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* was a watershed event in the national education reform movement. The President and members of Congress pulled together to make this happen without regard to party affiliation, recognizing the public's demand that educating all our children is the nation's top priority.

However, far-reaching reform will not come easily. We must now focus on three critical factors that will determine success: a substantial commitment of resources, sufficient time and a great and sustained effort.

Shrinking budgets are forcing tough decisions by elected officials at the state and local levels, and by everyday Americans sitting around their kitchen tables. Yet the desire for meaningful education reform persists.

A survey conducted in mid-February found that Americans overwhelmingly back requiring states to annually test students to determine if standards are being met. A majority of those surveyed also support directing a larger share of federal education money to schools that do not perform well on such tests to help them improve.

While considerable federal funds have been made available for these new tests, significant resources will have to come from the state level as well. Even as most state legislatures struggle to split up a smaller pool of tax revenue, we must ensure that they invest in building quality assessments to support good teaching and learning.

It is now time for all of us—parents, students, teachers and policymakers—to follow through on our commitment to advancing quality and equity in education.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* calls for high standards, strong accountability and annual standards-based assessments. Federal mandates now require testing



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some 22 million students every year. This is an ambitious undertaking, and it has to be done right. But developing a fair, accurate test, even in just one subject for one grade, is a lengthy, multi-step process; we must invest the time and money it takes to get it right the first time.

The new testing regimen will provide important information that the American people and policymakers can use to accomplish significant, lasting reform. But testing alone is not enough; it's just one step in education reform. We must respond to test results—particularly poor results—intelligently, thoughtfully and responsibly in order to help teachers and students improve classroom achievement.

The challenge before us is to muster the political, moral and professional will to improve public education. We must provide the resources to help teachers teach and help students learn, and we must monitor progress via well-designed assessments. Only then will we be able to reach our goal: an education system marked by excellence in student performance, elimination of the achievement gap and, yes, tangible evidence that no child is left behind.

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