

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| CA K-16 Initiatives | CA Data and Presentations | CA State and Local Policy | CA District and School Services | CA Community Center | CA Press Room | |
| CA Press Room | GO | EdTrust West Home | NCLB in California | College & Work Prep/A-G for All | Conferences and Meetings | Reports and Publications |



-About EdTrust — West

- Mission and History
- Contact Us

-Career Opportunities

-Internships

- Related Links to CA
- Información y recursos en español

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 13, 2003

Contact: Orlando De Bruce, (510) 465-6444

Implementing NCLB in California: One Step Forward, Three Steps Back?

Confusion about the New Law Threatens Advances for Students.

(Oakland, CA) – **T**he California State Board of Education rightly decided last week to hold steadfast to our state's high standards for the lower grades, but a chorus of misinformation and false claims threatens to undo this forward movement and risks pushing California's students to the back of the class yet again.

We applaud the Board for its courage last week in rejecting its own advisory committee's recommendation which would have watered down expectations for our children by lowering our standards for proficiency in grades 3-8. It is precisely this kind of Board leadership and courage called for by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). More important, this leadership will ensure the sea change necessary to provide all of our children with an education that adequately prepares them for success in life.

In the midst of this courage, however, there has been a chorus of misinformation and false claims about both the letter and spirit of the new law that threatens to undo the state's initial steps in the right direction.

There have been false claims that high standards could jeopardize federal funding. In reality, there is absolutely no linkage between student achievement scores and federal financial assistance. Schools receiving Title I funds must merely report on their progress and, where achievement falls short of state expectations, take steps to improve. Indeed, Title I funding exists for the purpose of adequately educating California's low-income students. If our schools are not doing that, then change is in order.

Ambition replaced by defeat.

There have been false claims that the goal of getting all kids to proficient on state standards is some new and unrealistic directive by the federal government. When in reality, it's been California's exact goal since we first administered the California Standards Exams in 1999. Indeed, ever since state leaders adopted state standards five

years ago, they've waxed eloquent about how these standards were for *all* Californians.

But now that the goal is attached to real consequences, and now that the federal government says that states need to actually get their students to the standards that they set or institute increasingly rigorous reforms in schools that do not meet them, our officials start backpedaling.

Suddenly the goal is overly ambitious, impossible and unachievable. All this does is provide cover for our continued lethargy in achieving it.

It's time to make the rhetoric reality. But instead, we keep hearing CDE data stating that 98% of our schools will fail to meet the goal in the NCLB time frame of a dozen years. Why is the status quo the projection of where we will be in 11 years? Aren't we going to do *anything* to improve?

The message to schools and districts – and especially to students – is devastating. If our leadership doesn't believe our students can reach high standards - over a period of time in which today's kindergartners will become voters, college students, and members of the state workforce - why should *they*?

Too many believe that California is simply too diverse to expect much of its kids. This sentiment is more than just collective apathy. It's bigotry. Period.

By saying that diversity is a liability, we suggest that low achievement is somehow inscribed on the DNA of poor, black and brown kids.

By saying that our kids are too diverse to achieve, we neglect our culpability for providing the least to the children who need the most. The truth is that we provide less of everything we know makes a difference in student achievement – qualified teachers, rigorous curriculum and adequate resources – to our neediest kids.

By saying these things, we settle. We settle, in the end, for a K-12 system that gets about the worst results for everybody – black, white, Latino, Asian, poor and rich – of any state in the nation.

We need to resist the urge to retreat. We must redouble our commitment to necessarily ambitious goals for our schools and our students. Then we must focus all the energy and resources we can muster on providing teachers and administrators with the help they need to get there.

In both moral and practical terms, far too much is at stake if we get this wrong. In one major urban district in California alone, for example, more than 35,000 high school students read at or below the third grade level. The consequences to our community and state are obvious, and grave.

We are in a moment of enormous opportunity and enormous danger. It is time to set aside the old bargains, the old politeness, and do what it takes to make the needed changes before it's too late for California's children and for public education.

###

The Education Trust – West
520 3rd Street, Suite 204
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 465-6444
fax (510) 465-0859

[\[back to top\]](#)

[\[home\]](#) [\[about us\]](#) [\[press room\]](#) [\[contact us\]](#) [\[related links\]](#) [\[site map\]](#)

[\[terms of usage\]](#)

©2009 The Education Trust. All rights reserved.