

ECS has identified five overarching recommendations – and a number of suggested actions – for federal officials and state policymakers to consider should they choose to modify or adjust provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The following list was developed through a process that included extensive analysis of state policy activity, comprehensive review of state government reports and academic literature, and conversations with and comments from our constituents.

ECS believes the items on this list represent a general consensus concerning NCLB. Individual constituents may hold different positions or favor other courses of action. ECS not only recognizes these differences, but also welcomes and encourages further discussion and debate among its constituents.

## Recommendations

In ECS' view, the following five issues merit immediate attention and consideration on the part of federal officials and state policymakers:

### 1. Embrace NCLB as a Civil Rights Issue

At its core, NCLB is a civil rights issue and requires commitment. The 50th anniversary of *Brown vs. Board of Education* is a stark reminder that school integration has not been accompanied by equality of student academic achievement across color and income lines. The clearly set goals of NCLB offer an unprecedented opportunity to raise expectations and significantly narrow achievement gaps that persist in U.S. schools.

### 2. Ensure Performance Growth of All Students, Not Just Low-Performing Students

The promise of NCLB to raise the achievement of students who have been struggling should not obscure the need to raise the achievement of all students, regardless of current academic standing. NCLB provides a unique opportunity to ensure improvement for all students.

### 3. Reassess Adequate Yearly Progress

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) must be thoroughly analyzed to ensure it measures school and district effects on student progress. The reassessment should take into consideration that AYP currently does not follow the progress of cohorts of students over time – an approach that provides a more accurate picture of student performance and how schools and teachers are contributing to the gains.

### 4. Strengthen Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

States must ensure their High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) plans meet both the letter and the spirit of the law. In many instances, states have set high standards for veteran teachers, but they are accompanied by less rigorous provisions that provide a “trap door” through which teachers can escape the intent of the law.

### 5. Build State and Local Capacity

A growing number of schools are being labeled as “in need of improvement” at a time when state departments of education and local districts are experiencing budget and staff reductions. Nevertheless, states and districts must continue to build capacity for assisting schools in need of improvement. This may require reallocation of resources and new forms of collaboration.

**Note:** See Appendix A for Recommended Actions