

# Education groups agree: NCLB must be reformed

Judy Wadsworth, Assistant to Executive Director, Monroe County School Boards Association

Source for much of the information below is from an article written by Wadsworth for the January 2007 edition of MCSBA's *News Scope*.



Judy Wadsworth

Genesee Valley  
PTA

Monroe County  
Federation  
of Teachers

NYS United  
Teachers

Monroe County  
Association  
of School  
Business Officials

Monroe County  
Council of  
School  
Superintendents

Monroe County  
School Boards  
Association



There is general agreement in the public education community that, while the goals promoted by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation are admirable if not doable, the implementation of the law is hurting children and mislabeling public schools as failing. NCLB was created in 2001 to insure that all children achieve academic success. Its method for achieving this goal has been to identify and penalize low-performing schools rather than to provide such schools with the resources to make the changes needed to comply with the law.

The result is an increasing number of school districts that cannot by any means available to them meet the arbitrary "adequate yearly progress" deadlines, so that by 2009, it's been predicted that about 50% of our nation's public schools will be labeled as failing by the federal government. And by 2014, when all children are supposed to be learning everything with a 100% success rate, 100% of our public schools will be falsely deemed as failing. (For more on the detrimental effects of NCLB, see the essay on the following page.)

Many groups of educational leaders are seeking reforms to NCLB that would remove some of the penalties and replace them with supports such as adequate financial support and freedom to design appropriate educational programs for students needing them.

The table below presents condensed statements from position statements regarding the reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind law that were developed by MCSBA and several national educational leadership groups. As the table demonstrates, many reforms to NLCB are required if we are to ensure that No Child is Left Behind.

Assessment	Adequate Yearly Progress	Sanctions	Local control
<p><b>MCSBA</b> ★ Students should be enrolled in a district for at least two years before it is held accountable for their performance on mandated tests. ★ Scores on English language assessments by students too new to master the language should not be the reason a school fails to make AYP.</p> <p><b>AASA</b> Permit multiple forms of assessments, make state accountability systems more accurate and more fair to students needing alternative assessments.</p> <p><b>NEA</b> Accountability should reward success and support educators.</p> <p><b>NSBA</b> Current accountability does not accurately assess student, school, or school district performance.</p>	<p><b>MCSBA</b> ★ The current Adequate Yearly Progress formula must be changed from high-stakes exams that compare student groups to a value-added model that measures growth for each student. ★ Schools should not be penalized for students who graduate one year before or after their cohort.</p> <p><b>AASA</b> Title I should focus on describing the progress of low income students.</p> <p><b>ASCD</b> The USED should allow the use of multiple assessments including growth models.</p> <p><b>AFT</b> The AYP formula is inaccurate and arbitrary. Its testing of students with disabilities and English language learners is neither valid nor reliable.</p>	<p><b>MCSBA</b> ★ Labeling a school as failing because a small subgroup fails a test is misleading and unfair. ★ The U.S.E.D. should give promised support to enable schools to meet standards. The 5-year shortfall totals \$31.45 billion; in 2006, our region was shorted by \$230 million.</p> <p><b>AFT</b> Approved interventions are not research-based but are punitive. Funneling Title I resources to school choice and supplemental services diverts resources to unproven programs.</p> <p><b>ASCD</b> Allow districts flexibility to determine approaches for improved performance.</p> <p><b>NEA</b> Congress must shift from a flawed, under-funded, one-size-fits-all approach.</p>	<p><b>MCSBA</b> ★ Local and state control should be returned. In NYS, districts are required to pass their annual school budgets; they should be able to decide how their funds are used to maximize achievement. ★ The scope of NCLB should not be extended until current issues with the law are resolved.</p> <p><b>AASA</b> The federal/state/local partnership in education needs revitalization.</p> <p><b>NSBA</b> ESEA (NCLB) undermines state and school district authority, and shifts public dollars to the private sector.</p>



Howard Maffucci

## OPINION: 'No Child Left Behind' a fraud

by Howard Maffucci, Superintendent, East Rochester Union Free School District

The No Child Left Behind law is a fraud. That may be strong language from a school superintendent, but the law is a definite political, social and economic con.

First, the law's basic premise—that public schools are performing poorly and need to be improved, or else something really bad is going to happen to America—is political nonsense. Right-wing zealots have used the phrase “failing public schools” so often that some think it is a fact, when it isn't.

American public education is the backbone of our democracy. It's the great equalizer. Gerald Bracey, an independent, highly regarded education researcher, notes in an article for the Stanford University Alumni Association that since the end of World War II, the proportion of high school graduates among those 25 or older has grown from 34 percent to 74 percent, and the percentage of college graduates has increased from 6 percent to 19 percent.

Bracey points out that according to a 2006 report published by a Columbia University research center, public schools outperform private schools when controlling for poverty. And, a

2004 U.S. Department of Education report found that despite all the rhetoric about charter schools, they're “less likely to meet state performance standards than tradition public schools.”

NCLB is deceptive in social and economic ways as well. The law helps to hide two of America's dirty little secrets:

The first is the incredible amount of poverty in America. Timothy Smeeding, professor of economics and public policy at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, has found that among the world's nine richest industrialized nations, America has the second highest poverty rate in general, and the highest rate of poverty among children. And, as we know, America's poverty is concentrated in rural and urban areas.

Probably the most troublesome and scheming aspect of NCLB is, as Bracy states, that it depends on punishment for schools that don't meet its standards.

And, its standards are rigged to make good schools look bad. NCLB arbitrarily requires that all schools show “adequate yearly progress” by subgroups, 37 or so

of which are based on race/ethnicity, special education, gender, etc. If a school misses the target in just one of these subgroups, it could be deemed “failing”, possibly triggering sanctions.

In districts with high poverty rates, the everyday social and economic needs of students are more about survival than passing a test.

So, it's American dirty little secrets, not public schools, that are failing.

Actually, we've been down this road before. In 1983, when the report *A Nation at Risk* was published, public schools were blamed for every social, economic and military ill that faced our nation. Thirty years later, America is the world's only leading military power and our economy is second to none. That report was a fraud then, as No Child Left Behind is a fraud now.

NCLB is a fraud. Either fix NCLB or abolish it.

This essay was published in the December 21, 2006 edition of the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* ([www.democratandchronicle.com](http://www.democratandchronicle.com)) and appears here with permission. If you'd like to read the responses generated by his column, go to [Democrat and Chronicle Forums](http://forums.democratandchronicle.com/viewforum.php?f=16&sid=792d2c684c1320908eb845231da2ed82) or go directly to <http://forums.democratandchronicle.com/viewforum.php?f=16&sid=792d2c684c1320908eb845231da2ed82>

Monroe County Education Coalition

.....Representing 60,000 Members  
.....A force in our community

# MCEC

Monroe County Education Coalition

1250 Scottsville Road, Suite 5A

Rochester, NY 14624

585.328.1972

[www.mcsba.org/mcec](http://www.mcsba.org/mcec)