



HOOVER INSTITUTION
ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

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Congressman George Miller
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0507

Dear Chairman Miller:

I am writing about the current re-authorization discussions for *No Child Left Behind*. I can state unequivocally that your leadership has been extremely important in ensuring that we are nationally better off today by a wide margin because of strong school accountability.

At the same time, I am very worried by some of the current discussion of using alternative measures of student performance within the federal accountability system. The key element of NCLB has been to focus everybody's attention on the need to bring all students up to minimal proficiency levels. This simple idea has, by my observation, led to dramatic changes in our schools. It simply is no longer possible or acceptable to write off a group of students as uneducable. Instead, schools are focused on approaches to support and develop a nation where everybody participates fully.

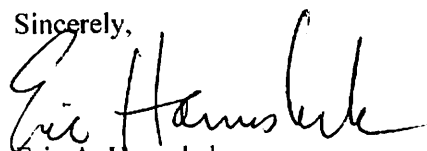
As you may know, I personally believe that a number of adjustments to *NCLB* will lead to even better outcomes for our students. I believe that introduction of growth modeling – in states where it is feasible – is an important and useful change. I also believe that a new focus on teacher quality is key to overall improvements.

That said, I believe that backing off from consistent, clear, and measurable standards – as we have now – would be a serious mistake. Schools of course do more than just developing reading, math, and science skills – and it might be important to try for a consensus on standards, accountability, and expectations in these other content areas. Such consensus does not, however, currently exist, and the current proposals *NCLB* would weaken the emphasis on the basic skills while providing little offsetting gain. Further, the basic skills are just what enable most other learning to proceed.

I urge you to hold the line on clear and measurable federal standards for state objectives. The states and the districts can, and in my opinion should, recognize that schools have a broader job. They should on their own introduce mechanisms to recognize and promote these. But, it should not come at the expense of weakening the national commitment to a high level of basic skills as demonstrated by performance in math, reading, and science.

Additionally, with appropriate safeguards for measurement issues, including achievement related items such as graduation rates makes sense. Yet, as we get away from a focus on basic cognitive skills, we risk damaging the long run interests of our students and our country.

Sincerely,



Eric A. Hanushek