

No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization

AAUW believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. In 2002, AAUW joined in the bipartisan enthusiasm when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law—which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965—was first passed, hoping the law would provide a remedy for ailing schools and low student performance. There are some good elements to NCLB, such as increased teacher and school accountability, higher standards of achievement for student progress, supplemental service funds for low-income students, and public school choice for students who attend underperforming schools. Unfortunately, there is a large difference between implementation of the law and realization of program goals. While NCLB set lofty aspirations, the law’s unfunded mandates have left many states and school districts in dire straits; in fact, NCLB has been underfunded to the tune of over \$70 billion since its inception.¹ AAUW believes it is possible—and necessary—to maintain a commitment to high standards and greater accountability in our nation’s public schools. As Congress contemplates reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, AAUW will pursue the following improvements in addition to more general efforts—including increased funding—to strengthen the law’s goals, improve its implementation, and make clear progress in closing the achievement gap.

- **Strengthening STEM Education:** AAUW supports promoting and strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, especially for girls and other underrepresented populations. NCLB should include science as a required area of assessment used to calculate Adequate Yearly Progress goals. By measuring student performance and disaggregating data by gender, race, and socioeconomic status, we can obtain valuable information about student aptitude in science and better identify opportunities to improve girls’ exposure to and achievement in science.
- **Requiring High Schools Sports Data Collection:** Require high schools to report basic data on the number of female and male students in their athletic programs and the expenditures made for their sports teams. Access to such data will enhance compliance with Title IX and aid in the continued expansion of athletic opportunities for girls at the high school level. This is important because while girls comprise 49 percent of the high school population,² they receive only 41 percent of all athletic participation opportunities, amounting to 1.3 million fewer participation opportunities than male high school athletes.³
- **Supporting Reauthorization and Implementation of the Women’s Educational Equity Act:** This law was first enacted in 1974 to promote educational equity for women and girls, through the provision of funds to help education agencies and institutions meet the requirements of Title IX. AAUW strongly supports the full funding of this act, and the appropriate application of these funds to meet the goals of the program.
- **Creating Environments Free of Bullying and Harassment:** The implementation of stronger policies to deter bullying and harassment will help to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. Almost a decade ago, AAUW’s own research revealed that 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys reported having experienced sexual harassment, and over one in four students stated that harassment happens “often.”⁴ More recent research shows that bullying affects nearly one in three American school children in grades six through ten.⁵ Legislation aimed at reducing this problem should include the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights’ definition of harassment and identify the classes that are protected, including actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion.
- **Decreasing the Use of High-stakes Testing and Using Multiple Measures:** AAUW believes in holding schools accountable for demonstrating that they are meeting educational goals. However, it is both problematic and discriminatory to rely on tests as the sole indicator of student progress. AAUW is supportive of provisions encouraging the use of multiple measures of student achievement—including flexible and innovative growth models and tracking the same group of students over time to determine whether schools meet annual benchmarks.
- **Expanding Afterschool Programs through 21st Century Learning Centers:** After-school programs should be expanded to enrich the school experience and improve educational outcomes. One program vehicle might be the 21st Century Community Learning Centers; this could also be used to expand STEM programs—currently allowed as an option but given no real incentive.

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¹ National Education Association. (November 8, 2007). *Funding Gap: No Child Left Behind*. Retrieved December 18, 2008, from <http://www.nea.org/lac/funding/images/fundinggap.pdf>.

² U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. (2005). School Enrollment, Table 1. Retrieved January 19, 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/school/cps2005/tab01-01.xls>.

³ National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). (September 18, 2006). *Participation in High School Sports Increases Again; Confirms NFHS Commitment to Stronger Leadership*. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from, http://www.nfhs.org/web/2006/09/participation_in_high_school_sports_increases_again_confirms_nf.aspx.

⁴ AAUW Educational Foundation. *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School*, p. 4 2001.

⁵ Members of the National Safe Schools Partnership (June 2007). *Bridging the Gap in Federal Law: Promoting Safe School and Improved Student Achievement by Preventing Bullying and Harassment in our Schools*. Retrieved on December 19, 2008, from http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/912-1.pdf.