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COMMISSION ON
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
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Frequently Asked Questions
About the Commission's New Hearings and Recommendation Development
Process

August 2009

Why did the Commission decide to start this process again now?

Much has changed since we released our report in early 2007. There have been major strides toward adopting our recommendations. We called then for national standards, and there is now a state-led effort to adopt common standards. States have made great progress in developing data systems that inform reform efforts. Funding and implementation of the economic stimulus law is driving reform conversations in key areas addressed by the Commission, including increasing teacher effectiveness, turning around low-performing schools, and improving data, standards, and assessments. In addition, we have more than two and a half years' additional field experience with NCLB.

Given these shifts in the landscape, it is important to take a fresh look at the law and refine and build on our recommendations to reflect developments in research, practice, and policy.

Why have you recruited new commissioners? Specifically, why *these* commissioners?

As we move into this next phase of the Commission's work, we wanted to ensure that we had leadership and guidance from people who are implementing or conducting research on the law, and showing the way on aggressive reforms aligned to the Commission's vision. Our Commissioners include current teachers, principals, superintendents, research and policy experts, business representatives, and other leaders from around the country. Our original group of commissioners was instrumental in creating the vision for the Commission and helping to lead the nation in a new direction on education policy. We will continue to call on their insight and expertise during our newest phase of work.

What is the role of the commissioners? What are they responsible for?

Commissioners are responsible for gathering input from the public and the field through our hearings and other forums and making recommendations based on what they learn and their own professional expertise for how to further improve NCLB. Public hearings will be held in cities across the country, where commissioners will hear testimony from experts and stakeholders impacted by the law. There will be opportunities for public comment throughout the process, including through the Commission's website and Facebook page.

Where will the hearings be held and why?

Our first hearing will be held in Washington, DC. Other hearing locations have yet to be finalized, but we are looking at areas across the country where there is significant reform activity and education improvement and innovation taking place. Specific dates and locations will be announced soon.

When will your recommendations be complete?

Our recommendations will be released early next year.

Have your priorities for NCLB changed with the new administration?

We are pleased that the Administration's K-12 education priorities thus far align closely with the Commission's recommendations, including increasing teacher effectiveness, turning around low-performing schools, and improving data, standards, and assessments. We will continue to work within our original vision and framework, while listening for new ideas and areas for improvement.

The Commission plans to issue several new recommendations. Does that mean your previous recommendations are obsolete?

No. Our new recommendations will build on those issued in *Beyond NCLB*. While the core principles and direction of our established work will not change, we will be taking a fresh look at the law in order to update and augment our recommendations to reflect progress made toward their adoption, activity generated by the stimulus funding, lessons learned from additional years of NCLB implementation, and other changes to the landscape.

What impact does the Commission expect to have on reauthorization?

Beyond NCLB was a landmark report that was early to endorse several reforms that are now more widely supported, including common standards, improved data systems, and teacher effectiveness determinations significantly based on student growth. We hope that the new law will reflect these and our forthcoming recommendations and be a catalyst for expanding serious reforms and achieving better results for all children.

What if reauthorization doesn't happen this year—what is the cost of waiting?

We hope Congress and the Administration respond to the urgency for education reform and make the reauthorization of NCLB their first priority in 2010. We believe they can do much work throughout this year to set the stage for swift action in the new year. We have no choice but to act. Too many children continue to drop out of school or graduate from high school ill-prepared for college and work. In addition to tragic consequences and missed opportunities for individual students, there are also consequences for our collective standard of living: research has shown that the persistence of achievement gaps imposes the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession on our country.

The economic stimulus law (ARRA) has already placed new education reform requirements on states. Is there still a need to reauthorize NCLB?

Yes. While the education reform elements of the stimulus law are an important step in the right direction, the stimulus does not re-direct states and districts on how to use their current NCLB funds. We remain concerned that NCLB as currently configured could hold back some of the stimulus' significant reforms, which reflect the Commission's key 2007 recommendations. NCLB must be reauthorized in order to better align its programs and policies with accelerated reform priorities identified in the stimulus, such as: more sophisticated use of data, an emphasis on teacher effectiveness rather than qualifications, improved standards and tests, and more aggressive interventions to address chronically struggling schools.

Why are you still called the Commission on No Child Left Behind?

Our name remains the Commission on No Child Left Behind because, until the law is reauthorized, NCLB is the statutory name of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We will focus on making sure that the content of the law will help all children succeed. We are not concerned about the name of the law after it is reauthorized.