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**Leading Experts Warn New Federal Testing & Accountability Mandates  
Could Hurt Push to Raise Achievement for All Students**

***Former Title I Director, Expert on States' Accountability Systems  
Offer Suggestions to Congress in Papers Released by Center on Education Policy***

WASHINGTON — Aug. 1, 2001 — Congressional negotiators meeting again today to craft an education package from House and Senate bills need to give states greater flexibility in determining the progress made by students and in intervening against chronically failing schools, two national experts argue in new papers released by the Center on Education Policy (CEP).

Margaret Goertz, co-director of the Consortium on Policy Research in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and Mary Jean LeTendre, director of the federal Title I program for 15 years, each contends that well-intentioned attempts by both houses of Congress to revise requirements for growth in student achievement – Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP – have led to provisions that are not technically or politically feasible.

Their papers – commissioned by CEP and written independently – offer the conference committee working on the education legislation a number of improvements. The full texts of the Goertz and LeTendre papers are available at CEP's Web site, [www.ctredpol.org](http://www.ctredpol.org).

“The Congress is on its way to imposing on schools a federal system of accountability that will not work and will lead to the states lowering their academic standards,” said Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy. “The states must be required to close the achievement gap between White students and African-American and Hispanic students, but a uniform, rigid federal system imposed on the states will not achieve that goal.”

States should be allowed to build on their work since 1994 – the last time the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized, Jennings said. At that time, Congress added requirements for single accountability systems in each state based on high standards and tests with which to measure them.

## **More Resources Likely to be Needed**

The papers point to the current limits to states' capacity to produce the data needed to measure whether the achievement gap between White and minority students is closing and to assist schools with chronic poor performance, Jennings noted. "While the bills push for greater accountability, the budget does not provide enough help for students and teachers to meet high standards," he said.

"Students and teachers will not be able to raise academic achievement unless teachers are re-trained and students who do not score well on tests are given additional instructional time to do better," said Jennings. This means, he emphasized, that President Bush and the Congress must commit to fully funding over five years the Title I program, the federal government's main K-12 aid program. Currently, only a third of the disadvantaged students eligible for Title I services receive them. "More insistent demands for results will not work unless students and teachers receive help in reaching those higher goals," said Jennings.

The two experts pointed to benefits which could flow from these changes--single state accountability systems instead of the dual systems now in many states, and the focus on closing the achievement gap, but their concerns far out weighed those benefits. Their chief worry was that a "one size fits all" system imposed on the states would not work and would lead to states lowering their academic standards. They also pointed to the lack of state-level fiscal and human capacity to help all the schools that would be labeled as in need of improvement. Other problems were that, due to the inherent limitations of tests, they could not be relied on to enforce the tight timelines for identifying schools in need of improvement or the rigid targets for student progress, and that the same set of remedies was being imposed on schools failing some students and those failing the overwhelming majority of students.

Goertz and LeTendre made similar recommendations for the legislation, including requiring states to have the goal of closing the achievement gap, a time table for that effort, clear academic achievement targets for subgroups of students (e.g. African-Americans, poor students, disabled students), different treatment of schools failing some and those failing nearly all their students, a two-year period to determine whether a school needed improvement, and an immediate effort to aid those schools needing improvement that have already been identified.

The Center on Education Policy is the national independent advocate for public education and more effective public schools. Based in Washington and founded in 1995, the Center's work is funded largely through philanthropic contributions. For the full text of the papers, please contact the Center on Education Policy at 202-822-8065 or visit the Center's Web site at [www.ctredpol.org](http://www.ctredpol.org).

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