

Holland+Knight

**Federal and National Trends in
Education Reform:**

A Discussion of the Road Ahead

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Introduction

- ❑ **Trends in National Education Reform**
- ❑ **Trends in Federal Education Reform**
- ❑ **No Child Left Behind Reauthorization and Issues**
- ❑ **Other Federal Activities**
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Trends in National Education Reform

We are at a key transition point in education reform, based on internal and external pressures. We need significant change.

- ❑ **The Role of Education.** As we enter the 21st century, education is ever more the single most important investment in the future success of individuals and our nation.
- ❑ **The Movement of Standards-Based Reform.** Over the last 20 years, our nation has moved toward a standards-based education system. Many of the front-end foundations are now in place (e.g., standards, assessments, accountability, data systems), but we have not fully invested in the back-end use of those systems to dramatically improve educational opportunity and delivery. And we have yet to see dramatic change in student achievement at scale.
- ❑ **The Rise of Global Expectations:** Even as we strive to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps, the bar is rising – from “proficiency” to college and work readiness, 21st century knowledge and skills, and international competitiveness.

Trends in Federal Education Reform

Federal law in education is at a key transition point as well. The federal role in education increased dramatically with NCLB (leading to an increased state role as well). But now we need a new federal, state, and local partnership.

- ❑ **ESEA of 1965** was part of the War on Poverty, and focused on providing increased funds for disadvantaged students.
- ❑ Following *A Nation at Risk*, Goals 2000 and **IASA of 1994** shifted the federal role to promoting standards-based reform, with a focus on accountability.
- ❑ **NCLB of 2001** dramatically expanded the federal role in standards-based reform – setting a floor for state and local policies on standards, assessments, accountability, teacher quality, etc. (for all public schools and districts). But this floor has often operated as a ceiling, and there has been less focus on strengthening education resources and systems.

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

Where does the federal government go from here?

- ❑ There are **three possibilities** for NCLB reauthorization:
 - NCLB redux
 - Go back or get out
 - A new federal-state partnership (encouraging judgment, innovation and continuous improvement over time)

- ❑ One key question is: Can, should, and will the federal government focus significantly on the back-end of standards-based reform and improving **opportunity to learn**?
 - Significantly increased investment is unlikely
 - Dramatic intervention in teaching and learning poses real federalism challenges (and should)
 - Again, partnership may be key – with federal law as leverage point

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

What is likely in 2008, and beyond?

- ❑ President Bush, Senator Kennedy, and Congressman Miller have continuously said they want reauthorization, **but...**
 - President Bush is almost gone
 - Senator Kennedy has some republican opposition and two democratic presidential candidates on the committee, as well as interest groups on all sides
 - Congressman Miller has some opposition from republicans and freshmen democrats on the committee, as well as interest groups on all sides
 - This stuff is hard!

- ❑ Both the Senate and House education committees are expected to present legislation for mark-up in **February or March 2008**. Even if not reauthorized, these drafts will be key markers for future action, but there will be a new president...

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

What are the key issues being debated, and what could be on the table?

- ❑ NCLB reauthorization debates focus on many key national trends in education reform, but within the current NCLB framework:
 - Movement to higher **standards** (college and work ready, knowledge and skills, international benchmarking)
 - Improvements in **data systems and assessments** (including individual student identifier data systems, adaptive assessments, etc.)
 - Improvements in **accountability** (e.g., growth models, multiple measures)
 - Improvements in **supports and interventions** (e.g., differentiated consequences, school improvement grants)
 - Movement from “highly qualified” to “**highly effective**” teachers (including returns on student achievement)
- ❑ Current debates still often focus on finding *THE* right answer (balancing political pressures), but can federal law shift to provide incentives for state and local innovation? **Is there any way to flip federalism?**

Other Federal Activities

Beyond NCLB reauthorization, there are other key federal activities pending.

- ❑ **Congressional reauthorizations.** No Child Left Behind Act, Higher Education Act, Education Sciences Research Act
- ❑ **Congressional appropriations.** FY09 budget, American Competitiveness Act
- ❑ **USED implementation.** USED has authority to promote NCLB innovation regardless of reauthorization (e.g., graduation rates, growth models). Other key implementation issues include Teacher Incentive Fund, data systems, higher education, etc.
- ❑ **Presidential campaigns.** Between the economy and the War in Iraq (not to mention health care, immigration, etc.), education has not emerged as a leading issue. But key themes include early learning (D), reforming NCLB (more D than R), pay-for-performance (more R than D, but both), school choice and vouchers (R).

Questions for Discussion

The National Teachers of the Year have a bully pulpit.

- ❑ **What is the state of education, and where are we in education reform?**
- ❑ **What is the proper federal role? And what is it not? What impact (good and bad) is NCLB having on teaching and learning?**
- ❑ **What can and should really be done to dramatically improve teacher quality and effectiveness? What would matter most to attract and retain our best teachers to our lowest performing schools? What would those teachers need to succeed?**

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