



- **Update the Nation's Report Card (NAEP)** to ensure it sets a national benchmark that is internationally competitive and aligned with the demands of the 21st century by incorporating measures of student preparedness into existing 12th grade national assessments and improving our ability to reliably monitor trends in science achievement in the 4th, 8th and 12th grades.
- **Examine gaps in student performance** on State-level assessments and NAEP assessments and assist states that want to analyze how their standards and assessments compare to benchmarks reflected in NAEP.
- **Establish P-16 Preparedness Councils** to link student knowledge and skills with the expectations of colleges, employers, and the Armed Forces. The Councils would engage members of the P-16 education community, the business and military communities, and other stakeholders to ensure that standards align with what is needed for success in college and the workforce. Councils would be charged with ensuring state standards and assessments meet international benchmarks to improve instruction and student achievement and prepare students to contribute in the global economy.
- **Encourage collaboration among states** in raising the bar for student achievement by providing grants to state consortia that develop common standards and assessments that are highly rigorous, internationally competitive and aligned with the demands of higher education, the 21st century workforce, and the Armed Forces.

**Senator Edward M. Kennedy**  
**Floor Speech on Introduction of the SUCCESS Act (As Prepared for Delivery)**  
**January 4, 2007**

Few things are more indispensable to the United States than good schools. Today more than ever, a quality education is the gateway to achieving the American dream and the best guarantee of equal opportunity for all our people, good citizenship, and an economy capable of mastering modern global challenges.

In 1965, as part of the War on Poverty, President Johnson signed into law the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act to strengthen America by allocating substantial federal resources to public schools for the first time. In the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, we reauthorized this landmark legislation, and for the first time made a commitment that every child – black or white, Latino or Asian, native-born or an English language learner, disabled or non-disabled -- would be part of an accountability plan that holds schools responsible for the progress of all students. It required every state to implement content and performance standards specifying what children should know and be able to do, and urged states to create high-quality assessments so that students' progress toward meeting those standards could be accurately measured. It expanded support for early reading and literacy skills and offered extra tutoring to students in struggling schools. It sought to improve the quality of instruction by requiring all schools to provide a highly-qualified teacher for every child.

We know these reforms can work. But good results are not possible without adequate investments. The No Child Left Behind Act recognized that to move forward with these dramatic changes, schools would need a continued infusion of federal resources, because the cost was obviously too great for states and local governments to bear alone.

Today, because of budget cuts and poor implementation, we still have much to do to ensure that no child is left behind. President Bush has short-changed the promise made in the law by nearly \$56 billion, leaving millions of children without the resources needed to reduce class sizes, improve teaching, and set higher standards for our schools. Now, more than ever, it's important to deliver the resources our schools deserve. Thousands of schools are on watchlists in their states and need federal support and extra assistance to bridge the learning gaps of their students.

The No Child Left Behind Act is again scheduled for reauthorization this year, and we must work to ensure that its promise is fulfilled. Aside from additional funding, one of our priorities must be to ensure that the standards and assessments used to measure progress are fair and reliable.

Accountability is only as good as the tests to measure progress, and many states use tests that need substantial improvement. Some use exams that are not aligned to the standards that students must meet. Others have manufactured artificially high test score gains by lowering standards and adjusting test scores in order to avoid unfavorable consequences under the law's accountability framework.

We need to shift our understanding of the Act away from the idea that it labels and penalizes schools, and toward a more productive framework that helps schools and states reach higher, not lower. We should use the well-regarded National Assessment of Educational Progress – the “nation’s report card” – as a benchmark for the rigor of state exams. States should also align their elementary and secondary school standards with their standards for college entrance and success, creating seamless systems that guide students from the beginning of their education to the achievement of a college degree.

The SUCCESS Act I am introducing today would assist states in these efforts. As the name suggests, it would provide federal support for States Using Collaboration and Cooperation to Enhance Standards for Students. It would help ensure that public schools challenge all students to learn to high standards and provide needed help to schools with the greatest needs.

The legislation updates the nation’s report card – the National Assessment of Educational Progress – to ensure that it sets a national benchmark which is internationally competitive and is aligned with the demands of the 21st century global economy. It expands our ability to monitor science achievement. It requires the NAEP to measure student preparedness to enter college, the 21st century workforce, or the Armed Services. It also requires the Secretary of Education to examine the gaps in student performance on state-level assessments and NAEP assessments, and to assist states that wish to analyze how their standards and assessments compare to the benchmark.

The SUCCESS Act provides critical resources to states to create “P-16” Preparedness Councils that will engage members of the early childhood, K-12 and higher education communities, along with the business and military communities, and other stakeholders to align the standards with what is needed for success in college and the workforce. The councils would be charged with ensuring that state standards and assessments meet international benchmarks to improve instruction and student achievement and prepare students to contribute in the global economy. It also provides funds to encourage collaboration among states in raising the bar for student achievement by providing grants to states working together to establish common standards and assessments that are rigorous, internationally competitive, and aligned with postsecondary demands.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on this and other important proposals as we move toward the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. In the coming weeks, our Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will hold a series of hearings and roundtable discussions to hear from experts and those dealing with the challenges of the current law on a daily basis. Our goal is to work on a bipartisan basis with all our colleagues in the Senate and in the House and with the Administration to develop a strong bipartisan bill that builds on the positive aspects of the law, addresses the concerns about its implementation, and encourages reforms that we know will work to

help students succeed.

Teachers deserve the resources they need to help students achieve at higher levels. In many schools, the most valuable resource that teachers require is time. Yet the U.S. ranks 11th among industrialized nations in the number of days children attend school. Innovative approaches are needed to extend the school day and year in high-need schools. We should recruit Americorps volunteers to coordinate academically oriented extended-day programs for students and assist teachers during the school day.

We must also ensure that students in high poverty schools have access to good teachers. We should create incentives to attract the best teachers to the neediest schools, including increased salaries for teachers and principals with strong track records of success who work in hard-to-staff schools, and by creating “career advancement systems” in which highly effective teachers serve as instructional leaders for new or less successful teachers. To help teachers improve their teaching, we should invest more in training them to use the best data to improve instruction.

We should also help parents by replicating Boston’s successful initiative to place parent-family outreach coordinators in every high-poverty school, and offer grants to school districts to support community programs that address children’s social, emotional and other non-academic needs.

We must invest in these and other reforms to give schools the resources they need to close the achievement gap and ensure that all students can stay on track to graduate and succeed.

Experience shows that each year yields greater success when policymakers and educators commit in the long term to higher standards, better teacher training, stronger accountability, and extra help for students in need. The initial implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act has been flawed, but we can’t abandon its vision of an America in which every child is important and deserves to be educated and enjoy the full benefits of our society.

That vision is as enduring as America itself. As John Adams wrote in the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, the education of the people is “necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberty.” More than two hundred years later, we need to recapture that spirit, and make “No Child Left Behind” a reality, not merely a slogan.

###