



For Immediate Release

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ENZI: NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND RENEWAL MUST GIVE SCHOOLS FLEXIBILITY TO MEET UNIQUE NEEDS, BUILD KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS LOCAL STUDENTS NEED IN GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said he is encouraged by the bipartisan commitment to reauthorize the “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB), which he called “vital to ensure that American students and workers have the knowledge and skills to be successful in the global economy of the 21st century,” and pledged to ensure that no rural school is left behind as the landmark law is renewed as part of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act.

Enzi’s remarks came as The HELP Committee held a Roundtable titled “NCLB Reauthorization: Strategies that Promote School Improvement,” to examine how school improvement strategies implemented since NCLB’s enactment five years ago have been effective at the state, district, and local school levels. He stressed the importance of examining the impact of NCLB implementation on rural school districts, saying, “No Child Left Behind should include the flexibility and focus to encourage improvement and achievement in all school districts.

“In five years under NCLB, we have seen major improvements in student achievement all across America, but there is still work to be done to ensure that the Department of Education, the states and local communities are able to work together and continue to focus on the needs of students,” Enzi said “There is no silver bullet when it comes to school improvement.. We must ensure that every school, whether a rural school, an inner city school, or a suburban school, is able to implement NCLB in manner that meets its unique needs.”

Enzi said he will work in a bipartisan way to renew and improve NCLB to give schools and districts the flexibility and focus they need to implement the provisions of NCLB most effectively.

“The next step is to determine how we can help schools that are faltering and how we can best give them the tools and resources they need to implement strategies to

improve student performance,” he said. “Every school and school district in this country is unique and has different areas in need of improvement.”

“I am pleased that we were able to hold this Round Table to learn the strategies that states and local communities have utilized within the framework of NCLB to best fulfill their mission and enhance student achievement,” Enzi added. “Renewal of No Child Left Behind and other important elementary and secondary school programs represents a test the 110th Congress must pass, if we are to meet the growing challenge of global competition.”

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Senator Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Roundtable: “NCLB Reauthorization: Strategies that
Promote School Improvement”
February 8, 2007

Thank you Senator Kennedy for starting our review of the No Child Left Behind Act with this roundtable. It is a pleasure to be here today to learn more about school improvement strategies that have worked on the state, district and school level. There are many good things happening in our schools today, but that is not what we focus on when we talk about our schools. Just as our schools vary in size and student population, effective approaches of school improvement vary widely. What we have not done effectively is “getting the word out” about what we know are the most effective improvement interventions, in other words, what works. That is what this roundtable is about..

School districts in Wyoming are using a variety of strategies for schools designated as in need of improvement under the Adequate Yearly Progress structure. In Cheyenne, the largest school district in Wyoming, Superintendent Dan Stephan has put in place professional learning communities that focus on three goals: first, increased achievement on math and problem solving skills; second, utilization of writing skills across the curriculum; and, third, increasing the graduation rate. Superintendent Stephan is changing the culture of the school district from one of a teaching district to a learning district and firmly believes that failure is not an option.

Superintendent Kevin Mitchell, of Big Horn County School District #1, believes that an increased focus on reading instruction and effective leadership are two key indicators of increasing student academic achievement as part of school improvement. His experience has show that an effective leader who can not only pinpoint the problem, but also execute a strategy to fix the problem, is the key to school success.

Both of these district leaders also said that they need help. They need to know what strategies other districts with similar characteristics are using to improve student

achievement outcomes. They need technical assistance to implement school improvement plans and to analyze data to determine where interventions are most needed. Finally, they need assistance to provide training to staff on interventions that have successfully improved student achievement levels.

Each of you has coped with similar needs. I am very pleased that we were able to hold this Roundtable today to learn from each of you the strategies that have been effective and the obstacles you have faced in implementing those strategies. NCLB has given us a strong framework and good data to learn where schools are faltering. The next step is to learn how we can help schools that are faltering improve and increase student academic achievement.

The topic of school improvement is not a new one. In 1979, Ron Edmonds, an expert on high-performing, high poverty schools identified what he called “the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools.” He found six key characteristics: strong administrative leadership; high expectations for all students; an orderly and quiet atmosphere; clear focus on academics; readiness to divert energy and resources to academics; and the frequent monitoring of student progress. A similar study was published in 2000 which found very similar traits. The only big addition was the use of master teachers.

We know what makes a good school. What we don’t know is how to make a low-performing school into a high-performing school. Many of you here today have done just that. The key is how do we duplicate the successes you have had in other schools across the country?

The federal government, through No Child Left Behind, can assist with a number of the issues and problems each of you have encountered. First, we need to learn more about what is working. Schools are working very hard to increase the academic achievement levels of their students, and that effort needs to be recognized and successes need to be disseminated. I believe it is important that everyone – school leaders, teachers, and parents – have access to school improvement activities and interventions that have been proven to be successful in both schools and school districts. Superintendents, principals and teachers should be able to adapt these interventions to their school environment so that they work for their students. Second, I believe the Congress should support school improvement activities as they are authorized under NCLB. Schools and districts now have the data and information they need to determine where they need help, but don’t often have the resources needed to implement strategies to achieve improved student performance.

Finally, I believe we can work within the current NCLB structure to improve teacher training and professional development and that focuses on strategies that increase student academic achievement. Teachers are a necessary and vital factor in the school improvement process.

That said, there is no silver bullet when it comes to school improvement. Every school and school district in this country is unique and has different areas in need of improvement. We must focus on strategies that couple effective interventions, such as aligning curriculum and professional development with state standards.

I look forward to working with all of you as work progresses on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind.

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