



A Broader, **BOLDER** Approach to Education

For Immediate Release

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Expert Task Force Charges School Reform Alone Will Fail in Closing Achievement Gap

Diverse Bipartisan Group Launches Campaign for 'Broader, Bolder' Policies to Improve Education, Bridge Achievement Gaps

Washington, DC, June 10, 2008 – A new task force of national policy experts with diverse religious and political affiliations, in public policy fields including education, social welfare, health, housing, and civil rights today launched a campaign calling for a “*Broader, Bolder Approach to Education*” to break a decades-long cycle of reform efforts that promised much and have achieved far too little.

Co-chaired by Helen Ladd, a Duke University professor of public policy studies, Pedro Noguera, a sociologist at New York University and an expert on educational policy, and Tom Payzant, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a former Boston schools superintendent and U.S. assistant secretary of education, the Task Force’s framework points to the many flaws in the approach of the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law and charges that the nation’s education and youth development policy has erred by relying on school improvement alone to raise achievement levels of disadvantaged children.

According to the Task Force, multitudes of children are growing up in circumstances that hinder their educational achievement. Statistics suggest the rhetoric of leaving no child behind has trumped reality. As the Task Force’s ads in today’s *New York Times* and *Washington Post* note, “Some schools have demonstrated unusual effectiveness. But even they cannot, *by themselves*, close the entire gap between students from different backgrounds in a substantial, consistent and sustainable manner on the full range of academic and non-academic measures by which we judge student success.”

The timing of the release of a “*Broader, Bolder Approach*” comes after months and months of gridlock in Washington tied to the reauthorization of NCLB. The statement signed by more than 60 leaders provides a fresh way of thinking about education and youth development policy for governors, state legislators, and a President and Congress who are now running for election in November.

The signatories to “*Bolder Approach*” read like a Who’s Who of diverse national leaders from all political and policy spectrums, who have come to agree that the policy embodied in NCLB has failed. The list includes former officials of the current administration, including Susan B. Neuman, who served as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education when NCLB was first enacted; John Dilulio, who was President Bush’s first director of faith-based programs; and Dr. Richard Carmona, U.S. Surgeon General until last year. It also includes education, health, and human services officials from the Clinton Administration, such as Marshall Smith, who was Undersecretary of Education; Peter Edelman, who was Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Dr. Joycelyn Elders, U.S. Surgeon General. Diane Ravitch, who served as Assistant Secretary of Education in the administration of President George H.W. Bush, also signed on to “*Bolder Approach*.”

Although some supporters of NCLB call it a "civil rights law," the signatories include civil rights advocates such as Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP; Hugh Price, former President of the National Urban League; John Jackson, President of the Schott Foundation and former Chief Policy Officer at the NAACP; Julianne Malveaux, President of the Bennett College for Women; the noted sociologist William Julius Wilson; Ernie Cortes, director of the Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation; and Karen Lashman, Vice-President for Policy of the Children's Defense Fund.

The list includes well-known conservatives, such as Nobel economist James Heckman and Glenn Loury, a Brown University economist. Also included are progressives such as Linda Darling-Hammond, an education advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama; Debbie Meier, founder of the Central Park East schools, and authors John Goodlad and Ted Sizer.

Other notable signatories include Robert Schwartz, the founding president of Achieve, the education reform organization of the nation's governors and leading corporate executives; Milton Goldberg, the executive director of the commission that produced the report, *A Nation At Risk* in 1983; Richard Kazis, Vice-President of Jobs for the Future, the high school reform organization; and Bella Rosenberg, formerly the assistant to the late Albert Shanker of the AFT. Although many of the signers are known for their concern about the education of urban youth, the Task Force also includes Rachel Tompkins, one of the nation's leading experts in the problems of rural education.

The statement's diverse group of religious leaders include the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches; Richard Mouw, president of the Fuller Theological Seminary, the nation's leading evangelical seminary in Pasadena, California; and Joseph O'Keefe, S.J., Dean of the School of Education at Boston College.

Prominent academic scholars of child development and the economics of education, including James Comer, David Grissmer, Christopher Jencks, Sharon Lynn Kagan, and Jane Waldfogel, are also members of the group, as are urban schools superintendents Rudy Crew (Miami-Dade), Arne Duncan (Chicago), and Beverly Hall (Atlanta).

"After six years, it has become clear that No Child Left Behind has not succeeded in improving the quality of education available to America's neediest children. This Task Force is united around the need for a more comprehensive approach to federal policy that specifically responds to the needs of children and schools in low-income areas," said Co-Chair Pedro Noguera. "Our '*Bold Approach*' identifies critical community support systems that can effectively work to narrow the disheartening achievement gap that exists in America."

"Schools can't do it alone," said Co-Chair Helen Ladd. "Accountability is a pillar of our education system, but schools need the support of the community – both before children arrive at school and during their school years – for all children to achieve high standards."

"*A Bold Approach*' calls for a broader partnership and a sturdier bridge across schools, public health, and social services," said Co-Chair Tom Payzant. "When we ensure our children are provided their most basic needs, then we can work toward the highest of standards applied to all of our students."

"*A Broader, Bolder Approach*" applies equally to federal, state and local policy and acknowledges the centrality of formal schooling, but also focuses on the importance of high quality early childhood and preschool programs, after-school and summer programs, and programs that develop parents' capacity to support their children's education. Specifically, "*A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education*" calls for:

1. **Continued school improvement efforts.** To close achievement gaps, we need to reduce class sizes in early grades for disadvantaged children; attract high-quality teachers in hard-to-staff schools; improve teacher and school leadership training; make college preparatory curriculum accessible to all; and pay special attention to recent immigrants.

2. **Developmentally appropriate and high-quality early childhood, pre-school and kindergarten care and education.** These programs must not only help low-income children academically, but provide support in developing appropriate social, economic and behavioral skills.
3. **Routine pediatric, dental, hearing and vision care for all infants, toddlers and schoolchildren.** In particular, full-service school clinics can fill the health gaps created by the absence of primary care physicians in low-income areas, and by poor parents' inability to miss work for children's routine health services.
4. **Improving the quality of students' out-of-school time.** Low-income students learn rapidly in school, but often lose ground after school and during summers. Policymakers should increase investments in areas such as longer school days, after-school and summer programs, and school-to-work programs with demonstrated track records.

"We are pleased to support the '*Broader, Bolder Approach to Education*' campaign," said Nicholas C. Donohue, President and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, New England's largest philanthropy that focuses exclusively on education. "The Task Force reminds us that proper health care and a safe and nurturing environment are keys to learning. We are hopeful their initiative will promote a new conversation about the next stage of education reform."

The release of "*A Broader, Bolder Approach for Education*" marks the beginning of a long-term effort to persuade federal, state and local policymakers to consider a more enriching framework as they work to support every child's education.

The Task Force

Lawrence Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute, convened the Task Force to consider the broader context of the NCLB law in the nation's approach to education and youth development policy. The Task Force drafted a statement adopted unanimously to articulate the theme that the nation has erred by attempting to rely on school improvement alone to raise the achievement of disadvantaged children. To read the full statement and view the list of signers with their biographical information, please visit www.boldapproach.org.

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