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**New Report on No Child Left Behind Offers First-Ever Analysis
Of Implementation Efforts at Federal, State & Local Levels**

***States and School Districts Are Working Hard to Meet NCLB Requirements
But Face Difficulties, Including Insufficient Capacity and Concerns About Funding***

WASHINGTON – January 26, 2004 – The most comprehensive national study on the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act indicates that urban districts are twice as likely to have at least one school identified as “in need of improvement” under the law as non-urban districts. The report also shows that states and school districts are providing additional help to such schools to improve student achievement, but many school leaders are concerned that federal resources may not be enough to address significant staffing and funding challenges created by the law.

The report, *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act*, is the most comprehensive review of the law to date and the first to examine all aspects of its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. The report was conducted by the independent, nonpartisan Center on Education Policy (CEP), and is the second in a series of reports that will be issued annually through 2007.

Two years after its passage, the law is having a deeper and broader effect. One-fifth (21 percent) of all school districts had at least one school identified as in need of improvement, up from 15 percent in 2002-03. Half of all urban districts (50 percent), already home to a relatively large share of identified schools, and 86 percent of the nation’s very large districts, had at least one identified school, up from 40 percent and 67 percent, respectively in 2002-03. One-quarter of suburban districts (23 percent) had at least one school identified as needing improvement this school year, many for the first time.

“The law is beginning to have a significant impact not just in state capitals but in district offices and classrooms around the nation,” says Jack Jennings, director of CEP. “While much of the debate and headlines have focused on test scores and lists of ‘failing’ schools, the law’s requirements for additional help for schools that need it – and states’ and school districts’ ability to provide that support – will have a more profound and lasting effect over time.”

The report includes a survey of implementation efforts in 47 states and the District of Columbia; a nationally representative survey of 274 school districts; in-depth case studies of 33 urban, suburban, and rural school districts; and interviews with Congressional leaders and Bush Administration officials.

According to the report, districts are now taking a range of approaches in providing additional support for schools identified as in need of improvement. More than three-fourths of districts (77 percent) with schools in need of improvement are currently providing such schools with additional professional development. More than half of the districts with schools identified for improvement implemented a new research-based curriculum or instruction program, and more than one-third extended the school day or the school year. To help identified schools, a majority of school districts reported that they allocated resources to such

strategies as increasing the use of student achievement data to inform instruction, matching curriculum with standards and tests, and using research to inform decisions about improvement strategies.

While supplemental education services (tutoring) for students have been a popular choice for parents to boost their child's achievement, the law's option for public school choice has been little used by parents. Nearly half (46 percent) of students eligible for supplemental education services (tutoring) under the law received them in 2003-04. Meanwhile, just 1 percent of students eligible for the school choice option changed schools in that same school year. The number of districts with at least one school offering NCLB choice has held steady over the last two years; 11 percent in 2003-04 and 10 percent the year before.

"Parents may prefer to give their children extra learning time through supplemental services over moving their child to another school, even when they are clearly informed of their options," notes the report, which goes on to question whether the services, often provided by external organizations and companies, will be effective in raising student achievement in the long-term.

While states and districts have moved quickly on providing additional help for schools, progress has been much slower on requirements for improved teacher quality. Currently, states and districts are reporting that the overwhelming majority of their teachers are highly qualified, though these assertions are questionable given that many states are still struggling to define what "highly qualified" means or develop systems to track teachers' qualifications. A troubling issue, however, is that districts with higher enrollments of poor and minority students have fewer highly qualified teachers, according to the report's district survey.

Funding, Staffing Pressures Mount

Most federal officials expect no legislative changes to the No Child Left Behind Act, according to interviews conducted for the report with key U.S. Dept. of Education officials and Congressional leaders. Interviews with state and school district leaders found that most are supportive of the law and feel it will "raise student achievement over time." Some, however, worry that reaching proficiency for all students by 2014 may be an unrealistic goal – especially for some disabled students and English language learners. In addition, some worry about the impact of budget cuts on their efforts to carry out the law.

Thirty-eight states (of 48 responding) say they do not have sufficient staff to carry out everything required by the Act, even though local school districts name state education agencies as the resource they rely on most to help them with the law's implementation. At the same time, twenty-four of 40 responding states reported that fiscal problems are adversely affecting their ability to carry out the law, and about half of responding states say that local districts are being hampered by fiscal problems, which can be largely attributed to state budget deficits. These funding and capacity issues will grow, the report warns, as more schools are affected by the law's accountability requirements and as districts move closer to the law's deadlines for improving teacher quality in 2005-06 and student proficiency in 2014.

"These findings are a first look at the effects of NCLB at the district level," says Diane Stark Rentner, CEP's deputy director and NCLB project director. "We will follow this issue over five more years and will be able to assess how the implementation of the Act has changed over time and whether state and school district officials remain committed to achieving the goals of the Act."

Based in Washington, D.C. and founded in January 1995, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.

From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act, along with each district case study and additional information on CEP, its publications and its work, is available on the web at www.cep-dc.org.

CASE STUDY DISTRICTS

Alabama	Calhoun County School District
Alaska	Kodiak Island Borough School District
Arkansas	Fayetteville Public Schools
California	Escondido Union Elementary School District Grant Joint Union High School District Oakland Unified School District
Colorado	Colorado Springs District 11 Fort Lupton Weld Re-8 School District
Florida	Collier County School District
Idaho	Joint School District #2 – Meridian
Illinois	Chicago Public Schools
Kansas	Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
Louisiana	St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools
Massachusetts	Avon Public School District Boston Public Schools
Minnesota	Cloquet Independent School District #94
Mississippi	Pascagoula School District
Missouri	Hermitage School District
Nebraska	Heartland School District
Nevada	Clark County School District
New Jersey	Bayonne School District
New Mexico	Bloomfield School District
New York	Romulus Central Schools
North Carolina	Wake County Public School System
North Dakota	Napoleon School District
Ohio	Cleveland Municipal School District
Oregon	Tigard-Tualatin School District
South Carolina	Berkeley County School District
Texas	Cuero Independent School District
Vermont	Marlboro Elementary School Orleans Central Supervisory Union
Virginia	Waynesboro School District
Wisconsin	Sheboygan Area School District