



United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
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Priorities for Reform in the Upcoming Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Our children and their teachers have now endured 8 years under No Child Left Behind, the deeply flawed 2002 version of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

NCLB embodies a test-and-punish philosophy that pressures teachers to teach to the test and obscures the special gifts and needs of individual children. Further NCLB commands that schools raise test scores, while the law is silent about equalizing resources that guarantee opportunity to learn. We ask Congress to address the following principles when the federal education law is reauthorized:

- **recognize that it is unfair and immoral to demand equal outcomes while remaining silent about equalizing the resources at federal and state levels that create the opportunity for children to learn;**
- **address with resources the generational educational debt of poverty and segregation;**
- **improve the most vulnerable public schools and turn away from blaming teachers and punishing the schools that serve poor children;**
- **develop the unique gifts of each child, created in the image of God, rather than worshipping standardization;**
- **test children only in ways that improve instruction, measure real performance, and encourage exploration, imagination, and critical thinking;**
- **set a visionary and at the same time workable school improvement time line to replace the utopian 2014 deadline;**
- **address economic and social issues outside the school day that impair learning.**

The United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries' mission is to speak and act prophetically through community mobilization, leadership training, issues education, public witness and public policy advocacy in support of the social action policies of the United Church of Christ's General Synod, its biennial governing body. Historically the United Church of Christ has worked to strengthen public schools especially valuing their public role in our democracy, and spoken out against policies that weaken public education—including inequity, racism and xenophobia, an over-focus on standardization and high stakes testing, and privatization.