



National School  
Boards Association

Fall 2003  
www.nsba.org

# NCLB. ActionAlert

## TOOLS & TACTICS FOR MAKING THE LAW WORK

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### How to Use NCLB as a Governance Tool

#### *Organizing your school board's work around the law's requirements*

By Michael A. Resnick

With the school year underway, it's time for your board to sharpen its focus on your district's academic performance and your other responsibilities under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Federally approved state accountability requirements are now in place, and report cards on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are being issued. You can also expect to see new state policies that will shape school board action on issues ranging from teacher qualifications to student promotion to summer school classes.

Certainly, you will spend more time at board meetings dealing with NCLB deadlines, mandates, and public reactions to report cards. But to effectively implement the law and—more important—to meet your district's student achievement goals, it's a good idea to think of NCLB as a year-round governance tool rather than as a series of separate compliance events.

Specifically, as your school board looks out over the coming school year, you should be able to identify key requirements in the federal law, determine how to strategically align them with your own student achievement goals, and then determine the action you might need to address your district's budget, board policies, and teacher compensation and evaluation programs—including collective bargaining—to produce the results you want.

For example, your board should be able to determine when the state intends to

identify schools in need of improvement and when state and local report cards will be issued. You can design a year-round calendar that features board agenda time or special sessions and workshops to build your own understanding—as well as the public's—of what the data really mean.

The calendar also can include a sequenced plan of follow-up meetings during the fall and winter to hear reports and recommendations from the superintendent on the various strategies needed in such areas as professional development, instructional materials, or special programming in lower achieving schools to

good news and bad news contained in your report cards. This program also can be used to enlist the community's understanding and support for those areas where the school district needs to improve. (For more on developing an NCLB communication plan, see the Summer 2003 issue of *NCLB Action Alert*, available on the Members Only page of the NSBA National Affiliate Web site, [www.nsba.org/na](http://www.nsba.org/na).)

#### Getting Started

The first step in developing a school board governance plan for NCLB is to hold a board workshop to do the following:

- Review the requirements of NCLB and the state's implementation plan. Use



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meet NCLB and other student achievement goals.

Your board can time its decisions on these strategies for use with your budget, policy, and collective bargaining processes during the winter and spring. During the summer, you can evaluate the past year's achievement as you create the following year's governance calendar, starting with the state's announcement of schools in need of improvement and AYP results.

By acting now, your board can develop a coherent governance plan for the school year that builds on itself from board meeting to board meeting.

Similarly, by looking out over the year, your board can develop a year-round communication and public engagement program to help the public understand the

that opportunity to build a common understanding about what the school district must do and identify areas where the school board needs more information to comply.

- Identify key dates for public reporting (publication of report cards), implementation deadlines (providing choice, supplemental services, or reports to the state), and timelines for local action (budget development, collective bargaining negotiations, and review of board policies).

- Identify areas in which the board might need more information to effectively evaluate progress and program options. (See box on page 3.)

- Develop a year-round governance calendar that lays out a plan that builds

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*NCLB Action Alert* is an occasional publication of the National School Boards Association and the National School Boards Foundation, in conjunction with the Office of Advocacy and Issues Management. Written exclusively for NSBA National Affiliates, it is designed to provide ideas and insights on NCLB compliance. Copyright 2003, NSBA.

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## About NSBA

The National School Boards Association is the nationwide advocacy organization for public school governance. NSBA's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education in the United States through local school board leadership. Founded in 1940, NSBA is a not-for-profit federation of state associations of school boards across the United States and the school boards of the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## About the National Affiliate Program

The National Affiliate Program extends NSBA's services directly to local school districts. School districts are eligible to join provided they are members in good standing of their state school boards associations.

## About the Office of Advocacy and Issues Management

The Office of Advocacy and Issues Management implements NSBA's Action/Advocacy Agenda and carries out NSBA's lobbying efforts at the national level. By lobbying the Congress, the White House, and federal agencies, the office helps increase federal funding for local school districts and reduces costly federal mandates; helps improve federal education programs by making legislative and regulatory changes; local board members support; protects the governance role of school boards from congressional attack; and promotes the role of school boards as a key democratic institution in our country's education system.

strategically from board meeting to board meeting. Include sessions with your superintendent to analyze test data, identify reasons for success and failure, determine what information you need about your district and specific schools, review pertinent research and best practices, identify current resources and needs, and develop a plan of action that is timed with—and is a central part of—your budget process. (See pages 4-5 for a model calendar.)

A primary aim of this workshop is to begin drawing together your board's (1) knowledge of what NCLB requires, including nuances particular to your state; (2) ability to establish a governance process to successfully address the law; and (3) acquisition and use of specific content knowledge, such as interpreting test results, so that your board can make decisions that produce the best results.

## Standards-Based Accountability

It is helpful to think of NCLB as an example of an academic accountability system consisting of four distinct components: standards, assessments, accountability, and resource alignment. Each component has a special purpose and relationship to the others. And each can easily be incorporated within your governance plan to meet the law's academic requirements, as well as your school district's broader student achievement goals.

These components occur in sequence:

1. State standards are designed to describe what all students should know and be able to do at specified grade levels.
2. A state assessment, which is aligned to those standards, is used to determine whether students are actually performing at grade level.
3. Accountability provisions are then brought into play to ensure that local districts are taking action to raise student achievement. These provisions are principally aimed at rectifying any failure to meet performance goals at the "proficient" level (that is, AYP) at specific schools or across an entire district.

4. In response, school boards take appropriate actions that involve an alignment of resources, including decisions about budget allocations, school board policies, and the board's approval of specific programs and innovations.

In other words, while NCLB clearly involves a series of reports and mandates, taken as a whole it also provides a systematic way for school boards to approach student achievement. And each of the system's four component parts can play an

integral role in the board's year-round calendar of governance activities.

The following sections look at these four components and suggest school board actions to address each one.

## The Standards Component

NCLB says that language arts and math (and eventually science) are so important that the state must determine what students at specific grade levels must know and be able to do—and how well—in those areas.

Everyone talks about standards, but few know the purpose they serve. Perhaps more important, few know what the actual standards are in their district and how rigorous they are.

The purpose of standards is to define the instructional program that is needed to accomplish the district's larger vision of education. At each grade level and in each course, standards tell us what we want students to know and be able to do.

Good standards use action phrases like "know key facts," "analyze," "describe," "compare," "write in coherent paragraphs," and so on. So, in an area like history, standards should not simply identify an era for which students need to know key events or dates, but they should also indicate how students need to think about the material and be able to use it. To be effective and usable, standards should be clear and concise—and, where relevant, be accompanied by examples of the level of work that should be performed.

Designing standards is not the role of the school board, but the board should have a basic grasp of both state and local standards in order to hold the district accountable and to make the most effective budgeting and policy decisions to attain the standards. In this regard, it can be helpful to hold a workshop to generally review your state's standards—including those related to NCLB—along with what it will take to reach those standards and how they might need to be augmented locally to match the knowledge and skills your community wants for its students.

### School board action:

- Focus the attention of school staff, parents, and the community on standards—including the expectation that all students will learn at the required levels.
- Ensure that teachers and other school personnel know the course content and skills needed to make AYP know how to address the standards, and recognize when they are teaching at that level.
- Determine whether state standards

for NCLB-related courses and other subjects are high enough and broad enough to meet your school district's goals.

- Promote public understanding and discussion of NCLB-related standards and those in other core courses. (For example, publish sample standards so parents and the community at large know the level of learning that is expected.)

- Promote parents' knowledge of the standards through brochures and workshops so they can reinforce schoolwork at home.

Because standards define what students will need to know, they should be discussed toward the beginning of the year-round governance process. They should also be a focal point in discussions about the assessments, accountability system, and resources that must be aligned to attain them.

### The Assessment Component

Through workshop discussions with your superintendent and staff, your school board should be able to determine whether individual schools and the district as a whole are achieving the standards—and, in turn, meeting the district's larger educational goals.

That judgment can be made by using a variety of measures, such as standardized tests, evaluations of students' written and oral work, or such indicators as Advanced Placement enrollment, high school graduation rates, or college enrollment rates.

NCLB requires assessing student achievement in language arts and math using state-approved tests that are aligned with state standards. The state will set performance levels to indicate how well students must know the subject matter and perform the skills required on the test. To meet NCLB's accountability requirements, a certain percentage of students must score at the "proficient" level.

While NCLB-related test scores will receive a lot of attention, it is important to remember that they involve just two subjects (albeit important subjects) at select grade levels. Even then, they are limited to the specific knowledge and skills being tested. As such, these test scores will not provide a complete picture of your school district's performance—including whether standards are being met in other subjects or areas of student development.

Experts recognize that a fair and well-reasoned judgment of academic performance requires the use of multiple assessments. Under NCLB, the state must

require the use of at least one other indicator—which, at the high school level, must include graduation rates—to measure schools' progress.

Your school board should consider what other indicators of achievement you wish to use to assess your schools in NCLB-related subjects and others to round out your understanding of how well your schools are doing. These other indicators can be incorporated into local report cards. For NCLB accountability purposes, however, failure to make AYP on the state's test will not be offset by successful performance on other state and local achievement measures.

To be effective in assessing district schools, your board will need to know what specific tests are designed to show,

what the test scores actually mean, and how scores can be validly (and invalidly) compared. The public, including the media, should have a grasp of these concepts as well.

It is also important to keep in mind that numerical test results—or even labels like "proficient"—are only measures. They are not analyses of why students are achieving at a certain level. Raising achievement requires understanding why students in particular schools, or specific groups of students, are performing at certain levels. Only then can the right strategies and resources be used most effectively to bring about improvement.

#### School board action:

- Work with the superintendent to determine what kind of assessments will

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO ADDRESS NCLB

Before you can design a governance plan to address NCLB, you and your board colleagues need to know the key elements of the law. Effective decision making for advancing AYP and other student achievement goals will also require a working knowledge in specific content areas, including how these content areas interact with local policies and conditions.

Here are examples of the types of information your board might wish to discuss before designing your governance calendar:

- **Standards.** Know what standards are, the purpose they serve, the subjects for which your district has written standards and the criteria by which the standards are developed and reviewed. Also review samples of specific standards—at least in NCLB-related courses.

- **Assessments.** Know what assessments your district uses, what they are designed to show (and not show), what test scores and trends mean in terms of educational performance, what are valid and invalid ways of comparing test results, and what research shows regarding the impact of specific tests and other indicators on students and teachers.

- **Accountability.** Know what goals students and staff are held accountable for achieving (such as making AYP), how they are held accountable, how well the district's achievement goals are matched with student and teacher accountability, and what the

research says about the impact of various sanctions, rewards, and other incentives on students and teachers.

- **Research/best practices.** Know what the research says about the educational success and limitations of various strategies involving class size, instructional approaches, and summer and after-school programs with students generally and with targeted groups of students.

- **Teachers.** Know what the research says about educationally effective and ineffective professional development programs, recruitment criteria and practices, and teacher evaluation and compensation programs.

- **Local conditions.** Know local demographic conditions and trends in individual schools and across the school district in order to understand assessment results and anticipate future action needed to attain AYP and other achievement goals, such as strategies for the recruitment, assignment, and development of teachers to address enrollment shifts among students in targeted groups.

- **Use of data.** Know how to use data in evaluating student achievement, including familiarity with disaggregated and aggregated data, key terminology, and valid (and invalid) ways of numerically and graphically displaying student performance results.

For more information, see the NSBA resources in the box on page 7.

# NCLB GOVERNANCE CALENDAR\*

## TIME EVENT SCHOOL BOARD ACTION

### SUMMER

1. Title I schools in need of improvement (SINOI) are announced.
2. School choice and supplemental services are announced to parents and the public.
3. New board members take office in some states.

1. Conduct school board workshops to:
  - Discuss SINOI.
  - Discuss choice and supplemental services responsibilities and plans.
  - Discuss a communication plan for these items.
  - Review the requirements of NCLB and your state's plan.
  - Determine how NCLB fits into the district's larger education goals—including results from previous public engagement activities.
2. Implement a communication plan to address SINOI and report card results:
  - Prepare the media, parents, and the community in advance to understand SINOI and report cards.
  - Communicate to the public when the report card results are published for explanation and reaction.
3. Review local policies for the opening of school.
4. Evaluate the school board's student achievement role during the previous year and determine what improvements could be made.
5. Establish student achievement goals with the superintendent for inclusion in his or her performance review for the following year.
6. Develop a year-round NCLB governance agenda.
7. Develop a plan to engage the public regarding its goals and perceptions of the district.
8. Identify training needs and resources for new and current board members. (Consult with your state school boards association.)

### FALL

1. School choice, supplemental services, and school improvement plans are implemented.

1. Monitor implementation of school choice, supplemental services, and school improvement plans.

2. Conduct school board workshops to:

2. Report cards are published, including:

- AYP for all schools and school districts.
- Teacher qualifications.
- Plans for improvement.

- Review principles and examples of standards and assessments used by the district—including information on how to analyze state test results.
- Review principles of data-driven and research-based decision making.
- Review AYP data and other items on state, district, and local report cards.
- Evaluate the district's progress toward making AYP and other student achievement goals using appropriate measures.
- Identify needs related to key NCLB issues, such as:
  - a. Recruitment and professional development of highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals.
  - b. Schools and/or groups of students requiring special attention.
  - c. Gaps in the current curriculum.
- Review plans, budget, and policy recommendations from the superintendent to address these issues.
- Determine how progress will be measured, how school staff and students will be held accountable, and how that information will be communicated.

3. Implement the communication plan and larger public engagement activities.

1. School district budget development begins.
2. Contract negotiations are held.
3. Legislative sessions begin in states and in Congress.
4. New school board members take office in some states.

WINTER/  
SPRING

1. Align resources (such as curriculum, professional development, textbook adoption, and instructional materials) to meet recommendations.
2. Develop collective bargaining objectives that align employee contracts with other NCLB and student achievement goals.
3. Implement the communication plan.
4. Lobby Congress and state policy makers for the funds and policy changes needed to successfully implement NCLB.
5. Align school board policies to NCLB and student achievement goals.
6. Approve plans to improve the content and dissemination of the following year's report card and NCLB notice requirements.
7. Evaluate the superintendent on the basis of previously agreed on NCLB and other student achievement goals.

\* This calendar represents an example of how a school board can develop a year-round plan both to meet its governance goals under NCLB and to raise student achievement generally. Your calendar should take into account state timelines and any complications that specific issues pose for your district. Your first year's plan may have to be adjusted depending on the time of year it is adopted and the school board's need for information.

be used to evaluate the district, individual schools, and individual students.

- Ensure that the assessments selected are aligned with state standards and the school system's larger goals for student learning.
- Know what each assessment is designed to measure—including the tests for NCLB—and what the actual scores or score changes mean.
- Use multiple assessments to ensure that the full range of students' knowledge and skills that you believe are important are measured and taken into account in evaluating student achievement.
- Make sure teacher-made and other locally developed assessments are aligned with standards.
- Make judgments about district and school performance on the basis of the

1. Members of a racial/ethnic minority group
2. Students who live in poverty
3. Those who have a disability
4. Those who have limited proficiency in English.

Accountability is achieved through the broad publication of state report cards that include district comparisons of student performance in making AYP and other indicators of the district's attainment of NCLB goals. Similarly, local report cards must show, for the district as a whole and for each school, whether all students, as well as the four targeted groups of students, have made AYP in language arts and math at the grade levels tested. They also must contain such information as the qualifications of teachers and plans for improvement.

accountability provisions are aimed at raising the lowest-achieving students to the "proficient" level, with less attention given to those who are performing well. Although nothing in NCLB requires districts to hold the students themselves accountable for performance, the law doesn't prevent them from doing so.

In the final analysis, what your staff and students are held accountable for accomplishing will determine what you focus on. Correspondingly, subjects, skills, or areas of knowledge that are not subject to the same level of accountability are likely to be de-emphasized. When the accountability system is successfully aligned with tests and the standards on which they are based, powerful incentives can be created to motivate and focus learning.

A word of caution: In a high-stakes environment, such as the NCLB accountability system, a strong focus on test scores can make it appear that test performance, rather than student learning, is the purpose of education. For that reason, it is important to consider the district's accountability system in light of the district's overall vision and goals—not only in light of the accountability procedures required by NCLB.

#### **School board action:**

- Determine what your school district will hold itself accountable for accomplishing.
- Know your accountability options under NCLB (in calculating AYP and in managing sanctions in Title I schools) and use those that best meet the needs of your school system.
- Establish a set of rewards and sanctions that, coupled with other strategies to motivate student learning, will promote attainment of district goals, including making AYP.
- Determine whether any elements of the accountability system have a counterproductive impact on students or staff.
- Identify schools or areas of the district's program that merit special attention by the superintendent and periodic review by the board.
- Work with the superintendent to develop performance goals tied to specific student achievement targets, including those set forth in NCLB, and conduct the superintendent's annual performance review on that basis.
- Evaluate the board's governance role in the design and execution of its student achievement plan and make improvements as needed.



**Used properly, tests are a bridge between what students need to know and the school experience needed to achieve that knowledge.**



assessments and indicators selected and proper analysis of test data analysis, including disaggregated data.

- Communicate the purpose of assessments, what they are intended to measure, and what the measurements mean, to the public.

In the governance process, tests are a tool to measure and understand student performance; they are not the end product. Used properly, tests are a bridge between what students need to know and the school experience needed to achieve that knowledge.

### **The Accountability Component**

Reaching high standards, even with testing, will be more likely if students and staff are inspired to achieve. The way NCLB does this is to hold the school system accountable for results.

More precisely, NCLB holds districts and individual schools accountable for a set percentage of students scoring at the proficient level or above on the state language arts and math tests. That percentage, called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), applies to all students districtwide and within each school, as well as to four specific target groups at both levels:

In addition, schools and districts that receive federal Title I funds are subject to progressively more rigorous interventions if they fail to make AYP for their students overall and for targeted groups of students for two years or more.

At the school level, these interventions start with offering students the choice to transfer to another public school. If a Title I school fails to make AYP for another year, it must offer supplemental services at other public or private facilities. In subsequent years, in-school strategies will be added, such as changes in staff, curriculum, and instructional programming. Finally, if these remedies fail, the entire Title I school must be restaffed, converted to a charter school, managed by a private company, or closed.

Similar sanctions will apply to Title I districts that persistently fail to make AYP, concluding with the possibility of disbanding the school board and replacing the superintendent.

As your board becomes familiar with the NCLB accountability system, you should consider other ways to inspire learning in math, language arts, and other subjects through rewards or sanctions. In this regard, NCLB's most aggressive

- Encourage community dialogue in the design of local report cards.
- Actively report to community members on how your schools are doing and discuss the results with them.

### The Alignment Component

When all the standards, testing, and accountability systems are in place, the next crucial factor is how well the school board uses the budget process and its policy role to align the resources of the school district with its goals—including the goal of meeting NCLB requirements.

Here is where your board's understanding of the larger vision of the district's education program—its standards and assessment, the effectiveness of specific programs, and the selection of policy options—all comes together. Ideally, the board's alignment decisions will be timed to follow consideration of all the other factors in light of a comprehensive student achievement plan. Throughout the development of the district's budget and policy review process, the board should ask, How does this expenditure or policy further our goals for the students in our district, including making AYP? What changes are needed?

#### School board action:

- Ensure that changes occur in curriculum, textbooks, and instructional practice to rectify gaps in the curriculum or weak performance on state assessments and other indicators of student achievement.
- Ensure that specific groups of students or schools have effective in-school, after-school, and summer-school programs to make AYP, as evidenced by scientifically based research.
- Align teacher recruitment, assignment, and compensation policies—with a special focus on providing high-quality teachers in weak schools to help those schools make AYP.
- Refocus professional development programs and funding to provide incentives and time for teachers to take effective in-service programs and to help more teachers build their skills.
- Develop a two-year plan to meet the NCLB requirement for highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals in the 2005-06 school year.
- Adopt policies and plans (including community engagement activities) to obtain the best improvement in student achievement with the least disruption, cost, and worry by parents in those Title I schools identified as needing improvement.

Through the interplay of the four components of standards, assessment, accountability, and resource alignment, your board can develop an effective governance system for raising standards—including meeting your state's AYP requirements. In so doing, your board will be more likely to play a strong leadership role under NCLB—and more likely to meet your larger student achievement goals.

### Other NCLB Governance Factors

In addition to developing content knowledge around each of these four components, your school board should consider three other factors as you implement your year-round governance plan:

- **Climate.** Do the content of your meeting agendas and the tenor of your discussions reflect the priority you place on NCLB and the district's other student achievement goals? Is your school board treating NCLB as a checklist of troublesome mandates, or are you using the law as a serious tool for raising student achievement? Despite some of the pitfalls in the program, are you creating an atmosphere that promotes success and high expectations that all students can learn at the level required by NCLB?
  - **Community collaboration.** Through the publication of report cards and the identification of schools in need of improvement, NCLB will focus public attention on the school district—especially on individual schools and groups of students who don't make AYP. Certainly a communication plan should be in place to explain that data, to present the full picture of student performance, and to build public understanding and support for actions the district is undertaking to improve weak areas.
- But effective community collaboration can produce much more. As your board establishes the steps in its governance calendar, ask how you can involve parents, business and civic leaders, the media, and the community at large to obtain their ideas and contributions to help fulfill specific NCLB and other student achievement goals.

- **Continuous improvement.** The successful implementation of a plan this year will not guarantee success in meeting challenges in future years. Changes in enrollment, along with the rising percentage of students who must make AYP each successive year, will lead to new needs and new approaches.

To continue on the road to improve-

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This publication was designed to provide a governance framework for addressing NCLB as well as school districts' larger student achievement goals.

It draws together the law's specific requirements, suggests additional ideas for improving the school board governance role, and identifies the areas of substantive information on education issues that board members need to know.

For more information in each of these areas, board members should consult with their state school boards association and NSBA.

Check with your state school boards association for the following:

- The details of your state's NCLB plan, policy changes, funding progress, and so on.
- Workshops and training opportunities to improve your effectiveness in dealing with the law.
- Services to help you align your board policies with NCLB and other student achievement goals.
- Communication strategies to help you work with your community—including having a statewide perspective before issuing statements to the press.
- Advocacy strategies and services to maximize your effectiveness in obtaining improvements in your states approach to NCLB.

Check the NSBA Web site ([www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)) for the following information:

- Overviews and detailed explanations of the law (see the National Affiliate portion of the NSBA site, [www.nsba.org/na](http://www.nsba.org/na)).
- NSBA publications on school governance, including the Key Work of School Boards series (see NSBA's online bookstore, <https://secure.nsba.org/pubs/index.cfm>).
- NSBA's publications on content issues, including *The Educated Student: Defining and Advancing Student Achievement* (see the online bookstore).
- Special NCLB sessions at NSBA's Annual Conference (see [www.nsba.org/conference](http://www.nsba.org/conference)).
- Federal advocacy and updates on NCLB legislation (see [www.nsba.org/advocacy](http://www.nsba.org/advocacy)).

ment, your board should periodically ask itself such questions as, How are we doing? How can we improve on our own role to make sure our district achieves its NCLB goals? In what content areas—such as knowledge of assessments or data interpretation—do we, as a school board, need to be better informed? And how can we best bring new school board members up to speed in this complex convergence of the law, content knowledge, and year-round strategic governance?

The school board's function in continuous improvement does not end with its own commitment. It also should promote

across your state and the nation. Set time aside in your governance calendar to meet with legislators when the 2004 session convenes at the state and congressional levels—which, in most districts, will coincide with the beginning of the budget development process.

### Keeping the Big Picture in Sight

Connecting the requirements of NCLB to your board's broader governance role will help you maintain a necessary perspective on your larger mission. In implementing NCLB, it is easy to get caught up in the details and lose sight of the broader role

first year, other decisions might have to be made before completing this important work.

In addressing NCLB, your board's vision-setting role can include the following:

- Engage the community to determine what constituents want education to be and how NCLB goals in language arts and math fit in.
- Establish a vision statement and goals that meet the community's needs—including goals relating to NCLB.
- Commit the school board, working with the superintendent and staff, to a plan that is designed to achieve the vision and goals of the district—including those related to NCLB.

• Ensure that the school system, the public, and the board's own activities throughout the year are focused on the achievement of its vision and goals.

The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act established an operational framework that will significantly influence how America's public schools will function, at least over the next few years. Through this framework, local school boards are presented with a series of tough mandates and high-level challenges. But you and your board colleagues are also presented with a historic opportunity to use the law to create a board governance program that can support your leadership in advancing the educational achievement of the children in your community.

By developing a year-round governance program that incorporates knowledge of the law, a standards-based system of local governance, and general principles in specific areas of education practice, your school board, working with the superintendent, will be well-positioned to approach student achievement, including the requirements of NCLB, in a strategic and accountable manner.

Clearly, there are technical flaws in NCLB and shortfalls in federal funding. School boards are encouraged to be advocates to correct those problems. But you should not allow these concerns, as important as they are, to distract you from proactively using the law—and your governance potential—to improve student learning. Your state school boards association and NSBA stand ready to help you in this key governance work.

**Michael A. Resnick** ([mresnick@nsba.org](mailto:mresnick@nsba.org)) is NSBA associate executive director for advocacy and issues management.



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a commitment to improvement by the entire staff and ensure that the resources are in place to attain it.

### Advocacy at Federal and State Levels

As school boards move forward to implement NCLB, they are likely to identify some serious flaws in the program. For some, the major flaw might be a lack of adequate federal and state funding to get the job done. For others, it might be that the emphasis on specific tests doesn't match district achievement goals, or that the AYP system identifies certain schools as needing improvement even though they appear to be succeeding. For still others, federal requirements relating to choice, supplemental services, or highly qualified teachers might not be realistic for their school district.

Therefore, the governance role of local boards also should involve communication with members of Congress and state policy makers regarding the district's overall student achievement goals, how NCLB fits in, and recommendations for rectifying problematic aspects of NCLB that stand in the way of success in the local school districts your legislators were elected to represent.

Your board can work with your state school boards association and NSBA to provide greater leverage in remedying problems that are likely to affect districts

the schools must serve in educating children. Clearly, the school board has a governance role to ensure that NCLB is successfully implemented. But that does not mean narrowing the board's role to being a federal or state NCLB compliance board—or focusing the district's educational mission solely on reading and math, as critical as those subjects are.

The public wants more from its schools, and it elects school boards to ensure that the local district's overall program reflects the broader aspirations, values, and educational goals that the community wants for its children. As your board moves forward with implementing NCLB, this might be a good time to articulate, in writing, your longer-term vision of education, the mission of the school system, and specific goals that you wish to accomplish—which certainly can include meeting AYP under NCLB.

Your district's educational vision most likely will address two basic questions:

1. What does it mean to be an educated student in our district in terms of the knowledge, skills, and values we expect our pupils to possess?

2. What must our classrooms, our schools, and our district as a whole do to get us there?

Vision setting defines what the school system is about. This crucial governance function can be incorporated in your governance calendar—recognizing that in the