



# A Broader, BOLDER Approach to Education

The No Child Left Behind law, passed with bipartisan support in 2001 and now up for reauthorization, assumes that ineffective schools are the major reason for low student achievement. It also presumes that higher standards for students and teachers, frequent testing, better teacher training and accountability can eliminate achievement gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged students.

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.

Reducing social and economic disadvantages can also improve achievement. But national and state policy has mostly failed to act on this understanding.

As the limitations of a schools-only approach become more obvious, it is time to rethink our assumptions. We propose a Broader, Bolder Approach that can realistically boost disadvantaged students' achievement.

While continuing to press for school improvement, our proposed Broader, Bolder Approach also promotes high quality early-childhood programs and preschool, after-school and summer opportunities. Along with improving test scores, it also emphasizes physical health, character, social development and non-academic skills. It prizes traits needed for effective citizenship, creativity, and the ability to work in diverse environments.

## A Broader, Bolder Approach is built around four pillars:

- 1 Pursue** an aggressive school improvement strategy, including ensuring smaller classes in early grades for disadvantaged children; attracting high-quality teachers to hard-to-staff schools; improving teacher and school leadership training; making a college preparatory curriculum accessible to all; and paying special attention to recent immigrants.
- 2 Provide** developmentally appropriate and high-quality early childhood, pre-school and kindergarten care and education that promotes not just academic readiness but positive lifetime social, economic and behavioral outcomes for low-income children.
- 3 Address** children's health, including routine pediatric, dental, hearing and vision care for all infants, toddlers and schoolchildren to minimize health problems that impede school success. Full-service school clinics can overcome the absence of primary care physicians in low-income areas, and address poor parents' inability to miss work for children's routine health services.
- 4 Improve** the quality of out-of-school time. Low-income students learn rapidly in school but often lose ground after school and during summers. Successful out-of-school and extended day programs not only focus on remediation but also provide cultural, organizational, athletic, and academic enrichment that middle-class children routinely enjoy.

## This Broader, Bolder Approach applies equally to federal, state and local policy.

Test scores alone should not define school effectiveness. New and broader accountability systems are needed to promote more effective school programs. These new systems will be considerably more expensive than the tests currently employed, many of which are seriously flawed.

America's education policy can continue to focus on schools alone and on narrow, test-based accountability—and be content with modest improvements.

Or we can ratchet up our ambitions and adopt a broad new strategy to enable all our children to pursue the American dream.

## We urge policymakers to embrace this Broader, Bolder Approach to Education

Read the full statement or sign on at [www.BoldApproach.org](http://www.BoldApproach.org) or contact [boldapproach@epi.org](mailto:boldapproach@epi.org)

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