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To: Educators, Parents, Community Members and Others Interested in the Education of Students with Disabilities

From: Rebecca H. Cort 
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Deputy Commissioner of Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Continuing Education

Subject: Accountability Measures for Students with Disabilities Under No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

We are writing to seek your support in addressing an issue of national significance that impacts students with disabilities and every school district. In January 2002, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted which establishes a system that holds school districts across the country accountable for the educational success of all students. We support the overall goals of NCLB to improve the educational outcomes for all students and to close the achievement gap of various subgroups of students, including those with disabilities. However, the final federal regulations implementing NCLB have failed to fairly address a significant number of students with disabilities.

Accountability measures for students with disabilities must appropriately measure academic performance and continue to require schools to focus on improving performance of students with disabilities without unfairly penalizing the schools and school districts they attend. As such, the New York State Education Department is working to influence change at the federal level, but your support is also essential.

We urge you to read the attached proposal and to share it widely with others who can help to influence the necessary legislative and regulatory changes at the federal level. If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please contact the Special Education Policy Unit at 518-473-2878.

Attachment