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Education News from EPRU/EPIC: KEY COMPONENT OF NCLB LACKS RESEARCH SUPPORT

Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) at ASU  
Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC) at CU-Boulder

**\*\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*\***

### **KEY COMPONENT OF NCLB LACKS RESEARCH SUPPORT**

**New policy brief describes ill-informed decision-making for Supplemental Education Services provisions.**

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TEMPE, Ariz and BOULDER, Colo. (May 1, 2007) -- Supplemental Education Services, a key component of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, has been adopted and implemented without any systematic research or scrutiny, notwithstanding potential problems that call out for investigation, according to a new report from the Education Policy Research Unit and the Education and the Public Interest Center.

The policy brief, “Supplemental Education Services under NCLB: Emerging Evidence and Policy Issues,” is by professor Patricia Burch of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The brief examines the supplemental education services (SES) provision of NCLB, which requires school districts to pay the cost of after-school tutoring services for eligible students attending schools that have failed to meet mandated Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks three years in a row. Those schools must set aside up to 20 percent of their Title I funds to pay for tutoring services provided by state-approved operators. These operators are a mixture of for-profit or non-profit, public or private firms.

The report finds that SES programs have low participation rates and offer limited services for English Language Learners and special education students. It also finds that states and school districts lack the capacity to offer significant monitoring or accountability for SES programs—in stark contrast to the NCLB law’s strict accountability measures applied to the schools themselves.

But the key finding of this report is essentially a non-finding: the overwhelming absence of evidence to support (or refute) the wisdom of the SES policy. The report states, “existing research offers little information about specific conditions that support positive outcomes” from supplemental education services provided under the law. “To make well-informed decisions in the future, policy makers will require additional empirical evidence.”

The report recommends policy makers redesign NCLB to commission federally funded evaluations that assess the effects of SES on student achievement and the access of at-risk students to SES programs; it also offers concrete recommendations for amending NCLB to assist local school districts and state education agencies in administering SES programs.

Burch also recommends that policy makers examine and reconsider “NCLB’s apparent tension between the high-stakes accountability imposed on schools and the more limited measures for holding SES providers accountable for their contributions to student achievement.”

Find Patricia Burch’s report, “Supplemental Education Services under NCLB: Emerging Evidence and Policy Issues,” on the web at:

<http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/documents/EPSTL-0705-232-EPRU.pdf>

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The Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) conducts original research, provides independent analyses of research and policy documents, and facilitates educational innovation. EPRU facilitates the work of leading academic experts in a variety of disciplines to help inform the public debate about education policy issues.

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The Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC) at the University of Colorado, Boulder seeks to contribute information, analysis, and insight to further democratic deliberation regarding educational policy formation and implementation.

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