

CLOSEOUT FILES



Resolved: That, on balance, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has improved academic achievement in the United States.

Introduction

The topic this month is Resolved: That, on balance, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has improved academic achievement in the United States. Many would argue that the No Child Left Behind Act was the best (relatively speaking of course) and most defining piece of domestic legislation passed by George Bush during his time in office. Eight years later, it remains highly controversial. Lately, NCLB is back in the news with Obama's recent appointment of Arne Duncan to Secretary of Education. The final fate of NCLB is still unknown with the new administration.

Overall, I think it is a decent topic. The quantity of evidence is HEAVILY tilted towards the con. Pro will have to rely heavily on analysis and logic, but I think it is reasonably balanced. Pro has to prove very little to win the round. No one would argue that NCLB is perfect, but all pro has to do is show a little improvement. How cost effective the act is under the resolution is irrelevant. All that matters is academic achievement. It doesn't matter for the pro if there are even a million better alternatives out there.

March is a pretty big month in debate with a lot of debaters having their state tournaments and/or nat quals. For this topic, it is really important that you judge your judge. A judge that is a teacher, student just out of high school, and parent are possibly going to respond very differently to your arguments. You should keep that in mind.

The resolution is pretty straight forward in terms of its interpretation. NCLB refers to a very specific piece of legislation and the NFL seems to be putting "on balance" in all the resolutions these days. The main question is what constitutes improved academic achievement. You should definitely have a definition ready even if you don't necessarily waste time and put it in your first constructive.

One of the biggest problems I found teams had judging last month is they didn't give the judge a good/clear enough weighing mechanism. For example, pro might clearly have won the economics point, but lost the security point. I then don't know what to vote on or how I should be balancing these things. As a result, I get to pick for myself. According to Anita Ansari, you don't want me to pick; it's a scary thought. Tell the judge why X is more important than Y, because _____. Tell the judge specifically why education equality is more important than drop-out rates. Also is it really better if NCLB lessens the achievement gap by bringing all the gifted kids down.

Good luck debating. In general, I think the better team will come out on top with this topic, but I think the slight advantage between two equal teams goes to the con.

Background

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/education/no_child/basics.html

PBS NewsHour

August 21, 2005

Overview of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

With overwhelming bipartisan support, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law by President Bush on Jan. 8, 2002. The bill outlined President Bush's public education reform agenda, proposing the most dramatic changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since its enactment in 1965.

The law affects schools receiving Title I funding -- supplemental funds granted to school districts with high concentrations of students at the poverty level and most at-risk for low academic achievement. Determined by the proportion of students enrolled from low-income families, over 90 percent of all elementary and secondary schools around the country currently receive Title I funding.

NCLB's strategy is to provide "greater decision-making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance" in order to fulfill the law's main goals.

These goals include:

- Close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students
- Reading proficiency for all students by the end of grade 3 by 2013-4 school year
- Math and reading proficiency for all students within 12 years (2013-4 school year)
- A highly qualified teacher for every core academic subject

To achieve these goals, the law is based on four main principles:

1. Stronger Accountability for Results: States are required to develop and implement their own academic achievement standards and benchmarks of proficiency and will be held accountable to them by the federal government.
2. More Choices for Parents and Students: Parents will be given the option of transferring their student out of a low-achieving or unsafe school.
3. Greater Flexibility for States, School Districts, and Schools: States can transfer federal dollars between different grant programs in order to improve school progress.

4. Proven Education Methods: Education programs must be based on scientifically based research that proves their effectiveness. NCLB outlines standards for scientifically based research.

The law asks each state to define "proficiency" by establishing its own tests and state standards. The law also grants the federal government an increased role in public education by establishing a national deadline to reach proficiency and consequences for missing federally mandated education goals. For instance, states that fail to develop and implement state standards and a road map for achieving proficiency might risk losing federal funding.

Under NCLB, states must implement their standards of academic proficiency and measure student achievement against these standards through testing. States must also set annual achievement goals called Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP. Defined as a percentage of students achieving proficiency level on annual testing, AYP must be raised each year to reach an overall goal of 100 percent student proficiency by the end of the 2013-4 school year.

Each state will have its own definition of academic proficiency and its own AYP benchmarks and will be held accountable by the federal government for the goals it has set.

Key Provisions of NCLB

1. All schools must test students in grades 3-8 in reading and math by the 2005-6 school year and test students in grades 10-12 at least once in reading and math.
2. All schools must test students in grades 3-8, 6-9, 10-12 in science at least once by the 2007-8 school year.
3. All schools must test 95 percent of its students in each grade and in each subgroup -- poverty level, race, ethnicity, disability and limited English proficiency -- before assessing whether or not they meet their AYP.
4. Students in all subgroups must meet the AYP in order for a school and district to reach its AYP.
5. School districts and states must release district and state report cards tracking student achievement broken down by each subgroup.
6. District and state report cards must be made public for parents and taxpayers.
7. A school's teaching programs must be scientifically tested and determined to be effective, based on standards outlined by NCLB.
8. NCLB establishes Reading First and Early Reading First programs, competitive state grant programs to promote scientifically based reading instruction for kindergarten through third grades and 3-5 year olds, respectively.
9. All teachers in core academic subjects must be "highly qualified" by the 2005-6 school year. In general, the federal standards for being highly qualified mean teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree and demonstrate proficiency in the subject(s) they teach by majoring in the

subject, passing a subject test, or meeting a State High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation.

10. States must implement a plan to reach the goal of having all teachers highly qualified by the 2005-6 school year and must report their progress. All teachers hired from the 2002-3 school year onward must be highly qualified.

11. Parents can request information on the qualifications of their child's teacher and must be informed if their child is taught by a teacher that is not highly qualified for more than four consecutive weeks.

12. NCLB authorizes alternative methods of teacher certification and rewards higher salaries and bonuses for teachers in high-need subjects, such as math and science.

13. The law also increases federal funding for teacher training programs, such as the Troops to Teachers program that encourages military veterans to become teachers, the Transition to Teaching program that encourages experienced professionals to become teachers, and Teach for America which recruits recent college graduates to teach in disadvantaged schools.

14. Miscellaneous provisions include the constitutional protection of school prayer, equal access to facilities for Boy Scouts, access to high school directory information for military recruiters, and the banning of smoking in all school indoor facilities.

Consequences for Failing to Meet AYP

If a Title I school fails to meet AYP:

For two consecutive years, the school must implement a two-year improvement plan, including teacher development and utilizing scientifically based education resources. Students must be given the option to transfer to a higher performing or charter school with Title I funds covering transportation costs. The school is also designated as "in need of improvement."

For three consecutive years, the school must continue to offer school transfers to students to better performing schools and implement improvements, such as teacher professional development. Students are also eligible to receive federally subsidized supplemental educational services, such as tutoring.

For four consecutive years, the school must take at least one serious corrective action, such as staff replacement, school restructuring, a new curriculum, the appointment of a consultant, extension of the school day/year. The measures come in addition to continuing to offer school choice and supplemental tutoring.

For five consecutive years, the school must completely restructure itself by replacing staff and school management, or turn control over to the state.

Students will also be allowed to transfer schools if a school is termed "unsafe" by the state or district.

Public Forum Article

Throughout my debate career, I have always heard about the importance of running unique arguments that your opponents will not expect coming. It seems obvious enough that you could benefit from your opponents not having a prepared response or counter evidence to this unique point. There is also the added benefit of entertaining your judge after he has heard the same three arguments all day long. Why wouldn't you always run unique arguments?

If an argument was truly that effective then it would become a much more popular argument. Granted the majority of arguments used by an average team tend to be easily disputed because those debaters are drawn in by the points superficial evidence. The best teams will be using the best arguments and if your goal is to win tournaments then you are going to encounter teams who run your same points. That being said if you can create an effective contention that is off the beaten path and you have adequately analyzed potential responses then by all means use that in your upcoming tournament.

When running a unique argument you need to make sure that there is some tangible evidence to support it rather than just theory and obscure connections. I happened to watch a round where a team was arguing that fiscal policy of rebate cheques would cause crippling inflation in the economy. They continued to support this point by stating that the government would print new money to cover some of the costs of the rebate cheques and by printing the needed amount we should see an increase in inflation by about 13-15%. Now reading this condensed version of this argument might make it seem naive but it was presented very convincingly in the round. The team had evidence to support all aspects of the contention; they even had a quote of some expert saying that it is common practice of the government to print money. Unfortunately, their opponents response was very simple; the government would not print money for exactly this reason and the country had implemented fiscal stimulus' before and have never seen this type of inflation in the past.

Debaters tend to get very exciting when they think they have found a one-of-a-kind argument and they end up losing sight of the resolution. You might try to get overly ambitious and idolize your contention thus causing you to overlook the main flaws with it. This is where most unique points go to the graveyard; just because you cannot quickly think of a good response doesn't mean that your opposition cannot. It doesn't matter if there isn't any counter evidence, analytic responses tend to be the most effective at ruining odd arguments.

One of the problems that I have seen with most teams running a unique argument is they don't fully understand the point themselves. It takes a very strong team, in many different ways, to effectively run an argument that their opponents are not expecting. Obviously, the most important part is being able to communicate your point successfully to your judge and opponents. If your opponents cannot understand it, then it is likely that your judge can not comprehend it as well. Once you have accomplished that, then you must be very adept at crossfire to support your point throughout the round. Overall, be careful because being unique for uniqueness sake is not effective and there is no such thing as an impenetrable argument.

Pro Analysis

Do not try to do too much on the Pro, the resolution states that you have very little that you need to accomplish to win the round. You do not need to try to advocate that No Child Left Behind has been good, beneficial, or even effective, stick to the wording of the resolution and only argue that academic achievement has improved. You will be able to deter many of the Con's attacks by keeping to this mentality because you will run into teams that will try to say that NCLB hasn't improved academic achievement because of all of the negative harms associated with the legislation. Those attacks do not have an affect on student achievement thus you can call your opponents out for bringing up erroneous points. Focus on the benefits of NCLB that directly relate to academic achievement or its importance for future achievement.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important factors when it comes to education is the impact of an effective teacher. One of the most influential people in my life time has been a former elementary school teacher of mine. In addition to always supplying cookies on holidays, she instilled a sense of the importance of education within me. No matter how many bad teachers you encounter in your lifetime, you will always remember the good ones and that will be enough to keep you motivated in school. Our culture is filled with inspirational teaching figures that come from literature, news, and movies so there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to prove how critical good teachers are. In addition, there is a good chance that some of your judges may be teachers so make sure to use that to your advantage. No Child Left Behind has taken many steps to try to improve the quality of teachers within in the country and there is very little evidence to suggest this hasn't been effective. Research by Darling-Hammond (2000) supports Goldhaber and Brewer's findings as well. She concludes: "The most consistent highly significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics in each year tested is the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state: those with full certification and a major in the field they teach." From this, you have set up the benefits of qualified teachers, and next you must prove that NCLB has increased the number of qualified teachers available. You might want to point out that there is a good chance that the majority or maybe even all of the teachers at the schools of the teams you will be debating are already qualified. Don't succumb to this availability heuristic by believing that this is the norm for the country; debaters are typically very privileged in the education they receive. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Progress is made possible by great teachers. NCLB calls for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. The Department has invested nearly \$3 billion each year to help states meet the requirements, which include state certification and subject-matter knowledge. The percentage of highly qualified teachers rose from 87 percent to 94 percent between the 2003-2004 and 2006-2007 school years." The only Con response to this is that there is no guarantee that these are better teachers, and even if there is no guarantee, the evidence suggests otherwise. Very few actually believe that a less qualified teacher is better for teaching the children of America.

It seems obvious that the Pro team should want to show that the actual measurement for academic achievement has increased since NCLB and, lucky for you, there is evidence to support that notion. High-stakes testing is used as the tool to measure this achievement and there are two different tests that can show academic achievement; the first being state exams and the second being the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Results on state exams are not going to hold much weight in debate rounds because most teams should have evidence showing how the tests get easier each year to increase the number of students who pass them. Give increases in the scores on state exams some lip-service in your case but focus more on the NAEP for the rest of the round because it is a standardized test that every student in the nation takes. The U.S. Department of Education reports, “Math scores for 4th- and 8th-graders rose to record highs in 2007, reading scores for 4th-graders rose to record highs in 2007, writing scores increased for 8th and 12th-graders in 2007; history scores increased in all three grade levels tested—4th, 8th, and 12th—in 2006.” You can find out the statistics for any group of people during any time frame at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/> which is the NAEP website. From this data you will most likely be able to prove anything you want in regards to test scores. As a standard, I would suggest you look at the long term growth in NAEP scores which does indeed show improvements after NCLB was passed. Clearly, test scores are not the ultimate barometer for academic achievement but it is rather compelling when you can show the accepted measure of academic achievement has improved since NCLB.

To add to scores across the board improving, supplement that by showing that the achievement gap, the gap between the scores of Caucasian students and students of other ethnicities, has begun to close since NCLB. This evidence will counter Con arguments regarding a decrease in the overall benchmark for achievement, because if that was the only reason for increased scores then we should see an even increase across the board. The evidence suggests that scores of minority students have been increasing at a higher rate than those of white students. This is particularly important because closing the achievement gap has been one of the main goals of NCLB. The Washington Post reports, “Students are performing better on state reading and math tests since enactment of the landmark No Child Left Behind law six years ago, according to an independent study released yesterday. The report by the District-based Center on Education Policy also found that black and low-income students have made gains on those exams, frequently narrowing performance gaps with white and middle-income peers.” This argument as a whole has the potential to have more of an impact than just increasing test scores because many would view this as being more important and might be enough to affirm the resolution on its own. Business Wire reports that, “In 4th grade reading, the achievement gap between white and African-American students is at an all-time low. In math, 4th and 8th grade African-American students achieved their highest scores to date. In 4th grade reading and in 4th and 8th grade math, Hispanic students set new achievement records. In reading, Hispanic 8th graders matched their all-time high.” There is plenty of evidence to show the achievement gap decreasing and if you want even more evidence then go to the NAEP website because you can organize scores by ethnicity.

NCLB creates a standard in which schools are responsible for the results of their teaching students; no longer are they only payed for having students show up to classes, they must demonstrate some sort of benefit from that attendance. Schools cannot allow their students to just fill up desks, they must actually be accountable for students learning. Without holding schools responsible for the achievement of their students, by creating a correlation between progress and funding, many schools wouldn't take the necessary steps to ensure improvement. Purdue Expert Sidney Moon states, "Because No Child Left Behind builds in serious consequences for schools that do not bring all students up to a minimum level of competency in key areas like reading and mathematics it has really focused the attention of schools on students like English language learners. I think No Child Left Behind has also created a positive atmosphere of accountability that schools are responsible not just for what they're doing but for the outcomes of what they're doing, for what their students learn." This is one of the analytic points that gives credence to the reasons why academic achievement should increase under NCLB. Schools must focus their attention on failing students instead of turning a blind eye on the "lost-cause." NCLB is primarily an incentive based plan, in which incentives have proven to lead to beneficial outcomes. The Con will most likely respond to this by saying that schools have always had an incentive to teach their students, and even if that is true, there is more of an incentive when there is a tangible benefit or repercussion.

NCLB has also taken steps to increase the involvement of parents in students lives. One can hardly argue that this isn't a noble cause or wouldn't have some sort of benefit on the students. While in no way could a piece of legislation fix all of the household problems in regards to parents influence on their children, NCLB is a step in the right direction. Educational experts claim, "Proponents of parental involvement (Henderson and Berla 1994; Epstein 2001; Henderson and Mapp 2002) have asserted that it is critical to student success. Leading researchers have found that when schools work with parents, everyone involved benefits—students, families, and schools (Henderson and Berla 1994; Henderson and Mapp 2002). Additionally, when parents are invited to participate at their children's schools, families generally become involved. This involvement leads not only to improved academic achievement for students, but also to increased teacher morale." More than just a bill that targets teaching students math and reading, NCLB is helping to solve the root cause of much underachievement. You can use this evidence to outweigh many Con points by the fact that it provides a more stable foundation for increased achievement in the future. The Georgia Appleseed Knowledge Forum says, "In the schools: Parental involvement in the school system can be viewed as the most important part of NCLB so that schools, school districts and state departments of education should offer effective programs that will involve all parents in their children's education in ways that will help students perform better in school. Effective parental involvement programs result from effective "partnerships" among school districts, local schools, and parents." Adding stability to households not only increases academic achievement but it also leads to a higher standard of living for many students which in turn would rejuvenate an importance of education.

If you were to ask anyone on the street what the major problem is with public education, the vast majority would say funding. No one will deny that schools are underfunded and since that predicament could be alleviated by increasing funding, NCLB is at least a part of the solution. Granted, in no way does NCLB solve the funding issue, don't try to argue that, but there is no denying that it has increased the amount of federal aid given to public schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "The President's Budget increases total funding for NCLB by \$1.2 billion (in 2007), to \$24.5 billion, a 41% (total) increase since 2001." Under the logic that increased funding is good, you should be able to trap many Con teams into admitting this point. Their only response will be that increased funding will only be effective if the money is used correctly, and while that is true, there is not a way to misdirect the entire 41% increase in funding. The evidence outlines where exactly the spending has gone to and it will be easy to argue that much of it has gone to methods to improve student achievement.

Con Analysis

It is likely that Con teams should have the advantage in this month's debates; however, do not think that you have won the round just because you have the more popular side. On the Con, you have the distinct advantage of a mountain of evidence that you can use because there are very few non-governmental groups that support No Child Left Behind. There has been so much backlash against NCLB that all kinds of groups are publishing papers and articles about their grievances with NCLB. Luckily, you can use this anti-NCLB craze to your benefit by having legitimate sources to counter, what seems like, every provision of NCLB.

It is rather widely accepted that NCLB has not achieved its intended goals and this disdain will most likely be shared by your judge. Putting the resolution aside, Con teams should be able to use statistics and evidence to paint NCLB as the worst piece of legislation in our era and that may be enough to overwhelm some teams, but proficient pro teams will be able to overcome shallow con arguments. The Pro has very little that they need to prove; NCLB doesn't have to be perfect or even achieve its intentions for the resolution to be affirmed. The round rests on the hinge of whether NCLB has improved student achievement; focusing the debate on this issue has made this topic much more level.

If there will be any debate over definitions, it will concern the use of academic achievement in the resolution. You should expect Pro teams to try to limit this performance to high stakes test scores but in no way is student achievement limited only to the subject matters being tested. It would behoove you to suggest that academic achievement encompasses performance throughout a student's career, growth in varying subjects, potential to succeed in the future, and education as a whole. No judge is going to buy that academic achievement is only children's scores on tests so don't let this pro point go unanswered.

When choosing which arguments to include in your case, make sure to use points that stand on their own rather than just responses to expected Pro arguments. There is a time and place for everything so leave your responses until the second speech. As a standard for most of your arguments, include the background information necessary about NCLB to assure that your judge is able to understand your points.

The base of NCLB is that standardized testing is supposed to represent students' achievement at a particular time. To prevent sanctions being placed against them, schools need to maintain a state level of achievement for their students. While it sounds good that all students should be proficient in math and reading, we must look at the consequences of placing so much emphasis on these high-stakes tests. William J. Mathis of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education says, "Statewide achievement tests do not measure the vast expanse of curriculum set forth by states and school districts. Tests tend to measure those things that are easy to measure, in an efficient and economical way. This means that the focus is on lower-order thinking skills, with a light smattering of higher-order skills, such as writing a short essay. Schools and teachers, faced with ever-increasing demands to avoid the 'failing school' label, will logically focus on the

curriculum content that is most likely to improve test scores.” There is a benefit for schools to have their students pass these tests so it is in the schools best interest to take all of the steps necessary to help students in the respective testing subjects. Unfortunately, schools end up sacrificing many different facets of education to focus solely on math and reading. Across the country we have been seeing schools cut their arts and physical education classes so that there is more time for core learning. To teach failing and bubble students, those who are near the level of passing, schools will even forgo teaching important, although not tested, subjects such as history and science. According to the Research and Policy Manager of Education Sector of You Decide, “Yes, we want children to know how to read and understand basic math computations. But most experts believe that an appreciation of other disciplines, such as music and foreign languages, or just time off to kick a ball is equally as crucial to brain development and success later in life.” In addition, students are being taught how to take a test and figure out which answers are wrong rather than actually learning the subject matter. Students spend time in classroom, rooted in a seat so they can practice taking these state exams; is that really the type of education that we want for America’s children? We must also look at the effect of narrowing the curriculum has on students perceptions of education. When students are forced to learn seemingly difficult subjects for the sole purpose of passing a test without the addition of potentially more well-rounded subjects, students will lose their love of education. Students already do not see the merits in testing so, to them, the reason why they are in school is to pass some test so their school can get money. While students perception might not be rooted in the reality of the situation, their belief makes the consequences real. Decreasing the spirit of education within the minds of students, makes them less likely to continue with school in the future, which is the opposite of the intended effect of high stakes testing.

Increasing student achievement must account for all students, not only those who are testing at a specific time. Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education at Stanford University, states, “Perhaps the most adverse unintended consequence of NCLB is that it creates incentives for schools to rid themselves of students who are not doing well, producing higher scores at the expense of vulnerable students' education” While testing scores might improve over time, can we really say that achievement is going up along with drop out rates? Even though students may be underperforming, it is more beneficial to them and to the community to keep them in school rather than having them on the streets. Darling-Hammond goes on to say, “Studies have found that sanctioning schools based on average student scores leads schools to retain students in grade so that grade-level scores will look better (although these students ultimately do less well and drop out at higher rates), exclude low-scoring students from admissions and encourage such students to transfer or drop out.” NCLB has had the unintended consequence to push the very students it has attempted to help out of an education. Drop-outs inflate test-scores, which would undermine any perceived gains in education because those gains don’t necessary mean that students actually scored higher, just that the average increased. Even if this were not the case, increased drop-out rates in itself is enough to outweigh the controversial benefits of NCLB.

Going along those same lines of increased achievement for all students, it is not enough to only help those who are near to passing the state benchmark test. Since schools will focus their attention on increasing the number of students who pass the state exam, they in turn spend less resources educating their high-achieving students. The American Educational Research Journal reports that, "The most logical course for the low-performing high school is to focus all its available resources and reform efforts on a very small number of students - those students who are close to proficient in the tested grade." Once a school reaches that critical mark of failure to meet their AYP two years in a row, advanced students will no longer be able to get the kind of education they deserve. Purdue Expert Sidney Moon, Associate Dean of Learning Engagement and Professor of Educational Studies, says, "Gifted children, who often are ready to move beyond basic education well before their peers, also are feeling the fallout of No Child Left Behind. Some of our brightest and most talented learners are being neglected because of the focus on bringing all children up to minimal competencies." In reality, students are being punished for excelling; as far as the school is concerned, there is no longer an incentive to accelerating the education of a student once he has passed the state exam. We need to ask ourselves the question, what happens when we stifle the education of the next generation's leaders? Achievement as an adult and as a citizen will become hampered and even more susceptible to the inequalities of socio-economic classes; more wealthy families will send their children to better and private schools because they will not be challenged in public school. As difficult as it is to admit, raising students test scores to some arbitrary level does not mean that they are more apt to success in the real world. Focusing efforts to improve students with a vastly ineffective method that does not improve their chances of pursuing higher education or even earning a high school diploma is not worth the consequences of retarding the progress of the excelling students who should become the leaders of tomorrow.

Education inequalities become a particular problem when schools do not have available resources and must focus on complying with the law rather than upholding the fundamentals of education. According to the Heritage Foundation, "No Child Left Behind created new rules and regulations for schools and significantly increased compliance costs for state and local governments. According to the Office of Management and Budget, No Child Left Behind increased state and local governments' annual paperwork burden by 6,680,334 hours, at an estimated cost of \$141 million dollars." Funding is probably the largest problem with education in America and the provisions on NCLB do not provide enough money to assure the academic growth of students. Even with the money allotted to schools under NCLB, states all over the country are having educational budget issues. The bureaucracy of NCLB has drastically increased the paperwork for states, and costs associated, just so that an ineffective method of education can continue to exist. There is also evidence to suggest that state educational programs have been more advantageous at improving academic achievement but states have had to give up these programs to fund NCLB sanction requirements.

Funding perpetuates a vicious cycle of harming lower achieving schools, the ones who need the most support. The way Title 1 funding works is that each schools gets a specific

amount of money per year, the amount varies depending on a many different factors, and as long as schools fulfill their AYP they can use that money however they choose. Once a schools has NCLB sanctions imposed against them, they must spend some of their Title 1 funding on specific programs intended to benefit their students. Unfortunately, these sanctions are very costly methods to slightly benefit a small number of students; much of these costs go to tutoring and transportation for transferring students. Schools are doing all they can to educate their students so instead of additional funding for failing schools, NCLB requires them to use the money they are already receiving. Undoubtedly, the pro team will state that schools are not using their funding correctly so that is why they are not passing AYP thus they should spend that money on other efforts to improve their students. That logic in reality fails because on the whole education is still vastly underfunded even with NCLB; therefore, NCLB funding is not enough for many schools to properly educate their students. This system of sanctions only harms underperforming schools because those schools must allocate huge amounts of their budgets away from classrooms to attempt to help a minority of students; overall the benefits are not worth the costs.

Just because scores have increased on state and national tests does not mean NCLB has been effective at improving academic achievement. According to the Flynn Effect in psychology, IQ scores increase from generation to generation; likewise, scores on state and national standardized tests gradually increase over time. If NCLB were truly effective, then we should see an increase in the rate of score growth; however, national scores have not shown this. Bruce Fuller, lead author and professor of education and public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, noted that the strong advances in narrowing racial and income-based achievement gaps seen in the 1990s have faded since passage of ‘No Child’. “The slowing of achievement gains, even declines in reading, since 2002 suggests that state-led accountability efforts—well underway by the mid-1990s—packed more of a punch in raising student performance, compared with the flattening-out of scores during the ‘No Child’ era.” There is plenty of technical evidence for this point that will give you a better understand of the actual numbers associated with the decreasing gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The point you want to get across is that NCLB is actually getting in the way of gains that were already being seen in the past.

On the Con, you can also place immense doubt on the recent improvements on exams. The evidence is full of reasons why standardized testing scores have been inflated and that should be enough to convince your judges that numbers are not enough to constitute academic achievement. The American Educational Research Journal reports that, “study authors also note that achievement gains cannot be directly attributed to NCLB and may result from a combination of increased learning and other factors such as teaching to the test, more lenient tests, scoring or data analyses, and changes in the student populations tested.” Once you cast enough skepticism on the legitimacy of test scores, you can emphasize that the spirit of education has been lost for sake of meaningless measures of achievement. Despite the mountain of statistics on the Con, do not become overwhelming in your rounds, choose your evidence wisely for it should not be difficult to convince a judge on the Con.

Pro Blocks

Increased Test Scores

NCLB has not lead to improved academic improvement. First, there are several problems with standardized tests in general and their efficacy at measuring achievement gains. Second, the testing results have been artificially inflated through cheating and making the tests easier. Finally, the increase in scores in the last few years was smaller than the immediate years before NCLB was enacted. As a result, the testing results if anything suggest NCLB has decreased academic improvement overall.

Increased Accountability

Holding schools and teachers accountable isn't necessarily a good thing. The main problem with NCLB is its poor implementation. It does not set a clear enough set of worthy standards to hold schools accountable to. There is no benefit in increasing accountability if it is to poor standards which has been the actuality with NCLB. In addition, this lack of quality standards does not translate into higher teacher quality like the pro is suggesting. Finally, the way NCLB supposedly keeps schools accountable is flawed. Instead of helping the students that need the most help, it deprives them of the tools and resources they need which isn't the answer.

Increased Parental Involvement

I don't think anyone would argue that parental involvement is a major part of NCLB. I doubt the judge even knows parental involvement is a part of the act. The main problem with the parental involvement aspect of the legislation is even if it had good intentions; the awful implementation has thwarted them. In addition, it is borderline impossible to quantify/impact. Then list some solid empirical data that outweighs these hypothetical gains.

Bridge Achievement Gap

NCLB's main goal was to lessen the achievement gap, but we have seen empirical evidence that that's not what it has done. In reality, NCLB has hurt minorities, and as a result, civil rights groups are calling for the destruction of NCLB. Despite its good intentions, NCLB has failed. As the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Increased Funding

The problems with our education system extend far beyond funding. Just throwing money at the problem isn't the answer. In reality, NCLB takes money away from state funding. Furthermore, the costs of complying with the poor legislation are high as well which takes away valuable money that could be used much more effectively. Overall, funding is somewhat irrelevant to the resolution. The resolution specifically asks if NCLB has improved academic achievement which it hasn't when you look at the evidence directly relevant to the topic.

Higher Quality Teachers

This is a myth. According to the Hoover Institute, "Lawmakers blundered when they confused "qualified" with "certified" teachers. There's no solid evidence that state certification ensures classroom effectiveness—and the booming success of programs such as Teach for America, which sends recent college graduates into troubled schools, suggests that certification may be wholly unnecessary. By requiring certified teachers in every classroom, No Child Left Behind makes it harder for district and charter schools to attract energetic and capable people who want to teach but have taken a less traditional route to the classroom."

Tutoring/Transfer Option

While these options sound good in theory, in practice they haven't been effectively utilized and are vastly under funded. Evidence shows that students that change schools do no better than the students that stay.

Con Blocks

Narrows the Curriculum/Teaching to Test

Nothing about NCLB inherently narrows the curriculum. Instead, NCLB enables students to get more out of the curriculum by improving teacher quality and helping to ensure a firm foundation is set in math and reading early. In addition according to the Hoover Institute, “Teachers’ animus toward standardized testing has many roots, chief among them the grueling weeks of preparation and exams that they and their students endure every year. But the accountability made possible by standardized testing isn’t all bad. If the test is an honest measure of a solid curriculum, then teaching students the skills and knowledge they need to pass it is honorable work. Just ask any Advanced Placement teacher.” Furthermore, it is impossible for these students to succeed later on without the basic foundation required by NCLB.

Harms Talented Students

This is speculative at best. Everyone benefits with the increased accountability, higher quality teachers, increased parental involvement, and increased funding regardless of their ability. Also, schools have honors and advanced classes to combat this hypothetical problem. Even if it did mildly hurt talented students—which it doesn’t—on balance this is outweighed by the fact that NCLB helps everyone else. Is it better for Bill Gates to make more money or for the average American to make more? We need to narrow the achievement gap that we currently possess.

Gains Not Due to NCLB

Not true. Clear gains have been seen in the past few years, and NCLB, the largest change in education in several decades, has been the cause. NCLB has produced these gains both directly and indirectly. Directly, NCLB has produced these gains by increasing accountability, teacher quality, parental involvement, funding, etc. Furthermore, NCLB has truly brought education to the forefront of the nation’s conscious. As a result, the other factors that are supposedly causing these gains can still be attributed to the NCLB Act of 2001, because these other factors arose out of the increased attention to education generated by NCLB. It is important to remember that few changes to the education system have been made since the passing of Brown v Board of Education.

Achievement Slowing Since NCLB

Read counterevidence. Go into the logic of why achievement would be growing even slower today without NCLB. While there is no way of proving this either way view the situation as a comparative of what is happening to what could be happening if we didn’t have NCLB.

NCLB Takes Money Away from States

Overall and more importantly, NCLB results in an increase in overall funding which can be seen as a clear benefit considering how under funded this country's education system has been for decades. Also education is a national issue.

Scores Improve Because States Lower Standards

NCLB is not perfect. Yes to the cynic, minor score manipulation is possible; however, this does not mean there has been a decrease in student achievement. It simply means it is harder to quantify the gains. Even if the tests are made easier, NCLB still increases teacher quality, parental involvement, funding, etc. which are all benefits of NCLB. For example, let's say ten students take a math test and only five pass. Two of the students then go on to learn the material necessary to pass the same test, but the test has been made easier since the last time. As a result, all ten pass the test even though only seven would have passed the original test. Clearly in this example, the data is a little skewed when the test is changed; however, it doesn't change the fact that as a whole academic achievement has been improved.

Vicious Cycle of Harming Underperforming Schools

No exactly the opposite. NCLB has made significant progress in trying to bring an end to the major achievement gap problem that has been prevalent in the United States for decades. In addition by keeping schools more accountable and increasing the overall transparency, it encourages people to get more involved in the community. It only makes sense that our underperforming schools should be watched and monitored so they don't fall too far behind. If a school can't be salvaged, then it may need to be closed in order to bring about improved academic achievement. NCLB creates a way for these students to get tutoring and access to better schools when they most need it.

Increase in Drop-Outs

This is one of the harder points to refute. Overall, this is outweighed by all the other gains that NCLB creates. In additions, it is hard to link NCLB to the drop-out rate over this time period. The drop-out rate has naturally increased some as more and more students choose to go over seas to serve their country. It is a natural result in times of war. In addition in the future, NCLB is helping to establish a firm foundation early on, so students can succeed later on.

Discourages Teachers

NCLB doesn't discourage teachers. All it does is help ensure that our nation's youth have higher quality teachers that can be held accountable. If anything, NCLB discourages the teachers that aren't qualified to be teaching which can be seen as a positive impact of the act. There is counter evidence available in regards to the improvement of family connections and its impact on teacher morale.

Crossfire

I can not stress enough how annoying it is to be a judge when two teams are just reading evidence and making speeches without questions during cross. Also you shouldn't dwell on any one point too long in cross especially if you are losing it. I saw this mistake made myriad times by some very good teams while judging at Harvard.

On the pro, I would start right off with:

P: Would you agree that our education system has historically been vastly under funded?

Don't take no for an answer. It is pretty hard to deny but bring up evidence if you need to.

P: So we need better funding. Doesn't NCLB increase funding for education, a good thing?

C: (See blocks)

I think you can easily corner a team here with the funding point and it is reasonably compelling. I wouldn't even put it in my first constructive, because it is so easy to bring up later.

C: How does depriving the schools in the most need of resources beneficial?

P: First of all, net resources across the board actual increase with NCLB. In addition, NCLB is beneficial for all these students for all the reasons I mentioned in my case. NCLB simply puts underachieving schools on a watch list, and gives the students at these schools experiencing a death spiral of sorts some of the best resources, namely tutoring and the means to transfer out to better schools which they wouldn't get or be able to do without NCLB.

C: If NCLB supposedly lessens the achievement gap, why do so many civil rights groups oppose the legislation? Isn't that quite telling?

C: Does more money make a person better at teaching?

P: It doesn't make them worse at teaching certainly, and it enables them to do more in the classroom.

C: What makes a good teacher? Do more degree requirements in their field of study like NCLB requires make a better teacher?

P: In general yes. We owe it to our students to have competent teachers with a decent understanding of the material.

C: So do you honestly believe Albert Einstein would have been a good teacher of elementary school science?

P: I think you are vastly exaggerating what these standards are. I would hope we could both agree that it is impossible for a person to teach someone else something if they don't understand it adequately themselves.

P: Wouldn't you agree increased parental involvement and transparency is a good thing?

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Pro Evidence

Students Scores Improve/Decrease Achievement Gap

The Washington Post
June 25, 2008 Wednesday, Regional Edition
Test Results Improve After 'No Child' Law, Study Finds
Maria Glod; Washington Post Staff Writer

Students are performing better on state reading and math tests since enactment of the landmark No Child Left Behind law six years ago, according to an independent study released yesterday. The report by the District-based Center on Education Policy also found that black and low-income students have made gains on those exams, frequently narrowing performance gaps with white and middle-income peers. The report's authors cautioned that the boost could not be attributed directly to the federal law and said the improvements also might reflect state and local reforms.

"The country tried to improve the quality of public schools, raise student achievement, close the achievement gap, and we're moving in the right direction," said Jack Jennings, the center's president and chief executive.

Because standards vary from state to state, some analysts have questioned the reliability of state tests as a gauge of academic performance.

The study, which included data from 50 states, found that achievement on state reading and math exams has improved in most of them. The trend is largely mirrored on national exams, the study found, although the gains tend to be smaller.

In Maryland, the report found, achievement gaps between black and white students and between low-income and middle- to upper-income students narrowed in reading across grade levels. The picture was mixed in math.

http://www.kqed.org/w/youdecide/no_child_left_behind/index.html

You Decide

Kevin Carey, Research and Policy Manager, Education Sector.

A recent study from the Center on Education Policy seems to credit the NCLB strategy with the great equalizer effect. It shows that the achievement gap between African American and white students has shrunk in 13 states since NCLB went into effect and the gap between students from low-income backgrounds and those from more affluent families narrowed in 10 states.

Achievement Gap Closing/Goals Attainable

http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20080107006297&newsLang=en

Business Wire

January 7, 2007

As the 2007 Nation's Report Card shows, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is helping raise achievement for all kinds of children, in all kinds of schools, in every part of the country. Students are achieving record success, with minority students, poor students, and students with disabilities reaching all-time highs in a number of areas. As a result, the achievement gap is beginning to close.

The results achieved by students at Horace Greeley prove that with high expectations and dedication, we can meet the goal of NCLB and help every student reach grade level or above. Horace Greeley was recently named a NCLB-Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, an honor given to schools that are academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. Most of the students at Horace Greeley come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and many speak English as a second language. Yet test scores are soaring – from 2003 to 2007, student proficiency in reading increased 25 points to 76 percent, while student proficiency in math rose 26 points to 85 percent.

The Nation's Report Card, released this fall, shows across-the-board improvement in 4th and 8th grade reading and math nationwide.

In reading, scores for 4th graders were the highest on record.

In math, scores for 4th and 8th graders were the highest on record.

African-American and Hispanic students are making significant progress, posting all-time highs in a number of categories.

In 4th grade reading, the achievement gap between white and African-American students is at an all-time low.

In math, 4th and 8th grade African-American students achieved their highest scores to date.

In 4th grade reading and in 4th and 8th grade math, Hispanic students set new achievement records. In reading, Hispanic 8th graders matched their all-time high.

Remarkable Gains against Achievement Gap

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/06/06052007.html>

US Department of Education

June 5, 2007

In response to the Center for Education Policy's release of *Answering the Question that Matters Most: Has Student Achievement Increased Since No Child Left Behind?*, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said the following:

I'm greatly encouraged by the findings of the Center for Education Policy's report. This study confirms that No Child Left Behind has struck a chord of success with our nation's schools and students.

Under President Bush's leadership, No Child Left Behind has driven meaningful reforms in our nation's education system. In five short years, we've seen encouraging results, especially in our elementary schools. Students are making remarkable gains in reading and math, and the achievement gap that once seemed intractable is now narrowing in many of our nation's schools.

We know the law is working, so now is the time to reauthorize No Child Left Behind and continue the promise of a quality education for all of America's children.

NCLB Lead to Better School Management

<http://www.cgcs.org/pdfs/Testimony9-10-02.pdf>

Testimony on "Successful Implementation of Title I"

No Child Left Behind before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

U.S. Senate by the Council of the Great City Schools

September 10, 2002, Washington, D.C.

Most cities responded by starting their planning process immediately. New York City, for example, assembled a cabinet-level task force on January 16 to initiate the implementation process. Greenboro (NC) began implementation meetings on February 22 with its board, superintendent, senior management, and all school principals.

One of the unintended--and positive--side-effects of the legislation has been better coordination among staff. NCLB reached beyond Title I into curriculum, instruction, personnel, procurement, budget, student assignment, transportation, strategic planning, assessment, research and evaluation, data systems, and management. In nearly every Great City School system, the superintendent and his cabinet-level administrators have been engaged personally in implementing the Act at a level I have not seen in the five other ESEA reauthorizations in which I have participated.

All Students get Attention Under NCLB

http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/hww/results/getResults.jhtml?_DARGS=/hww/results/results_common.jhtml.21

Viadero, Debra

Study Finds No 'Educational Triage' Driven by NCLB

Education Week 27 no10 11 O 31 2007

A new study offers evidence to dispute the notion that the federal No Child Left Behind Act is pressuring educators in struggling schools to focus on the "bubble kids" -- students who fall just below the passing threshold on state tests -- at the expense of students at the high and low ends of the achievement spectrum.

For the study, which is to be published Oct. 31 in the magazine Education Next, researcher Matthew G. Springer scoured three years of test-score data on 300,000 elementary and middle school students in an unnamed Western state for signs that students in the middle testing range got a disproportionate boost in test scores after the 2002 law took effect.

"I didn't see anything that seemed to indicate that educational triage is taking place," said Mr. Springer, a research assistant professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

Rather, he found, the schools identified as having fallen short of their performance goals succeeded in raising achievement for the entire range of students at risk of failing, without sacrificing the academic progress of the most gifted students.

NCLB Holds Schools Accountable for Aiding Struggling Learners

<http://news.uns.purdue.edu/mov/2008/080811TG12-MoonEducation.wmv>

Purdue Expert Sidney Moon

Associate Dean of Learning Engagement and Professor of Educational Studies

“This act has certainly had a tremendous impact on the nations schools. And I would say the results are somewhat mixed. The positive side of No Child Left Behind is that it has really encourages a national focus on struggling learners sometimes those learners were ignored in the past or they weren’t appropriately educated. Because No Child Left Behind builds in serious consequences for schools that do not bring all students up to a minimum level of competency in key areas like reading and mathematics it has really focused the attention of schools on students like English language learners. I think No Child Left Behind has also created a positive atmosphere of accountability that schools are responsible not just for what they’re doing but for the outcomes of what they’re doing, for what their students learn.

NCLB Helps States with Least Programs

http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Educational_Researcher/3605/07EDR07_268-278.pdf

Gauging Growth: How to Judge No Child Left Behind?

by Bruce Fuller, Joseph Wright, Kathryn Gesicki, and Erin Kang

Educational Researcher, Vol. 36, No. 5, pp. 268–278

A parallel argument by some in the civil rights community is that NCLB's distinct value added may be modest in states that already experienced gains, but federal action is required to reap similar benefits in southern or midwestern states that have legislated weaker standards-based accountability programs. An important possibility is that NCLB may yield significant gains for students in states that maintain weak accountability efforts.

Experts Say NCLB Has Increased Achievement

Editorial Team's Introduction: Special Issue on No Child Left Behind

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 454, 6 pgs

"American educators and students were asked to raise academic achievement, and they have done so," said Jack Jennings, President and CEO of the private, nonprofit Center on Education Policy. "The weight of evidence indicates that state test scores in reading and mathematics have increased overall since No Child Left Behind was enacted.

Improved Opportunities for Low Income Students

<http://www.opposingviews.com/arguments/qualified-teachers-for-all-students-not-just-the-affluent>

Deborah White

2008

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) resulted in all public school students, not just those in affluent or well-funded school districts, to be taught by well-qualified, competent teachers.

This rule is needed as one of many tools to combat the reality of low-income and minority students scoring significantly below more affluent whites on tests, high school graduation rates and college attendance.

As National Public Radio reporter Larry Abramson explained in a November 22, 2006 report, "In high-poverty and high-minority schools -- where students are likely to be the most in need of an experienced teacher -- they're the least likely to get one."

Substantial Opportunities for Disabled Students

National Center for Learning Disabilities

The National Center for Learning Disabilities believes that the new provisions of NCLB provide substantial opportunities for students with learning disabilities. However, given the serious sanctions schools face for not delivering sufficient academic progress, NCLD also recognizes the possibility that students with learning disabilities and their parents might be subjected to numerous obstacles. Many of these obstacles have been mentioned here, while others will only be thoroughly understood and identified as NCLB implementation moves forward.

Everyone Benefits with Parental Involvement

https://secure.kdp.org/pdf/publications/rsp08/Record_Sp08_Quintanar.pdf

Anita P. Quintanar, Director of Student Programs & School Relations (Claremont)

Susan R. Warren, Director of masters programs in education (Azusa Pacific University)

Spring 2008

Proponents of parental involvement (Henderson and Berla 1994; Epstein 2001; Henderson and Mapp 2002) have asserted that it is critical to student success. For decades, federal and state guidelines such as Title I have required schools to show evidence of parental involvement (Elementary and Secondary Education Act 2004). The recent policy No Child Left Behind (2001) also provides for the inclusion of parents in the educational process of their children. For many schools, however, parental involvement is viewed simply as a mandate that must be followed (Sarason 1995) and does not include the voices of parents, particularly low-income Latino parents.

Leading researchers have found that when schools work with parents, everyone involved benefits—students, families, and schools (Henderson and Berla 1994; Henderson and Mapp 2002). Additionally, when parents are invited to participate at their children’s schools, families generally become involved. This involvement leads not only to improved academic achievement for students, but also to increased teacher morale. Kellaghan et al. (1993, 13) reported, “today, many commentators would view any attempt at intervention with children from disadvantaged backgrounds that did not include a home component as unlikely to be very effective.”

Parental Involvement Most Important Part

[http://www.gaappleseed.org/docs/Parent Involvement Forum Notes - Final.pdf](http://www.gaappleseed.org/docs/Parent%20Involvement%20Forum%20Notes%20-%20Final.pdf)

Georgia Appleseed Knowledge Forum, September 17, 2007

The morning session's panelists were: U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, an original author of NCLB; former Georgia Governor Roy Barnes, Co-Chair of the Aspen Institute Commission on NCLB, and Dr. Joyce Epstein, Director of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University and a nationally recognized expert in the field of parent involvement.

ISSUE: Why is parent involvement important at home and in the schools?

Barnes: At home: Children are often caught in a “cycle of failure” or a “cycle of success.” In the education context, studies indicate that children of parents who did not go to school or who were not successful in school are more likely to fail academically, while children of parents who are college-educated or otherwise successful in their education are more likely to succeed in school. Therefore, a parent's involvement in a child’s education can be an important part of breaking a cycle of failure and beginning a cycle of success.

In the schools: One of the things that distinguish us as a free people from other great civilizations is that ours is the first society which has fostered universal access to education. Active parental involvement in schools is important to maintain this key differentiating factor. Indeed, every school ought to be governed by a local board made up of parents, teachers and others from the community rather than through the current centralized system.

Epstein: At home: Studies over the last 25 years or more have demonstrated that effective family involvement can lead to positive academic, behavioral, and attitudinal outcomes for children regardless of their starting point.

In the schools: Parental involvement in the school system can be viewed as the most important part of NCLB so that schools, school districts and state departments of education should offer effective programs that will involve all parents in their children’s education in ways that will help students perform better in school. Effective parental involvement programs result from effective “partnerships” among school districts, local schools, and parents. Parents certainly have responsibilities but cannot be expected to figure out on their own how to be involved. Schools and school systems need to develop programs to encourage parental involvement in a way that all parents (regardless of socioeconomic status) can have the opportunity to assist their children in improving their academic performance.

Isakson: At home: A child will rise or fall based upon parental expectations. If Georgia parents asked their children whether or not they had done their homework (or needed help) five nights a week; showed up at school unexpectedly three or four times a year, and knew their children's teacher’s home phone number and first name, there would likely be a dramatic improvement in student performance in the state.

In the schools: In his travels around the state observing the best schools and those that were in need of improvement, the single distinguishing factor in general was the extent of parental involvement in the schools with the highest performing schools reflecting the highest level of effective parental involvement and interest.

NCLB Has Been Effective

[http://www.gaappleseed.org/docs/Parent Involvement Forum Notes - Final.pdf](http://www.gaappleseed.org/docs/Parent%20Involvement%20Forum%20Notes%20-%20Final.pdf)

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ISSUE: With NCLB reauthorization coming, what aspects of the law are working and what needs to be changed?

Barnes: NCLB was a "sea change." The greatest achievement of NCLB has been to end the divisive debate about whether education should be a national priority. It is a national priority, and it should be. For the most part, NCLB is working because it has established higher performance expectations and accountability.

With regard to needed changes, a "growth model" approach to demonstrating adequate yearly progress (AYP) should be used. That is, a school considered to be underperforming but which makes more than a year's worth of progress in one year and is reasonably closing the gap on deficiencies should be viewed as achieving AYP. He believes this change will be made in the reauthorization process (but in order for it to work, there will have to be adequate funding for an effective student information system.) He further urges that the information developed in this process be used to assess teacher performance as well as student performance.

An area that needs change and that is particularly relevant to parent involvement relates to Georgia student performance standards. His position on this is triggered by his view that: "We do not tell parents the truth." The state CRT [Criterion Reference Test] does not set a sufficiently rigorous goal for proficiency and can lull parents into a false sense that their children are doing well in school. Performance evaluation should be based on national American student performance standards. He rejected the idea that algebra is different in Ohio than it is in Georgia.

Effective education of our young people is critically important to our ability to compete as a nation over the next 50 years and, potentially, to whether in fact we exist as a nation at all in 100 years. We are not now producing students in Georgia who will all have the ability to compete in the international economic competitive marketplace. There needs to be a sense of urgency (indeed, "a panic") to assure that we do everything we can to make all our children competitive. We need to put children first regardless of the impact of such action on the adults affected by the changes necessary to implement such a program.

NCLB Has Been Effective (Cont'd)

Isakson: NCLB has been effective, although some changes are in order. Test scores indicate that math and reading skills have improved since the enactment of NCLB, especially in Title I schools.

The use of the growth model is appropriate and Congress is likely to pass the necessary amendments to implement this approach. He also expects changes in the law to allow more flexibility in the assessment of the disaggregated group of special needs students, as well as how the disaggregated non-English speaking student group affects a school's AYP status. He urged a change that would not count the performance of the non-English speaking group members for up to three (3) years or when they achieve proficiency whichever first occurs (although he doubts that this particular change will occur). He also would like to see changes in the law to allow for alternative certification systems for schools to demonstrate that they comply with the requirements for the employment of "highly qualified" teachers. It is important that reauthorization be done in 2007 because it is not likely to happen in the 2008 election year.

Epstein: She agreed with the other two panelists with regard to likely major changes to NCLB. She then focused on Section 1118 of NCLB which is the primary source of parental involvement mandates and which builds upon prior law. This section properly moves the focus on parent involvement from the parent to the school system. Section 1118 is a good base upon which to develop parental involvement but some improvements are needed. In particular, she believes the language should be revised to encourage greater leadership. Generalized statements stressing the importance of parental involvement are important, but the language should be strengthened to mandate "really making it happen." She suggested some refinements that would mandate that school districts appoint leaders responsible for implementation of the mandate of the law. She is concerned that the word "teamwork" does not appear in Section 1118 but that teamwork and partnerships among principals, teachers and parents is a missing piece in the process of making parental involvement a reality for all parents. She also noted that a continuing issue is funding. She noted that the funding language is not bad but that funds are not always appropriated by Congress at the level authorized.

Barnes: He noted that there is sometimes an unfortunate unwillingness on the part of districts to share detailed information with the individual schools and with parents. He urged full transparency.

Examples of Benefits

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/tst071703.cfm>

July 17, 2003

The Promise of No Child Left Behind by [Krista Kafer](#)

Testimony Before the House Budget Committee Democratic Caucus, Senate Democratic Policy Committee

NCLB is making a difference, but you do not have to take my word for it. Newspapers, educators, parents, and elected officials are talking about the good news:

According to the Raleigh News & Observer, “school districts in North Carolina are reporting sharp increases in performance on tests of reading and math given this spring to students in third through eighth grades.... Elementary grades show the biggest improvements. Education leaders see a clear link between the jump in test scores and the federal mandate to push schools to look past their overall score averages to the performance of their lowest-scoring students.”

The Denver Post reported that, spurred by the NCLB, schools are reaching out to Latino families in order to improve achievement.

The Minneapolis Tribune reported that NCLB’s policy on failing schools “means unprecedented attention to individual students and reaching those who struggle.”

Considerable Progress in Elevating Achievement

<http://republicans.edlabor.house.gov/archive/issues/108th/recess/nclbworks.htm>

John Boehner

US Representative and Chairman of the House Education & Workforce Committee

October 7, 2004

A major new report released in March 2004 concludes America's big city schools are making considerable progress in elevating student achievement, and the No Child Left Behind education law is helping to drive those scores. The report, released by the Council of Great City Schools – a national coalition representing more than 60 of the nation's largest urban school districts – shows students in the nation's major urban schools have posted substantial gains in statewide math and reading assessments since NCLB was enacted. A copy of the report is available online at http://www.cgcs.org/reports/beat_the_oddsIV.html.

Reading and math scores have climbed in urban schools since NCLB was enacted. The Great City Schools report shows improvement of fourth and eighth grade public school students in state-developed reading and math tests under NCLB. According to the report, 47.8 percent of urban school students performed at or above proficient in fourth grade reading and 51 percent scored at or above proficient in fourth grade math, a 4.9 and 6.8 percentage point increase respectively compared to 2002 scores. Eighth grade reading and math scores showed increases as well from 2002 to 2003. When compared to 2002, eighth grade reading and math scores increased by 1.1 and 3 percentage points in 2003.

Urban school officials credit NCLB with helping teachers and school officials raise student achievement. “Our most recent report attempted to answer the question, ‘Have urban schools improved student achievement since *No Child Left Behind* was enacted?’ The answer appears to be ‘yes,’” testified Dr. Michael Casserly before the Education & the Workforce Committee on June 23, 2004. Casserly is the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

High Standards Have Helped Teachers

<http://republicans.edlabor.house.gov/archive/issues/108th/recess/nclbworks.htm>

John Boehner

US Representative and Chairman of the House Education & Workforce Committee

October 7, 2004

High standards help teachers succeed. The Great City Schools report credits the academic standards movement – which culminated in the NCLB law – with sparking real change and improvement in the nation's urban schools. The high standards at the heart of NCLB have helped teachers – not hindered them, as claimed by the National Education Association (NEA) and other reform opponents.

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education, December 2008

Progress is made possible by great teachers. NCLB calls for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. The Department has invested nearly \$3 billion each year to help states meet the requirements, which include state certification and subject-matter knowledge. The percentage of highly qualified teachers rose from 87 percent to 94 percent between the 2003-2004 and 2006-2007 school years.

Continued academic improvement depends on teachers who are highly effective as well as highly qualified. The best teachers must be encouraged to work in the most challenging educational environments. This is key to closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for the demands of the 21st century.

President Bush's groundbreaking Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) is the first federally funded program geared toward rewarding great teachers and principals for outstanding performance. The program also aligns teacher hiring with NCLB's academic achievement goals. Since 2006, nearly \$200 million has been awarded to 34 grantees. In addition:

- Loan forgiveness has been expanded from \$5,000 to \$17,500 per teacher, for highly qualified math, science, and special education teachers who choose to work in high-poverty communities;
- More than 300,000 teachers have been trained through the Department's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative and e-Learning professional development Web site;
- Congress enacted (but did not fund) the President's Adjunct Teacher Corps to encourage thousands of qualified professionals in mathematical, scientific, and other fields to become adjunct high school teachers; and
- The President's Troops-to-Teachers program is enabling our veterans to make a difference in the classroom.

NCLB Teacher Requirements Improve Learning

Teacher Quality, Controversy, and NCLB

Kathleen Porter-Magee. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#).

Kathleen Porter-Magee is associate research director at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in Washington, DC, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution in California.

The decision to focus more on content knowledge than pedagogical training was based on the growing body of research that suggests that content knowledge has a greater impact on student achievement, particularly in areas like math and science, which are critical to the emerging information economy. For example, according to research by Goldhaber and Brewer (1996), "[A] teacher with a BA in mathematics or an MA in mathematics has a statistically significant positive impact on students' achievement compared to teachers with no advanced degrees or degrees in nonmathematics subjects" (206). Research by Darling-Hammond (2000) supports Goldhaber and Brewer's findings as well. She concludes: "[T]he most consistent highly significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics in each year tested is the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state: those with full certification and a major in the field they teach."

Costs to Comply are Modest

<http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/22739034.html>

Hoover Institute

Chester E Finn Jr

March 30, 2008

Myth: No Child Left Behind is egregiously underfunded. This charge comes mainly from Democrats, including liberal lions such as Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy and California Representative George Miller, who helped shape the law. It arises from the fact that NCLB, like almost every social program, was authorized at higher funding levels than have ever been—or are likely to be—appropriated. Viewed that way, nearly everything born in Washington is “underfunded.”

The costs of complying with No Child Left Behind—setting standards, testing children, publishing the results, and intervening in low-performing schools—are actually relatively modest. Instead of demanding more money for No Child Left Behind, critics should ask why states and local communities get such dismal returns on the half-trillion dollars, or nearly \$10,000 per student, that they already spend on primary and secondary education every year.

Standardized Testing Not Bad

<http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/22739034.html>

Hoover Institute
Chester E Finn Jr
March 30, 2008

Myth: The standardized testing required by No Child Left Behind gets in the way of real learning. Teachers' animus toward standardized testing has many roots, chief among them the grueling weeks of preparation and exams that they and their students endure every year. But the accountability made possible by standardized testing isn't all bad. If the test is an honest measure of a solid curriculum, then teaching students the skills and knowledge they need to pass it is honorable work. Just ask any Advanced Placement teacher.

Test Scores Are Higher

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education
Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education
December 2008

- Math scores for 4th- and 8th-graders rose to record highs in 2007, according to the Nation's Report Card (NAEP);
- Reading scores for 4th-graders rose to record highs in 2007;
- Writing scores increased for 8th and 12th-graders in 2007;
- History scores increased in all three grade levels tested—4th, 8th, and 12th—in 2006.

Children Once "Left Behind" Have Made Great Strides Forward

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

Average reading scores for 4th-grade students with disabilities improved by 23 points between 2000 and 2007;

Average reading scores for limited-English proficient 4th-graders improved by 21 points between 2000 to 2007;

Children in large urban school districts have made faster academic gains than the nation as a whole.

Progress Is Being Made Compared To Other Nations

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

U.S. students in grades four and eight showed steady improvements in mathematics since 1995, according to the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

U.S. 4th-graders (11 points higher) and 8th-graders (four points higher) improved in math from 2003 to 2007;

U.S. 8th-graders improved by 16 points in math since 1995

Higher Education

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

America's system of higher education has long been recognized as the finest in the world. But our colleges and universities face twin challenges: freshmen unprepared for postsecondary coursework and students unable to afford or gain access to college.

In 2005, Secretary Spellings formed the Commission on the Future of Higher Education. Its report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, called for improved access, particularly for low-income and minority students; affordability, by putting a check on rising tuition costs and making the financial aid system more user-friendly; and accountability, by providing consumers with clear and reliable information about cost and quality.

In September 2006, Secretary Spellings launched the Action Plan for Higher Education. She proposed a number of reforms, including aligning high school standards with college expectations, using the Internet to help families compare schools and receive financial aid, and modernizing state information systems without compromising student privacy.

Two years later, progress has been made on each of these goals:

- About 1.5 million more students are receiving Pell Grants than in 2001, while the maximum Pell Grant award has risen from about \$3,700 per person in 2001 to \$4,731 in 2008-09, a significant increase;
- The President's Academic Competitiveness Grants and SMART (Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent) Grants encourage schools to offer and students to take more challenging course work.

Charter Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

In many ways, our public education system is trapped in the industrial age. The old, agrarian six-hours-a-day, 180-days-a-year model must be updated for the 21st century. We must use time more efficiently, and use data to customize instruction for individual students. And we must give parents more choices and control over their children's education.

Charter Schools:

- More than \$1.8 billion in start-up funding has been invested since 2001 through the Charter Schools Program.
- The Department has leveraged nearly \$740 million in financing for construction and renovation of charter schools.

Schools Transfers

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

- More than 120,000 students took advantage of NCLB's choice provision in 2006-07, transferring from an underperforming public school to another public school in the district.
- In October 2008, the Department announced final Title I regulations to require schools to notify parents in a timely manner about their choice options.

Supplemental Educational Services

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

- More than 530,000 students received free tutoring or afterschool help under NCLB's SES provision in 2006-07.
- The Department has launched SES pilot programs aimed at increasing the number of students receiving services.

D.C. Opportunity Scholarships

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/progress.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Progress by Our Schools and the U.S. Department of Education

December 2008

- In 2004, President Bush signed the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program into law, the nation's first federally funded voucher program. It offers low-income parents scholarships worth up to \$7,500 toward tuition and fees at the private school of their choice.
- Independent studies of the scholarship program have shown academic gains and parental satisfaction.

Indicators of Achievement

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/trends/indicators.html>

U.S. Department of Education

The five indicators provide answers to many of parents' most fundamental questions in education:

- Do children have reading and math skills, as measured by the Nation's Report Card (NAEP)?
- Are African American and Hispanic students lagging behind their classmates?
- Are students graduating from high school on time, as measured by the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate released every year by the National Center for Education Statistics?
- When students graduate from high school, are they prepared for college-level work, as defined by college entrance exams?
- Finally, are students obtaining college degrees, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau's figures on the proportion of those between the ages of 25 and 34 who have attained at least a bachelor's degree?

These indicators track the United States' education attainment. The composite score gives the nation an overall idea of where we are headed and shows our growth over time.

| | 2000 | 2007 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|
| Achievement in Reading and Math | 25% | 33% |
| Achievement Gap | 23% | 35% |
| High School Graduation | 72% | 74% |
| College Readiness | 42% | 42% |
| College Completion | 29% | 31% |
| Composite | 38 | 43 |

NCLB Benefits African Americans

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/achieve/report-card-aa2007.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Nation's Report Card Shows Record Gains—African American Students

Achievement Gap Continues to Narrow As Student Population Becomes More Diverse

September 2007

The latest NAEP results show that achievement gaps are narrowing even as our student population continues to grow more diverse. The results also show African-American students posting all time highs in a number of categories.

Highlights include:

- African American fourth graders achieved their highest reading scores in the history of the test, and African-American fourth and eighth graders achieved their highest math scores in the history of the test.
- The achievement gap between white and African-American students in 4th grade reading narrowed to its lowest point since 1992.
- Compared to 2005, about 23,000 more African-American fourth graders have fundamental reading skills.
- In the four years between 2003 and 2007, math scores at 4th grade went up 5 points. That's equivalent to adding an extra half-year of instruction to 4th grade. These gains were driven in part by progress by African-American students (up 6 points since 2003).
- Since 2003, the achievement gap in math between white and African-American and white and Hispanic 8th graders narrowed by three points, while at the same time all three groups made significant academic gains.
- Math scores for 8th grade students rose significantly since 2005 (up 2 points), driven in part by gains among African-American students (up 5 points).

NCLB Benefits Hispanic Students

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/achieve/report-card-hisp2007.html>

U.S. Department of Education

Nation's Report Card Shows Record Gains—Hispanic Students

Achievement Gap Continues to Narrow As Student Population Becomes More Diverse

September 2007

The latest NAEP results show that achievement gaps are narrowing even as our student population continues to grow more diverse. The results also show Hispanic students posting all time highs in a number of categories.

Highlights include:

- Hispanic fourth graders and eighth graders achieved their highest mathematics and reading scores in the history of the test.
- In the four years between 2003 and 2007, math scores at 4th grade went up 5 points. That's equivalent to adding an extra half-year of instruction to 4th grade. These gains were driven in part by progress by Hispanic students (up 5 points since 2003).
- The percentage of eighth grade Hispanic students with fundamental reading skills rose from 56% in 2005 to 58% in 2007. That change represents about 32,300 more students with fundamental reading skills.
- Since 2003, the achievement gap in math between white and Hispanic and white and African-American and 8th graders narrowed by three points, while at the same time all three groups made significant academic gains.
- Math scores for 8th grade students rose significantly since 2005 (up 2 points), driven in part by gains among Hispanic students (up 3 points).

Native American Support

William R. Rhodes, Governor of the Gila River Indian Community

April 28, 2007

Overall, the Community is optimistic that the policies underlying NCLB can lead to improved academic achievement of children across the country, and supports the law's reauthorization. We want our children, too, to benefit from NCLB and to improve their academic achievement.

Increases Funding

<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget08/factsheet.html>

U.S. Department of Education

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S 2008 BUDGET PROPOSAL **President's FY 2008 Education Budget: Building On Progress**

No Child Left Behind Act

After five years of the No Child Left Behind Act, educators and policymakers have learned more about how to improve student achievement than ever before. Across the country, test scores are up and the achievement gap is narrowing. As NCLB comes up for reauthorization, we must strengthen and build on this progress by focusing new resources to meet the greatest needs, including improving the performance of high school students and fixing troubled and underperforming schools. The President's Budget increases total funding for NCLB by **\$1.2 billion**, to **\$24.5 billion**, a **41% increase** since 2001. This includes:

- **Title I Program—\$1.2 billion increase—\$13.9 billion total—up 59% since 2001**
Resources to high schools serving large numbers of low-income students will be significantly boosted, while funds for Title I elementary and middle schools will be protected. This would more fairly distribute Title I resources throughout the K-12 system.
- **State Assessment Systems—\$412 million**
The funds will support the continued annual assessment of students in reading and math in grades 3-8 and high school. Funding can also be used to develop science assessments in three grade spans that States must administer by the 2007-08 school year, and for new course-level academic standards and assessments for high school students to prepare them for college and the workplace.
- **English Language Acquisition Support—\$671 million—up 50% since 2001**
The funds will help the nearly 6 million limited English-proficient (LEP) students learn English and other subjects so they can achieve academic and economic success.

School Restructuring and Parental Choice

Before *No Child Left Behind*, parents were given few options when their child's school underperformed. Now, low-income families in Title I schools may qualify for free tutoring and the choice to attend another public school or public charter school. Nearly 450,000 students have chosen this path. Still, the demand for more choices and change is growing. The President's FY 2008 Education Budget invests \$500 million to help states turn around the performance of chronically underperforming schools, and \$300 million to provide new options, including public and private school choice, for students in those underperforming schools.

Increases Funding (Cont'd)

- **Title I School Improvement Grants Program—\$500 million**
This will help States restructure, reform and restaff chronically underperforming schools. Added to the current four percent reservation of Title I Grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) for school improvement efforts, it would significantly increase funding to aid students in the nation's 10,000 schools in improvement, corrective action or restructuring status.
- **Promise Scholarships—\$250 million**
Under the President's FY 2008 Budget, public schools that have consistently underperformed for five years and are in the process of restructuring will offer Promise Scholarships to low-income students. Averaging about \$4,000, the money will follow the child to the public, charter or private school of his or her choice. Students selecting intensive tutoring as an option will receive scholarships of up to \$3,000.
- **Opportunity Scholarships—\$50 million**
Modeled after the federally funded D.C. Choice Program, Opportunity Scholarships will enable children to attend the private school of their choice or receive intensive tutoring. Competitive grants will be targeted to areas with a large number of schools in improvement status to give students yet another option to succeed.

American Competitiveness Initiative

Our schools helped make the 20th century the American Century. But in the 21st, the rest of the world is catching up. U.S. graduation rates are slipping relative to other developed nations, due in large part to lagging scores in science and math, the new currencies of the world economy. We must give our students the technical and problem-solving skills to succeed in this competitive global marketplace. Integral to this effort is the President's American Competitiveness Initiative, elements of which will receive **\$365 million** under the President's FY 2008 Budget, to help strengthen math and science instruction so our students can stay on the right academic track. This includes:

- **Math Now for Elementary School and Math Now for Middle School Programs—\$250 million**
These programs will employ proven, research-based instructional methods—based in part on findings of the National Math Panel—to help ensure that all children can take and pass algebra and other advanced courses.
- **Expanded Advanced Placement Programs—\$90 million increase—\$122 million total**
Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs will be expanded in math, science and critical foreign languages to prepare more students for higher education. Grantees will match funds two-to-one.
- **Adjunct Teacher Corps—\$25 million**
This will encourage qualified professionals to serve as adjunct high school math and science teachers in low-income schools and districts, where students are less likely to have teachers with adequate subject-matter knowledge in math or science.

Increases Funding (Cont'd)

Helping Students with Disabilities

- **Special Education Grants to States Program—\$10.5 billion—up 66% since 2001**
NCLB is committed to helping students with disabilities reach their full potential. This funding will help districts improve the academic achievement of these students under the highest possible standards.

Resources for Teachers and Schools

Teachers are critical to improving student achievement. The President's FY 2008 Budget provides nearly **\$4.4 billion** to improve teacher quality. Through the Teacher Incentive Fund program, teachers who show real progress in raising test scores or closing the achievement gap will be rewarded. The best teachers will be offered financial incentives to serve in the most challenging educational environments. And programs such as Reading First and Striving Readers offer the professional development and instruction needed to build on our progress.

- **Proven Reading Instruction—\$1.1 billion**
This includes \$1.0 billion for the Reading First Program, and \$117 million for Early Reading First. Reading First is the largest, most successful and most focused early reading initiative in American history, providing more than 100,000 teachers and 1.8 million students with training and instruction in proven, research-based methods so every child can learn to read by grade three.
- **Striving Readers Program—\$100 million—up \$68.4 million**
Students with poor reading skills are far more likely to drop out of school, joining the million who do so every year. We must reduce this number. Striving Readers provides targeted, intensive instruction to help struggling readers in grades 6-12 catch up to their peers and reach grade level, reducing the dropout risk.
- **Teacher Incentive Fund—\$199 million**
This fund will enable States and districts to financially reward educators making progress in raising student achievement or closing the achievement gaps, as well as teachers who choose to serve in the neediest schools.
- **Educational Research Funding—\$162.5 million**
This will support research, development and dissemination of information to ensure students and teachers continue to benefit from sound, research-based programs.
- **Statewide Longitudinal Data Grants—\$49.2 million**
This will help State educational agencies develop longitudinal data systems that will enable them to more closely and accurately monitor student achievement, graduation and dropout rates.

Increases Funding (Cont'd)

Affordable Higher Education

A college degree, once merely desirable, has become essential to many Americans' future. Last year, Secretary Spellings launched an Action Plan for Higher Education to improve the performance of our colleges and universities, making them more accessible, affordable and accountable. The President's FY 2008 Budget provides **\$21 billion** over the next five years to ensure that higher education continues to be on the leading edge of America's competitiveness. This includes:

- **Pell Grant Program—\$15.4 billion—76% increase since 2001**
This will support 5.5 million recipients in the 2008-09 school year. It includes a \$550 increase in the maximum Pell Grant award to \$4,600, representing the largest growth in the maximum grant (14 percent) in more than 30 years. An additional \$800 increase in the maximum Pell Grant would be made over the next five years, to \$5,400 in fiscal year 2012, representing the largest-ever five-year increase. Since 2001, an additional 1.1 million students have been able to afford college through increases in the Pell Grant amount.
- **Academic Competitiveness & National SMART Grants—\$1.2 billion—increase of \$390 million over FY 06**
Academic Competitiveness Grant levels would increase by 50 percent, enabling an estimated 662,000 Pell Grant-eligible students who completed a rigorous high school program of study to receive up to \$1,125 (up from \$750) for the first year of college and up to \$1,950 (up from \$1,300) for the second year. National SMART Grants would provide grants of up to \$4,000 to an estimated 93,000 low-income, high-achieving college juniors and seniors majoring in math, science, technology, engineering or critical foreign languages. This will help set these individuals—and their nation—on the course to a brighter future.

Con Evidence

NCLB Undermines State Programs

Federalism Revised: The Promise and Challenge of the No Child Left Behind Act
Kenneth K Wong, Brown Univeristy
Public Administration Review, Dec 2008

The annual testing requirement has pushed states toward standardization of performance-based accountability. While this may have elevated the focus on countability, it may undermine systems already in place in some states. For example, prior to the enactment of the NCLB, Virginia state policy makers and lawmakers had invested enormous political capital and fiscal resources to build its test-based accountability program based on the Standards of Learning assessment, which was first administered in 1998. The Virginia Board of Education has repeatedly expressed concerns with the NCLB testing provision. In other states, the NCLB may have the unintended consequences of lowering state standards on proficiency, weakening the overall NCLB objectives in raising student achievement for all (Hess and Petrilli 2006)

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070521/darling-hammond/3>

The Nation

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at [Stanford University](#), where she launched the [School Redesign Network](#), the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#)
May 2, 2007

Ironically, states that set high standards risk having the most schools labeled "failing" under NCLB. Thus Minnesota, where eighth graders are first in the nation in mathematics and on a par with the top countries in the world, had 80 percent of schools on track to be labeled failing according to the federal rules. In addition, states that earlier created forward-looking performance assessment systems like those used abroad have begun to abandon them for antiquated, machine-scored tests that more easily satisfy the law. As emphasis on drilling for multiple-choice tests has increased, the amount of research, project work and scientific inquiry has declined, and twelfth grade reading scores have dropped nationwide.

State Programs More Effective Than NCLB

<http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/newsroom/ShowNewsItem.do?id=80309>

The Friedman Foundation

How "No Child Left Behind" Threatens Florida's Successful Education Reforms

January 07, 2009

By Matthew Ladner, Ph.D. and Dan Lips

In Florida, the significant education reforms to increase school accountability and parental choice began years before No Child Left Behind. This suggests that academic progress should be attributed to state reform efforts rather than No Child Left Behind. NAEP data, in fact, demonstrates that the change in the trend line for Florida's scores occurred between 1998 and 2002. If any of the improvement after 2002 could be attributed to NCLB, the question arises: Why so little progress in other states?

In 2008, Paul Peterson and Rick Hess issued the latest of three studies on state standards in Education Next by comparing state accountability exams to state performance on the NAEP, which provides a benchmark for academic transparency.^[22] The authors had previously compared state and NAEP testing data for 2003 and 2005. They concluded that the 2007 comparison of state and NAEP testing "finds in the new data a noticeable decline, especially at the eighth-grade level.... In eighth-grade reading, for example, standards overall are down by 0.2 standard deviations. This means that, in 8th-grade reading, states are reporting a substantial improvement that is not evident on the NAEP." Peterson and Hess conclude that: Two years ago, we could see small evidence for a decline in standards but detected no race to the bottom. That is still true for 4th graders. But 8th-grade standards, if not exactly racing downward, are moving steadily away from world-class standards. Those responsible for NCLB reauthorization, as they struggle forward, should first and foremost establish a clear and consistent definition of grade-level proficiency in reading and math, even if it means giving up the cherished but decidedly unrealistic goal of proficiency for all students by 2014.^[23]

NCLB Inhibits School Programs

Journal of Counseling & Development ■ Winter 2009 ■ Volume 87

Mary Ann Clark and Jennifer Crandall Breman

Paradoxically, pulling students out of class for direct services, which has been the traditional way of carrying out small-group and individual counseling, is becoming an increasingly difficult undertaking (Carpenter, King-Sears, & Keys, 1998). Many teachers in today's teaching environment are less willing to let students leave their classrooms for counseling interventions because missing class time means less academic time available to include preparation for high-stakes tests required by NCLB (2002). Teachers often request that school counselors take students out during "noninstructional" time, such as recess, physical education, art, or music classes, which may be highlights of the day for a struggling student. School counselors, guidance supervisors, and counselor educators are asking the question, How will school counselors be able to work directly with students to help them in the academic and social-emotional arenas if access to students is so limited? In light of the fact that social and behavioral issues can have academic consequences (Elias, Breune-Butler, Blum, & Schuyler, 1997; Kemple, Duncan, & Strangis, 2002; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004)

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#). Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

NCLB also harms rather than helps schools in need in other ways. Sanctions intended to force school improvement eventually divert funds away from efforts to help all children succeed toward helping a few parents obtain transfers and tutoring for their children. The law's ultimate sanctions-privatizing school management, firing staff, state takeovers, and similar measures-have no proven record of success.

NCLB Takes Money Away from States

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#). Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

As many educators have pointed out, the federal government has failed to adequately fund the law (National Conference of State Legislatures 2004). Just as schools are hit with the demands of the current law, most states' education budgets are shrinking. Worse, neither federal nor state governments address either the dearth of resources required to bring all children to educational proficiency or the deepening poverty that continues to hinder some children's learning.

March 23, 2007

www.heritage.org/research/education/wm1406.cfm

Produced by the Domestic Policy Studies Department

Published by The Heritage Foundation

The Administrative Burden of No Child Left Behind

Dan Lips and Evan Feinberg

But with these funding increases has come an increased administrative burden on state and local authorities. No Child Left Behind created new rules and regulations for schools and significantly increased compliance costs for state and local governments.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, No Child Left Behind increased state and local governments' annual paperwork burden by 6,680,334 hours, at an estimated cost of \$141 million dollars.

Problems Setting Standards

<http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/22739034.html>

Hoover Institute
Chester E Finn Jr
March 30, 2008

Myth: Setting academic standards will fix U.S. schools. No Child Left Behind asks state governments to set standards in reading, math, and science—to identify basic skills that students should have mastered by a given grade level—and to test them accordingly. This follows an educational theory called standards-based instruction that says: state what children should know, measure their progress, and use rewards and punishments to help them succeed.

For this to work, of course, good standards must be in place, and NCLB doesn't address the problem of mediocre or even downright silly standards. The compromises needed to pass NCLB left the law laid-back about standards yet fussy about what states and districts should do when those standards aren't met. The upshot is low expectations on one hand and too much micromanagement on the other. A few states, such as Massachusetts, California, and South Carolina, have taken their job seriously. But the majority either expect woefully little of their students and schools or have developed such nebulous standards that nobody—not parents, not teachers, not test makers—can make out what students are supposed to be learning.

NCLB Simplifies Education

Thomas Misco, PhD, is an assistant professor of social studies education in the Department of Teacher Education at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.
Sept/Oct 2008

Almost all schools will eventually fail to meet NCLB targets (Hershberg, Simon, and Lea-Kruger 2004), and the data derived from most of its measures does not help refine curriculum or practice. Instead, these data are often uninformative or unreliable but attractive in their simplicity, even when injurious to students and teachers (Doran 2003).

Narrowing Curriculum

<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0305mat.htm#31>

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: Costs and Benefits

By William J. Mathis

WILLIAM J. MATHIS is superintendent of schools, Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, Brandon, Vermont; a senior fellow of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education; and a National Superintendent of the Year finalist.

Curriculum narrowing. As noted above, statewide achievement tests do not measure the vast expanse of curriculum set forth by states and school districts. Tests tend to measure those things that are easy to measure, in an efficient and economical way. This means that the focus is on lower-order thinking skills, with a light smattering of higher-order skills, such as writing a short essay.³⁹ Schools and teachers, faced with ever-increasing demands to avoid the "failing school" label, will logically focus on the curriculum content that is most likely to improve test scores. Leaving aside the fact that these tests provide little useful instructional feedback, the inevitable results will be that the nation's curriculum will be narrowed and the level of expectations will be lowered.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070521/darling-hammond/3>

The Nation

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at [Stanford University](#), where she launched the [School Redesign Network](#), the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#) May 2, 2007

Instead, the law wastes scarce resources on a complicated test score game that appears to be narrowing the curriculum, uprooting successful programs and pushing low-achieving students out of many schools.

Narrowing the Curriculum. No Child Left Behind has actually made it harder for states to improve the quality of teaching. At the core of these problems is an accountability system borrowed from Texas and administered by an Education Department with a narrow view of what constitutes learning. This system requires testing every student in math, reading and, soon, science and issuing sanctions to schools that do not show sufficient progress for each subpopulation of students toward an abstract goal of "100 percent proficiency" on state tests--with benchmarks that vary from state to state.

Importance of Diverse Education

http://www.kqed.org/w/youdecide/no_child_left_behind/index.html

You Decide

Kevin Carey, Research and Policy Manager, Education Sector.

Yes, we want children to know how to read and understand basic math computations. But most experts believe that an appreciation of other disciplines, such as music and foreign languages, or just time off to kick a ball is equally as crucial to brain development and success later in life.

NCLB Teaches Tests not Education

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#). Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

Many false assumptions undergird NCLB. The most serious of the suppositions are the following:

Boosting standardized test scores should be the primary goal of schools. This assumption leads to one-size-fits-all teaching that focuses primarily on test preparation and undermines efforts to give all children a high-quality education. This exclusive focus on test scores ignores the widespread desire for schools that address a broad range of academic and social goals, as reported in public opinion polls.

Students Learn How to Take Test

<http://www.nea.org/home/20755.htm>

National Education Association

NCLB: Is it Working?

The 'scientifically-based' answer

By Alain Jehlen

What's more, scores on state tests are definitely climbing. So-is that proof of success? No, it isn't, according to leaders in the science of testing. Scores always rise when you put high stakes on a particular test, whether or not students actually know more. This phenomenon even has a name: Campbell's Law. Harvard University Professor Daniel Koretz, a leading test researcher, explains it with an analogy to polling before an election. Pollsters can't call every voter. Instead, they choose a small sample. Let's say a campaign polled 1,000 likely voters and poured all their energy into winning over just those voters, ignoring everyone else. They would probably see encouraging gains among the 1,000 voters-and then lose the election by a landslide.

Koretz says a math test works the same way: No test can cover all the skills from every angle that students should master, so the test is just a small sample. If you focus on teaching kids to correctly answer problems that use a particular question format and only cover a narrow range of skills, students will do better and better-that is, until someone asks them questions in a different way, or measures a different set of skills from the larger curriculum.

Koretz carried out an ingenious demonstration of this phenomenon in the 1980s in a school district he had to agree not to name. The stakes on test scores in that district were "laughably low compared with today's," he says, but teachers did feel pressure to get scores up.

When the district switched to a new test, Koretz says, "scores dropped like a rock." But over the next four years, they rose steadily. Now comes the clever part: Koretz gave students the old test, the one that no longer carried high stakes so teachers didn't prep students to take it. Their scores plummeted. His conclusion: Four years of rising scores did not reflect real achievement, just teaching to a new test.

School Shouldn't be about Learning a Test

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#). Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

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One recent public opinion survey found Americans believe the most important thing schools should do is prepare responsible citizens. The next most important role for public schools was to help students become economically self-sufficient (Rose and Gallup 2000). Another recent survey found that people's key concerns about schools were mostly social issues not addressed by standards, tests, or accountability (Goodwin 2003).

http://www.kqed.org/w/youdecide/no_child_left_behind/index.html

You Decide

Kevin Carey, Research and Policy Manager, Education Sector.

It's a war cry heard throughout public schools across the country — music, language and social sciences, dropped. Sports? Also in the battle zone. Fewer than 10 percent of our nation's schools now offer daily physical education.

So what are children learning? Don't look to the arts. While the law was certainly not written to diminish arts programs, evidence shows that since NCLB went into effect, arts programming in public schools, like physical education, has taken a hit. Why? School districts skip them to double the time they devote to math and reading, with 71 percent reporting that post-NCLB, they spend less time on subjects that aren't mandated for testing.

States Lower Standards

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

One recent study of NCLB in six states hones in on how inconsistent implementation among states makes it difficult to discern whether schools achieve AYP because they actually improve or because improvement targets and proficiency standards are more easily met in their state.

The percentage of low-performing high schools making AYP increases as the NCLB eighth grade mathematics exam gets easier. Missouri, which appears to have the most rigorous exam, seems to be an anomaly in this trend, but it also has the lowest proficiency target in 2004-2005 (17.5%). Overall, there are clear indications that low-performing high schools that made AYP tended to be in states where high school proficiency goals were substantially below existing middle grade proficiency levels and/or the NCLB proficiency exams themselves were less rigorous.

Numbers Don't Show Achievement

Thomas Misco, PhD, is an assistant professor of social studies education in the Department of Teacher Education at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Sept/Oct 2008

One of the early criticisms of NCLB was its focus on cohort-to-cohort analyses and lack of longitudinal data collection, both of which would allow defensible conclusions about progress and effectiveness (Brennan 2004).

Moreover, comparison of state designated proficiency levels with national external measures derived from National Assessment of Educational Progress data (McCombs et al. 2004) demonstrated significant gaps between measures of proficiency, thereby further undermining the value of data for making any meaningful statements about student learning.

No NCLB Score Growth in High School

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

Emerging literature on NCLB points to weaknesses in the law, both in concept and implementation, that call into question its ability to effectively identify and stimulate improvement in low-performing schools, especially at the high school level (see Commission on No Child Left Behind, 2007; Forum on Educational Accountability, 2007; also see Harvard Education Review, vol. 76, no. 4). Though a recent study reports overall gains in student achievement and a narrowing of achievement gaps since NCLB was enacted in 2002, more states showed declines in reading and math achievement at the high school level than at the elementary and middle school levels.

NCLB Hurts Schools Who Need the Most Help

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

An alternative view is that schools that have repeatedly failed to make AYP have done so in part because they lack the capacity to improve themselves or because the level of improvement required to make AYP is greater than even a school that puts forth effort and implements effective reforms can achieve. This second theory predicts that schools facing high levels of NCLB sanctions and intervention might be less likely to achieve AYP.

NCLB Harms Talented Students

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Sept/Oct 2008

In addition, many felt it resulted in a myopic focus on improving achievement among students on the cusp of proficiency and ignored gifted and talented subgroups.

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Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

In low-performing high schools, with existing proficiency levels a great distance from their states' AYP levels, such as the 25% of high schools in our sample with mathematics proficiency levels of 20% or less, reaching safe harbor becomes the only feasible yearly achievement goal. When this is combined with the fact that high school students are typically tested only in one grade for AYP, a perverse situation occurs. The most logical course for the low-performing high school is to focus all its available resources and reform efforts on a very small number of students - those students who are close to proficient in the tested grade.

Viadero, Debra

Study Finds No 'Educational Triage' Driven by NCLB

Education Week 27 no10 11 O 31 2007

Focusing on the 421,000-student Chicago school district, researchers Derek A. Neal and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach studied two time periods during which the school system was shifting to a testing-and-accountability system that turned up the pressure on educators to raise test scores.

In both periods, the Chicago researchers found, students in the middle of the pack made the largest test-score gains, compared with students in previous years. ("Study: Low, High Fliers Gain Less Under NCLB," Aug. 1, 2007.)

"I can tell you anecdotally, after visiting many states in the last several years, that focusing on the bubble kids is an explicit strategy for many districts and schools," said Margaret Heritage, the assistant director for professional development at the National Center on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, located at the University of California, Los Angeles.

NCLB Harms Talented Students (Cont'd)

<http://news.uns.purdue.edu/x/2008b/080811TG12-MoonEducation.html>

Purdue Expert Sidney Moon

Associate Dean of Learning Engagement and Professor of Educational Studies

Gifted children, who often are ready to move beyond basic education well before their peers, also are feeling the fallout of No Child Left Behind, she said. "Some of our brightest and most talented learners are being neglected because of the focus on bringing all children up to minimal competencies," Moon said.

http://www.kqed.org/w/youdecide/no_child_left_behind/index.html

You Decide

Kevin Carey, Research and Policy Manager, Education Sector.

A 2008 study by the Fordham Institute shows that in the NCLB world, while the needs of poor-performing students are being attended to so they can pass tests, high-achieving kids — the ones who normally have no trouble acing the tests — are getting left behind. Their scores are not rising at all and in some cases are completely flattening out.

NCLB Doesn't Provide Life-Skills

[http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/pqdweb?](http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/pqdweb?index=9&did=1394588261&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1233776200&clientId=3740)

[index=9&did=1394588261&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1233776200&clientId=3740](http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/pqdweb?index=9&did=1394588261&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1233776200&clientId=3740)

Technically Speaking

Prakken Publications, Inc. Oct 2007

An interesting article published in August in The Buffalo News recently came to my attention. The article, subtitled "Emphasis on College-Prep Academics Leaves Many Students Without Job Skills," describes a dawning awareness among New York policymakers and school leaders of the critical need for increasing support and opportunities for career and technical education.

Due to the testing provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, along with the state's own increasingly rigorous graduation requirements, New York has placed great emphasis on academic achievement, especially in English and math. As a result, notes the article, students interested in careers in such fields as building trades and automotive mechanics have in fact been "left behind."

Gains Not Due to NCLB

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, 4Johns Hopkins University,

Study authors also note that achievement gains cannot be directly attributed to NCLB and may result from a combination of increased learning and other factors such as teaching to the test, more lenient tests, scoring or data analyses, and changes in the student populations tested (Center on Education Policy, 2007).

Editorial Team's Introduction: Special Issue on No Child Left Behind

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 454, 6 pgs

Indeed, many unexamined factors may have contributed to the achievement gains, including the total focus on test scores rather than attending to the historical "education debt" to underperforming students (Ladson-Billings, 2006), the differences in state tests or implementation of the tests (see Time, 2007), issues of language (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), cultural context and history (Portes, 2005), differences in levels of teaching expertise (Darling-Hammond, 2006), and increases in the drop-out rate (EPE, 2006).

<http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/newsroom/ShowNewsItem.do?id=80309>

The Friedman Foundation

How "No Child Left Behind" Threatens Florida's Successful Education Reforms

January 07, 2009

By Matthew Ladner, Ph.D. and Dan Lips

Some supporters of NCLB may contend that NCLB is responsible for the modest improvements that have occurred over the past seven years. But the gradual improvement that American students have been making since the early 1990s suggests that it is just as likely that we are seeing an unrelated trend of modest improvement. Moreover, any recent gains in student test scores could obviously be due to other factors including state, not federal, reforms.

NCLB Hurts Lower Economic Schools

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

In a case study of California schools, the researchers also find that the NCLB subgroup accountability requirements concentrate sanctions in socially and economically disadvantaged schools in spite of little evidence that the schools are actually failing to improve student achievement over time (Sunderman, Kirn, & Orfield, 2005).

http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/NCLB_HighSchools.pdf

Alliance For Excellent Education
Policy Brief June 2007

“The fact that most of the high-poverty, high-minority high schools do not receive Title I funding, the federal program designed to offset the impact of poverty, is outrageous.”
Balfanz and Legters
Education Week, July 12, 2006

Even if the problems with the goals, measures, and interventions required by NCLB were addressed, low-performing high schools would still be left out and their students left behind. All public schools submit to the NCLB mandates triggered by the acceptance of Title I funds at the state level, including testing, reporting, and being labeled “in need of improvement.” However, only those schools that actually receive Title I funds are required to implement improvement actions.

This funding stream may serve as a meaningful lever for change in the earlier grades, but it is an ineffective hook on which to hang high school accountability. Because of the way funds are allocated by the various states and districts, which are often likely to direct additional resources toward meeting the needs of younger students in the hope of correcting problems early in students’ educational careers, the vast majority of resources provided by Title I of NCLB go to elementary schools. While this funding is intended to assist all low-income students, only 8 percent of those students receiving Title I services are high school students (and only 17 percent are middle school students).¹² This imbalance is caused by under-reporting of poverty levels at the high school level, district-level decisions about the allocation of funds, and overall underfunding of Title I. As a result, most secondary schools receive little support for improvement and are exempt from undertaking significant reforms.

NCLB Increased Dropout Rates

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

Other case study and anecdotal evidence focuses on the NCLB graduation rate accountability requirements and finds that, contrary to the intentions of the law, the lack of standards and subgroup accountability requirements around graduation rates has created loopholes and perverse incentives for schools to make AYP by pushing out or holding back students likely to score low on academic proficiency tests (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Losen, 2005; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).\

For example, a New York City high school made AYP in 2004-2005 with seemingly impressive proficiency levels of 72% in math and 80% in English on the state's 12th grade test. This, however, is paired with a 58% cohort graduation rate and an 81% attendance rate. This indicates that only 58% of the entering freshmen graduated and only 41% graduated proficient in mathematics and 46% in English. Yet for all practical purposes, because this school made AYP, it is being sent the signal that it is doing fine and that it should keep focusing on making students who survive to the 12th grade proficient rather than on the nearly 50% of students who are dropping out with weak academic skills.

A school in Missouri is an even stronger example of how current implementations of NCLB at the high school level can obscure more than they reveal. This school made AYP with proficiency levels of 21% in mathematics and 25% in English, based on modest gains of 8 percentage points in mathematics and 4 percentage points in English. Its graduation rate, however, declined 12 percentage points to 77%. The school made AYP, however, because 77% was above the minimum required to meet AYP in Missouri in 2004-2005. The signal being sent to this school is that fewer graduates is okay as long as proficiency levels keep rising on the state tests given in the 10th and 11th grades. This in turn provides a strong incentive to retain students in ninth grade or push them out.

Some high schools that are making AYP and by implication are being told they are doing fine have extremely low, or even declining, graduation rates. Other high schools are making significant improvements in both achievement proficiency levels and graduation rates and are facing the most extreme NCLB sanctions because their starting points were so far below the baselines established by their state. As a result, it is not possible to use the AYP indicator to determine how many or to what extent the nation's lowest-performing high schools are improving. This is deeply problematic because it means NCLB is not achieving one of its core missions.

NCLB Increased Dropout Rates (Cont'd)

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In fact, the changes may have been too much. The high-stakes testing requirement for NCLB may have contributed to the high drop-out rate for African Americans and Latinos in urban school districts (Editorial Projects in Education [EPE], 2006; Swanson, 2004) and other unanticipated consequences for many other school children.

<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0305mat.htm#31>

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: Costs and Benefits

By William J. Mathis

WILLIAM J. MATHIS is superintendent of schools, Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, Brandon, Vermont; a senior fellow of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education; and a National Superintendent of the Year finalist.

Dropouts. While it is still too early to determine whether students will drop out of school as a result of the NCLB requirements, an examination of the national longitudinal database shows that students subjected to eighth-grade promotion examinations are more likely to drop out by 10th grade.⁴³ Anecdotal evidence suggests that some students are encouraged (or provided subtle incentives) to drop out. This is consistent with the "uncertainty principle" mechanisms set forth by Amrein and Berliner. Simply put, the more intense the negative consequences held over a system in an effort to get high results, the more likely the system is to game the rules to show better results.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070521/darling-hammond/3>

The Nation

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at [Stanford University](#), where she launched the [School Redesign Network](#), the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#)

May 2, 2007

Perhaps the most adverse unintended consequence of NCLB is that it creates incentives for schools to rid themselves of students who are not doing well, producing higher scores at the expense of vulnerable students' education. Studies have found that sanctioning schools based on average student scores leads schools to retain students in grade so that grade-level scores will look better (although these students ultimately do less well and drop out at higher rates), exclude low-scoring students from admissions and encourage such students to transfer or drop out.

NCLB Increased Dropout Rates (Cont'd)

Recent studies in Massachusetts, New York and Texas show how schools have raised test scores while "losing" large numbers of low-scoring students. In a large Texas city, for example, scores soared while tens of thousands of students--mostly African-American and Latino--disappeared from school. Educators reported that exclusionary policies were used to hold back, suspend, expel or counsel out students in order to boost test scores. Overall, fewer than 40 percent of African-American and Latino students graduated. Paradoxically, NCLB's requirement for disaggregating data by race creates incentives for eliminating those at the bottom of each subgroup, especially where schools have little capacity to improve the quality of services such students receive. As a consequence of high-stakes testing, graduation rates for African-American and Latino students have declined in a number of states. In the NCLB paradigm, there is no solution to this problem, as two-way accountability does not exist: The child and the school are accountable to the state for test performance, but the state is not held accountable to the child or his school for providing adequate educational resources.

Schools are Not Improving

Which Low-Performing High Schools Made AYP in 2005?

In 2005 the majority of low-performing high schools in our sample did not make AYP. Success in making AYP also considerably varied by state, irrespective of achievement gains. Of the low-performing high schools, 41% made AYP in 2004-2005, and 59% did not make AYP. This was nearly identical to the prior year (2003-2004), when 39% of the low-performing high schools made AYP.

Of low-performing high schools that reported gains in the percentage of their students achieving proficiency in mathematics or English (or had their proficiency levels stay the same), 44% made AYP. Yet nearly the same rate (38%) of the low-performing high schools that reported declines in either mathematics or English proficiency levels also made AYP.

The low-performing high schools that did and did not make AYP share some common characteristics. On average, they have similar poverty levels and qualify for Title I funds at similar rates.

AYP not an Indicator Of Achievement

[American Educational Research Journal](#). Washington: [Sep 2007](#). Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 559, 35 pgs
Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University,

Our analyses uncover major shortcomings in AYP as an indicator of improvement, or persistent failure, in our nation's low-performing high schools. We found that 40% of the nation's low-performing high schools made AYP and that these schools tended to be better resourced, smaller, Southern, and less urban than those that did not make AYP. More fine-grained analyses, however, reveal that whether a particular school makes AYP depends on how much subgroup accountability it faces and its NCLB improvement status. Thus, state differences in how NCLB is being implemented at the high school level make it impossible to determine if the nation's low-performing high schools are getting better or which schools are making the greatest strides toward fulfilling the intent of the law. In addition, examples show how some features of current implementations of NCLB actually provide incentives or means to evade or even operate counter to the law's intent. Examples illustrate how low baseline requirements or minimal improvement targets for graduation rates may offer incentives for schools to improve achievement scores and reach AYP by pushing students out in the 9th or 10th grades. They also show how low-performing schools that are making meaningful improvements in both achievement and graduation measures can fail to make AYP (and invite sanctions), whereas similar schools that demonstrate far less improvement make AYP in other states. Equally troubling is the incentive produced through the safe harbor provision to target only a small number of students for instructional improvement, enabling schools with high concentrations of needy students to avoid more comprehensive reforms that could reach all students.

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education
Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. [The Clearing House](#). Washington: [Sep/Oct 2004](#). Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing
As Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor Richard Elmore explains: "The AYP requirement, a completely arbitrary mathematical function grounded in no defensible knowledge or theory of school improvement, could, and probably will, result in penalizing and closing schools that are actually experts in school improvement" (Elmore 2003, 6-10).

NCLB Doesn't Create Accountability

Editorial Team's Introduction: Special Issue on No Child Left Behind

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"Our recommendations reflect the reality that a rigid One-size-fits-all' approach to accountability does not work," [said] panel member Dr. Brian Gong, Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. "[Enacting our recommendations] would lead to creation of high-quality assessment systems that use a rich range of evidence to help schools improve, not just test scores to label them passing or failing." (FEA, 2007)

NCLB Teacher Requirements Don't Help

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. *The Clearing House*. Washington: Sep/Oct 2004. Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

Another potentially useful component of NCLB is the call for high-quality teachers for all students. Unfortunately, the law's requirements fall short of the attractive label: A teacher may be deemed "highly qualified" if she or he has a bachelor's degree and passes a paper-and-pencil standardized exam. This minimal definition can in no way ensure that all children have good teachers.

There is no persuasive evidence demonstrating a strong relationship between passing a standardized test and being competent in the classroom. A National Academy of Sciences report, *Testing teaching candidates: The role of licensure tests in improving teacher quality*, offers the most comprehensive study of this issue. It found that raising cut-off scores on the exams may reduce racial diversity in the teaching profession without improving quality (Mitchell et al. 2001). Furthermore, the study concludes that the tests cannot "predict who will become effective teachers" (FairTest 2001).

Teacher Quality, Controversy, and NCLB

Kathleen Porter-Magee. *The Clearing House*. Washington: Sep/Oct 2004. Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 26, 4 pgs

Kathleen Porter-Magee is associate research director at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in Washington, DC, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution in California.

In fact, in an analysis by Goldhaber and Brewer (1996), they found that fully certified teachers "do not appear to be more effective than those who hold emergency credentials" (54). And in a meta-analysis of one hundred fifty research studies going back as many as fifty years, Walsh (2001) concluded that "research does not show that certified teachers are more effective teachers than uncertified teachers" (iv). In that report, Walsh further explains: "The teacher attribute found consistently to be most related to raising student achievement is verbal ability" (v).

Unfortunately, many existing teachers are unhappy about having to prove that they are qualified to teach the subject they may have been teaching for years, and states are not happy that they will be forced to publicize the percentage of classes taught by teachers who are not deemed highly qualified. As a result, many states have worked overtime to find loopholes in the law so that they will still qualify for the federal money, without facing the undesirable consequences.

NCLB Teacher Requirements Don't Help (Cont'd)

<http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/newsroom/ShowNewsItem.do?id=80309>

The Friedman Foundation

How "No Child Left Behind" Threatens Florida's Successful Education Reforms

January 07, 2009

By Matthew Ladner, Ph.D. and Dan Lips

Beyond parent-centered reforms, other strategies promoted by NCLB appear to also have a limited impact. While NCLB sought to improve teacher effectiveness by requiring that instruction be grounded in research-based methods through the Reading First program, a 2008 Department of Education study evaluating Reading First found that the program had not produced a statistically significant improvement in reading-comprehension test scores.

Certified Teachers Not Better

<http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/22739034.html>

Hoover Institute

Chester E Finn Jr

March 30, 2008

Myth: Certified teachers are better than noncertified teachers. Lawmakers blundered when they confused “qualified” with “certified” teachers. There’s no solid evidence that state certification ensures classroom effectiveness—and the booming success of programs such as Teach for America, which sends recent college graduates into troubled schools, suggests that certification may be wholly unnecessary. By requiring certified teachers in every classroom, No Child Left Behind makes it harder for district and charter schools to attract energetic and capable people who want to teach but have taken a less traditional route to the classroom.

Lowers Teacher Quality

<http://www.eddealermagazine.com/articles.php?view=article&id=263>

Education Dealer (magazine)

March 2008

(reader quotes)

'It's time educators look at getting results from kids, just as all others must get results in their chosen occupations.'

'NCLB has been a disaster for education and for the teaching profession! It has driven our best customers to retire or quit. The way NCLB has been implemented has done nothing to improve the lot of students or educators, and the lasting impact is a loss of inspired, creative teachers who enjoy spending money in our stores.'

'NCLB has not had a significant impact on total dollars spent, but it has changed how money is spent. The biggest change I have seen is that teacher morale is down. NCLB doesn't allow teachers to make decisions based on each individual child.'

'Teaching now has to be the same in each class, each day, for each teacher. Teachers went to college to learn to teach children and make a difference, and, unfortunately, many teachers in this area don't feel like NCLB allows them to do that.'

'NCLB is far from perfect, but it has had a major positive impact in Florida, evidenced by improved scores in reading, math and writing. When the socio-economic makeup of a school population prevents the school from making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), districts need some relief from the rigid rules of NCLB. We have school populations that are predominately non-English-speaking, and I'm not referring just to Spanish speakers. We have many Haitians, as well as Russians, Lithuanians, Greeks, etc. These schools have almost no chance of making AYP, and that destroys teacher morale.'

'All programs need time to measure success. The object of NCLB was to improve education for children - not have teachers only teach to testing schemes. The education lobby did the act great harm, as did the teachers' unions.'

NCLB Discourages Teachers

Editorial Team's Introduction: Special Issue on No Child Left Behind

American Educational Research Journal. Washington: Sep 2007. Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 454, 6 pgs

Linda Valli and Daria Buese examine teachers' changing roles and tasks during the first years of NCLB in "The Changing Roles of Teachers in an Era of High-Stakes Accountability." Through a complex analysis of the implementation of a differentiated instruction policy, the authors show the impact of NCLB on elementary teachers and students. They write, "The summative effect of too many policy demands coming too fast often resulted in teacher discouragement, role ambiguity, and superficial responses to administrative goals. If policy expectations for teacher role change had benefited students, one could argue that the toll on teachers, although unfortunate, was for the greater good of students. But that did not seem to be the case."

http://www.reading.org/downloads/resources/NCLB_survey_022005.pdf

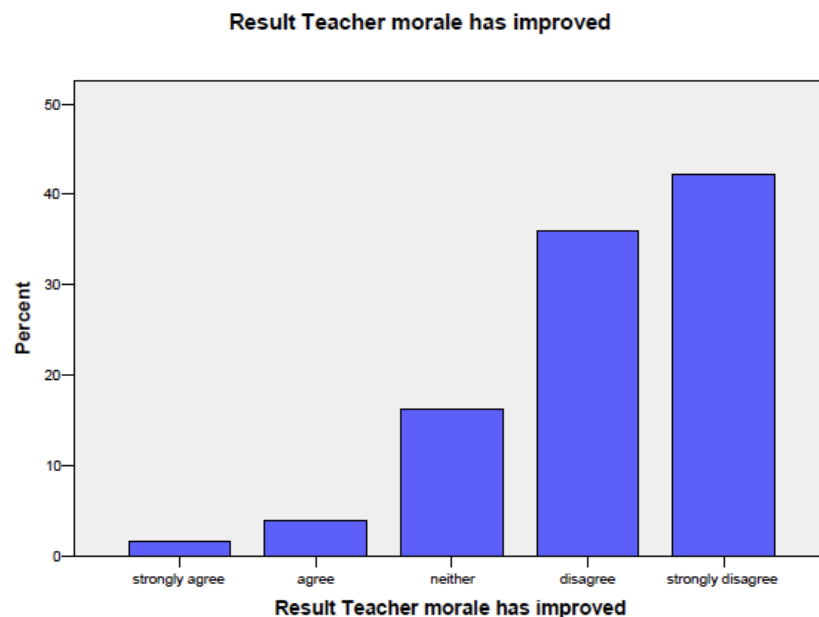
No Child Left Behind:

A Survey of Its Impact on IRA Members Cathy M. Roller

Division of Research and Policy, International Reading Association

Participants

The International Reading Association (IRA) is a professional organization that promotes higher achievement levels in literacy, reading, and communication worldwide by advancing the quality of instruction. Seventy-five thousand individual members and a network of 1,250 councils and 42 national affiliates provide the working foundation for the Association. A randomly selected list of 3,960 U.S. members received the survey.



NCLB Cannot be Achieved

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. The Clearing House. Washington: Sep/Oct 2004. Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

Only about three in ten American students now score at the proficient level on NAEP reading and math tests (NCES 2004). Thus, within a little more than a decade, all students are expected to do as well as only a third now do—a goal far more stringent than simply "grade level."

Based on trends on NAEP tests over the past decade, prominent measurement expert Robert Linn calculated that it would take 166 years for all twelfth graders to attain proficiency, as defined by NCLB, in both reading and math (Linn 2003; Linn, Baker, and Herman 2002).

Implementing Tests are not Enough To Increase Achievement

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education
Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. The Clearing House. Washington: Sep/Oct 2004. Vol. 78, Iss. 1; pg. 12, 5 pgs

Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

The implication is that administrators and teachers are not working hard enough, not working well, or both. Thus, with willpower and effort, schools and districts can bootstrap their way to unprecedented results. This reasoning ignores real factors that impede improvements in teaching and learning, such as large class sizes, inadequate books, and outmoded technology, as well as nonschool factors like poverty and high student mobility.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070521/darling-hammond/3>

The Nation

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at [Stanford University](#), where she launched the [School Redesign Network](#), the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#)
May 2, 2007

At a time when the percentage of Americans living in severe poverty has reached a thirty-two-year high, NCLB seeks to improve the schools poor students attend through threats and sanctions rather than the serious investments in education and welfare such an effort truly requires. As Gloria Ladson-Billings, former president of the American Educational Research Association, has noted, the problem we face is less an "achievement gap" than an educational debt that has accumulated over centuries of denied access to education and employment, reinforced by deepening poverty and resource inequalities in schools. Until American society confronts the accumulated educational debt owed to these students and takes responsibility for the inferior resources they receive, Ladson-Billings argues, children of color and of poverty will continue to be left behind.

Tests are Not a Barometer of Success

Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education

Lisa Guisbond, Monty Neill. *The Clearing House*. Washington: Sep/Oct 2004. Vol. 78, Iss. 1 Lisa Guisbond is a researcher and advocate for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing

* Test scores do not necessarily indicate real progress when they rise or deterioration when they fall. Annual fluctuations should not be used to reward or sanction schools, teachers or school officials (Haney 2002).

* Many of the tests used to judge our students, teachers, and schools are norm-referenced, meaning they are specifically designed to ensure a certain proportion of "failures" (Haney 2002).

* Errors in question design, scoring and reporting have always been a part of standardized testing and are likely to increase substantially with the increase in testing mandated by NCLB (Rhoades and Madaus 2003).

NCLB's rigid AYP mechanism and the sanctions it triggers exacerbate standardized exams' weaknesses, such as their cultural biases, their failure to measure higher-order thinking, and the problem of measurement error. Exams with such narrow scopes and strong sanctions promote intensive teaching to the test, which undermines efforts to improve educational quality (von Zastrow 2004).

* Little evidence supports the idea that the model of standards, testing, and rewards and punishments for achievement is the cure for public schooling's ailments. On the contrary, several studies show a decline in achievement in states with high-stakes testing programs relative to those with low-stakes testing (Stecher, Hamilton, and Gonzalez 2003; Amrein and Berliner 2002).

* Surveys of educators confirm that the model promotes teaching to the test and narrowed curricula, particularly in schools that serve low-income and minority students (Pedulla et al. 2003; Clarke et al. 2002).

* Independent analysts have found that tests often fail to measure the objectives deemed most important by educators who determine academic standards. Thus, students taught to such tests will not be exposed to high-quality curricula, and the public will not be informed about student achievement relative to those standards (Rothman et al. 2002).

* The instructional quality suffers under such a model because it is often assumed that all students who fail need the same type of remediation. On the contrary, researchers have found that students fail for a variety of reasons and need different instructional approaches to get on track (Riddle BuIy and Valencia 2002; Moon, Callahan, and Tomlinson 2003; Hinde 2003; Mabry et al. 2003).

* Research refutes the assumption that low-achieving students are motivated to work harder and learn more in a high-stakes context. On the contrary, lowachieving students are most likely to become discouraged and give up in that environment (Harlen and Deakin-Crick 2002; Ryan and La Guardia 1999). There is evidence of falling graduation rates in high-stakes states, as well as evidence that schools retain additional students in hopes of reaping higher test scores in key grades. Decades of research support the contention that retained students are more likely to drop out of school (LIaney 2003).

Tests are not an Indicator

<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0305mat.htm#31>

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: Costs and Benefits

By William J. Mathis

WILLIAM J. MATHIS is superintendent of schools, Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, Brandon, Vermont; a senior fellow of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education; and a National Superintendent of the Year finalist.

Test score reliability. The centerpiece of NCLB is the requirement that test scores must improve annually. Before NCLB became law, Thomas Kane and Douglas Staiger demonstrated that 70% of the year-to-year change in test scores for grade levels or schools is simply random variation.³¹ Differences in the student body from one year to the next, combined with the statistical error in the tests themselves, make it impossible to know whether the tests are measuring real gains (or losses) or whether the changes are merely random noise.

Similarly, Walt Haney examined the scores of all Massachusetts schools. He found that those that received a medallion for large gains in one year saw those gains disappear the following year.³² In Florida, the same pattern emerged, with 69% of the schools that posted gains in the first cycle of testing falling back in the next cycle.³³ In Maine, Jaekyung Lee found the same phenomenon and noted that the random fluctuation, not surprisingly, increased as the size of the school decreased.³⁴

Leaving aside whether schools have the resources and whether students have the social capital to reach the high levels sought by NCLB, it is questionable whether punitive incentive systems work. (B. F. Skinner disproved negative reinforcement systems 45 years ago.) In looking at 18 states with high-stakes testing systems, Audrey Amrein and David Berliner considered the scores on the high-stakes tests along with the scores on other tests. If all scores went up, they concluded that learning was taking place. If only the high-stakes scores went up, they concluded that test preparation and curriculum narrowing were taking place. They found that scores on the other tests were not related to scores on high-stakes tests. Thus the basic assumption that high-stakes systems lead to improved learning must be suspect at least.³⁷

Texas is cited as a state in which the increase in the percentage of students meeting the standards was paralleled by increases in the state's scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. However, the low level of the state's tests and the very different trend lines of the state and NAEP tests call this conclusion into question. More troubling still is that the increase in test scores was not accompanied by increases in outcomes of high value, such as increased high school completion or college attendance.³⁸

Achievement is Slowing Since NCLB

http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2007-07/aera-tss073007.php

Test scores slow under No Child Left Behind reforms, gauged by states/federal assessment

American Educational Research Association

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 30, 2007 –

As Congress reviews federal efforts to boost student performance, new research published in Educational Researcher (ER) reports that progress in raising test scores was stronger before No Child Left Behind was approved in 2002, compared with the four years following enactment of the law.

The article “Gauging Growth: How to Judge No Child Left Behind” is authored by Bruce Fuller, Joseph Wright, Kathryn Gesicki, and Erin Kang, and is one of four featured works published in the current issue of ER—a peer-reviewed scholarly journal of the American Educational Research Association.

Bruce Fuller, lead author and professor of education and public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, noted that the strong advances in narrowing racial and income-based achievement gaps seen in the 1990s have faded since passage of ‘No Child’. “The slowing of achievement gains, even declines in reading, since 2002 suggests that state-led accountability efforts—well underway by the mid-1990s—packed more of a punch in raising student performance, compared with the flattening-out of scores during the ‘No Child’ era,” he observed.

Following passage of the ‘No Child’ law, federal reading scores among elementary school students declined in the 12 states tracked by the researchers – after climbing steadily during the 1990s. The share of fourth-graders proficient in reading, based on federal NAEP results, climbed by one-half a percentage point each year, on average, between the mid-1990s and 2002. But over the four years after the legislation was passed, the share of students deemed proficient declined by about one percent. The annual rise in the percentage of fourth-graders proficient in mathematics improved slightly in the same 12 states, moving up from 1.6 percent per year before ‘No Child’ was signed to a yearly growth rate of 2.5 percent following enactment of the law. This is the one out of six federal gauges where a post-NCLB gain was observed by the research team, tracking NAEP results.

Achievement is Slowing Since NCLB (Cont'd)

http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Educational_Researcher/3605/07EDR07_268-278.pdf

Gauging Growth: How to Judge No Child Left Behind?

by Bruce Fuller, Joseph Wright, Kathryn Gesicki, and Erin Kang

Educational Researcher, Vol. 36, No. 5, pp. 268–278

But analysts could find just one number backing the president's claim: a gain in the share of fourth graders deemed proficient in math, as gauged by the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), relative to proficiency levels observed in 2000. But students had sat for the 2003 exam in the first full year subsequent to the January 2002 enactment of NCLB. And math scores, having begun their ascent back in 1986, were likely buoyed by earlier state-led, not necessarily federal, accountability reforms (Loveless, 2003).

More sobering news arrived a year later when fresh NAEP scores stemming from 2005 testing were released. They showed how the nation's students had performed over the 3 school years following NCLB's enactment. Reading scores among fourth graders remained flat, with 31% of the nation's children at or above proficient in 2002, 2003, and 2005 (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). The share of eighth-grade students proficient or above in reading had fallen 2 percentage points. The percentage of fourth graders proficient in math continued to climb between 2003 and 2005. Math scores at the eighth-grade level had reached a flat plateau.

But veteran Washington analyst Jack Jennings, referring to earlier state-led reforms that took root in the 1990s, said, "The rate of improvement was faster before the law. There's a question as to whether No Child is slowing down our progress nationwide" (Dillon, 2005).

But state trend lines often look like a jagged mountain range, erratically moving up and down as tests are changed and proficiency bars are moved.

Third, the issue of timing is crucial. All but one state had in place a school accountability program prior to 2002. Several states registered solid gains during the 1990s. We know that achievement growth was more impressive in states that advanced more aggressive accountability programs (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Lee & Wong, 2004).

Yet no progress has occurred since 2002 in closing Black–White or Latino–White gaps.

Achievement is Slowing Since NCLB (Cont'd)

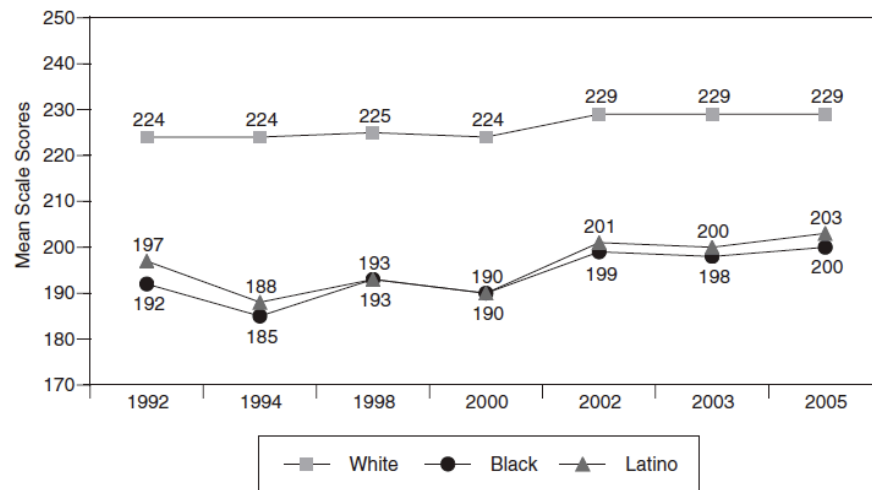


FIGURE 2. *Achievement gaps: mean scale scores in reading, fourth-grade regular National Assessment of Educational Progress trends by ethnic group.*

Whites have gained over two grade levels, from 219 to 246 between 1990 and 2005. Black fourth graders have climbed by about three grade levels over the same period. In 2005, Black and Latino fourth graders performed at the same level that Whites performed back in 1990. But the Black–White gap remained unchanged, and the Latino–White gap closed slightly. Again we see that mean gains have slowed since 2003, and progress in closing ethnic gaps has stalled.

The setting of cut-points may play a stronger role in such cases, where state officials deem a higher share of students are achieving at a proficient level, compared with the benchmarks set by the NAEP governing board. Take the case of Alabama, where the state determined that fully 77% of all fourth graders could read proficiently or above in 2003, compared with just 22% as assessed by the NAEP. Our analysis below reveals that Massachusetts offers a rare case where the percentages of children deemed proficient in reading and math by the Commonwealth have been within 10 percentage points of the shares estimated from NAEP results going back to the mid-1990s.²

Where cut-points are set and the emphasis placed on certain curricular topics can yield tests that are disproportionately sensitive to gains made by low-performing students. This allows large numbers of students (at the low end of the distribution) to clear the basic or proficient hurdle with greater ease relative to the low level of discrimination at the middle or high end of the achievement distribution.

Achievement is Slowing Since NCLB (Cont'd)

RAND researchers detailed this dynamic when they examined the rise in scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a study that achieved notoriety after being released 2 months prior to the 2000 presidential election. The results were eye-opening, essentially following the pattern seen in Kentucky (yet in Texas the data were not analyzed at the item level as Koretz and Barron had done in Kentucky). The TAAS results showed that fourth-grade reading scores climbed, between 1994 and 1998, fully 0.31 of a standard deviation for White fourth graders, 0.49 for Blacks, and 0.39 for Latinos. These gains were detected on the NAEP but at lower levels of magnitude: 0.13, 0.14, and 0.14 standard deviations, respectively (Klein et al., 2000). The RAND team warned states and schools to avoid “coach[ing] to develop skills that are unique to specific types of questions that are asked on the statewide exam . . . [and] narrowing the curriculum to improve scores.” The team emphasized that the TAAS results were “biased by various features of the testing program (e.g., if a significant percentage of students top out or bottom out on the test, it may produce results that suggest that the gap among racial and ethnic groups is closing when no such change is occurring)” (Klein et al., 2000, p. 16).³

Given these various sources of noise that may distort state testing results, how do proficiency levels compare between state and NAEP assessment programs? Do state results appear to be valid and useful when trying to understand whether students are learning more? And do state assessments help to inform the question of whether NCLB is truly making a difference in raising achievement levels?

The Washington-based Center for Education Policy (2007) interprets these widening disparities as true gains in learning when pegged to each state’s respective curricular standards. The center’s findings, however, often rely on just 2 years of data pre- 2002. The authors excluded breaks in time series when a state reset proficiency cut-points or changed its test—years when proficiency shares typically drop, as we saw above.

Across the 12 states the (unweighted) mean rate of growth in percentage proficient in reading equaled 1.5 percentage points annually over the 4 school years following NCLB enactment. This compares to 0.2 percentage point average decline each year, based on NAEP results and the federal cut-point defining proficient. In short, the chasm between state and federal estimates of proficiency has grown wider since NCLB was signed into law (detailed in Fuller & Wright, 2007).

Achievement is Slowing Since NCLB (Cont'd)

These findings illuminate the challenges in answering the bottom-line question: Is NCLB working? One fact is crystal clear: We should not rely on state testing programs and the jagged trend lines that stem from their results. Instead, it is important to focus on historical patterns informed by the NAEP. Achievement gains, going back to the early 1970s, are most discernible at the fourth-grade level. Mean scale scores in reading—independent of the proficiency-bar debate—climbed by about one grade level between 1971 and 2004, with at least half of this bump coming between 1999 and 2002 (seen in the regular NAEP time series). Some policy mix, rooted in state-led accountability efforts, appears to have worked by the late 1990s. But growth flattened out in fourth grade over the 3 years after enactment of NCLB.

Progress in math achievement has been more buoyant, with fourth graders performing about two grade levels higher in 2004 on the NAEP compared with their counterparts back in 1973. About half of this gain occurred between 1999 and 2004, but the discrete effect of NCLB, beyond the momentum of state-led accountability reforms, is difficult to estimate. Remember that 2003–2004 was the second full school year in which schools lived under NCLB rules and sanctions, and growth in math was slower post-2003 than before enactment of NCLB. When it comes to narrowing achievement gaps, the historical patterns are similar. For reading, ethnic gaps on the NAEP closed steadily from the early 1970s through 1992, then widened in 1994, and then narrowed through 2002. But no further narrowing has occurred since 2002. For math, the Black–White gap narrowed by over half a grade level between 1992 and 2003, but no further progress was observed in 2005. The Latino–White gap has continued to close, with a bit of progress post-NCLB—the one bright spot on the equity front.

NCLB Has Not Improved Achievement

<http://www.heritage.org/research/education/ednotes84.cfm>

The Heritage Foundation

EDUCATION NOTEBOOK:

A Report Card for No Child Left Behind

Improving academic achievement: Incomplete. It's simply too early to tell whether NCLB has improved student achievement. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which provides a cross-section of educational achievement data based on a sample of students across the country, there is no evidence of significant improvement in American schools since 2002. If history is any guide, however, this "incomplete" is likely to become an "F" before long.

NCLB Makes it More Difficult to Attract Teachers

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070521/darling-hammond/3>

The Nation

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at [Stanford University](#), where she launched the [School Redesign Network](#), the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#)

May 2, 2007

NCLB's practice of labeling schools as failures makes it even harder for them to attract and keep qualified teachers. As one Florida principal asked, "Is anybody going to want to dedicate their life to a school that has already been labeled a failure?" What's more, schools that have been identified as not meeting AYP standards must use their federal funds to support choice and "supplemental services," such as privately provided after-school tutoring, leaving them with even fewer resources for their core educational programs. Unfortunately, many of the private supplemental service providers have proved ineffective and unaccountable, and transfers to better schools have been impossible in communities where such schools are unavailable or uninterested in serving students with low achievement, poor attendance and other problems that might bring their own average test scores down. Thus, rather than expanding educational opportunities for low-income students and students of color, the law in many communities further reduces the quality of education available in the schools they must attend.

Achievement Gap No Longer Closing

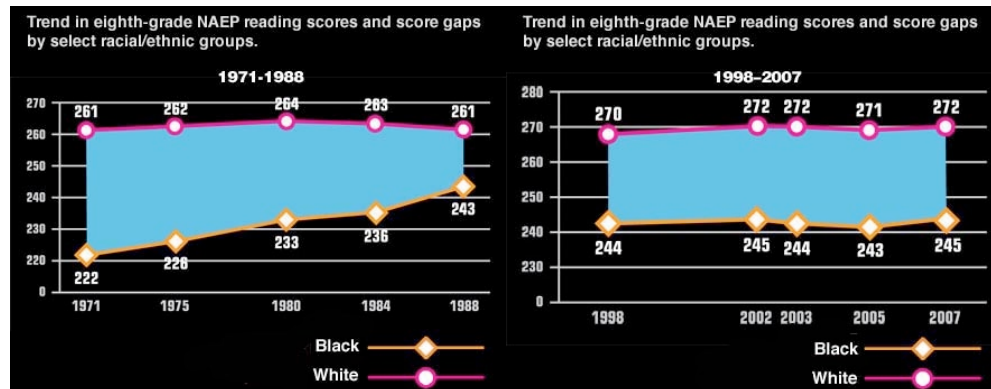
<http://www.nea.org/home/20755.htm>

National Education Association

NCLB: Is it Working?, The 'scientifically-based' answer

By Alain Jehlen

The chart for the 1970s and 80s shows the achievement gap cut in two. The gaps for other grade levels, for math, and for Hispanic students also shrank, most by about a third to a half.



What happened to make that possible? The War on Poverty? School desegregation? Shrinking class size? Head Start and other new school programs? Maybe all of the above. One thing's clear: This is what success looks like.

Now look at the chart showing recent trends. If you didn't know about NCLB, you would never guess that something bold and drastic was taking place right now in our schools. Reading scores are fairly level. The achievement gap has shrunk a little. The news is slightly better in fourth grade, slightly worse in 12th.

Math scores are trending upward (as they did during the 70s) but they're not rising faster than they were before NCLB, and math achievement gaps show little progress.

This is not what success looks like. The bottom line: this strategy doesn't work.

"Vilifying teachers and saying we are going to shame them was not the right approach," says Susan Neuman, the former Bush official. She's now joined a group supporting a broad effort to counter the devastating impact of poverty on children.

The No Child Left Behind law uses the phrase "scientifically-based" 115 times to emphasize that schools should use proven methods-not hunches or educated guesses or ideological beliefs.

NCLB Hasn't Worked

<http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/newsroom/ShowNewsItem.do?id=80309>

The Friedman Foundation

How "No Child Left Behind" Threatens Florida's Successful Education Reforms

January 07, 2009

By Matthew Ladner, Ph.D. and Dan Lips

The Limits of Federal Intervention. The past seven years have also highlighted the limits of the federal government's power to force states to implement various interventions--especially interventions meant to empower parents, not public school bureaucracy. For example, less than 1 percent of students in lower performing schools who were eligible to transfer to an alternative public school benefited from public school choice in 2004-2005.[7] Less than 19 percent benefited from the limited-choice option of supplemental educational services.[8]

Evidence suggests that poor implementation by school districts has contributed to the low student participation. The Department of Education reports that a survey of parents in eight school districts found that only 27 percent of the parents of eligible students were notified of the public-school transfer option. Among those who were notified, the information often arrived after the school year had started and, in some cases, included language that was confusing or even discouraged parents from taking advantage of the transfer option.[9]

NCLB Causes Cheating

<http://www.fairtest.org/nclb-boosts-temptation-cheat>

Fair Test: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing

NCLB Boosts Temptation to Cheat

Issue: May 2004

Reports of cheating on state standardized exams are becoming much more frequent, and many observers see a clear link between such dishonest behaviors and the high-stakes pressures attached to tests by state policies and the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law.

The Los Angeles Times recently reported that since statewide testing began five years ago, “more than 400 public school teachers in California have been investigated for allegedly helping students” on the tests, double the number reported by the state Department of Education.

Cheating accusations have also surfaced recently in Florida, New York, Massachusetts, Arizona, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Illinois and elsewhere. Examples include:

- Charges that a Brooklyn, NY, elementary school kept copies of previous years’ exams and gave them to teachers and students to prepare for new exams.
- Teachers at a Manhattan elementary school accused of urging parents to label their kids “learning disabled” to obtain more time to finish a high-stakes third-grade reading exam.
- The resignation of a principal of a school serving low-income students in Worcester, MA, after the percentage of students scoring proficient on the state test suddenly jumped from 17 to 76 percent, in one subject and grade.
- An eighth-grade teacher in Pennsylvania suspended after being accused of providing students with answers to the state test.
- Florida seniors at risk of not graduating because of allegations of cheating.
- A Boston principal accused of sending a teacher out of a fourth-grade classroom and then insisting that students redo their tests.
- Massachusetts and other states considering banning cell phones on testing days to prevent students from using text messaging and photographic features to cheat.

Some allegations of cheating have been shown to be false, and only a tiny percentage of teachers have been accused of cheating. Still, educators know their reputations and that of their schools are on the line in an era of testing and sanctions that has been greatly intensified under NCLB. In some cases, their salaries or even their jobs are at risk if student “proficiency” does not increase according to the NCLB “adequate yearly progress” formula. This pressure increases the temptation to make the grade by any means necessary.

NCLB Causes Cheating (Cont'd)

The Los Angeles Times quoted California Teachers Association President Barbara Kerr, who said that the union didn't excuse cheating but that she felt bad for teachers who broke rules under what she described as "horrendous" pressure.

"We have gone to such extremes — where your whole life and existence is measured by one test — that the pressure is on the kids, the pressure is on the teachers, the publicity is so overblown," she said.

A high school senior in Syracuse, NY, described the consequences for students of unrelenting pressure to raise test scores. "Some of the students with the best grades and the toughest course loads are the ones who cheat the most," said Pete Callahan. "This is not really surprising. These days the message being sent to students is that grades and standardized test scores are the only things that matter. ... This high-pressure environment causes students to overextend themselves and start believing that the end will always justify the means."

The term "cheating" is applied to a wide range of behaviors. Many teachers face a dilemma when students they know understand the material are tripped up by confusing and ambiguous questions. The rules usually prohibit any efforts to clarify a confusing question, yet teachers may feel that a few words of clarification might make the test a more accurate portrayal of students' knowledge.

Some experts argue that officially sanctioned test preparation is itself a type of cheating on several levels. First, by coaching so narrowly that students repeatedly practice on questions that are similar to the actual exam items, the test loses validity as a representation of the students' broad understanding of the material. Second, as schooling becomes increasingly narrowed to preparation for math and English tests, schools are "cheating" students out of a broader curriculum that they need for higher education and life.

NCLB Hasn't Improved Achievement or Narrowed Achievement Gap

["http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICEstSearch_SearchValue_0=ED491807&ERICEstSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED491807"](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICEstSearch_SearchValue_0=ED491807&ERICEstSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED491807)

Education Resources Information Center

Jaekyung Lee

June 2006

This study offers systematic trend analyses of NAEP national and state-level public school fourth and eighth graders' reading and math achievement results during pre-NCLB (1990-2001) and post-NCLB (2002-2005) periods. It compares post-NCLB trends in reading and math achievement with pre-NCLB trends among different racial and socioeconomic groups of fourth and eighth graders from across the nation and states. National and state progress toward closing racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps are evaluated not only in terms of their success in reducing the test score gaps but also in terms of reducing each subgroup's chance of failing to meet desired performance standards. Further, it provides new evidence on the impact of state accountability policy on the achievement gap trends and the discrepancies between NAEP and state assessment results. Key findings include: (1) NCLB did not have a significant impact on improving reading and math achievement across the nation and states. Based on the NAEP results, the national average achievement remains flat in reading and grows at the same pace in math after NCLB than before. (2) NCLB has not helped the nation and states significantly narrow the achievement gap. The racial and socioeconomic achievement gap in the NAEP reading and math achievement persists after NCLB. (3) NCLB's attempt to scale up the alleged success of states that adopted test-driven accountability policy prior to NCLB, so-called first generation accountability states (e.g., Florida, North Carolina, Texas) did not work. (4) NCLB's reliance on state assessment as the basis of school accountability is misleading since state-administered tests tend to significantly inflate proficiency levels and proficiency gains as well as deflate racial and social achievement gaps in the states. Appended are: (1) Data and Statistical Methods; (2) Measures of State Accountability and the Discrepancies between NAEP and State Assessment in Reading and Math Proficiency; (3) Supporting Tables. (Contains 7 tables and 18 figures.)

Transfer Option -> No Effect on Achievement

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED497259&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED497259

Education Resources Information Center

Ron Zimmer, Brian Gill, Razquin, Kevin Booker, Lockwood

June 2007

This report presents findings about the relationship between participation in the Title I school choice and supplemental educational services options and student achievement from the National Longitudinal Study of "No Child Left Behind" (NLS-"NCLB"). A key component of the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" ("NCLB") was to provide options to parents whose children had been attending Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring due to failure to achieve adequate yearly progress toward meeting state standards for two or more years. Under "NCLB," parents have the option of: (1) transferring their children to another school in the district that is not in need of improvement; or (2) enrolling their children in supplemental education services (e.g., tutoring, remediation, or other academic instruction) in addition to instruction provided during the school day. This study used data from nine large, urban school districts to examine the characteristics of students participating in the two options and the resulting impact on student achievement. The study found the following: that participation was highest in elementary grades; that African-American students had the highest participation rates of all racial and ethnic groups; that participating students had lower achievement levels than eligible but nonparticipating students; that students who transferred tended to transfer to higher-achieving, racially balanced schools; and that there was no statistically significant (positive or negative) effect on achievement among students participating in the two options. In sum, although participation rates were not high, the users of the two Title I parental options came from the disadvantaged populations that "NCLB" is intended to target. Appendix A provides a description of the nine-district data set. Appendix B presents the full results of the alternative analyses of the school choice option, comparing achievement gains of current and future choosers. Appendix C presents a meta-analysis of effects of Title I school choice and supplemental educational services. The information in this report was provided through the congressionally mandated National Longitudinal Study of "No Child Left Behind" (NLS-"NCLB"), which was conducted by the RAND Corporation and the American Institutes for Research. (Contains 23 exhibits.) [This report was prepared for Policy and Program Studies Service, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, US Department of Education.]

NCLB Hurts Businesses

<http://www.eddealermagazine.com/articles.php?view=article&id=263>

Education Dealer (magazine)

March 2008

Though most retailers who responded to our survey indicated that the NCLB Act had only a limited effect on their businesses, the overwhelming majority opposed its reauthorization. Respondents also indicated that teachers should be able to deduct the money they spend on their classrooms from their taxes. To learn more, read on.

Readers also said:

'NCLB has had the most negative impact on our business in 30 years. Children are being trained, not educated. Our teachers are no longer able to be creative. So why do they need our products?'

Civil Rights Groups Oppose NCLB/Hurts Minorities

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/11/opinion/lweb11educ.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Civil%20Rights%20and%20the%20No%20Child%20Left%20Behind%20Act&st=cse

New York Times

August 8, 2008

“Education as a Civil Rights Issue” (editorial, Aug. 1) asserts that civil rights organizations support strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act. While you are correct that education is a civil rights issue, we disagree with your generalization about the position of civil rights groups.

The failures of No Child Left Behind’s hand-tying mandates are acutely felt by minority students nationwide: students and teachers in communities of color are smothered by the testing mandates of this broken law.

Civil rights leaders have recognized the law’s shortcomings. They have united to sign the Joint Organizational Statement on No Child Left Behind Act, which has been endorsed by more than 20 prominent civil rights groups and more than 120 other organizations.

The N.A.A.C.P., Aspira, the League of United Latin American Citizens and the National Urban League have joined the call to overhaul No Child Left Behind.

Yes, education is a civil rights issue, but strengthening No Child Left Behind is not the way to level the playing field.