

**Education Degree Program Students' Knowledge of
No Child Left Behind Legislation and of
Its Impact on Special Education**

by

Michael R. Berg

A Research Paper

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
With A Major in**

Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Amy Schlieve", written over a horizontal line.

**Dr. Amy Schlieve
Investigation Advisor**

**The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 2005**

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

Author: Berg, Michael R.

Title: *Education Degree Program Students' Knowledge of "No Child Left Behind" Legislation and of Its Impact on Special Education*

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Education

Research Adviser: Dr. Amy Schlieve

Month/Year: August, 2005

Number of Pages: 33

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of university students enrolled in teaching-degree programs regarding *No Child Left Behind* regulations and its impact on Special Education services.

Data was collected through a voluntary survey given to students enrolled in coursework required to obtain teaching certification during the summer session of 2005. The participants were given a brief explanation of the study and its purpose. The university is located in a small, upper Midwest community.

The survey was developed by the researcher based on current literature findings of special educators concerns of *No Child Left Behind's* regulations. The participants were asked to evaluate how much impact *No Child Left Behind* will have on the field of Special Education in the public schools. Data was also collected on the participants' knowledge of *No Child Left Behind* and through what informational resources they gained knowledge about *No Child Left Behind*.

The results show that the majority of participants believe *No Child Left Behind* will have a very significant impact on the four major concerns of current educators that were addressed in this study:

1. Graduation requirements in grades 4,8,10.
2. Ability to hire and retain para-educators that meet new requirements.
3. Inclusion of students enrolled in special education's standardized test scores in determining at-risk schools and funding.
4. New licensure requirements for hiring qualified special education teachers.

The results also show that future educators perceive themselves to have average or above prior knowledge about new regulations of *No Child Left Behind*. The most common informational resources providing this gained knowledge are classroom instructors and current educators.

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife, Stacy, for supporting and encouraging me throughout my entire college experience and allowing me time to find my career path.

I would also like to thank my research advisor, Dr. Amy Schlieve, for being flexible with my schedule and providing me with the structure and support I needed to complete my thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
.....	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	4
<i>Research Questions</i>	4
<i>Definition of Terms</i>	5
<i>Assumptions</i>	5
<i>Limitations</i>	5
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
History and Major Themes of <i>No Child Left Behind</i>	7
<i>Impact of No Child Left Behind on Special Education</i>	10
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	14
<i>Sample Selection</i>	14
<i>Description of Sample</i>	14
<i>Instrumentation</i>	15
<i>Data Collection</i>	16
<i>Data Analysis Procedures</i>	16
<i>Limitations</i>	16
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	18
<i>Demographic Information</i>	18

<i>Data Analysis</i>	18
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	21
<i>Summary</i>	21
<i>Conclusions</i>	22
<i>Recommendations</i>	23
References.....	26
Appendix A: NCLB Impact on Special Education Survey.....	27

CHAPTER I: Introduction

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has caused many educators and politicians to question President George W. Bush's commitment to "leave no child behind" in the American public school system. The presidential initiative began during his first election campaign in response to America's public school systems that were struggling to meet performance standards and improve test scores. The Bush Administration followed the performance accountability of public schools that was enacted during the Clinton Administration. The only difference being that *No Child Left Behind* enforces consequences for those schools that do not meet expectations for improvement (Ripley, et al, 2005).

The federal law requires all schools to assess every student in reading, math, and science. These assessments focus on accountability of schools to provide adequate yearly progress (AYP) for students enrolled in grades 3-8. The controversy of these new regulations is the inclusion of special education students in the proficiency rating of schools. If the students with the most severe cognitive disabilities do not meet grade-level standards and count as "non-proficient," states and districts will not meet the AYP requirement. The failure of being labeled an at-risk school means students can transfer to other proficient labeled schools and therefore loss of federal funding dollars to those at-risk schools. Many schools across the nation failed to make AYP last year solely because of special education students (Kukic, 2004).

Due to these findings, new provisions were made to address special education students' assessment scores. The new rules will allow school districts to hold a limited number of students with severe cognitive disabilities to a separate set of standards under

the law. States and districts can develop one or more alternate academic achievement standards and count proficient scores for up to one percent of students with severe cognitive disabilities. If states elect to use alternative standards, they must meet these conditions: be aligned with the state's academic content standards, promote access to the general education curriculum, and reflect professional judgment of the highest learning standards possible for the group of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (Coleman & Palmer, 2004).

Browder and Cooper-Duffy (2003) provided teaching strategies for special educators to promote annual yearly progress under NCLB. Special education teacher must be involved in team planning. General educators must provide positive behavioral supports while adapting curriculum with the assistance of special education support. The use of alternate assessments must be written in the student's individual education plan (IEP) with the knowledge and involvement of parents, educators, and other related agencies who provide the best educational environment possible for the students with disabilities.

Another strategy is peer tutors. Non-disabled peers learn to use promoting methods, adaptive technology and other cooperative learning interventions to use with their classmates with disabilities. Studies have shown these strategies promote mastery of skills by students with disabilities (Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003).

Even with implementation of strategies and goals to meet the new standards of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, schools are straining to meet the proficiency level needed to not be labeled as a low performance school. Robelen (2004) believed states and districts couldn't meet the standards due to lack of funding and low staffing. Under a study

conducted by the Center on Educational Policy, it was found that 21% of the 274 districts surveyed were identified as “needing improvement” under the new law, compared with 15% the previous year. Districts that do not make AYP for three years must also provide supplemental support services, which also cause more staffing issues in the areas of special education and reading specialists within the school systems.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is potentially the most significant educational initiative to have been enacted in decades (Sampson, et al, 2004). With many regulations and federal requirements that need to be met, many educators and school board members are wondering where the funding will come from. On April 20, the National Education Association and eight school districts in Vermont, Texas and Michigan sued the Department of Education, charging it had violated part of NCLB that says states can not be forced to use their own money to meet the law’s requirements. The teacher’s union reports that in the fiscal 2005, schools received \$9.8 billion less than they would have if the law was funded at the level authorized by Congress. With the increasing amount of paperwork, special education services, supplemental services to school in-need of improvement, and bureaucracy that is not being funded by the federal government; schools are struggling to comply with NCLB (Hardy, 2005).

More research needs to be conducted on how the new regulations will affect special education students and educators in the public school systems. These groups play a key role in the meeting the “proficiency” performance rating needed to continue receiving federal funds and keep students in their assigned neighborhood schools.

This study is important because it addresses the concerns of Wisconsin public school educators at the beginning of the enforcement of *No Child Left Behind*. If school

boards and administrators are not aware of their concerns, there will be no changes in the implementation of special education services and testing procedures which will not only effect the student's academic performance, but also the school's performance to meet adequate yearly progress and proficiency ratings. Hopefully this study will highlight concerns within the profession and lead to discussions on how to take positive steps toward meeting the requirements of NCLB.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the perceived knowledge and understanding of the impact of *No Child Left Behind* on the field of Special Education as reported by university students enrolled in Education Programs to obtain teaching certification in the state of Wisconsin.

Research Questions

This study was designed to gather information regarding how future educators attending college to earn a teaching certificate have gained knowledge regarding *No Child Left Behind* and how they perceive this legislation will impact the field of Special Education. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) Are future educators gaining knowledge regarding the new standards of the *No Child Left Behind Act*?
- 2) Through what informational resources are future educators learning about the *No Child Left Behind Act*?
- 3) According to future educators, what standards of the *No Child Left Behind Act* have the most impact on the field of Special Education?

Definition of Terms

There are two key components of the *No Child Left Behind Act* that need to be defined by the researcher- adequate yearly progress and scientific based research.

Adequate yearly progress- each state defines its goals to meet higher levels of academic achievement which must include ninety-five percent of the student population, be continuous and substantial improvement

Scientific based research- methods that have met rigorous standards and that have been shown, when correctly applied, to reliably yield positive results

Special education services- any additional services that students enrolled in special education programs receive according to their individualized educational plans that is delivered by the Special Education department (teachers, administration, IEP teams, para-professionals)

Assumptions

It is assumed that all subjects have prior knowledge of *No Child Left Behind* and the new regulations that will possible impact funding, testing requirements and ability to provide the least restrictive learning environment to meet the individual educational process (IEP) of their students with special education needs. The other assumption is that participants will answer truthfully and thoughtfully.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that may impact the significance of the research findings. The sample may be too small to provide an accurate indicator of future educators enrolled in Education degree programs. The survey, authorized by this researcher, does not have high reliability and validity, which should be questioned when

reviewing the findings of the study. Students may not complete survey due to limited time frame, busy schedules and tendency to not attend summer classes due to second job responsibilities, nice weather and vacations.

CHAPTER II: Review of Literature

The review of literature will cover the history and major themes of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the impact of NCLB on special education in the public schools.

History and Major Themes of No Child Left Behind

The history of *No Child Left Behind* is a complex, political initiative that believes America's public schools need to be held accountable for low-test scores and performance. There are many accomplishments that President George W. Bush hopes to meet through new regulations and drastic changes in teaching standards.

President George W. Bush introduced the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 to address the needs of our nation's children and educational system. Children are struggling in low-performing schools and as President Bush stated, "too many of our neediest children are being left behind." (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* in January 2002, which amended the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. The new education reforms included in NCLB are built on four pillars: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven educational methods, and more choices for parents.

The major theme of *No Child Left Behind* is accountability. This accountability that is stressed in the new regulations means that school districts, states, and individual school buildings must make improvements in student achievement. All students must be involved in this directive including disadvantaged, low performing, and minority populations (Simpson, et.al, 2004).

To assess improvement NCLB requires adequate yearly progress (AYP) for individual schools and school districts. Students must take standardized testing assessments in reading, language arts, and eventually science. If schools do not meet AYP they will lose federal funding, be identified as “a school in need of improvement” and add more supplemental services to make progress under NCLB. These supplemental services may include free tutoring, after-school assistance, and more personnel to assist with students that are not reaching the proficient-level during academic testing. Within two years the school in need of improvement will need to show improvement. AYP must be met within five years. If the school holds no accountability for low performance they could receive more sanctions and allow students to transfer to a district or school building with a better performance record (Gewertz, 2005).

The second pillar attempts to address the need for students to demonstrate accountability by allowing more freedom for states and communities in using federal education funds. This new flexibility allows districts to meet the needs based on local concerns. Funds can be used to improve school performance by allocating resources towards technology-based instruction, hiring new teachers, increasing instruction through after-school programming, offering support programs such as free tutoring, and promoting safe and drug-free schools through comprehensive school wide programming (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Another major theme of *No Child Left Behind* is the use of proven education methods to meet the needs of students attending all public schools. The U.S. Department of Education has established the *What Works Clearinghouse* (WWC) to promote the use of evidence-based practices. The WWC provides teachers and other education

professionals with reliable and effective educational methods to promote higher performance and academic achievement. When accessing the WWC through its website, www.w-w-c.org, teachers can use the Design and Implementation Device Instrument. This method is controversial due to infrequent use of many methods and various design instrumentations to test validity may not work with every student, but the Department of Education stresses that any scientific-based method is better than using no method at all to meet the needs of struggling students (Simpson, et al, 2004).

The fourth pillar involves the parents of children attending our nation's schools in the decision-making process and other programming related to their children's education. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, parents are encouraged to be active participants and informed members on meeting the high performance standards needed to keep federal monies and programming. Their children's district must provide performance ratings and AYP goals through clear, common-sense reporting such as newsletters, articles in the local paper, individual report cards for students, and face to face conferences at least twice a year. If schools do not meet AYP and are labeled as a school in need of improvement for more than two years, the parent has a choice to transfer their child to another higher performing school building or school district- at the expense of their current school district. The current district must provide transportation to the new school and also provide supplemental services to those students that stay within the low performing school such as summer school, tutoring and additional paraeducators to work within the classrooms in smaller instructional groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

NCLB also recognizes the need for expanded parental involvement. This involvement includes the need for schools to have parents enforce home values and discipline within the home and not rely on school personnel to build positive character values without parental cooperation and input. This could include follow through with behavioral modification plans, meeting individualized educational plan (IEP) goals and promoting community programs such as service learning, school-to-work and other transition services needed to be life-long learners and productive citizens (Simpson, et al, 2004).

Throughout the process of this new educational reform schools will find positive impacts of implementing new programming but also struggle with meeting the new regulations. President George W. Bush wants no child left behind, but many wonder if his goal is too high and too overwhelming to find federal dollars to finance all the supplemental services and professional development for our nation's schools and professional educators.

Impact of No Child Left Behind on Special Education

As with every new educational reform, there will be positive and negative impacts on the professionals that work with our children. *No Child Left Behind* directly impacts the field of special education through several key regulations- emphasizes on early childhood education, teacher and paraeducator qualification requirements, inclusion of children with disabilities in raising the academic achievement levels for all students.

A positive impact of *No Child Left Behind* toward improving special education services is the commitment to provide early childhood education in local communities. Through these programs, all children will come to school with pre-reading skills such as

knowing that print goes from left to right, top to bottom. These skills will directly impact the referrals school districts must face when students are struggling in academic areas and teachers are requesting special education programming to meet the needs of their students. Hopefully families will take advantage of early childhood education in their communities and prepare their children to do well both academically and socially in the public school setting.

Of great concern to many special education professionals is the “highly qualified” teacher requirement that must be met by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. According to the U.S. Department of Education the requirements for a highly qualified teacher under NCLB are: a bachelor’s degree, full state certification as defined by the state, demonstrated competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject taught by the teacher. Core academic subjects include English, reading or language arts, math, science, history, civics and government, geography, economics, the arts and foreign language (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The last requirement is of the greatest concern to special education professionals. If special education is directly teaching core subjects to their students they must hold certification in that subject. Schools and state legislators are concerned that there will be teacher shortage in the area of special education due to the requirement to be dually certified in several subjects (Reese, 2004). NCLB recognizes the need to be flexible with special education and determined that if special educators who provide only consultation in adapting curricula, use of behavioral supports and interventions, and/or selecting appropriate accommodations, do not need to meet certification requirements in core subjects.

Teachers are not the only education professional that must meet new qualification requirements. Para-educators who instruct students must meet one of the three following requirements: have an associate degree or higher, or have completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher learning, or pass rigorous state or local assessment that demonstrates knowledge and skills needed to assist in teaching reading, writing, and math (Simpson, et al, 2004). The problem with having higher-level educational paraeducators may lead to unsatisfied individuals that often are in low paying positions with high turnover rate due to difficulties of job duties including lifting students, providing nursing-related care throughout the day, and often part-time hours without benefits of full-time employees.

Under *No Child Left Behind* guidelines, schools that perform well on state academic assessment tests may receive public recognition and increased funding opportunities but those schools whose students perform below proficient standards sanctions and even state takeover could occur. All students, including students with disabilities, must participate in state testing and be included in calculation of proficiency level of school districts and buildings. This added pressure for special educators to prepare their students for testing, increases the level of stress for many special education professionals. Students that do not pass testing requirements will not be allowed to advance to the next grade-level and in the high school will face non-graduation for many students that struggle with testing, core subject content and ability to complete assessment testing under the current NCLB and state guidelines. It is the responsibility of the special education teacher to discover availability of adequate resources to implement the NCLB mandate, educate regular education professionals on the allowances to the use

of flexible and individualized evaluation accommodations and modifications that address students' unique learning disabilities, disabilities, and other needs; and support for personnel preparation and professional development needed to successfully implement the mandate (Simpson, et al, 2004).

The task of finding resources and educating other professionals on needed intervention can interfere with a special educator's ability to meet the needs of their students. There is not enough time in a school day to focus on testing requirements, meeting modifications and IEP goals of each student, and collaborating with other educators to guarantee the least restrictive educational environment. These daunting responsibilities might lead to special education profession shortages in our public schools, overall resentment from community members including parents that special education students are causing "their school" to be in need of improvement and lose federal education funding, and/or other negative impacts related to the new regulations of *No Child Left Behind* (Reese, 2004).

It is important that research be conducted regarding both negative and positive impacts from this major educational reform called *No Child Left Behind*. Government agencies, educational departments, higher-level learning facilities, and our public schools need to understand how to effectively implement NCLB mandates and guidelines and hopefully research will begin to identify strategies and needed provisions that will guarantee the best education for all students attending America's schools.

CHAPTER III: Methodology

This chapter will provide information about the participants in this study and how they were selected. The instrumentation will also be discussed, as well as data collection and analysis procedures. The limitations of the research methods will conclude this chapter.

Sample Selection

After the University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) approved the survey and research proposal, emails were written and sent to seven professors teaching coursework required to obtain teaching certification the week before surveys were to be administered in their classrooms. All students enrolled in their courses were currently enrolled in following educational areas: early childhood education (prekindergarten-3rd grade), special education, secondary education, and guidance and counseling. Therefore, the students represented the entire prekindergarten- twelve grade future educator's perspective.

Permission to conduct the survey was granted by three professors teaching the courses offered in the summer of 2005 with support of UW-Stout IRB approval that all measures were taken to protect all human subjects involved in the research study. A total of four courses were sampled, resulting in a total of 52 participants.

Description of Sample

The subjects in this study were students enrolled in courses required to obtain or renew teaching certification in the State of Wisconsin through enrollment at a medium sized university during the summer session of 2005. All students who participated in the

study were enrolled in programs related to becoming future educators or renewing licensures in the public school system. The subjects were male and female.

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study was developed specifically for this study by this researcher. The survey was developed based on the literature review findings that described some concerns of *No Child Left Behind* and its impact on special education in American schools.

Part I of the survey asked for demographic information of the participants including current educational program and current degree level (undergraduate, graduate). The second question determined the participant's prior knowledge of *No Child Left Behind* by using a five-point Likert scale. If the subject circled 0, no knowledge, they were asked to stop and turn in the survey to the researcher.

Part II of the survey gathered information pertaining to how the participant gained knowledge about the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). The participant was to circle all informational resources that applied to learning about NCLB including classroom instructors, professional magazines/journals, newspapers, Internet, television, family/friends, employed teachers, classmates, professional organizations, and seminars.

Part III of the survey measured the participants' opinions about the impact of NCLB regulations on Special Education in the public schools. The choices used a Likert scale of measurement composed of no impact, average impact, and very significant impact.

There are no measures of validity or reliability that have been documented since this survey was designed specifically for this study. The survey is one page in length with approximately 8 items (see Appendix A).

Data Collection

All participating classes were given a brief explanation of the study and its purpose. Each of the students had the option to participate in the study. If they chose not to participate, they were instructed to hand in the survey to the researcher. A consent form, giving an overview of the study, was given to each student along with the survey. The participants were instructed to read the consent form. The surveys were then passed out to everyone in the room. The surveys took about ten minutes to complete. The participants handed the survey to the researcher when they were finished.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data will be analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences, version 10.0, (SPSS, 2002) computer software available through UW-Stout technology. Participants' responses from the survey was entered into the database and analyzed to determine significant findings concerning the perceived knowledge of *No Child Left Behind* and impact on special education as rated by university students enrolled in education courses during Summer session.

Limitations

1. Participants were given one opportunity to complete the survey. If they were absent from class on the scheduled date, they were not administered the survey.
2. The validity and reliability of the survey should be considered when evaluating results of the study. The researcher designed the survey; therefore, further

analysis may be necessary if used in future and/or continuing research related to NCLB.

3. The one university participating in this study may not represent the perceptions of all future educators enrolled in education coursework included in obtaining a teaching certificate in the state of Wisconsin. The sample may have been more beneficial to future educators if it included more than one university.

CHAPTER IV: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of the study regarding future educators' perceptions toward the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and impact on Special Education. The results of demographic information will be given as well as the results of data analysis of each research question.

Demographic Information

Students participating in this study were required to be enrolled in teaching educational degree programs. The sample consisted of 21% Elementary Education- specifically Early Childhood Education (n=11), 37% Special Education (n=19), 23% Secondary Education (n=12), and 19% Guidance and Counseling (n=10). Undergraduate students comprised 48% (n=25) and graduate students made up 52% (n=27) of the sample. A total of 52 surveys were completed and used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: Do you have knowledge of the No Child Left Behind Act?

Participants were asked to rate their knowledge using a 5 point Likert scale (0=none, 1,2=little, 3=average, 4,5=above average). Out of the 52 participants, 46% (n=24) rated their knowledge as average regarding *No Child Left Behind*. Twenty-nine percent of the participants rated their knowledge as little to none.

Part II: Through what informational resources have you gained knowledge of the No Child Left Behind Act? Participants were asked to circle all that apply. Their choices included classroom instructors, professional magazines/journals, newspapers, Internet, television, family/friends, employed teachers, classmates, professional organizations, and seminars. The frequency and percentage for responses to each item in Part II were

calculated. Out of the 52 participants, 77% (n=40) reported classroom instructors as providing the most information regarding the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Employed teachers provided the second highest percentage, 60% (n=31) of information to future educators to gain a better understanding of the new regulations in NCLB.

Part III consisted of the four concerns gained from reviewing current literature regarding *No Child Left Behind* and its impact on the field of Special Education. Participants were asked to circle the appropriate numerical rating (0= no impact, 3=average impact, 6-8= very significant impact) concerning the following statements regarding *No Child Left Behind* regulations and their impact on Special Education in the public schools.

Statement 1: Graduation requirements in grades 4,8,10 based on testing. Participants rated the impact of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) as very significant 56% of the time (n=29).

Statement 2: Ability to hire and retain para-educators that meet new requirements. Overall, 49% of the participants rated the impact of NCLB regulations on the field of Special Education as being very significant. The highest frequency occurred at a rating of 7 with 21% (n=11).

Statement 3: Inclusion of students enrolled in Special Education's standardized test scores in determining at-risk schools and funding. Out of 52 participants, 69% (n=36) rated the NCLB impact as being very significant toward inclusion of students enrolled in special education's test scores to determine funding.

Statement 4: New licensure requirements for hiring qualified special education teachers in subject areas. On the last statement, 53% (n=28) of the participants rated new licensure requirements of NCLB having very significant impact.

CHAPTER V: Discussion

This chapter will begin with a summary of the findings of this study. Conclusions of the study will then be discussed. Finally, the last section will outline recommendations for the improvement of educating future educators about *No Child Left Behind* and its impact on the field of Special Education.

Summary

President George W. Bush had a goal that no child would be left behind while attending American public schools. The signing of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in January of 2002 supported this goal. Current public school educators struggling to meet the new regulations of NCLB have raised many concerns. An important finding from this study is that future educators are learning about NCLB and its impact on special education through communication from classroom instructors (77%) and employed teachers (60%).

Since *No Child Left Behind* is recently being enforced in America's public schools it is important to gain a better understanding of how future educators are being informed of the new regulations and what concerns they feel will impact their ability to teach all students that enter their classrooms including students enrolled in special education. The results of this study showed that most future educators 71% (n=37) felt they had average to above average knowledge of *No Child Left Behind*. The major concerns that are surfacing in the school system: graduate requirements based on testing in grades 4,8,10, ability to hire and retain para-educators that meet new requirements, inclusion of students enrolled in Special Education's standardized test scores in determining funding and at-risk schools, and new licensure requirements for special

education teachers in subject areas all showed significant impacts when rated by future educators that participated in this study. According to this study's findings, the inclusion of students enrolled in special education's standardized test scores to determine funding and at-risk schools 69% was perceived to be the most influential impact of *No Child Left Behind* on Special Education services in the public schools.

Conclusions

The results show that the majority of participants believe *No Child Left Behind* will have a very significant impact on the four major concerns of current educators that were addressed in this study: graduation requirements in grades 4,8,10, ability to hire and retain para-educators that meet new requirements, inclusion of students enrolled in special education's standardized test scores in determining at-risk schools and funding, and new licensure requirements for hiring qualified special education teachers in subject areas. The results also show that future educators perceive themselves to have average or above prior knowledge about new regulations of *No Child Left Behind*. The most common informational resources providing this gained knowledge are classroom instructors and current educators.

Overall, this study supports current literature on the topic of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the field of public education. There are many concerns that need to be addressed and possibly modified before the new regulations will be able to be met in the public school system. Future educators are learning from current educators working in the schools and in their college classrooms therefore it is possible that they are influenced by the current literature that shows public schools are struggling to meet the new

regulations of NCLB and modifications are being made specifically in the area of special education.

It is an interesting finding from this study that the area that was rated the lowest impact on the field of education was the ability to retain and hire para-educators that meet new requirements. Para-educators are a vital part of the special education services that public schools offer. Future educators that participated in this study did not show this same concern for low staffing issues, decreased funding and school budgets, and ability to offer supplemental services through one-on-one para-educator assistance. All these concerns need to be met in order to address the new regulations of *No Child Left Behind*.

Recommendations

From the findings supported by this study and current literature, the research recommends the following:

- Future and current educators should receive instruction and/or staff development concerning *No Child Left Behind* specifically how to improve standardized test scores for all students, including students receiving special education services, to meet the requirements of NCLB.

Further research should be done with a broader sample to get a more representative evaluation of the impact of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) on the field of Special Education in public schools. Future research may also want to sample current educators and classroom instructors to determine their concerns towards NCLB and Special Education due to the finding that most future educators are learning about new regulations through interactions with these two resources. From that research, conclusions can be made about current educators concerns about NCLB and

recommendations for improving the enforcement of NCLB and how to address the inclusion of special education in meeting the requirements of testing accountability, federal funding, grade advancement, and licensure requirements.

References

- Browder, D., & Cooper-Duffy, K. (2003). Evidence-based practices for students with severe disabilities and the requirement for accountability in no child left behind. *Journal of Special Education, 37*(3).
- Coleman, A., & Palmer, S. (2004). Review of final NCLB rules for severely disabled students: Attorneys offer an overview of key elements that address special-needs students. *Special Education Report, 30*(1), 6-8.
- Gewertz, C. (2005). Guide seeks new clarity on tutoring. *Education Week, 24*(41), 1-4.
- Hardy, L. (2005). Mutiny in the NCLB ranks. *American School Board Journal, 192*,(6),14.
- Kukic, S. (2004). Lawmakers laud rules for testing disabled. *Special Education Report, 30*(1).
- Reese, S. (2004). The highly qualified teacher under NCLB. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers, 79*(8), 33-6.
- Ripley, A., August, M., Mustafa, N., & Sieger, M. (2005). Inside the revolt over Bush's school rules. *Time, 165*(19), 30-4.
- Robelen, E. (2004). More school districts feeling the effects of no child law. *Education Week, 27*(21), 6.
- Simpson, R., LaCava, P., & Graner, P. (2004). The no child left behind act: Challenges and implications for educators. *Intervention in school and clinic, 40*(2), 67-75.
- U.S. Department of Education (2004). *NCLB making a difference in Wisconsin*. Retrieved December 01, 2004 from:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/importance/difference/wisconsin.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *No Child Left Behind: A toolkit for teachers*.

Washington, DC: Office of the Deputy Secretary.

APPENDIX A: NCLB Impact on Special Education Survey

Please circle your current educational program and level of degree.

Elementary Education Special Education Secondary Education Other: _____
Please specify

Undergraduate Level Graduate Level

Do you have knowledge of the *No Child Left Behind Act*?

None Little Average Above Average
 0 1 2 3 4 5

If you circled 0, please stop here and turn in your survey to the researcher. Please continue with the next section if you circled 1 or above.

Through what informational resources have you gained knowledge of the *No Child Left Behind Act*? (Please circle all that apply).

Classroom Instructors Professional Magazines/Journal Newspapers Internet Television
 Family/Friends Employed Teachers Classmates Professional Organizations Seminars

Please circle the appropriate numerical rating concerning the following statements regarding the *No Child Left Behind Act* regulations and their impact on Special Education in the public schools.

	No Impact			Average Impact			Very Significant Impact		
1. Graduation Requirements in grades 4,8,10 based on testing	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. Ability to hire and retain para-educators that meet new requirements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. Inclusion of students enrolled in Special Education's standardized test scores in determining at-risk schools and funding	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. New licensure requirements for hiring qualified special education teachers in subject areas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Thank you participating in this study. Please return your completed survey to the researcher.