

A Comprehensive Review of Literature

Associated With the No Child

Left Behind Act of 2001

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine available research associated with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Since the NCLB passed through Congress in fall of 2001 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, it has generated a wealth of social and political controversy. The law created federally mandated standards and assessment requirements with severe sanctions for the schools that failed in their efforts to reach published benchmarks for improvement. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine the historical background of the NCLB, how the policies it established affected school districts, educators, and students, and the changes to the law the new administration would like to establish. Upon conclusion of the literature review, recommendations were made in regard to what schools can do to help their students achieve high academic standards.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Recognizing the universal importance education, the federal government assumed a larger role in financing public schools with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. Through subsequent reauthorizations, the ESEA has continued to assist the states for educational purposes. In 2001, the reauthorization included the NCLB, which mandated that all states had to set high standards for student performance and teacher quality. The NCLB called for all teachers to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. In order to be highly qualified, a teacher needed to hold a bachelor's degree, hold a certification to teach in the state of his or her employment, and have proven knowledge of the subjects he or she teaches.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has mandated more accountability in public education. The law also redefined the federal government's role in K-12 education by requiring states and districts to take specific actions. These actions must not only demonstrate how well students are achieving, they must also show consistent progress over time in closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. Teachers and students alike are being held to higher standards. A key component in the NCLB legislation is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which is the minimum level of improvement that schools must achieve each year. Each state is responsible for defining AYP goals for its schools. All schools are required to meet these goals or they face consequences ranging from supplemental services for students who are not making adequate progress to school takeover and restructuring (Shippen, Houchins, Calhoon, Furlow, and Sartor, 2006). If this were to occur, local control of the district would be severely hampered.

With the establishment of a new administration in 2009, one can expect reforms to occur in the NCLB. President Obama thought the goals of the NCLB were good, but the law had significant flaws in that need to be addressed (Klein & McNeil, 2009). President Obama also believes that providing a high-quality education is critical to addressing many of our country's challenges, and that world-class public schools provide the path to global opportunity and strong local communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the complexities of the NCLB. This includes identifying the historical background of the legislation, the effect it has on educational practices, and what the future holds for the law. The results of the study will be shared with administrators and teachers to help them formulate recommendations to help their schools achieve high academic standards.

Research Questions

When the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, it signaled the latest efforts of the federal government to regulate education in the United States. Why was the legislation needed?

The study addresses the following research questions.

1. What is the historical background of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001?
2. How did the NCLB affect education?
3. What changes will the new administration make to the NCLB?

Definition of Terms

For clarification purposes, the following terms are defined.

No Child Left Behind – This term refers to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which was a federal law signed by George W. Bush that held schools accountable to higher standards.

Adequate Yearly Progress – The minimum level of improvement that schools must achieve each year according to state requirements is referred to as adequate yearly progress.

Students with Disabilities – Students with disabilities refers to students who are from low-income families, speak limited English, are members of racial or ethnic minorities, or have learning disabilities.

Empirical Research – Research that uses data derived from actual observations or experimentation is referred to as empirical research.

Direct Instruction – Teacher-centered methods of instruction that involve using lectures or demonstrations to teach new material referred to as direct instruction.

Inquiry-based Learning – Inquiry-based learning emphasizes measuring student progress by how well they develop problem-solving skills, rather than by how much knowledge they possess.

Progressive Education- Educational progressivism is the belief that education must be based on the principle that students learn best in real-life activities.

Back-to-Basics Education – Back-to-basics education focuses on the belief that students learn best through rote memorization of material.

Limitations of the Study

Because NCLB legislation is relatively new, long-term studies on its impact are limited. Also, much speculation is used when discussing future changes to the NCLB.

President Obama has ideas he would like to see implemented in schools across the country, but Congress also has a say in the process. The President will have to wait until the reauthorization of NCLB to find out if his ideas will be enacted.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is a comprehensive review of the literature associated with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The chapter focuses on the historical background of government involvement in education, how the policies established by the NCLB affected education in the United States, and what policy changes the new administration might make in years to come.

What is the Historical Background of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001?

Government in the United States is much decentralized when compared with that of other nations. Our Democratic system is based on the idea that government ought to be limited and that control of many public functions should rest with state and local communities. The task of educating people has historically been the responsibility of state and local governments. In the late 1700 and early 1800's, states such as Virginia and Connecticut became known for the quality of their education systems. These states gave direct aid to schools, as long as the funds were used to support education for the poor (Gabel, 1937). Parents who could afford it were expected to pay their fair share to support local schools. For the most part, the government did not run schools, even as it supported them financially at the request of its citizens. Throughout the colonial period, all schools, even religious ones, were considered public because they served the public good. Despite early attempts at a national education system by notable proponents like Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, local communities guarded their schools and their curriculum. Schools were seen as an extension of the home, and teachers were essentially servants to parents.

Even though education was primarily the responsibility of local governments, the Founding Fathers believed a well-educated citizenry was an essential part of the general welfare of its citizens and wanted education for all, not just for the elite. John Adams believed education was not just for the rich and noble, but also for every rank and class of people down to the poorest (Brown, 1996). The Preamble of the Constitution allows the government to promote the general welfare of its citizens, and education is no exception. Over the years, the federal government has taken a more critical role in education. In general, the federal government has entered the field of education when a vital national interest was not being met by states or localities. After the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, the federal government placed an emphasis on improving math and science curriculum. In the 1960's, the achievement gap that separated minority and low-income students from students from more affluent backgrounds led to the passage of the ESEA, which provided aid to states and school districts to improve education for children from low-income families. In the early 1980's, educational quality became a heated national issue due in part to the release of *A Nation At Risk*, which warned of declining performance in American schools. By the 1990's, a movement had emerged to reform schools by setting higher standards for student learning in core academic subjects. This movement led the passage of the IASA. The most recent and expansive federal legislation is the NCLB, which, among other things, emphasized the importance of testing and accountability. The act relies heavily on student test results as the primary information source to assess progress and to guide the improvement of learning.

The debate over whether to emphasize basic skills or to concentrate on the larger context in which these skills are used is hardly new. There are different theories as to

whether or not student test scores are the best way to assess student learning. Considered a pioneer in education for his views on student learning, early 20th century philosopher John Dewey (1938) believed that students learn best by doing and that educators are responsible for providing students with experiences that are immediately valuable and which better enable the students to contribute to society. In the early 1900's, Russian theorist Lev Vygotsky, who shared Dewey's theories on education, argued that standardized tests are not the best way to assess children's learning. Vygotsky argued that testing students is not a true measure of intelligence. Instead of using tests, it is better to determine intelligence by examining a student's ability to solve problems, both independently and with the assistance of an adult. Vygotsky believed instruction should take place in a meaningful context. This means teachers should let students experience learning in real-life situations, instead of presenting abstract material in class (Smagorinsky, 2007).

More recently, there has been a movement in education that stresses getting back to basics. The back-to-basics movement in education that began back in the 1970's mandated state curriculums, high-stakes testing, and school accountability (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, (2009). Federal legislation that has been passed in the last forty years has been under the tenet of the back-to-basics movement.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

Passed by the U.S. Congress in the spring of 1965 and conceived as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) focused primarily on delivering federal aid to help level the educational playing field for poor and minority children. The ESEA was one of the most significant and

expansive education policies ever undertaken by the federal government. President Johnson signed the legislation into law in Stonewall, Texas, in front of the one-room schoolhouse he attended as a child. The law outlined and provided funds for many educational programs deemed essential for children living in poverty. In 1965, a child was considered as living in poverty if the family earned less than \$3,000 a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). At the time, the government did not adjust its poverty line for family size, which had the effect of underestimating the number of poor children. In 2008, a family of four living in the contiguous 48 states would have to make less than \$22,050 to be considered impoverished. The value goes up \$3,740 for each additional child (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The act was the first comprehensive federal education law that provided substantial monetary funds to schools serving children from low-income families (Robelen, 2005). The ESEA authorized funds for the professional development of educators, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs, and promoting parental involvement in education. According to Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield (2005) with the passage of the ESEA, the federal government sought to provide compensatory educational services for economically disadvantaged school districts.

The main component of the act was a program called Title I, which allocated significant resources to schools serving areas with high concentrations of children from low-income families. Title I also funded Chapter 1, which provided services to eligible students enrolled in private schools. Along with the emerging system of social programs of the 1960's, Title I was the major educational initiative designed to close the achievement gap between poor children and their more advantaged peers, and, ultimately,

to break the vicious cycle of poverty (Parker, 2005). In the past, Title I funds have been allocated to schools through programs such as Head Start, Follow-Through, and bilingual education programs. Today, more than 50,000 schools across the country use Title I funds to provide additional academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving children master challenging curricula and meet state standards in core academic subjects. For example, funds support extra instruction in reading and mathematics, as well as special pre-school, after-school, and summer programs that are intended to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum (Parker, 2005).

A Nation at Risk

Eighteen years after the passage of the ESEA, Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell and the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report entitled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*. The report was founded on concerns regarding the nation's low academic proficiency despite federal efforts to improve public schools by passing the ESEA (Peterson & West, 2003). The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* served as a catalyst for today's standard's based reform movement. In a sense, the movement contained both progressive and back-to-basics tenets. The movement was progressive in how it aligned with John Dewey's philosophy of preparing students for real-life challenges, yet it also incorporated the back-to-basics approach of standardized tests. Educational leaders began to refer to a learning revolution that would replace the old architecture of education (O'Banion, 2007). The old architecture, reformers believed, was an artifact of earlier eras when school was designed for an agricultural society. However, the report also emphasized getting back to the basics with its emphasis on standardized tests of achievement to determine student

learning. *A Nation at Risk* offered recommendations in five areas: (a) content, (b) standards and expectations, (c) time, (d) teaching, and (e) leadership and fiscal support (Allen, 2008). In terms of content, the report recommended that state and local high school graduation requirements be strengthened and that all students who are seeking a diploma should be required to complete the *five new basics* during their four years of high school. The *five new basics* included: (a) four years of English, (b) three years of mathematics, (c) three years of science, (d) three years of social studies, and (e) one-half year of computer science. These requirements would be an increase for many schools. In 1987, only 12 states required their high school students to have at least 2.5 years of math, and only six states required at least 2.5 years of science (Hanushek, 1992).

For standards and expectations, the report recommended that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct. By applying these standards, students will be pushed to do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment. The report also recommended that more time should be devoted to learning the new basics, which would require more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year. The fourth area the report concentrated on was teaching. The goals included trying to make teaching a more respected and rewarding profession. The report focused on teacher training and rewarding those teachers who have demonstrated excellence in their field. The last recommendation in *A Nation at Risk* called for citizens across the nation to hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the necessary leadership to achieve the previously mentioned reforms. In terms of funding, citizens are

expected to provide fiscal support and stability in order to bring about the proposed reforms.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* triggered a series of major reform efforts in education that are still evolving (O'Banion, 2007). As part of the reform efforts, leaders began to refer to a learning revolution that would place learning first by overhauling the traditional architecture of education. Less than a decade after the publication, presidential candidate H. Ross Perot called for tough requirements that would hold schools and students accountable for increasing and maintaining academic proficiency. He called for the use of standardized tests, namely the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), to monitor the progress of all students (Peterson & West, 2003). Test results on the NAEP steadily increased in Texas, and, as a result, demonstrated to the nation the proficiency and accountability of a standards-based testing program. As governor of Texas from 1995-2000, George W. Bush saw how the NAEP program positively affected schools in his state and began to embrace the idea of increased testing towards improving the nation's schools. H. Ross Perot's idea is regarded as one of the early programs that laid the foundation for the NCLB.

Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

The IASA was a major part of the Clinton administration's efforts to reform education, and it followed Perot's ideas of emphasizing standards and assessments. It was a reauthorization of the ESEA and included five major provisions for improving education. The provisions included higher standards for all children; a focus on teaching and learning; flexibility to stimulate local school-based and district initiatives, coupled

with the responsibility for student performance; links among schools, parents, and communities; and a focus on allocation of Title I resources (Riley, 1995).

Most people agree that schools should teach students a certain body of knowledge and the skills to use that knowledge to reason and solve problems. Getting standards aligned throughout a state is not easily accomplished, but it was one of the main provisions of the IASA. According to Riley (1995), aligning the curriculum of the educational systems to high content standards would improve student learning. The IASA was aligned with the back-to-basics educational theory that testing students is a good way to measure student learning. A focus on teaching and learning was the second provision of the IASA. According to Fege (1999), teachers were to use effective instructional strategies to improve student learning. Examples of effective techniques would include team-teaching with experienced colleagues, increasing the amount of quality learning time by having strong class discipline, and extending different learning opportunities for students whom are both struggling and excelling in class. The act invested in high-quality, professional development for teachers in order to improve the quality of instruction in schools. Teachers would take a more back-to-basics approach to help ensure all students could achieve the content standards as set forth by each state. The act also wanted schools to expand available instructional time for students who needed extra help to achieve the required standards.

Giving schools more flexibility to educate their students as they saw fit was a third aspect of the IASA. The legislation recognized the uniqueness of schools across the nation and gave each school district leeway in tailoring its curriculum to fit the needs of its students. However, schools would still be accountable for setting high standards and

educating all of its students. If this was not taking place, a school's flexibility in setting its own curriculum could be limited. The fourth provision of the IASA called for schools to implement comprehensive partnership programs with parents and the community. According to Jackson (2005), the IASA called for schools and members of the community to provide services to help prepare students for the transition from school to work. Services should include the integration of work-based learning through job shadowing and volunteer work. Schools are uniquely positioned to bring together families and the community to support student learning in ways that reflect school goals and the community's diversity and values. Schools needed to be responsive to students' backgrounds and cultures, which could enrich student learning. The final part of the IASA dealt with allocating resources. The act recognized the critical role the federal government must play in providing supplemental resources to students in the greatest need of assistance. If students in high-poverty schools are to have an opportunity to reach the high standards set for them, the federal government will have to sustain, if not strengthen, its commitment to these to these students and their schools (LeTendre, 1997).

As previously mentioned, the IASA emphasized standards and assessments. Federal funding was also tied to student testing. To receive Title I funds, the IASA required states to establish challenging academic content and student performance standards for all students. The IASA also required states to assess all students relative to these standards and to demonstrate that students were making adequate progress toward achieving the standards. The assessments were to take place at least once annually within each of three grade spans: 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12, and were to cover reading or language arts and mathematics (Riley, 1995). With the passage of the IASA, congressional demands on

student testing and accountability became widespread. This trend would continue to 2001, with the passage of the NCLB.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The statement purpose of the NCLB declares that it was implemented in order to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education (David, 2007). The statement of purpose developed out of a concern for certain groups of students who have traditionally not performed well in school. It was these students that Congress had in mind when it passed its most recent and expansive federal educational legislation in 2001. Building on the foundation of standards and assessment required of states by the IASA, the current NCLB requirements include high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, and quality teacher preparation. The states are required to have challenging academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student achievement. Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence in America's schools. The NCLB reformed federal educational programs to support state efforts to establish challenging standards, to develop aligned assessments, and to build accountability systems for districts and schools that are based on measurable results. In particular, NCLB includes explicit requirements to ensure that students who are served by Title I programs are given the opportunity to achieve high standards and are held to the same high expectations as all other students around the country (David, 2007). The new legislation has also raised the consequences of student test score results, while at the same time requiring more grade levels to be

tested and more detailed reporting on the performance of different student groups within the school.

The NCLB is a large piece of legislation that covers many aspects of education. On the local level, it allowed states to retain control of certain parts of education, including the right to control their own curriculum and methods of teaching. Nationally, the NCLB created mandated standards and assessment requirements for all schools receiving Title I funds. The goal of the NCLB is to improve the American educational system, and its policies have affected the way schools operate around the country.

How did the NCLB Affect Education?

Political leaders wanted to level the playing field for all students regardless of their socioeconomic status by striving towards a universal progression in reading, language arts, mathematics, and eventually science. In order to accomplish this goal, Congress passed the NCLB, which emphasized stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents. These “pillars” serve as the backbone for the NCLB.

Stronger Accountability for Results

There are many provisions in the NCLB that individual states and local school districts must abide by, but according to Abernathy (2007), the cornerstone of the law is referred to as AYP. This part of the law requires each state to develop and integrate into its curriculum a standards-based accountability program that demonstrates student proficiency levels in reading/language arts, math, and beginning in 2008, science. Student proficiency levels are assessed based on the results of students’ scores on standardized tests that are administered once a year. The tests are designed by the states and approved

by the U.S. Department of Education (Sunderman et al., 2005). Student performance on the state test is divided into three levels: basic, proficient, and advanced, and each state is responsible for setting the scoring requirements to achieve each level. The NCLB required all states to test student achievement in reading/language arts and math annually in grades 3 through 8, and at least once during grades 10 through 12 (Allbritten, Mainzer, & Ziegler, 2004). The law also stated that beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, states were required to begin assessing students in science. States can still require their students to be tested in other subject areas, such as history and geography, but NCLB only requires testing in reading/language arts, math, and science. Testing students on an annual basis gives each school the opportunity to monitor the progress of its students and determine which academic areas need an increase in support.

Much attention has been focused on using student test scores to evaluate schools. Because of this attention, American educators have become concerned about the standards and requirements as prescribed in the NCLB. The concern is understandable because non-compliance can have dire consequences for teachers and schools alike. Failure to make AYP can result in a series of punitive actions ranging from student losses to school reorganization (Zhao, 2008). Another serious consequence is the public shaming of schools resulting from the publication of a school's low ranking. A failure to make AYP results from poor student test scores in a required testing subject, and is not necessarily indicative of the overall quality of the school. In other words, regardless of what a school has achieved in other areas, if students score poorly in math and do not make AYP, the school is considered in need of improvement. The NCLB strengthened the federal government's role in public education, with the goal of improving the

academic achievement of all students, regardless of race, ethnic group, gender, or family income. The legislation places a priority on measurable student achievement, which in turn has led to an increase in student testing.

Helping Students with Disabilities

Even though the NCLB is primarily a law for students in regular education, it also constitutes a federal commitment that students with disabilities will receive genuine access to the general education curriculum (Allbritten et al., 2004). The promise that students with disabilities will achieve at the same levels as other students is a step forward for disabled students. However, how to account for students with learning disabilities when calculating AYP can be a challenge. According to Shriner and Ganguly (2007), including students with disabilities in the new standards and accountability systems is one of the key challenges facing school districts around the nation. To help solve this dilemma, the NCLB allows school administration to establish certain subgroups within its student population. Subgroups consist of students who are poor, speak limited English, are members of racial or ethnic minorities, or have disabilities (Olson, 2005). Students who have been placed in a subgroup still participate in annual assessments, but each subgroup's scores are separated from the general population of students when determining AYP. This is done so the state can hold schools accountable for educating all students. Students in the subgroups participate in the annual assessment in one of two ways: (a) participation in the general assessment (with or without accommodations) or (b) participation in an alternative assessment (Allbritten et al., 2004). If students do not require accommodations, they simply take the state test. An example would be a student who was placed in a subgroup because he was a minority,

yet functions at a high level. Accommodations, when needed, try to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability. These changes do not affect the integrity and purpose of the test and could include such things as larger print or a Braille version.

There are students with disabilities who, despite being provided high-quality instruction, including special education and related services, are not likely to achieve grade-level proficiency. This category of students would include those who are severely cognitively delayed or suffer from autism. Students who are included in this category are allowed to take alternative assessments based on modified achievement standards (Browder, Wakeman, Flowers, Rickelman, Pugalee, & Karvenon, 2007). The assessments these students take are more life skills oriented than based on grade-level content. Proficient and advanced scores based on alternative achievement standards may be included when determining if a school made AYP, but there is a cap on the number of scores allowed. According to Flowers, Browder, & Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006), the NCLB permits up to 1% of students in a state or school district who score proficient or advanced on an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards to be counted as proficient for purposes of the district's and state's AYP calculations. For example, if a school district had an enrollment of 1,000 students, it could use up to 10 scores of students who scored as proficient or advanced on an alternative assessment when calculating AYP. If 12 students from the district took an alternative assessment and they all scored as proficient or advanced, only 10 scores could be used as proficient for calculating AYP. The other two scores, even though they were proficient, would count as non-proficient when calculating AYP. The NCLB only allows this small percentage because, historically, the students eligible for alternative assessments have represented

less than 1% of the total student population, and the U.S. Department of Education wants to avoid the problem of schools giving alternative assessments to those students who do not really need one (Flowers et al., 2006).

One of the main premises of the NCLB is accountability, and teachers across the country faced more stringent requirements after the law was passed. According to the NCLB, all teachers were to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Under the terms of the NCLB, to be highly qualified, teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree from a four year institution, hold a certification or licensure to teach in the state of his or her employment, and have proven knowledge of the subjects he or she teaches. Teachers who were hired after the NCLB was passed had more requirements than those who were already in the field. For example, newly hired elementary school teachers working in core academic areas are required to pass a rigorous state test of subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading/language arts, writing, math, and other areas of the basic elementary curriculum. The requirements are a little different for non-elementary school teachers. Newly hired middle and high school teachers in core academic areas can demonstrate their subject matter competency by passing an exam in their content area, majoring in their subject as an undergraduate, earning a graduate degree in their subject, accumulating the coursework equivalent to an undergraduate major, or by attaining an advanced certificate or credential (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). Existing teachers have the option of either meeting one of the requirements for new teachers, or demonstrating subject matter competency by meeting a uniform state standard of evaluation. Such a standard must be set by the state for both grade-appropriate academic subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills; be aligned

with challenging state academic standards and developed in consultation with core content specialists, teachers, principals, and school administrators; provide objective, coherent information about the teacher's attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects in which a teacher teaches; and be applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and the same grade level throughout the state (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009).

Requiring Teachers to be Highly Qualified

The NCLB also included important new reporting requirements related to teachers. At the beginning of each school year, all school districts that receive Title I funds must notify parents that they are entitled to receive information on the qualifications of their children's teachers, such as their teachers' college majors and whether they have had any licensing criteria waived (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). In addition, Title I schools must notify parents if their child has been taught for four consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified criteria. Under the terms of the NCLB, to be highly qualified, teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree from a four year institution, hold a certification or licensure to teach in the state of his or her employment, and have proven knowledge of the subjects he or she teaches. Finally, all states must develop plans showing how they will achieve the goal of having all teachers highly qualified with measurable objectives and milestones along the way. One method for experienced teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency is through a High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) program. The HOUSSE program allows current teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency through years of experience and professional training they have acquired (Krall, Straley,

Shafer, & Osborn, 2009). Under the HOUSSE program, each state is allowed to set its own requirements for having experienced teachers demonstrate they are highly qualified.

As states prepared to meet the 2005-06 deadline for ensuring that all of their teachers met the highly qualified definition under the NCLB, the Education Department found that some flexibility was needed in rural areas (Eppley, 2009). Because rural teachers are often required to teach more than one core academic subject, the original provisions of the law did not recognize and adequately accommodate the challenges faced by teachers in small districts. According to the NCLB, the core academic subjects included: (a) English, (b) reading or language arts, (c) math, (d) science, (e) foreign languages, (f) civics and government, (g) economics, (h) arts, (i) history, and (j) geography (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Under the new policy established in 2006, teachers in rural districts who are highly qualified in at least one core subject area will have three years to become highly qualified in the additional subjects they teach. According to Eppley (2009), the new policy gave rural districts much needed relief in trying to find highly qualified teachers in areas such as science and math.

Informing Parents of School Performance

Keeping parents up to date on how well their child's school is performing is another requirement of the NCLB. The NCLB requires school districts to prepare and disseminate an annual report card detailing school performance every year (Betebenner, Linn, & Baker, 2002). Schools must make the performance reports available to parents by the beginning of each school year. States and districts can publicize the information through public agencies or the media, such as a local newspaper (Peterson & West, 2003). Each state must ensure that every school district collects appropriate data, both at the

district level and for each school, and includes such data in its annual report. Information that needs to be included in the performance report includes: (a) aggregated achievement information on state assessments, (b) data comparing actual achievement levels of students to annual student achievement goals, (c) information on whether or not the school achieved AYP, (d) at the high school level graduation rate must be included; at the elementary and middle school levels attendance rates are required, and (e) data on teacher qualifications, including the number of teachers with emergency certification and percentages of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers (Betebenner et al., 2002). Teachers who are not licensed to teach in a particular field can ask the state for an emergency license, which allows them to teach the subject for one school year. For example, a high school math teacher could ask the state for an emergency license to teach Geography for one year. The license is only good for one year and cannot be renewed unless the teacher took the required steps to become certified to teach Geography. School performance reports break down student test results into different subgroups, which include: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) disability status, (c) English language performance, (d) migrant status, (e) race, (f) ethnicity, and (g) gender. This allows the state and school district to track the results of all students, including those with disabilities. If any subgroup fails to make AYP, the school is identified as in need of improvement. A school is identified as not making AYP if it fails to meet the minimum levels of yearly improvement as required by the state.

More Choices for Parents

If a school has been identified as not making AYP, it must let the parents of students in the school know what options are available to them. It is important for schools

to meet state mandated goals because there are increasing consequences for every year a school fails to make AYP. According to Richard (2004), there are various school improvement activities associated with each stage of school improvement. During the first year, the school goes about business as usual while it identifies the areas that need improvement. If the school fails to make AYP for a second consecutive year it is identified as in need of improvement and must provide school choice as an option to students (Howell, 2006). School choice must remain an option for students and parents until the school is no longer identified for improvement, which requires the school to make AYP for two consecutive years. All students in the identified school are eligible for the school choice option. If an individual chooses the transfer option, the school must provide transportation for the participating student.

Although school choice is an option for students who attend a Title I school that has not made AYP for two consecutive years, studies have shown that only a small percentage of eligible students take advantage of this opportunity. A Title I school is any school that receives funding from the federal government because it serves an area with high concentrations of children from low-income families. In 2006, approximately 4,000,000 students were eligible for school choice in the United States. However, only 120,000 students participated in school choice (Mead, 2007). This means only 3% of eligible students actually left a school that was identified as in need of improvement. Inadequate or untimely communication between interested parties is largely blamed for the low participation rates in school choice. One concern that is consistently raised in regard to school choice is the frequent delay in providing state classification data to the schools (Olson, 2006). The state AYP determination for individual schools is needed in

determining the school's actions for the upcoming year. This affects the district's ability to provide the legally mandated notification to the parents in time for them to exercise their options. Some districts reported that their AYP determination was not received from the state until after the school year began, making parental choices to send their children to a different school unlikely (Mead, 2007). This has resulted in schools making educated guesses based on preliminary data as to whether or not they achieved AYP. According to Olson (2006), schools in Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, and Massachusetts have experienced delays in obtaining state AYP results.

If a school fails to make AYP for three consecutive years it must provide low-income families is the opportunity to enroll their children in supplemental educational services such as tutoring, remediation, or other academic instruction that are offered by a state-approved provider and are in addition to instruction provided during the school day. When providing notice to all eligible families, the school district, at a minimum, must identify approved providers of educational services, describe in detail each provider's services, qualifications, and evidence of effectiveness, and describe the process by which parents may select and enroll with a provider. These options are available for low-income families whose children attend a Title I school that is in year two or later of improvement (Richard, 2004).

If AYP is not met after four years, the school moves into the corrective action phase. Corrective action requires the school to take actions that are likely to bring about meaningful change (Cuban & Usdan, 2002). To accomplish this goal, the school is required to take several corrective actions. First, the school must replace school staff that is responsible for the continued failure to make AYP. Next, the school must implement a

new curriculum based on scientifically based research. Finally, the school must appoint an outside expert to advise the school on its progress.

If a school fails to meet AYP for five consecutive years, it goes into the restructuring stage, where it has five options, which include: (a) reopen as a charter school; (b) replace principal and staff; (c) contract for private management company of demonstrated effectiveness; or (d) state takeover, or (e) any other major restructuring. The fifth year would be the implementation of the alternative governance plan as decided in year four. In 2007, there were 1,750 schools in 42 states in NCLB restructuring (Mead, 2007). Instead of takeovers, closures, and other dire options mentioned in the law, most states and school districts have chosen less aggressive interventions. According to Mead (2007) the most popular restructuring option chosen by schools was “any other major restructuring” which was used by 93% of the schools. Under this sanction, the structure of the school’s leadership must be changed in order to produce major reform, which usually meant firing the school’s principal. The most drastic restructuring options like converting to a charter school or state takeover were only used by a handful of schools. As the number of schools subject to restructuring increases, so will pressures on school districts to find easy ways out

A key goal of the NCLB is to provide new educational options to parents whose children attend Title I schools that are identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring because the schools have not made AYP (Christie, 2005). Parents of children in low-performing schools have new options under the NCLB. The NCLB requires all identified schools to provide a notification of the choice option in a comprehensive, easy to understand format to all parents of students enrolled in the

school. The notification must inform parents of their child's eligibility to attend a different school because the current school is identified for improvement. The notification must also name the specific schools available for transferring, and include information on student achievement in the schools available for choice (Christie, 2005). The schools that can be identified as transfer schools are Title I schools that are not identified as needing improvement. If there are no available schools within the district, the school must, to the extent practicable, attempt to make arrangements with other districts to accept transfers from the school identified for improvement. If a public school is not available, students also have the opportunity to attend a charter school located in the district. Charter schools are public schools that are designed to meet students' unique interests and needs (Howell, 2006). A public charter school is a publicly funded school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from selected state rules and regulations. For example, charter school teachers are exempt from certain rules and regulations of state boards in regard to licensing. Charter schools are typically governed by a group or organization under a contract with the state. In return for funding and more autonomy, the charter school must meet accountability standards. Thus, charter schools are still held accountable for achieving AYP according to the state's standards. Teachers at charter schools develop programs for their students to help them achieve their academic goals. Charter schools are typically quite small, which allows the teachers to spend more time with each individual student.

More Financial Options for School Districts

Under the NCLB guidelines, states and school districts have unprecedented flexibility in how they use federal funds. According to Odland (2007), one of the broadest

forms of flexibility introduced in the NCLB is the transferability authority of federal funds. Under this provision, school districts are allowed to move up to 50% of the federal formula grant funds they receive for improving teacher quality, educational technology, innovative programs, and safe and drug-free schools and communities. Transferability does not affect the overall amount of funds a school receives, but it provides them with greater flexibility in how they can use the money. This flexibility allows districts to shift federal funds to programs that are in need of most assistance. Although no additional resources are made available to the districts that decide to transfer funds between programs, the enhanced flexibility enables the school district to redirect a large sum of existing federal funds to different programs with the assumption that the reallocation of funds to high priority areas will help students make AYP. As long as school administrators follow federal rules and requirements when transferring funds, there are no limitations to which programs can receive additional funding. For example, if a school district wanted to decrease class sizes and improve teacher-training programs, it could use 25% of the funds it received for safe and drug-free schools to hire new teachers and offer more professional development opportunities for its staff.

Although the NCLB gave school districts more leeway in how they spend federal dollars, transferred funds are subject to certain rules and requirements. Many of the federal programs require districts to set aside a certain percentage of allocated funds for special uses, and transferred funds are not exempt from the calculations (Brown, 2007). For example, 25% of the formula funds a district receives for educational technology must be set aside for professional development activities such as continuing education, curriculum writing, and peer collaboration. While there are limitations on the use of

transferability authority, participation is relatively simple. There is no application process that might discourage districts from participating. According to Sawchuk (2008), district eligibility is automatic and can only be affected by consistent failures to make AYP. For example, districts that have not made AYP for two consecutive years and are identified as in need of improvement cannot transfer more than 30% of formula funds from eligible programs. Furthermore, if the district does transfer money it must be used to support district improvement efforts. School districts that have been identified for corrective action may not exercise the transferability option.

The additional freedom for schools districts that the NCLB is promoting is essentially financial freedom. The transferability authority offers extensive flexibility to local education systems. This allows school districts to use their federal funding in more discretionary ways that suit the needs of the schools and the community without additional federal approval.

Emphasis on Proven Teaching Methods

The NCLB places an emphasis on determining which educational programs and practices have proven to be the most effective in educating students of all ages. According to Pruisner (2009), unproven educational theories such as the factory-model of education where all students are treated the same are the main reasons children fall behind and teachers get frustrated. The NCLB had this premise in mind years earlier when it mandated that only scientifically proven curriculum and methods should be used to teach children. Federal funding is targeted to support the programs and teaching methods that work to improve student learning and achievement.

After Congress passed the NCLB, student test scores became the norm for determining how well schools were performing. Each state was required to set high standards for its students, and then schools administered yearly tests to see if students had achieved these standards. Great importance was placed on having students achieve the yearly, state-mandated goals. With such a high priority being placed on student test scores, teachers needed to make sure that all required content was taught in class. According to Rushton & Rushton (2008), teachers felt extra pressure to cover all the state mandated material, which led to more direct methods of instruction, such as lecturing or teacher-led discussion of material. What are the benefits of using direct methods of instruction? According to Coyne et al., (2009), direct instruction methods are effective in supporting students with varied achievement levels. Struggling readers are more likely to learn essential reading skills and strategies if direct methods of instruction are part of the teacher's repertoire (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). In this approach, the teacher clearly leads the teaching-learning process. At the heart of the direct instruction method are explicit explanations, modeling or demonstrating material, and guided practice with the students. With NCLB laws holding schools accountable for educating all students, direct methods have proven to be successful in reaching all students.

Direct instruction, followed by taking tests to determine knowledge, is in direct contrast to inquiry-based learning, where progress is assessed by how well students develop experimental and analytical skills rather than how much knowledge they possess (Coyne, Zipoli, Chard, Faggella-Luby, Ruby, Santoro, & Baker, 2009). Students take a more active role in inquiry-based classrooms, as they take on a more responsible role in learning activities, such as leading discussions. In inquiry-based classrooms, teachers

structure lessons more loosely to allow student questions to drive the learning process. Inquiry-based learning would be aligned with both John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky's theories that students learn better when given real-world problems to solve and that testing should not be used to determine student knowledge.

Additional Funding for Successful Programs

Reading First is an example of a program that was targeted by the NCLB for funding because its methods and curriculum proved to be effective in teaching children to read (Lewis, 2005). The program is based on the adoption of phonics-based lessons to teach reading and the discarding of whole-language based lessons. The Reading First program incorporated scientifically based reading research to identify five essential components of effective reading instruction. To ensure that students learn to read well, explicit and systematic instruction must be provided in all five areas. The first area is phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness includes the understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words. The second component of the Reading First program is teaching phonics. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes, which are the sounds of spoken language, and graphemes, which are the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language. Readers use these relationships to recognize familiar words accurately and to decode unfamiliar words. Developing stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication is referred to as vocabulary development and is the third essential component of the Reading First program. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four types of vocabulary used in the

program. The fourth essential component of the Reading First program is fluency, which is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. Fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. The final component of the Reading First program is helping students develop reading comprehension strategies to help them better remember and communicate with others about what has been read (Lewis, 2005).

Achievement data reported by states on their annual performance reports for the 2006-2007 school year show that Reading First students from nearly every grade have made gains in reading proficiency (Connor et al., 2009) In grade one, 44 of 50 states reported student increases of five percentage points or more in reading comprehension. For grade two, 39 of 50 states reported the same increase in reading proficiency. Students in third grade showed improvement of five percentage points or more in 35 of 50 states. According to Connor et al (2009), this impact means that scores of students in Reading First schools were higher by the equivalent of three months in a nine month school year.

The NCLB adopted the phonics-based Reading First program because of its scientifically based methods of instruction. What exactly is scientifically based reading research? According to Connor, Jakobsons, Crowe, & Meadows (2009), scientifically based reading research involves examining hundreds of studies to extract the essential findings about what has been scientifically proven to work in reading instruction. This includes using studies that employed empirical methods, which means the studies used experiments or observations to provide valid data, and the studies have been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts.

Reading First grants were made available to school districts beginning in 2002. Schools that received grants were given guidelines as to how the money was to be spent.

For example, states could reserve up to 20% of their Reading First funds to support staff development in reading instruction. By April 2007, more than 1,800 school districts had been awarded grants, which provided funds to over 5,800 schools (Connor et al., 2009).

What Changes Will the New Administration Make to the NCLB?

By explicitly naming education as one of three top priority areas in his first joint congressional address and in his federal budget proposal, President Barack Obama is putting considerable weight behind the agenda he laid out during his campaign. Obama discussed four areas of reform which included: (a) reforming the NCLB, (b) investing more heavily in early childhood education, (c) recruiting, retaining, and rewarding teachers, and (d) helping the most at-risk children succeed in school. As part of his pledge to better fund education, he set aside 115 billion dollars for schools as part of the economic stimulus plan that was passed by Congress earlier this year (Klein & McNeill, 2009).

According to Ladner and Lips (2009), a major debate among education reformers over how to best reduce the achievement gap has broken out since the 2008 presidential election. The Educational Equality Project (EEP) supported a continuation of accountability and other school-focused reforms such as school choice and changes in teacher compensation. Those who signed on to the project included a diverse group of leaders in education, philanthropy, and public service who have vowed to challenge politicians, public officials, educators, and anyone else who stands in the way of necessary change (Colvin, 2009). The coalition for a Broader, Bolder Approach to Education (BBAE) claimed that the greatest gains in education could be achieved by addressing health, housing, and other social ills. The EEP backs strong accountability

through reforms, while the BBAE looks to augment the current system with social support programs. Barack Obama is sounding themes of accountability based on standards and assessments (Ladner & Lips, 2009). According to Robelen (2009), President Obama believes that all children can learn and all teachers can be successful if given effective training. Teachers can, and should be evaluated based on student learning. Even though he does not believe in once-a-year assessments, President Obama wants to hold teachers accountable by testing students more frequently to determine teacher effectiveness. Obama's ideas of accountability are similar to previous President's, such as George W. Bush, who emphasized a back-to-basics approach to education (Robelen, 2009).

Reforming the NCLB

The overall goal of the NCLB is to ensure that all children can meet high academic standards. While President Obama agrees with the goal, he believes the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed (Klein & McNeil, 2009). He believes it is wrong to force teachers, principals, and administrators to accomplish the goals of the NCLB without the necessary resources. According to Colvin (2009), President Obama believes the NCLB has demoralized educators and failed in its promise to help all students achieve high academic standards. During a campaign rally in Dayton, Ohio, in 2008, Obama spoke of improving the assessments that are being used to determine if students are meeting state standards for achievement (Shirley, 2009). He believes that preparing students to fill in bubbles once a year on standardized tests is not an adequate way to track student progress. The NEA has backed Obama in his call to reform the high stakes testing process. According to Supovitz (2009), the NEA sees high stakes testing as

a relatively weak intervention because, while it reveals shortcomings, it does not contain the guidance and expertise to help students in the short-term. According to Klein and McNeil (2009), Obama wants to create assessment models that provide educators and students with timely feedback about student learning, measure readiness for college and success in the workplace, and that indicate whether individual students are making progress toward reaching high standards. The President wants to give states the necessary funding to implement a broader range of assessments that can evaluate higher-order skills, including students' abilities to use technology, conduct research, engage in scientific investigation, solve problems, and defend their ideas. These assessments will provide immediate feedback so teachers can begin improving student learning right away, instead of having to wait for results from a once-a-year standardized test. According to Supovitz (2009), the quality of any program should not be determined solely on the basis of the results of a single test. Securing valid and reliable information about young children's development and learning requires multiple measures applied at multiple points over time.

Reforming the accountability system of the NCLB is also on President Obama's education agenda. Obama believes that schools need an accountability system that supports schools to improve, rather than focuses on punishments (Klein & McNeil, 2009). As part of the U.S. Department of Education's Differentiated Accountability Program, six states were given additional funds to help schools meet AYP standards. The program provides additional funding for states to give to schools that are in the most need of improvement (Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009). The funding will allow schools to offer additional student services, such as tutoring. According to (Vannest, Temple-

Harvey, and Mason, 2009), schools should assess all students appropriately, including English language learners and special needs students. Students with disabilities need to be given appropriate accommodations, such as having tests read to them or giving them extended time to complete the assessment. The assessment system should evaluate continuous progress for students and schools all along the learning continuum and should consider measures beyond reading, math, and science tests, such as a student's ability to use technology and solve complex problems (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). The system should also create incentives to keep students in school through graduation, rather than punishing them out to make district test scores look better.

Investing More Heavily in Early Childhood Education

Research shows that early experiences shape whether a child's brain develops strong skills for future learning, behavior, and success (Rushton & Rushton, 2008). Without a strong base on which to build, children will be behind long before they reach kindergarten. Investing in early childhood education during the infant and toddler years is particularly important. According to Clark and Zygmunt-Fillwalk (2008), early childhood education programs have longer lasting effects than programs that start later in school such as remediation and reduction of class sizes. In addition, every dollar invested generates a return to society of anywhere from three to nine dollars because of less grade repetition, higher adult earnings, more tax revenues and reduced crime rates. President Obama has spoken about putting children first by focusing investments in this area. His "Zero to Five" plan will provide support to young children and their parents by creating incentives for states to deliver better early education for young children (Shirley, 2009).

As part of his plan to invest in early childhood education, President Obama will provide funding to enable states to create or expand high-quality early care and education programs for pregnant women and children from birth to age five. Early Learning Challenge Grants will help states create a system of learning, address gaps in services, and enhance quality programs that serve all young children. In order to receive funding, states will be required to match new federal funds, meet quality and accountability standards, and provide support for both early learning and family support services. The years prior to kindergarten are among the most significant in shaping a child's foundation for learning and school success (Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2008). Developmental theorist Erik Erikson's third stage of development occurs between the ages of three to six (Haber, 2006). During this time period, kids become more assertive and begin to reach out to others for friendship. It is important during this time for children to be supported in their efforts, lest they feel inept and begin to mistrust their own abilities. Early learning programs lend this support and help children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed in school. As part of the program, development grants would be awarded to states that show promise for strengthening and expanding their early learning system.

Expanding Early Head Start (EHS) is the second part of Obama's zero to five plan. Low-income families have traditionally been the main participants EHS programs. In expanding EHS, the President hopes to quadruple the number of infants and toddlers participating in the program. With programs around the country, EHS is the nation's primary early education program for children from birth to age three (Shirley, 2009). It is known for its comprehensive vision of care for low-income children and its high quality of services. The programs that children participate in are designed to foster their social,

emotional, and physical development. Having EHS enables communities to design flexible programs through a variety of service delivery options, including home-based services to help those who have young children with special needs.

Encouraging all states to adopt universal pre-school is the third component of Obama's zero to five plan. Obama wants to provide funding to states to accelerate the trend toward voluntary, universal pre-school for all children. Under the guidelines, states would be allowed to use Early Learning Challenge Grants to fund high-quality programs that seek to enroll every four-year-old, or every three and four-year-old. The grants would provide states with the flexibility to adopt sliding-scale systems and other measures in order to give children and families in greatest need top priority. Sliding-scale systems take into account a family's income, and charge less for services for those with low incomes. Income tax is levied on a sliding-scale system; those who earn less money pay less in taxes.

Recruit, Prepare, Retain, and Reward America's Teachers

From the moment that students of all ages step into a classroom, the single most important factor in determining their achievement is their teacher (Vannest et al., 2009). To ensure that we have competent, effective teachers in our schools that are organized for success, President Obama outlined a teaching quality plan to retain and reward America's best teachers. Obama's goal is to transform the teaching profession by ensuring that it offers high-quality opportunities for professional growth and career development, similar to other professions like law and medicine. President Obama outlined a four-part plan to help achieve the goal of transforming the teaching profession. His plan includes efforts to: (a) recruit, (b) prepare, (c) retain, and (d) reward America's teachers.

The professionalization of teaching begins with recruitment efforts that restore prestige and financial incentives to education careers, including adequate entry-level salaries and service scholarships that cover high-quality teacher education programs. President Obama wants to create Teaching Service Scholarships that completely cover training costs in high-quality teacher preparation or alternative certification programs at the undergraduate or graduate level for those who are willing to teach in a high-need field or location for at least four years (Klein & McNeil, 2009). According to the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), high-quality teacher preparation programs graduate students who are prepared to help all students succeed in the classroom, have effective discipline procedures, and are prepared to use technology in the classroom (Gere & Berebitsky, 2009). Some Teaching Service Scholarships will be targeted to high-ability candidates who might not otherwise enter the teaching profession, and the incentives will also be used to proactively recruit candidates to the fields and locations where they are most needed, such as math and science teachers in urban areas. The scholarships will cover four years of undergraduate or two years of graduate teacher education, and will be allocated on the basis of academic merit and to academic fields where there is a teaching shortage.

If students are expected to achieve high academic standards, we can expect no less from their teachers. As part of his plan on improving teacher preparation programs, President Obama will require professional accreditation of all programs, with a focus on evidence regarding how well teachers are prepared. Accreditation is a process of validation in which universities are evaluated. The standards for accreditation are set by a review board whose members include faculty from various accredited colleges and

universities. In order to help identify the most successful programs, colleges of education and alternative licensure programs will track their graduates entry and retention in teaching and their contributions to growth in student learning. President Obama also believes teacher preparation programs will be further strengthened if they are guided by a high-quality, nationally-available teacher performance assessment that measures actual teaching skill in content areas (Butler, 2009). Prospective teachers will be evaluated on how well their teaching methods promoted student learning. For example, if a student-teacher was working with students who struggle with the English language, the teacher would need to design lessons that were associated with theoretical principles related to language acquisition. President Obama plans to fund the development of such an assessment, which will do more than current paper and pencil examinations that just measure basic skills and subject matter knowledge. The assessment would also collect evidence about how prospective teachers construct lesson plans, evaluate student work, and adapt their teaching to student needs.

Retention is as important as recruitment in addressing the teaching shortage. According to Varrati, Lavine, & Turner (2009), 30% of new teachers leave the profession within five years. Beginning teachers need mentoring and support, and veteran teachers need opportunities for career advancement and recognition. Teacher attrition is costly both in terms of district costs for replacement, and in terms of lost teaching expertise. Teachers become noticeably more effective after their third year in the classroom, the point at which far too many have already left, only to be replaced by other novices. Estimates of the annual cost of teacher attrition exceed two billion dollars nationally (Varrati et al., 2009). President Obama has proposed the Career Ladder Initiative, which

pledges to provide one billion dollars in federal resources to states and districts to create strong mentoring programs to support beginning teachers. Veteran teachers who agree to be mentors would be compensated through money supplied by the initiative.

Existing compensation systems in schools places classroom teaching at the bottom, provides teachers with little opportunity to share their knowledge and skills with others, and requires teachers to leave the classroom if they want greater responsibility or substantially higher pay. President Obama has called for a different system, one that places teaching at the top and creates a career progression that supports teachers as they become experts in their field (Butler, 2009). Teachers need to be better compensated, with both a more competitive base salary for newcomers and higher pay for well-prepared and successful teachers. President Obama's Career Ladder Initiative will support and compensate schools that are prepared to create opportunities for high-achieving veteran teachers to gain additional compensation for serving as mentors, leading curriculum planning, and helping the school plan professional development training for other staff. As beginning teachers are mentored in their early years, those who successfully complete an induction program and demonstrate their competence will have the ability to move from a novice level of teaching to a professional status, which will be accompanied by the award of earned tenure and increased compensation. As teachers gain expertise, they will have the opportunity to move into leadership roles associated with their knowledge and skills. The opportunity to move up the career ladder creates an incentive for veterans to remain in the teaching profession. The career ladder approach to compensation has a positive spillover effect for both individual teachers and the district as a whole. Beginning teachers are given the opportunity to be mentored as

they begin their careers, and veteran teachers have the opportunity to take on advanced roles within the school as they move up the career ladder.

Help the Most At-Risk Children Succeed in School

According to Dedmond (2008), only 70% of U.S. high school students graduate with a diploma. African-American and Latino students are significantly less likely to graduate than white students. Today, dropouts are twice as likely to be unemployed, and for those who work, pay is low, advancement limited, and health insurance less available (Dedmond, 2008). The dropout problem begins well before high school, which is why President Obama places an emphasis on identifying at-risk students at an early age and then providing the necessary interventions.

President Obama has pledged federal funds to help provide critical support to young children and their families through his zero-to-five plan. Obama has also introduced the “Success in the Middle Act,” which will provide federal support to improve the education of middle grade students in low performing schools (Butler, 2009). The middle grades are a crucial, but often overlooked segment of the educational pipeline. Middle school students must gain skills in reading, mathematics, and other subjects to be successful in the rigorous high school coursework that follows. Early indicators can reveal the students that need the most help. Middle school students who do not attend school regularly, who undergo frequent disciplinary actions, or who fail mathematics or English have only a 10% chance of graduating from high school on time (Balfanz, Herzog, & Iver, 2007). Obama’s plan requires states to develop a detailed plan to improve middle school student achievement by developing and utilizing early identification data systems to identify those students most at risk of dropping out of

school. Schools would also need to provide professional development and coaching to school leaders, teachers, and other school personnel in addressing the needs of diverse learners. The final part of his plan requires schools to develop and implement student support systems such as personal academic plans, teaching teams, parent involvement, mentoring, intensive reading and math instruction, and extended learning time that enables all students to stay on path to graduation.

Creating middle schools that allow teachers to work together in teams and personalize instruction for students will help develop stronger relationships among adults and students (Gable et al., 2009). In order to accomplish this, schools need to move away from the factory model theory of education, where all students are treated alike and teachers are more concerned about total product than individual needs (Johnson, 2006). According to Butler (2009), re-designed models have improved school safety, increased attendance and sharply reduced dropouts. Voices for Education, an education advocacy organization that works to improve educational outcomes of students in Arizona, has supported President Obama in his calls for middle school reform.

To help close the achievement gap in America's schools, President Obama has called for schools to expand their summer learning opportunities. Obama's "STEP UP" plan addresses the grade school achievement gaps by supporting summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children through partnerships between local schools and community organizations (Butler, 2009). The President also supports transitional bilingual education and will help Limited English Proficient students get ahead by supporting and funding English Language Learner (ELL) classes. His program will support the development of appropriate assessments for ELL students, monitor the

progress of students learning English, and hold schools accountable for making sure these students complete school.

Chapter III: Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter represents a summary of the information obtained in the literature review. The findings include the history of government involvement in education, how the NCLB affected schools, teachers, and students, and the changes the new administration would like to make to the NCLB. Lastly, the chapter offers recommendations for what schools can do to help their students achieve high academic standards.

Summary

There were three questions the literature review addressed.

1. What is the historical background of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001?
2. How did the NCLB affect education?
3. What changes will the new administration make to the NCLB?

Government involvement in education dates back to the earliest days of our country. The Founding Fathers wanted an educated public because Democracy, they believed, is dependent on an educated society (Brown, 1996). Throughout our nation's history, the government has typically gotten involved in education when a vital national interest was not being met. Such was the case in the 1960's when the federal government passed the ESEA. This law was part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and it provided federal aid to help level the educational playing field for poor and minority children. The ESEA was the first comprehensive federal education law providing substantial funds for K-12 education to schools serving children from low-income families.

Eighteen years after the passage of the ESEA, *A Nation at Risk* was published. The publication triggered a series of reforms that are still evolving today (O'Banion, 2007). As part of the reform movement, educational leaders began to refer to a learning revolution that would place learning first. The publication called for the strengthening of high school graduation requirements, the adoption of more rigorous and measurable standards, devoting significantly more time to learning, better preparation programs for would be teachers, and for holding educators and elected officials responsible for achieving the necessary reforms.

In 1994, Congress passed the IASA, which required states to develop content standards that defined what all children were expected to know and be able to do. Each state was also required to develop criteria for holding schools accountable for student performance and to provide assistance to schools that were identified as in need of improvement. The law was written to state explicitly that educationally disadvantaged students should be held to the same academic standards as other children. The IASA was responsible for ushering in the testing era in America's schools, which was taken to a new level in 2001 with the passage of the NCLB.

The NCLB focused the federal role in K-12 education on the goal of making all students proficient in reading, math, and science, and, as a result, closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. Schools, teachers, and students were all held to greater accountability standards. Accountability came in the form of increasing annual goals for student achievement and testing the students to see how they are progressing toward the yearly goals of achievement. The centerpiece of the NCLB is setting high expectations for all students to achieve. Under the guidelines of the NCLB,

the expectations should be the same for all students regardless of their background or where they attend school.

The NCLB affected education in many ways. Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are the central strategies of the NCLB for promoting educational excellence and equity in our schools. It reformed federal educational programs to support state efforts to establish challenging standards, to develop aligned assessments, and to build accountability systems for schools that are based on educational results.

Building on the foundation of the IASA, the NCLB requires that states set high academic standards for its students and then test them yearly to see if students are meeting the required standards. The NCLB places a stronger accountability for results and requires each state to develop and implement measurements for determining if students are scoring at state mandated levels. If students are not scoring at the mandated level, they are not making AYP. There are sanctions involved if schools do not make AYP. The sanctions range from providing supplemental services to students to school restructuring (Zhao, 2008).

The NCLB also gave schools unprecedented flexibility in how they use federal funds. This allows schools to use their federal funding in discretionary ways that suit the needs of the school and community. With this new flexibility, schools can transfer funds between programs without separate approval from the government. The legislation requires a certain percentage of funds to be spent in mandated places, such as technology, but schools are given the leeway to spend the rest of it where they see fit. The only time a

school can be limited in how it transfers funds is if it has not made AYP, and then some of a school's discretion on where it spends the funds can be limited.

The NCLB also placed an emphasis on schools to determine which educational programs and practices have proven to be the most effective. Federal funding is targeted to support the programs and teaching methods that work to improve student learning and achievement. Based on these ideas, the NCLB wants proven methods of instruction in the classroom. This part of the NCLB also establishes the requirement for highly qualified teachers in every classroom. The designation of highly qualified is specific to subject matter competency where a teacher has demonstrated high levels of competency in their subject matter.

Parents of children in low-performing schools were given new options under the NCLB. In schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years, parents are given the option of transferring their children to a better-performing school in their district. The transfer school can either be a public or a charter school, as long as neither one has been identified as in need of improvement. Students from low-income families in schools that fail to make AYP are eligible to receive supplemental educational services, including tutoring, after-school services, and summer school.

President Barack Obama has called for several changes to be made to the NCLB. He wants once-a-year assessments to be replaced with models that provide educators and students with timely feedback about how to improve student learning. Obama has also called for assessments that can evaluate higher-order skills, including a students' ability to use technology, conduct research, and solve problems. The President also wants to implement an accountability system that supports schools to improve, rather than

focusing on punishment. If a school fails to make AYP, funding should not be taken away from the school. The system should be used to figure out why a school is not able to achieve the state mandated benchmarks and then help it make the necessary changes.

Another change the President has called for is investing more heavily in early childhood education. Barack Obama believes the time has come to put children first by focusing federal dollars where research and effective practice tell us we will have the greatest opportunity for long-term success (Klein & McNeil, 2009). His plans include providing funding to enable states to create high-quality early care and education programs for children from birth to age five. Obama also wants to expand early head start, which is the nation's primary early education program for children from birth to age three. Providing early learning challenge grants to fund high-quality pre-school programs is another way the President wants to invest in early education. His eventual goal would be to have universal pre-school available for all children.

In order to ensure that every child has a highly-qualified teacher, President Obama has called for a four-part plan to recruit, prepare, retain, and reward America's teachers. The plan involves recruitment efforts that restore prestige and financial incentives to education careers, including adequate entry-level salaries and service scholarships that cover quality teacher education programs. In order to better prepare future educators, Obama wants to require professional accreditation of all programs preparing teachers, with a focus on evidence regarding how well teachers are prepared. Retaining and rewarding teachers is a critical component of making sure there are enough highly-qualified professionals in the classroom. Beginning teachers need mentoring and

support, and accomplished veteran teachers need opportunities for career advancement and recognition.

Helping disadvantaged children to succeed in school has been a goal of federal legislation dating back to the ESEA. President Obama shares this goal and has ideas as to how this can be achieved. He wants to add additional learning time to school, whether it is in the form of longer days or longer school years, to provide additional learning time for struggling students to close the achievement gap. Focusing on success at the middle school level is part of Obama's plan to develop and implement early identification systems to identify those students most at-risk of dropping out. To further help close the achievement gap, Obama introduced his "STEP UP" plan, which supports summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children through partnerships between local schools and community organizations (Butler, 2009).

Recommendations

Helping students achieve high academic standards should be the goal of every school in the country. How schools go about attempting to achieve this goal varies from state to state and district to district. No matter what model a school decides to use, the U.S. Department of Education recommends it has the following characteristics:

1. Employs proven methods and strategies based on scientifically validated research
2. Integrates a comprehensive design with aligned components
3. Provides ongoing, professional development for teachers and staff
4. Includes measurable goals and benchmarks for student achievement
5. It is supported within the school by teachers, administrators, and staff

6. Provides support for teachers, administrators, and staff
7. Provides for meaningful parent and community involvement
8. Uses external technical support and assistance from an external partner
9. Plans for the evaluation of school reforms and of student test results
10. Identifies resources to support and sustain the school's reform efforts
11. Demonstrates significant improvement in the academic achievement of students (Shippen et al., 2006).

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