

*No Child Left Behind* and its Affect in the Severe-Profound

High School Special Education Classroom

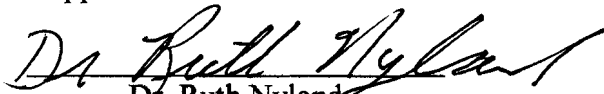
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* in high school special education classrooms of students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities.

Data was collected by interviewing special education teachers from the Twin Cities area during the spring and summer of 2008; each teacher had 15-20 years of experience. The participants were given a brief explanation of the study and its purpose.

The interview questions was developed by the researcher based on current literature findings on *No Child Left Behind's* affect on special education classrooms. Each interviewee was asked how *No Child Left Behind*, adequate yearly progress, accountability, and highly qualified teachers affecting their classrooms.

The results indicate that teachers in severe-profound cognitive disabilities classroom have minimal affects of *No Child Left Behind*. Teachers shared that the greatest impact has been the increased focus on testing and making academic gains. Teachers also shared that the biggest factor in their classrooms was students IEP.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

*No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) was signed by President Bush and passed into law on January 8, 2002. The primary purpose of NCLB is to ensure that students in every public school achieve significant learning goals while being educated in safe classrooms by highly qualified teachers (Yell, Drasgow, & Lowrey, 2005, p. 131). To increase student achievement, the law requires that school districts take on responsibility for all students reaching 100% proficiency on tests assessing reading, mathematics, and science by the 2013-2014 academic year. In addition, NCLB requires schools to reduce achievement gaps between economically advantaged students and students who are from diverse economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as students with disabilities (Yell, Drasgow, & Lowrey, 2005, p. 131). NCLB is a reauthorization and revision to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

There are six main ideas behind NCLB: accountability, highly qualified teachers, scientifically based instruction, local flexibility, safe schools, parent participation, and choice (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p.24). These six ideas have been the guiding influences that have changed the face and approach to the American education system.

Schools are held accountable for all of the students that they educate. NCLB focuses on increasing the academic performance of all public school students and improving the development of low performing schools (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). States are required to establish their own standards citing what students should know and be able to do and provide guidelines to schools, parents, and communities that tell them what achievements will be expected of all students (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). NCLB requires states to develop academic standards for all students in reading/language arts, math, and science (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). Accountability also encompasses two sub categories, which are assessment and adequate yearly progress (AYP).

NCLB requires that states put into practice a statewide assessment system that is aligned to the state standards in reading/language arts, math, and science (Nagle, Yunker, & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29). The purpose of the statewide testing is to measure how successful students are at learning what is expected of them, and how they are progressing toward meeting these academic standards.

To receive federal funding, states were required to submit accountability plans to the U.S. Department of Education. These plans defined the states' procedures for reporting school performance, and the system for holding schools and school districts responsible for increasing student achievement (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). States must develop academic standards and tests to assess students' knowledge and skills in reading, math, and science (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). States must set state proficiency standards that schools and school districts must attain within the 2013-2014 timeline (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132).

NCLB requires that all teachers in public schools must be highly qualified (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.133). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004) Teachers must hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a college or university. Second, teachers must have full state certification or licensure for the area that they teach in. Third, teachers must be able to demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject(s) that they teach. Teachers can demonstrate subject matter competence by passing a state-administered test in each of the core subjects that they teach.

States and school districts are required to use scientifically based instruction programming to improve the achievement of students. Emphases using educational programs and practices that have been demonstrated to be effective by rigorous scientific research (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.133). NCLB defines scientifically based

research as 'research that applies rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain relevant knowledge' (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.133).

Increased flexibility for states and school districts to exercise discretion in finding solutions to local issues (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69). This decision making authority includes greater latitude in using federal dollars earmarked for education than previously permitted (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69). The premise behind this allowance for more active decision making and use of resources is that community personnel (educators, parents, and community leaders) can best determine local needs (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69).

Programs to prevent violence in and around schools; to prevent the illegal use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco by young people; and to promote a safe and drug-free learning environment that supports academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.32). NCLB awards funds to states, which, in turn, awards money to districts and community based organizations for a wide range of drug- and violence-prevention programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.32). These programs must address local needs as determined by objective data and be grounded in scientifically based prevention activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.32). They must also involve parents. The effectiveness of these programs must be measured and evaluated continuously (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.32).

The last provision of NCLB is that parents are afforded expanded opportunities for decision making and other amplified alternatives associated with their children's education (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69). Parents are encouraged to become active participants in their child's education. Parents have the option of transferring their child to a school in their district with a better performance record (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69). Supplemental services, such as free tutoring, are available to some families whose children are enrolled in schools that fail to demonstrate satisfactory AYP

(Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69). Parents and families are thought to be an integral education resource and alternative under NCLB (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004, p. 69).

### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this study is to determine if the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* has affected high school special education classrooms of students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities. Data was collected by interviewing special education teachers from the Twin Cities area during the spring and summer of 2008.

### *Research Objectives*

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To determine how adequate yearly progress is affecting the classroom.
2. To determine how accountability is affecting the classroom.
3. To determine how schools are making sure they have highly qualified teachers.
4. To determine how *No Child Left Behind* is affecting the special education classroom.

### *Assumptions of the Study*

It is assumed that all of the subjects will have prior knowledge of *No Child Left Behind*, accountability, highly qualified teachers, and adequate yearly progress. It is also assumed that all participants will have an understanding how NCLB has affected their special education classroom. The final assumption is that all subjects will respond truthfully and thoughtfully.

### *Definition of Terms*

There are two key components of *No Child Left Behind* that needs to be defined by the researcher-cognitive disability and special education.

*Cognitive Disability.* “Cognitive Disability refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work. Cognitive disability manifests before age 18 (Hilton & Ringlaben ,1998, p. 18).”

*Special Education.* Special education is defined as “specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Watson, 2007, n.p.).”

#### *Limitations of the Study*

There are several limitations to this study that may impact the significance of the research findings. The sample may be too small to represent an accurate indicator of how special education teachers are working with NCLB and it may not represent all schools and how they are working with NCLB. The interview, written by the researcher, does not have high reliability or validity, which could be a concern when reviewing the findings of this study. During the interview, interviewees may be preoccupied with their busy schedules, or anything else that is going on in their lives at the time of the interview.

#### *Methods*

Four special education teachers that work with students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities were interviewed. Four questions were developed from the literature to gain more understanding of how NCLB is affecting special education classrooms. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the interviewees. The recorded interviews were transcribed and the data was reviewed.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

The review of literature will cover what is special education and four of the major themes of *No Child Left Behind*. The four themes are as follows: accountability, adequate yearly progress, highly qualified teachers, and testing.

### *What is Special Education?*

Prior to the 1970's, millions of children with disabilities were either refused enrollment or inadequately served by public schools (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, p. 25). Special education is defined as: "specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Watson, 2007, n.p.)."

Between the mid 1960s and 1975, state legislatures, the federal courts, and the U.S. Congress spelled out educational rights for children with disabilities (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 25). During World War I the U.S. created the U.S. Army Alpha assessment (Smyth, 2008, p. 133). The Army Alpha test allowed military officials to test recruits for suitable positions (Smyth, 2008, p. 133). This was one of the first uses of intellectual tests on groups of people. This test allowed the Army to sort recruits based on intellect, ability, and potential. This test would be the start for tests to be used in schools in the future.

There have been a few laws that have been paramount to the field of special education. The first was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. This law was the first major federal effort to subsidize direct services to selected populations in public schools (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 26). 1973 brought about Public Law 93-112 or otherwise known as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Rehabilitation Act provided that any recipient of federal financial funding must end discrimination in the offerings of its services to individuals with disabilities (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 29). In 1975 Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law required that all students with

disabilities receive free, appropriate public education and provided a funding source to help with the extra costs for such programming (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 29). Public Law 94-142 would be changed to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. In 1990 Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. This act expanded the rights of people with disabilities by outlawing discriminatory practices in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 29). In 2002 *No Child Left Behind* is enacted.

IDEA carries procedural safeguards for children and parents. There are 10 procedural safeguards under IDEA; six of the safeguards will be mentioned. First, notice of schools proposed actions and of parents' rights. Parents are entitled to a full explanation of all procedural safeguards and a description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, report, or other factors the school used as a basis for the proposed action (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 32). Second, consent to evaluate. Children must be evaluated in accordance with IDEA regulations before they are placed in special education, and parent consent must be obtained before testing (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 32). Third, appropriate evaluation. Testing and evaluation materials must be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory, and must have been validated for the specific purposes for which they will be used (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 32). Fourth, consent to placement. Parental consent must be obtained before placement of a child with a disability in a special education program (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 33). Fifth, input in Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP lays out the school's goals for the child and services to be provided, including the extent to which the child will participate in regular education programming (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 32). Finally, the 'stay put' provision, once placement has begun, can only be changed by the IEP team (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, pg 33).

## *Accountability*

The purpose of the accountability feature of NCLB is to measure, publically report and then decrease the achievement gap between more advantaged students and other students who might be expected to be at a disadvantage by nature of membership in a subgroup educationally, culturally, or socioeconomically (Harriman, 2005, p. 64). This feature of NCLB is to ensure that all students are being monitored, not just one group. The method for ensuring accountability is to require states to test every child in core subjects every year from grades 3-8 and once in high school, and then to report test scores along with extensive demographic data (Harriman, 2005, p. 64).

Statewide Accountability systems must be based on challenging state standards in reading, mathematics, and science (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 20). Each state must establish annual statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students remain on a trajectory toward proficiency by the school years 2013-2014 (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 20). Annual achievement objectives must be determined, met, and reported for subgroups, including students with disabilities (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 20)

One of the strengths of NCLB is that it holds schools accountable (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29). Results of state assessments at the school level are published in annual state and district report cards (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29). This allows parents to measure their school's performance and their child's progress. Schools are responsible for improving the academic performance of all students, and there are real consequences for districts and schools that fail to make progress (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29)

“Advocates of standards-based reform have held the opinion that expectations for students have been too low, and that the road to academic improvement lies in raising standards and holding teachers and students accountable for meeting those standards.”

(Voltz & Cecil, 2006, p.329) “One of the most visible and controversial aspects of education reform in the United States today is the demand for public accountability for student learning at all levels of the education system.” (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29)

Lawmakers believed that if students with disabilities were excluded from schools’ accountability systems, they would be ignored and not receive the academic attention they deserve (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34). Lawmakers knew if students with disabilities were not included they would be left behind. For NCLB to work, students with disabilities had to be held accountable to the same standards as their non-disabled peers and participate in accountability assessments along with their non-disabled peers (Voltz & Cecil, 2006, p.329).

“No Child Left Behind, therefore, articulates a results-orientated accountability system (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).” NCLB has increased the role of the federal government in state education policy significantly by requiring states to implement statewide accountability systems covering all public schools and students (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29).

#### *Adequate yearly progress*

NCLB mandates that states develop measurable milestones for schools to use to gauge their success in improving student achievement until the goal of 100% student proficiency is reached by the 2013-2014 school year deadline (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.32). These measurable milestones that schools must achieve are called adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.32). NCLB mandated the development of state accountability assessment plans for all school districts and students (Layton & Lock, 2007, pg 169).

AYP is met when three conditions are satisfied. First, no less than 95% of students in each subgroup must participate in state assessments at the school level.

Second, all students and each subgroup of students must meet or exceed the objectives set for all students by the state. Third, progress must be made toward increasing high school graduation (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p.29).

NCLB focused national attention on improving the academic achievement by requiring that states take the following four actions. First, states had to set challenging academic content and performance standards in reading, mathematics, and eventually science (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33). States were free to develop standards in other subjects, such as science and social studies, but these tests are not used in the NCLB reporting requirements. Second, states had to develop or adopt tests that would be given to students to determine if the students were meeting states standards (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33). All public school students in Grades 3 through 8 were tested, and high school students were to be tested at least once annually. Third, states were required to set standards that students had to meet on these tests to be considered proficient (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33). Having states set their own proficiency standards has become a controversial issue because some states have set proficiency standards that are easy to achieve, whereas other states have set very rigorous proficiency standards that are very difficult to achieve. Finally, to ensure that all students are making progress toward reaching the 100% proficiency goal by the 2013-2014 school year deadline, the state must set specific targets for all students each year in reading/language arts and math (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).

Schools are required to report AYP data for the following subgroups: students who are economically disadvantaged, students from racial and ethnic subgroups, students with disabilities, or students with limited English proficiency (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).

In order to make AYP, schools must have at least 95% of enrolled students participate in the testing program (by entire student body and in each subgroup), all

students and all subgroups score at least proficient at the state's AYP targets for that year, and all students and all subgroups meet AYP targets for graduation or attendance (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).

Schools can also make AYP, even in situations in which a particular subgroup has not met the state's proficiency target, if certain conditions are met. These conditions are known as the "safe harbor" provisions. To meet the safe harbor provisions, and thus meet the state's AYP targets, schools must have at least 95% of students enrolled participate in statewide testing (by particular subgroups), all students and all subgroups score at least proficient at the state's AYP targets for that year and have the percentage of students in the subgroup(s) that did not score at least proficient decrease by at least 10%, and have students in subgroup(s) make progress in graduation rate or attendance, and all students and the other subgroups meet AYP targets for graduation or attendance (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).

School districts and schools that fail to make AYP toward statewide proficiency goals will, over time, be subject to corrective action and restructuring measures aimed at getting them back on course to meet state standards (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29). Schools that meet or exceed AYP objectives or close achievement gaps will be eligible for State Academic Achievement Awards (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006, p. 29).

School districts and schools failing to make adequate yearly progress toward statewide proficiency goals must provide supplemental services for their students. These services may include free tutoring, after school assistance, and widespread instructional changes in the daily delivery of curriculum (Layton & Lock, 2007, pg 169).

If a school's students do not meet these proficiency levels for 2 consecutive years, the law mandates that the state designate the school in need of improvement. These schools will then receive technical assistance and must develop a 2-year plan to increase

student performance. NCLB also requires that states and schools take certain actions when a school does not make AYP for 3 or more years in a row (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34). The following table (Table 1) illustrates the effects of not making AYP when it comes to NCLB.

<b><i>TABLE 1.</i></b> When Schools Fail to Make Adequate Yearly Progress (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35).
<b><u>2 consecutive years</u></b> - The school will receive technical assistance from the state, A committee of school personnel and parents will develop a 2-year school improvement plan, Every student must be given the option of transferring to a school within the district that has made AYP.
<b><u>3 consecutive years</u></b> -In addition to the above, the school must offer supplemental services to disadvantaged students
<b><u>4 consecutive years</u></b> -In addition to the above, the school must implement corrective actions to improve the school such as-replacing certain staff responsible for failure to make AYP, Implementing a new curriculum grounded in scientifically based research, Hiring outside experts to assist the school, Reorganizing the management structure.
<b><u>5 consecutive years</u></b> - In addition to the above, the school must be restructured by taking such actions- Replacing the staff, contracting with a private firm to run the school, Reopening the school as a charter school. If these measures do not succeed, the state will take over management of the school.

Statewide assessment scores of all students with disabilities must be reported both as a subgroup and as part of the student body (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). AYP, therefore, is calculated and reported for the entire student body and again separately for students with disabilities. These students will be tested against standards appropriate for their intellectual development and, for accountability purposes, their scores would be counted as part of their school's performance (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35).

In some states, specific guidelines for determining the use of the state-mandated assessment device contain provisions for on-grade-level assessment, below-grade-level assessment, the use of accommodations and modifications during assessment, and the

need for student assessment of non-state-guided curricular expectations as outlined in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Layton & Lock, 2007 pg 169).

Students who are assessed using an alternate assessment are also included in AYP. The federal government, however, puts a cap on students who may take an alternative assessment and be counted as scoring proficient if judged against alternative achievement standards for purposes of determining AYP (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). This cap is currently set at 1% of the total school population at each grade level that is tested (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). All the students above the 1% percent must be included in the AYP calculations as failing to demonstrate proficiency (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132).

In large school, one of the most common reasons that schools do not make AYP is that students with IEPs fail to make appropriate academic progress. Many small rural schools avoid failure in the special education category because of small enrollments (Thornton, Hill, & Usinger, n.d., p.116).

The strategy of reporting AYP is designed to pressure educators to take whatever measures are necessary to increase achievement as measured by standardized tests (Harriman, 2005, p. 65). AYP increases from year to year, each benchmark creates considerable pressure on teachers, and that pressure gets transferred to students (Harriman, 2005, p. 65). It was believed that this new strategy also would serve to promote competition among schools and, theoretically, to promote higher performance out of fear of embarrassment (Voltz & Cecil, 2006, p.330).

NCLB gave states a great deal of flexibility in determining how they will implement the AYP requirements (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.33).

#### *Highly qualified teachers*

Teachers of core academic subjects such as English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history,

and geography must meet state criteria for highly qualified (Hyatt, 2007, pg 132). If a teacher teaches more than two of these core subjects, he or she must be qualified in all the subject areas taught (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.134).

When reviewing the highly qualified section of NCLB, legislators recommend allowing states to determine conditions under which schools can be granted exceptions rather than following a one-size-fits-all mandate from the federal government that may impose sanctions on schools unable to hire highly qualified teachers in all areas (Hyatt, 2007, pg 132).

All teachers in public schools must be highly qualified (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.133). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004) Teachers must hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a college or university. Second, teachers must have full state certification or licensure for the area that they teach in. Third, teachers must be able to demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject(s) that they teach. Teachers can demonstrate subject matter competence by passing a state-administered test in each of the core subjects that they teach.

NCLB requirements may be elusive for many districts. Teachers in many small districts are required to teach multiple subjects, and requiring that they meet NCLB highly qualified criteria for every subject (Hyatt, 2007, pg 132).

### *Testing*

There has been increasing emphasis on the use of large-scale tests to monitor students' progress toward meeting educational standards and to hold school districts accountable for their progress (Voltz & Cecil, 2006, p.329).

Two types of testing are used to measure academic progress: statewide standardized assessment and alternate assessment. State wide standardized assessment consists of every public school testing 95% of all students including 95% of students in

each of the following subgroups; low income students, students with disabilities, limited English-proficiency students, and students from diverse racial and ethnic groups (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). The results of these assessments are then reported to parents in annual report cards. This information provides parents with data about where their child stands academically and whether their child's school and school district are succeeding in meeting state standards. (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132).

States must develop alternate assessments that may be taken by students with disabilities who are not able to participate in the regular assessment even with the provision of accommodations (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). States may develop multiple alternate assessments and may choose to create alternate achievement standards that differ in complexity from the grade level achievement standard (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35).

NCLB allows for students to take an alternate assessment and have their performance judged against alternate achievement standards (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). Use of this later option is limited to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.35). Assessment accommodations are changes made in the assessment presentation or in the student's response. Examples of accommodations include changes in format, response, setting, timing, or scheduling (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p. 26).

Large scale state assessment requires that all students, even those with disabilities, will participate in. Large scale assessments have high-stake consequences, even unintended consequences, related to individual students or a school system (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p. 25). Some of the high stake consequences include grade-retention/promotion, educational/vocational tracking, graduation requirements, and ultimately quality of life once transitioned from school (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p. 25). When implementing large scale assessment policies for students with disabilities, schools

must consider the life-time effects of decisions made for students with disabilities and their families (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p. 25).

Most students with disabilities are to be held to the standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled, although in some situations accommodations, modifications or alternate assessments may be needed to get a true picture of a student's achievement (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34). States and districts require that only 'approved' accommodations be considered in these decisions (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34).

The key to success in this area is selecting the most appropriate accommodations. Appropriate accommodation strategies should be individualized to meet the exceptional learner's needs and not generically applied to all special education (Bowen & Rude, 2006, p. 26).

The assessment provision of NCLB require that school districts provide students with disabilities included in statewide-standardized assessments access to appropriate accommodations neede to take the staewide assessment (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34). If the standardized statewide assessment is not appropriate for the students, even with accommodations, their progress must be measured using an alternate assessment (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34).

States must provide training and guidance to IEP teams on the appropriate use of testing accommodations and modifications (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34). IEP teams often report difficulty in pinpointing the appropriate assessment situation and indicate a need for more precise and explicit information for ascertaining the correct assessment (Layton & Lock, 2007, pg. 170). The IEP team decides how the student will participate, not wether the student will participate (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.34).

### Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* in high school special education classrooms of students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities. Data was collected by interviewing special education teachers from the Twin Cities area during the spring and summer of 2008. This chapter will discuss the subjects and how each subject was selected. Instrumentation will also be discussed, along with data collection and analysis procedures. The limitations of the research methods will conclude this chapter.

#### *Subject Selection*

After the University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects approved the interview questions and research proposal, phone calls were made to special education directors of school districts to inquire about their special education teachers. During these phone conversations with special education directors, questions were asked to find out if they had any teachers that taught students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities at the high school level, how long the teacher had been teaching in special education, and how they could be contacted to see if they were interested in participating in this study.

Four special education teachers that teach students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities at the high school level were contacted. Each teacher was contacted by email or phone to enquire about his or her interest in being a part of this study. Each teacher was emailed the interview questions and consent form ahead of time. Meeting time and place was made for the convenience of the interviewee. Each interview was scheduled for one hour. Copies of the interview questions were given to the interviewee to have as a reference during the interview and all interviewees signed hard copies of the consent forms. All forms were collected at the end of the interview. All interviews were

tape recorded for accuracy. All interviews took place during the spring and summer of 2008. All measures were taken to ensure the protection of the human subjects involved.

### *Description of Sample*

The subjects in this study had between 15-20 years of teaching experience in special education. There were 2 male and 2 female subjects. Each subject came from a different school district from the Twin Cities metro area. All are currently teaching students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities in the high school setting.

### *Instrumentation*

The researcher developed the interview questions used in this study. The questions were developed based on the literature review findings and the lack of information that pertained to the area of severe-profound cognitive disabilities in regards to *No Child Left Behind*, and its impact on American high school classrooms. There were four questions for the interview, designed to be more general open-ended questions to elicit a further exploration into each question by the interviewee.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

All participants were given a brief explanation over the phone or via email of the study and its purpose. Each participant had the choice to participate in this study. If the participant chose not to participate, then another subject was found. The interview questions and consent form was emailed to the participants. A consent form was given to each interviewee before the interview was to take place. The participants were instructed to read the consent form and ask any questions that they may have. The interview was scheduled to last one hour, and each participant was informed that when he or she had no more information to share the interview was done, even if the hour had not passed. Each participant was given a copy of the four questions during the interview; at the conclusion of the interview the researcher collected all papers.

### *Data Analysis*

The data will be analyzed by reviewing the interviews. Upon completion of the interviews the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and looked at all responses to the questions. The researcher grouped the comments into common themes and unlike responses to fully understand the different teachers experiences to NCLB.

### *Limitations*

1. Participants were given one opportunity to complete the interview. There were no follow up interviews.
2. The validity and reliability of the questions should be considered when evaluating the results of the study. The researcher formulated the questions for the interview.
3. Interviewing four teachers in this study may not represent the experiences of all teachers in special education following *No Child Left Behind*.

## Chapter IV: Results

This chapter will discuss the results of the study regarding *No Child Left Behind* and its affect in the severe-profound high school education classroom. Each teacher had different experiences with NCLB in their classrooms and were very willing to share all of the knowledge that they had with the researcher. Each of the teacher's names used in this section are not their real names. The names have been changed to protect their identity. The results of each interview question will be discussed.

### *Question Analysis*

*How is No Child Left Behind affecting your classroom?* John started out by saying that NCLB had no effect on his classroom. Then, he went on to say that since NCLB, his budget has decreased every year, he personally financed many things in his classroom. John shared with the researcher that with the implementation of NCLB the paperwork demands increased.

Cindy replied that testing had been the biggest effect from NCLB. She spent time talking about testing and the use of alternative testing. Cindy also shared that this year's version of the alternative test was better than the previous version. Cindy also shared that she had a student with a physical and visual disability and she was unable to be tested, because the test could not be modified to her ability.

Rose shared the two biggest impacts of NCLB in her classroom. The positive impact was that NCLB made for more accountability for the teachers. She shared that when she got to her present job, students would watch movies and do nothing all day. NCLB forces more development of the students because the teacher is held accountable for academic standards. The negative is NCLB does not take into account for the more severe disabilities.

Steve shared with the researcher that he did not really know too much about NCLB. Administration does not bring up NCLB at staff meetings, and there is no

discussing district wide. Steve shared with the researcher that since NCLB he did notice an increase in testing of all students.

*How is accountability affecting your classroom?* Rose shared that accountability has engaged students in learning and made teachers prove learning. “(Special education) students are more involved with school, not sitting in the corner and doing nothing,” according to Rose. Teachers are forced to be accountable for their students.

Steve shared that accountability is not really affecting his classroom. Steve’s accountability is his individual education plan (IEP). During his first years of teaching Steve would write goals that were multi-year goals, now Steve writes goals that are more achievable in a year time. Steve shared that his goals became more narrow instead of global for each student.

John shared that accountability is not affecting his classroom, along with Cindy. Cindy also shared that someone else deals with accountability in her school district.

*How is adequate yearly progress affecting your classroom?* John and Steve both responded to this question exactly the same. They both said that AYP has not affected their classrooms. Both stated that their student’s achievement based on IEP goals measured success in their school districts, not a standardized test.

Cindy shared that she had not seen any affect of AYP in her classroom also, but she shared the affects of testing in her experience with NCLB. Cindy stated that NCLB had increased testing expectations and that the tests are more difficult for special education students.

Rose shared that AYP is negatively affecting her classroom. Her students to date have made AYP, but she shared the stress of having students with severe-profound cognitive disabilities having to be tested. “Severe-profound students lower test scores for AYP and the rest of the school dislikes them,” said Rose. According to Rose, “no matter

how hard the students work and the gains that they may make, the students (severe-profound) do not make the AYP benchmark.”

*How is the school ensuring they have highly qualified teachers?* John shared that teachers went through a three-year period in which they were in probation. After the three years were done then they were tenured staff. John stated that there was no real change for hiring teachers that he knew of since NCLB.

Previous to the meeting Cindy made a call to the district office to talk with the personnel director to find out how her school district is meeting highly qualified teachers. Cindy shared with the researcher that her school district hires “right degreed people in the right position, backed by credentials, trained and qualified for the position.”

Rose stated that her school district follows the state highly qualified teacher criteria. She did not go into detail what the state criteria was. Rose also shared that her school district provides monthly trainings to keep special education teachers up to speed on the newest and most effective teaching strategies. Her school district also has monthly meetings.

Steve shared that his school district goes through a formal process for highly qualified teachers. He did not know what this process was. Steve shared that when NCLB law went into effect his school district worked with current teachers to highly qualify them in the subject areas that they taught. What Steve said he had to do was produce his college transcripts to prove that he took classes in the area that he teaches in to make him highly qualified.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter will begin with the limitations and a summary of the findings for this study. Conclusions of the study will be discussed. Finally, the last section will outline recommendations for the improvement of *No Child Left Behind* and its affect in the severe-profound special education high school classroom.

### *Limitations*

1. Participants were given one opportunity to complete the interview. There were no follow up interviews.
2. The validity and reliability of the questions should be considered when evaluating the results of the study. The researcher formulated the questions for the interview.
3. Interviewing four teachers in this study may not represent the experiences of all teachers in special education following *No Child Left Behind*.

### *Summary*

*No Child Left Behind* was signed by President Bush and passed into law on January 8, 2002. The primary purpose of NCLB is to ensure that students in every public school achieve significant learning goals while being educated in safe classrooms by highly qualified teachers (Yell, Drasgow, & Lowrey, 2005 p. 131). According to the four teachers that were interviewed, NCLB has not really changed their classrooms.

Schools are held accountable for all of the students that they educate. NCLB focuses on increasing the academic performance of all public school students and improving the development of low performing schools (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.132). Rose shared that accountability has been the positive influence in her school. It encourages student development because the teacher is more accountable for students achieving standards. Steve and John reported that their accountability is measured by IEPs.

NCLB mandates that states develop measurable milestones for schools to use to gauge their success in improving student achievement until the goal of 100% student proficiency is reached by the 2013-2014 school year deadline (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.32). These measurable milestones that schools must achieve are called adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.32). Rose experienced negative affects from AYP with her school. The other three teachers had no experience with AYP.

NCLB requires that all teachers in public schools must be highly qualified (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006, p.133). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004) Teachers must hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a college or university. Second, teachers must have full state certification or licensure for the area that they teach in. Third, teachers must be able to demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject(s) that they teach. Teachers can demonstrate subject matter competence by passing a state-administered test in each of the core subjects that they teach. All four teachers had the general idea of highly qualified teachers, and knew that someone else took care of making sure that the school district had highly qualified teachers.

### *Conclusions*

The researcher was shocked at the amount of information that each teacher knew about *No Child Left Behind*. When it came to the interview, it was assumed that the teachers would have the general knowledge about NCLB to discuss the topic and their experiences with NCLB for at least an hour, each interview last less than twenty minutes. Steve was very open with the researcher and he shared that he did not really have a grasp for the law that dictates what schools have to do. He also shared that he has wanted to learn more information, but he has not taken the time to look it up. The scary thought is

that teachers are relying on administration to tell them what they need to know about educational law.

It was encouraging to know that the interview sparked some interest in NCLB for Cindy. She felt that it was her duty to find out more information about NCLB. She contacted her special education director to ask about the law. She also contacted an individual in the personnel department to find out how her school district is going about NCLB.

Rose thought that the concept of NCLB was terrific. She thinks that schools are excelling and students are doing better than before. NCLB is a great concept and has brought great awareness to the need of student development and growth. Like all four teachers shared with the researcher, it is impossible to think that all students will achieve 100% efficiency in math, reading, and writing. Especially when there are students in schools that are academically disadvantaged because of a cognitive disability. These students are being forced to pass tests that they may never pass.

### *Recommendations*

From the research and interviews the researcher suggests that more studies need to be done on the affects of *No Child Left Behind* in the severe-profound cognitive disability special education classroom. There is limited information on how laws in education affect special education in the severe-profound cognitive disability special education classroom. The researcher would suggest that discussions occur with special education directors. These people have the responsibility of keeping up with laws that pertain to education and it is their duty to share with their teachers what they need to know. There is more to NCLB than special education teachers know about, and with all of their responsibilities in the classrooms the teacher relies on their special education directors to keep them informed on new laws. The final suggestion is that lawmakers need to include teachers in making improvements to NCLB when they revisit the law.

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## APPENDIX A: Teacher Interview Form

***No Child Left Behind* and its Affect in the Severe-Profound  
High School Special Education Classroom**

**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Questions**

**How is No Child Left Behind affecting your classroom?**

**How is accountability affecting your classroom?**

**How is adequate yearly progress affecting your classroom?**

**How is the school ensuring they have highly qualified teachers?**