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School administrators' perceptions of the contributions of No Child Left Behind to the achievement gap

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by

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M.S., Hunter College, City University of New York, 1990
B.S., Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) receive assistance and eventually are subject to corrective action if they do not improve. This qualitative case study used interviews with 10 elementary and middle school administrators from 8 public schools to assess the influence of NCLB on schools with a high percentage of students of color and students in poverty. This study was viewed through the lens of Toffler's conceptual framework of how change occurs, and on the current school reform climate surrounding NCLB and how its accountability system of assessments for students of color and high poverty makes it difficult for them to participate in the American economy. The data analysis strategies included the use of data triangulation through the review of archival data, participant interviews and employing member checks to insure the trustworthiness of data. Results showed that administrators in the targeted schools have difficulty retaining highly qualified teachers. Interventions such as extending the school day, increasing test preparation, using test data to drive instruction, and using academic intervention services have met with mixed results. Participants generally believed that NCLB has prompted a lack of curricular innovation and has promoted too much teaching to the test. Outside academic intervention, services were described as expensive and inconsistent. Interview data from the study indicated that the prevalent challenge was dealing with unmotivated and disrespectful students. This study has the potential to influence social change by providing further support for both social policy advocacy and other research on NCLB. Scheduled for reauthorization in 2009, state, federal policymakers and education advocates have called for sweeping modifications. The results of this study will contribute to the ongoing debate on student achievement, teacher quality and school equity.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to UmmRashid, AbuRashid, Rashid, Rashidah, Qadr,

Arkiel, Mustafa, Fatimah, Layla, Abdullah, Ameera, Ruquyyah, and Maysoon

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Public school reform has been an integral part of the American school system, with debates about the goals of education seen in the progressive and traditional education movements since the beginning of the 19th century (Berube, 1993; Semel, Sadovnik, & Cookson, 1992). The most recent school reform is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB), which is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and is intended to improve education in elementary and secondary schools for all children. NCLB requires states to establish academic standards and use assessments to monitor academic progress.

Each state must be accountable for ensuring that all students meet the academic standards prescribed by NCLB. In addition, states must develop a system of sanctions and rewards to hold districts and schools accountable for reducing the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students, on the one hand, and White students, on the other hand. Success in meeting standards is measured by schools and districts maintaining adequate yearly progress (AYP). When schools fail to make AYP, they receive administrative assistance; if they subsequently fail to make progress, they are categorized for corrective action. The Secretary of Education is authorized to reduce federal funds available for administrative expenses if a state fails to meet its performance objectives and demonstrate improved academic achievement (Goals, 2000).

This dissertation explored the use of assessment scores as the sole measure of academic achievement, as required by a standards-based system. Schools already operating at a disadvantage may experience challenges in implementing NCLB. Some

schools may be unable to meet their achievement targets due to preexisting challenges inherent in schools in economically challenged communities. Schools serving students of color and those in poverty must demonstrate the same academic progress as students in more affluent communities. NCLB required that all students perform at proficient levels as established by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

NCLB required states to implement challenging standards and assessments in reading and mathematics by testing all students in grades 3 through 8. Assessments are to be administered annually, with an established test score improvement required to continue receiving federal Title I funds. The law also requires schools to employ highly qualified teachers who are certified in the subject(s) being taught. States are also responsible for moving limited English proficient (LEP) students to English fluency, promoting informed parental choice, and encouraging safe schools for the 21st century (Bush, 2002). Under NCLB, schools are required to produce an increased percentage of students who demonstrate a specified level of achievement on tests within a given period.

The law's mechanism for holding schools accountable, the AYP formula, does not take into account the gains made in student achievement by schools starting furthest behind. In April 2005, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced that the U.S. Department of Education would grant states new tools to meet crucial goals of the NCLB. The new tools would be growth models. In November 2005, Spellings announced a pilot program for qualified starters to request the use of growth-based accountability models so their fairness and effectiveness could be evaluated. Tennessee was one of the first states to have its growth model approved. It incorporated student projection data into AYP calculations, which encouraged schools and districts to improve student

achievement and close achievement gaps by focusing resources on all students who had yet to attain proficiency or were at-risk of falling below proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

NCLB required states to base AYP projections on the percentage of students who score at the proficient level on state tests in reading and math. That percentage is compared to a target percentage, which must be met by both the student body as a whole and by subgroups of students, such as specific racial and ethnic populations, by the 2013-2014 school year. Districts that fail to make AYP for consecutive years become subject to increasingly serious consequences and interventions (Carey, 2006).

According to NAEP, achievement gaps for students of color and those in poverty have not significantly reduced, and these students are performing below proficient levels. For students performing below established state standards, the achievement gap may take longer to be narrowed. These students were performing below proficient levels before the implementation of NCLB (National Academy of Sciences, 2004). Poorly performing students experience the same testing regime imposed on all schools in order to continue receiving federal funds and keep school doors open. The culture of schools often changes and the delivery of education is altered due to the demands for meeting AYP. High-stakes testing pressures students in low-performing schools to deliver higher scores on standardized exams. In many of these schools, traditional subjects such as history, geography, science, and Romance languages are no longer taught because they are not tested (Kozol, 2005).

The standards-based reform movement as established by NCLB does not address the disproportionately lower funding that schools serving children of color and those in

poverty historically have received (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Karp, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Meir, 2002). The accountability measures of NCLB require improved test scores as the benchmark of successful schools. This requirement may disproportionately affect students of color and high poverty who have been categorized as performing below proficient standards. An Educational Testing Service report (2008) on the achievement gap found 14 contributing factors to academic failure. Of these, the report identified four predominant factors: birth weight, child nutrition, class size, and teacher qualification. Among these, only one is a provision measure in NCLB (Barton, 2003; Landgraf, 2006).

Historical Background

The U.S. Supreme Court ended racial segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The separate but equal practice was banned, and racial discrimination was outlawed. Organizations engaging in racial discrimination were barred from receiving federal funds. The enactment of ESEA in 1965 provided funds to states to support provisions made by the federal government. These provisions included promoting academic achievement among children of color and high poverty (McDermott & Jensen, 2005).

ESEA increased federal funding for education (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2005; Walker, 2000). It addressed equality of educational opportunity for all children. The section of ESEA that provides federal funds for disadvantaged children is the Title I program. It was designed to motivate states and local school districts to pay greater attention to particular groups of students and to increase the services provided to them (McDonnell, 2005).

On January 8, 2002, the NCLB law reauthorized ESEA Title I and other programs for public education. Federal funding for public education continued to be provided, but NCLB implemented mandates that required accountability measures using assessments, a new feature. NCLB required states to demonstrate progress on assessments through AYP in order to continue to receive funding. Funds were provided to purchase testing materials and provide practice test situations.

NCLB's testing mandates have been the center of considerable discussion among educators. Moloney (2006) argued that the dependence of high-stakes testing on state-mandated assessments as the dominant or sole criteria for graduation or promotion can threaten teachers' fragile capacities to meet diverse student needs. Popham (2004) contended that because of substantial pressure to raise students' scores on high-stakes tests, educators are abandoning significant curricular content.

NCLB's mandate of demonstrating AYP has created other challenges for states. In 2005, Connecticut filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education and Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling. The basis of the suit was that mandated assessments are costly and the fact that Connecticut already had an established accountability assessment system in place. The lawsuit was filed in federal court, and since its inception other states have joined Connecticut in voicing their discontent with NCLB's testing mandates ("Connecticut Sues," 2005). Glod (2007) reported that federal education officials could withhold funds if Virginia's Fairfax School Board did not administer new reading tests to thousands of immigrant students.

Problem Statement

The main focus of the NCLB is accountability through assessments. By holding all schools and students to the same standard, NCLB uses test scores as the main measure of student achievement and learning. Using test scores as the only yardstick to determine student achievement neglects other aspects of educating the whole child. Assessments required by the NCLB are a snapshot of student learning during a school year. Critical thinking, oral communication, and the use of technology are not assessed. The U.S. Department of Labor SCANS Report (1991) identified competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance. Test-based accountability systems aim to improve student achievement. NCLB was intended to improve outcomes for all students, particularly those who have been historically neglected, but educators have adopted gaming practices to artificially inflate school school's passing rates (Booher-Jennings, 2006).

NCLB is an educational policy that emphasizes accountability by imposing constraints on school systems. According to Jennings and Rentner,

> The achievement gaps persists among different ethnic group, the streamlining of school curricula such that critical areas of learning required for students to have a well-rounded education are ignored, and neglecting students who will not attend academic colleges and universities after high school. (as cited in Gay, 2007, p. 13).

For example, students of color and those in poverty face the same achievement requirements as other students even though historically they have been allotted fewer resources than students living in more affluent communities. In short, disadvantaged students and school administrators are held to high accountability standards without the

needed resources. Consistently, children of color and high poverty are educated in schools that are woefully inadequate on most measures of quality and funding.

In 1993, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE, 2005) challenged New York State's school financing system on the grounds that it failed to provide students sufficient opportunity for a sound basic education in New York City. Courts in Ohio and Kentucky have found public schools systems inadequate in providing all children with equal access to a quality education (Verstegen, Venegas, & Knoeppel, 2006). Carr, Gray, and Holley stated that over the last 3 decades, 45 states have been confronted with school finance lawsuits. According to Kahlenerg (2004), NCLB does little to address the key source of inequality in public schools: the separation of rich and poor.

The academic achievement gap for children of color and high poverty persists despite the implementation of NCLB's standards-based accountability system. School administrators are required to produce test scores that meet AYP or face sanctions that will decrease funding to schools. Yet NCLB does not address such factors as lower class sizes, up-to-date textbooks, furniture, library books, technology in classrooms, hiring and retaining high qualified teachers, curricula that support knowledge required for future employment, guidance counselors, and numerous other components of academic achievement.

The problem this study addressed is the disparity between NCLB's requirements and the resources available to schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students. How can such schools maintain AYP when they start at a competitive disadvantage with more affluent schools? How do teachers and administrators in schools with high percentages of low-income students and students of color see the task before them? How

do they assess the impact NCLB has had on their schools and students? These are the broad questions that this study explored.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative case study used semistructured audio-taped telephone interviews with 10 school administrators to explore their perceptions while serving students of color and high poverty since implementation of NCLB. Participants' responses were assessed for common themes. A case study was defined by Merriam (2002) as a specific, complex, functioning thing. Qualitative case studies are used when researchers want to search for meaning and understanding. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy is used, and the end product is richly descriptive. This qualitative study examined NCLB and how its mandates were administered as perceived by school-level administrators. These cases provide rich and authentic impressions that will increase understanding of how NCLB mandates were implemented in schools serving students of color and those in poverty. Potential participants were asked informally to participate by responding to an e-mail message sent to 20 administrators. The theoretical framework for the study was critical theory, which was used because of the historical influence of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1961.

Research Questions

This qualitative study used interviews to investigate administrators' perceptions of the impact NCLB has on students of color and high poverty. The study was based on the following questions:

1. How do administrators perceive the use of testing as the main yardstick by which to measure student academic achievement?

2. In what ways were changes made to accommodate this mandate while delivering education to students of color and high poverty?

3. What are the challenges of hiring highly qualified teachers as mandated by the NCLB?

4. How would you describe your impressions and observations about the role of NCLB and how it has influenced how you deliver education in your school?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand the impact of NCLB on the delivery of education for students of color and high poverty. School administrators were interviewed to find out how funding, testing practices, curricular changes, and teacher recruitment have changed to support the success of students of color and high poverty. The goal of this study was to illuminate the challenges faced by administrators in schools serving a high percentage of low-income students and students of color.

Theoretical Perspective

Toffler (1985) proposed that social change occurs in waves. He stated that society was experiencing the Third Wave, where technology and services are the symbols of the economy. This perspective implies that appropriate education will be needed to equip workers with the skills needed to participate in an information society. School reforms are formulated to address the needs of an education system to ensure that what students are learning will enable them to participate in the society's economy. This theoretical perspective was used to examine the school reforms of NCLB and how its accountability

system of assessments relates to provisions for students of color and high poverty to participate in the American economy.

Preparation for employment in a society which depends on the instant communication and dissemination of data, ideas, symbols, and symbolism is the responsibility of the education system (Toffler, 2002, p. 25). Toffler argued that mass education will require reforms in order to prepare students for a variety of employment opportunities. NCLB's main focus, however, is on students' demonstrating proficiency on state assessments. This study explored whether NCLB is preparing students of color and high poverty to participate in a technological economy by closing the academic achievement gap.

NCLB is the most sweeping school reform implemented by the federal government in decades, and it has noble intentions; however, the achievement gap continues to exist for subgroups of students. Funds for implementing the accountability and assessment mandates of the NCLB have caused states to redirect spending for programs and parenting education (Johnson, 2006). The question is why these efforts have not been more successful. Some observers have suggested that when there is limited input from teachers, parents, and school communities, the needs of the clients that reforms are supposed to help are subsequently limited. Maloney (2006) and Allington (2002) stated that federal funding is tied to testing, and because underfunded schools (often populated by students of low socioeconomic status) are more reliant on federal funding, their students have been disproportionately tested. This has created a testing culture in public schools, and other student achievement is ignored. It could also be observed that school funding is based on a formula designed by each state. The federal

government provides less than 10% of the funding for implementing NCLB. States and local government provide the remaining 90% from income taxes, lotteries, sales and property taxes, and various corporate taxes (*Give Kids Good Schools*, 2009).

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): Gains measured on annual assessments and accountability measures mandated by NCLB.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): Passed in 1965, this was the first and largest comprehensive federal education law to provide substantial funds for K-12 education.

English language learners (ELL): Students whose dominant language is not English. This abbreviation is used interchangeably with LEP.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act: Legislation signed by President Clinton on March 31, 1994, that began the national standards reform movement.

High-stakes tests: Tests used to determine students' promotion, graduation, or remediation.

Improving America's Schools Act (IASA): A major part of the Clinton administration's efforts to reform education, this legislation was another reauthorization of the ESEA.

Limited English proficient (LEP): Students whose dominant language is not English.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): A congressionally authorized project of the National Center for Education Statistics.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): The 2002 law that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

School report cards: NCLB requires every state to publish a report card as part of its accountability plan, which must include information on assessments, accountability, and teacher quality.

Title I: Part of ESEA is a set of programs by the U.S. Department of Education to distribute funding to districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families.

Assumptions

The following assumptions reflect the researcher's experiences and perceptions as an educator serving students in high-poverty communities:

1. Less emphasis on accountability through assessments would afford struggling students more time to make improvements in academic performance because more time would be spent on their specific needs.

2. Less emphasis on assessments would allow for more autonomy among teachers and administrators to focus on students' social needs.

3. More resources would increase students' academic achievement by exposing them to a wider variety of curricular content.

These assumptions were bracketed by the researcher while listening to participants' responses.

Delimitations

This study was confined to three New York City school districts during the 2008-2009 academic year. Ten school administrators were interviewed, and from those in-

depth interviews, themes and patterns were sorted out which related to the effects of operating under NCLB. Interview questions addressed the impact NCLB has on student academic achievement, and the results of the study will not necessarily be generalizable to other public schools that serve mostly students of color and high poverty.

Limitations

The perceptions of the study's participants do not necessarily represent other administrators in other schools that serve disadvantaged students. Given the complexity of human nature and the present climate of New York City schools, some participants may have been reluctant to divulge their true feelings. Also, participants' responses may have reflected the particular time of the school year in which interviews were conducted. The perceptions of teachers, other school personnel, and parents were not studied. Finally, the participants were given the research questions prior to the telephone interviews. This procedure may have contributed to less truthful responses than those provided in a face-to-face discussion.

Significance of the Study

American society needs an educated citizenry to preserve and enhance its competitive global position in the 21st century. Educators and parents want children to achieve academically in order to be productive citizens who will contribute to the improvement and preservation of society and compete in the global economy. NCLB was designed so that districts and schools would be held accountable for the academic improvement of all students. Historically, though, some students have been left behind, and the experiences of school administrators reveal what can be done to inform policy makers about changes that will facilitate improved accountability in schools serving

disadvantaged students. This study sought to determine what can be changed so that NCLB can better accommodate the needs of disadvantaged students.

Social Impact

For now, NCLB is here to stay. However, to the extent that this well-intentioned legislation is not serving the needs of all students, the law may need to be revised. Any such revision should reflect the perceptions of those who are directly responsible for implementing the law. School administrators are an important part of that constituency. This study can bring about social change by giving voice to the people responsible for overseeing the education of tomorrow's leaders.

Public education should prepare students for productive citizenry, but Hess and Finn (2007) concluded that educational accountability under NCLB is less about any conventional notion of school improvement or reinventing government and more about ambitious goals and a form of moral advocacy. Wilson (2002) noted that there has been a systematic reduction in federal aid to urban cities. Along with decreased financial support, urban schools have experienced an increase in Black and Latino populations. Cities like New York are left to deal with an increase in families living in poverty. School administrators are responsible for the education of these students while operating with less funding and the social ills facing students. Kirylo (2005) compared the unpreparedness of hurricane Katrina with NCLB and educators' efforts to improve education by relying solely on improved test scores.

Summary

Chapter 1 discussed the No Child Left Behind school reform legislation and its accountability and assessment mandates. The chapter identified shortcomings in NCLB

as it has affected attempts to educate disadvantaged students. Research questions were introduced that examine the experiences of school administrators attempting to implement school reform among children of color and high poverty. The chapter discussed how a qualitative approach was used to assess the effectiveness of NCLB.

In chapter 2, the academic literature related to NCLB and provisions made to address the academic needs of students of color and high poverty will be reviewed. The literature review will also consider the impact of NCLB accountability and assessment mandates on specific subgroups.

In chapter 3, the qualitative methodology used in this study will be described. In chapter 4, the study's findings will be summarized, and in chapter 5 the results will be discussed and suggestions for further research will be provided.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Public school reforms have been an integral part of the American school system since the beginning of the 19th century. The reforms have centered on making changes to school curricula, teaching methodology, and other aspects of school administration. The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into effect on January 8, 2002, by President George W. Bush, is the latest educational reform intended to improve education for all elementary and secondary school children. It is a standards-based reform that has accountability through assessments as its main focus.

NCLB requires states to establish academic standards and use accountability through assessments to measure annual yearly progress (AYP). Chapter 2 will review the literature pertaining to this public education reform. The literature review will be presented in four parts: (a) the history of public school reform, (b) ESEA and NCLB mandates, (c) accountability through assessments and AYP, and (d) the achievement gap as it exists for subgroups of students in public education.

Education Reform

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA) of 1965. ESEA was the single largest source of federal support for K-12 education and a part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. It sent $11 billion each year as federal assistance to schools, communities, and children for nearly 30 years. The ESEA stated that

> Congress declares it the policy of the United States that a high-quality
> education for all individuals and a fair and equal opportunity to obtain that
> education are a societal good, are a moral imperative, and improve the life

of every individual, because the quality of our individual lives ultimately depends on the quality of the lives of others. (ESEA, 1965, section 1001)

This legislation laid the foundation for subsequent education reforms. Today, ESEA is known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. Each president since Lyndon Johnson has contributed to the maintenance and reauthorization of ESEA for almost half a century. Although this legislation has had alterations, providing funding for the nation's most needy students has remained one of its main foci. Changes to ESEA coincided with social change. As society began to shift from an industrialized to a technological economy, its provisions were altered to accommodate an education commensurate to a changing society.

A Nation at Risk was a report written in 1983 during Ronald Reagan's presidency. The report was in response to the widely held view that America was at extreme economic risk, largely because of poorly performing schools that were not preparing students for the new economy and because of the emergence of two classes of Americans: those that have and those that do not. The report warned that schools had not kept pace with changes in society and the economy, and the nation would suffer if education was not dramatically improved for all children (Meier, 2000; Ravitch, 2000). This report was instrumental in galvanizing efforts to improve educational standards. Reagan left the work of establishing academic standards to the states. Students were tested, and failing students were denied class promotions. The next president would be charged with initiating the establishment of a standards-based education.

In 1989, during George H. W. Bush's first year as president, he summoned the governors of all U.S. states to a summit to discuss education policy. Bush declared that

education was a national concern. At the summit, governors pledged to set national goals

for education and to hold themselves accountable for attaining them. The goals were

ambitious. They stated that by 2000, every child will enter school ready to learn; the high

school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%; all students will demonstrate

competence in challenging subject matter; U.S. students will be first in the world in

mathematics and science achievement; all adults will be literate; and all schools will be

safe and drug-free (Rothman, 1995). The Department of Health Education and Welfare

created the National Education Goals Panel to monitor and report on the progress made

toward meeting the six objectives. These objectives were the beginning of a standards-

based education reform required of states by the federal government. However, even

though the legislation is portrayed by educators as focusing on goals, the legislation's

most important element may have been the creation of new national standards for

spending levels, teacher salaries, and other opportunities to learn (Sykes, 1995).

The next president, William Jefferson Clinton, one of the governors who attended

the aforementioned summit, maintained an emphasis on educational reform. Clinton's

first major education legislation, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, was signed into

effect in October 1994. The program provided funds for states to develop standards and

assessments, and it authorized a new federal board to certify national and state standards

(Ravitch, 2000). Title I of the ESEA was a federal law providing billions of dollars per

year to states for the education of at-risk students. Legislators changed Title I in 1994 to

complement Goals 2000. With its reauthorization on October 20, 1994, Title I tied receipt

of its funds to the development of standards, assessments, and accountability systems in

each state. Due to lack of coherence, however, Goals 2000 was not implemented as hoped (Superfine, 2005; Sykes, 1995).In 1996 Congress did not reauthorize the program.

The next major educational reform occurred when President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act on January 8, 2002. Implementing NCLB proved complicated because there was a lack of alignment with district- and state-mandated tests and curriculum requirements (Datnow, 2005; Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 2001). Contrary to requirements of Goals 2000, President Clinton's version of Title I, which offered flexibility to states in implementing the program, NCLB faced implementation challenges because although the flexibility offer remained, sanctions were attached through accountability measures. In the case of Goals 2000, a state could receive funds simply by submitting an application detailing the process by which it would develop an improvement plan (Superfine, 2005). NCLB's funding requirements are much more involved.

Kohl (2006) criticized NCLB standards as unrealistic, charging that those who write the standards would have difficulty meeting them. In Kohl's view, a humane way to transform schools has been turned into a punitive standardization of learning. He faulted the standards movement and NCLB's emphasis on testing for making no concession to individual differences, even to the point of sometimes refusing to exempt severely handicapped students from the humiliation of assured failure on standardized tests. According to Kohl, NCLB and its attempt to impose rigid standards on all schools, teachers, and children without providing the time, resources, and opportunity to learn is a recipe for school failure. One of those standards is the accountability mandate that uses assessments as the single yardstick by which to measure student success.

Accountability and Assessment Provisions

At the signing of NCLB, President Bush stated that public education had a moral obligation to provide all children with a world-class education. Furthermore, states had to be accountable for the billions of dollars invested into the education system. The accountability sections of the NCLB hold public educators directly responsible for the effectiveness of their instructional efforts (Popham, 2004). The public is made aware of how each school is functioning by test scores that measure student performance and academic achievement.

The standards-based reform movement, as codified in NCLB, has led to increased emphasis on tests. Each state is required to establish academic standards for reading and mathematics. These standards must be aligned with what will be assessed, and assessments and what will be tested are chosen by states, which must formulate a standard by which to measure each child's academic progress by establishing targets at basic, proficient, and advanced levels. Each state determines the minimum score for each level, and states determine the percentage of students they want to achieve each performance level. NCLB requires that all students meet a standard of proficiency by 2014.

Attempting to bridge the gap between political and policy analysis, Superfine (2005) stated that many of the accountability systems employed by states are high-stakes in that they tie students' ability to graduate, be promoted from one grade to another, or be placed in a particular curricular track to the results of a standardized test. NCLB required that states annually assess performance for all students in grades 3 through 8 and once in grades 10 and 12. States must also indicate how both schools and school districts will

demonstrate AYP towards full proficiency by 2014 and make the results available for

public scrutiny. These performance data are disaggregated by subgroups based on gender,

minority group, special education need, level of economic disadvantage, and English

language proficiency. Typically, a subgroup comprises 25 students, although states vary

in their definition of this (Smith, 2005).

Another accountability provision of the NCLB is that states must show progress

on administered assessments. AYP is the measure of how much a school has increased

the proficiency of its students and is used to label schools as failing or successful. During

the ESEA era, states were required to demonstrate progress but they set the targets for

themselves. Some states set the targets low because they wanted to ensure continued

receipt of Title I funds. NCLB changed this practice by legislating that 100% of the

nation's students will be proficient by 2014. According to Laitsch, Lewallen, and

McCloskey,

> Districts and schools use work-arounds to raise test scores without actually
> improving student learning. These methods cheat students by making
> changes at the state level (making test items easier, lowering cut scores);
> at the school level (excluding low-performing students, tutoring students
> just below the cut score who are more likely to move to proficiency); and
> at the teacher level (encouraging or discouraging certain students to attend
> on test day) that trick the accountability system. These work-arounds raise
> test scores but do nothing to help students. (Quoted in Guilfoyle, 2006, p.
> 10)

Another accountability provision is that schools make the results of standardized

assessments available to parents and report not only aggregate results but also results

specific to particular demographic groups (Neal & Schanzenbach, 2007). Each state must

publish assessment scores on Web sites, and schools must use report cards to inform the

public of their academic standing using school profiles. NCLB further requires that each

state demonstrate AYP. The executive summary by the U.S Department of Education

includes an increased accountability measure stating that NCLB will strengthen Title I

accountability by requiring states to implement statewide accountability systems covering

all public schools and students. These systems must be based on challenging state

standards in annual progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach

proficiency within 12 years. Assessment results and state progress objectives must be

broken out by socioeconomic level, race, ethnicity, disability, and English proficiency to

ensure that no group is left behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

In addition to new accountability requirements, NCLB revised sanctions for not

performing according to projected progress. If a school does not make AYP, a school

plan must be developed or revised with parents, the local educational agency (LEA), and

its support team. A school must conduct professional development activities over 2

consecutive years, an amount equivalent to at least 10% of the funds received by the

school under Title I, Part A during one fiscal year, or otherwise demonstrate that it is

effectively carrying out professional development activities. After providing technical

assistance and taking other remediation measures, a LEA may take corrective action at

any time against a school identified for improvement. During the third year following

identification, such action must be taken against any school that still fails to make

adequate progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

These corrective actions may include withholding funds; revoking authority for a

school to operate; decreasing decision-making authority; making alternative governance

arrangements, such as the creation of a public charter school; reconstituting the school

staff; and authorizing students to transfer, providing transportation costs if necessary, to

other public schools served by the LEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). States have been given flexibility to design their own assessment and set their progress levels. However, all tests must be the same for all students. The first two subjects tested were reading and mathematics; science was included starting in the 2007-2008 school year (Popham, 2004).

States have been made aware of the sanctions for not meeting their set targets. But a problem arises for schools that have functioned at a deficit for many years and suddenly have to set targets that are not attainable. One of the challenges facing schools that serve disadvantaged students is that the law requires that every child demonstrate 100% proficiency by 2014, regardless of where the school began. In effect, the law requires that students who have had the greatest difficulty must demonstrate the greatest progress.

Giroux and Schmidt (2004) and Balfanz and Byrnes (2006) argued that NCLB mandates for accountability perpetuate a system of tracking and a culture of failure for those who do not have the cultural and academic resources to mediate successfully between a test-based curriculum and the high-stakes scoring mechanisms of a state-and-corporate-regulated testing machine. Minority and high-poverty students, in particular, rapidly fall below desired levels of achievement because they attend schools with teacher shortages and weak and unfocused curricula. According to Baines and Kent (2006), advocates for dismantling the testing regime experience the consequences of a standards-based education as propagation of a fixed curriculum, de-emphasis on individualization, subversion of the teacher, focus on measurable outcomes, and development of an expensive and expansive bureaucracy unrelated to instruction.

The desire for all students to obtain a world-class education so they can participate in a global economy requires that they perform at proficient levels on assessments based on challenging standards. This goal is supported by Payne (2003), who argued that society has made technological and economic progress and students need to be prepared to participate by demonstrating intellectual capital. The testing mandates of NCLB force schools to develop the intellectual capital of all children. Toffler (1990) encouraged society to adjust its education system to accommodate Third Wave technological advances so that it can educate citizens for the vast variety of knowledge and skills required to participate in a symbolic society.

<div style="text-align:center">Challenges and Consequences of Accountability</div>

NCLB's Title I section provides for improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. It purports to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic assessments. This purpose is accomplished by (a) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging state academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement; (b) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in the most economically depressed schools, LEP children, migratory children, children with disabilities, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance; and (c) closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially between

minority and nonminority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Assessments and accountability were discussed in the previous section. Another challenge for states is teacher preparation and training to meet NCLB mandates. A case study by Rex and Nelson (2004) found that even with a strong professional commitment to their low-achieving students, teachers who were under pressure of test score accountability altered what was taught and learned. Teachers in this study were asked to provide evidence that they had successfully revised their curricula to mimic the language, procedures, and skills required by the state's high-stakes test, resulting in them teaching to the test.

Gibson and Wallace (2006) conducted a year-long research project to investigate how science teachers taught for understanding. The investigation found that teachers striving to maintain constructivist teaching practices were working in a counterproductive environment under NCLB. Craig (2004) reported on the efforts of one school principal to inform his staff about NCLB mandates. Henry Richards, principal of Eagle High School, used the metaphor of a dragon to explain the accountability requirements of the NCLB and their required contributions for closing the achievement gap.

Students of color and high poverty continue to rank low on national assessments. Large populations of Latino and African American students are likely to attend underachieving schools, and by the time they arrive in high school, they are far behind others in academic achievement. Karp (2004) stated that finances have a direct effect on educational outcomes because schools unable to afford educationally relevant materials

are at a competitive disadvantage, and low-income students have fewer resources, such as books or computers, that can facilitate learning outside of school.

Lower academic achievement by students of color and high poverty are attributed to many factors. They are more likely to attend school in poor communities and have teachers who are less qualified than those in other districts. These schools also lack the necessary resources. Karp (2004) noted that inequality in test scores is one indicator of school performance but that scores also reflect other inequalities in resources and opportunities. Karp's conclusions were echoed by Payne (2005), who found that social capital affects the academic achievement of immigrant students because working-class poor families have weaker channels to distribute information from schools. Furthermore, immigrant parents often lack familiarity with the American school system, including expectations regarding parental involvement and routes to higher education.

Additional questions have been raised about NCLB regarding LEP students. Abedi (2004) studied the effects of NCLB accountability sanctions on LEP and ELL students. He found that the system is flawed because there are inconsistencies in reporting academic achievement, due to use of different criteria for classifying students. Moreover, tests for these students revealed scores that varied from classification codes. Disaggregated reporting in small school districts illustrates that small populations do not offer reliable data for AYP. Issues such as immigration status, last name identification, and migratory families contributed to making data collection for this subgroup difficult and added to its misrepresentation.

Johnson (2006) noted that NCLB uses only numbers derived from standardized tests to assign value to an educational experience. However, tests measure only part of

intelligence and therefore offer an incomplete view of learners and learning. Riley,

Selden, and Caldwell (2004) argued that basing accountability exclusively on test scores

is unreasonable and potentially frustrating and demoralizing, that teachers do not respond

constructively to such pressures and that such an approach can inspire gaming and

misguided emphasis. Abrams and Madaus (2003), commenting on a study by Hamilton,

Stecher, and Klien that revealed the unintended consequences of high-stakes testing,

concluded that:

> The test has the power to affect individuals, institutions, curriculum, and
> instruction. Teachers' and students' behaviors are geared only toward
> passing tests. The more a test is used to determine if funds will be
> received, the more likely scores will be falsified or manipulated to show
> success. If important decisions are made based on test results, then
> teachers will teach to the test. In every setting where high-stakes testing
> operates, the exam content eventually defines the curriculum. Teachers
> adjust their instruction to the form of the test, such as coaching students on
> how to answer essay questions and multiple choice or whatever form of
> questioning is used. The weight given to tests negates all other important
> parts of schooling. (p. 32)

Hodge and Krumm (2009) surveyed 371 rural school administrators to investigate

the effects of the NCLB mandates on special education programs in rural school districts.

An online survey using a 5-point Likert scale was developed to ask how students were

being serviced. Results showed that 299 participants (81%) used small class size as a

service option. Few used highly qualified special education teachers (HQT) as an option.

The authors recommended that state departments of education, institutions of higher

education with a rural service area, and rural school districts should combine efforts and

work to address the needs in rural school districts by providing professional development.

NCLB mandated that students who fail to perform at proficient levels must

receive supplemental educational services (SES), which are designed to raise student

achievement through tutoring programs. Munoz, Potter, and Ross (2008) used a quasi-experimental design that closely matched program and control students with multiple student-level covariates in Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. They surveyed the district SES coordinator, principals, teachers, and parents to determine the effectiveness of SES. The researchers cited many problems encountered by school personnel and parents. They found no significant increase in students' academic performance.

Thornton, Hill, and Usinger (2006) examined the impact of NCLB on accountability for special education students in small rural schools. They studied how schools met AYP requirements with IEP students and how school improvement plans were analyzed for efforts to ensure compliance with NCLB. They conducted site visits at selected schools that failed to make AYP. The results were as follows:

> Seven school districts had fewer than 1500 students and none reported AYP results for IEP students. In each district, the reason was that the school failed to meet the threshold. The data indicated that the percentage of students in rural districts with an IEP was similar to the statewide average. Thus, the small rural schools avoided the NCLB accountability process for special education students. (p. 117)

The interviews that Thornton et al. (2006) conducted revealed that school administrators encouraged teachers to pay special attention to students who were near the target AYP by giving them extra practice in testing strategies. None of the respondents expressed concerns for subgroups that failed to make AYP and were not reported because membership fell below the state threshold. The study revealed that many principals attempted to divide the problems associated with failure to make AYP into smaller components and they lacked proactive plans to improve AYP.

Travar (2006) reviewed New York City Mayor Bloomberg's education reform agenda, Children First, in light of organizational theory. For the 2009-2010 school year it is estimated that New York City will spend $21.8 billion on education. Travar observed that the mayor's education reforms are based on institutions borrowed from his experience as founder and CEO of Bloomberg Communications. Bloomberg's decision to change district offices to regional offices and replace superintendents with local instructional supervisors were cited as an attempt to centralize control of the public school system, an example of coercive isomorphism. In Travar's view, the mayor appointed a chancellor who was a lawyer because he wanted to implement tenets of scientific management, standardized curricula, and increased assessments to further pursue institutional isomorphism.

Travar (2006) called individualized instruction a myth because all New York City elementary schools use the same reading and math programs, and middle schools do the same. Ironically, noted Traver, the education reform installed by the mayor resembles in language and philosophy the industrial-efficiency movement of the early 20th century and is one that NCLB espouses. Traver concluded that given the current decline in fiscal and political support for public education, student test scores have emerged as the one uniform, quantitative measure politicians can use to judge school efficiency.

Parsons and Harrington (2009), in their review of scripted literacy programs, posed two questions educators should consider before embracing that approach to teaching:

1. If a program were to be adopted in New York, would you want to use it for your own children?

2. Are the researchers knowledgeable about literacy research and instruction, experienced in working with diverse children, and familiar with teaching in Title I elementary schools?

Parsons and Harrington observed that there is no single program that is best for teaching literacy. Any literacy instruction should help develop confidence and motivate students to read and write for their own purposes.

Burke and Burke-Samide (2004) reviewed recent changes in New York City's schools. They cited the example of a Queens teacher who transformed her classroom by rearranging rugs, rocking chairs, formal learning areas, and desks to facilitate small-group instruction. They noted that decibel level and the kinds of sounds in a classroom can affect students' ability to concentrate, think, and perform well. Lighting and room temperature also contributed to student performance, according to research on learning styles. They endorsed attempts to harmonize individual learning-style preferences with congruent educational environments.

<center>Testing Mandates</center>

NCLB required that disaggregated test scores for students who are economically disadvantaged, from major racial and ethnic groups, disabled, or with limited English proficiency be examined separately and that these four subgroups attain 100% proficiency within 12 years (Popham, 2004). Thus far, according to the NAEP, these subgroups have maintained a flat line of progress. The achievement gap has not been significantly reduced for students of color and high poverty. Schools report that closing the achievement gap is difficult for several reasons. NCLB has not made provisions for the issues that affect the subgroups, thereby enabling them to close the achievement gap.

Poverty has been shown to account for almost half the variation in test scores among schools. Schools in poor communities with lower test scores are identified as not making AYP more frequently than are affluent schools (Mathis, 2006).

A report from the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute stated that the gap has grown and the difference in spending between the best-performing and worst-performing districts is about $200 per child per year. The gap is not just between White and Black students; it is between upscale students and poor students. Funding provided by the federal government is disproportionate to NCLB mandates, and the lack of money violates the requirement of the law, according to McDade (2006).

Scherer's (2005) conclusions about disparities in school funding were based on schools in the state of New York:

> The composure of the student body adds further to the uniqueness of the system. There are 180 languages spoken amongst the children of New York City, and one in every eleven students is a recent immigrant. Approximately seventy-three percent of New York State's total minority student body attends a New York City public school. Sixteen percent of City children are classified as having limited English proficiency, meaning that they scored below the fortieth percentile on language assessments. Nearly half of the students come from families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and seventy-three percent of students get free lunch, as compared to five percent in the rest of the State. Fifty-two percent of students in the city attend schools in which more than forty percent of their peers are poor, as compared with eleven percent of students outside the Big Five Cities (Buffalo, New York, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers. (p. 6)

Although the Campaign for Fiscal Equity won a court case to award over $12 billion dollars to New York City public schools, these funds have not reached the classrooms serving the neediest students, who continue to score below proficiency on assessments (Scherer, 2005).

According to the NAEP, 30 states showed no significant change at the two grades tested (4th and 8th) in reading. No gains were made in scores for lower-income students since 2005. The Nation's Report Card, as reported by NAEP, indicated a 4-point gain in reading compared to 15 years ago. In light of the $900 billion spent on public education, gaining 4 points in a decade and a half is inconsequential. The report also stated that the achievement gap between White and Black students narrowed from 32 points in 1992 to 27 points in 2007. This 5-point difference over 15 years is evidence that efforts to close the achievement gap have failed. There is no mention in the NAEP report of any influence an increase in immigration had on test results. NCLB will require more testing for students who speak other languages, while funding for bilingual and special education decreases and more students are placed in regular education classrooms under the guise of inclusion education and other changes to special education.

Using the same assessments enables teachers to teach more to the test, while students get used to the form of test items. But despite widespread manipulation of administering assessments, the consequences of those assessments, for schools and for students, are still severe. The concern that students of a particular subgroup will perform at lower level due to their particular circumstances remains at the heart of the argument that one test should not be the sole measure by which to judge academic performance.

This provision of NCLB has drastically changed the way education is delivered, with emphasis on data-driven instruction. For students of color and high poverty, who have experienced various forms of inequity, and for whom this inequality created an achievement gap, accountability means learning to pass state-mandated tests. Instead of rich curricula that expose them to knowledge that affords them an equal opportunity at an

education for their future, they receive a watered-down curriculum heavy on test-taking. Thompson (2003) cited Fullan, who stated that when targets require large gains in achievement scores, a preoccupation with tests can border on cheating. Corners get cut and learning is diminished, the antithesis of what is intended. Thompson noted that good jobs and civic participation require solving complex problems; working on projects in teams; and performing tasks that require analysis, synthesis, interpretation, communication, and imagination, things that standardized tests are least able to assess.

In light of problems created by NCLB, 10 U.S. senators called for an overhaul of the testing mandates, along with other changes. Their February 15, 2007, letter to Senator Edward M. Kennedy, chair of the Senate Education and Labor Committee, argued for a major overhaul of the legislation:

> We have concluded that the testing mandates of No Child Left Behind in their current form are unsustainable and must be overhauled significantly during the reauthorization process this year. While we all agree that states and districts should be held accountable for academic outcomes and continue working towards closing the achievement gap among their students, federal education law should not take the form of one-size-fits all, cookie cutter approach. (p. 1)

Popham (2004) agreed that assessments are necessary but argued that just because a test yields a numerical score does not means the score provides a precise picture of student achievement. Also, as testing increases, not only is the academic content diminished by the limited test items but funds are spent on purchasing tests instead of being channeled to other needs. Connecticut was the first state to file a lawsuit against the federal government regarding the testing frenzy. The state claimed they already had an assessment program in place that adequately measured student achievement and that federal funds were not sufficient to purchase additional tests. In their letter to Senator

Kennedy, the 10 senators also stated that the federal funding is well below the agreed upon authorization levels for crucial programs such as Title I and special education. This underfunding is having an effect on schools' ability to meet NCLB and state standards.

McReynolds (2006) charged that schools that once offered a rich curriculum to all their students are reducing or eliminating instruction in history, science, and the arts to focus on math and reading. An example of how the pressure to increase standardized test scores is in Washington, where test preparation activities include WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) Wednesdays, and a Seattle nurse described third graders in tears for fear of failing the WASL and one child sleepwalking before the test. One Washington fourth grader was suspended because he did not answer a question on the WASL. Then he was made to sit at a table with his head down for 5 hours while the class celebrated test success.

McReynolds (2006) argued that an increase in multiple-choice tests makes it difficult to tell whether the achievement gap is being narrowed and whether test results reflect real intellectual development. Another gap is being created because students of color and high poverty are spending most of the school day preparing for tests, while White and affluent students are offered a full and varied curriculum. McReynolds suggested that it is time to consider preparation of the young for democracy, with an education that includes independent thinking, judgment, critical reasoning, community responsibility, self-governance, justice, individuality, tolerance, respect, fairness, compromise, appreciation of differences, rejection of violence, and concern for the rights and welfare for all.

One issue that has been inadequately studied is resources for students who speak languages other than English. Crawford (2004) stated that NCLB has noble intentions when seeking to address the achievement gap, but it falls short in designing accountability systems that yield fair, accurate, and useful information on which to base decisions about school improvement. One-size-fits-all mandates are especially of concern when it comes to English language learners (ELLs), Crawford charged.

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) supported NCLB with the hope that increased attention would be given to ELLs. The law does little to address obstacles to achievement. There remains an inequity in resources, critical shortages of teachers trained to serve ELLs, inadequate instructional materials, substandard school facilities, and poorly designed instructional programs. Despite this, requirements for improved test results remain at the forefront, backed up by punitive sanctions for schools (Crawford, 2004).

Some educators agree that testing can be useful and is necessary to assess academic progress. Assessments are used to guide teaching strategies as well as content. But testing, many educators believe, has become more a political than an educational tool. Emery (2007), discussing the political origins of high-stakes testing in U.S. public schools, stated that in the last 20 years, the U.S. economy has undergone a fundamental change from an industrial economy to a service economy. Correspondingly, corporate CEOs are interested in tracking upper-class students into college and lower-class students into the service sector.

Popham (2001) observed that standardized tests, both in design and results, have a strong correlation to socioeconomic status. The trend in public education has been that

Black and Brown students have been resegregated (sic) to low-performing schools to match their socioeconomic status. These students are subjected to an unimaginative, drill-oriented test preparation curriculum, while high-performing schools continue to get college preparation curricula.

Closing the Achievement Gap

An Educational Testing Service (ETS) report concluded that the achievement gap is not only about what goes on in the classroom; it is also about what happens to students before and after school (Landgraf, 2006). Taylor (2006) used critical race theory to show that aggregated test scores are a reflection of how different groups are educated. Some observers have argued that closing the achievement gap could be solved simply by reducing class size, particularly in early grades. The Children's Defense Fund (2007) published a fact sheet demonstrating how high school exit exams are neither fair nor the most accurate way of evaluating students. This single test cannot always validly or reliably measure what students know and can do, resulting in students failing for reasons not related to their ability.

Landgraf (2006) stated that without solid and frequent information gathered from student assessments, it is difficult to know if each child is mastering the material appropriate for his or her age and grade. Landgraf acknowledged that the gap between White and Black students has been widening over the past 10-15 years in mathematics and reading in middle and high school. He said that having the data from annual tests is one of the key ways of closing the achievement gap.

Sherman and Grogan (2003) used an ethical perspective to critique school superintendents' responses to the achievement gap, as measured on standardized tests in

Virginia. This exploratory study found that poverty, segregated housing, difficulty in recruiting and retaining stronger instructional leaders, complexities of raising taxes to increase local funding, and fewer material and human resources were contributing to the achievement gap. While these studies discuss the challenges faced by school districts for closing the achievement gap, there is no shortage of suggestions for closing it. Darling-Hammond (2003), Kozol (2000), and Meier (2004) agree that the inequality of school funding lies at the heart of improving education for many students.

Booher-Jennings (2006) noted that the language of accountability is swift and uncompromising: Hold educators responsible for results. But a data-driven approach results in selectivity:

> Using the data, you can identify and focus on the kids who are close to passing. The bubble kids: Take the benchmark scores and divide the students into three groups. Find the safe cases, or those who will definitely pass, and color them green. Identify the kids who are suitable cases for treatment. Those are the ones who can pass with a little extra help; color them yellow. Then color the kids who have no chance of passing red. Teachers were encouraged to focus their attention on the yellow kids. (p. 756)

Booher-Jennings observed that despite the intent of NCLB to improve outcomes for all students, particularly those who have been historically neglected, educators often adopt a series of gaming practices to artificially inflate a school's passing rates. Such practices include giving students a special education classification to exclude them from high-stakes tests, retaining students in a grade to delay test-taking, diverting attention away from subjects not evaluated on tests, teaching to the test, and cheating.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Selwyn (2005) studied teacher education candidates at Antioch University and concluded that NCLB has changed the game of preparing teachers because of its testing mandates. Student teachers expressed concerns about newly adopted reading programs and administrators' concerns about test scores. Student teachers are reluctant to teach in high-need areas because schools failing to meet AYP are adopting scripted test-preparation curricula. Antioch's placement specialists reported that it is difficult to place student teachers because administrators are fearful that inexperienced teachers will lower their test scores. Student teachers are sent to schools with higher percentages of students who are White, middle-class, and successful on tests.

In a later study, Sewlyn (2007) wrote more extensively about NCLB and teacher education, noting that Department of Education statistics document a widening demographic gap between teachers and their students. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Kenneth Zeichner (2005), in their summary of the American Education Research Association (AREA) Panel of Teacher Research and Education, summed up the profile of people coming into the field by saying they are typically young, White women who are monolingual, who are from suburbs or small towns, and whose parents have attended high school or college. The average age is in the low 40s, and they have had little or no contact with inner-city children or children of color.

The American Institute for Research (AIR) released a report on August 29, 2007, stating that most public school teachers are highly qualified under the terms of NCLB, but many low-income and minority students experience inequities when it comes to the qualifications of the teachers in their classrooms. Dr. Kerstin Le Floch, a principal

research analyst at AIR, stated that a higher percentage of teachers who are not highly

qualified under NCLB teach special education and limited English proficiency classes.

Those teachers are also overrepresented in middle schools and in high-poverty and high-

minority schools. Two national studies, the Study of State Implementation of

Accountability and Teacher Quality under NCLB (SSI-NCLB) and the National

Longitudinal Study of NCLB (NLS-NCLB), found that 49% of high school teachers said

they received no professional development focused on mathematics content.

Porter-Magee (2004) noted that often teachers can control neither who ends up in

their classroom nor the personal baggage those students bring into it. Porter-Magee cited

Rivers and Sanders (2002), who concluded that the effect of the teacher far overshadows

other classroom variables. On the other hand, to say that poor teachers have a lasting

negative impact on student achievement means that the crisis of low achievement among

poor, minority, and limited English Proficient (LEP) students is due to the failure of those

students' teachers.

Nieto (2005) surveyed a variety of studies on what it means to be a successful

teacher of students with diverse backgrounds and found several common characteristics

that seem to describe highly qualified teachers. In general, such teachers place high value

on students' identities (culture, race, language, gender, experiences); connect learning to

students' lives; have high expectations for all students, even for those others may have

given up on; stay committed to students in spite of obstacles that get in the way; and view

parents and community members as partners in education.

Theoretical Perspective

Toffler's theory of social change guided this study's exploration of whether academic assessments improve educational and economic opportunities for students of color and high poverty. Toffler (1990) stated that the 21st century is an era of consumption, political corruption, wild spending, financial speculation, anti-unionism, and contempt for the poor. Contempt for the poor may have had some influence on the genesis of NCLB, which requires that schools exhibit accountability through assessments.

Toffler (1990) argued that knowledge is the main currency of modern societies. Any effective strategy for reducing joblessness in a symbolic economy must depend less on the allocation of wealth and more on the allocation of knowledge. Society needs to prepare people, through schooling, apprenticeships, and on-the-job learning, for work in such fields as the human services, helping care for a fast-growing population of the elderly, and providing child care, health services, personal security, and the like. Public school assessments based on mathematics and other mechanical skills will not serve students well in their need for interpersonal skills and cultural intelligence.

Administrators and NCLB

Literature on NCLB and school administrators is scarce. McGhee and Nelson (2005) stated the impact of high-stakes accountability on school leadership has yet to be deeply explored. They cited a principal who characterized the current educational climate as dominated by fear. The principals they interviewed agreed to speak only with assurance that their identities would be carefully protected. These were accomplished, experienced administrators who were fired without warning for not raising test scores.

Hunt (2008) stated that recent reform movements require administrators to be managers who can improve teaching and learning. Schools have been restructured to reflect assumptions that guide the business world. In New York City, schools are no longer overseen by superintendents but by chief executive officers. Hunt concluded that today's administrators are driven more by the stick of sanctions than the carrot of financial incentives.

Administrators are faced with the struggle of finding highly qualified teachers. Jacob (2007) used data from the Schools and Staffing Survey of 2003-2007, a nationally representative survey administered by the Department of Education, to give a portrait of urban districts and schools. The survey indicated that 64% of students in central cities are students of color. In New York City schools, for example, students speak more than 120 languages. They also tend to have extremely high rates of mobility, which is disruptive for the movers as well as stable students.

Batagiannis (2009) argued that educational leaders at all levels in the United States struggle to meet unattainable goals of the narrowly defined, test-measured-only accountability exemplified by the NCLB. In the nation's quest for instant perfection, he charged, many administrators are being terminated, which suggests that their professional judgment is not trusted. The problem Batagiannis has with NCLB is the goal that every student must be proficient by 2014. The author compared schools with other organizations, such as government, business, and health industries, which are not required to attain 100% proficiency. Instantaneous perfection permeates both private and professional lives until there is a loss of any kind of patience. Administrators are expected to instantly know all of the facts and, just as quickly, fix the problem. A

solution to the push-button administration syndrome is for educators to appraise and respond to attacks on public education. While complying with legislative mandates, educational leaders must take the initiative and have the courage to speak. Educators at all levels should commit to school improvement, have the courage to talk to policymakers, and even challenge political agendas and the undermining of public education.

James and Algozzine (2006) surveyed 45 school principals in North Carolina to gauge the impact of the state's education accountability program. This initiative, which moved accountability from the district to the school level, was designed to more quickly identify students performing below grade level so that intervention strategies might be strategically employed. The study was designed to elicit perceptions of principals regarding key aspects of accountability and its impact on their roles. The authors concluded that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the pressure being placed on school administrators. The authors cited Ladd and Zelli, who stated that surprisingly little is known about the impact of school-based accountability systems.

> Respondents reported five favorable components of the program: safe, orderly and caring schools; quality teachers; safety standards/expectations for students; financial bonus for staff members in schools that meet student achievement expectations; promotion standards at grades 3, 5, & 8; and intervention expectations for students not meeting student accountability standards. Unfavorable components were the expectation for schools to meet AYP required by NCLB, testing requirements for limited English proficiency students, testing requirements for exceptional students, sanctions for schools that do not meet expected growth, and the school status designation labels assigned to schools based upon student academic achievement as measured by test scores. (p. 4)

Cohn (2005) noted that some superintendents view NCLB as a helpful part of an overall school reform strategy that builds on local and state accountability initiatives.

These superintendents and local school leaders saw the law as both a rare opportunity and a unique challenge. Cohn stated that according to a recent Public Agenda survey, superintendents are optimistic about NCLB. Darline Robles, superintendent of schools in Los Angeles, said that the real benefit of NCLB is the focus on individual students, attempting to meet the needs of all students, and monitoring their performance on a regular basis.

Maria Goodloe, superintendent of the Charleston County, South Carolina, school system, believed that putting students first, increasing achievement, raising the bar, creating a high performance culture, examining the data, implementing practices, and not accepting any excuses are completely consistent with goals of NCLB. James Lytle, superintendent of schools in Trenton, New Jersey, is a strong advocate for accountability and closing the achievement gap. However, he had concerns about the testing and AYP mandates of the law.

Kati Haycock (2006) is an advocate of closing the achievement gap:

The biggest benefit of NCLB is there are no more invisible kids. NCLB has shone a spotlight on the academic performance of poor and minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities—students whose lagging achievement had previously been hidden. As a result, schools are now focusing more attention on students' education. (p. 38)

Haycock gave examples of schools in Atlanta, Virginia, and Richmond where data analysis tracks student performance and schools offer extra tutoring to struggling students.

Summary

Improving education for students continues to be a challenge for leaders, policy makers, educators, parents, and stakeholders. NCLB provides the beginning of a blueprint for educational reform. However, there is widespread concern that NCLB may need alterations. The testing provision has caused the most concern for policy makers and educators. This concern finds states focusing on AYP targets. Students of color and those in poverty, for whom an equal education opportunity has been an item of contention for decades, now have to face another challenge.

Chapter 2 of this study comprised a review of the literature about NCLB, including a short history of school reforms, and a summary of NCLB provisions that states are required to implement. The challenges and consequences of a high-stakes testing culture and its effects on educating disadvantaged students were discussed. The administrators who are responsible for implementing the mandates at the school levels and teacher quality were also discussed. In chapter 3, the methods used in this research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of school administrators in delivering education to students of color living in high-poverty urban areas. The qualitative method was chosen because it lends opportunities for more personal responses. Merriam (2002) stated that in qualitative research, meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed-upon, or measurable phenomenon that is assumed in positivist, quantitative research. Instead, multiple constructions and interpretations of reality are in flux. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context.

This study investigated how the social and political aspects of NCLB shape the reality of school administrators and students of color and high poverty. In this chapter, the research design and methods employed in the study will be described. The research setting and population as well as data collection procedures for obtaining and recording informants' experiences will be detailed. Data analysis and the researcher's role as an educator of students of color and those in poverty will also be discussed.

Research Design

To investigate the effects of NCLB in public schools that serve students of color and high poverty, this case study explored the experiences of school administrators. This method was chosen to enable participants to discuss their experiences based on the researcher's quest for "inter-subjective validity" (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). A qualitative study allows participants to discuss their feelings and perceptions by

responding to open-ended questions. By contrast, a quantitative study observes and measures information numerically, uses unbiased approaches, and employs statistical procedures (Creswell, 2003).

A case study is a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 2002). The case study has a finite quality about it, such as in the number of participants. Merriam cited Stake (1995), who stated that the case is one among others. In this research study, the case is how school administrators have sought to understand and implement NCLB. Being an administrator in a school serving disadvantaged students and having to implement a reform that may not contribute to academic success is likely to produce conflicted feelings.

The case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). In the present study, the case was how school administrators have dealt with a specific educational mandate. A case study was a better fit for this research than a phenomenological study even though there are similarities between the two paradigms. The case study is a bounded, integrated system and concentrates on a single phenomenon or entity (the case). The case study could be a program, an event, an activity, or an individual. Phenomenology concentrates on the experiences of more than one participant. It focuses on the central, underlying meaning of the experiences and emphasizes the intentionality of consciousness (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002). A case study was chosen over a phenomenological investigation because

participants would not feel pressured to reveal any information that they may deem harmful to their careers in light of the current economic climate. Ethnography was considered for this research but did not fit the purpose because it would have required descriptions of behaviors of cultural groups. The NCLB encompasses the entire public school population in the United States, and an ethnographic study would have been too grand an endeavor.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The researcher surveyed 10 participants, 9 middle school administrators and 1 elementary school administrator, from eight schools located in three New York City school districts. Participants were chosen to reflect the common features and structural connections of schools attempting to implement NCLB among students of color and high poverty. Purposeful sampling of participants established any similarities in their experiences by which to build themes for data analysis (Creswell, 1998). Two criteria for purposeful sampling were used:

1. School administrators serving students of color and high poverty.

2. Administrators implementing mandates of NCLB.

There are no relationships or connections between the researcher and participants. However, the researcher is an educator in a similar setting. Letters were sent to each school administrator by U.S. mail and facsimile. Telephone contacts were completed to set up appointments for telephone interviews. Copies of all correspondence were submitted to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB, approval no. 09-09-08-0300079) before any interviews took place.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Since understanding was the goal of this research, the human instrument, able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 2002). The researcher became interested in this study because of her interactions with several school districts, administrators, and students in New York City schools for more than 20 years. Therefore, it was imperative that biases, assumptions, and prior knowledge not unduly influence the research. This goal was accomplished by reporting exactly what was related in participants' responses and verifying responses by using member checks. The administrators chosen for this study were teachers at the same time as the researcher, which required that the researcher apply bracketing while interviewing and analyzing data.

Bracketing

Bracketing requires that a researcher be aware of personal assumptions, feelings, and preconceptions, and then strive to put them aside in order to be open and receptive to what is being investigated (Hatch, 2002). Bracketing was used to separate the researcher's impressions and interpretations, which are based on experience in the New York City public school system, from a more general analysis of educational trends. The researcher is currently a math teacher in a middle school that serves students of color and those in poverty. For more than 20 years the researcher has held positions such as lead teacher, assistant principal, summer school principal, and teacher mentor, in three school districts serving disadvantaged students. The researcher's assumptions, feelings, and preconceptions about how school administrators responded to questions during

interviews were bracketed so that a distinction could be made between what administrators were experiencing and what the researcher's experiences were. Bracketing allows the experience of the phenomenon to be explained in terms of its own intrinsic system of meaning, not one imposed on it from without (Merriam, 2002).

<div style="text-align:center">Reliability and Validity</div>

Validity and reliability are two factors about which any qualitative researcher should be concerned while designing a study, analyzing its results, and judging its quality (Galafshani, 2003). Healy and Perry (2002) asserted that the quality of any study should be judged by its own paradigms. Reliability and validity in a quantitative study are different from the same factors in a qualitative study. In the latter, reliability and validity can be replaced with terms such as credibility, neutrality, or conformability. Guba (1985) suggested that reliability can be replaced by inquiry audits to enhance dependability in qualitative studies.

According to Polinghorne, validity in a case study indicates that an idea is well-grounded and supported. Researchers should consider if the general structural description provides an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected (as cited in Creswell, 1998). Creswell (2003) stated that validity is seen as an asset of qualitative research and is used to determine whether findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, and the readers of an account.

According to Merriam (2002), in qualitative research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved, uncover the complexity of human behavior in context, and present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. For this case study, the

researcher used an audit trail strategy for promoting reliability, a method suggested by

Guba and Lincoln (1981). Just as an auditor authenticates the accounts of a business,

independent readers can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the

researcher. An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were

collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the

inquiry. It is dependent on the researcher keeping a research journal or recording memos

throughout the study (Merriam, 2002).

Member checks were used to ensure internal validity of this research. Participants

were asked to comment on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Transcripts of the

telephone interviews were e-mailed to participants. Participants were asked to read the

transcripts and e-mail them back to the researcher with any comments indicating

disagreement with what was transcribed. All the participants confirmed the transcripts as

accurate. The researcher presented tentative interpretations to participants for consensus

as to whether their experiences were accurately transcribed. This took place throughout

the course of this study. External validity or generalizability was accomplished by using

rich, thick description. This involved providing sufficient description such that readers

can determine the extent to which their own situations match the research context and,

hence, whether findings can be transferred (Merriam, 2002).

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

This case study used interviews to investigate administrators' perceptions of the

impact NCLB has on students of color and high poverty. In qualitative studies, research

questions typically orient to cases or phenomena, seeking patterns of unanticipated as

well as expected relationships (Stake, 1995). The study was based on the following questions:

1. How do administrators perceive the use of testing as the main yardstick by which to measure student achievement?

2. In what ways were changes made to accommodate mandates while delivering education to students of color and high poverty?

3. What are the challenges of hiring highly qualified teachers as mandated by the NCLB?

4. How would you describe your impressions about the role of NCLB and how it has influenced the delivery of education at your school?

<div align="center">Research Setting and Population</div>

In 2001, nearly three quarters of New York City students were students of color (Kozol, 2005). According to the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), New York served almost 100,000 students of color for the 2005-2006 school year. For the entire state, over 1 million students were eligible for free lunch. The Children's Defense Fund reported that Bronx County, New York, had the highest percentage of poor children (20.2 %) in 2005-2006. For that school year, New York ranked third in the nation for number of poor children served (Children's Defense Fund, 2007).

The eight sites selected for this study were chosen because it was anticipated that administrators there would best contribute to exploring NCLB's impact on children of color and high poverty. The schools are within a 2-mile radius of each other and serve a similar population. All the schools are considered hard to staff. Middle schools in New York City are considered for increased funding based on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity

case. Schools are still awaiting disbursement of those funds. The United Federation of

Teachers has long maintained that middle schools lack the well-rounded educational

environment that supports academic success (United Federation of Teachers, 2007).

<center>Instrumentation</center>

Before data collection, 20 administrators were asked verbally if they would

participate in the research as a prescreening procedure. They were asked what was

happening in their schools since the implementation of NCLB mandates. Ten of the

administrators agreed to participate. The researcher interviewed five assistant principals

and five principals. According to New York City's research protocol, three copies of a

proposal approved by the researcher's Institutional Review Board and a proposal

summary must be submitted to the Proposal Review Committee of New York City Public

Schools for approval to conduct research. Upon receipt of approval from the IRB and

New York City Proposal Review Committee, a letter was sent to the superintendent,

principals, and assistant principals informing them of the intent to conduct research. A

consent form was also mailed and faxed to each administrator. Upon receipt of the signed

consent, a list of open-ended questions was mailed and faxed to participants.

The research was conducted through interviews. In a case study, collecting

information usually involves in-depth interviews (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994;

Polinghorne, 1989), and the number of participants recommended is usually from 3 to 10.

Interviews can be as long as 2 hours (Creswell, 1998). Interview questions for this study

addressed participants' experience in attempting to implement NCLB. The following

questions were used in interviews:

1. As an administrator, how do you perceive student performance when using testing as the main indicator for academic improvement?

2. In what ways were changes made to accommodate the mandates of NCLB while educating students at your school?

3. What success have you had in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

4. What organizational changes were made to accommodate NCLB in your school?

Several follow-up questions were used to prompt additional clarification and elaboration. These questions are part of the interview transcripts (Appendix D). An interview guide was not used, but four questions were e-mailed to participants prior to telephone interviews.

<div align="center">Ethical Protection of Participants</div>

Participants were informed that their participation is strictly voluntary and they are free to withdraw from participation at any time. Telephone numbers, e-mail, and addresses were provided for contacting the researcher should any participant wish to withdraw. All data collected from participants were kept strictly confidential. The identities of participants were protected. Names, addresses, phone numbers, schools, or any identifying information were not used in the data collection or reporting. The researcher used pseudonyms to identify each participant and a fictitious school number to identify the school at which the participant was an administrator.

Participants were informed of IRB approval to conduct this research. They were informed that there would be no risks or discomfort associated with the research. They

did not incur any loss of compensation to which they were entitled as a result of participating in this study.

Data Collection

Data collection began after approval from the IRB. Participants were contacted by telephone and e-mail. Ten school administrators from 8 schools in three districts participated in the interview process. The group was homogeneous because they were situated in similar settings. The researcher explained the study and why they were chosen to participate. Participants were informed that interviews would be recorded and that transcripts would be reviewed for member checks by the researcher. A list of questions was provided, and participants could respond to them in any order. Consent forms were faxed, signed, and returned to the researcher before interviews begin. A tape recorder was used for collecting responses, and the responses were coded by themes. Two interviews per participant were conducted. Telephone interviews were conducted. Participants took phone calls while they were at home or at school. Interviews lasted from 30 to 65 minutes. The initial interview gathered information, and the second was for member checks. Dates and times were arranged by phone calls, and follow-up calls were made to thank participants for their contributions to the study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed after all interviews had been completed. Data were organized and labeled with participant number, date, and time of interviews so that themes could be identified, a process Hatch (2002) called political analysis. Most qualitative research is political in the sense that political analysis has the same characteristics as critical analysis. Both give researchers tools for data analysis that fit within the assumptions that

characterize their perspective. Political analysis requires the qualitative researcher to conduct systematic, rigorous data collection that is solidly grounded. This is necessary to avoid bias. Political analysis must be based on recording real-world phenomena. The researcher should also be aware of positioning and ideologies related to the issue being studied.

Hatch (2002) enumerated seven steps for conducting political analysis of data sets:

1. Get a sense of the whole and review entries previously recorded in research literature and bracketed protocols.

2. Write a self-reflective statement explicating the researcher's ideological position and identifying ideological issues seen in the context under investigation.

3. Read the data, marking places where issues related to researcher's ideological concerns are evident.

4. Study marked places in the data; then write generalizations that represent potential relationships between ideological concerns and the data.

5. Reread the entire data set and code the data based on researcher's generalizations.

6. Decide if the generalizations are supported by the data and write a draft summary.

7. Negotiate meanings with participants, addressing issues of consciousness raising, emancipation, and resistance.

8. Write a revised summary and identify excerpts that support generalizations.

Qualitative research uses inductive analysis as researchers gather data to build concepts or support a theory. The inductive process of analyzing data occurs simultaneously with data collection. This simultaneous data collection and analysis allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way (Merriam, 2002). In inductive reasoning, researchers use specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about a phenomenon. They observe a sample and then draw conclusions about the population from which the sample comes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Inductive data analysis in this study was accomplished by organizing and interrogating data to reveal patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, and make interpretations (Hatch, 2002). The researcher proceeded from the specific to the general across participant's experiences. Since individuals' perceptions can vary even though they may be witnessing the same phenomena, the researcher analyzed the data manually so that member checks reflected what was actually related in interviews

Summary

In chapter 3, the qualitative methodology of a study on administrators' perceptions of implementing NCLB in schools serving predominantly low-income students and students of color was discussed. The role of the researcher, interview questions, procedures for gaining access to participants and for data analysis, and ethical considerations for participants were summarized. In chapter 4, a summary of the results will be presented.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to discover the lived experiences and perceptions of public school administrators in New York City serving students of color and high poverty under the NCLB Act. Administrators were interviewed about how student performance, testing, curriculum, and teacher recruitment have changed under NCLB. The goal of this study was to illuminate the challenges faced by administrators in schools serving a high percentage of low-income students and students of color. Hatch's procedures (2002) for conducting a political analysis of the data were used to analyze the data for themes and common experiences. This chapter describes the population, sample, and data collection and analysis procedures. Results are organized by research question.

Population

This study employed a purposefully selected group of participants that would best help the researcher understand the problem and answer the research question (Creswell, 2003). The population was administrators in elementary and middle schools from three school districts in New York City whose students are predominantly low income and students of color. Hatch (2002) described homogeneous sampling as purposeful sampling because it selects participants who share common characteristics. Merriam (2002) added that homogeneous sampling provides focus and reduced variation while also encouraging descriptions from participants' unique perspectives.

Sampling Procedure

Participants were chosen based on the location of their schools and the researcher's prior knowledge of the racial and socioeconomic status of the students and

communities those schools serve. Selection of participants was complicated by the fact that it occurred when the major state English language arts exam was being administered. Two potential participants declined the invitation to participate, citing the upcoming exams as the reason. Eventually, 10 administrators agreed to participate in the study.

Participants

Participants were 10 administrators from eight different New York City public schools serving grades K-5, K-8 and 6-8. All the schools represented had student bodies that were over 90% low income and students of color. Participants had at least 9 years of experience in New York City public schools. There were five males and five females. Five were principals, and five were assistant principals. Table 1 summarizes the participants' schools, positions, and experience.

Table 1

Participants by Position, Experience, School Type

Admin.	Position	School	Years Exp.	Type
#24	Princ.	#8	25	K-5
#25	Princ.	#1	23	K-8
#26	Asst. Princ.	#2	20	K-8
#28	Asst. Princ.	#3	20	6-8
#29	Princ.	#4	25	6-8
#30	Princ.	#5	25	K-8
#31	Asst. Princ.	#5	25	K-8
#32	Asst. Princ	#7	9	K-8
#37	Princ.	#7	20	K-8
#40	Asst. Princ.	#10	25	6-8

Data Collection

Before data could be collected, the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) Office of Data and Assessment reviewed the research proposal, voluntary

participation letter, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval documentation, and research summary. After approval was granted to conduct the research, a NYCDOE consent form was mailed to participants. Signed forms had to be mailed back to the NYCDOE Department of Data and Assessment before interviews could be conducted.

The researcher sent informational packets to 15 potential participants consisting of the following:

1. An invitation letter from the researcher that included Walden University information and IRB protocols.

2. An invitation letter from NYCDOE.

3. The four interview questions.

4. A NYCDOE consent form.

5. A Walden University consent form.

6. A proposal summary.

One week after sending the packets, the researcher made telephone calls to the 15 prospective participants. Eleven initially agreed to participate. Ten followed through by scheduling an interview. Interviews were conducted between January 26 and February 18, 2009.

Participant responses to interview questions were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were verified by member checks and were supplemented with the researcher's notes. Complete transcripts are included in Appendix D.

The researcher began each interview by thanking participants, reminding them that their participation would be completely confidential and voluntary, and informing

them that their conversations would be recorded. They were also informed that a member check would be conducted to verify the accuracy of transcriptions.

No names of individual participants or schools were used in compiling the data. The researcher assigned numbers to each participant as well as to the school where the participant worked. Participants were advised not to use any identifying information during the interview.

Interview Questions

1. As an administrator, how do you perceive student performance when using testing as the main indicator for academic improvement?

2. In what ways were changes made to accommodate the mandates of NCLB while educating students at your school?

3. What success have you had in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

4. What organizational changes were made to accommodate NCLB in your school?

Several follow-up questions were used to prompt additional clarification and elaboration. These questions are part of the interview transcripts (see Appendix D).

Bracketing

The researcher used bracketing during the interviews when asking questions 3 and 4. Bracketing was necessary because of the researcher's personal experience working in a New York City public school. Participants' experiences were similar to those of the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed after all interviews had been completed. Data were organized so that themes could be identified, a process Hatch (2002) called political analysis. Most qualitative research is political in the sense that political analysis has the same characteristics as critical analysis. Both approaches give researchers tools for data analysis that fit within the assumptions that characterize their perspective. Political analysis requires the qualitative researcher to conduct systematic, rigorous data collection that is solidly grounded. This effort is necessary to avoid bias. Political analysis must be based on recording real-world phenomena. The researcher should also be aware of positioning and ideologies related to the issue being studied.

Inductive data analysis in this study was accomplished by organizing and interrogating data to reveal patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, and make interpretations (Hatch 2002). The researcher proceeded from the specific to the general across participants' experiences. Since individuals' perceptions can vary even though they may be witnessing the same phenomena, the researcher analyzed the data manually so that member checks reflected what was actually related in interviews.

Findings

This study sought the perspectives of urban K-8 administrators on how NCLB has affected the achievement of students of color and high poverty. The first question asked how students have performed since NCLB was implemented. The second question asked how the testing component of NCLB has affected students. The third question asked how one of NCLB's mandates, attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, was being

fulfilled. The fourth question asked what organizational changes had been made in response to NCLB.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, "How do administrators perceive the use of testing as the main yardstick by which to measure student achievement?" Seven of the 10 administrators reported an increase in test scores. One said students were scoring higher but that these results were questionable because some students are good guessers. Another said there was so much testing that students had no alternative but to score well. Responses are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Responses to Perceptions of Testing

Improved Performance	Mixed Performance	No Improvement
#24	#30	#37
#25		#40
#26		
#28		
#29		
#31		
#32		

Administrator #40 reported no improvement and that the school was being closed because of continually low test scores. Administrator #37 attributed that school's lack of improvement to the nature of the student population, with large numbers of English language learners (ELL) and students with special needs, as well as a highly transient population. Administrator #30 said that some years scores went up and other years they

went down. The lack of overall progress was attributed to inadequate funding, a transient population, and lack of parental support.

Seven out of ten administrators perceived the mandate of testing as the main measure of student academic improvement. As the Center for Educational Policy (2008) noted, it is difficult to tease out a cause-and-effect relationship between test score trends and any specific educational policy or program. With all the reforms implemented since 2002, it is difficult to sort out which policy or combination of policies is responsible for test score gains, and to what degree. This is particularly true in New York City. Two years ago, the state government relinquished control of city schools to the mayor. With a new school chancellor appointed by the mayor, new city mandates were implemented to improve accountability. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity won in court, and a judge ordered the state to provide billions of dollars to for years of shortchanging city students in the city. Because NCLB overlapped these mandates, it is difficult to tell which policy is directly responsible for any increased test scores.

Neal and Schanzenback (2007) concluded that empirical evidence supports the common perception that schools are focusing on students in the middle in order to boost scores on state exams used to determine whether schools are meeting proficiency targets. Administrator #40 affirmed that perception, stating that most test preparation was geared to students who scored at levels 2, 3 and 4, with little attention given to students who scored at level 1 or 2.

Administrator #37 said that special needs and ELL students contributed to the low scores in his school. Abedi (2003) argued that an inconsistent limited English proficiency (LEP) classification, as well as small LEP populations in many states, threatens the

validity of adequate yearly progress (AYP) reporting, a key feature of NCLB. Rules for LEP eligibility have changed since NCLB was implemented. How long a student has been in the country and attended school has been contentious issues. Abedi concluded that AYP reporting for LEP students is important because although this population has received considerable attention for many years, educational inequity issues have yet to be resolved. This is especially pertinent as this population continues to increase, with particularly high concentrations in a few states.

Research Question 2

Research question asked "In what ways were changes made to accommodate the mandates of NCLB while educating students at your school?" Students in the New York City schools represented in this study are 95-100% African American and Latino. All are considered high poverty (i.e., eligible for free lunch). As such, these students attend schools that qualify for Title I funds under NCLB. The administrators who serve these students had divergent attitudes regarding how NCLB-mandated testing has affected student attitudes. Half said their students were focused, serious, and cooperative about taking tests, whereas half said that testing makes students feel overwhelmed and frustrated. These responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Student Attitudes

Focused, Serious	Cooperative	Overwhelmed, Frustrated
#24	#26	#28
#25		#30
#29		#31
#37		#32
		#40

In administrator #24's school, 38% of students are either from Bangladesh or a Spanish-speaking country. These students do not feel overtested because they are excited about learning. The use of technology, incentives, and extracurricular activities contributes to that attitude. Also, students know that when they get to grade 3 they begin to take a city-wide test. Teachers work hard to prepare them for this. Behavior problems are minimal, and the school has a low suspension rate. Another factor is that teachers are excited about the programs that have been put in place.

Administrator #25 said the testing regimen has made students more goal-oriented. Students are more focused on standards than they were prior to NCLB. The testing program has focused children's behavior because they know that assessment does not happen only at the end of the year but that there are monthly interim assessments. This participant acknowledged that monthly testing puts some pressure on teachers and students. However, a student becoming overwhelmed was attributed to teacher inexperience and insufficient skill building.

In response to a follow-up question (how many practice tests were used from the beginning of the school year to prepare students for state exams?), Administrator #25 said

that one test in each of the four subject areas was administered each month prior to January. The focus was on language arts, math, science, and social studies. The practice tests were administered for one period, once per month, during the second week of the month.

Administrator #29 stated that the exposure to rigorous standardized testing was positive because it lets students see what the playing field is actually like. It exposes students to competition with students of higher socioeconomic backgrounds who are outperforming them. His perception was that this will contribute to closing the academic gap.

Administrator #26 stated that students were cooperative when they were given practice exams. The other five administrators reported that students were frustrated and exhibited aggressive behavior. These behaviors included being overwhelmed with the numerous practice exams; as a result, they selected responses at random instead of carefully evaluating or making critical choices.

Administrator #28 said was there is too much testing in New York City's public schools. This administrator wanted to know if there are other ways to assess student knowledge and suggested that portfolios be used as part of assessment practices. This administrator said that students were aware that success meant moving on to the next grade and failure had a negative stigma.

Administrator #30 said that students' performance on assessments varied from year to year. The students who put forth the effort to be successful did well. However, too many students were not serious about the tests, were not focused on academics, and did not seem to care about doing well on exams. This administrator said that many students

did no homework and had difficulty sitting in the classroom for long periods. Students

made excuses to leave the classroom and frequently complained of headaches. Some

insisted on leaving to call parents.

One of the most poignant responses was by an administrator who cited the

number of students who live in homeless shelters. Several types of transient students

were delineated, and an attempt was made to correlate a student's home life and behavior

at school. Students having to travel long distances and arriving at school late was a

contributing factor to performance on exams.

Administrator #40 perceived no impact of testing on students. Many efforts were

made to provide remedial academic assistance for students by offering before- and after-

school programs in reading and math. Most students did not attend either of these

programs. Letters were sent to the homes of every student informing parents of their

rights under NCLB to receive supplemental education services (SES) at no cost.

Agencies were contracted to provide in-home tutoring for students. Most parents declined

to take advantage of SES.

Administrator #37 said there were 47 special needs students and 23 ELL students

in the school. This administrator asked "Are we testing the ELL and special needs

students for what they know or how fast they can tell us what they know?" The question

was prompted because many students in these two categories performed at low levels yet

were given the same tests as higher performing students. Low-performing students

become frustrated at testing time because they are not academically prepared to perform

well on the exams they are given, and they have difficulty with the language.

Monolingual students perform differently from ELL students. Some ELL students do not

know how to read, and even giving them additional time for tests does not necessarily result in adequate performance. In response to a follow-up question (What are some behaviors from students you see as an administrator?), participants mentioned an overall lack of discipline in the school, students being disrespectful to each other and to adults, and a general lack of motivation to do well in school.

In responding to question 2, participants said that students were focused when intrinsically motivated. These students did well on tests, were cooperative, and behaved well. Most of the administrators who said students were not negatively affected by the testing regimen were in schools that showed gains in student test scores. Participants said they used incentives to reinforce desirable behaviors. Students who did not react positively to tests need more academic and parental support.

Kozol (2005) lamented the narrowness of government-mandated criteria for measuring student progress:

> In government-supported institutes where goals are set and benchmarks for performance of our students are spelled out in what is usually painstaking detail, I never come on words such as "delight" or "joy" or "curiosity" or, for that matter, "kindness," "empathy," "compassion for another child." There is no "happiness index" for the children in our public schools, and certainly not for children in inner-city schools where happiness is probably the last thing on the minds of overburdened state officials. (p. 100)

Payne (2005) argued that students should be involved in setting goals and that providing them emotional resources, such as teaching goal-setting, will lead to improved academic achievement. Administrator #25 concurred with that sentiment, noting that students became accountable because they were aware of monthly goals. However, Payne noted that merely setting goals will not result in life-long academic achievement unless

other things are taught in combination with goal-setting. She said that students need to build relationships with teachers and school administrators because they are much more important as role models than has previously been addressed. The development of emotional resources is crucial to student success. The greatest free resource available to schools is the role-modeling provided by teachers, administrators, and staff (Payne, 2005).

Under the terms of NCLB, schools are held accountable for closing the achievement gap and attaining 100% student proficiency by 2014. Popham (2006) argued that although state standardized tests vary, the vast majority is instructionally insensitive, that is, they are unable to detect even striking instructional improvements when such improvements occur. The shortcoming exists because most tests are so strongly linked to students' socioeconomic status that they tend to measure what students bring to school rather than what they were taught there. Payne (2005) added that the assessments and tests used in many areas of education are not about ability or intelligence. Instead, they are about an acquired knowledge base; if one's parents are educated, chances are one will have a higher acquired knowledge base.

Participants said that NCLB testing requirements make them feel as though they are jumping through hoops to maintain AYP. This testing has caused teachers to teach to the test and ignore some areas of the curriculum such as art, music, and physical education. Participants also said they had to extend the school day to accommodate testing preparation sessions.

Wood (2004) criticized the assumption, implicit in NCLB, that higher test scores necessarily reflect improved schools. The goal has become simply high test scores, with

no evidence that these scores translate into postschool success. Furthermore, under

NCLB, school quality is indicated by the percentage of students that tests reveal as

proficient in various subject areas at a given time. The testing system is not well designed

to measure school improvement over time. Raudenbush (2004) charged that equating

testing proficiency with school quality cannot withstand serious scientific scrutiny.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked "What success has there been in attracting and

retaining highly qualified teachers?" NCLB mandates that requires schools hire highly

qualified teachers because of the notion that teacher qualification is directly correlated to

student achievement. Participants were consistent in praising their teachers as dedicated

and qualified. However, they acknowledged that staff turnover is a problem, and few

reported having a majority of teachers with at least 10 years of experience (Table 4).

Table 4

Teacher Experience and Retention

Teaching Fellows	High Turnover	Staff with at Least 10 yrs. Experience
#25	#28	#24
#26	#30	#37
#29	#31	
#32	#40	

The U.S. Department of Education (2005) issued a fact sheet outlining criteria for

determining teacher qualifications. New York City uses the High, Objective, Uniform

State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), which allows teachers who have taught in the

same subject area for 3 years to become certified and categorized as high qualified.

NCLB requires states to (a) measure the extent to which all students have highly qualified teachers, (b) adopt goals and plans to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified, and (c) publicly report plans and progress in meeting teacher quality goals. To that end, NYCDOE has installed Alternative Certification Route programs, which provide an accelerated way into the classroom for people who want to change careers and recent college graduates who have subject matter expertise but no formal education coursework or training.

The New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF) program accepts candidates with any bachelor's degree, and no previous education coursework is required. Teach for America (TFA) is a national corps of recent college graduates and professionals with varying academic majors and career interests who commit to teaching in urban and rural public schools for 2 years. The Peace Corps Fellows program based at Teachers' College Columbia University, recruits small cohorts of returned Peace Corps volunteer educators who are ready to become teachers. This program provides tuition awards and partial scholarships. Finally, Teaching Opportunity Program (TOP) is supported by City University of New York (CUNY). This program recruits potential teachers in high-need subject areas such as math, science, literacy, and foreign languages (New York City Department of Education, 2007).

NCTF is popular because candidates receive a subsidized master's degree in exchange for a commitment to teach for 2 years in a New York City public school. All the participants in this study had NYCTF candidates in their schools. Four administrators said the candidates were good, with the potential for being great teachers. One reported that a NYCTF employee became a principal after attending the leadership academy. This

administrator's school houses a training center for the NYCTF program, and he was able

to choose candidates that he thought were suitable for his school. Four participants said

there was high turnover with NYCTF teachers. Reasons for the high turnover included

insufficient staff development to accommodate the ethnic and socioeconomic status

students, poor attitudes on the part of students, and teacher burn-out.

Administrator #30 said that many teachers from NYCTR and TFA programs

come to school in New York City for the training and then leave. Administrator #31 said

it was difficult to attract highly qualified teachers because of the school's location.

Administrator #40 said that NYCTF and TFA teachers do not stay because of difficulty

coping with student behavior. This administrator added that regardless of how highly

qualified a teacher is, if he or she does not accept the circumstances of the community

and remained committed to the job, qualifications will be of no consequence.

Payne (2001) argued that working in schools with a high percentage of students of

color and low socioeconomic status requires specialized skills. She charged that most

schools and businesses operate with middle-class norms and use the hidden rules of the

middle class. Teachers from NYCTF and TFA are not trained to understand the effects of

generational poverty and how to work with those students to develop appropriate

cognitive strategies. Copenhaver-Johnson (2007) summarized the deficiencies of attempts

to cope with NCLB requirements:

> In response to the NCLB requirement of "highly qualified teachers," the
> American Board of Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCE) was
> funded by a federal grant of $35 million. Candidates are not required to
> demonstrate the understandings or dispositions widely recognized, in
> qualitative research, as features of exemplary teachers in diverse settings.
> The ABCTE fails to include a genuine standard for diversity, relies on a
> high-stakes test for credentialing, posts ethnocentric annotations of text

preparation materials claiming "proven" methods for teaching, and provides no development or assessment of teacher dispositions to support cultural responsiveness. (p. 45)

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked "What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandates?" Participants described adding time to the school day, increasing test preparation, using test data to drive instruction, and using academic intervention services (AIS). These responses are summarized in Table 5. Many classroom changes were funded by New York's Campaign for Fiscal Equity, which requires schools to address the social issues that affect learning. As New York Judge Leland Degrasse noted, it is almost impossible for healthy kids not to learn how to read or do basic math (Gelimas, 2005).

Table 5

School Responses to NCLB Mandates

AIS	Smaller Classes	After-School Programs	Test Prep.
#24	#24	#24	#25
#25	#30	#26	#26
#26	#31	#28	#28
#28		#29	#30
#29		#32	#31
#30		#37	#32
#31		#40	#37
#32			#40
#37			
#40			

Judge Degrasse ruled that New York's system of school finance had deprived children in New York City, the vast majority of them black and Hispanic, of the basic

education guaranteed by the state constitution. Degrasse said funding was inequitable but that money alone was not the issue (Schrag, 2001). Schrag (2004) charged that many poor children go to school in the ghettos and barrios of property-wealthy districts, where schools are run down, the roofs leak, books are out of date and sometimes not available at all, and teachers are disproportionately underqualified.

The president of New York State United Teachers, Dick Iannuzzi, acknowledged that NCLB has been disappointing but reinforced the legislation's emphasis on raising student achievement. He also argued that federal guidelines need more clarity that federal money should be used to lower class size and that states should be allowed to set realistic goals that fit their unique circumstances. He further suggested that schools should be given more than one year to demonstrate AYP, "establishing a process that judges school effectiveness by measuring student progress over time" (Iannuzzi, 2006, p. 24).

Because two programs, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and No Child Left Behind, overlapped in New York City public schools, it is difficult to attribute changes or results to either one of them. Administrators in the present study did not differentiate whether changes were made in response to NCLB or CFE. Nonetheless, changes were made, mainly in AIS, reduced class size, and teacher recruitment. NCLB requires that student performance be improved by demonstrating AYP. Participants reported that one of the main ways they addressed this mandate was by instituting AIS, which ranged from hiring outside agencies to creating supplemental classroom instruction to taking students out of the classroom for small-group instruction.

New York City has paid private tutoring firms millions of dollars to provide AIS. For example, Champion Learning Center was paid $21 million over 2 years to improve

reading and math scores. However, the company hired college students, gave them very little training, and paid them $15 per hour instead of the reported $79 per hour. Other programs began with earnest test-preparation sessions and dwindled as students became inundated by the volume of test practice (Gonzales, 2009).

In the present study, Administrator #24 was the only participant who made changes to affect ELL and ESL students, which was due to the racial composition at his school: 38% Asian and 21% Latino. This administrator also reported that CFE funds were allocated to reduce class size and purchase smart boards and computers. Administrator #25 said that the major change made to accommodate NCLB was to implement the Reading First Program, in which students are tested weekly and monthly. All instruction is based on test data.

Administrator # 26 reported that most of their changes were made to accommodate students in after-school programs. Many students there come from single-parent homes and no one is home after school. The after-school programs provide hot meals to address students' nutritional needs as well as help prepare them for major exams. This program significantly improved student attendance and attitudes toward staying in school.

Administrator #28 said Kaplan tutors were used for AIS to work in classrooms with teachers. The school day was extended by adding a period in the morning so students could receive small group instruction. However, this administrator said that that student behavior was still a major issue that was not being addressed by NCLB.

Administrator #29 said that AIS was implemented via a push-in program. Teachers with a free period are assigned to another class so there are two teachers in the

room. The push-in teacher focuses on those students who attained level 1 on the previous year's exam.

At Administrator #30's school, AIS positions were used to provide small group instruction and hire teaching coaches to provide on-going professional development and support for classroom teachers. Class size was also reduced. Other changes included instituting Saturday programs and computer-assisted reading.

Administrator #32 emphasized that academic improvement is a group effort; therefore, emphasis was placed on improving parental involvement. Efforts were made to teach parenting skills, get parents involved in school activities, and improve student behavior and attendance. However, there was little success in accomplishing these goals.

For Administrator #37, the biggest change was an extended day program for low-performing students. However, teachers were encouraged to keep an entire class for the extended day. Before- and after-school programs lengthened the school day to 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The AIS described by this administrator provided intensive tracking of low-performing students by analyzing data to drive individualized instruction.

Administrator #40 explained the differences between SES and AIS services. The former are provided by tutoring companies that have contracts with the NYSDOE and in turn the NYCDOE. Kaplan, Princeton, and Champion are only three of the dozens of private companies with state approval to provide tutoring services under NCLB.

AIS, on the other hand, is used primarily for reading and math programs. It uses small-group instruction conducted by a regular teacher who either takes students out of class or stays in the class as a push-in for small group instruction in literacy or mathematics. Target students for small-group instruction were chosen according to the

previous year's scores. Although administrators said that level 1 and 2 students should have been targeted, the groups were mostly made up of students in levels 3 and 4 because those levels are counted twice in determining AYP. Under NCLB, moving a student from a low 1 to a high 1 or from low 2 to a high 2 does not count toward AYP. However, moving a student form a high 2 to 3 or from 3 to 4 means receiving double points toward AYP. Administrator #40 concluded that NCLB only cares about test scores and that the legislation has turned schools into sites for test preparation. And even that preparation is not given to the lowest-performing students but only to those who can improve a school's AYP profile.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In this chapter, the results of a qualitative study that solicited perceptions of public school administrators in New York City serving students of color and high poverty under the NCLB Act were summarized. The population was administrators in elementary and middle schools from three school districts in New York City whose students are predominantly low income and students of color. Ten administrators (5 males and 5 females) from eight different New York City public schools serving grades K-5, K-8 and 6-8 were interviewed.

Participants described a variety of responses to the NCLB legislation, including attempts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, adding time to the school day, increasing test preparation, using test data to drive instruction, and using academic intervention services. The general perception was that NCLB has prompted a lack of curricular innovation and has promoted too much "teaching to the test." Outside academic intervention services were described as expensive and inconsistent. Participants

said that the biggest challenge is dealing with unmotivated and disrespectful students. In chapter 5 the results of the study will be discussed and recommendations for further research will be provided.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATONS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to examine what school administrators were experiencing while delivering education mandates of the NCLB to students of color and those in poverty. Ten New York City public school administrators participated in telephone interviews, which lasted 30-65 minutes. Responses were audio recorded and transcribed. Interviews were based on four questions:

1. How have students at your school performed on assessments since the implementation of NCLB mandates?

2. What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty?

3. What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

4. What organizational changes were made in your school to accommodate NCLB mandates?

Discussion

Most participants in this study said that if their students performed better on NCLB-mandated assessments, it was because more time was spent practicing the tests. Test preparation was a significant part of the curriculum and school day. Participants said that teachers hired from NYCTF and TFA programs were not prepared to handle the type of students served by their schools. They also questioned how well a test score represents a student's academic achievement. Popham (2004) was sharply critical of a reliance on testing:

Educational testing is far less precise than most parents (and numerous educators) think it is and the fact a test yields a numerical score does not signify that the score provides a truly precise picture of a student's achievements. NCLB tests chosen by many states are altogether instructionally insensitive, built using test construction models that are completely inappropriate for evaluating a school's quality. (p. 34)

Kohn (2004) argued that the same get-tough sensibility that has loosed an avalanche of testing has led to a self-congratulatory war on social promotion that consists of forcing students to repeat a grade. Keeping students in junior high school well into their teen years is damaging psychologically and socially. Furthermore, there is evidence that forcing students to repeat a grade increases the chance that a student will drop out of school.

Haycock (2006) supports the accountability system of the NCLB because it ensures that all students will be given an equal opportunity education. The literature indicates, however, that there are instances where administrators are using the system superficially. Test scores should not be the only yardstick by which to measure student achievement. Instead, educators should establish standards and accountability that assess students' abilities to think critically, use interpersonal skills, and, most importantly, understand and appreciate the value of education. The alternatives facing administrators (to meet AYP or suffer consequences) leave unaddressed the needs of students who have historically been left behind.

NCLB has created extra costs for schools. Participants in this study said they had lengthened the school day to accommodate test preparation sessions and had devoted significant resources toward academic intervention services. Orlich (2004) reported that a study by the U.S. General Accounting Office estimated that the testing requirements

outlined by NCLB would cost states $1.9 billion between 2002 and 2008. This figure represents only machine-scored exams; the cost almost triples for using a combination of multiple-choice and hand-scored exams. Funds spent on increased testing could be used to repair school buildings, provide more technology in classrooms, and reduce class size.

Administering tests in public schools is not a straightforward matter. Creating tests that do not reflect racial or ethnic bias is difficult. Testing students with special needs and students who speak languages other than English is another complication. The accommodations such students need may require resources that some schools lack. An American Institutes for Research (2008) survey of all 50 states reported that only one third of state education officials said their departments have adequate capacity to help improve low-performing schools as required by NCLB. Even for students who do not require special accommodations, testing conditions may vary considerable from school to school. A school with inadequate heating and cooling systems provides a testing environment very different from a properly equipped school.

NCLB requires that ELL students be tested the same way as monolingual students. All students who have lived in the United States and attended public school for at least 2 years must be tested. If the student lives in a home where only a native language other than English is spoken, then that student has to negotiate between two languages on a daily basis. Students who have to be tested in a language other than their native language are at a disadvantage. It is possible for a school to fail to make AYP based on the performance of a single subgroup. LEP students are unique among all of the NCLB-required subgroups because they also include race and ethnicity, poverty, and disability.

The 2008 school report cards have demonstrated few changes. Hoff (2008) noted that almost 30,000 schools in the United States failed to make adequate yearly progress under NCLB in the 2007-08 school year.

Question 3 asked participants whether they were able to hire and retain highly qualified teachers. Scherer (2007) reported that in New York City, 10-14% of teachers are not certified. The concentration of uncertified and inexperienced teachers is disproportionately high in poorer districts. The city sought to correct this imbalance by instituting the HOUSSE programs, but they have proven inadequate. Education departments are rushing to fill schools with candidates who have no previous teacher education courses or student-teaching experience and are only required to give back 2 years of service. Some schools serving students of color and high poverty are revolving doors for candidates who want to gain experience and a master's degree but leave without forming lasting or meaningful relationships with students. As participants in this study noted, teachers need the appropriate training and staff development for managing behavior and cultural differences of students of color and high poverty. Professional development to increase cultural understanding and improve pedagogy for working with children of color and high poverty is a critical element in narrowing the achievement gap.

Participants in this study lamented the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. Parental involvement was seen as a major challenge for administrators, even with the assistance of a parent coordinator. Participants also cited behavior problems among students as a major factor in failing to make AYP, even though that variable is not addressed by NCLB. This situation has escalated because budget cuts have reduced the number of guidance counselors in public schools. Most guidance

counselors have to serve more than one school and have overwhelming case loads. Students with special needs and students in regular education classrooms who need guidance counselors are not receiving these services. Students of color and high poverty in particular experience emotional challenges due to single-parent households, addictions, homelessness, and health-care needs.

Most participants in this study said their schools lengthened the school day to spend more time on test preparation. Meanwhile, many curricular areas, especially the arts, were curtailed. It is unfortunate that the extra time students are in school is not spent in such activities as book clubs, sports teams, technology activities, and mentoring programs. Payne (2005) maintained that students of color and high poverty need to build relationships in order to build skills and knowledge. Relationships help students develop cognitive strategies for learning. Another strategy needed for this group of students is mediation, which can help students use deferred gratification and resist the fight-or-flight impulse (p. 91).

<div align="center">Implications for Social Change</div>

Rothstein (2008) argued that there is a lack of moral, political, and intellectual integrity in suppressing awareness of how social and economic disadvantage lowers achievement. Although some political leaders maintain that social ills are not the reason for failing public schools, the administrators in this study were consistent in citing the disadvantaged circumstances of their students as a factor in academic achievement. They reaffirmed what others have said: Giving students more tests does not necessarily reveal what they know, testing drains resources from important pedagogical and curricular

efforts, and an emphasis on testing diverts attention from the lingering effects of race and poverty on educational achievement.

NCLB was well-intentioned and has much to recommend it. However, NCLB has perpetuated the misconception that improved test scores tell the whole story about how children are educated. Furthermore, NCLB, by holding all schools and students to the same standard, ignores consequential differences in the social and economic conditions that affect academic performance. The results of this study can contribute to revising NCLB by recognizing the socioeconomic disparities that confront the nation's educators.

Beck and Murphy (1994) argued that educational leadership

requires a consideration of the fundamental purposes of education, of the nature of schools as institutions, and of the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders. Those advocating this perspective . . . see ethics as informing administrators' understandings of themselves as moral agents and of their schools as moral agencies. (p. 10).

The results of this study can inform that consideration and thus help improve educational leadership at this crucial time in history.

Conclusions

One way that a nation's status is measured is by the wealth of its citizens. If NCLB and its supporters are truly concerned with affording the disadvantaged and disenfranchised children of America an opportunity to close the achievement gap, then high test scores should be the last thing required of them. If a genuine concern for an egalitarian education truly exists as an outcome of NCLB, then children of color and those in poverty should be given the same resources from the beginning of their school life. NCLB and its predecessors have been in place for almost 40 years without really looking at what public education offers poor students. Now that the federal government

has decided that American public education is failing, insult is added to injury by not giving all schools the same resources. Those same children who have not had what they needed are the first ones who have suffered at the hands of the NCLB testing frenzy.

How can children of color and those in poverty, children who speak other languages, and children with disabilities be expected to perform at the same level as children who have been afforded the best that public education has to offer? NCLB is taking a one-size-fits-all approach when it requires all children to perform at the same level. In point of fact, students are not all alike and not all students are given the same opportunities to learn. The goals of NCLB are laudable. No parent or educator or responsible citizen wants any child to be left behind. But making everyone march to the same drum is not the way to achieve educational opportunity.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made:

1. Revise NCLB to include less emphasis on standardized testing and more attention to alternative means of assessing student progress.

2. Improve teacher education programs by providing more information on immigration, poverty, drug addiction, homelessness, and teenage pregnancy to prepare teaching candidates for working in schools that serve students of color and high poverty.

Recommendations for Further Study

This qualitative study was based on interviews with 10 New York City principals and assistant principals. Further research might take a similar approach with administrators in other inner-city schools. It would also be interesting to compare the impressions of inner-city administrators with their suburban counterparts. A study based

on interviews will necessarily use a small sample. A quantitative study that used a questionnaire would enable a researcher to survey a larger group.

Researcher's Experience

During interviews, the researcher found her own thoughts and experiences coinciding with those of her interviewees. The researcher's background as an educator and her experience with NCLB created the potential for overlap with participants' experience. A notable example of this was when Administrator #31 described the challenges of delivering a curriculum focused on testing instead of preparing students for the real world by teaching spelling, penmanship, and math facts.

Summary

In this chapter the results of a qualitative study designed to assess the impressions of 10 administrators in New York City public schools with a high percentage of low-income students and students of color were discussed. Through personal phone interviews, participants reflected on their experience attempting to implement the provisions of the NCLB Act. Although some of these administrators acknowledged an improvement in test scores, they were critical of NCLB's reliance on standardized testing as the sole means of measure student progress. In this chapter, several recommendations for revised policies in teacher training and school administration were made, as well as suggestions for further research.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

From: IRB@waldenu.edu
Date: 09/09/2008 02:43 PM
To: ppayn001@waldenu.edu
Subject: Notification of Approval to Conduct Research-Paula Payne

Dear Ms. Payne, This email is to serve as your notification that Walden University has

approved BOTH your dissertation proposal and your application to the Institutional

Review Board. As such, you are approved by Walden University to conduct research.

Please contact the correct Research Office at research@waldenu.edu if you have any

questions.

Congratulations!

Jenny Sherer Operations Manager, Walden University Center for Research Support

Leilani Endicott IRB Chair, Walden University

NYC

Department of Education

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger
Executive Director
Research and Policy
Support Group

November 18, 2008

Ms. Paula Payne
792 Sterling Place
#2E
Brooklyn, NY 11216

52 Chambers Street
Room 309
New York, NY 10007
1 (212) 374-7659 tel
1 (212) 374-5908 fax

Dear Ms. Payne:

I am happy to inform you that your research study, "School Administrators' Perceptions of the Contributions of NCLB to the Achievement Gap," has been approved by the Proposal Review Committee, the IRB of the New York City Department of Education. However, in order to begin the research you must meet the following conditions:

1. Approval by this office does not guarantee access to any particular school or individual. It is your responsibility to make appropriate contacts and get the required permissions and consent before initiating the study. Participation in your research must be strictly voluntary.

   When requesting permission to conduct research, submit the Approval to Conduct Research form, a copy of the Proposal Summary form, and this letter to the principal and/or superintendent.

Please be aware that this approval is in effect for one year. Any continuation of your study after a year requires re-approval from the Proposal Review Committee.

The following written consents are required:

   A. Each principal and superintendent agreeing to participate must sign the enclosed Approval to Conduct Research form. A completed and signed form for every school included in your research must be returned to this office prior to beginning your research. Please use the enclosed return stamped envelope.

   B. In addition to the above written consent, all participants (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) must be informed that they are not required to participate in the study, and that there are no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal.

   C. Before involving any child in your study or collecting student data, written parental consent is required.

NYC

Department of Education

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

Ms. Paula Payne   -   2 -   November 18, 2008

Your report of the study should not include the identification of the superintendency, district, any school, student, or staff member. A coding system should be used if necessary.

2. Please be aware that all researchers visiting schools will need to have their fingerprints on file at the Department of Education prior to the start of field work. This rule includes all research in schools conducted with students and/or staff. The cost is $115.00. See attached fingerprinting materials.

Please remember when requesting permission to conduct research to submit an Approval to Conduct Research form for each participating school/region, a copy of the Proposal Summary form, and this letter to the superintendent and/or principal. *The Approval to Conduct Research forms must be returned to the Research and Policy Support Group in order for you to begin your research.*

Please send us a copy of your final report as we are most interested in the results of your research.

Moreover, we require a study abstract which includes all study findings for our records. Please send an electronic copy of the documentation of your research to DAAResearch@schools.nyc.gov or send a printed copy to: Proposal Review Committee, NYC Department of Education, 52 Chambers Street, Room 309, New York, NY 10007.

If you have any questions about implementing your research, please contact: Dr. Thomas Gold at (212) 374-3913, or by e-mail TGold@schools.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

Thomas Gold, Ph.D.
Director of External Research

c: Dr. John Humins
    Barbara Dworkowitz

APPENDIX B: SOLICITATION LETTER

Walden University
Office of Research Integrity and Compliance
155 5th Avenue South, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55401

December 8, 2008

Administrator's Address

Dear Administrator:

Public school reform in the package of No Child Left Behind has caused many changes in public education. These changes include testing every year, hiring highly qualified teachers, and establishing safe schools. As an administrator you have had to implement mandates that were required by the law. The implementation of these mandates involved adjustments to the delivery of education.

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines middle school administrators' perceptions of the contributions of No Child Left Behind to the achievement gap. It is anticipated that this research will provide insight into what factors impeded or facilitated the academic success of students in economically challenged communities.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are an administrator serving students of color and high poverty in schools that receive Title I funds. Walden University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. Approval will be obtained from the Walden University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects irb@waldenu.edu

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and may do so by contacting me using my phone number, email, or address below. All data collected pertaining to you will be destroyed. Your decision will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect your relationship with the investigator or your employer.

The individual interview will investigate personal experiences encountered throughout the implementation of the NCLB mandates. Interviews will be conducted over the telephone when it is most convenient for you and will be audio-taped to insure integrity

of responses. The interview should take approximately forty-five minutes to complete. I will perform a member check by emailing and faxing you a copy of your responses so that you agree with statements made. All information obtained will be kept confidential and incorporated into data. The information obtained in this study may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Please complete and return the attached copy of the voluntary consent form via email to paulapyn@aol.com. A summary of the findings from this study will be made available to you and I will make any necessary arrangements to share them with your staff if you so wish. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at 718-574-2357 ext. 202 daytime, or 718-614-3353 evenings on my cell phone. You may also reach me by email to paulapyn@aol.com. If you choose not to participate, please return the incomplete consent form with just your name and word "NO" printed on the form via email. Your time and cooperation are highly valued and deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Paula Payne,
Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate
Walden IRB Approval # 09-09-08-0300079

Walden University
Walden's Research Participant Advocate
1-800-925-3368
Extension 1210

Dissertation Chairperson:
Dr. JoeAnn Hinrichs
Associate Dean for Doctoral Programs
joeann.hinrichs@waldenu.edu
229-228-9263w
229-319-2705c

Study Title: School Administrators' Perceptions of the Contributions of NCLB to the
    Achievement Gap

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the information on the cover letter and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I also understand that the interviews will be audio tape recorded. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name: (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature: _____

Date:

Phone number or location where you can be reached:

Best days and times to reach you.

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and accept an electronic signature above.

_____
Date Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #24, School #8

February 18, 2009 3:00 PM

Question 1: How have students in your school performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: Since the NCLB, the scores have risen progressively over the years especially in the area of mathematics. However I am not sure if this can be total attributed to the implementation of NCLB or some other things that were implemented.

Question Prompt: Could you tell me what other things were that could have attributed to rising test scores?

Response: The Campaign for Fiscal Equity changed the funding at my school. My school was able to get thousands of dollars more that it would have normally received. And because of that we were able to implement programs and lower class size. It could be in part attributed to NCLB but other factors could have played a part.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty in your school?

Response: My students are excited about testing in our school because of the things that were implemented especially in the area of technology. They are very excited. Our suspension rate has always been low and it continues to be low because the students are engaged and involved with extra-curricular activities. Students are excited about learning and they are taking the responsibility and taking charge of their own learning by doing their own research, etc. So I see them excited about learning as it is now. The teachers are excited also.

Question Prompt: Do you think all of the excitement about learning is related to the technology that is available in your school?

Response: I feel that it is in a large part because of the technology and I also feel that because of the lower class size and the extra-curricular activities that they are engaged in and they know that there will be incentives. They know that they have to have good behavior in order to participate in certain things. So I think there is a combination of what is happening that contributes to the success of the students.

Question Prompt: What kinds of incentives are given:

Response: For example, students with the highest attendance receive pizza parties, certificates, pencils. They get tangibles as well as intangibles things.

Question Prompt: What is the demographic make of the students in your school?

Response: The entire school is considered as high poverty. All of our students are eligible for free lunch and free breakfast. We are a Title 1 school with a population consisting of 50% African American, 38% Asian Indians, and 21% Latino, and 1% other.

Question Prompt: What is the attitude of students toward testing?

Response: I think the students are not aware of anything different. They know that once they get to grade 3 they begin to take a city-wide test. So they do not have a say it is something that they have to do and we prepare them for it. They really don't know anything different.

Question Prompt: How do older children behave:

Response: My school only goes up to grade 5. And when students reach fifth grade they are excited about the test because it means graduation and moving on to junior high school.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

Response: My school has a very low turnover. Our teachers leave when they retire or relocate. An informal assessment showed that 100 % of our teachers will be returning next school year.

Question Prompt: To what do you attribute the success of retaining teachers?

Response: There are several factors responsible for this success. I would attribute it to the camaraderie in the school; the willingness of the staff to help each other, the rich quality of staff development that is conducted. All of these factors play a part. In addition, teachers are given leadership roles and step up to the occasion by imparting knowledge so there is a great buy- in of the ideas presented in my school so teachers do not leave. I have teachers who have been teachers in my school for 32 years.

Question Prompt: Are there any teacher certification or qualification issues at your school?

Response: We are 97 percent highly qualified. The other 3 percent are in the process of completing their state and city license qualifications. They are still in the time frame allowed to complete their course work for permanent licensure.

Question Prompt: Has this been the situation since NCLB?

Response: Well since the implementation of NCLB the teacher license requirement laws have been more stringent with regards to teachers being highly qualified. No longer are school districts allowed to here teachers with temporary licenses. Teachers must be highly qualified in order to work. However, the state gives some amount of time to complete the requirements to obtain permanent certification. So people understand that because of NCLB they have to be certified or face job termination; so this propels teachers into becoming fully qualified.

Question Prompt: Are there any Teaching Fellows or Teach for America teachers at your school?

Response: I have Teaching Fellows and there are teachers who came into the school through the Teach for America program; but I have Teaching Fellows.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made in your school to accommodate the NCLB mandates?

Response: In general education, I created a team teaching model where there are 2 teachers in every classroom in addition to lower class size. This was done to accommodate individual and small group instruction so that students would obtain maximum instruction. This required rescheduling of the school program. In addition, all classes have a push-in teacher during the morning to assist in the area of reading because of the high percentage of ESL students from Bangladesh and various Spanish-speaking countries. So we put a high concentration in area of reading because this is where we find that they are most lacking. Also I have introduced a new reading program because we had extra money. The new program was implemented in grades 2 through 5. Other changes that were made included setting aside funds for Saturday programs, after-school programs; anything that afforded students the opportunity to get more individualized or small instruction. I have enlarged my AIS team. We brought in smart boards, new computers in every classroom. Each classroom has 2 brand new computers. The gifted and talented classrooms have smart boards. The school has 2 computer labs, a Mac and PC labs. These labs are used by all of the students at least once per week in addition to what they have in the classrooms because some classes have full class sets of laptops. Students are exposed to technology. My school has lots of technology and I was able to do this because of the extra funds given by the CFE. Our school is classified as a school

in good standing on our progress report. But we are not all work and no play. We are in the process of installing a totally new playground so it's a complete package. We have workshops for parents and ongoing staff development for teachers.

Question Prompt: Did you have to extend the hours in the school day?

Response: Yes, our regular school day is from 8:30 to 3:30; this includes the thirty-seven and one half minutes. Then on Tuesday and Thursday we have after school from 3:30 to 5:00 PM.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #26 School #2

February 6, 2009, 8:15 PM

Question1: How have students in your school performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: Students have been performing much better in our school compared to previous years. In 2007, our school received a grade of D; however, this school year our school received a grade of B because of the improved performance of our students. At the last conference held for administrators, our principal was informed that our school serves the highest number of special needs students in the district yet we had the second best scores. We serve approximately 100 special needs students. Many of these students have moved from level 1 to level 2 and some are scoring on levels 3 and 4 on the performance scale of the state assessments.

Question 2: In your school what has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty?

The demographics of our schools consists of 97percent African American and 3 percent Latino. One hundred percent of our students are eligible for free lunch rendering us a Title 1 school. In addition to the high poverty status, we have several students who live in a shelter for the homeless located in our immediate area. This means that our student population is very transient; students are always coming and going.

Question Prompt: How do students react to the test preparation and testing done in the school?

Response: Actually; for the last ELA (English Language Arts) test administered practice tests for the entire day the week before the actual test; even during the thirty-seven and one half minutes and after school programs we continued to practice for the test and all of the practice was just ELA. The students knew what they had to do and they just practiced for the test. I conducted a pull-out component of academic intervention for a small group of students who are not performing well. When I took this to my room during the day the students just wanted to talk; they did not want to do much of anything including the test practice; they just wanted to talk. They usually want to talk from 8:30 to 3:00. I think that one of the reasons why the students' scores increased was because our students realized that attendance at school was important to doing well on tests. The principal initiated an attendance incentive. This was done by having teachers post the daily attendance of each class. The strategy worked because the school attendance reached over 90 percent. The students were rewarded for the improved attendance with trips and classroom luncheons.

Mostly students wanted lunch; they enjoyed Chinese food and pizza as an attendance incentive. This speaks to the issue of our school population existing in high poverty. Many of our students come from single parent homes. Sometimes no one would be at home when a child came home from school. Our after school program provided hot meals after 3:30 PM for our students. These provisions addressed the nutritional students' needs as well as help prepare them for major tests in ELA and math. The hot meals were provided after 3:30 for students who attended the after school programs. This made a big difference in attendance and student attitude toward staying in school for a longer school day. With the success of getting students to stay longer, the principal held entire classes instead of dismissing them at 3:00 PM. Then teachers would teach students for the thirty-seven and one half minutes in test preparation. After this, some students would be dismissed and some would go to the other school program where they would receive a hot meal and remain in school until 5:30 PM. Letters were sent home informing parents that students would remain in school until 5:30 PM. My perception was that food was a positive reward that worked to get students to come to school and stay for an extended period of time.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining high qualified teachers at your school?

Response: The principal really appreciates the staff at our school. Most of the teachers who teach lower grades have been at the school for some time. We do not have a very high turnover of staff. The staff is steady; they have been there since I became an administrator which is a little more than 3 years.

Question Prompt: How does the principal show her appreciation to the staff?

Response: She buys us lunch and breakfast on a regular basis. She would give gifts during the holiday to the staff. She also gives teachers lots of supplies. Teachers' wish lists are often honored. This I think makes teachers feel happy and appreciated.

Question Prompt: What support system is in place for teachers at your school?

Response: There are very strong teachers and 2 deans that don't play. There is a guidance counselor, and a supportive staff. The principal encourages the parents to participate in school activities. This is done by teachers inviting parents to come up to the school to visit on a 'parent visiting day.' All the parents are invited. If a particular child has difficulty, the parent is invited to discuss ways to help the child with coping strategies. However, the focus is to have parents of students who are exhibiting difficult behaviors to be involved with the school to bring about change in the behavior. There is a strong parental presence in our school.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made in your school to accommodate the mandates of the NCLB?

Response: I don't think any changes were made; I don't think they really pay attention to NCLB in my school. The funds that are received is used across the board for students and staff. Her purpose is to provide whatever our students need in order for them to perform on tests. The principal provided programs so that students could be exposed to a variety of experiences. For example, a writer visited our school each week to read to students and tell stories to the students in the lower grades. Ballet groups came to our school and performed and work with groups of students and prepared them to perform at a school assembly.

Question Prompt: Are any special preparations made to practice for major exams?

Response: The principal engages the entire student body in test prep sessions that are conducted all day during the days prior to the major exams. During this time, the related service providers do not pull the students out of the classroom; instead they go into the classroom and assist the teachers with test preparation. Students who are performing at level 1 proficiency are given intensive test preparation sessions utilizing the ARIS data to target instruction during after school. Specific questions that students did not answer correctly were used to practice. One problem solving item per day was a strategy used for test prep and all the students in grades 5 through 8 received the same item. Another change was that during the extended day period, classroom teachers would be paired up out of classroom teachers to practice on skills that received low scores on practice tests. The teachers are given the steps for answering the item so that they can demonstrate for the students how the question should be answered.

Transcript of research interview with School Administrator #25, School #1

January 30, 2009, 5:20 PM

Question 1: How have students performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB legislation?

Response: There has been significant improvement in students' performance on assessments. Before the implementation of the NCLB mandates, 30% of our students were performing at a proficient level in reading. Presently, 50% of our students are performing at a proficient reading level. Prior to NCLB 45% of our students were performing at a proficient level in math. Presently, 60% of our students are performing at a proficient level.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty in your school?

Response: In my school virtually everyone is of color; we have 85% African American and 14% Latino; the other percent are Asian and 2 white students. The vast majority of students in my school are students of color.

Question Prompt: Has the testing required by the NCLB changed the behavior of students?

Response: My perception is that the testing has focused the teachers and students on the testing goals. The goals are aligned with the standards; then when we teach to the test we teach to the standards. So I think that students are focused on the standards and more children are focused more on the standards than they were prior to the implementation of the NCLB. The testing program has focused children's behavior in a sense that they know that there is not just accountability at the end of the year; but there is accountability once per month for interim assessments. So the children know that the monthly goals have to be met. Therefore, the positive side of this is that students have become more goal-oriented. Compared to when I was a teacher there were no goals or there might have been some unit goals but no one bothered to check whether the goals were being met. Nonetheless, my own teaching practice included data. Before this big push to use data in the classroom my instruction was data driven. Now we see that this is the age now when everyone is data driven. There have been positive changes as a result of the NCLB testing mandate. However, I do feel that with monthly testing and the city interim tests it can produce some pressure on teachers and students. I think the problem arises when the teacher spends the whole year doing test prep. But no one is telling us to do that; we are supposed to be focusing on skills. Also it depends on how the teacher is conducting the

test prep. In terms of the students' behavior I don't think that it is worse. Most of it depends on the emotional intelligence of the teacher. Some teachers are emotionally incompetent therefore those classes become dysfunctional. The teachers who are emotionally intelligent have classes where students display no change in behavior.

Question Prompt: On an average, how many practice tests are utilized from the beginning of the school year to prepare students for NCLB state mandated exams?

Response: One per month. So for ELA students were tested each month from September to December to prepare for the main exam in January. Furthermore, these practice tests were administered in each of the content subject areas. Now the focus for the upper grades is in math, science and social studies. The practice tests are administered for one period, once per month, in 4 subjects the second week of each month.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining high qualified teachers in your school?

Response: I think that there has been a big shift in attracting teachers since I became principal as opposed to when I was an assistant principal. The reason is primarily due to organizations such as the Teaching Fellows and Teach for America. Before these organizations existed administrators used the Department of Education Hiring Hall and gamble on teachers being competent. Now we have these organizations that help us screen and certify prospective teachers at least in terms of their academic and state qualifications. There has been a shift much more for the better in getting far more certified and certifiable teachers than previously; so that's a good thing. In terms of emotional intelligence, we are certainly not getting any more qualified individuals. For example, we could get a state certified teacher but he or she may lack the emotional intelligence or someone who is not emotionally rounded or grounded so that such an individual may have a problem regardless of their career choice. Some of the Fellow teachers may have failed at their previous careers not because of any technical reason but because they lack emotional intelligence. So when this individual comes into the classroom where it is all about emotional intelligence, of course he or she is going to flounder.

Question Prompt: Does an organization such as Teach America focus on training future teachers on emotional intelligence?

Response: No they don't focus on that; they may deal with a little classroom management. Emotional intelligence is an area that is still in its infancy and in terms of research and practice in our school system it remains on the ground level. I think that this is a concept that educators should be concerned about.

Question Prompt: Once you have gotten newly qualified teachers, what procedures do you have in place to retain them?

Response: Here we have a new teacher induction committee and we have many new teacher induction activities. Fortunately, my school is a Teaching Fellow training site during the summer so I have a head start over other schools, in that I have twenty fellows being trained here every summer. So I get first pick of which Fellow I want. Typically I may choose one or two of them if there is a vacancy in my school. So before school starts in September, I would have already trained them for fifteen days during the summer. They would have had opportunities to observe a teacher, to teach lessons to small groups and whole groups. They would have had opportunities to interact with me as the principal. They get more time with me during this time than during the school year. We also have celebrations by inviting parents and the community to meet and interact with our new teachers. When the school year begins, we pair new teachers up with an experienced mentor teacher. The mentor is assigned for five periods per week; one period per day. The new teacher observes the mentor and mentor observes the new teacher and the give feedback about their observations. So the cycle of modeling, feedback, and observation is what we use to get new teaches trained and consequently this helps to retain them.

Question Prompt: Does the method work?

Response: Yes, absolutely. Very few teachers leave. We have kept most of the

Teach For America teachers because the program pays for their continued education so they stay. Typically after some teachers receive a free masters degree they leave. But in my school most of them stay; as a matter of fact a teacher who used to be in the Teaching Fellow program is about to become a principal. We don't have a problem with teachers leaving; most of them have turned into very good teachers. The turnover rate here is very low compared to other schools in the immediate area. Other schools experience a higher turnover rate; but we don't have that issue here.

Question Prompt: Have there been any issues with teachers being in danger of not receiving permanent certification?

Response: From time to time we have people who actually are dual certified. There is an interaction between the state that is granting the certification and the college. So the colleges ensure that Teaching Fellow and Teach for America candidates receive the appropriate programs and course work required for certification. For example, Teaching Fellows will say we are in connection with the department of education so they provide candidates who certified in one specific area that are needed by the department of

education. In addition, some teachers have interests in other areas such as special education and they work toward this certification when obtaining their masters degree; therefore they become dual certified. Many teachers are opting to obtain dual license in order to make themselves more marketable. So because of the programs such as Teach for America and Teaching Fellows candidates come in with appropriate certification. The accountability data for my school indicates that we are almost at 99 percent capacity with certified teachers.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandate at your school?

Response: Implementing the Reading First Program has led to an organizational shift in our school. Prior to my being principal, there were various programs that began in the 1980s that were under the influence of the whole language reading programs. However, the Reading First Program has an accountability component that holds teachers accountable for maintaining data on student progress in reading. Teachers use palm pilots to record the student data. So each student has data recorded in a regular systematic way. The program requires that children be categorized in three categories of proficiency: Intensive, strategic and benchmark. The benchmark students are tested once per month, the strategic students are tested every other month, and the intensive students are tested weekly. So we have weekly progress monitoring of students who are in the intensive category. The results of the weekly tests are displayed in graphs to delineate the movement of students toward the reading goals set for them. There is concrete objective data that is gathered about students every week that is fed into computers and analyzed. We then use the data to drive differentiated instruction. These are some of the changes that have taken place in early childhood reading. For the remainder of the school, the push is on utilizing interim data to help teachers help students focus on attaining goals. So now we have monthly data that is used to guide instruction.

Question Prompt: Were any other changes made to accommodate NCLB?

Response: Yes and no. If a student is stronger in math than in reading then we instruct more in ELA; yes but is it because of NCLB? maybe; because we are more focused on the testing. Because of the data and required accountability principals are going to make organizational changes so that their outcomes can improve. So I would agree that there have been system-wide organizational changes because of the NCLB. As a result of these changes, more students are performing at or approaching proficiency levels in their academic subjects.

School Administrator #28, School #3

February 28, 2009 6:30 PM

Question 1: How have students performed since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: When I began as an administrator at the school six years ago, the school has changed three principals, moved from a D to a B rating, and remains on the SURR list for ELA because targets for AYP have not been met. However, targets were met in Math. Students are performing well on math assessments but performance levels in ELA remain inadequate.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty?

Response: My perception is that there is too much testing in the city school system. The question remains of whether there are other alternative systems such as portfolios that can be utilized. However, presently there does not seem to be any other workable alternative to the testing system that is in place.

Question Prompt: Your perception is that there is too much testing; what impact is the testing having on the students?

Response: We have Princeton Review which was one of the low-impact testing which was changed to Acuity Testing. We use the Acuity tests in addition to teacher evaluation and state testing. All of these tests are utilized to accumulate data on students' performance on various test items. The data is used to focus instruction on the items on which students perform poorly. My perception is that students are being tested too much. We also use the city predictive tests. In some of those areas of testing students are overwhelmed with tests and as a result they select responses at random instead of carefully evaluating or making critical choices for tests responses. Some students make

random decisions for question responses and this is one of the indications I perceive as students' testing fatigue.

Question Prompt: Do you feel that the assessments administered reveal what students have learned?

Response: The Acuity Test is not used for what students have learned it is used to gauge how much information or knowledge a student has acquired thus far in their academic life. The Acuity Test is administered in the first two months of the school year. At this point students have not been taught the information that is tested. So Acuity is not a test for student learning or what they have been taught rather it is a test to evaluate students at the level of the assessment.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

Response: Our school has a very high turnover of teachers. One reason for the high turnover is attributed to the use of Teaching Fellows. Many of these teachers that were selected went back to their states after a short period of time at our school. In some cases they don't stay very long. Most of them have left. They acquire their skills and go back to where ever they were from. The ability to attract qualified math teachers poses a genuine challenge and is certainly an area of concern. However, we do have some teachers that have remained in our school for a number of years who are veteran teachers. We also have teachers with issues regarding their certification credentials. There is a concern of teacher certification and qualification for schools such as ours that serve students of color and high poverty. But this is not to say that we don't have highly qualified teachers. Teacher certification is important because teachers cannot be employed with the proper credentials. Some of the issues we fact with teachers' credentials is that some teachers have not acquired the additional credits from a master's degree and at this point we are examining how we can help them pay for their master's education.

Question Prompt: What is one of the main reasons for the high teacher turnover in your school?

Response: Retention of teachers is attributable to student attitude toward learning, disrespectful manner in which students behave cause teachers to become burned out. It is not easy to teach when a few students who are disruptive and disrespectful interrupt the education for students who want to learn. New York is the training ground for many teachers from other states. Teachers leave and go to jobs with more lucrative salaries in other states after receiving the training here. In my perception, teachers make choices in the interest of their health because at the end of the day it is an extremely difficult job. Teaching can be akin to experiences in a war zone when dealing with some of the students who attend schools in high poverty communities. Getting these students to be cooperative is very difficult and requires an extraordinary kind of teacher. So once teachers have opportunities to go elsewhere then they leave which leads to the tremendous turnover of teachers. In addition to find teachers who are qualified, another significant challenge is finding teachers who are skilled with the understanding of a high needs population. Understanding the needs of students of color and high poverty is a requirement for being successful in schools such as ours. Such teachers need to have an appreciation for the differences in culture, understanding of the learning styles of students, and group dynamics. A teacher may be certified but lack an understanding of student population—this poses a significant challenge.

Question Prompt: Does the NCLB make provisions for addressing the issue of teacher retention?

Response: Teachers travel in an open market. They can leave positions whenever they want. We had a teacher who resigned in the middle of the school year. They haven't addressed that. The open market allow teachers to leave one school and apply for a job at another school if they so desire. We have had a number of cases like that. Then again you do not want a teacher to remain in your school if he or she is unhappy. But this does not negate the fact that we have dedicated teachers within our school. We have committed teachers.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandate at your school?

Response: The NCLB created transparency and accountability systems which focused on closing the achievement gap in a number of schools-- closing the achievement gap between Caucasian students and students of color and high poverty. One of the things that we have done was to hire SES (Supplemental Educational Services) providers such as Kaplan and Princeton. Kaplan tutors comes in and work in the classrooms with teachers for 6 periods 3 days each week. This has been helpful in the past and hopefully it will prove helpful again. In the evenings the SES providers work with students. We have Saturday School. We work with parents by encouraging and informing them of testing dates, we try to boost their level of involvement with their children's education. We work with students by motivating them using songs every morning to keep them informed and hyped for the exam.

Question Prompt: Has there been any other changes to school programming?

Response: Yes, rather than having a zero period, we have instituted period 1 instead of zero period. All students come up to class early in the morning and practice ELA (English Language Arts). This was done prior to the ELA Exam. Presently we this same procedure is being applied to math in preparation for the state math exam. We have materials that are given to teachers and they work with students. We also have a program called C-6 – this is a common planning time when teachers from the same discipline meet to discuss issues and strategies to support student learning and for increasing student performance on assessments. So we have the C-6, SES providers, parental meetings to inform parents about what is happening in the school. We also have an Inquiry Team, an Instructional Cabinet, we have a group of students that we study to see what is responsible for the success or failure of each student. We also look at students who are over age in middle school. Some students are fifteen or sixteen who are still in middle school. These students have issues with behavior and achievement so we created a special class with a special budget to meet their needs and the program is called Achieve Now Kids. Counselors from Brooklyn come to our school to speak with these students and take them on trips to colleges. Also teachers have become involved with these students as mentors. The students who are fifteen and sixteen that are still in the 7th grade are exposed to the 8th grade curriculum to transition them for graduation and high school.

Question Prompt: Are there any changes made to the school programming to accommodate the testing aspect of the NCLB?

Response: We have not changed from 90-minute blocks for the four major

subjects.

Question Prompt: What has been the overall change in your school in regards to the NCLB?

Response: My perception is that the government has put money into the school to hire the SES companies. But we are always looking at programs to put in place to help students improve. However, the whole issue of student discipline which is an integral part of education seems to be ignored by the NCLB and this issue needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner. We still have students who disrupt the educational process at the expense of students who what to learn. NCLB also needs to address the issue of student retention and promotion. Fifteen and sixteen-year-old students in junior high school drains the resources of the school because these students are unwilling or unable to be part of the whole education process. The system has failed them and we are trying to make up in our own way for this failure. But there is no learning without discipline and to have discipline involves parents, the community, and other components. Discipline is not just the responsibility of the

There also needs to be a support system for teachers in order to retain them. school. Unless the issue of discipline is addressed where students become responsible for their education then we'll be having this discussion one hundred years from now.

Question Prompt: What kind of movement have you perceived thus far as a result of the implementation of the NCLB?

Response: A number of school came off of the SURR list and a number of schools are doing well on the progress report. Can this be tied to the NCLB others seem to think that the test have been made easier. So progress is subjective; progress has to be sustained rather than just make progress now and fail tomorrow. Progress has to cultivated. There must be a cultural change in the outlook of education that has not happened at the grass roots level. Students are still coming to school without books and ill-prepared. Parents

have to become involved with the education of their children. There needs to be some type of outreach to parents.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #29, School #4 January 26, 2009, 4:05 pm

Question 1: How have students performed since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: I would say yes, since the implementation of the NCLB, students have performed differently. I'm not sure it there is a direct correlation between students' performances and the NCLB. I think the emphasis on testing and the emphasis on training that was put into the system lately has some influence and I am beginning to see upward movement of the school and the performance of the students.

Question Prompt: When you say training, what do you mean?

Response: I mean training of the staff utilizing staff development especially with the emphasis of targeted instruction. The emphasis of using the new tools, mainly the acuity computer program, helps teachers identify the academic weaknesses of students through testing data. However it is still incumbent upon teachers to provide good instruction.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty?

Response: I think we are beginning to make improvements in the way students perform on standardized tests. I would say to a certain extent the impact has been positive because it lets our students see what the playing field is actually like. It exposes our students to competition with students of higher socio-economic background because right now they are outperforming our students but I think right we are beginning to close that gap.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers?

Response: I think a lot more can be done in that area; especially in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. From personal experience, within my school sometimes it is hard to hang on to more experienced teachers. Some of them want to move on to other parts of the city I don't know what the solution is other than some sort of incentive for them to stay.

Question Prompt: When you say incentive, are you referring to a school based incentive or an incentive from the Department of Education?

Response: From the Department of Education because the school is limited in what can be done as far as keeping a good teacher. Whether it is a merit pay system or whether it is a bonus for being in a Title I school; but there needs to be something in place to keep teachers in schools serving high poverty students. The biggest thing is the number of teachers in those schools. If you really want to close that achievement gap and raise the performance of students of color and high poverty there needs to be a reduction in the teacher to student ratio. It's the only way that's going to happen.

Question Prompt: What success have you had in your school with retaining high qualified teachers?

Response: Personally, I would not say that the retention of teachers on staff at my school is typical of most schools in the neighborhood. Most schools in the neighborhood have had a much higher rate of teacher turnover. For me it's not the department of education that put the group of people within my school. From the inception of the school, these teachers have been committed to making a change. They are not there because they just happen to be there, they are there because of choice. So it's a little different from my perspective. Mostly, as an administrator you have to create an atmosphere of family to retain teachers who are committed and surround them because they are committed to the students. The students can present challenges for teachers and when teachers demonstrate their commitment you have to constantly give up _____ and go beyond_____. If administrators and teachers share the bond for wanting the success of students then the retention rate is higher—teachers tend to stay. These teachers are stake holders and they have a vested interest in the schools success. No administrator, no principal or group of teachers can move a school by themselves. It's

impossible. So one of the main duties of an effective administrator you get a buy in from the majority of people that is working on your staff. This might require a variety of skills. Some people need a little push; some people need a pat on the back, and some people you don't have to say anything to because their satisfaction is intrinsic. Most of my staff experience intrinsic satisfaction. They get satisfaction from seeing students succeed when they come back to the school with smiles. You have to be committed. Even if it's not funded --If they would really commit to these programs they way they were written it would be wonderful. However, there is an old saying, "it's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Things may not be right because of budget cuts, but in spite of the horrible and terrible budget cuts; you still have to shine the light for the students. Sometimes institutions, the Board of Education, know that there is commitment coming from schools because human nature takes over when children involved and the school communities make the necessary sacrifices so that students will be successful. You may not see the end result right then and there but when you help children, they understand what it means to help someone.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandate in your school?

Response: The main organizational change that was instituted in my school was the implementation of AIS (academic intervention services) instruction. The main thing that came about since NCLB is that certain students were mandated to receive AIS. Prior to NCLB students were being tutored; but now certain students in certain ranges are mandated to receive services and portfolios have to be kept of their progress.

Question Prompt: What steps were taken to implement AIS in your school?

Response: We implement AIS in 2 ways. We have a Push-In program—when a teacher has a free period is assigned to another class so that there are 2 teachers in the room. When the Push-In teacher is in the room she focuses on a small group of students with the lowest scores. This is also done by subject—math teachers go into math classes, science teachers go into science classes, etc. The next way of implementing AIS is for grades 6 and 7, with a target population of students who scored level 1 on the previous year's State exams. These students are pulled out of classes mainly in reading and math;

especially reading which is very weak. An AIS teacher will pull them out and tutor them in small groups.

Another thing that came about because of NCLB is the 37 _ minutes. The new Teachers' contract required that 37 _ minutes be added to the teacher work day. These minutes are used to tutor students before or after school hours focusing on low functioning students.

Question Prompt: What contributions has NCLB made to close the achievement gap?

Response: One thing the NCLB contributed to closing the achievement gap is requiring adhering to minimum standards. They have created a certain minimum standard that must be achieved. A framework for achieving the minimum standard was established in the document itself. How they fund this and bring it to fruition how to make it come to life is still lacking. But the idea, the document, the concept is good.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #30 School #5

February 8, 2009, 8:15 PM

Question 1: How have students at your school performed since the implementation of the NCLB?

Response: The performance level has varied. We definitely made some gains. But with NCLB it is not all on a level ground. There have been some years where the support has been greater than others and that have made the test results better than other years. There was a time when we were receiving extra academic support from outside agencies. In that year the scores were very good; but as soon as the school shows positive results, the support is discontinued. If funding for support had been kept a little longer, the results would have been more stabled and students would have performed better.

Question Prompt: What do you mean by varying results?

Response: Sometimes you see great growth sometimes it is just stabled. Sometimes the students' scores decrease. The fluctuation in scores is attributed to many factors. One such factor is dealing with a transient population where students from diverse backgrounds and different school locations. We have a number of students who come from temporary housing. In the past we have dealt with three different types of transient populations. These included children from families who have been burned out of their homes and moved into shelters for support until they can find another home. Another category of transient student comes from single parent home where a mother was being abused and the family is on the run. And we get students from regular homeless shelters. So we receive students from three different kinds of homeless shelters. This makes it difficult to keep scores on the rise. Students come in with problems and situations which can be challenging to deal with. I also think that where there is no parental support this affects academic performance. Without parental support, students do not realize the importance of an education, therefore; they do not put forth their best efforts in order to be successful. This makes getting the good scores very difficult to attain. I think that sometimes there is a need for new programs to address the challenges in schools. We also need support from the community because this impacts students' test scores. Attendance is another issue affecting how our students perform on assessments because if the children do not come to school we cannot teach them. So if the children's lives are in influx it makes it difficult for them to prioritize and this makes your job as an educator more difficult.

Question Prompt: What was one of the programs that supported and influenced an increase in performance levels on assessments?

Response: We had a program that was a support system which was given to use when our school was classified as SINI. This was an after school program that gave the students incentives for attending. School staff were recruited and paid for tutoring students. The program also hired outside help to support the tutors. Parents were given incentives for ensuring that their children attended the after school program. This program was successful because attendance in our school increased. Parents were involved in school activities and parental presence was very impressive. The program lasted for one year. During that year our test scores rose significantly. However, after one year the funding was cut because of the demonstrated increase in scores.

Question Prompt: What is the rate of attendance at your school?

Response: The attendance at the beginning was very poor, but it is beginning to improve. Then again, if it is raining outside the children do not attend school. On rainy days the attendance is low. Any kind of inclement weather affects attendance. We used several motivational strategies to improve attendance such as commendation cards for 90 and 100 percent attendance and we give incentives. Presently we are working on other strategies to improve attendance. In addition, we need to work on getting students to come to school on time. The situation with punctuality remains challenging because parents escort younger children to school late.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on the students in your school?

Response: I think some of the students are not serious about the tests; even though promotion to the next grade depends on how well they perform. The students who put forth the effort to be successful are the ones who do well. But there are many, too many students who are not focused on academics and they do not seem to care about passing one way or the other. This is a whole population that we keep working with to get them to strive for excellence. It is difficult for them to complete homework; it is difficult for them to sit in the classroom and focus. Question Prompt: What are some strategies you employ to prepare students for tests?

Response: We have after school and Saturday school sessions. For ELA we use test prep for ELA. We follow a prototype that is very scripted. Teachers instruct in literacy and teach to different parts of the test. They reinforce vocabulary in both literacy and math. They use manipulates to prepare students for the math test. We assign a problem of the day for homework that requires students to practice on one of the problems from a previous year's exam. The home work is reviewed the next day. For support, we have students working in small groups. AIS service is provided. Math and ELA coaches go into classrooms to support teachers. Professional development focuses on both exams.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers in your school?

Response: This is the most difficult part of accommodating NCLB because of the location of the school. Sometimes it is difficult to attract highly qualified teachers. We attract capable individuals who need support and lots of professional development. So we provide these things and try to build their capacity. I have had teachers come into my building and stay for 2 years or 1 year. While they are here they are trying to gain experience from New York City Department of Education. Then they look for teaching positions elsewhere because this is not a comfortable community or area in which to work. When teachers who come here are not familiar with the community and the population it is difficult and as soon as they can find a way out they leave. I went to hiring halls and hired teachers who were very enthusiastic and ready to come to work. The potential teachers did homework and researched the area to see where the school was located on the map. When they find out where the school is suddenly the willing teacher who may have been an asset to our school is no longer available for work. This is not an easy community to find teachers to build a staff. In addition, when teachers are hired from a hiring hall they are usually qualified. However, I don't go to the hiring halls anymore because the candidates do not want to remain in the positions due to the community. What works best is hiring by recommendation from teachers who know about potential teachers. This way of recruiting may not be yield the most highly qualified teachers; but regardless of how qualified a potential teacher may be, if he or she is not prepared to accept the circumstances of the community and be committed to the job, the qualifications will not help. Teachers who want to teacher here have to be willing to do what needs to be done, be dedicated and be prepared to go above and beyond, and make sacrifices to help children.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made in your school to accommodate the NCLB mandates:

Response: I have created AIS positions to comply with NCLB mandates; teaching coaches to provide on-going professional development and support classroom teachers; small group instruction to support students' needs. One of the most important strategies implemented in my school was to create lower class sizes across all grades to support the instructional requirements of NCLB. Most classes have no more than twenty-four students. However, the majority of the class registers are lower. Another change was to hire a parent coordinator to relate to and support parents by conducting workshops and disseminate information.

Question Prompt: Overall how is your school progressing under the NCLB?

Response: I feel that we are moving forward but the movement may not be represented in the data. I think that my population is very needy and there are other issues that should be addressed other than academics. They will get that just by the nature of a school. But the nurturing, guidance, counseling, and the other aspects that pertain to the whole child that we need to address so that real growth can be demonstrated and identified is not addressed by the NCLB. Raising self-esteem is another thing that is not addressed. NCLB stresses the academic by accountability and assessments but neglects the social issues affecting our school population. For example, some students have to take 3 or 4 siblings to class or another school before coming to class themselves. Consequently, they are late for class. The responsibilities are great. Parents have to leave for work early in the morning and leave older children responsible for the younger ones. We have students who come from many miles away. Again the homeless situation comes into the equation. After leaving the shelter the new housing could be located many miles away and because parents do not want to transfer their children in the middle of the school year they are forced to commute long distances. NCLB addresses the academic needs of students; the professional development needs of teachers to accommodate the accountability aspects of the law but neglects the social issues affecting education.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #32, School #7

February 1, 2009, 4:15 PM

Question 1: How have students in your school performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB legislation?

Response: I think students have done better on tests overall on exams. However, I am concerned that they have just been programmed to take these exams. I am so concerned that we are not teaching children to be well-rounded individuals in preparation to be productive citizens. We are just teaching them to take the tests.

Question Prompt: In your opinion, in addition to administering assessments, what should schools be teaching to prepare students for the future?

Response: We need to teach children how to respect each other, how to respect adults, how to basically be well-mannered individuals. We also need to teach them things that will prepare them for the world of work. For example we need to teach them in the areas of shop, home economics, welding, and auto mechanics; anything that consists of a shop curriculum. These things have slowly evaporated from these schools. And schools are so focused on testing that when children leave they are not prepared. Especially from the middle school; students are not properly prepared for high school and so we have a high drop-out rate in our city. We are failing these students because they are not being given the skills needed for success and that is what concerns me.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty in your school?

Response: We are a Title 1 school where more than 95 percent of our students are African American and our school is located in a very high poverty community. The problem is the testing again. We are so focused on preparing students for tests that we forget their other needs. Our students are coming to us from homes that are predominantly run by single parents. Our students have so many other needs and there is so little time given towards addressing the other needs. So children become frustrated and we are not giving them the quality of education that they deserve. We are so bogged down with the testing that the other things are being neglected.

Question Prompt: You mention that students have other needs, in your perception, what are some of those other needs of your students? And could they have been addressed by NCLB?

Response: Our students come from high poverty homes and they are not exposed to things in the homes such as computers. Many students do not have computers in their homes. We are living in world where technology is so advanced and everything is technology based. We give students homework assignments and they are not able to go home and adequately conduct research to complete the assignments. This is one area where we are really lacking; students are not given adequate resources. If you compare our school with schools in other communities with parents who are better off economically, and who are in a higher socio-economic status they are doing much better than our students because parents are able to give their children the materials that expose them to them to technology and other aspects of the world. In high poverty areas, children are suffering. Our students fall into that category because more than 95 percent of our students are in that category.

Question Prompt: What is happening with the testing?

Response: We administer interim tests each month and we analyze the results so that the data can be used to drive instruction; this is one good thing about the testing that is being done. We are able to use the exams to address the needs of the students. But again after the testing, there is so much emphasis on it, and so much that goes into the exam, that we forget the other little areas that are needed to make a child well rounded. And that's my major concern again.

Question Prompt: What is happening with student behavior as a result of testing frustration?

Response: Students are very aware of the emphasis on preparation for the exams that they stay focused up to a point. They understand that they must do well on these exams so that they would not be labeled as failures. Administrators are held accountable because scores are used to assess an administrator's effectiveness. My perception is that after the exams there is a free-fall in behavior and discipline breaks down. After all the tests have been administered, it becomes difficult to run the school because many unwanted behaviors are exhibited . At this point, administrators are put in a position where they have to scramble around to find alternatives to keep children actively engaged. In my school, we have put things in place by adding activities to the curriculum to keep students engaged. We have added band, art, and aerobics. We plan trips and other activities to give students something to look forward to as a reward for good behavior.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers in your school?

Response: We have been fortunate in that we have been able to retain a number of new teachers. Many of our teachers have more than 3 years teaching experience. In our school teacher turnover is not that bad. But from conversations with colleagues in the district, it is my perception that teachers are becoming frustrated because they are not properly trained and given the professional development opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop into master teachers. So we need to address this situation. In order to keep teachers and attract new ones we need to look at salaries and the provision of professional development opportunities for them to grow in confidence so that they can become master teachers.

Question Prompt: Have any teachers left your school in the past 2 years?

Response: Yes, we had 2 or teachers leave our school. They were recruited by the Teaching Fellows and Teach for America programs. They made use of the program by getting a master's degree and putting in their required time then returned to their states to work as teachers in their home states.

Question Prompt: Are there any certification and qualifications issues with the teachers that are currently at your school?

Response: Yes, there are some issues with certification. Of course it is difficult for some teachers to pass the exams required for certification. Of course these teachers have a master's degree; but some of them are finding it very difficult to pass the exams. From conversation with these teachers, I think that they are feeling that the teaching exams are somewhat biased. The content of the exams is geared to a different group of people. My perception is that this is the reason why candidates from other states are able to pass the exams and get teaching positions on the large scale that is currently being experienced; they are passing the exams easily. Also the candidates who are passing the exams are recent college graduates. The teachers who have been teaching for 10 years or more who have to meet the new certification requirements are having the most difficulty passing the exams.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made in your school to accommodate the NCLB mandate?

Response: There have been changes in different areas of the school structure. Since the NCLB mandates have to be met there is greater emphasis for accountability on behalf of administrators and teachers. Much of what goes on in our school surrounds reaching AYP targets set by the district. We had to adjust and prepare for the accountability piece. So we looked at our budget and we had to tailor our day to day operation by instituting programs that comply with the mandates of NCLB. We brought in outside agencies that

helped us with professional development, technology, and other programs to meet the academic needs of our students. We had to make changes to our school structure to accommodate NCLB.

Question Prompt: You said tailor programs, what kind of programs were instituted?

Response: For example we instituted an art program; we instituted a technology program that taught our students how to build websites, we had people come in and teach our students new aspects of science using hands-on strategies. In our school we don't have a modern science lab so we had people come in and take students out to different sites where there are science labs to expose them to hands-on science experiences. Science is one area of the curriculum where we are lacking. We are teaching our students to do math, reading, and writing. But we don't address areas of the curriculum such as science and technology. So when these people were brought in, we had to change our program schedule to accommodate their programs. Again, I think that one of the good things that came out the NCLB is the accountability. People understand that they are being held accountable for educating our students and that we need to do whatever is possible to have our children show progress; we must do it even if it means adjusting our budget by putting more money in areas where there is a need. We need to provide professional development on a continuous basis. Teachers and administrators are accountable. But as administrators we are trying to get more parents involved in the education process. Our school would be more successful if we had more parental involvement. The NCLB has a parental involvement component but it is not enough. We need to have more parental involvement. We are trying to hold parents responsible for their children's education. We are trying to make them more responsible for getting their children to school and for getting them to school on time. Attendance in our school is very low. In our community it is difficult to get students to come to school on a regular basis. Our parent coordinators spend hours on the phone trying to get parents to come to the school to become involved in their children's education; to attend parent conferences, to get involved with the PTA, volunteer in the school, and just simple things like coming to the school to visit to see what their children are doing in school; it is very difficult to get parents involved. We hold workshops for parents to teach them parenting skills. But sometimes only 3 parents show up. NCLB needs to institute a larger component requiring parental accountability.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #37 School #10

February 7, 2009 Time Start: 12:15 PM Time End:

Question 1: How have students in your school performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: I must tell you that even before the implementation of NCLB students attending my school have been performing well. The school has had a history of good standing for the past eighteen years. However, under the NCLB many of the students have impacted the performance of the school. Under the NCLB parents have the option of transferring students to any school they wish. Therefore, our school has had to accept students who come with 'baggage' that impedes the academic progress made in previous years. We have an established system that is used for reading beginning in kindergarten. We start teaching students the first 300 must know words. By the time these students reach the third grade, they are proficient in the use of these words. Under the NCLB transfer policy many of the students who are coming into our school are not as prepared as students who have attended since kindergarten and they are not performing at the same levels.

Question Prompt: Are you saying that students at your school are proficient readers by the third grade?

Response: No. Let me explain, by third grade every child must be a proficient reader based on the system we have in place whereby we implemented 300 must know words. There are three steps to the procedure; the recognition, spelling and application. Students must be able to recognize the words, they must be able to spell them, and they must be able to use them in forming complete sentences. Under the NCLB once students are transferred with documentation, I must accept them into my school. Many of these students that come to be placed in third and fourth grades at my school are not performing at the same level as the children who have been with me for many years. Students are transferred in from the Bronx or Manhattan and I must accept them. If a parents wants a child transferred to my school from any part of New York City I must accept that child. I am being impacted by this situation. The students that are performing well are remaining in their schools. The students who are not doing well are being transferred to other schools in an attempt to improve his or her performance. This is the basis for the transfer mandate of NCLB. The students that are traveling from the Bronx or Manhattan often come to school late and this contributes to the dilemma. However, when a school is classified as a SINI (school in need of improvement) or SURR (school under review and restructure) that school cannot participate in the transfer program; these schools cannot accept students from out of their zoned areas. Furthermore, these schools

are not under the mandates of the NCLB. If a SINI school does not improve after 3 years, then that school becomes a SURR school. If that SURR school does not improve in 2 years that school is closed down. When SURR schools are closed down, the students are sent to other neighborhood schools. Then 2 or 3 small schools are reopened in the building that was closed down. The city feels that small schools are more manageable.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty in your school?

Response: The majority -95 percent of my students are African American, 4 percent are Hispanic, and 1 percent is others. There are 47 special needs students and 23 ELL (English Language Learners) students. The question I ask myself is: Are we testing the ELL and special needs students for what they know or how fast they can tell us what they know? The reason I ask this question is because we know that many of these students are performing at low levels; yet we test them on the same level as higher performing students. I think we are doing a disservice to these students, school, the parents, and the whole community. For example, a student may be placed in the seventh grade who reads on a third grade level. That student is given a seventh grade test and is expected to perform at the same level as the other students. The provision of giving this students time and a half will not change the results if the child does not have the capability or capacity. I think that even if you give this student the whole day to take the test he or she may still not be able to perform at the required level. So are we testing special needs and ELL students to assess what they know are we testing them to find out how fast they can tell us how much they know? So as far as the impact of testing on our students, it has been devastating. I say this because we know that students are not performing at the level of the assessments from the beginning. Yet the accountability of reaching AYP (adequate yearly progress) requires that ELL and special needs students perform at the same level as the rest of the students. Schools with a large population of ELL and special needs students are not performing well in this district. The schools are suffering when it comes to demonstrating adequate yearly progress.

Question Prompt: How are the scores from assessments for ELL and special needs students calculated?

Response: For each ELL and each special needs student the scores are given one and one half points. However, the majority of these students score on level 1and sometimes on level 2 on assessments; rarely do they score above level 1. Right now this district is in the status of " in need of improvement "because of the large ELL sub population. The ELL students are not performing at the same level as the monolingual population which has caused a drop in scores. The same situation exists for the special needs students. Special

needs students need academic assistance, they are not performing at the same level as the monolingual students yet they have to perform at the same level as the other students. We are doing a disservice to them. Some of these children do not know how to read. Before the NCLB legislation, principals were fighting to get special needs students into their buildings because they didn't affect the building academically. But now many principals fight not to have a large special needs population because they don't help in show adequate progress academically. Unfortunately, you are under the gun and you have to show progress and perform well and the majority of the time these students do not help you to show progress.

Question Prompt: Does having special needs students in your school means getting more funds?

Response: They claim that they do but when you have to make cuts that is what you do. When you are under the gun you have to show progress you forget about the budget. A school can have all the money in the world this does not mean that the scores are going to go up. Principals are constantly contemplating about strategies they will use to move students from point A to point B so that next school year they can keep their job. The city looks at progress and the state looks at performance. If your school does not demonstrate adequate progress then your school faces the possibility of being closed down. So I have to tailor my instruction to move students from level 2 to level 3 and keep the amount of students who score at levels 3 and 4 or I may not have a job next year. I may be performing at a 74 percent performance level but if I have move level 2 students to level 3 and I have to keep the levels 3 and 4 students performing at those levels.

The most important thing is the scale scores. Last my level was 650 this year it will have to be increased.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining high qualified teachers at your school?

Response: The rule for New York City is that you must be fully certified in order to be a classroom teacher. The majority of my teachers are highly qualified. The only way they would be classified as not qualified is if they were teaching in another area of instruction; that is an area outside of their license. For example, a teacher must be certified to teach math, science, or any of the subject area. The BEDS Survey that is administered every October ensures that each teacher is qualified to teach in a position. If the survey finds that a teacher is teaching outside of their license, the city will terminate their license and remove that teacher from the payroll. Before teachers were allowed to teach with provisional license but that has changed and every teacher must have a permanent

license. No principal is allowed to hire someone as a classroom teaching position unless he or she has a permanent teaching license.

Question Prompt: What is the turnover rate of teachers at your school?

Response: This school has a history of a staff that is dedicated. They love what they are doing here. The only time that a vacancy occurs is when someone retires. We don't have any turnover at all. That is why this school is in such good standing with the community. This is demonstrated by the state and city results on assessments. Compared to other school in the district our school is performing the highest and I am sure the staff has contributed greatly to this success.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandate at your school?

Response: I have a Quality Curriculum Committee consisting of librarian, assistant principal, data specialist, members of the inquiry team, resource room teacher, AIS teacher, and myself. Anytime we have students who were transferred to our school, we make sure that student receives additional academic services. This includes making sure that student attends the extended day program and receive individualized instruction. Our Committee identifies students who are in need of extra academic help and we provide resources to raise their performance levels. We send a letter to parents in the beginning of the school year explaining that our school day is from 8:30 to 5:00 PM which is unlike any other school in the district. The regular school day is 8:30 to 2:50. Then there is the thirty-seven and one half minutes from 2:50 to 3:30 (this was a union contract agreement of teacher time. Some schools incorporate the minutes during the school day and some schools choose to use them at the end of the day to accommodate the NCLB mandate of providing individual instruction for students performing below proficient levels). So each teacher has 10 students for individualized instruction for thirty-seven and one half minutes. Then the extended day is from 3:30 to 5:00 PM. During the two sessions, students receive whole class as well as individualized instruction. We have no breaks; this is why we call it extended day.

Question Prompt: Does this mean that you have increased the hours of your school day?

Response: I had to. One of the reasons why I am grateful and appreciate my teachers so much is that instead of just keeping the 10 mandated students, they keep the whole class students. I am sure they don't do this in other schools. The ten students are identified as needed academic help based on teacher recommendation.

Question Prompt: What are some other changes you implemented to accommodate NCLB?

Response: We have AIS (academic intervention service) and the Inquiry Team. The Inquiry Team examines a specific number of students by taking their data, analyzing the data, and then uses the data to drive instruction. The service provided from the Inquiry Team works in collaboration with the classroom teacher. This system is used throughout the whole school. These students are followed; the teachers are involved with the planning for instruction when students are pulled out of the classroom for individualized instruction. The team goes into the classroom to see how well the students are performing and also work in the classroom with the students. There has progress made for the past 2 years using this program. The AIS teacher and resource room teacher are two service providers who work closely with classroom teachers. They are in constant communication about students to monitor and track progress. The team consists of resource room teacher, classroom teachers, AIS teacher, coach, data specialist, librarian, assistant principal, and me. But we have another sub-inquiry team monitoring accelerated classes. There is one accelerated class on each grade level. The teachers from these classes form the other inquiry team. For each testing grade a class formed with students who scored levels 3 and 4 on the previous year's assessments. This is a strategy to maintain these levels. I must tell you again, all of this would not be possible if I did not have a dedicated staff working with me. The staff here works over and above what is required. They are dedicated to making a difference.

Transcript of research interview with Administrator #40, School #11

February 1, 2009, 11:15 AM

Question 1: How have students in your school performed on assessments since the implementation of the NCLB Legislation?

Response: There has not been any improvement in student performance on assessments since the implementation of NCLB. Student test scores have not risen since NCLB was implemented.

Question 2: What has been the impact of testing on students of color and high poverty in your school?

Response: I am in a Title I school and my student population is universal free lunch. The population consists of ninety-nine percent African-American and all are considered as living in high poverty. My perception is that there has been no impact from testing as related in the response to question 1. In my school there are two major programs that are used to help students improve academically. We have an after-school component of the program. We sent letters to every single parent informing them that SES (Supplemental Education Services) are available for students who need academic help at no cost to them. This is a tutoring service which uses tutors who work with students individually in their homes. We planned and had meeting inviting parents to explain the benefits of SES, many if not all of the parents do not choose to participate in the program. Many if not all of the parents have not taken advantage of SES; which is the out of school component of service that is provided by NCLB. Most parents do not choose this in home tutoring program because they do not feel comfortable having strangers in their home. The other in school tutoring program that is mandated to be provided by the school to fulfill NCLB requirements for students who perform below standards, is conducted at zero period in the morning and after-school. Most children do not show up for these services. The children who do attend these tutoring sessions are the students who perform well on tests anyway.

Question Prompt: Why don't students show up for tutoring?

Response: In our community most of our children are care-givers themselves. They have to pick younger brothers or sisters from school and have to take them home so they cannot stay for the extended day. Or they have take younger brothers and/or sisters to school in the morning so they cannot attend the zero hour tutoring sessions; they are just making it to school on time themselves they cannot make it to school any earlier.

Question Prompt: Has your school done anything in terms of outreach to get parents to participate in SES?

Response: We have mailed letters three or more times inviting parents. The parent coordinator has held one meeting after the other at different times of the day; the mornings, during different times of the day, and evenings but parents do not attend these meetings. Again, it the children who do well on tests whose parents attend the meetings.

Question Prompt: In your estimate, what percent of students in your school is performing below standard that need to attend these SES tutoring services?

Response: I would say sixty-seven percent of the students are levels 1 and 2. Level 1 indicates that students are performing below standards and level 2 indicates that students are approaching standards.

Question 3: What success has there been in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers in your school?

Response: We have had teachers from Teach for America and Teaching Fellows programs. These teachers do not stay longer than one year. The behavior of the students is so poor that it causes the teachers to leave. If these teachers do stay, they stay for the two years that is required for them to attain a master's degree and move on to a better school.

Question Prompt: If new teachers are not staying, are the administrators staying?

Response: In my perception, the administration is stationary.

Question 4: What organizational changes were made to accommodate the NCLB mandate in your school?

Response: There were not any organizational changes, however, the AIS (Academic Intervention Service) was instituted in our school. As opposed to the SES Program that occurred before and after the school day and on Saturday, AIS is conducted during the school day.

Question Prompt: What does AIS entail?

Response: SES Services are provided by tutoring companies that have contracts with the State Department of Education and parents can choose which tutoring company they want to work with at their home. Our school had Kaplan Review and Princeton Review Companies. Academic Intervention Services is the other component of NCLB. AIS were only for literacy and math programs. It utilizes small group instruction conducted by a

regular teacher. A regular teacher would either take students out of classes or stay in the class as a push-in for small group instruction in literacy or mathematics. The target students for the small group instruction were chosen according to the previous year's scores. Students who scored high 2 or close to3, students who scored 3 and high 3, and students who scored low and high 4 received AIS. These were the students who received in-school AIS and were the focus of small group instruction. My perception is that students who scored level 1 and low level 2 should have comprised the groups to receive the small group instruction. However, the students who scored high level 2 so that they could score 3; students who scored 3 so that they could remain level 3; students who scored high level 3 so they could score level 4; students who scored low level 4 so that they could remain at level 4. This strategy was used because levels 3 and 4scores are counted twice on AYP (adequate yearly progress). Under NCLB to move a student from a low 1 to a high 1or from low 2 to a high 2 does not have give any points towards AYP. However, to move a student from a high level 2 to 3 or level 3 to 4 means receiving double points on AYP. My perception is that NCLB only cares about test scores. Funding under the NCLB Act depends only on student performance, and the performance depends on test scores, and test scores are most affected by students scoring at levels 3 and 4 on assessments. The students who scored levels 3 and 4 were given AIS because these scores were given double weight. The students who could really move test scores were one on one tutoring. NCLB helped students who already had performed at high levels so that they could continue to score high and increase test scores so that funding could be received by the school. What NCLB did was to turn schools and education into test prep. And the test prep was not given to low achieving students test was given to those students who could affect higher test scores. That is what NCLB accomplished in my opinion. Low performing students were overlooked. NCLB created a very high preponderance of test preparation in the building. No longer was there exciting and enriching content in lessons. In most subject areas there was just test prep so the children learned how to take a test but nothing else. Furthermore, the multiple choice section of the test carried the most points; 67 percent of the test. So every day in every subject students had test prep using interim assessments in comprehensions skills such as making predictions, author's voice, author's purpose, cause and effect-- there were thirteen of them. These skills were administered everyday because 67 percent of the test was based on these skills. So in my opinion and what I saw and when I spoke to other school administrators in the district, NCLB succeeded in making school test prep havens and forgot about the lower achieving students and focused on the higher achieving students who could do well on a test. NCLB was only about test scores. This was the strategy that was used throughout the city because the higher the test scores the more funds are received from the federal government.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2004-Present
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
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Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Brooklyn, NY
Advanced Certificate School Administration and Supervision

1988-1990
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Professional Experience
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1998-2002
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