

2011

Student motivation and No Child Left Behind

Tiffany Kleckner
University of Northern Iowa

Copyright ©2011 Tiffany Kleckner

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Education Policy Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation

Kleckner, Tiffany, "Student motivation and No Child Left Behind" (2011). *Graduate Research Papers*. 191.
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/191>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Student motivation and No Child Left Behind

Abstract

The No Child Left Behind Act was developed in 2002 by the administration of George W. Bush. The purpose of this piece of legislation was to increase student achievement in America. Regulations and requirements have been put in place by the administration such as standardized testing. This paper discusses the history of NCLB, the current issues with the legislation, and how student motivation and achievement has been effected due to the NCLB law.

STUDENT MOTIVATION AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

A Graduate Review

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Tiffany Kleckner

October 7, 2011

This Review by: Tiffany Kleckner

Titled: Student Motivation with the No Child Left Behind Act

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts.

Oct 14, 2011

Date Approved

Lynn Nielsen

Graduate Faculty Reader

Sarah E. Montgomery

Graduate Faculty Reader

Jill M. Uhlenberg

Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Oct. 14, 2011

Date Approved

10-18-11

Date Approved

Table of Contents

Introduction5

 Background on No Child Left Behind5

 Terminology of No Child Left Behind.....6

Methodology 10

Literature Review 11

 Importance of Student Motivation 11

 Why Student Motivation is Important Within the No Child Left Behind Act 13

 Pros of the No Child Left Behind Act 17

 Cons of the No Child Left Behind Act 18

 Effects of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement..... 19

Conclusion and Recommendations21

References28

Abstract

The No Child Left Behind Act was developed in 2002 by the administration of George W. Bush. The purpose of this piece of legislation was to increase student achievement in America. Regulations and requirements have been put in place by the administration such as standardized testing. This paper discusses the history of NCLB, the current issues with the legislation, and how student motivation and achievement has been effected due to the NCLB law.

Introduction

Does the No Child Left Behind Act hinder student motivation and student creativity in school? This, as well as many other similar questions, has been raised by educators and parents since the beginning of the No Child Left Behind Act. No Child Left Behind is one of the most controversial educational reform acts and educators agree that there have been benefits and struggles with the act. The four arguments concerning No Child Left Behind were standardized tests, flexibility towards curriculum, teacher accountability, and adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements. Supporters of No Child Left Behind agree that accountability to national standards will improve the quality of education for all public school students. Those opposed believe that standardized testing is bias and has not been effective in improving test scores and student achievement.

Background on No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2002 by the Bush Administration. The purpose of the act was to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain high-quality education (Howard, Crenshaw, 2006). The writers of the No Child Left Behind Act created the incentive to close the achievement gap between minority and white students. According to the act, teachers, schools, districts, and states are responsible for the academic progress of all students. Since the act has sparked much controversy, the areas of concern are: assessment driven reform, assessments based on standards, accountability with standardized assessments, and high stakes testing consequences.

The No Child Left Behind Act changed requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 provided compensatory educational services for economically disadvantaged school districts. The law focuses on policy and

distribution of funds to public schools. Majority of the funds under No Child Left Behind are distributed to school districts whose populations come from lower economic levels and represent culturally diverse populations (Aru, et al. 2006). The goal of the act set by the Bush Administration was to close the achievement gap by holding school districts and states accountable. The attempt of the act was to deliver high quality education to all students. Years later as government officials, educators, administrators, and parents look at the effects of the act, questions were raised. The questions remain: Is the No Child Left Behind Act closing the achievement gap? Are students really getting a quality education? Is the No Child Left Behind Act hindering our student's creativity and motivation to learn? And are we robbing students of a well rounded education?

No Child Left Behind is an important issue that does need the attention of all educators. This act, now law, has affected schools, teachers, and students in our nation. No Child Left Behind has expanded the federal role in education causing it to become a focal point of policies influencing education. The act came at a time during a wide public concern about the state of education. There were many legislation requirements connected with No Child Left Behind that touched every public school in America. The No Child Left Behind Act is based on a number of measures that are designed to increase student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress.

Terminology of No Child Left Behind Act

1. **Accountability System:** Each state sets academic standards for what every child should know and learn. Student academic achievement is measured for every child, every year. The results of these annual tests are reported to the public. (Definition

taken from the U.S. Department of Education website:

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)

2. **Achievement Gap:** The difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on standardized tests as compared with their peers. For many years, low-income and minority children have been falling behind their white peers in terms of academic achievement. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
3. **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** An individual state's measure of yearly progress toward academic standards. Adequate Yearly Progress is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
4. **Assessment:** Another word for "test." Under *No Child Left Behind*, tests are aligned with academic standards. Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, schools must administer tests in each of three grade spans: grades 3-5, grades 6-9, and grades 10-12 in all schools. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, tests must be administered every year in grades 3 through 8 in math and reading. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, science achievement must also be tested. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
5. **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** First enacted in 1965, is the federal law affecting K-12 education. The No Child Left Behind Act was the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)

6. Flexibility: Refers to a new way of funding public education. The *No Child Left Behind* Act gives states and school districts unprecedented authority in the use of federal education dollars in exchange for strong accountability for results. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
7. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
8. National Assessment of Educational Progress: An independent benchmark, NAEP is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, The National Center for Education Statistics has conducted NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
9. State Educational Agency: SEA is the agency primarily responsible for the state level supervision of public elementary and secondary schools. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)
10. Supplemental Services: Students from low-income families who are attending schools that have been identified as in need of improvement for two years will be

eligible to receive outside tutoring or academic assistance. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of approved providers. The school district will purchase the services. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)

11. Teacher Quality: To ensure that every classroom has a highly qualified teacher, states and districts around the country are using innovative programs to address immediate and long-term needs, including alternative recruitment strategies, new approaches to professional development, financial incentive programs, partnerships with local universities, and much more. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)

12. Title 1: The first section of the ESEA, Title I refers to programs aimed at America's most disadvantaged students. Title I Part A provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in high-poverty schools to enable those children to meet challenging State academic content and performance standards. Title I reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools.. (Definition taken from the U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>)

Methodology

The No Child Left Behind Act, as stated previously, has been a very controversial topic in the past view years for educators and lawmakers. The purpose of this literature review was to find research and information on the No Child Left Behind Act and its influence on student motivation and achievement.

Locating information on this topic was a straightforward process. Access to the EBSCO host provided a large variety of professional journals from a multitude of databases such as ERIC, Academic Search Elite and Teacher Reference Center. Within these databases I found a great deal of research and information by searching the No Child Left Behind Act, student motivation, effects of the No Child Left Behind Act and student achievement.

The articles found were analyzed by publication date, relevance to the topic, and the amount of information provided on the various topics. The journal articles that were selected for use were articles that were published within the last decade that included accurate information relevant to the topic. Many of the articles were very useful in locating information on the topic of the No Child Left Behind Act and student motivation.

Once articles were found, they were categorized by the various topics: student motivation, student achievement and the No Child Left Behind Act. This allowed me to generate a list of questions on student motivation and the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on motivation and academic achievement.

Literature Review

Importance of Student Motivation

No Child Left Behind has affected student motivation in school. Motivation is defined as an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior. Motivation is an internal psychic energy or a mental force that helps a person achieve a goal (Sternberg and Williams, 2010). Students who are motivated achieve more in school, attend school more, and stay in school longer. They also perform better on tests. There are two types of motivation students can identify with--intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the push students give themselves; extrinsic is the push students get from external rewards or incentives (Sternberg and Williams,

2010). Researchers have found that students need motivation in order to learn successfully. To motivate students, teachers need to use extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivational techniques. According to Eric Jensen (2005) students are more motivated to learn when they are given choices and multiple learning opportunities. The No Child Left Behind Act had an opposite effect on student learning with its rigid guidelines and requirements.

Allowing teachers to have instructional choices can make a very positive impact on student motivation. Teachers play an extremely important role in the motivation of their students in the classroom. “Effective schools and effective teachers are those who develop goals, beliefs, and attitudes in students that will sustain a long-term involvement and that will contribute to quality involvement in learning” (Mart, 2011 pg 319) It is important to look at how the elementary school day is structured and what teaching methodologies are used. This can affect student’s motivation to learn (Mart, 2011). There are strategies to consider when planning your curriculum and lessons which are important in student motivation. According to Mekiva and Callahan (2004), these are the strategies that should be considered:

1. Set the tone of the classroom early in the year. Explicitly communicate to your students the learning objectives, goals, and expectations.
2. Vary your teaching methods. Incorporate problem-based learning, collaborative learning, experiments, and the use of technology.
3. Give students options in the classroom. Allow students to give input or select topics for studying. Students’ motivation will increase if they feel they have some control over the learning goals and outcomes.
4. Create assignments that are appropriately challenging. Teachers need to consider student interests, background knowledge, and range of ability when designing

lessons. Students need small successes that lead into more difficult assignments and projects. Students need to be challenged but not beyond their limits.

5. Make lessons relevant. Students are highly motivated if they can relate the activities and topics to their daily lives and experiences. Students need to see how the skills being learned relate to the real world.

Lack of student motivation can lead to deficits in student achievement. Experts like Jeremy Harmer (2008), suggested that a mixture of 5 A's can aid in sustaining student motivation in the classroom.

1. Activity: Moving around, role-plays, hands-on experiences.
2. Agency: Allowing students to be doers. Give students the power to decide things when possible.
3. Affect: Students need to know the teacher cares about them.
4. Adaptation: The teacher's ability to respond to the unexpected and be flexible.
5. Attitude: Simply put, the teacher's attitude.

Highly motivated and positive teachers naturally create classroom atmospheres which both engage and challenge students. Students in these classrooms exhibit high levels of curiosity and creativity. An effective teacher does not lecture students but rather empowers them by the culture of the classroom. Mart (2011) explains that students achieve poorly in highly evaluative situations. When instructors exert control over classroom procedures and competition among students is emphasized achievement is affected. Students who are anxious are more sensitive to situations, such as testing, that they perceive as highly evaluative.

In conclusion, Mart (2011) sets forth basic principles of motivation educators should consider. These include the following:

1. The environment can be built in a manner which will help to focus the students' attention on what needs to be learned.
2. External incentives motivate learning, but internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than external motivation.
3. External motivation must be reinforced by praise or concrete rewards on a regular, consistent basis.
4. Learning is most effective when an individual is ready and willing to learn. Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized.
5. Learning can require changes in both beliefs and behavior. Acquisition of information normally produces a mild level of anxiety.
6. It is important to help each student set academic goals and to provide informative feedback regarding progress toward the goals.
7. Both affiliation and approval are strong motivators.
8. Finally, many behaviors result from a combination of motives (Mart, 2011).

Why Student Motivation is Important Within the No Child Left Behind Act

Some critics of the No Child Left Behind Act suggest that the heavy emphasis and focus on academic proficiency and accountability has had some negative consequences. Overlooked are the personal, social, and emotional development of children. Martens and Witt (2004) have argued that it is important for children to learn as much as possible to be competitive with peers internationally. It is also very critical to have the opportunity to thrive socially and emotionally in order to help meet the crucial goal of becoming lifelong learners.

The No Child Left Behind Act seems to show that schools are beginning to reduce the time and resources they have available in order to improve student proficiency scores. Schools

have cutback subjects such as physical education, social studies, music and art. Some schools have even eliminated recess time in order to focus on the No Child Left Behind Act. A study done by Cook (2004) found that free play, naptime, and longer lunch times have also been removed from the school day so that more time can be devoted to teaching reading, writing, and math skills.

A narrow curriculum focusing only on reading and math skills has brought up numerous questions. The effect of this act on childhood obesity because; children are not getting adequate amount of daily exercise, is one topic of concern. A study done in 2006 by the American Heart Association claims that a decreased amount of physical education classes in schools has contributed to the rising levels of childhood obesity.

Much research has been done on the effects of No Child Left Behind and students' creativity and motivation. Research on recess has produced some interesting information related to the effects it has on children's creativity and motivation. There has been a trend to implement "no recess" policies. This is under the belief that recess is a waste of time and that time would be better spent on academics. This trend concerns parents and educators for many reasons. According to experts in child health and psychology, the loss of recess results in a more sedentary, stressed-out youngster who may encounter significant difficulties related to socialization. The loss of PE, Art, and Music, are a blow to the "Whole Child" approach to education (Henley, et al. 2006). Many experts feel that recess is a vital part of a child's school day. Recess allows for children to socialize with their peers and it promotes creative play. Nationwide, parents are troubled that recess is being taken out of the school day. The Cartoon Network and the National PTA have launched a "Rescuing Recess" campaign. The campaign is supported by the Center for Disease Control and other national experts who believe that recess

provides children with the daily exercise they need and it improves their ability to participate and learn in class (Rescuing Recess 2006). The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that elementary school children get at least one hour of exercise per day. Researcher Charles Corbin states that the number one barrier to physical activity in schools is the perception that time spent in activities such as physical education and recess will undermine academic learning. The evidence does not support this assumption. Making time for physical education and physical activity does not reduce academic learning, on the contrary it may actually increase academic learning (National Association for Sports and Physical Activity, 2003).

Another effect of No Child Left Behind relates to the Gifted and Talented programs offered to our students. Questions have risen as to what No Child Left Behind has done for our brightest students. The concern is that the curriculum has been “dumbed down”, the pace has been slowed down, and little consideration has been given to the individual needs of the gifted learner.

A study by Henley was done interviewing ten classroom teachers with questions regarding the impact that No Child Left Behind had on their students. The teachers taught in schools ranging from poor to affluent populations and low performance to high performance on standardized tests. The teachers were asked questions related to how No Child Left Behind has affected gifted children in their schools and classes, if adequate instruction was given to gifted children, and if professional development was available for differentiation curriculum for the gifted in lieu of No Child Left Behind. The conclusions from the study were that gifted children have been overlooked before and are underserved now more than ever. Advanced students are not a priority to teachers. Gifted children missed their gifted education classes so they could be

included in test preparations (Henley et al. 2006). Gifted learners seem to have been overlooked in the past and viewed as unimportant in our educational system. No Child Left Behind has increased this lack of attention that educators have given to this small population. However, we do need to consider that these children are our future leaders. Possible cures for cancer and other diseases, new technologies and inventions to better our world could possibly come from one of these gifted students. What has No Child Left Behind done for these students? Have we cheated them of a quality education?

The saying “No Child Gets Ahead” has been heard by many since the act has been initiated. This has angered parents of high performing and gifted children. Many parents are arguing that their child is getting left behind, and is not being pushed to achieve. The curriculum is not challenging and focuses just on basic reading and math skills. There are no programs for talented and gifted students under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Barbara Bartholomew stated in her article, “Why We Can’t Always Get What We Want”, that all school districts should provide educators with professional development opportunities to learn how to motivate students. She also states that as a nation we have failed to provide, in our professional training of teachers, a realistic understanding that control and compliance will not in themselves create a climate for academic attainment. Causes of student disengagement vary from boredom and frustration to anger and depression. We are overlooking the root causes of why students fail to thrive and are focusing on the symptoms (Bartholomew, 2006). If educators can learn how to motivate students and create motivating opportunities in their classrooms, students will be successful. No Child Left Behind has limited the opportunities for teachers to be creating creative lessons that engage and motivate student learning.

Pros of the No Child Left Behind Act

One of the main focuses of the No Child Left Behind Act was the push for performance on standardized tests. Students, regardless of socioeconomic background, race, or disability, were expected to reach a common set of standards on the assessments. Everyone involved with education were held accountable. Schools and districts suffered dire consequences if they did not meet the goals of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The Bush administration and other supporters felt strongly that No Child Left Behind would strengthen U.S. education by setting standards and providing resources to all schools. In January of 2007, Education Secretary, Margaret Spellings published “Building on Results: A Blue print for Strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act”. In this article, Spelling stated that the Act was challenging students to succeed and improving our schools. She provided statistics which supported the Bush Administration’s No Child Left Behind Act.

1. Between 1999 and 2004, reading scores for 17 year olds fell 3 points, and math scores fell 1 point.
2. U.S. 15 year olds ranked 24th out of 29 in developed nations in math, literacy, and problem solving.
3. 1 million students annual drop out of high school before graduation. (Spellings, 2007)

Supporters of the No Child Left Behind Act argue that school districts have failed with students achievement, especially in the area of intervention. Schools with significant achievement gaps were not getting the needed support, nor the professional development to change. The legislation encouraged accountability in public schools, offered parents more educational options, and helped close the achievement gap between minority and white students.

Supporters of the Act rallied behind the common goals mandated by the federal standardized tests.

The No Child Behind Act claimed that it will:

1. Link state academic standards with student outcomes.
2. Measure student performance in reading in math annually.
3. Provide information for parents by requiring states and school districts to give detailed report cards.
4. Districts must provide schools Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
5. School administrations must use assessment data to drive decisions on instruction and curriculum.
6. Narrow class and racial gaps in school performance by creating common expectations for all.

Cons of the No Child Left Behind Act

Those that criticize the No Child Left Behind act felt that the incentives and penalties that were set up within the act have motivated schools, districts, and states to manipulate test results in one way or another. Some states have lowered their official standards. States can produce their own standardized tests. Therefore, the tests can be easier and scores were increased. Many opposed to the Act argued that the focus on standardized testing encourages teachers to teach a narrow set of skills (Gentry 2006).

This led many teachers to teach to the test. Opponents say that the practice of giving all students the same test, under the same conditions conflicts with the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). IDEA entitles schools to accommodate disabled students on testing and daily assignments. No Child Left Behind has been criticized for holding educators

accountable for variables out of their control. One variable is socioeconomic status. Another one is learning readiness. The third variable is student home life.

Gentry (2006), uncovered four negative effects of the No Child Left Behind Act. These include:

1. Schools focusing on what is tested rather than enriching and challenging curriculum;
2. A deficit, rather than strengths-based approach to education;
3. Establishing standards that lead to less challenging curriculum;
4. A problematic message sent to students that summative test results are priority

Other negative effects have been increased stress levels of students, teachers, and administrators. Before academic learning can occur students must be prepared to learn. They must be able to self-motivate, take responsibility, and see value in education.

Effects of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement

In an April, 2009 issue of the New York Times, Sam Dillon reported that the achievement gap between white and minority students has not decreased in recent years, despite the focus of the No Child Left Behind law to improve African American and Hispanic test scores. Education secretary, Arne Duncan said he would like to tighten requirements distributing high-quality teachers equally across schools in affluent and poor neighborhoods. (Dillon, New York Times, April 2009).

Margaret Spellings, former president George Bush's Education Secretary, argues Duncan's opinion stating "It's not an accident that we are seeing the most improvement where No Child Left Behind has focused most vigorously. The law focuses on math and reading in grades three through eight. So these results are affirming our accountability-type approach." (Dillon, New York Times, April 2009).

Jennings (2006) reports that each year the Center on Education Policy conducts a comprehensive and continuous review of the No Child Left Behind Act. Information is gathered by surveying officials in all state departments of education. A questionnaire is given to a nationally representative sample of school districts. From this questionnaire Jennings (2006) cites ten major effects have been the theme throughout the review. The ten effects are:

1. States and districts report student achievement is rising on state mandated tests, but it is unclear whether students are gaining as much as the rising percentages suggest.
2. Schools spend more time on reading and math at the expense of other school subjects.
3. Schools are paying more attention to alignment of curriculum and instruction and are analyzing test scores more closely.
4. Low performing schools are undergoing changes within rather than restructuring the entire school.
5. Schools and teachers have made progress in demonstrating that teachers meet the law's academic qualifications. Some continue to be skeptical about whether this will improve the quality of teaching.
6. Students are taking more tests and assessments.
7. Schools are paying more attention to achievement gaps and the learning needs of specific groups of students.
8. The percentage of schools on state "in need of improvement" lists have been steady, but not increasing.
9. The federal government plays a larger role in education. The Education Department must approve all testing programs that states use and accountability plans that determine each school's annual yearly progress.

10. The No Child Left Behind requirements have meant that state governments and school districts have expanded roles in school operations, but most are lacking the staff and support necessary to carry out the No Child Left Behind requirements.

Overall, it seems that the No Child Left Behind Act has made an impact on the American School System. Whether these effects are positive or negative, they have forced all involved in education to take a closer look at how children are being educated in this country and how we as a nation are holding schools accountable for this education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Has student motivation now become “how many bubbles can I fill in today?” or “what is a creative way to fill in my bubble sheet?” If our goal as a nation is to provide students with a quality education and create well rounded citizens, are we doing that by having them fill out bubble sheets?

Under the Obama administration changes within the No Child Left Behind Act have begun to emerge. This administration has begun the task of rewriting the federal law and issued a revision in March of 2010. The administration focused on addressing the main criticisms of No Child Left Behind. These criticisms include the lack of flexibility within the law. All schools are treated the same when in fact they were not the same. Other criticisms include the emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing as a means of measuring student learning. Many believe that since No Child Left Behind, teachers have become overly focused on the testing of students rather than student learning. Concerns have been raised about the superficial nature of the standardized testing as well as the teacher qualifications needed under the act (Blueprint for Reform 2010, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/faq.html>).

President Obama believes that the overall goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is right.

This goal is to ensure that all students meet high standards of academic achievement. He also believes that the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed. In the proposed revision

Obama states:

Reforming our schools to deliver a world class education is a shared responsibility-the task cannot be shouldered by our nation's teachers and principals alone. We must foster school environments where teachers have the time to collaborate, the opportunities to lead, and the respect that all professionals deserve. We must recognize the importance of communities and families in supporting their children's education, because a parent is a child's first teacher. We must support families, communities, and schools working in partnership to deliver services and supports that address the full range of student needs. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

According to the U.S. Department of Education Blueprint for Reform (2010), the revisions Obama has suggested focuses on student achievement and accountability as the No Child Left Behind Act did, but the focus is in a more positive manner. The focus is on rewards and incentives rather than punishments and failures of schools struggling to make their yearly progress on proficient levels. Schools and districts that are making real progress and closing achievement gaps will be rewarded. States will adopt new standards that will show student growth and school progress, rather than on if schools are meeting proficiency standards. The blueprint as described by the U.S. Department of Education Blueprint for Reform (2010) builds on the following principles:

1. Improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader.
2. Providing information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools, and to educators to help them improve their students' learning.
3. Implementing college and career-ready students and developing improved assessments aligned with those standards.

4. Improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions.

The blueprint priorities stated in Obama's revision are to make accountability about more than test scores for most schools and to develop systems of measurement that focus on the conditions of learning. It suggests that we develop and support the use of better assessments which will allow teachers and administrators to look beyond the actual assessments themselves to determine what a school actually needs. Additional resources need to be available to develop a well rounded curriculum where all subjects are being taught, especially in the content areas of literacy, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is the hope that improving and providing a well rounded education will strengthen student skills and help them become world class learners. Obama's revision hopes to assist all teachers and leaders in finding expanded learning time that will provided educators with the more meaningful time needed to collaborate and plan for their students. The revision plans to invest in preparing and improving teachers and leaders so that the great ones are working where they are needed most.

The revision also states that students are the focus. Students need to be in safe and healthy environments where they can focus on learning. To make sure that students are the focal point, Obama has developed the Race to the Top incentive program. This program centers on positive rewards and incentives for schools working towards student growth and progress.

Authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the Race to the Top Assessment Program provides funding to States to develop assessments that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and which measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. These assessments are intended to play a critical role in the educational systems, provide administrators, educators, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring, by 2020, the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates. (Blueprint for Reform <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/faq.html>)

The revision plans to improve all areas of education from the tops of the administration down to the students, who are in fact the reason we are in education to begin with. To summarize, the blueprint revision focuses on five important areas that will become the priority for all educators:

1. College and career-ready students
2. Great teachers and leaders in every school
3. Equity and opportunity for all students
4. Raise the bar and reward excellence
5. Promote innovation and continuous improvement

No Child Left Behind is an important issue which has affected all schools, teachers, and students in our nation. The No Child Left Behind Act has expanded the federal government role in education and has become a focal point of policies influencing education. This act came at a time when there was a wide public concern about the state of education. Legislation set in place requirements that touch every public school in America. The No Child Left Behind Act is based on a number of measures that are designed to increase student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. Obama's revisions center on flexibility and accountability of schools and districts. The revision focuses on student achievement and success. Rewards and incentives are given for student growth and progress, not whether a child has met the proficiency level or not. With this revision I strongly believe student motivation will increase. Student motivation is linked to assessment, accountability and school improvement. Teachers and principals are given back some ownership of their craft. They are given choices and flexibility with assessments. Grants and incentives will allow teachers to provide the environment and resources necessary for students to focus on learning. Individual students who

have mastery goal orientations rather than performance goal orientations tend to be more readily engaged and willing to work on challenging tasks. School improvement, professional development, and motivational concerns are affected very heavily by assessments and accountability decisions that are made based on those assessments. Formative and summative assessments can be used for instructional purposes. Both types are important. Teachers can better utilize assessments for learning. Teachers can create innovative lessons that will motivate and engage their students to learn.

In *The Future of Test-Based Educational Accountability*, Ryan and Shepard (2008) give the following reasons why standardized assessment is flawed (pg 94):

1. Situational factors of the testing setting which include variable such as administrative errors, distractions, and disruptive students.
2. Scorer unreliability, incorrect or non-uniform scoring rubrics, scoring errors, etc.
3. Student specific factors such as fatigue, mood, health, carelessness in marking answers, motivation and exposure to test content and differences in ability.
4. Test specific factors that include the sample of questions on the test, item order, clarity of the test directions, and ambiguity of the questions or response options.

As an educator, these four factors resonate with my experience and thinking about accountability and testing. I have faith in the fact that the core ideas and beliefs of No Child Left Behind are essential. Everyone is in favor of higher educational standards that measure our students' progress and will hold our schools accountable for their learning and achievement. Unfortunately, I do not consider the current state of the No Child Left Behind Act as fulfilling these ideas (Ryan and Shepherd, 2008). I do not believe that there is a one size fits all approach to educational reform. Standardized testing should not be the backbone of how we measure

student performance and achievement. No assessment is perfectly constructed nor is reliable in judging student achievement.

Teachers need to take the time to look at what motivates their students. In what ways can teachers create lessons that compliment this and still fall within the required curricular areas? In what ways can educators provide opportunities for creative thinking and innovative problem solving within their classroom and daily lessons? Teachers need to take a closer look at the curriculum that is required to be taught and find ways to work in creativity for the students benefit as well as their own development as an expert teacher. As Eric Jensen states:

We have all looked for solutions to “motivate” learners. The long-term promise of better grades, pleasing others, graduation, and future employment are common “hooks”. Short term, teachers offer choice, privileges, and getting out on time or early. These kinds of rewards seem to work with some but not all students (Jensen 2005).

Teachers need to do some detective work to figure out what can, and will, motivate the students they work with. This takes time and effort but will pay off in the long run for the teacher and student. More work will be accomplished and students will become successful self motivated learners. Jensen suggests five strategies that can help motivate students. Teachers can implement these strategies in their classrooms which will in turn promote students to be intrinsically motivated to learn and achieve. The first strategy suggested is eliminating threat in the classroom. This can be done by asking students to come together to brainstorm and discuss what inhibits their learning ability in the classroom. Goal setting is another strategy that can promote student motivation. When students set goals they tend to have a more focused attitude towards the topic of study. The third and fourth strategies suggested by Jensen are to positively influence students’ beliefs about themselves and learning and teaching students how to manage and monitor their emotions. This can be done through dramatic play and movement activities. Student affirmation and acknowledgment are powerful tools that can be used for motivating

students. Feedback is the final strategy Jensen suggests teachers use to intrinsically motivate students. Feedback is crucial to student learning and achievement. Feedback given to students should be positive and constructive in nature (Jensen, 2005).

This literature review would suggest that few people argue against the goal of helping all children meet the same set of high educational standards. The No Child Left Behind's requirement that all children must reach the same set of standards at the same time fails to acknowledge that there are many factors that will limit how much and how quickly a child learns. It seems that the revisions set in place should help children meet high standards and become world class learners in a positive and constructive way. This cannot be done unless teachers, leaders, parents and communities work together to insure that all students are receiving a quality, well rounded education. All of us must embrace the best practices and ideas in order to prepare students and ensure that they become world class learners.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Arce, J., Luna, D., Borjian, A., Conrad, M. (2005). No Child Left Behind: Who Wins? Who Loses? *Social Justice*. Volume: 32, Issue: 3, Page Number: 56+.
- Bartholomew, B. (2007). Why we cant always get what we want. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88, 595-598.
- Blank, R. K., & Council of Chief State School, O. (2011). Closing the Achievement Gap for Economically Disadvantaged Students? Analyzing Change since No Child Left Behind Using State Assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. *Council of Chief State School Officers*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Butzin, S. (2007). NCLB: Fix It, Don't Nix It; There Is Both Good and Bad in the No Child Left Behind Act. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 88 (10), 768+. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Cameron, J. Banko, K. M., & Pierce, W. D. (2001). Pervasive negative effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation: The myth continues [Electronic version]. *The Behavior Analyst*, 24, 1-44. Retrieved from <http://www.abainternational.org/tbajournal/bhan-24-01-0001.pdf>
- Cook, G. (2004). Good-bye to nap time: Spurred by NCLB, elementary schools get serious. *American School Board Journal*, 191(5), 6-8.
- Dichele, A. M. (2006). Academic Achievement in an Age of Irresponsibility. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 10(1), 29-33. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Dillon, S. (2009, April 28). 'No Child Law' Is Not Closing a Racial Gap. *New York Times*, Retrieved from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/29/education/29scores.html?scp=5&sq=April%202009%20Sam%20Dillon&st=cse>

- Fredrick, L. D., Deitz, S. M., Bryceland, J. A., & Hummel, J. H. (2000). *Behavior analysis, education, and effective schooling*. Reno, NV: Context Press.
- Gallagher, J. (2004). No Child Left Behind and Gifted Education. *Roeper Review*, 26(3), 121+.
- Gentry, Marcia. (2006). No Child Left Behind: Gifted children and school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 10, 73-81.
- Henley, J., McBride, J., Milligan, J., Nichols, J. (2007). Robbing Elementary Students of Their Childhood: The Perils of No Child Left Behind. *Education*, 128(1), 56+.
- Howard, W.C., Rice-Crenshaw, Mary. (2006.) No Child Left Behind: A Successful Implementation. *Education*, 126(3), 403+.
- Hwang, Y.G. (1995). Student apathy, lack of self-responsibility and false self-esteem are failing American schools. *Education*, 115, 484-490.
- Jaiani, V., & Whitford, A. B. (2011). Policy Windows, Public Opinion, and Policy Ideas: The Evolution of No Child Left Behind. *Quality Assurance in Education: An International Perspective*, 19(1), 8-27. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Jennings, J., & Stark, D. (2006). Ten Big Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on Public Schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(2), 110-113. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Jensen, E. (2005). *Teaching with the brain in mind* (2nd ed.). New York: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Krieg, J. M. (2008). Are Students Left Behind? The Distributional Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act. *Education Finance and Policy*, 3(2), 250-281. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Malone, H. (2008). Educating the Whole Child: Could Community Schools Hold an Answer?. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 74(2), 6-8. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Mart, C. (2011). How to Sustain Students' Motivation in a Learning Environment. *Online Submission*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Martens, B. & Witt, J. (2004). Competence, persistence, and success: The positive psychology of behavioral skill instruction. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41, 19-30.
- Mechner, R. (1959). A notation system for the description of behavioral procedures. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 2, 133-150.
- More Choices, Higher Scores, and Worse Education. (2010). *American Educator*, 34(2), 12-15. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (n.d.). *American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance - AAHPERD*. Retrieved October 7, 2011, from <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/>
- Neel, R. S. (2006). Consider the Opportunities: A Response to No Child Left Behind. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 29(4), 533-548. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- North Central Regional Educational Lab., N. L. (2005). Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Using Student Engagement to Improve Adolescent Literacy. NCREL Quick Key 10 Action Guide. *Learning Point Associates / North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

- Paone, T. R., & Lepkowski, W. J. (2007). No "Childhood" Left Behind: Advocating for the Personal and Social Development of Children. *Journal of School Counseling*, 5(25). Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Ryan, K. E., & Shepard, L. A. (2008). *The future of test-based educational accountability*. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt, T. (2008). Scratching the Surface of "No Child Left Behind": How "No Child Left Behind" Unfairly Affects Schools with Significant Proportions of Disadvantaged Students. *Online Submission*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Schraw, G. (2010). No School Left Behind. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(2), 71-75. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Shibley, I. A. (2005). One School's Approach to No Child Left Behind. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers*, 80(4), 50-53. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Schoenfeld, W. N., Cole, B. K., Blaustein, J., Lachter, G. D., Martin, J. M., Snapper, A. G., Kadden, R. M., & Inglis, G. B. (1982). State notation of behavioral procedures. *Behavior Research Methods and Instrumentation*, 14, 329-342.
- Spellings, M. (2007). *Building on Results: A Blueprint for strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/nclb/buildingonresults.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Glossary of Terms*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Blueprint for Reform*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf>

Wong, V. C., & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, (2011). Games

Schools Play: How Schools near the Proficiency Threshold Respond to Accountability

Pressures under No Child Left Behind. *Society for Research on Educational*

Effectiveness, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.