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No Child Left Behind (2001) and high stakes tests: how they affect teachers' experiences in the classroom

Emily N. Olson
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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (2001) AND HIGH STAKES TESTS: HOW THEY AFFECT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Educational Specialist in School Psychology

Emily N. Olson
University of Northern Iowa
December 2006
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether No Child Left Behind (2001) and high-stakes tests affect teachers' experiences in the classroom, in areas such as instruction, attitude/anxiety, and job satisfaction. This study also investigates whether teachers in schools labeled “in need of improvement” are affected differently than teachers in schools that are not labeled. Thirty-eight teachers in four urban elementary schools in Iowa who work with 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students responded to a 30-question survey that used a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as ANOVA to investigate a possible difference between the two groups. Results indicate that NCLB and high-stakes tests do affect teacher’s instruction, attitude/anxiety, and job satisfaction. It was also found that there is a significant difference in how teachers in schools identified “in need of improvement” are affected in the areas of instruction and attitude/anxiety. Administrators and other educational professionals can use these results to become more aware of the effects of NCLB and to better assist teachers in these areas through supports such as professional development or inservices.
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This Study by: Emily N. Olson

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has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the Degree of Educational Specialist in School Psychology

Date

\[ \text{Dr. Kimberly Knesting, Chair, Thesis Committee} \]

\[ \text{11/10/03} \]

Date

\[ \text{Dr. Kerri Clopton, Thesis Committee Member} \]

\[ \text{11/10/03} \]

Date

\[ \text{Dr. Susan Etcheidt, Thesis Committee Member} \]

\[ \text{12/12/04} \]

Date

\[ \text{Dr. Susan J. Koch, Dean, Graduate College} \]
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Jaime, Lauryn, and Amy. Their friendship and support have been priceless throughout graduate school. I could not have made it without them. Thank you!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is a major focus of time and resources for educators across the country. NCLB affects states, school districts, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community alike. These affects can be positive and negative. In this study, the focus will be on how NCLB is affecting teachers. Teachers are now being held more accountable for student learning through standardized, high stakes testing. Because of this, it is important to look at how standardized tests are impacting their experiences in the classroom. Three main areas will be discussed: how NCLB impacts instruction, teacher’s attitude and anxiety levels, and their job satisfaction.

Current research is showing that standardized, state-mandated tests are negatively affecting teacher’s experiences in the classroom, including the three areas previously stated. Teachers are changing their curriculum and feel more restricted in what they teach in the classroom (Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Bickham, Burns & Monahan, 2001; Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbrough, & Davis, 1999; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003; Perreault, 2000), their attitudes and anxiety levels are being negatively impacted (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham et al., 2001; Donegan & Trepanier-Street, 1998; Jones et al., 1999; Lutz & Maddirala, 1990; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003), there is reduced teacher morale and job satisfaction (Abrams et al, 2003; Cozart & Gersti-Pepin, 2002; Jones et al., 1999; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003), and their relationships with other professionals are being negatively affected (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham et al., 2001).
Not only is it important to look at how NCLB and state-mandated, high-stakes assessments are impacting teachers in general in these areas, it is also critical to explore how they are affecting teachers in schools that are identified as "in need of improvement" by NCLB. A school that is labeled "in need of improvement" has not made adequate yearly progress toward one or more of the state's goals as measured by a standardized test, which will be explained in greater detail in the following section. These schools are under particular stress to make sufficient progress toward their goals, which in turn puts more pressure on the teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Currently, there is no research that depicts how this is affecting teacher's experiences in the classroom. Research on schools that are low-performing or have high teacher burnout rates indicate that there is a high mobility rate among teachers in the schools (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001) and that teachers have negative feelings toward these schools (Friedman, 1991). This study will attempt to answer whether or not NCLB and high-stakes tests are affecting teachers' experience in the classroom, and if teachers in school that are labeled "in need of improvement" are affected differently than those in schools that are not labeled.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

No Child Left Behind (2001)

Across the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and high-stakes testing have affected countless numbers of elementary, middle, and high schools. NCLB is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 that, at the time, created content and performance standards for the areas of reading and math. NCLB, which was signed into law in 2002, is an education reform that was designed to help all students succeed and to hold schools accountable for their academic achievement. The underlying idea of NCLB is that all students can learn and that all students can be “proficient”. NCLB allows each state and their school districts control over their definition of proficient and how they spend their federal dollars allotted for education. This allows them to spend money in places they see need (e.g. professional development) in order to achieve their proficiency goals. NCLB focuses on educational programs that are scientifically based and that are shown to be effective in improving student learning. There is also a greater emphasis on school accountability for student achievement. To demonstrate this, by the year 2005-2006, states were required to assess students in grades three through eight annually and one time during high school in reading and mathematics, and by 2007-2008 they will be required to assess these students in science using tests that can be referred to as high-stakes tests. By 2013-2014, it is expected that all students will be “proficient” in reading and math (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
Because of the No Child Left Behind Act, every state-mandated testing program has become high stakes for districts and schools (Gulek, 2003). High-stakes tests have results that are important and have direct consequences on those who take the test and those who give the test (American Educational Research Association, 1999). These state-mandated tests and their results are designed to measure what students’ have learned, which in turn holds the administrators and teachers of that school accountable for their students’ learning and the results on the high stakes tests. High-stakes tests are meant to be used for the improvement of instruction and learning, accountability, and school district support to students and teachers. However, there are potential negative consequences of high stakes tests that are often overlooked (Gulek, 2003). For example, high stakes tests are often used to evaluate schools and teachers, to make student promotion decisions, and to make instructional decisions (Haladyna, Haas, & Allison, 1998; Holloway, 2001). Based on this, even though NCLB uses high-stakes test results to measure “adequate yearly progress,” individual schools or school districts may use the test results for other reasons as well, such as the ones listed above.

Schools “In Need of Improvement”

One component of No Child Left Behind that can be viewed as both positive and negative is that it gives schools a label based on their students’ scores on the state’s tests. States must provide annual report cards with information as to how their students are achieving overall based on their assessment results, information on graduation rates, and their performance towards adequate yearly progress. Labels are determined based on a school’s ability to make “adequate yearly progress” on their percent of students
“proficient” as defined by the state. In the state in which the current research was conducted the definition of “proficiency” is the raw score on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)/Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) that is equal to the 41st percentile from scores from the year 2000. Each state must also provide goals for their schools. In this state, trajectories for proficiency in reading and math have been set, which is illustrated in the following tables.

Table 1
Percent of Students Proficient in Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Percent of Students Proficient in Mathematics

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>93</td>
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</table>

Schools that receive Title 1 funding that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two consecutive years are identified as schools “in need of improvement.”
More than 7,000 schools nationwide are considered in need of improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

If a school is identified as "in need of improvement", it is mandated to spend at least 10% of their Title I funds on professional development for their staff. They will also receive technical assistance for improvement and must have a two-year improvement plan that includes professional development, and scientifically based instructional strategies and methods. Parents/guardians also need to be notified of the school's status and have the option to transfer to a different public school that is not "in need of improvement." During their second year labeled "in need of improvement", in addition to the technical assistance, school improvement plan, and transfer option, supplemental services, such as tutoring, are made available for low-income students. During their third year, actions by the school district must be taken to bring meaningful change to the school. School staff can be replaced, the school day or year can be extended, a new curriculum can be put in place, and an outside expert is appointed to advise the school on making meaningful changes to improve student achievement. During their fourth year, the principal may be replaced, the school can be reopened as a charter school, and the state takes over the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

School districts, individual schools, and, in turn, teachers are held accountable for the performance and progress of their students. The knowledge of how a school compares to other schools in its district allows parents more flexibility and control in deciding what school is best for their child. Also, with at least one state mandated testing program, the "ABC's of Public Education" in North Carolina, financial incentives are
given to the schools and teachers if they meet or exceed the state’s expectations on their scores of the standardized tests (Jones et al., 1999).

NCLB requires that 10% of funds be allotted for professional development that specifically addresses the area or areas that caused the school to be labeled “in need of improvement.” Teachers in schools receiving Title 1 funds are required to be highly qualified and states must have plans with “annual measurable objectives” in order to ensure that “teachers are state certified, have a bachelor’s degree, and demonstrate subject area competency.” School districts are now being held more accountable for employing high quality teachers, and teacher quality is ultimately measured by students’ scores on the state mandated tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Because of this increased school accountability and use of high-stakes tests, it is important for researchers to start investigating their effect on the school community, educators, curriculum, teaching methods, teachers, and students. The following literature review of how state mandated tests are affecting teachers is divided into the following areas: the impact of No Child Left Behind Act on instruction, on teacher attitudes and anxiety levels, and on job satisfaction. These areas will be addressed because these are major issues that teachers deal with on a daily basis across the country.

**Instructional Impact**

Due to the emphasis on high stakes tests and the greater accountability placed on teachers and schools that accompany these tests, teachers are changing what they teach and the type of instruction they provide in the classroom (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham, Burns & Monahan, 2001; Jones et al., 1999; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003; Perreault,
2000). Many teachers are narrowing the scope of their curriculum (Groves, 2002) and “teaching to the test,” which means that high stakes, state-mandated tests guide teachers in what to teach and how to teach it (Bickham et al., 2001; Lutz & Maddirala, 1990). Even though it is considered unethical to develop curriculum, prepare objectives, or use items that are similar to those on the test (Kher-Duriabhji & Lacina-Gifford, 1992), this may be happening in districts and classrooms across the country.

Jones et al. (1999) evaluated North Carolina’s “ABC’s of Public Education” and its affects on teachers as well as students. The ABC’S is a high stakes accountability program in which each school’s performance is based on statewide test scores. Like the No Child Left Behind Act, each public school in North Carolina receives a public label based on the results of their school’s score. While its impact on students was also investigated, the impact of high stakes testing on teachers will be discussed here. Overall, 67% of the 236 elementary school teachers who responded to the survey reported that as the testing time drew closer, they changed their curriculum and the way they taught. Almost 38% indicated that they used more tests as a teaching strategy to help students prepare for the high stakes tests. The teachers also reported spending much of their day teaching students the basics of the ABC’s program, which is reading, writing, and mathematics. Eighty percent of the teachers reported that more than 20% of their total instruction time was spent practicing for their end-of-grade standardized tests.

In addition, Maurice and Karr-Kidwell’s (2003) survey of 27 teachers in Texas revealed that over 88% of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that instructional time had been reduced and over 81% agreed or strongly agreed that instructional options had
been reduced due to standardized testing. Respondents also strongly agreed or agreed that they sometimes taught to the test (70.3%) and at time adjusted their instruction to what was on the test (59.2%). Perreault (2000) found similar results in his interviews with teachers. Eight focus groups of seven to nine teachers were conducted in order to gather information regarding their feelings toward state mandated testing and it’s impact on their classrooms. The teachers in this qualitative study reported that they felt only being allowed to teach what was on the state-mandated test restricted their instruction. They also reported pressures to stick with the curriculum which focused on the “basics” of education.

Abrams et al. (2003) reviewed the current literature on how high-stakes, state-mandated testing programs from various states (e.g. Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, Maryland) impacts teachers’ classroom practices, motivation, and morale. Several research studies reviewed concluded that high stakes testing has impacted classroom practices by placing more emphasis on what is being tested rather than on the non-tested curriculum areas. Similarly, Bickham et al. (2001) concluded from their review of the literature on how standardized, high-stakes assessments impact instruction, that many teachers are teaching to the test and find it necessary to teach skills that are directly related to the test, therefore taking time away from other subjects or skills such as problem solving.

Impact on Attitudes and Anxiety Levels

High stakes tests and state mandated tests also impact teachers’ anxiety levels and attitudes toward teaching (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham et al., 2001; Donegan &
Teachers are feeling more pressure to raise their students test scores (Adams & Karabenick, 2000; Kher-Duriabhji & Lacina-Gillford, 1992). Friedman (1991) found that teachers who feel pressure for academic success and those that belong to schools that emphasize high levels of academic success have high burnout levels. In schools that were considered low-burnout, academic scores were not of high importance and there was not pressure to increase these standards.

Donegan and Trepanier-Street (1998) surveyed teachers at both elementary and secondary levels concerning their perceptions of stress due to the use of standardized testing. Seventy-three percent of elementary teachers and 96% of secondary teachers reported personal stress occasionally to consistently. These pressures to improve test scores may have caused the teachers to teach what was on the test and to take class time to teach test preparation skills. Jones et al. (1999) found that more than 76% of the 236 teachers responding to their survey reported that they felt their jobs were more stressful following the implementation of the state mandated tests. Teachers worried during test time and were concerned about whether they had prepared their students enough for the test. Teachers are spending much more time on test preparation than in the past, approximately 20% more, possibly contributing to the increased pressures.

Similarly, Adams and Karabenick (2000) surveyed 1,656 elementary school teachers in Michigan to obtain their views on issues related to assessment and state-mandated testing. Approximately 35% of the teachers reported that they felt pressure concerning their students' results on these state-mandated tests "consistently throughout
the year.” Fifth grade teachers reported more pressures than preschool teachers, 94% and 57% respectively. Of the teachers who reported experiencing pressures, 32% reported that the pressures improved their instructional strategies and 35% reported that it helps them focus on what is important to teach their students. In contrast, 52% reported that this testing takes “time away from what they consider to be more important content,” while 30% reported that the pressures hinder the decisions they make concerning their instruction.

Impact on Job Satisfaction

Research also suggests that teacher morale and job satisfaction are diminishing with the emphasis on state-mandated and high stakes assessment (Abrams et al., 2003; Cozart & Gerst-Pepin, 2002; Jones et al., 1999; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003). The daily workload that teachers face has increased due to the need to prepare students for standardized tests (Bickham et al., 2001). These tests often affect the teachers’ professionalism and independence in the classroom (Perreault, 2000).

Jones et al.’s (1999) survey of teacher in North Carolina, over 77% reported a decrease in their overall morale. Similarly, Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, and Stecher (as cited in Abrams et al., 2003) found that approximately 75% of educators surveyed in Kentucky reported that morale had declined since their state-testing program began. Teachers have also reported that they would consider changing schools or leaving the profession if their current school had been identified as failing or low performing (Jones et al., 1999; Murillo & Flores, 2002).
The pressure teachers are feeling to raise student test scores could affect their relationships with other professionals (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham et al., 2001). Bickham et al. (2001) reported that teachers are experiencing pressures from many different directions. They receive pressures from national officials and politicians down to principals and other teachers. Abrams et al. (1999) similarly found that teachers feel pressure from district superintendents, principals, and parents to improve their students test scores on state-mandated tests.

**Conclusion**

Much is known about how state-mandated, high stakes tests affect teacher's experiences in a “regular” school. However, little is known about how NCLB and high stakes tests affect their experiences in schools that are identified as “in need of improvement”. Schools that are known as low-performing, high poverty, or high teacher burnout may be similar to schools that are “identified”. Even though little is known about “identified” schools, we do know from Friedman's (1991) qualitative study of high- and low-burnout schools, high-burnout schools were described as schools that were structured and stressed educational achievement scores. While there are other variables involved in describing high-burnout schools, such as teacher age, sex, level of education, and years of experience, the factors of stressing academic achievement plays an important role. The factors related to a high-burnout school (Friedman, 1991) may be similar to those factors in a school “in need of improvement” (e.g. stressing academic achievement).
Similarly, high poverty and low-performing schools may also be similar to those schools that are “identified” in terms of teacher retention, teacher mobility, and their feelings pertaining to their jobs. Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) found after interviewing principals in high poverty schools and schools that are labeled as failing in the A+ Plan in Florida, that they see teachers feeling as though these systems are “demoralizing,” “devastating,” and “destabilizing.” These schools also have a more difficult time recruiting and maintaining high quality teachers.

From what we know of teacher’s experiences at these low-performing and high stress schools, we have reason to believe that teachers in schools that are identified as “in need of improvement” are feeling much the same way. Because of the influence the No Child Left Behind Act has on educators, it is important to look how it is affecting them in their daily school experiences.

**Purpose of Study**

The objective of this study is to look at the effects of No Child Left Behind on teacher’s experiences in the classroom. Further, it will investigate how teacher’s experiences are different for those teachers in schools that are labeled “in need of improvement” and for those in schools that are not labeled. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to provide information about how No Child Left Behind is affecting all teachers, which may lead to the education of professionals in providing assistance to teachers in these areas and possibly spark more research in this area. This research is important because No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and high stakes testing is a controversial issue in the United States today, and may continue to be indefinitely.
The more information we have as to how they affect both teachers and students, the more we can assist them in that areas at which they are struggling.

Previous research suggests that high stakes testing and other state mandated testing programs, such as the ABC’s of Education in North Carolina and the FCAT in Florida, has a negative impact on teachers (e.g. Abrams et al., 2003; Jones et al., 1999; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) puts great emphasis on high stakes and mandated testing as a form of accountability. Research in the area of how state-mandated and standardized testing affects teachers and their practices has shown that they affect their instructional practices, put more pressure on the teachers, affect their job satisfaction, and their relationship with other professionals, but there is little to no research on how No Child Left Behind and it’s accountability and labeling system is affecting these experiences in the classroom.

Additionally, there is limited research on the experiences of teachers from schools that have been identified as “in need of improvement”. This study will investigate if the implementation of No Child Left Behind has differentially affected teachers in schools meeting state standards and those in schools identified as “in need of improvement.” Research in this area will help states, school districts and schools become more aware of the impact of NCLB on teachers and assist them in implementing ways to support teachers in these areas. Comparing results from the two groups will help determine if all teachers are having the same experiences or if there are differences between the two groups. This information will help administrators target the specific needs of their
teachers in which they may need more assistance, such as stress management related to NCLB or administrative support for classroom instructional practices.

Research Questions

This investigation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Do teachers report that NCLB and high stakes tests affect their instruction, attitude and anxiety levels about teaching, and job satisfaction?

2. Is there a difference between the reports of the teachers in schools that are labeled "in need of improvement" and teachers in schools that are not labeled?
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

Surveys were administered to a total of 42 third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in four elementary schools within a large urban school district in a Midwestern state. Teachers at these grade levels were asked to participate because the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered to all students in these grades. This assessment is state-mandated and is used to measure student achievement to meet the requirements for No Child Left Behind.

The four schools that were used in this study were chosen based on the researcher's association with the schools, proximity, ease of survey administration, as well as each principal's willingness to participate. Schools B1 and B2 were schools that the researcher was already associated with as a support staff member, while schools A1 and A2 were two of three elementary schools in the district that were identified "in need of improvement." The principals at these two schools agreed to participate in the study, while the principal at the third school identified "in need of improvement" chose not to participate. Two schools (School A1 and A2) were in their first year of being identified as "in need of improvement" by the No Child Left Behind Act, and two schools (School B1 and B2) were not identified. School A1 was identified "in need of improvement" for not meeting Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) in reading, while school A2 was identified "in need of improvement" for not meeting AMO in math. Table 3 summarizes
the specific characteristics of each school, while Table 4 summarizes the ethnicity breakdown of the students at each of the schools.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Number of Staff</th>
<th>Total Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent of Students with Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
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<tr>
<td>A1 (SINI)</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 (SINI)</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>42%</td>
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Table 4

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<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Am. Indian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 (SINI)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 (SINI)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants were given the same survey. The participants were both male and female teachers who taught general education, special education, or English as a Second
Language. A total of 42 surveys were administered and 38 were returned. For schools identified in need of improvement, N=19. For schools not identified in need of improvement, N=19. Table 5 illustrates participant breakdown of the returned surveys.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participating Teachers from Each School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 (SINI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 (SINI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey

A thirty-question survey was developed for this study by the researcher. A few of the survey questions were developed by adapting questions from the survey used in a previous study (Bickham, Burns, & Monahan, 2001). These survey questions were used as a guideline for developing the survey and were adapted to answer the research questions specific to this investigation.

The survey was comprised of three scales, how NCLB and high stakes tests affect instruction, attitude and anxiety levels about teaching, and job satisfaction. There were twelve survey questions relating to instruction, six questions relating to attitude/anxiety levels, and seven questions relating to job satisfaction. Each scale had strong internal
consistency ($\alpha = .87$, $\alpha = .87$, $\alpha = .84$, respectively). Survey questions were all presented in a 5-point Likert scale. One section of responses required the participants to choose strongly agree, agree, not certain, disagree, or strongly disagree as their response to each statement. Another section of responses required the participants to choose 1-5 with 1 being very positive and 5 being very negative. See Appendix for a copy of the survey.

Procedure

Surveys were given to the teachers of four elementary schools in a large urban school district in a Midwestern state in the spring of the 2004-2005 school year. After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the supporting university granted their approval for this study to take place, the research coordinator for the school district was contacted to get access to two elementary schools that are identified as "in need of improvement", and two elementary schools that are not identified. Principals of these schools were then contacted to get permission to conduct the study at their schools. The survey was given to the teachers with a letter explaining the study and asking them to participate.

At schools B1 and B2, the surveys were administered directly by the researcher during a staff meeting. At school A1, the surveys were administered by the principal at a staff meeting. The principal was given a set of written directions to read aloud before beginning the survey (See Appendix A). Completed surveys were collected by the principal and returned to the researcher the following week. At school A2, surveys were given individually to each eligible teacher by the researcher. Written directions were included with the survey. All participants were asked to read and sign the enclosed letter
of informed consent before completing the survey. Completed surveys were returned directly to the researcher.

**Data Analysis**

This study uses a quantitative methodology. The data was analyzed in aggregate form. Survey questions were divided into three groups and descriptive statistics were used to answer the first research question, investigating if teachers report that NCLB and high stakes tests affect instruction, attitude and anxiety levels about teaching, and job satisfaction.

T-tests and ANOVA's were used to compare the two groups and answer the second research question, investigating if there a difference between the reports of the teachers in schools that are labeled "in need of improvement" and teachers in schools that are not labeled.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to investigate how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and high-stakes tests affect teachers' experiences in the classroom and if those experiences differ for teachers in schools that are labeled “in need of improvement.”

Classroom Experiences

The first question the researcher sought to answer was if No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and high stakes tests affect teachers’ instructional methods, their attitudes and anxiety levels, and their job satisfaction. Descriptive statistics were used to answer this first question.

Instruction

It was found that 62% of all teachers who responded to the survey from both schools identified in need of improvement and schools not identified in need of improvement strongly agreed or agreed that No Child Left Behind and high stakes tests have affected their instruction in the classroom. More specifically, 82% of responding teachers strongly agreed or agreed they spend more time preparing their students for tests, while 82% also strongly agreed or agreed that they alter their daily schedule to prepare for the high stakes test. Similarly, 71% of responding teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the time they spend on core subjects such as reading, math, and language arts has increased, while 82% strongly agreed or agreed that they amount of time they spend on areas that are not tested on high stakes tests has decreased because of NCLB and high stakes tests. In addition, 63% of responding teachers strongly agreed or agreed that high
stakes tests have affected their freedom to teach what they want and how they want and has impacted their decision making in the classroom. Sixty-three percent also strongly agreed or agreed that high-stakes tests have reduced the amount of instructional time in the classroom. Fifty-five percent of reporting teachers strongly agreed or agreed that high-stakes tests have changed the way they teach, and that they teach topics just because they are on the high-stakes test. Less than half (45%) of reporting teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they sometimes “teach to the test” because of high-stakes tests.

**Attitude and Anxiety Levels**

When investigating if NCLB and high stakes tests have affected teachers’ attitude and anxiety levels about teaching, it was found that 89% of responding teachers strongly agreed or agreed that those areas have been affected. Specifically, 87% strongly agreed or agreed that because of NCLB they worry about state-mandated assessments, and 92% strongly agreed or agreed that because of NCLB they worry about their students’ scores on the tests. Additionally, 82% of responding teachers strongly agreed or agreed that because of NCLB and high stakes tests their stress levels have increased. Seventy-four percent strongly agreed or agreed that they worry about being a teacher at a school that is identified “in need of improvement,” while 55% strongly agreed or agreed that they worry about job security. All of the responding teachers (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that they feel pressure to raise their students test scores.

**Job Satisfaction**

The researcher also was interested in knowing how NCLB and high stakes tests have affected teachers’ job satisfaction. Surveys responses indicated that 55% of the
teachers felt that NCLB and high stakes tests have negatively affected their overall job satisfaction. Sixty-eight percent of responding teachers reported that NCLB and high stakes tests have negatively affected their satisfaction with being a teacher. When asked how NCLB and high stakes tests have affected their workload, 84% reported it has been negatively affected. Approximately 71% of all respondents reported that NCLB and high stakes tests have negatively affected their school’s overall climate. Respondents reported that other questions related to this section of the survey, such as how NCLB and high stakes tests have affected their relationships with other teachers and administrators, and how they have affected their role in their school have not been affected negatively.

School Differences

The second research question explores whether there is a difference between the responses of teachers in schools in their first year identified as “in need of improvement” and teachers in schools that were not identified in the three areas of instruction, attitude and anxiety levels, and job satisfaction. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) and T-tests were used to compare the two groups.

Instruction

When looking at the first dependent variable, how NCLB and high stakes tests affect instruction, there was a significant difference between the two groups. With an alpha level of .05, F(1,35)=5.930, p<.01. Schools identified “in need of improvement” had a M=2.15 and a SD=.425, while schools not identified “in need of improvement” had a M=2.69 and a SD=.840.
Table 6 depicts the percentage of teachers from each group, schools identified “in need of improvement” and schools not identified, who strongly agreed or agreed to survey questions pertaining to the impact of NCLB and high stakes tests on instruction.

Table 6

*Percentage of Teachers who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the Survey Questions Pertaining to Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Schools “in need of improvement”</th>
<th>Non-labeled schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#4 - Reduce instructional time</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 - Impact decision making</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 - Change way they teach</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 - Increase time preparing for tests</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 - Alter daily schedule</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 - Teach to the test</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 - Increase time on core subjects</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues
Attitude and Anxiety Levels

There was also a significant difference between the two groups when looking at the second dependent variable, how NCLB and high stakes tests affect teacher attitude and anxiety levels. With an alpha level of .05, F(1,36)=5.440, p<.025. Schools identified in need of improvement had a M=1.55 and a SD=.533, while schools not identified in need of improvement had a M=2.12 and a SD=.922.

Table 7 depicts the percentage of teachers from each group, schools identified “in need of improvement” and schools not identified, who strongly agreed or agreed to
survey questions pertaining to the impact of NCLB and high stakes tests on attitude and anxiety levels.

Table 7

*Percentage of Teachers who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the Survey Questions Pertaining to Attitude and Anxiety Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Schools “in need of improvement”</th>
<th>Non-labeled schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#16 – Worry about tests</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17 – Worry about student’s scores</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18 – Stress levels increase</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19 – Worry about job security</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20 – Worry about teaching at a SINI school</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21 – Pressure to raise scores</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Job Satisfaction**

There was no significant difference between the two groups when looking at the third dependent variable, how NCLB and high stakes tests affect job satisfaction. With an alpha level of .05, $F(1,36)=2.004$, $p=.23$. Schools identified in need of improvement had a $M=3.62$ and a $SD=.385$, while schools not identified in need of improvement had a $M=3.36$ and a $SD=.713$.

Table 8 depicts the percentage of teachers from each group, schools identified “in need of improvement” and schools not identified, who felt their level of job satisfaction has been negatively affected by NCLB and high stakes tests.
Table 8

Percentage of Teachers who Rated Being Negatively Affected on Survey Questions Pertaining to Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Schools “in need of improvement”</th>
<th>Non-labeled schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#24 – Affect satisfaction with being a teacher</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#25 – Affect workload</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#26 – Affect role in school</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#27 – Affect morale</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#28 – Affect school’s climate</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#29 – Affect relationship with other teachers</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#30 – Affect relationship with administrators</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results from this study indicate that the majority (62%) of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and high stakes tests affect their instruction in the classroom, compared to a relatively small amount (11%) who strongly disagreed or disagreed. In general, teachers reported they are spending more time on core subject areas such as reading, math, and written language and less time on other subjects. They also reported that they spend more time preparing their students for the high stakes test and may even change their daily schedule to prepare for that test. The results from this study are consistent with results from previous studies. More emphasis is being placed on areas that are on the standardized tests and less emphasis on areas that are not tested (Abrams et al., 2003; Bickham et al., 2001), and tests are affecting what and how teachers teach (Bickham et al., 2001; Lutz & Maddirala, 1990; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003).

Results from this study also indicate that teachers have high anxiety levels regarding NCLB and high stakes tests. A relatively high percentage of teachers surveyed (89%) strongly agreed or agreed that their attitude and anxiety levels have been affected by NCLB and high stakes tests. More specifically, all of the teachers reported that they feel pressure to raise their student's test scores, with the majority reporting as well that their stress levels have increased, they worry about their student's test scores, and they worry about the tests in general. These results are also consistent with the results from
previous studies such as Adams & Karabenick (2000) and Kher-Duriabhji & Lacina-Gillford (1992) who concluded that teachers are feeling more pressure to raise their student’s test scores, and Jones et al. (1999) who found that teachers reported their jobs as more stressful.

When looking at job satisfaction, the majority of the teachers surveyed (55%) in this study reported that NCLB and high stakes tests have negatively affected their satisfaction with their overall teaching job. Only 3% reported that their jobs have been positively affected. Teachers reported that their workload, their morale, and their school’s overall climate has been negatively affected. These results are consistent with previous research that also indicates that teacher morale has decreased (Abrams et al., 2003; Cozart & Gersti-Pepin, 2002; Jones et al., 1999; Maurice & Karr-Kidwell, 2003) and their workload has increased (Bickham et al., 2001).

School Differences

Because research in this area is very limited, the investigator in this study was particularly interested in exploring whether teachers who work in schools that are identified “in need of improvement” are similarly affected in these areas as teachers who work in schools that are not identified. This study reveals that, in general, teachers in schools that are labeled “in need of improvement” are affected significantly more than teachers who do not work in identified schools in the areas of instruction in the classroom and attitude and anxiety levels.

In the area of job satisfaction, there is no significant difference between the two groups, but there does seem to be a trend present. A greater percentage of teachers from
the identified schools reported that they have been negatively affected in terms of workload, their role in the school, and their relationship with other teachers and administrators in their school. A greater number of teachers from the identified schools also report that their overall school’s climate has been negatively affected. There were two survey questions in which the trend was not present. On the questions relating to satisfaction with being a teacher and morale, an equal percentage of teachers (68.4% and 52.6% respectively) at schools identified “in need of improvement” and teachers at non-labeled schools reported being negatively affected in these areas.

**Conclusions**

Overall, this study indicates that No Child Left Behind and high stakes tests are affecting teachers’ experiences in the classroom. There are a few limitations with this study that need to be considered when interpreting the results. First, this study is considered a pilot study and was the first time this survey was used. Next, a relatively small number of teachers (N=38) were surveyed in a small number of schools (N=4), each school in an urban school district with similar student populations. This study also looked very generally at No Child Left Behind, high stakes tests, and their effect on teachers’ experiences in the classroom. Follow-up studies that focus specifically on how instruction has changed, how teacher attitudes and anxiety levels have changed, and how job satisfaction as been effected would be very beneficial. It would also be beneficial to take a closer look at how teachers are teaching in relation to No Child Left Behind and high stakes tests, for example, whether they are focusing on students learning fact
material for the test, or if they are teaching learning strategies and higher order thinking skills.

Furthermore, findings from this study indicate that teachers in schools "in need of improvement" are affected differently. Because of the limited research looking at how schools "in need of improvement" are being affected, it would be valuable to gather more specific information in this area and possibly look at other ways they are affected differently than those in schools that are not "identified." Examples of such areas could be looking more specifically at how teachers are changing their instructional practices, and if these, as well as their anxiety levels and job satisfaction, stay the same or change over time as their schools work to improve their test scores. It would also be interesting to investigate whether students at "identified" versus "non-identified" schools are affected differently. In addition, because this study was relatively small with a limited number of schools and teachers surveyed, it would be advantageous to consider a larger-scale study in this area to gather more specific information and confirm the results from this study.

Findings from this study are particularly important to help all educators realize that No Child Left Behind affects everyone in the school system, not just the students. Information from this study, as well as previous and future studies in this area, can provide information to administrators and other professionals to help answer the question: What can we do to better support teachers? This information can help guide professional development on proper and helpful instructional practices related to high stakes testing, on ways teachers can deal with the stressors related to high stakes testing,
and how all educators can support one another to make their working environment and their overall school community more positive despite all of the demands and accountabilities placed on them. It will also help educators become more aware of what others in their profession are facing and possibly managing on a daily basis.

Information from this study can help school psychologists and other support staff in the way they work with administrators, teachers, and students in their schools. Not only is it important to support teachers in instructional planning to make sure individual student needs are being met, it is equally important to assist them with their overall daily attitude toward teaching, the way the relate to their students and they way they relate to other staff in their building. School psychologists can support teachers in instructional planning, assist with differentiating instruction, set up and help facilitate professional development classes related to assisting teachers with the effects of NCLB and high stakes tests, and can also act as a liaison between the administrators in their school or district and the teachers in their school to communicate the needs and opinions of the teachers.

To conclude, No Child Left Behind and high stakes tests affect nearly every teacher in the United States and the more that is known about how and why they are affecting educators, the more they can be supported, which will very likely ultimately affect their students.
REFERENCES


Department of Education. (2002). *Parents’ guide to supplemental services*. Washington, DC,


APPENDIX

SURVEY

No Child Left Behind and High Stakes Testing: How it is Affecting Teacher’s Experiences in the Classroom

Emily Olson, M.A.E.
University of Northern Iowa

Below are statements that relate to the affect of the state-mandated and high stakes tests of No Child Left Behind on experiences in the classroom. Indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by circling your category of response. Use the following marking scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Certain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. State-mandated and high stakes tests have provided valuable information for assessing or evaluating my students’ ability.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5

2. I believe that state-mandated and high stakes tests adequately reflect students’ abilities.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5

3. I believe that state-mandated and high stakes tests adequately reflect teacher ability and quality.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5

4. I believe that state-mandated and high stakes tests have reduced the amount of instructional time in my classroom.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5

5. Scores on state-mandated and high stakes tests impact my decision making in the classroom.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5

6. State-mandated and high stakes tests have changed the way I teach.
   - SA 1
   - A 2
   - NC 3
   - D 4
   - SD 5
7. State-mandated and high stakes tests have increased the amount of time I spend preparing my students for tests.

8. If a state-mandated and high stake test is approaching, I alter my daily schedule to prepare for that test.

9. I sometimes “teach to the test” because of state-mandated or high stakes tests.

10. Because of state-mandated and high stakes tests, the amount of time I spend on “core” subjects (reading, math, language) has increased.

11. Because of state-mandated and high stakes tests, the amount of time I spend on areas that are not currently tested state-mandated and high stakes tests have decreased.

12. Because of state-mandated and high stakes tests, I teach topics just because they are on a test.

13. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my autonomy or independence in the classroom.

14. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my freedom to teach what I want.

15. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my freedom to teach how I want.

16. Because of NCLB, I worry about state-mandated assessments.

17. Because of NCLB, I worry about my student’s scores on the state-mandated assessments.
18. Because of state-mandated and high stakes tests, my stress levels have increased. 

19. Because of state-mandated and high stakes tests, I worry about job security. 

20. I worry about being a teacher at a school that is identified “in need of improvement”. 

21. I feel pressure to raise my student’s test scores. 

22. I would consider changing schools if my school were labeled “in need of improvement”. 

To answer the following questions, please use the following marking scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positively Affected</th>
<th>Not Affected</th>
<th>Negatively Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. State-mandated and high stakes tests have impacted my attitude toward teaching. Positively Not Affected Negatively

24. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my satisfaction with being a teacher. Positively Not Affected Negatively

25. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my workload. Positively Not Affected Negatively

26. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my role in the school. Positively Not Affected Negatively

27. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my morale. Positively Not Affected Negatively

28. State-mandated and high stakes tests have affected my school’s overall climate. Positively Not Affected Negatively
29. State-mandated and high stakes tests have Positively Not Affected Negatively
affected my relationship with other teachers 1 2 3 4 5
in my school.

30. State-mandated and high stakes tests have Positively Not Affected Negatively
affected my relationship with administrators 1 2 3 4 5
in my school.