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The “ No Child Left Behind” Act The Effects of “ No Child Left Behind” on Special Education and General Education Collaboration & Outcomes: A Qualitative Study The “ No Child Left Behind” Act The Effects of “ No Child Left Behind” on Special Education and General Education Collaboration & Outcomes: A Qualitative Study Introduction The primary aim of this research paper will be to determine how NCLB program impacts special education students, general collaboration and educational outcomes.

NCLB was introduced by the Bush Administration in 2001 with the intent of improving the performance of sub groups and special populations in educational institutions across the nation. It is a revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and considered by many a “ potent blend of new requirements, incentives, and resources” that poses a “ significant challenge for states” (ECS, 2004). The act basically sets deadlines that require states to expand the “ scope and frequency of student testing, revamped accountability systems” and guarantee that teachers are qualified to instruct students in the subject areas they teach in (ECS, 2004).

On paper the act seems like it would benefit educational institutions tremendously. NCLB also requires that states make “ demonstrable progress” in the arena of standardized testing, and asks educators to ensure that a certain percentage of students are proficient in key areas including reading and math (ECS, 2004). With regard to special education students and other sub-groups, the intent of the act is to narrow the gap that currently exists in many schools between disadvantaged students and advantaged students (ECS, 2004).

Despite the good intentions of the law there is a lot of controversy surrounding the act, particularly with regard to its efficacy and impact on special education students and members of other subgroups. Many schools are also struggling to simply comply with the basic requirements of the act, given the short amount of time given to educators to revise their programs (Young, 2003). The focus of this paper will revolve around how NCLB impacts special education students and classroom structure, in addition to examining the deficits in NCLB programming with regard to special education students.

At this time there is a large body of research that focuses on the impacts of NCLB both positive and negative. Though some mention of special education students is made in many of these studies, this paper will aim to narrow the gap that exists with regard to comprehensive information regarding NCLB. Relatively few studies have focused on the impact NCLB legislation has had on specific teaching practices and attitudes among general educators vs. the attitudes and teaching practices of special education educators. Theoretical Propositions (Hypothesis) Tested

The research proposes the following with regard to NCLB: Hypothesis 1: NCLB needs to more effectively address the needs of special education students because it does not adequately address the deficits that currently exist in teaching with regard to this population. Though NCLB was created to address the deficiencies that exist within testing scores of advantaged and disadvantaged students, the researcher believes that it fails miserably at actually addressing the deficits and mechanisms that need to be in place in order to help special education students achieve their greatest potential.

Hypothesis 2: Standardized testing is not fair for special education students. This hypothesis comes about based on literature evidence which suggests that commercial standardized testing does not adequately address the special circumstances special education students and other sub groups may face when in a testing situation (Young, 2003). The researcher will explore the extent to which standardized testing may be used effectively within an educational facility to determine the skill level of all students not just advantaged students. Significance of Study/Previous Work

The NCLB is relatively new legislation and relatively little research has been conducted with respect to its impact and effectiveness among the special education population. There is however a large body of research available with regard to the controversy that currently exists surrounding the act and the impact it may have on educators and school administrative programs as a whole. The primary reason the researcher has proposed investigating this topic is to test the notion that NCLB unfairly impacts sub-groups including special education.

This despite the fact that the act was originally developed to help sub groups and special education students achieve the same or similar proficiency as their peers. During the researchers discourse and meetings with educational administrators, information revealed that the general education staff at many facilities seems to believe the job of fixing the NCLB deficiencies provided there are any rests on the hands of special Education departments and teachers. This idea need be explored, thus this research paper is being proposed.

In addition, there is a great deal of debate that currently exists regarding standardized testing and the fairness of such testing relative to special Ed students. Again a gap currently exists in the literature regarding this aspect of NCLB, thus further exploration is required. Research Questions Among the objectives of this paper include examining how NCLB, annual yearly progress and standardized testing statistics pertain to special education students. In addition the researcher intends to examine how these aspects factor into the fairness and day-to-day realities of education for special ed students.

The researcher also intends to examine the extent to which the relationship of accommodations such as modification and adaptation are being addressed and complied with in the realm of teaching for both special Ed. Students and general Ed students. To realize these objectives the researcher will examine the following questions: 1) How do NCLB issues affect the arenas of teaching and preparing students? 2) How well are teachers complying with IEP's for each student? 3) How does NCLB affect standardized testing achievement and results?) How is special education students going to meet the Proficient standardized testing numbers required? 5) What does a successful model of inclusion look like and how might it be conducted, taught and used to meet AYP? 6) Do special education and general education departments really work cohesively as a team? 7) Has NCLB narrowed the gap that currently exists between advantaged and disadvantaged student populations? This study will not only examine the ins and outs of the Act itself, but will also examine its implications on student and teacher practices.

The researcher has a strong interest in determining the extent to which general education teachers are willing to work with special education teachers to resolve the disparities that currently exist between these two populations. The researcher believes that there might be a misconception among educators that it is the responsibility of special education teachers alone to resolve the problems and gap that currently exists between student achievement of sub group students and traditional students.

Historically, evidence suggests that for a gap to be narrowed, the two populations being examined must work together in order for solutions to be determined rather than place the responsibility solely on one party or another, which is likely to lead to confusion and controversy (Young, 2003).

Literature Review The preliminary research review suggests a need for further investigation into the impact of NCLB on special education and other subgroups within school districts. There is a large body of evidence that currently exists suggesting that NCLB is deficient with respect to these populations.

Bailey (2000) discusses potential failure of NCLB with regard to special education and discusses national concern for outcomes of the program. He points out that government has enacted wide ranging mechanisms with the intent of reforming legislation and providing a system of services that universally addresses children's needs, but also points out that more involvement is necessary if this program or any similar to it will work for special education students and other student subgroups (Bailey, 2000).

Bainbridge (2002) critically examines the limitations of NCLB and the potential deficiencies of this act. He suggests that the act is largely rhetorical in nature and doesn't improve educational opportunities for all students, including special needs (Bainbridge, 2002). His primary argument is that while well intentioned, the NCLB fails special education students, and presently not enough involvement from general educators is evident within a majority of school districts to help alleviate the deficiencies that currently exist within the program (Bainbridge, 2002).

Donlevy (2002) discusses the NCLB act and defines its standards, assessment and accountability issues. He discusses the implications for the program in general suggesting a negative outcome. In a later study conducted in 2003, Donlevy suggests that the act is "waking up school districts across the United States" with adequate yearly progress requirements in English, math and science (Donlevy, 2003, p. 335). He points out however that the goals of the act are still lofty, and many questions exist as to whether its outcomes are truly achievable for a majority of school districts.

He notes that since the act has been legislated, hundreds of schools that are failing have been identified, and suggests that the reform measures proposed by the act are demanded too quickly, not allowing enough time for adequate review and success (Donlevy, 2003). He cites an editorial in the Journal News of September of 2003 which states "some districts are so taken aback by the law's demands for public accountability and its timetable

for student progress that they are outright refusing to comply” (Donlevy, 2003, p. 335).

This analysis suggests that not only might NCLB be failing with regard to special education students, but that it might also be failing with regard to students in general. Schools may be outright defying the law because of an inability to comply with the Acts stringent standards. The implications of his work are tremendous, suggesting that ultimately NCLB will have to be modified “ in the face of growing concerns over the consequences of the act” and suggests that it is not reasonable to see hundreds of schools failing under the logistical and financial burdens the act present (Donlevy, 2003).

Lewis (2002) Discusses NCLB specifically in reference to special education students and the impact NCLB might have on special Ed students seeking high quality education. In a more recent review of the act, Lewis (2003) suggests that the standardized testing mandates of the NCLB act are ‘ far ahead of the state knowledge and practice about testing” thus can’t be expected to accurately predict the achievement of students in any situation, much less the needs of special education students (p. 197).

Further, Lewis suggests that in the rush to meet deadlines imposed by NCLB, states “ are grabbing standardized tests off the shelf” whether or not they actually reflect learning standards or not. The implications are that educators may be using commercial tests that lack the ability to address the needs of sub-groups and special populations including special education students in schools across the nation (Lewis, 2003). Few studies have also been

conducted that examine what types of testing might actually accurately reflect the ability of special education students in general.

Young (2003) Discusses problems with NCLB and proposes ways that schools can improve, in addition to discussing further challenges for legislators. He points out specifically that schools have already been cited as failing to meet the goals and standards of NCLB and are being labeled as “needs improvement” in particular because “two of 29 special education students” were not able to take the test (Young, 2003, p. 24). This suggests that even minor variances in the testing mechanisms used by NCLB might impact special education and even general education students in a negative manner.

Young (2003) also points out that legislators have been struggling with this act since its inception in 2001, and that many schools are reflecting a state of chaos rather than a state of success when it comes to realizing the stringent requirements of the act. Further, he suggests that the implications of the act are becoming clearer as time progresses, suggesting that while legislators are supportive of the law in general, the act is actually placing more and more legislators in a state of controversy and chaos rather than facilitating progress among the nation’s school districts (Young, 2003).

For schools to actually improve student performance so that all children, including special education children, meet the requirements, continuous improvement efforts are still necessary (Young, 2003). Though NCLB was supposed to focus on “low performing subgroups of students” including special education students, those with disabilities, limited English language

skills, low income and even students of racial minority backgrounds, it is not necessarily impacting them in a positive manner yet (Young, 2003, p. 24).

Why is NCLB failing potentially?

Perhaps because studies suggest that entire schools must either meet the criteria or fail if subgroups do not meet the same performance standards as other groups (Young, 2003). Generally this indicates the more diverse the school district the greater difficulty a school will have meeting NCLB standards. N. A. (2003) study discusses how NCLB is affecting teaching of social studies in particular in the classroom. It suggests that while teachers are making efforts to improve the performance and achievement of students at all levels, many are still struggling.

Schrag (2004) discusses the populations not helped by NCLB including special Ed and minority children. This is interesting given the notion that NCLB according to some (Young, 2003) is specifically targeted to address the needs of special education students among other populations. From the preliminary literature review, the researcher can conclude that at best the NCLB act has created a great deal of controversy and confusion with reference to education.

Particularly, the act which is designed to help subgroups seems to be harming more than helping school districts in many ways. There is relatively little evidence at this time to indicate whether general education teachers are interested in impacting special education students' progress and compliance in a negative or positive way. Part of the aim of this study will be to investigate this idea more thoroughly to determine whether or not the act

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needs reform so that it adequately addresses the needs of special Ed subgroups.

Teacher and other educational staff interviews conducted in the field portion of this study should provide additional insight into general educator's willingness to help special education educators with regard to the requirements NCLB poses. Methodology To accomplish these objectives and pursue an exploration of current educational practices, the researcher proposes a qualitative exploratory study. Qualitative research will provide the researcher with a historical basis for examining NCLB legislation as well as factual real time data about classroom practices.

It would be impossible at this time to conduct a quantitative study of broad enough reaching scope to examine the impact of NCLB on students. In addition the material being explored for purposes of this study more closely relates with the objectives and outcomes of a qualitative study. The researcher proposes a comprehensive literature review focusing on each aspect of the research questions and a survey/questionnaire type study be developed and distributed to educational staff within the Idaho school district, in order to examine the efficacy of the program as it currently stands.

Annotated Bibliography: Bailey, D. B. (2000). " The federal role in early intervention: Prospects for the future. " Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 20, 71. Assessment of the expectations of 57 families before and after the introduction of children with disabilities into a day care center revealed both groups (with and without a child with a disability) felt that

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greatest benefits were derived from exposing children to the “ real” world and promoting acceptance of children with disabilities. Bainbridge, M. D. T. (2002). No child left behind: Facts and fallacies” Phi Delta Kappan, 83, 781. The achievement gap persists within American classrooms. Although teachers do make a difference in terms of what and how much students achieve, educational practitioners and policy makers would be well served to consider social inequities created by demographic realities, instructional practices that engender broad student participation and accountability measures that compare districts fairly. Donlevy, J. (2003). “ Teachers, technology and training: No child left behind failing schools and future directions. International Journal of Instructional Media, 30, 335. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) inaugurated by the George Bush administration is waking up school districts across the United States with its adequate yearly progress requirements in English, math and science. Many schools have been labeled in need of improvement for failing to reach academic targets and questions are being raised about the demands of the Act and whether its lofty goals are achievable. Donlevy, J. (2002). “ Teachers, technology and training: No child left behind in search of equity for all children. International Journal of Instructional Media, 29, 257. ECS. (October 2004). “ ECS: No child left behind. ” Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from: http://nclb2.ecs.org/Projects_Centers/index.aspx?issueid=gen&IssueName=General The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps state leaders shape education policy. The ECS includes organizations that issued formal and comprehensive

recommendations directly related to revising No Child Left Behind ??? the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Lewis, A. C. (2002). " Washington commentary ??? the will to leave no child behind. " Phi Delta Kappan, 83, 343. Lewis examines an American Youth Policy Forum event that focused on the Research justification for supplementing academic goals with community service and civic education. He finds there is plenty of evidence to support this integration, but that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, with its " hell-bent" attitude of raising test scores, continues to be a barrier to further success in this area.

He states that subjects such as art, Career, education, and social studies are in danger of being lost in the shuffle of frantically trying to improve math and science standardized test scores. While the truest philosophical ideal of NCLB is unarguably good, it unintentionally is causing some students to dislike the entire education process because of the strict and rigid methods used to increase standardized test scores. Lewis, A. C. (2003). " Washington commentary: A horse called NCLB. " Phi Delta Kappan, 84, 179. N. A. (2003). No child left behind the impact on social studies classrooms. " Social Education, 67, 291. Schrag, P. (2004). " Bush's education fraud: The no child left behind act is self defeating, confusing and under funded. " The American Prospect, 15, 38. The longtime education writer and editor Schrag, points out that the danger of a system that calls for states setting their own standards of performance, with such grave consequences for failure, is that it encourages states to lower standards in order to avoid sanctions and interventions. Young, S. (2003). The challenges of NCLB: Some requirements

of the no child left behind act are causing more chaos than cures and driving teachers, parents and administrators mad. " State Legislates, 29, 24. Young a senior policy analyst for CQE, discusses a sustained level of opposition from state legislatures in the past year-61 measures to reform NCLB, a new high, have been introduced in 24 states. Young talks about there is also a trend toward states getting more prescriptive about changes they'd like to see made to NCLB, asking for specific kinds of flexibility or challenging the law in technical areas.