

No child left behind research paper sample

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Introduction to No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

This refers to an act of the US congress that brought several changes to the American public education policy. The act's full title was; 'An act to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility and choice so that no child is left behind'. It was assented into law by president G. W Bush on January 8, 2002. The No child left behind academic act emphasizes on standards-based education reform methodology where measurable standards of academic achievements are set to enhance individual academic performance (Linda Perlstein). The act stressed on issuance of basic skills tests that would gauge students at all levels of education in public schools. This was made a compulsory condition which had to be fulfilled in order for an institution to get the necessary funding (Waters, 23). The act aimed at achieving wider and more comprehensive achievements among students and also enhances accountability among school administrators. The act strived to inject the much needed financial aid among the needy students. The act encompassed even children with disabilities and any school which did not meet certain standards faced punitive measures. The Act requires fundamentally that all public schools should give a state wide standardized test yearly to students. The scores from the student's results are used to judge whether the school has properly taught the students. In addition the act dictates that all students must be predisposed to highly proficient teachers. The signing of NCLB into law was basically a re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which is the core law in the pre-college education of the federal government (NEA).

Race to the Top

This is a program of the United States Department of Education. It was started in liaison with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 and is funded by the ED Recovery Act. It was flagged off by president Barack Obama on July 24, 2009. The Race to the Top program was started to initiate competitiveness among state and local education school. The program involved awarding of merit points upon successfully meeting certain educational policy conditions such as performance of teachers, principal charter schools promotion and computerization. From this criteria, an institution could garner a possible 485 points while another 15 more points would be earned by schools which prioritized STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). This program enhanced the competitiveness of public schools based on performance as this was the base criteria for awarding of points and consequently the amount of funding allocated to the institution. The program prompted states all over the USA to adopt common standards which also have become a necessity for round 2 applications for funding. The whole project cost \$4.35 billion dollars mainly from the federal government. The administration will dedicate up to \$350 million to help develop new assessments." (ED.gov blog)

The race to the top has caused states to alter education policies to make them more competitive for example (Libby Quaid); Illinois repeated the restriction on the number of charter schools it allowed, while West Virginia introduced a payment policy based on merit whose compensation was calculated based on student achievements based on their results. Depending on the population of children in public schools in each state, the states

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qualified for various funding with Texas, New York, Florida and California getting the biggest chunk. The awards of the program are the largely based on two criteria;

52% on the present proven accomplishment and 48% Relevant proposed for future plans.

The race to the top aims at improving the achievements of students, to reduce and close the disparity between schools performances and also to raise the rate of high school graduation while ensuring success in post-secondary education.

NCLB

The NCLB's funding was placed at \$39. 4 billion according to the 2007 fiscal report. The biggest source of funding for the NCLB is the title I, which is a federal government program that offers grants to public district schools. In addition to that, it is also funded by the individual states which allocate some money to go into the project. When it was enacted, the NCLB received an increment in finding from \$ 17. 4 billion to \$24. 4 billion in 2007 (Wikipedia).

On the other hand the race to The Top program involved a rigorous system where every state that applied for consideration into the program was submitted into a selection criteria that had cumulative points up to 500 points. They were graded and acquired as follows for one to be eligible for a particular level of funding;

Top teachers and administrators

Teachers and principals who provided quality services that were reflected in the students' performance were highly considered and would earn upto 138 points.

The state success based upon set factors

States which achieved several set targets such as the building of formidable state wide capacity implementation and sustenance of proposed plans would earn the state upto 125 points.

Common standards and assessments

The coming up and adoption of the common standards would earn the state up to 70 points. Effective use and implementation data systems to support instructions.

The ability of state to practically carry out and implement data systems and use of data in instructions earned the state 47 points. The higher the points garnered by a state, then the higher the amount awarded towards the implementation of the act.

The No Child Left Behind seems to have been more successful than the Race to the Top program. This is attributed to the following reasons;

Firstly NCLB allows students studying at underperforming schools to transfer to better performing schools (EDweek). This choice of schools offers the students a choice of transferring from schools that cannot meet their Adequate Yearly Progress to those that can comfortably meet these targets. The program also led to a higher degree of accountability(LINDA PERLSTEIN).

The act dictates that schools and leaders should administer annual tests that would be used to judge the teachers and the students' performance in a given fiscal year. This will give clear indications of improvements or failures for adequate and elaborate measures to be taken. Failure to make improvements among schools resulted in reduced funding for the school. The system was also praised for the fact that it provided parents with annual report cards which contained comprehensive breakdown of the schools AYP performance and student's annual performance. This in turn helped the parents to make informed choices of the schools to which they sent their children.

The NCLB act also brought systems that enhanced student's assessment and enhanced the faster achievement of the set goals and targets. Consequently, this proved popular as measurable goals could be attained within reasonable time frames.

It also became successful as it led to a considerable improvement in the test scores that were administered. For instance, there was much improvement by nine year olds in reading as well as in mathematics performance in the past five years vis-à-vis the past 28 years combined together. The NCLB is claimed to have brought improvements over the local education standards offered by the states. Many people felt that local states had let them down in providing quality education to their children and hence the intervention of the federal government with the NCLB act was a savior. The NCLB has improved the quality of education by stressing and increasing the performance levels in all of the public schools. NCLB's stringent

accountability requirements on reading, writing and math proficiency are considered as key elements required for the economic growth and success of a country. Such strategy at a time of economic depression and a slow and painful recovery led to the appreciation of the policy as it was felt that the children were being prepared to face the harsh economic times. This though came at the expense of art subjects and the electives whereby schools were forced to reduce or totally do away with some of the art subject tutorials. In addition NCLB's system of giving incentives while penalizing failure has built a strong background of innovativeness and motivation for schools and states to perform better. This has culminated in provision of good and high quality education for Americans (wiarda, 45).

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