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Mykiala Bristow Professor MacLennan English April 4, 2011 Education Renovation Many children go through life living in the same school district for their whole education experience. They know all of the teachers and develop a reputation. Close bonds may form between the student and the teacher. No Child Left Behind has an effect on these student-teacher relationships because teachers have to buckle down on the student’s education to create progress. I chose the controversy over No Child Left Behind because I believe that students are being failed by the system “ Most Significantly, No Child Left Behind sets a deadline: By 2014 all students must be grade-level proficient in reading and mathematics — as evidenced by their scores on annual test in grades three through eight, and once in high school" (Mantel 2). It does not make sense for students to be pressured to succeed at the rate of the system. If they need extra time then it should be given. No Child Left Behind does not take in account that some students do not learn at the same rate as others, and some students have a hard time taking tests. Their stress levels could affect their test taking abilities, or they might have a problem with freezing up under the pressure of the test. “ Schools must now turn their attention to at-risk students because, due to No Child Left Behind subgroup requirements, they cannot hide low scores for subgroups within school or district averages" (Fusarelli as qtd in Lagana-Riordan 2). I believe that school administrations and teachers are overlooking the students that need extra help and attention. Also, No Child Left Behind does not recognize the fact that some teachers are not working to their best ability and take their jobs for granted. I am not saying that the teachers do not care; I just believe that they are going through the motions on a critical subject. No Child Left Behind needs to either be renovated or replaced by a curriculum that has the student’s best interest in mind. No Child Left Behind should no longer be practiced or remodeled in school systems. This is an important subject because it affects schools and students nationwide, and not for the better. President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act on January 8th, 2002. The law was designed to activate education reforms that were discussed during the president’s first presidential campaign. A government source claimed that the law was designed to improve schools by enforcing, "accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility" (U. S. Department of Education as qtd in Encyclopedia of Special Education 1). No Child Left Behind requires schools to demonstrate yearly progress towards the proficiency goals. Each state has their own set of goals and regulations, but nationwide the emphasis is on reading, mathematics, and science. Yearly progress is defined in a matter that all public and secondary schools have the same high standards of academic achievement, and the goals are valid and reliable. Also, students must have continuous and substantial academic improvement and give results. The curriculum needs to include separate, measurable annual objectives for the achievement of all schools including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. If a school fails to have shown adequate yearly progress for two or more consecutive years, the school must offer their students the choice of transferring to another public school except if existing law prohibits public school choice because the student’s school district has to pay for the transportation costs. If the school fails for three or more consecutive years they are required to provide tutoring, after-school classes, and summer school. If the school fails on successfully progressing for a fourth consecutive year, the district is required to take action. This could include replacing teachers and staff members, or changing the curriculum. On the fifth consecutive year the state is allowed to take over the underperforming schools and get a private contractor to manage the school, or they have the power to restructure the staff (Encyclopedia of Special Education 2). No Child Left Behind also required the state to create a method that ensures highly qualified teachers. The problem with No Child Left Behind is that if focuses on punishment and not assistance, and instead of supporting effective programs it dictates them. Before No Child Left Behind there was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This was the most expansive federal education bill passed in its day. It was a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “ War on poverty. " Poverty had affected the availability of an education for children, so Johnson strived to change this complication. Previous presidents helped out with their former comments and commitments on improving the educational system (Tomiko Brown-Nagin). During President Harry S. Truman’s administration American leaders came together to discuss the need for a competitive technology industry. When the Soviet Union successfully launched the Sputnik spacecraft, leaders were worried that the Soviet Union school system was superior to the American education system. President Kennedy constructed various proposals to make sure that American students were competitive with other countries, and every student had an equal opportunity to receive a good education no matter their religion, race, or class background. After Kennedy was assassinated, President Lyndon B. Johnson looked over the proposals and altered them. It made a rapid passage into law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in only eighty-seven days, with little debate and no amendments (Tomiko Brown-Nagin). “ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was designed to address the problem of inequality in education that had been laid bare by civil rights activist who lobbied for passage of the landmark anti-discrimination statute, the Civil Rights Act of 1964" (Tomiko Brown-Nagin). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act revolutionized the federal government’s role in education. Recently Obama shared the State Of The Union Speech, which recognized the adjustment of No Child left Behind. He makes a good argument by pointing out that in ten years half of new jobs will require more than a high school education, but only seventy-five percent of our students are graduating high school. We are faltering behind other nations when it comes to our math and science programs. Obama believes that a good education starts in the household, where the love of learning should be infused in a child. Children need to take a time out from the TV and video games, and focus on their studies. Schools should always have the highest expectations and standards for their students, but this is not how it is in today’s society. This is where Race to the Top comes in. This is a competition for all fifty states, “ If you show us the most innovative plans to improve teacher quality and student achievement, we’ll show you the money" (Obama 1). When teachers and principals put in hard work, you can see what is possible from the children. Race to the Top will take over No Child Left Behind and will focus on what is best for the student’s. We need to treat teachers with a high level of respect, like other countries do. If teachers are not adequately doing their job then we should not make excuses for them, and they should be replaced. We also need to reward the good teachers. Obama is also taking steps to make a college education a reality for everybody by making it more affordable. If America raises expectations for the students, we will reach the goal to have the highest proportion of college graduates. This competition has the funds of $4. 35 billion dollars to go toward the schools that are willing to admit their flaws and make a difference for the future (Jost 5). The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers are upset with the blueprint of Race to the Top because they feel like they are being targeted as teachers. The National Education Association wants Congress to, “ to rip out the pages of the blueprint that don’t work for kids and replace them with better solutions" (Jost 4.) I do not think they are being targeted because it is a possibility that teachers are not qualified to construct the minds of students. Diane Ravitch believes that No Child Left Behind enforces underperforming schools with cruel restructuring remedies instead of allowing assistance to be successful. Many education groups applause the proposed development in No Child Left Behind, even though there is some caution because this will only be the first step to bettering the classroom. One of the main problems with No Child Left Behind is that it is different for each state. The president of the National Education Association said, “ Our members are very aware that it doesn’t make much sense for states to have different standard. " (Roekel as qtd in Jost 6). They know that No Child Left Behind is not working, but they do not want to take the blame for the negativity. This means that we need to better prepare the teachers. The Teachers’ unions agree, “ You need to give teachers the education and professional development around that curriculum. And you need to make sure that the teachers and kids have the tools to work that curriculum" (Jost 8). Obama’s blueprint drops the time and AYP requirements of No Child Left Behind and proposes a new goal, which is that by 2020 all students should graduate or be on track to graduate ready for college or a career (Obama 2). Even though No Child Left Behind gave resources for tutoring and after-school classes not many students took advantage of these resources. Race to the Top erases these provisions altogether. Finn agrees with this change and relates the school system to a hospital, “ A school that manages to get itself in the bottom five percent needs radical surgery if anything is to be changed"(Finn as qtd in Jost 10). Others do not agree with this style. “ We believe the administration is acting on belief, not on research" (Jennings as qtd in Jost 10). The reason that teachers are taking more of the brunt of the fight is because in No Child Left Behind teachers were not accountable for their actions, and were not accountable if the student did not perform. “ While any given teacher may not have huge control over a kid, the cumulative effect of teachers is the single most important influence on what a kid learns — or maybe the second most important after home and neighborhood"(Fordham Institute’s Finn as qtd in Jost 11). Some researchers are saying that Obama is holding the teachers one hundred percent responsible, but not giving teachers leverage to get a hold of the tools they need. That is where the $4. 35 billion of stimulus money comes into play; the teacher just has to prove that their methods will work for the students. Obama does not want to discourage teachers, but he wants to motivate them. There were too many restrictions with No Child Left Behind, and this is a chance to be set free and think of more innovative teaching strategies that can better the student and the teacher. There also is another option if you do not agree with the Race to the Top. It is a program that runs through ACT, and it is called Educational Planning and Assessment System. This is broken down into three components which are ACT Explore, ACT Plan, and the ACT. ACT Explore is a curriculum that is based on career and educational planning. Subjects that it test over are English, math, reading, and science. They base their means over the achievement of all the students. Explore is started in middle school so the system can start structuring the students educational plan for high school. Once the student enters the tenth grade they start the ACT Plan. This will help the student build a complete high school course plans. They also can target their weaknesses to help them stay on track for their college and work success. The ACT is a test that measures the mastery of state and college readiness standards. Nationwide colleges are accepting the ACT. EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT uses test scores to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a student. It then helps guide the student to make curriculum decisions that are designed only for them. Lower-scoring students who go to schools that use EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT will achieve a great amount of academic growth. This growth is usually seen at the beginning years of high school. Students who go through the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT curriculum have a 24 to 44 higher percent chance to meet the ACT Readiness Benchmarks. “ Informed by the National Curriculum Survey, the College Readiness Standards are validated by actual student academic performance data through their alignment with the College Readiness Benchmarks" (ACT 2). These standards represent an academic expectation for all students, even if they do not plan on furthering their college experience. Some statistics show that 89 percent of students who meet EXPLORE and PLAN English Benchmarks will be better prepared for college English Composition by the time they graduate high school. 85 percent of students who meet EXPLORE and PLAN Mathematics Benchmark will be prepared to take College Algebra by the time they graduate. 76 percent of students who meet EXPLORE and PLAN Reading Benchmarks will be prepared to cake college social science courses by the time the graduate. Also, 82 percent of students who meet EXPLORE and PLAN Science Benchmarks are likely to be prepared for college Biology by the time they graduation high school (ACT 2). McPherson High School in Kansas has decided to adopt this new system, and they have also changed it a little to fit better to their curriculum. They have called there new system C3 which stands for Citizenship, College, and Career Readiness. They have decided to start using the ACT Explore program with their sixth and seventh graders. They have consulted with the ACT programs so they can make it possible for the sixth and seventh grade students to become involved with the program. They used past scores of this age group to come up with their own College Readiness Benchmark. “ The work being done in McPherson at the middle level is extremely important. ACT research shows that the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that currently happens academically in the typical U. S. high school" (ACT 3). This shows that when students are not on target for college and career readiness teachers need to interfere, especially in the years before high school. McPherson High School sent in their scores from the Kansas Assessment to the ACT and found out that only 61. 1% of their students are college ready (ACT 3). There is a large gap between the Kansas Assessments’ “ meets standards" and the ACT College Ready Benchmarks. McPherson has sent out a press release and Senator Robert of Kansas said, “ I am proud of the work Dr. Watson and the McPherson School District have done in setting a higher standard for their accountability system for student progress. Their efforts have made them a model for the nation as the first school district in the country to receive this waiver from the Department of Education Congratulations McPherson for breaking the mold and challenging yourselves to lead students toward citizenship, college and career readiness through tough accountability. " Senator Moran agrees with Senator Roberts and believes that this will start a worldwide epidemic. The McPherson School District is the first in the country to receive this type of waiver. All together we have learned that No Child Left Behind is having a negative effect on the performance of students. The deadlines that were set are impractical. All they did was set deadlines and expected the teachers and students to meet the goals without giving them the proper tools. Many believe that changes need to be made to this curriculum, but others believe that we need a transformation. President Obama has come up with a solution that is called, “ Race to the Top. " This provides a budget of $4. 35 billion dollars (Hartnett 1). He is relying on the school systems wanting to make a change, and for them to come up with their own ideas. If their new ideas show success then they will receive money. Some organizations are upset that Obama is putting a lot of the blame on the teaching staff, and think that that part of the document should be taken out. Obama wants this to motivate teachers to do better and to motivate their students. He is taking away the restrictions of No Child Left Behind, and letting teachers and staff to be creative and come up with a new innovative teaching method. McPherson High School in Kansas has done this. They came up with the C3 which means Citizenship, College, and Career Readiness. They have developed a program through the ACT that helps students get on track for graduation and for a career. Student will have the opportunity to begin this new curriculum in the sixth grade. They have looked at past scores of the Kansas Assessment and found the gaps. They will use the ACT Explore, ACT Plan, and the ACT to get their students ready for their bright future. The Superintendent of the McPherson School District said, “ This is an important day for students and faculty in McPherson. This confirms the work that our staff and community has been engaged in over the past several years. " The ACT is accepted at all Universities in the nation. The McPherson School District has the support of the Kansas Senators and many others. They are very excited to put these years of planning into a reality. I personally believe that all school districts should adopt the curriculum that McPherson has come up with. The statistics prove that there will be success. Obama’s idea is a good one, but it seems like that it will take a lot of time. This is a subject that needs to be taken care of now, because the students are the future.