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## No Child Left Behind: Fair and Equal Education

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## No Child Left Behind: Fair and Equal Education

Education is a big part of every American citizen's life because by law, we are all required to attend school till at least the age of sixteen(Bush). Education is a way in which to get better jobs and better access within society. Within the United States, taxpayers are required to support education by funding the public school system. Education is knowledge. Knowledge is power and for all these reasons, No Child Left Behind should be of importance to every student capable of understanding it, every parent with school age children, and every new or old teacher. No Child Left Behind has raised many questions and issues. Educators, government officials, and scholars have been working since the start of the law to figure out the answers. There are many problems with No Child Left Behind. For one, the law requires all students to meet the same standards when realistically due to finances, resources, and disabilities all students cannot meet the same standards. It has also proven very hard for researchers to empirically test the performance of No Child Left Behind because prior to the law there were not many schools who had accountability standards like those and so there is nothing to test it against. Over the last ten years testing has gotten a little bit better but is still concentrated in elementary education and not secondary education. No Child Left Behind was a new, revolutionary education reform law that had the potential to produce good results through it's good motives, but fell short because there was too much focus on only two subject areas, math and reading, standardized tests, and the accountability of teachers. There was not enough focus on the children and how the new plan may affect them.

No Child Left Behind is an educational reform law created by President George W. Bush, in 2001. The law was enacted in January of 2002. No Child Left Behind is of course not the first educational reform in American history, there have been a few and the new laws usually

somewhat of a replica of the last with additional goals. No Child Left Behind is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, created in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The law was created in part because every few year's educators always voice their opinion about the changes needed within the educational system. Educators wanted a new law or a reauthorized law because there had been a growing problem within the American educational system in which certain types of students were doing considerably worse than others. There were students getting left behind and ultimately dragged through the educational system without receiving adequate education. No Child Left Behind is known to all teachers because all states had to abide by the requirements of the law. The general public has inconsistent views of the law because they only know what they have heard from teachers or the news but they do not know if the law has been effective or not. When the law was presented to the public and to the schools, it was generally perceived positively because the sound of "no child left behind" was promising and even inspirational. It seemed as if there would be some equality created within the educational system. Even in the aftermath of the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 President George Bush seemed to be multi-focused, focused on the security of Americans and still focused on the educational system.

I began my research looking for answers to two main questions and some follow-up questions. 1) What did No Child Left Behind intend to do and who is directed towards. It is important to understand the intent of the law to even begin to look at its progress over the years. 2) How effective was No Child Left Behind. Did it reach its intended goals? Did it make the school setting better? The first question concerning the intent of the law was relatively easy to find the answers. I used the actual document itself and the final legislation of issues such as standardized testing, adequate yearly progress, and teacher accountability to support my intent

claims. It is also important when addressing this question to take a look at the history behind the law which includes the educational laws that were passed before No Child Left Behind. The Elementary and Secondary Act created by Lyndon B. Johnson and the educational system during Ronald Reagan's presidency will be discussed within the paper to show the path that led to No Child Left Behind. The second question will be the majority of this paper because these answers were a lot harder to find. The way in which I will support my claim concerning this question will be through statistical research, credible newspapers such as the New York Times, the opinions of educators from all over, and the information and blogs posted on credible educator websites such as the National Education Association and Education. Gov. After viewing all my research, my research led me to the idea that No Child Left Behind was a new, revolutionary education reform law that had the potential to produce good results through its good motives, but fell short because there was too much focus on only two subject areas, math and reading, standardized tests, and the accountability of teachers. There was not enough focus on the children and how the new plan may affect them.

According to the government there are four pillars or goals of No Child Left Behind: accountability, freedom of states, proven education methods, and more choices for parents (Four Pillars of NCLB). Accountability is the number one goal because the blame has to be pinpointed at someone for the low scores of American students, specifically the students of lower socioeconomic status. The government wanted states to feel as if education would still be to their discretion but it did not go as planned, the government still ended up winning the power struggle. The education methods have been hard to be proven by researchers because the law was implemented simultaneously. Parents' choice on paper increased but was still not easily accessible for parents. No Child Left Behind was created for education reform or educational

progress. The education system has never been perfect or equal to all students involved or teachers. Prior to this law, states made virtually all decisions on how their specific education systems would be operated. Education was at the discretion of the state including testing and accountability. Most states did not even have accountability measures against teachers. When George W. Bush began to talk about the bill in 2001 before it was passed in 2002, there was some educators and states worried about the role the federal government would play in the law. It turns out the federal government plays a huge role in education now because of No Child Left Behind policies. The federal government produced rigid rules and expectations. States were expected to report results to the government and in return either be punished or rewarded. In the first section, we will examine the history behind No Child Left Behind, analyze specific requirements within the law that will be relevant to section two, what it was intended to do, and who it was intended for.

No Child Left Behind is a reauthorization of Lyndon B. Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Act passed in 1965. The Elementary and Secondary Act was passed as part of Johnson's War on Poverty campaign. The act gave grants to low-income schools and allowed for extra facilities and resources to help the students. The law was a social response to what was prevalent during the 1960's(Diorio). For the next ten years following the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Act, the amount of federal funds given to schools increased drastically. Gina Diorio estimates a two hundred percent raise in federal funding towards schools during that time. The effects of inflation and a poor economy in the 1970's greatly minimized the amount of money that the government gave to schools. Schools began again to suffer more so during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who believed in minimal government intervention. Reagan did not believe that the government should be so heavily involved in the education

system and instead should allow them to make their own mistakes and fix them. During Reagan's reign, federal funding to education dropped twenty-one percent (Diorio). Tax dollars once again had to be enough to provide resources for students, but in many places in America, especially urban or rural areas this was not easy for schools to maintain. It took over thirty years before another President successfully addressed the issue. Successful in the sense that a law was created and passed, not so much in the sense of results.

In order to test the intention of the law, the law must first be examined. It is not beneficial to examine and analyze each part of the law but the sections that are relevant to the efficiency of the law such as the final legislation of the standards and testing, adequate yearly progress and accountability, and reporting results. All of these summaries of these specific sections of the law, I assessed on public, credible websites, in this case, Public Broadcasting System.

The standards and testing requirements placed on states was new and proved to be challenging for many states. Standards and testing have always been a big part of education. Standards are used as guidelines for teachers to ensure that they cover all material that is required of them and to ensure students are being taught valuable information in an allotted amount of time. Testing is a way in which to test the student's knowledge on a particular subject. Prior to No Child Left Behind, most states did not have a standard state-wide test that all students of a particular grade level had to take. Students just had to pass the school year. Standardized tests and the testing requirement is one of the top hot discussions within the education world concerning No Child Left Behind. The law required that states "develop and implement "challenging" academic standards in reading and math, set annual statewide progress objectives to ensure that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years, and then test children annually in grades 3 through 8, in reading and math, to measure their progress" (The New

Rules). The most important thing to note is the only reading and math are mentioned. This exclusion of all other subjects will begin to play a major role in the outcry of educators later. Also, the term challenging isn't explained very well within the law, it's almost ambiguous. The ambiguity causes problems within the education world because states struggled with creating challenging tests. They pondered over such questions as "Who should the test be challenging for"? Should it be for all students or the academically lower students to meet the scores of the higher academically students? These questions are never truly answered in full but in some content later on in the bill.

Despite struggling, states had to create the "challenging" test in order to receive funds from the government. The government would give states funds if they created a challenging test. States were given some leeway here though, because if the government did not provide enough funds for the tests, states did not have to make the test for grades 3-8 (The New Rules). The law created this battle for money between schools. States realized that they could no longer just receive money from the government, they had to work for it. They had to produce results and they would be rewarded. In turn, the government had to provide enough money for states to produce results. The system sounds fair but really the federal government has the upper hand. They gave themselves the upper hand, intentionally or unintentionally when then they created the requirements of the law. The federal government has the upper hand within the system of No Child Left Behind because they have access to the extra money that virtually all schools need all the time or at some point. The power of money is the highest power in our society. It's a power struggle that schools cannot win. If the government doesn't provide enough money to create the test then schools do not have to do it, but either way that school is not receiving extra money needed, and so their students fall even further behind.

Adequate yearly progress and accountability are extremely important aspects of No Child Left Behind. Schools are required to create state-wide objectives and must meet those objectives every year and show that they have made adequate yearly progress. The federal government attempted to give schools some freedom within the law by allowing each state to create its own standards, tests, and objectives; and because of this adequate yearly progress reports would be insufficient to mark progress. Each state would be so different, the government would not have a common standard to judge them all by. Progress in one state could be the equivalent of underachievement in another state so students across the country would still be on different levels, although this law was created to create equality in the school system.

Accountability is the best aspect of No Child Left Behind. It is the number one thing that separates No Child Left Behind from the Elementary and Secondary Act. The law holds the state and the teachers accountable for the test results of the school. Accountability is great and much needed quality in education. There are many schools with low retention rates and low scores and someone has to be accountable for the continuation of these trends. The Public Broadcasting System summarizes the law by saying "Those schools that fall behind may be subject to various "school improvement," "corrective action," or "restructuring" measures imposed by the state. Underperforming schools may avoid such measures if they can demonstrate a 10 percent reduction in the number of students that are not meeting the annual proficiency goals" (The New Rules). School improvement refers to extra academic programs to help students such as tutoring. Tutoring can be beneficial and should be present in all schools but forced tutoring can hurt the students and teachers. School improvement would impose extra duty for both students and teachers; both have to focus on math and reading, while putting the other subjects on the backburner. Corrective action could mean that students could be given vouchers to attend



another school that kept “failing” or teachers could be fired. Students being given vouchers has pros and cons. A pro is that the students will be given the option to get a better education elsewhere for no cost. A con is that the student will have to find a way to his or her new school. Most students at failing schools do not have resources or the means to transfer to another school. Teachers being fired for test scores seems absurd to many critics of the law but it has happened at many schools.

Although ambiguous in multiple aspects, the law is very clear in its intent to make results public. The Public Broadcasting Company summarizes the intent behind making results public “To help ensure that all groups of students are progressing at an adequate rate, the test results must be broken out and reported according to poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. This is known as “disaggregation of data,” and is intended to prevent schools from lumping test results together in an overall average for the school, effectively hiding the achievement gaps between groups of students” (The New Rules). Here in this section, the intent of the No Child Left Behind becomes clearer. The intent is respectable; the government is trying to break the achievement gap between minority students and the majority. The intent of No Child Left Behind is create, build, and produce equality. Allowing school results to be made public may seem cruel but it has benefits. It shows that the government is aware of the inequality and ill-balance within the education system. It allows parents to decide which schools they want their children to attend. It holds the school accountable. By making their mistakes or accomplishments public, the government hoped to make schools fight harder to reach goals.

The statement of purpose in the law makes the intent even more clear by stating “The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State

academic achievement standards and state academic assessments”(The Elementary and Secondary Act). The first question’s answers lies within this this statement of purpose. No Child Left Behind was created for all students not just minorities, but them in general, to receive a prized education in order to be successful in the world. It is clear that the intent of the law was an upright one that just went wrong in the midst of being implemented. In the second section, how and why No Child Left Behind ultimately fell short of its desired intent will be examined and analyzed.

The focus on math and reading within the law caused an uproar from many educators. No Child Left Behind required schools to test students in reading and math every year from third grade to eighth grade and at least one test in their first two years of high school. The scores of the students was a deciding factor in whether or not schools received funds and so teachers had to put a lot of focus on the two subjects. It is understandable why the government would choose those two subjects to focus on. Math and reading are fundamentals subjects. Students must be knowledgeable in both areas in order to perform basic abilities to survive in the real world. The importance of math and reading was not challenged by educators, but the sole focus on the two was. On the hand, although math and reading are fundamental subjects, it should be clear to see why only focusing on two subjects could be hazardous to students. School is supposed to teach students to be well rounded people. Ignoring science, social studies, or music will only hurt the student in the end. Also teachers were pretty much forced to dedicate more time to the teaching of these two subjects.

I read many researches on the achievement of No Child Left Behind and virtually every scholar who has tried to test the effectiveness of the law state that it is exceptionally hard because there is no comparison group. The law applied to all public schools and so there is really

no one to test the students against. Private schools are not an option because they did not have to follow the guidelines of the law for money because they get their money through other ways besides the government. The best option for people who want to test the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind is to compare the present students who are being taught according to the law to the students who were not taught under the law. Past versus present is a method that multiple people used. Another method would be to compare the early year students of the law to the now students and check the progress. Every study only focuses on the progress of math and reading because that was an aim of the law.

In *Education Next* by Thomas Dee and Brian Jacob, they took a different approach. They looked at states that already had some type of accountability system in place before No Child Left Behind. They figured that No Child Left Behind would not have drastically changed those states educational system because they had already had an accountability system in place. States who did not have an accountability system in place would be the most affected by the law. Therefore, they compared the math and reading scores of the states who had accountability systems before No Child Left Behind to the states who did not. They found that the “accountability provisions of NCLB generated large and statistically significant increases in the math achievement of 4th graders and that these gains were concentrated among African American and Hispanic students and among students who were eligible for subsidized lunch...NCLB accountability had any impact on reading achievement among either 4th or 8th graders” (Jacob). They note that the fact that their test results resulting in no effect of No Child Left Behind on the schools without a prior accountability system, that it made the comparison group, the states with accountability, seem more valid. Dee and Jacob do not give much reasoning for the results, they state the results and the possible implications of the results. It is

important to note that they mentioned subsidized lunch. Subsidized lunch or reduced lunch is usually given to students who cannot afford to pay for lunch. Students with subsidized lunch are usually students from low income families and so watching them would help shed light on the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind on different social-economic status students. The increases in achievement for students with subsidized lunch suggests that No Child Left Behind did contribute to the rise in equality of scores of minority groups, at least in the case of this study. On the other hand, this study also shows that No Child Left Behind was not able to reach its goal in its entirety because the reading achievement rose while the math achievement did not.

Dee and Jacob's findings closely resemble the findings of other studies done on the effectiveness of the law. A study done at Stanford University by Sean Reardon and colleagues found that No Child Left Behind did not close racial and socioeconomic gaps. In the abstract they state that "We find that within-state achievement gaps were closing slowly, on average, prior to the passage of the NCLB legislation, and that this trend did not change significantly after the introduction of NCLB. However, we do find evidence indicating that the policy's impact varies systematically across states in ways that are consistent with NCLB's subgroup-specific accountability features" (Reardon). This group seems to also have taken somewhat of the same approach as Dee and Jacob by looking at the trends of public schools math and reading scores before the passing of No Child Left Behind and comparing them to the scores after the passing of the law. No Child Left Behind on average did not close gaps of any kind, racial, socioeconomic, math or reading, but those gaps were already closing before the passing of the law. If these findings are true then No Child Left Behind cannot be accredited with the results, and so this Stanford group of researchers did not give the law credit. To further explain this quote, the results vary across states but mainly schools. According to the research of this Stanford group the

schools with more segregation between minority and majority groups, No Child Left Behind did narrow the racial achievement gaps. The racial achievement gaps between African-American and Caucasian students, and Hispanics and Caucasians. These two groups would be the ideal groups to pay attention to when testing the effectiveness of the closing of racial achievement gaps because African-Americans and Hispanics are the United States' two largest minority groups.

Poverty plays a major role in education. One reason that there has been a gap within education between African-American and Hispanic students compared to Caucasian students is poverty. Areas of lower socioeconomic standing are usually occupied by these two minority groups and so there is not much money going into the schools within the district. This group of researchers believes that the reason that schools with more segregation experienced a slight closure in racial achievement gaps is because of accountability pressure. Schools with less segregation, or majority of the students being of one race did not feel as much accountability pressure. The "report cards" that are made public by the government of individual schools includes the percentage of minority groups passing the standardized tests. A school with more segregation would assumeably be more adamant about preparing their minority students for the test and so raising their test scores. Schools with less segregation would still need to focus on the standardized tests but not so much the racial component of it. Although this idea of focusing on the minority students in order not to look like a failure on the public report cards may seem forced and targeted, it did in this case help the scores of the students and helped bridge the gap between the racial groups. Here is an example of how No Child Left Behind had good intentions that sometimes worked but never fully. Once again, just as in the last study, certain aspects of the goals were made but not all. The bridge between racial achievements groups were closed but only for specific situations. All students were not able to be positively affected as the law

intended. Schools with less segregation does not mean there was no segregation, or no minority groups present within the schools; but those minority students in those schools actually experienced a widening of the racial achievement gap, according to this specific study.

In a study done by Brian Jacob of University of Michigan and his colleagues also found that the scores of one subject, math raised after the implementation of No Child Left Behind but reading scores decreased. Jacob also addressing the racial component and goal of the law. In the abstract Jacob says that “Our results indicate that NCLB brought about targeted gains in the mathematics achievement of younger students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds” (Dee). The use of the term “disadvantaged backgrounds” points at the poverty or socioeconomic status issue. Education and poverty seem to be related and relative to each other and the government clearly noticed that when they created the goals of No Child Left Behind. It is important to note that each of these research teams make it imperative to include the mention of the scores of students of lower socioeconomic status. This is in part because of the intent of the law and the ongoing issue in education since the desegregation of schools in the 1950’s. No Child Left Behind had good intentions of positively affected minority students but if no child is to be left behind then the focus should be on all students reaching the same goal. Disadvantaged students experienced some gains according to these researchers but it may have been to the expense of other students.

The results of the above test lead perfectly into the issue of state standardized tests. Standardized tests have always been a hot topic within education. Some educators feel that they are necessary to test students’ general knowledge, while others feel that they are setting a bar that every student cannot reach. The requirement of standardized tests in No Child Left Behind wasn’t a new idea but the requirement that literally all students had to take one test and pass,

including students with mental and physical disabilities was a new idea. Prior to this law, if there was a standardized test in place there were usually separate ones for students with disabilities or no test at all. No Child Left Behind set the bar to the same height for every student. This may sound equal and equality is a goal of the law but really it is unrealistic. It does not mean that disabled students are not as smart or capable but that they have different needs and so need different goals set for them.

The need to meet requirements has caused many schools to make drastic changes in order to look good on the public reports. A concern of some educators is that because the government put these demands on schools but allowed them to make their own test, is that schools could cheat the system. Schools could cheat the system by making the standardized tests not as challenging as they should be so that their students will pass. If schools were to do that, then the students would really not be achieving at a higher level, it would just appear that way.

Alain Jehlen wrote an article on website of the National Education Association's page about the scientific-based answer on whether or not No Child Left Behind is working. He starts the article by pointing out the possible positive effects of No Child Left Behind such as the closing of the achievement gap between minority and majority students, the rise of math and reading scores, and the teamwork of teachers to make lesson plans to fit all children's needs. Jehlen says that those reasons are not enough to finalize No Child Left Behind as successful or working. There is a law called Campbell's Law that says that test scores will always rise if there is pressure to pass that particular test. Jehlen uses the work of Harvard professor, Daniel Koretz, to validate his claim. Koretz says that "No test can cover all the skills from every angle that students should master, so the test is just a small sample. If you focus on teaching kids to correctly answer problems that use a particular question format and only cover a narrow range of

skills, students will do better and better—that is, until someone asks them questions in a different way...”(Jehlen). Koretz statement suggest that although math and reading scores may have risen since the implementation of No Child Left Behind, students have not actually been learning more or better. Koretz tested his theory by testing a school district in the 1980s. The school had a test that it had been using as a type of standardized test, when they switched to a new test the scores dropped. They used that same test for four years and Koretz watched them all four years. Teachers prepped the students for that specific test and the scores rose during those four years. After four years, Koretz came back and gave the students the old test from four years prior. The students did terribly on that test because the teachers had not been prepping them for the old test but the present test. This experiment validates his point that students don’t actually learn when preparing for a standardized test, they just learn to pass that particular test.

The 2009 winner of the William Keats Sparrow Writing Award, Sarah Holmes wrote an essay on the issue of standardized tests and other problems facing schools after the implementation of No Child Left Behind. In her essay she tells the story of a high school in Texas where the dropout rate had already been declining before No Child Left Behind but once the law was in place, their rates were not considered good enough. In order to keep control of the school, they had to figure out a way to make their dropout rate look better than it was; so the school made the reasons for leaving on paper sound better, such as “transferred to another school”. By changing the wording and bending the truth the school was able to receive funds from the government and was actually awarded for their low dropout rate. The school was basically forced to lie or risk losing money. Their dropout rate was declining but not fast enough for No Child Left Behind. This is just one example of a school desperate to meet the requirements of the law. There was so much focus on meeting the standards that the school lost a



sense of morality and judgement; because virtually the school lied. They lied to keep control of the school though, so it is hard to judge them.

The accountability factor instills all of the pillars, or goals of No Child Left Behind. Accountability affects the test preparation, test scores, the teachers, and the parents. The school district and the teachers have to be accountable for the test that administer and the preparation steps they take to prepare students for the test. Accountability itself is a noble trait and there should be a sense of accountability within the school system. No Child Left Behind attempted to create this sense of accountability so that educators may work harder to help struggling students to succeed. Once again the concept is a respectable one but backfired. Many teachers around the country voiced their disapproval with the accountability measures. If a school did not meet its AYP, adequate yearly progress for four or more years they would be titled a failing school and they would lose funding, which led to the loss of many teachers as well. There are many education blog sites online where teachers have voiced their opinion on No Child Left Behind and its effect on their classroom. For example, Leslie, a high school teacher in Virginia posted that “I am a high school art teacher of eight years. It is amazing to me how significantly standardized testing has negatively impacted the learning environment in that relatively short time...These things need to be addressed outside of standardized testing. Inclusion is not allowing these considerations to be adequately addressed. NCLB is not successful legislation” (Educators Share How No Child Left Behind Has Affected Their Classroom). It is important to note Leslie’s use of the word inclusion. Inclusion refers the idea that all students even students with disabilities should be required to pass the state standardized tests. Leslie is not the only one who has issues with this idea.

Kathleen, a teacher in Colorado wrote on the blog “Reducing children (and teachers, too) to data points and numbers demoralizes us. Children (and teachers, too) are more than a number or a rating on a rubric. It is time to reclaim the whole child (and the whole teacher)... Accountability, yes! Reducing people to numbers, NO!”(Jehlen). Samantha, a teacher from New Jersey, complains that “My class time has been cut in half this year. I am told to teach to a test. I am told that they need to just be exposed to what they will be tested on, and that mastery doesn’t matter...I don’t want to give up on my kids because they are the ones that I feel like are being cheated, but I am tired and I do not see an end in sight”(Jehlen). Kathleen and Samantha both are unhappy with the demands placed on them and their students to pass the standardized tests. Both teachers felt that their students were ultimately losing more because of No Child Left Behind not gaining. The pressure that they are feeling as teachers is also evident. Kathleen does not feel as if she is truly important. She feels that her purpose as a teacher has become deformed into a test preparer. These are just the feelings of a few teachers but their feelings could very well represent the feelings of others.

In Kelly Randolph’s paper on the parents view of No Child Left Behind she says “Many teachers and parents believe the No Child Left Behind Act is biased against diverse and disabled students. Many of the schools losing their federal funding, due to their failure to show AYP, are schools that are racially diverse or have poverty stricken students. Special education teachers argue NCLB contradicts the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act(Randolph). No Child Left Behind was supposed to benefit minority students of both race and ability but it did not always fulfill that duty. Some special education students have individual education plans that have to be ignored if the students have to pass the standardized tests. The individualized educational plans are tailored to those specific students while the standardized tests are truly not

tailored for any students. The standardized test is tailored for an idea of an ideal student.

Randolph also mentions that No Child Left Behind has been difficult for teachers who have students that speak English as a second language. This statement may very well be true because teachers would not only have to make sure that all their students can learn the material, they would have to make sure that all their students can even understand the material. Students who speak English as a second language are usually taught a little differently than students who speak English as a first language. The reason being is because students who speak English as a second language have to first learn the language to learn the material, so teachers are also given this task. Although, this may have been hard on teachers, Tran-Hoang-Thu believes that No Child Left Behind ultimately helped English language learners. He comments that “English language learners (ELLs) comprise one of the subgroups of the disadvantaged groups, and because of that, ELLs have gone from the sidelines to the crosshairs in record time” (English Language Learners). In essence this statement is true. If educators had not put much focus and energy into English language learners, No Child Left Behind requires them to pay attention because English language learners would be considered a disadvantaged group due to the small numbers.

Over the years since its implementation, No Child Left Behind has become a hot topic in education discussions. Even before it was fully implemented there were a few educators and scholars who made predictions about the outcome of the law. William Beaver wrote an essay about a few of his predictions of the outcomes of the law in 2004. Beaver predicted that the requirement that schools higher highly qualified teachers or teachers who demonstrate knowledge of their subject. At the time of this article there were approximately twenty-two percent of all teachers had not went to college and obtained a degree in the present subject they were teaching. Beaver predicted that this requirement of highly qualified teachers would result in

the loss of many teachers depending on the standards of the state. If a state raised their teacher standards they would also need more funding to compensate those teachers and so Beaver says that the poorest schools would ultimately be hit the hardest(Beaver). Beaver's predictions seemed to reign true in some areas around the country. For example, Ginn Academy in Philadelphia, although with an eighty-eight percent graduation rate is considered a low scoring school because they have not met their adequate yearly progress. The school has consistently lost money since the implementation of No Child Left Behind. The New York Times says that "The Philadelphia School District — which has cut 5,000 jobs and closed 31 schools in two years and faces an \$80 million deficit for the next fiscal year"(Rich). Beaver's predictions did become true for some districts such as this one.

There are quite a few scholars and educators who have written essays and articles on ways in which to improve No Child Left Behind. Gary Orfield, a civil rights activist wrote an essay on the inequalities still faced by minority students even after the implementation of No Child Left Behind. He doesn't believe the law has done the job it intended to do. Orfield suggests that "A first step is for educators to recognize and demand changes in the racial conditions outside the schools that make their work so much harder. Housing policy, wages policy, health care, and day care are among the most urgent issues. A second is to demand that there be a Civil Rights agenda for our schools" (Orfield). Orfield feels that the issues outside of the school that affect the students within the school deal with should be addressed. Students who live in neighborhoods with better housing, wages, and conditions overall tend to receive a better education. Orfield's view is a direct reaction to Beeaver's predictions; poor areas getting hit harder since the implementation of No Child Left Behind. Orfield says that most poor areas are occupied by Black and Hispanic people and those students are not able to receive an equal

education even under No Child Left Behind because of the funding issues. Andy Porter from University of Pennsylvania, lists four ways in which to improve No Child Left Behind. 1) set high but reachable goals for schools to meet 2) create better testing that actually tested more than math and reading 3) hold students accountable too 4) give schools and teachers adequate resources to meet the standards set. Porter's view on how to fix No Child Left Behind are similar to most other scholars. Holding students accountable just as teachers are being held accountable is a different view. He does not elaborate or give suggestions on exactly how this could be implemented but he just believes that if teacher's job security depends entirely on student's test scores that students should be held accountable too. Students should feel the need to pass for more reasons than just to pass the test (Porter).

Teacher organizations such as National Education Association have been rallying and pressuring Congress to make changes to the law. This year, 2015 there has been much debate in the House and Senate over the changes to make. January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 The Washington Post published an article in which they quoted the full speech of Senator Patty Murray to the Senate on her ideas of how to fix No Child Left Behind. Murray's main points were that the unnecessary testing needed to be removed so that teachers could focus on many subjects to prepare students for college, teachers need to be given adequate resources in order to properly educate their students, and No Child Left Behind should extend to early childhood education (Strauss). Murray is the head democratic leader of the education reform movement right now in the Senate. Murray and others, both democrats and republicans have spoken on the Senate floor asking for the same things. July 16, 2015 the National Education Association posted on their page that the Senate had decided to create a new bill that would make some changes that they had been asking for (BREAKING). The new bill is named Every Child Achieves Act. It is still in the works of

being created but educators are confident that the new bill will be an even better version of the original Elementary and Secondary Act from which No Child Left Behind was created.

No Child Left Behind has received considerable negative feedback but The Center on Education Policy believes that there are ten big effects of No Child Left Behind that are worth mentioning. 1) tests are rising 2) schools are spending more time on math and reading 3) schools are paying more attention to curriculum 4) low performing schools are getting makeovers 5) schools and teachers have made progress demonstrating that they can meet academic standards 6) students are taking more tests 7) schools are paying attention to the achievement gap 8) the percentage of schools on the “need improvement” list has not been growing 9) the federal government is playing a larger role in education 10) state governments and school districts have expanded their role in school operations (Jennings). These ten big effects could also be viewed as negative by some people but The Center on Education Policy attempted to point out positives of the law.

No Child Left Behind and its setbacks and progresses should be of some importance to everyone. Taxpayers are required to support the education and should be knowledgeable about where their money is going, while teachers, students, and parents are being directly affected. Due to No Child Left Behind teachers are being held accountable for student’s successes and failures. No Child Left Behind was implemented in 2002 by President George W. Bush. The law sparked up much debate in the educational world because of the new idea of accountability checks. Educators, scholars, and lawmakers were divided on the fairness of putting so much pressure on teachers. Over the years No Child Left Behind has sparked more debate not just about teacher accountability but about the effectiveness of the new law.

I chose to research this topic to take a closer look at the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind was created in order to address the inequality of education within schools. Minority students tend to do worst then their counterparts on tests and exams and it isn't a secret. Teachers had been complaining to the government for years prior to No Child Left Behind for a reform bill to address the achievement gap issues. I began my research with the notion that the intentions of No Child Left Behind were noble and I used the direct statement of purpose in the introduction of the law as my main source of evidence. The bulk of this essay presents research that brings light to the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind. I used statistical research from university research teams who were specifically testing the exact things I was researching. Stanford and Brookings University both conducted research on how effective No Child Left Behind has been on meeting its goals. Both research teams concluded that there has been slight gains in test scores but no significant change since the implementation of No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind had potential to be a great changing law. It is clear that educators and scholars still believe that the law has potential because most do not want a totally new law, just a better one.

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