

**THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE FIELD EXPERIENCE PORTFOLIO
PROGRAM:
THE ULTIMATE LINK FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE OF DEVELOPING
HIGH QUALITY LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

SUMMARY

National University has established a partnership with local school districts employers, which provides prospective administrators (students) the opportunity to collaborate with their mentor and university supervisor on current practical administrative issues and requires them to complete extended activities for each regular course that translates theory into practice. Students formulate a set of twenty-two (22) leadership activities in eleven (11) different administrative categories.

Since this revised school administrative Portfolio Program is only in its fifth year of implementation, there are critical questions which need to be answered. Does this program translate theory into practice? Does the partnership linkage between the university and the school district mentor translate into success for the intern administrators? What are the strengths and weakness of the program? This paper will examine these questions from the prospective of the student, school site administrators and the university.

PAPER

Description of the Field Experience Portfolio

Realizing that the school administration internships are of major importance to any preservice program, National University has designed an effective program that meets the needs of both students and school districts. Prior to participating in the program, students must complete at least three (3) of the eight (8) required courses. The eight required courses are Legal & Financial Aspects of Education; Theories, Assessment & Application of Educational Leadership; School Community Relations in a Diverse Society; Management of Education Personnel: Social, Political, & Policy Issue; Schools as Organizations: Development & Resource Management; Supervision of Instruction: Curricula, Evaluation & Staff Development; Leadership, Technology & Its Application; and Preliminary Administrative Field Experience; this last class is the Field Experience Portfolio Program.. With faculty approval for field placement and assignment of a University supervisor, the student can now enroll in the Program. At the first meeting, the University supervisor obtains a signed agreement from the site administrator (mentor) stating that they would provide students the opportunity for a Field Experience toward a

Preliminary Administrative Services Certificate. During the implementation of the activities, the University supervisor continues to meet with the site administrator as needed.

In the Field Experience Portfolio Program, the students participate in real life field experiences that are designed to facilitate the application of theoretical concepts in practical settings. Each candidate addresses the major duties and responsibilities authorized by the administrative services certificate in a variety of realistic settings. Field experiences include intensive as well as extensive activities, both in the day-to-day functions of administrators and in longer term policy design and implementation. These activities provide the intern with a foundation that will help them in making important and sound decisions when they become an administrator.

The University supervisor, site administrator (mentor) and the student intern work collaboratively to determine field experience assignments to be completed at the student's current school site. During the six to twelve months the student is participating in the fieldwork, the University supervisor is in contact with the student on a regular basis to provide guidance, assistance, encouragement and to continuously evaluate the student's fieldwork activities and progress. If the student is currently assigned to a school site at a level other than middle school or junior high, he/she must conduct at least 20% of the field experience at the other school level. Such duties and responsibilities shall be performed by the student in at least two school levels: i.e., elementary, junior high school, middle school or high school. In most of these situations, the site administrator will contact the appropriate level school and assist the student intern in making arrangements with the neighboring school to complete the assignments.

Two to three activities must be identified for each of the areas unless the activities are so comprehensive in nature that they may meet the requirements for more than one area. For example, if the students are writing an entire grade-level curriculum, this activity could fulfill the requirements for more than one category.

The categories and some suggested activities are as follows:

Category 1. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

- Participate in the assessment of an education program.
- Develop instructional guides, resource materials.
- Participate in decision making process through involvement in the assessment of educational needs the definition of goals, planning of the educational program and evaluation of the school and its academic effectiveness.
- Coordinate the testing program.
- Develop, evaluate student awards recognition program.
- Develop experimental teaching units.
- Conduct of demonstration lesson.
- Assess the characteristics and behavior of exceptional pupils in terms of program and developmental needs.

- Conduct a demonstration lesson.
- Become involved in the process of textbook selection and plan to implement use of the selected text.
- Present a training session on current research on one of the following: learning theories, brain research, alternative methods for assessing student and/or teachers and the impact it has on student learning and improvement of instruction.
- Review schools' reading intervention plan and data and make recommendations for revision.

Category 2. Administrative concepts and Management Strategies

- Create a new student master scheduling system.
- Develop a lunch-time sports program.
- Develop a plan to utilize community and parent groups to assess the climate of the school.
- Assess staff needs for next year.
- Plan the faculty in-service meeting program.
- Demonstrate two techniques for diagnosing staff problems at your school site; indicate several strategies for resolving or improving each problem you identify.
- Conduct a teacher-staff meeting on a key topic.
- Develop a schedule for campus supervisors to assure adequate and continuous supervision of students during the school day.
- Follow through on three difficult pupils (one attendance case, one counseling case and one discipline case) and review the process used in handling each one.
- Develop and conduct a parent volunteer in-service training program.
- Develop a plan to involve the staff, parents and community – including representation from all socioeconomic and ethnic groups in the school community – in the review of the school's current goals, evidences of attainment and a process for revising them.
- Demonstrate two techniques for diagnosing staff problems at your school site; indicate several strategies for resolving or improving each problem you identify.

Category 3. Role of Schooling in a Democratic Society

- Attend a School Board meeting and outline procedures regarding meeting structure, and minutes and present an oral summary of an item(s) discussed which affects your school site and the implications to the faculty.

- Serve on the School Site Council and participate in a School or Consortium review and/or assist with development of the School Site Council Budget.
- Assist in developing the PTA school program budget, support activities, and fund raisers.
- Prepare and submit articles on education to the community newspaper and/or the school's PTA newsletter.
- Participate in a professional educational organization.
- Represent the school/district in one of the community's service clubs. (i.e. Rotary, Exchange Club, etc.)
- Serve as teacher liaison to the school's PTA for the school year and solicit teacher input for sharing at the meeting, prepare a written or oral report on the meeting for dissemination to the staff.
- Serve as the Student Council sponsor for the year and develop and coordinate with the students assemblies, awards ceremonies, special events, such as Red Ribbon Week, and other student-centered activities.

Category 4 Working with Diverse Populations

- Work with community youth organizations, law enforcement agencies, welfare agencies and similar groups in developing programs/services for the school.
- Design a program to deal with drop out problems in the school.
- Mediate several parents with complaints.
- Locate instruments which would help you measure students, staff and parents awareness of the cultural contributions of various ethnic groups. Use a selected instrument in your school setting.
- Make home visits regarding truancy, serious adjustment problems.
- Develop a student tutor program for students who are having difficulty with English using bilingual students as tutors.
- Organize and assist in an in-service meeting to share ideas and techniques for working with non-English speaking students.
- Design a school-wide Multi-cultural Diversity Fair involving both students and parents.
- Work with specialized support personnel on a case (nurse, psychologist, resource teachers, etc.).
- Review procedures for referring abused students for assistance.
- Develop and conduct a series of meeting for parents whose primary language is other than English on how to help their

children succeed in school and how they can participate in the school.

Category 5. Organizational Management

- Plan and conduct a community, parent and/or school meeting.
- Participate in school; closing activities.
- Conduct a problem-solving session with staff focusing on a problem such as diversity, truancy, budget priorities, graffiti, etc.
- Analyze the effectiveness of staff meetings and take steps to improve quality of the meeting.
- Plan new pupil groups for next year.
- Develop a handbook for substitute teachers containing a lesson plan model and all pertinent information necessary to insure continuity of a classroom program.
- Develop a student policy handbook.
- Design a plan for introducing a year-round school in your school or district.
- Construct a schedule of classes and teacher assignments for a new year.
- Review all support services at your school site and make recommendations for improvement.
- Evaluate the School Lunch Program – supervision, lunches students like, flow patterns, inclement weather.
- Assist teachers in developing a consistent grading program.

Category 6. Human Resource Administration

- Evaluate a probationary teacher. (actual or simulation)
- Arrange for teachers to visit and observe the work of master teachers at your site or within the district.
- Participate in or conduct a clinical supervision workshop.
- Screen confidential papers of candidates for a position.
- Identify how employees are assigned to particular schools or specific jobs. What preference, if any, is given district employees when supervisory or administrative openings occur?
- Discuss teacher evaluation procedure with your principal or Assistant Superintendent of Personnel or Human Resources and participate in the process where possible.
- Become familiar with all aspects of the district's processes for selecting both certificated and classified personnel.
- Interview and evaluate a prospective teacher.
- Discuss classified employee evaluation procedure with principal or Director of Classified Personnel and participate in the process where possible.

- Participate in the evaluation of the instructional aides at your site either in a supervisor role or a supportive role.
- Interview and evaluate a prospective teacher.
- Identify human relations problems in your school and develop approaches to the solution for one of these problems.

Category 7. Fiscal Resources & Business Service Administration

- Assist with the preparation and administration of the school level budget.
- Identify available resources in the community for external funding for educational programs.
- Examine the regular financial reports and become familiar with the methods used in preparing the reports.
- Assist with the management of student body funds.
- Review the process for ordering supplies for the school and assist with the ordering.
- Develop and assist with an application for a program funded by Federal or State agency.
- Conduct a school site survey with staff and determine budget strategies.
- Conduct school community budget planning committee.
- Inspect and evaluate the maintenance of the building.
- Evaluate and list plant needs (maintenance long term and short) summer projects.
- Develop a plan for appropriate staff and community involvement in the school's budget process.
- Work with key teachers and parents to raise funds for a special school or district need, such as computers, VCR's, science equipment, educational materials, music/art experiences, or items that have been cut due to budget constraints.

Category 8. Legal and regulatory Applications

- Prepare a written analysis of the policies, rules, and regulations officially adopted by the school board for the operation of the district.
- Review or revise the school faculty handbook.
- Observe or participate in the development of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for a student.
- Review district policies regarding site level responsibilities in contract management.
- Determine the district liability coverage for teachers; share the data with faculty.
- Conduct a staff in-service which addresses P.L.94.142 and its implication.

- Outline the steps a principal must take in dismissing an unsatisfactory teacher.
- Review the legal procedures for searching pupils and their lockers; read the district's/school's procedures to determine their compliance to the legal regulations.
- Complete a student and an employee accident report, prepare a written summary explaining the process and the schools legal obligations, and share the results with the staff.
- Develop a handbook of laws which directly affect teachers or students or both.
- Contrast and explain individual protections of special education legislation as it pertains to parents, teachers and students.
- Review district suspension and expulsion policies and evaluate in terms of state statutes and common law.

Category 9. Policy and Political Influences

- Attend a Board of Education meeting and prepare a report which analyzes the group's dynamics.
- Identify and describe federal and state projects in the school.
- Serve as a member of a committee preparing a proposal to the District Office.
- Work with a community/parent or student group in changing or shaping school policy.
- Identify and describe federal and state projects in the school.
- Attend an advisory committee meeting to present and communicate teacher concerns.
- Determine how the superintendent of your region/district receives input from the administrative staff as well as line personnel. (principals)
- Review several legislative bills affecting education currently before the state assembly/senate; meet with the superintendent or assistant superintendent and identify which of the bills has a high priority for the district and write a letter or send an e-mail to your local state representatives stating the district's position on one or more bills.
- Identify and describe federal and state projects in the school.
- Interview the head of the teacher's association/union to identify the organization's top three to five action priorities for the district in the school year.

- Meet with either your state or federal legislator(s) and review what they see as the major educational issues for the state or the nation and what their positions are on them.
- Attend a meeting of the school board and record briefly how each of the following items are handled.
 - a. Use of an agenda
 - b. Recording of minutes
 - c. Provisions for hearing speakers
 - d. Provisions for securing superintendent's recommendations on items requiring action.

Category 10. School Community Collaboration

- Establish a partnership with a community business.
- Speak at community or business meetings on general educational matters.
- Organize and participate in an extracurricular activities program.
- Plan a parent visitation program, Open House, Back to School, etc.
- Plan a parent Education Night.
- Assist in developing a community survey to determine satisfaction with school and its programs.
- Establish an after school homework assistance club.
- Establish and coordinate a School Beautification Committee (staff, students, parents).
- Develop a brochure describing the school's various programs, mission statement, vision and goals, awards and honors for distribution to local estate offices and businesses.
- Speak on school concerns/needs before a community group/organization.
- Welcome and schedule the use of the school plant as a center of community activities.
- Participate in the study process and development of plans for either the opening of a previously closed school or the closing of an existing school due to either increasing or declining enrollments in the district.

Category 11. Use of Technology

- Complete scheduling of each student for the school year using computer.
- Analyze the auditorium's sound system and submit written recommendations for upgrading.
- Meet with teachers to evaluate their instructional program. Consider computer assisted instruction and record keeping.

- Review the entire curriculum at your school looking for objectives that could be taught using presently available computer software.
- Input staff manual into a software package for future updates.
- Administer and score tests to diagnose class performance using a computer.
- Assist individual teachers with technology.
- Conduct a parent orientation on your school's Technology plan and demonstrate the various hardware and software currently in use by the students and faculty.
- Participate in the writing of a technology grant for the district or school.
- Prepare a technology needs assessment for the school staff to determine possible areas for staff in-service.
- Plan a new computerized approach for your school in the areas of pupil record keeping, pupil testing and score reporting, special education services or individual teacher grade recording.
- Observe or participate in staff development activity. Consider computer utilities such as word processing.

For each activity, the students must write a summary describing each step of how they started the activity and how they completed the activity. They must also attach any pertinent documentation, record and other artifacts that will attest to the scope and quality of the students' performance. Students must place all documentation into a binder that includes a self-assessment of the field experience, describing what they have learned and how they will apply this learning in the role of an administrator; a student evaluation of the Field Experience Portfolio Program and an extensive evaluation of the student by the site administrator. The administrators' evaluation has two parts; Part I contains the eleven (11) areas in which the student participates in the activities; Part II contains the skills and attributes of the student intern in ten (10) domains. The domains are Leadership Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Organizational Skills, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Personal/Relationship Skills, Group Relationship Skills, Sensitivity to Diversity and Attitude, Initiative and Cooperation. The portfolio provides the materials that the University supervisors use to assess the students' performance in each of the categories and to issue a grade. The primary purpose for the culminating portfolio is that it allows the student the opportunity to integrate course theory and field experiences in the real world.

Background

Research has shown that effective school site administrators are a key ingredient to the success of schools or as stated by John Stewart in his article in the journal Updating School Board Policies, "Without proper background, education, guidance, and on-the-job

training, a principal can create havoc within the school community". As early as 1981, states, school districts and universities saw a need to implement pilot intern programs in hopes of better preparing administration students for principal positions. The Kentucky General Assembly was the first in the United States to mandate the establishment of the Kentucky Beginning Principal Internship Program to upgrade the quality of educational leadership in the schools. In this program, a three member principal intern committee supervisors, assists and assesses each intern. The committee consisted of a mentor principal of a similar school level, the superintendent or a designee, and an administrator educator representing a state approved educational administrator program. (Prickett, R.L. et. al., 1990; Richardson, M.D. and Prickett, R.L., 1991). North Carolina's legislature also mandated changes in principal preparation programs and funded two year full time intern program which allowed Principal Fellows to receive loans. At the same time, the university maintained its program for part-time students. These students completed the same basic course work as did the Principal Fellows, but their internships were more limited in terms of duration and intensity. The Principal Fellows were clearly better prepared for entry-level administrative positions than their part-time counterparts.(Bradshaw, L.K., 1997). There is little doubt that full-time intern programs have been and are beneficial to both administrative interns and school districts; however, this program is extremely expensive.

Stacey Edmonson reported on the intern program at Sam Houston State University which is similar to the program at National University. Students are involved in activities that are based on the Texas standards for effective school leaders and recommendations of their supervising administrator. These series of activities were designed for building a working knowledge of and actually applying the standards. In addition to the activities and other written components, the student interns must attend four seminars per each semester. The seminars provide the interns the opportunity to discuss and share their learning, their frustrations, and their evolving views of becoming an administrator. Stacey Edmonson reports that "the networking and growth involved with these seminars is tremendous". The seminars are the one area which is not included in the National program but perhaps, one that should be added.

In her report, Martha Ovando examined the assessment of interns' performance in a university-based internship program. Administrators, mainly principals, who supervised interns at school sites, completed the Assessment of Interns' Performance form. The assessment was designed to gather information about interns' experiences, field-based areas in which interns were involved, their potential as future administrators, their strengths and areas for further development, and recommendations for program improvement. Findings indicated that the interns were engaged in a variety of activities. The areas of demonstrated strength and ability included effective planning, organization, time management, human relations, oral communication, written communication, taking directions, using organization policies and procedures, and applying theory in educational administration. The supervisors had high regard for the interns and believed they had the potential to perform a variety of roles at both central office and school site levels. The supervisors were willing to continue supporting other interns.

In their research paper, Wade Devlin-Scherer, Roberta Devlin-Scherer and John Couture focused on principal interns' participation in activities at two universities. The internship was designed for interns to work closely with other educators in fostering school improvement by completing specific instructional and managerial tasks. The researchers examined the intensity of involvement in the activity; the program evaluation; the program implementation; and managerial leadership; classroom observations and teacher conferencing; job shadowing/professional development; and independent leadership. They found that there was a wide variance in the amount of hours committed to this learning experience. They also found that the activities that the interns were involved in were legitimate and actually led to student learning.

With increasing interest in public education by the federal, state and local governments, universities and colleges are being challenged to improve the educational requirements for certificated personnel, especially the school site administrators. The challenge is to develop a program that would graduate effective entry level school administrators at little or no cost to the districts. In addition to lack of funds, the difficulty is that the administrative roles which were once clearly defined in an organizational hierarchy as having complete autonomy have recently changed to a model of principal as "facilitator" (Schargel, F. P., 1994) and collaborator.. Teacher associations/unions and parent groups have become more vocal and involved in the decision making process at school sites, adding another dimension that school administrators must address.. Keeping in mind that coming to consensus and making decisions utilizing the collaborative model always takes more time; additional time that the administrator does not have. School site administrators are spending more time at the school site in order to accomplish all the responsibilities that go with the job. The principal is no longer a recognized leader in only instruction; the principal is now the manger of the school facility that is also responsible for the instructional program. As the role of leadership changes, the function and structure of internship will need to change (Hoekstra, .B. 1995) and has changed.

In order to meet the demand for the changing role of the administrator, requiring different skills and abilities, universities have recognized the difficulty of attempting to teach complex issues exclusively by lectures and textbooks. Therefore, administrative intern programs have become more popular (Jean, E.W. and Evans, R.D., 1995). Full time internships are extremely expensive and most school districts are unable to release their teachers from their teaching obligations during their internship. In addition, more recently university education programs have included internship portfolio which ensures that the interns have an opportunity to perform real administrative duties while they are full time employees of the district (Edmonson, S. 2002)

National University has developed the Field Portfolio Program which combines the two strategies – field experience and portfolio assessments - to address the changing role of the school site administrator. The program is relatively new, only in its fifth year of implementation; some questions need to be answered, as well as, perhaps some changes.

Findings

Does the Field Experience Portfolio Program translate theory into practice? Each of the eleven categories was carefully designed to incorporate activities which would include the theories taught in the eight required classes. In selecting the activities, student interns were able to reflect back on their course work to determine which activities were of utmost interest to them. Without exception, the student interns stated in their reflections, that their activities were a real learning experience. The portfolio activities successfully translated theory into practice. This balance between theories and practice helped student interns realize that the administrative positions required a number of skills, in addition to knowledge of curriculum and instruction. The Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Arlington experience concluded that the portfolio assessment not only ties theory to practice but provided the students with a framework to continue their own professional development and also provided a tool to build upon (Wilmore, E. L., 1995). This same sentiment was echoed in the North Carolina experience (Bradshaw, L.K.;Perreault, J.O.;McDowelle, & Bell, E. W. 1997). In his paper, David Stader states, "The portfolio concept lends itself well to the challenges of assessing students in principal preparation programs in ways that are authentic and job-embedded". The one area of concern that teachers' working in traditional calendar schools was the few opportunities they had to participate in teacher observations/evaluations. Unlike teachers working in year-round schools, there were very few opportunities to observe teachers when they were not working, since all teachers at the school site were off at the same time. In some cases, the principal (mentor) was able to arrange for the student intern to observe at a neighboring year-round school. In the North Carolina intern program, it was the part-time interns who reported that they had few opportunities to be involved in teacher observations (Bradshaw,L. K.; Perrault, G; McDowelle, J.O.; Bell, E.W. 1997).

Does the partnership linkage between the university and the school district mentor translate into success for the intern administrators? There are numerous models for administrative internships and many models involve a school site administrator, a University supervisor and the student intern. In most cases, as in the National University model, the administrative intern is a full time employee on the campus where he/she is completing his/her internship. Realizing that most school site administrators have little time to accomplish all their tasks, and have little or no time to train an intern, collaboratively the university supervisor, the administrator (mentor) and the student intern, select activities which would help the administrator and be beneficial to both the school and the student intern. Recognizing that most of these activities are completed by the student intern before and after their working hours, administrators give their teachers considerable latitude to become involved in their field based activity. In some cases the site administrator will allow classroom teachers, in traditional calendar schools, as well as in year-round schools, to participate in teacher observation/evaluation by providing classroom coverage by other certificated staff members. Student interns, who are required to complete their activities at two levels, have a more difficult time completing their assignment. However, without exception, upon completing their portfolios all student interns feel better prepared and grateful for their experience. Just as the student interns at Sam Houston University, National University student interns become fully

aware of the tremendous responsibility and the commitment required of a school administrator (Edmonson, S., 2002).

What are the strengths and weakness of the program? In his paper, John Greer states “that cooperation between universities and school districts is difficult”. Although in the Danforth Program, in addition to collaborating in the selection of activities, and guiding monitoring, assessing and evaluating the student interns, school districts and the University shared responsibilities for the admission or program participants, and also for fulltime internships, and the placement of program graduates in administrative positions”. He found that the school district personnel were “enthusiastic” while university personnel were skeptical toward shared responsibility. In almost every situation, in the National University model, the relationship between the school district personnel and the University supervisor has been positive.. A definite strength of the program is hiring retired administrators from the school district to serve as the University supervisor for the student interns. Often times, a positive relationship between the school site administrator and the University supervisor already exists. The school site administrator view having student interns at the school site as a win win situation. Having an enthusiastic intern that wants to become an administrator is one additional person who is able to take on some of the duties/activities.

In most cases the School Administrative Field Experience Portfolio Program has been successful. Some student interns, especially those who were classroom teachers, had a more difficult time completing the assignment in the allotted time. In cases of emergencies, time limits have been extended. Teacher interns working in year-round schools had a definite advantage over the students working in a traditional calendar school. A few interns had a difficult time completing their activities, when the intern did not have a positive relationship with his/her school site administrator. In this situation, it was most helpful when the University supervisor had a good working relationship with the principal. Depending on the problem, the University supervisors must be able to communicate with the school site administrator, as well as the student intern, to find a solution to the problem. The positive partnership linkage between the University supervisor and the school district mentor is definitely beneficial for the intern administrator.

Conclusion

Research strongly supports the internship field experience portfolio programs. There is little doubt that real change can and does occur when student interns are involved in school based activities. First year principals in the University of Montana Internship Program were significantly more confident that they were well prepared for the job than first year principals who had no internship experience. The principals with internship experience felt better prepared in tasks most critical to schools e.g., supervision and evaluation of teachers, team building, communication, facilitating, etc. (Jean, E. W. and

Evans, R. D., 1995). A student intern at National University summed it best when he said, “The field experience exposed me to a realistic and hands on approach to administration and provided me with insight of how an administrator must be knowledgeable and aware of all aspects of administration – legal, financial, instructional, and at the same time be ethical, and professional”. As for the portfolio notebook, without exception, all student interns made two copies, one to turn into the University and one for themselves to use as a source of information.

The internship model which came from other professional fields, particularly medicine, has long been regarded as a highly beneficial experience (Hoekstra, R. B., 1975). Today we know that this model is also most helpful to future school administrators. As the need for quality school administrators continues to grow, universities and school districts need to continue working together to refine and improve the internship program, in order to graduate effective and knowledgeable administrators.

Recommendation

Since the Field Experience Portfolio Program is relatively new, it would be of interest for National University-Los Angeles to conduct a survey of graduate students who are now administrators. Did the experience help you to be an effective first year school administrator? Did you feel confident in your ability to fulfill the expectations of the job? Did the program translate theory into practice? Were you able to utilize the portfolio notebook in your first administrative assignment?

In addition, district supervisors should also be surveyed. Did the Field Experience Portfolio Program prepare the new administrators for the job? Were they better prepared than those new administrators who had no internship experience? Is there a need to periodically assess the program? Should the time spent in the field experience be extended?

Research should also be conducted regarding The Field Experience Portfolio Program. utilizing the research model “The Principal Internship Portfolio: Evidence of Instructional, Managerial and Interdependent Leadership used by Wade Devlin-Scherer, Roberta Devlin-Scherer and John Couture. Are the activities accomplishing what they were designed to do? Did the activities lead to student learning? Did the amount of hours committed to the tasks by the interns make a difference?

As the role of the school administrator continues to change, it is essential that the Universities provide the very best preparation for student interns to be successful in a job that is demanding, challenging and very important.

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IMPLEMENTING “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND” FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A MAJOR REFORM CHALLENGE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

By Clifford E. Tyler, Ed.D., Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Educational Administration
National University School of Education
11255 North Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, CA. 92037-1011 U.S.A.
Telephone (858) 642-8355
Fax (858) 642-8724
E-Mail Address: ctyler@nu.edu

By Robert G. Scharf, Ed.D., Lead and Associate Professor
Department of Educational Administration
National University School of Education
5245 Pacific Concourse Drive
Los Angeles, CA. 90045-6904
Telephone (310) 662-2156
Fax (310)662-2094
E-Mail Address: rscharf@nu.edu

No recent educational reform has had a greater challenge on the leadership of public school leaders than the *"No Child Left Behind (NCLB)"* Act, as they struggle to successfully implement its requirements. Passed by the United States Congress, and signed into law by U. S. President George W. Bush in January 2002, this legislation was a re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Title I Act that has carried new and ambitious mandates to improve achievement for all students over a period of five years for school districts, and developed data systems to track the state's efforts. More specifically NCLB provides and requires the following, according to the U. S. Department of Education:

- **Testing all students in reading and math every year in grades 3-8**, and once in high school. Using these tests, the state will be able to compare schools to each other and know which ones need extra help (or sanctions) to improve.
- **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** The term used to explain that all students have met state reading and math goals. All students means all subgroups based on ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and disadvantaged students. The Act requires producing annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities, whether or not students have made the AYP. Schools not meeting the AYP for two consecutive years will be identified "in need of improvement" and required to offer parents the option of sending their children to another public school within the district. The sending school district may pay for transportation. Upon being

identified as "in need of improvement" the school is also required to develop or revise an existing school improvement plan which must be approved by the district.

- **Failing Schools:** If the school does not meet targets the next year, supplemental educational services such as tutoring and after school programs must also be offered in addition to the option to transfer. If the school continues in "in need of improvement" status the following year it will be required to take corrective action such as removing relevant staff, implementing new curriculum, decreasing management authority, appointing outside experts to advise the school, extending the length of the school day or year or restructuring the school's internal organization. If the school is still not making Adequate Yearly Progress after five years, the Act requires dramatic changes to the way the school is managed, which may include any or all of the following sanctions: state takeover of the school, transferring all teachers, removing the principal, or closing the school. As an alternative, the Act provides monies for starting up charter schools. Only schools receiving Title I funds are subject to these sanctions.

- **A highly qualified teacher** is one who has completed the state's certification and licensure requirements. The following are required for new teachers:
 - 1.) Possess at least a Bachelor's Degree.
 - 2.) At the elementary level, teachers must pass a state test demonstrating their subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading/language arts, writing, mathematics and other areas of basic elementary school curriculum.
 - 3.) At the middle and high school levels, teachers are required to pass a state test in each academic subject area they teach, plus have either an undergraduate major, a graduate degree, coursework equivalent to an undergraduate major or an advanced certificated or credentialing.

Teachers not new to the profession must hold a bachelor's degree and pass a state test demonstrating the subject knowledge and teaching skills. These requirements have caused some controversy and difficulty in implementation especially for special education teachers and teachers in small rural schools where they are often asked to teach multiple grades and/or subject disciplines. Controversy has been enhanced by inconsistent enforcement of this component from state to state. States that have consistently voted Republican and helped elect and re-elect U. S. President George Bush have had an easier time winning compliance with the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Safe and Drug-Free Schools:** NCLB provides funding to assure safe and drug free schools, which includes violence prevention, and after school programs.

- **Title I Funds:** Federal funding that supports programs in schools and school districts to improve the learning of children from low-income families. The U. S. Department of Education provides funding to states to give to school districts based on the number of children from low-income families in each school district. Also included is a provision for greater flexibility on the expenditure of these funds.
- **Parent Involvement:** Requires schools to develop ways to get parents more involved in their child's education and in improving the school.
(www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/achieve/nclb)
- **Teacher Quality:** Provides funding for staff development to help teachers learn to be better teachers
- **Closing the Achievement Gap:** The Act's accountability provisions include the requirements that individual states describe how they will close the achievement gap to make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. This requirement addresses student achievement in American schools and districts between various racial and ethnic groups, poor and non-poor, those who have disabilities and those who do not, and English language learners and fluent English speakers.
- **Scientifically-Based Research:** This Act requires schools to use "scientifically based research" strategies in the classroom and for professional development of staff. Research meeting this label, which includes only a small portion of the total research conducted in the field of education and related fields, must involve large quantitative studies using control groups as opposed to partially or entirely qualitative or ethnographic studies, research methodologies which may suggest different teaching and professional development strategies.

The Rationale for Passage of No Child Left Behind

For years, research has supported the failure of ESEA Title I Federal funding as increasing achievement for the very students it was designed to help. Most schools receiving this funding have been failing schools, as evidenced by consistently showing up at the bottom of the student achievement scores. These schools have been located in poor rural, often isolated farming, mining, or logging communities receiving economic support from industry, or inner city economically depressed areas. All of these schools were attended by a majority of students with color—either Hispanic/Latino or Afro-American children. These neglected, aged buildings in poor maintenance condition became forgotten schools by mainstream society.

An additional problem of ESEA Title I funding is that there were little or no student achievement accountability requirements. The few accountability requirements that

existed were limited to compliance requirements, i.e. Identified Title I students must be served by this funding. Title I funds may supplement but not supplant a local educational funding effort. Any school not meeting compliance rules associated with spending Title I funding were required to submit a plan of corrective action to the Department of Education within thirty days, or risk losing the funding.

There were also Monitor and Reviews and Coordinated Compliance Review (CCR) activities where a combination of Department of Education and volunteer staff from other school districts would schedule a visit at designated schools every two or three years to review the quality of programs contained in their school wide program. Local school sites would prepare a self study to demonstrate compliance and quality in their programs. External reviewers would review the self-study, interview a variety of certificated and classified staff members, board members, members of the community and parents. They would then submit their findings and recommendations to the stakeholders of the school, which were only advisory in nature with no accountability sanctions nor incentives.

The above conditions led many American civil rights leaders to praise the legislation, No Child Left Behind as a major step to improve education for children traditionally left behind in American schools, in particular students of color and students living in poverty, new English learners, and students with disabilities. The broad goal of NCLB was to raise the achievement gap for all levels of students, especially underperforming groups that paralleled race and class distinctions evident in American society.

The legislation identified children who were attending failing and unsafe schools, receiving poor instruction by incompetent and/or unqualified teachers, achieving well below their potential leading to their dropping out of school. The legislation was intent on focusing on schools' attention on test scores for all groups of students, providing parents more educational choices, and ensuring higher quality teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2004)

The Challenge of Closing the Achievement Gap

What are the multiple leadership challenges of implementing the NCLB reforms, and the high-stakes responsibility? Foremost among these challenges is closing the achievement gap between Anglo and Asian students and those of other ethnicities, Latino and black. Why is there an achievement gap between these ethnic groups? Research supports that the huge achievement gap between white students and both Afro-American and Latino students is not related to genetics nor innate abilities. Instead, it's a combination of school, community, and home factors that are major contributors. These contribute to higher school drop-out rates among black and Latino students, peer attitudes on achievement. Other reasons that contribute to this gap are lower quality of teaching of these lower achieving ethnicities, differential treatment of black and Latino students by both teachers and administrators, language handicaps, etc. (Thompson, 2003).

One study supports black student achievement in school is not accepted by blacks

because high student achievement is associated with being white! Another study revealed that teachers were not interested in helping black students in math because they felt these students were not interested in learning. (Thompson, 2003)

According to Kober, the issue of "achievement gaps" (such as that between affluent and disadvantaged students), "effort gaps" between the same groups that affect the achievement gap are not addressed by NCLB. An effort gap can be attributed to such factors as hours of quality study time per week, diligence in completing homework assignments, attitude, discipline, and parental support. (Kober, 2001)

How can education leaders close the achievement gap? While lawmakers are moving swiftly and boldly to increase standards and accountability, special caution should be taken to monitor the negative effects of high stakes testing on minority students. Policymakers are irresponsible to the public to think that increased testing and accountability will along increase student achievement and close the achievement gap. Policymakers need to provide strategies, support and resources to raise student achievement among black and Latino students. (Kober, 2001)

Example strategies include increasing minority student in participating in rigorous instruction and challenging academic courses, lowering class size, providing meaningful staff development for teachers working with these students, expanding access to high quality pre-school programs. Still others include providing extended learning opportunities and more intensive programs for students having learning problems, strengthening community and support for learning and high achievement for all students, and addressing other disparities in curriculum, instruction and facilities for minority and low students. (Kober, 2001)

The No Child Left Behind Challenge of Meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

A second major leadership challenge is schools meeting the annual growth targets set by AYP. Research shows that most schools in California will become failing schools with the growth requirements of the Act. How can even the highest achieving schools meet successively higher achievement bars with each passing school year? According to Owings, it seems likely that the standard for yearly improvement set by the No Child Left Behind Act will be impossible for many schools to meet -- certainly many bad schools but also many schools that serve middle-class and upper-middle-class children and are currently held in high esteem by the parents whose children attend them. (Owings, 2003) W. James Popham states that standardized tests are have now become the sole criterion for federally recognized blue-ribbon schools, even though it measures only a modest sample of academic outcomes.

David James' article confirms researchers' agreement that tests are imprecise measures at best. No agency has ever developed a 100 percent reliable and valid instrument. W James Popham, former professor and test expert from UCLA, writes, "Policymakers assume that a student achievement test measures what a school has taught. In fact, it doesn't" (as cited in Miller 2001, A15). Studies have shown that test scores for students taking variations

of the same test differ based upon the student's attitude, sleep patterns, breakfast, health conditions, and home climate, to name a few. In his article "Standardized Testing and Its Victims" in Education Week, Alfie Kohn notes that a study "of math results on the 1992 National Association of Educational Progress found that the combination of four variables (number of parents living at home, parents' educational background, type of community, and poverty level) accounted for a whopping 89 percent of the difference in state scores" (James, 2002)

James also states that in addition, students have different learning preferences. Any teacher will confirm this: students learn differently. Some do well memorizing; some are comfortable with paper tests; others excel at group projects. Some students can verbalize their understanding of ideas and concepts while others can apply their knowledge to concrete, practical problems, but have very little theoretical understanding. Each student has strengths and weaknesses that shine or darken depending upon the method of testing used. The sad fact is that federally mandated standardized testing of this magnitude will, by necessity, focus on the lower levels of cognitive domain, reward (in John Gardner's terms) students strong in linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, and basically ignore the substantial problems within schools. (James, 2002)

Secondly, high-stakes tests ultimately lead to a "teaching to the test" syndrome. James cites Alfie Kohn notes that test scores go up when states impose mandatory achievement tests because teachers get better at coaching students on technique and the previous years' test questions. The tests measure superficial thinking, Kohn writes, and the "results are positively correlated with a shallow approach to learning" (James, 2002).

James also cites Ralph Tyler, way back in 1949, noted that artificially imposed testing "may become the focus of the students' attention and even of the teachers' attention rather than the curriculum objectives set up" (124). James cites Education professor Robert L. Linn from the University of Colorado at Boulder, who suggests in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that mandated score increases are evident "because teachers take a few years to hone their test preparations, not because instruction is perpetually improving" (as cited in Miller 2001, A14). Is this an educational dynamic we as a society want to encourage? Is this kind of evaluation the foundation of a healthy, just, and thriving national education policy? (James, 2002)

Many researchers consider testing for such high-stake decisions about student promotion and school funding as a misguided practice ("One Test" 2000). Using a single yearly measure "violates everything we know about measurement," says education professor James Scheurich from the University of Texas at Austin (as cited in Miller 2001, A16). Kohn and Tyler, along with the National Research Council, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the American Psychological Association, among others, all echo the same sentiment loud and clear: it is inappropriate to use the results of a single test as the basis for making important decisions. Even some of our more enlightened politicians like Senator Paul Wellstone from Minnesota is on record saying, "Far from

improving education, high-stakes testing marks a major retreat from fairness, from accuracy, from quality, and from equity" (as cited in Kohn 2000, 47). Cordeiro quotes Robert Linn (2003), who believes that based on a straight-line projections of present rates of improvement it would take 57 years for grade 4 percentages of students to achieve the desired 100 percent level. Yet school systems have until 2014 to achieve this percentage. He further states that "The goals that NCLB sets for student achievement would be wonderful if they could be reached, but unfortunately, they are quite unrealistic, so much so, that they are apt to more to demoralize educators than to inspire them (Cordeiro, Cunningham, 2006).

Some advocates for high-stakes testing argue that schools need to prepare students for the real world. In my 25 years of work, I have never had to take a paper and pencil test to secure a job, to do a job, to keep a job, or to be successful at a job. Who takes tests at work? Of course, a few professions-doctors and lawyers most notably-must pass tests to practice, but that in no way guarantees competency. Real work world success depends on being resourceful, working well with others, solving problems, researching, communicating effectively, compromising, being creative, and learning new skills. In the real world, success does not depend upon passing a multiple choice test.

Meeting No Child Left Behind Requirements While Preserving Local District Autonomy.

Local school leaders are increasingly challenged in formulating innovation to meet its requirements, managing change at local schools, while still preserving the autonomy of local school districts and decentralization of individual schools. As an example, how would a superintendent in a small rural three school, K-12 school district in a poor farming community with declining enrollment in California's San Joaquin Valley implement all of the provisions of No Child Left Behind? The answer is "with great difficulty. "

The key for this school administrator to successfully meet NCLB provisions is to pool the district's resources with other small and surrounding school districts and/or an Intermediate Education Unit, in terms of available curriculum specialists, teacher hiring pool, staff development, and distance education. Curriculum specialists are essential in coaching teachers and principals to monitor on-going assessment of students as schools strive to meet their Annual Yearly Performance. Pooling staff development funds can buy outstanding, relevant presentations for teachers by experts in the field on providing effective instruction and assessment.

Teacher hiring pools are also effective in helping districts locate highly qualified teachers. New teachers that have applied for positions in more affluent school districts become viable candidates for other districts when many districts can collaborate on personnel hiring to meet collective needs.

If school districts cannot locate highly specialized teachers, i.e. science, math, foreign language, distance education is an excellent alternative where they can pool their

financial resources. An intermediate education service district can provide these programs, or contract out with an agency who can provide distance education services. The web page www.NoChildLeftBehind.com states that NCLB focuses on basic educational classes and removes funding from music programs, art programs, etc. This results in schools being forced to remove elective and after school programs. NCLB places a focus on the standardized testing mandatory for each student, therefore forcing the educators to focus on points covered in testing rather than what they think is important for children to learn. Standardized tests can be irrelevant to students' developmental learning. (www.NoChildLeftBehind.com, 2006)

Although "local freedom" is advertised as a benefit of NCLB, school districts are free to choose one curriculum package from a federally developed list of about 6 products, and cannot use the funding for any other purpose. Thus, the main immediate effect of NCLB is to reinforce an oligopoly of large curriculum publishers. There is some public accusation of political cronyism in this result.

NCLB emphasizes standardized testing, which is mandatory for each student. Educators are forced to focus on points covered in testing rather than what they think is important for children to learn. No only standardized tests can be irrelevant to students' developmental learning, but it deprive children's exposure to fine arts, art and music, as well as physical education and other curricular activities, essential to providing a total education for children.

NCLB Effect On Student Academic Achievement and School Performance

Research has shown that NCLB has generally met the public demand for improved student achievement despite its largely punitive sanctions on schools that do not achieve. It has held teachers and administrators more accountable for results, although research supports that many administrators and teachers would prefer not to be held accountable for any student results. Schools and districts have been required to focus their attention on the academic achievement of traditionally under-served groups of children, such as low-income students, students with disabilities, and minorities. Many previous state-created systems of accountability only measured average school performance, allowing schools to be highly rated even if they had large achievement gaps between affluent and disadvantaged students.

David Marshak in his article provided some background that "The American public school system that we have today was constructed during the first two decades of the 20th century. Industrial efficiency was the new, cutting-edge technology of the time, and public schools were shaped to fit industrial models of efficient production. One key function for schools was sorting children according to their perceived abilities and encouraging many to drop out and go to work as unskilled laborers." He further stated that public were built on this industrial model were designed to leave *many* children behind, so they would drop out and go to work in what we now call low-skill jobs. Marshak states that while President Bush articulated a new goal for American public

schools, nothing else in schools has really changed, except for a lot more testing to come, a list of prospective penalties, and a sparse handful of dollars per student. And the intensification of standardized testing...employed to achieve their goal -- comes not from the future but from the past (Marshak, 2003).

Marshak's article confirms that little has changed in many large urban school districts. In a June 2006, there was a front page story in USA Today on the struggling large American urban school districts. The article discussed and listed the high school student graduation rate in America's largest urban school districts of being at or under 50% of ninth grade students entering high school, particularly among Afro-American and Hispanic students. Specific urban districts with this dismal graduation rates included New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami-Dade County, San Diego, and Houston. There were no specific reasons listed, but state mandated high school exit exams may be contributing to the lower graduation rate. (Toppo, 2006)

The Results of NCLB On Highly Qualified Teachers and Better Quality Teaching

There is no research yet that supports these results. According to a recent bipartisan national poll finds that 42% of respondents felt it was important for teachers to have "skills to design learning experiences that inspire/interest children," while only 19% thought it was important for teachers to have "a thorough understanding of their subject." Similarly, 67% of those who were sampled said that "developing the proper skills to make information interesting and understandable is a greater difficulty than developing adequate knowledge about subject matter." Overwhelmingly, Americans believe that knowing how to teach is at least as important as knowing what to teach. High-quality teaching - knowing the material and how to convey it - makes the difference in student achievement. Research supports this view (Owings, 2003).

Unfortunately, the U. S. Office of Education does not consistently enforce this requirement among all states. In some cases, it is less strictly enforced in some states where voters supported the incumbent president at the 2004 election, while more strictly enforced in states that did not support his re-election. As a result, some states have lower standards than other states (Dean, 2003).

Regardless of their political affiliation, many states are experiencing difficulty in meeting this requirement particularly in school districts located in isolated, poor rural communities and in inner city poor urban areas. Specific subject areas such as science, math, foreign language, special education aggravate difficulty in a number of school districts finding highly qualified teachers. The results of not meeting this requirement included teacher shortages in some areas making it difficult if not impossible for some local districts to offer badly needed programs for students.

What are some states doing to remediate this problem. Initially in California, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) issued emergency credentials in districts of hardship areas or subject areas which allowed school districts to hire some

teachers with only a minor or limited number of courses in the difficult to find subject area. The U.S. Office of Education applied pressure on both CCTC and California Department of Education to end that practice last year.

Lack of consistent federal funding

One of the biggest criticisms of NCLB is the lack consistent federal funding to support all of the Act's mandates. According to www.NoChildLeftBehind.com, organizations such as ACORN have criticized the unwillingness of the federal government, despite early assurances, to fully fund the act. While promoted by President Bush and applauded by both parties, neither the Senate nor the White House has requested funding up to the authorized levels for several programs such as Title I. Republicans in Congress have viewed these authorized levels as spending caps, not spending promises and have pointed out that former U.S. President Clinton never requested the full amount of funding authorized under the previous ESEA. (www.NoChildLeftBehind.com) However, it can also be argued that no previous ESEA Act has included the volume and penetration of public school mandates of No Child Left Behind.

Despite the political rhetoric about funding this Act, the mandates are still in place leaving local districts with the responsibility to fund at least a major portion of this Act. According to www.NoChildLeftBehind.com, NCLB will cost school districts \$1.491 billion annually representing an 11 percent increase over current total operating budgets. It was further determined that 97 percent of the costs associated with NCLB are unfunded with additional federal funding covering only \$44 million of the nearly \$1.5 billion in costs. Many financially strapped districts are forced to match or fund the NCLB mandates with inadequate local funding to balance their budgets.

One of the greatest concern is cost of this program to the states. The National Association of School Boards of Education estimate the cost of developing, scoring, and reporting results of reading and math tests at somewhere between \$2.7 and \$7 billion over the life of the Act. Science tests would cost extra. At \$300 to \$400 million per year, the total cost for testing alone would be \$4 billion (Cordeiro, Cunningham, 2006).

Unanticipated Problems with No Child Left Behind

This intrusive legislation has played out in the United States a sense of anger, confusion, and bewilderment left in its wake that has been labeled, "No Child Left Untested, No School Board Left Standing, No Child Behind Left," etc with teachers, school administrators, board members, and other educational advocacy groups. Since the start of the 2003-2004 school year, at least twenty states and a number of school districts have protested the Act, and voted to withdraw from participation and/or to withhold local funding for implementation, or resist specific provisions of the Act.

What are some of the some of the counterproductive provisions of the Act that have frustrated so many teachers, administrators, school board members and other groups? One example has been the testing mandates for special education students and limited

English proficiency (LEP) students. While there is a legitimate argument that leaving these students out of the high stakes testing may encourage schools to ignore and address their academic needs, NCLB forces schools to modify special programs by forcing LEP students to take tests in testing content areas in a language they do not understand, and punishing schools when these students come up short on the test results.

In special education classes, NCLB is forcing teachers to emphasize test taking skills for these students with special needs in lieu of meeting the needs of their learning handicaps according to their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The result once again, is that these students come up short on the test results, penalizing the good schools who normally have high student achievement scores.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, among other groups, have sponsored legislation placing a moratorium on the Act's high stakes testing, and withholding school sanctions until the Bill is fully funded. The Harvard Civil Rights Project, along with other advocacy groups, has contended that the Law threatens to increase student drop-out rates, especially with students of color, reducing their access to equal educational opportunity.

Some groups and educators contend that NCLB is likely to harm more than help most of the students who are targets of their aspirations, and could ultimately destroy the public school system. This contention comes from the Law's unachievable test score targets that disproportionately penalizes schools serving the neediest students (rural and urban), while creating strong incentives for schools to push or keep out who are low achieving to raise test score averages (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Some states have abandoned thoughtful diagnostic assessment and accountability systems, and replaced instructionally rich improvement oriented systems with rote-oriented punishment-driven approaches, which has thrown high performing, steadily improving schools into chaos rather than remaining focused and deliberate in their ongoing efforts to serve needy students. A recent study in California pointed out that "failing schools were designated as such not because their overall student achievement was faltering, but because a single student sub-group had fallen short of the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) target. As a result of this study, it is clear that a high achieving school that serves an ethnic diversity of students will likely be a failing school. This study has considerable merit when a tally conducted in 2004 showed that 26,000 of the nation's sub-groups (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Some people believe that the increasing number of failing public schools will deluge the public with unfavorable reports, setting the stage for school voucher legislation, one more step in privatizing the public education system. Such a prelude may lead to further reduction in inadequate federal funding for public schools, diverting funds to pay for transfer of students to other schools, which may offer no higher quality instructional

programs than the schools of their current attendance. Federal funds may be further diverted to funding ever intensive testing of students, busing to transfer students to other schools, litigation and payment of attorney fees to challenge unintended consequences of this Law.

One of the biggest shortcomings of No Child Left Behind is that it does not address inequality in Education. Unlike most countries that centrally fund schools, so American school districts spend at least ten times more than the poorest schools, i.e. \$30,000/student vs. \$3,000/student. Some states have addressed this inequality issue through state Supreme Court decisions, i.e. Serrano vs. Priest in California brought about by lawsuits on behalf of poor schools districts to address this inequality. Since poorer schools have lower student achievement, they are punished by NCLB sanctions because of their failure to meet the AYP (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

The Future of This Reform. Despite its many faults, researchers, education and political leaders universally agree that No Child Left Behind is here to stay because of strong public support and belief that schools need to be held accountable for student achievement results. The Act has resulted in overall improvement in student academic achievement in reading and math, with variable results from school to school and district to district, which is supported by Annual Yearly Progress statistics.

Has the Act written in its present form solved the problem of failing schools? Has its provisions created unequal educational opportunities for some students? Is it realistic to remediate every school that will be defined as a failing school as the Adequate Yearly Progress bar is raised each year? What is the future financial outlook for NCLB for supporting schools in implementation of its mandates? Will the problem of failing schools created by the structure of AYP encourage future legislation for public school vouchers? Will the Act be revised regardless of a newly elected Democratic or Republican president to succeed U. S. President George Bush in 2008? These are all important and searching questions that will be answered or played out in the next two or three years.

There is no question of the large amount of public discontent in No Child Left Behind, which is not likely to disappear after the 2008 presidential election. There will probably be pressure on Congress to modify certain provisions, moving away from "one size fits all," making implementation of the Act's goals more achievable at the school site level for school leaders, while still holding them accountable for student achievement results. Particular pressure will be placed on some concessions for Special Education handicapped students, who lack cognitive skills to perform well on standardized tests, which make them unable to reach the AYP target. The annual higher Annual Yearly Progress bar may also be modified as schools reach their ultimate student achievement goal.

Another area of expected pressures for change is for NCLB to provide equal educational

opportunity of all students. This equal opportunity should happen regardless of whether children live in a middle class or affluent suburban area, a small poor, isolated rural community with limited English speaking children, or an inner city urban area, where many children come from dangerous and deteriorating neighborhoods with dysfunctional families and attending poorly maintained schools with a dearth of resources and materials. Such changes may help to narrow the achievement gap between more affluent white and Asian students versus Afro-American and Latino students.

Closely related will be pressure on Congress to properly fund the provisions and mandates of No Child Left Behind for local school districts. NCLB, like so much other federal education legislation is long on mandates but short on funding to implement the mandates. School districts that cannot offer the level of local funding as affluent districts should be compensated by the federal government to equalize educational opportunity for all students. Local school districts will be hard pressed to provide matching funds to meet all of the Act's long list of requirements or risk severe federal sanctions.

Just this summer, America's largest teachers union, the National Education Association (NEA) just met in Orlando, Florida, and agreed that the basic intentions of No Child Left Behind, i.e. quality schools and good teachers are sound concepts, but the government's obsession on testing student skills and punishing failing schools undermines education. In a convention resolution, the Union wants to push the government, through appropriate legislation, to move away from testing as the sole benchmark. The teachers union, which favors a series of benchmarks favoring students' differing demographics and abilities, is in the process of securing support from lawmakers and other organizations (Davis, 2006)

Whatever the future is of No Child Left Behind, it is important for education leaders and local district governing board members to be major stakeholders to influence future legislation of this act. By working collaboratively with legislators to craft effective legislation that meets the needs of all students, as opposed to special interest groups, education leaders should promote quality instruction for this Act, which sets achievable goals for all students to be productive citizens and successful employees in their work assignment.

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