NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: THE TEACHERS’ VOICE

A SURVEY OF TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD NCLB

Written by
John Fitzgerald
Minnesota 2020 Fellow

Survey conducted by
Paru Shah, Ph. D.
Assistant Professor of Political Science, Macalester College
Minnesota 2020 Fellow

&
Macalester College Political Science “Empirical Research Methods” class, Fall 2007

February 27, 2008

MINNESOTA 2020
www.MN2020.org
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No Child Left Behind: The Teachers’ Voice, is collaboration between Macalester College Political Science Department faculty member Paru Shah and Minnesota 2020, a public policy think tank. Shah’s Fall 2007 Political Science Empirical Research Methods class developed and executed this survey for Minnesota 2020.

Paru Shah, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Political Science, Macalester College and Minnesota 2020 Fellow

Empirical Research Methods course members:

Macalester College is a liberal arts institution in St. Paul, Minnesota. For more information, contact:
Macalester College
1600 Grand Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105
651-696-6000
www.macalester.edu

Minnesota 2020 is a non-profit public policy think tank. Fellow John Fitzgerald contributed to this report. For more information, contact:
Minnesota 2020
2324 University Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-917-1026
www.mn2020.org
CONTENTS

Key Findings & Recommendations 3

Introduction to NCLB 4

   Nationally 4
   Minnesota 5

Survey Background 6

Survey Results 7

   Section I: Teacher Views of their School 7
   Section II: Knowledge of NCLB 9
   Section III: Accountability, Incentives, and Sanctions 9
   Section IV: Changes in Curriculum and Instruction 11
   Section V: What Teachers Need 12

Conclusion 15

Teachers’ Voice 16

Tables 17

References 22
KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

No Child Left Behind is a federal law that requires states to test students and hold schools accountable for student scores. The law, passed in 2002 and up for reauthorization in 2008, is roundly despised for its inflexibility and unrealistic expectations.

Teachers are on NCLB’s front lines, yet research shows they have grave and pervasive doubts about the law. No Child Left Behind: The Teachers’ Voice reveals those deep reservations are shared by Minnesota teachers.

In October 2007, researchers asked 87 elementary school teachers in Chaska School District 112 about their thoughts on No Child Left Behind.

Key Findings

- Sixty five percent say identifying schools that have not met Adequate Yearly Progress will not lead to school improvement.

- More than 65 percent say NCLB increases teacher focus onto students just under the passing score at the expense of other students.

- Only 13 percent say sanctions improve teaching.

- Almost 90 percent say they were under unfair pressure to improve student test scores.

- About 88 percent believe NCLB has caused teachers to ignore important aspects of the curriculum.

- Almost 90 percent say NCLB unfairly rewards and punishes many teachers.

- More than 90 percent say they are more likely to stay at a school designated “In Need of Improvement” if factors such as class size, having experienced teachers on staff and more money for materials are important.

Recommendations

- Money spent on NCLB to improve student performance at underperforming schools should be reallocated to create innovative education programs, improve facilities and increase professional development and training for teachers.

- Standardized testing is inflexible and does not accurately measure student ability. Current efforts to determine student progress using multiple criteria and growth models should be increased and implemented as soon as possible.
• AYP goals need to be changed to challenging yet realistic levels. While teachers welcome accountability, the goal of 100 percent NCLB compliance by 2014 is unrealistic.

• Flexibility in testing English language learners and special education students must be increased. It is unreasonable to hold these students to the same standards as mainstream students.

• There must be more input from teachers in NCLB’s reauthorization. NCLB should reflect their ideas, concerns and suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

America is indeed the land of the free, but if you are a teacher, you are an indentured servant to the federal No Child Left Behind law. NCLB purports to measure student ability and hold schools accountable for that ability, but instead the law has become a limiting factor to a teacher’s ability to provide students with a quality education.

The litany of injustices created by NCLB is long and detailed. The law requires schools to pay for private tutors, yet these tutors have little effect on test scores; teachers say tests don’t show the barriers students face including a lack of basic skills, inadequate support from parents, absenteeism and tardiness; standards vary widely between the states; pressure to improve test results forces teachers to focus on mediocre students, leaving gifted students behind; most special education students are unfairly asked to take the same test as mainstream students; among many others.

NCLB may be contributing to unfair practices by educators in order to produce better scores. The Center on Education Policy reported that about two-thirds of elementary schools surveyed had increased time spent on reading and math, and about half the elementary schools surveyed had decreased time spent on non-tested subjects. Some schools have been found to list students as dropouts in order to improve test results.

Teachers across the nation have been surveyed about NCLB and have found the program lacking, but Minnesota teachers have been silent. This study gauges Minnesota teachers’ perception of NCLB’s effectiveness. Since NCLB is up for renewal in 2008, it is important to understand whether teachers believe NCLB is beneficial or harmful to education.

NCLB History

In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, providing significant federal money for K–12 education for the first time. The original law has been renewed eight times, most recently in the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB’s goal is to impose prerequisites for federal funding by implementing education standards.
NCLB was created in 2002 to ensure educational progress by testing students. NCLB mandates that every public school receiving federal money must test students each year. Students currently must be tested in grades 3 through 8 and grades 10 or 11. The results are used as a double control mechanism; not only does the test show the academic abilities of the student but also the quality of the education those students are receiving. Thus, in addition to the testing standards, NCLB provides a teacher certification requirement. For a school to receive federal funding, all teachers must meet the state’s certification and licensing requirements, obtain at least a bachelor’s degree; and demonstrated expertise in the licensed subject.

NCLB’s testing standard is controversial. NCLB evaluates schools based on adequate yearly progress. For a school to meet AYP, 95 percent of students in the grades being tested must be present. In addition, a percentage of students must pass the tests. If either of these two standards is not met, the school will face a growing scale of punishments, starting with the loss of some federal money and culminating with the restructuring of the school administration and faculty.

**NCLB in Minnesota**

To help meet NCLB’s educational goals, Minnesota was to receive more than $200 million from the federal government in NCLB grants in 2005. This amount is 24 percent more than Minnesota received three years earlier, yet smaller than the increase received by most other states. In 2002-03, about eight percent of Minnesota’s schools did not make AYP. In 2007, more than 1 in 3 schools didn’t meet AYP.

The number of schools subject to NCLB sanctions will likely grow for at least two reasons. First, the proficiency targets used to measure school performance have begun increasing with the 2006 school year; by 2014, NCLB will expect 100 percent of students to be proficient. Second, as Minnesota implements more assessments for more grade levels, more schools will be held accountable for the performance of more NCLB-specified student subgroups.

Simulations have shown that between 80 percent and 100 percent of Minnesota’s elementary schools will fail to make AYP by 2014. This analysis is based on statewide testing data from 2003, using assumptions ranging from “no improvement” to “high improvement” in the future achievement levels of students. In sum, even if there are large, sustained improvements in student achievement, many Minnesota schools will likely struggle to comply with the ambitious targets set by NCLB.
SURVEY BACKGROUND

School District 112

School District 112 is on the western edge of the Twin Cities serving Carver, Chanhassen, Chaska and Victoria. Suburban sprawl and the relocation of manufacturing and industrial businesses are increasing the district’s population. The completion of U.S. Highway 212 is expected to accelerate that growth. Although the drop in new housing construction has affected the area’s economy, it is one of the few areas in the Twin Cities where new homes are still being built.

The area’s economic and population growth has allowed the district to expand its programs. In 2007, reading programs were begun for first and second graders who read below grade level, an orchestra program was expanded and technology and facilities were updated. The district is won an “Energy Excellence Award” in 2007 for energy efficiency and environmental stewardship.

Student Characteristics

The student population is predominately white (87 percent) with a growing Hispanic population (seven percent) and small number of Asian (four percent) and black (two percent) students. Of the 8,602 students enrolled for the 2007-08 school year, 14 percent qualify for the federal free and reduced price lunch and 10 percent have limited English proficiency. Survey respondents report their students are predominately middle and upper class. District 112 students have scored above the state average for all grade levels in the state’s Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment II Test.

Teacher Characteristics

There are 510 teachers in District 112. Sixty four percent hold master’s degrees and less than one percent hold doctorates. Over 53 percent have been teaching for more than ten years.

Eighty-seven elementary teachers responded to the survey. These teachers are predominately female (87 percent) and all of the respondents are white (not of Hispanic origin). About half of the teachers had begun teaching at District 112 since 2000, with the longest reported tenure beginning in 1972. They appear to be committed to their jobs; 76 percent intend to teach for at least five years, and 48 percent hope to teach for “as long as I am able.” Seventy two percent say they meet NCLB’s “highly qualified” teacher standards, with 25 percent unsure of what the standards specified. Three percent said they are not “highly qualified” because they don’t have a Minnesota teaching license.

Data Collection and Analysis

No Child Left Behind: The Teachers’ Voice was conducted by Macalester College and Minnesota 2020 in which 87 teachers from School District 112 were asked their opinions of No Child Left Behind. The design of the survey, which intended to gather information about the federal NCLB and its impact on classroom instruction, was based on a 2004 Harvard University study,
“Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and No Child Left Behind” that explored classroom realities and how they were affected by the NCLB. The survey was coordinated with school officials and conducted by the school staff between October 14 through October 25, 2007. Teachers were asked to complete the online survey whenever they had time. As a way to promote participation and anonymity, the teachers did not have to provide their names when completing the survey.

The survey addressed the following topics:

- Knowledge of NCLB
- Perceived effects of the NCLB sanctions
- Perceived changes in instructional and curricular focus
- Changes in classroom activities as a result of state mandated tests
- Possible changes needed for improving education

All responses are included in the survey to enable consistent entry and minimize bias. Simple frequencies and percentages were calculated based on the responses to the survey questions. A five-point Likert response scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” was used to evaluate teachers’ opinions. In addition to the multiple choice responses, numerous open-ended or free response questions were included to allow teachers to elaborate their opinions of NCLB.

**Survey Results**

Section I addresses teachers’ views of their schools. Section II discusses the teachers’ knowledge of NCLB and the sources of their knowledge. The teachers’ perceptions about NCLB accountability, incentives, and sanctions are found in Section III. Sections IV and V address the results from the survey about changes in curriculum and instruction as well as what teachers believe they need to improve their schools.

**I. Teacher Views of their Schools**

Teachers were asked about the content and quality of the curriculum, its structure and continuity between grades, the adherence of teachers to the curriculum, and the performance of both teachers and students in the classroom. The results offer an insider’s view of the quality and the structure of schools in District 112.
Main Findings

Overall, the teachers have favorable opinions about their schools. An overwhelming majority agrees that their schools have high quality curricula, which are clearly defined and reflect the learning expectations for all students (table 1).

Teachers believe the curriculum is relevant to students (table 2). Ninety three percent agree their plans are aligned with academic measures such as standardized tests and rubrics.

Teachers’ perception of their students was highly positive (table 3). Not only are students clearly aware of school expectations, but these expectations are also challenging, attainable, and measurable. Ninety four percent of the respondents would classify their students as hard working. When asked about student performance in self-contained classes, however, teachers are less positive, and their answers vary. While a majority say student performance in these settings is either average or mixed (43 percent and 26 percent respectively), there is a significant number of responses in the extreme categories.

Almost all teachers agree that teachers are committed to improving student achievement and providing high quality instruction. Teachers concur that, on the whole, standards tend to be the same between any two classrooms in the schools (table 4).

Summary

Teachers have a positive view of their schools. They express favorable opinions not only of the curricula and its relevance and implementation, but also the dedication of their colleagues to maximize the academic achievements of students in providing high-quality instruction. This also translates into a positive view of the students’ academic performance which is enthusiastically evaluated by a large majority of teachers.
II. Knowledge of NCLB

Teachers reported they understood a sufficient amount of knowledge about NCLB which they received from a variety of credible sources. Background knowledge of NCLB is essential when assessing teachers’ beliefs regarding the legislation. Sixty percent said they knew quite a lot about NCLB. Thirty-nine percent said they knew at least a little; 1 percent said they did not know much (table 6).

Sources of Knowledge

The teachers obtained information about NCLB from a variety of sources, although many attributed their knowledge to school workshops and faculty meetings as well as district and professional development workshops. Twenty-eight percent reported school workshops and faculty meetings as their most effective source of information, while 27 percent reported district and professional development workshops (table 7). Twelve percent reported their own knowledge or research as the most effective source of information, 10 percent attributed their knowledge to local or national media, 6 percent received effective information from other colleagues, and 3 percent credited the Minnesota Department of Education’s workshops as their primary source of information. Other sources cited include college classes, professional educational publications and the Internet.

Summary

According to their responses, the majority of teachers in School District 112 are knowledgeable about NCLB. Over half of the teachers were informed about NCLB from sources such as professional development, school workshops and faculty meetings. Only a few learned about NCLB from other, arguably less reliable, sources like local or national media or discussion with colleagues.

III. Accountability, Incentives and Sanctions

The results from the survey indicate teachers believe sanctions are both harmful and unfair. Teachers feel that labeling a school as “needing improvement” will not inherently lead to improvement. Teachers also believe sanctions negatively affect their work. Teachers feel sanctions unnecessarily change their focus from subject matter and individual time with students to improving test scores. Finally, teachers do not think they will be swayed by punishments or incentives.
Accountability

Only 9 percent of the teachers agreed identifying schools that have not met AYP would lead to school improvement (table 8). This shows a consensus among teachers that simply identifying a failing school will not improve education. Teachers do not seem to derive any motivation from the identification of their school as meeting AYP. Rather, teachers believe they are already committed to student improvement regardless of top-down classifications of their results.

Sanctions

Teachers felt that sanctions would negatively influence instruction. Sixty-three percent agreed the threat of sanctions would cause teachers to ignore important aspects of the curriculum. Similarly, a majority disagreed that sanctions would better focus their instruction. Most teachers believe the pressure of sanctions would increase focus on students under the passing score at the expense of other students. Finally, only 13 percent agreed that sanctions would cause teachers to improve teaching (table 9).

A strong majority of teachers surveyed felt NCLB sanctions are fundamentally unfair. Eighty-nine percent agreed sanctions would unfairly reward and punish teachers (table 10). Teachers believe NCLB standards did not accurately track their performance. The teachers felt the application of sanctions at a school-wide level was particularly flawed. An overwhelming majority agreed sanctions put teachers under “undue” stress. Eighty-nine percent agreed they were under unfair and undue pressure to improve student scores on standardized tests.

Incentives

Teachers believe they will not be swayed by punishments or incentives. Even though teachers generally believe sanctions are unfair, they would not leave their teaching position due to sanctions. Only 13 percent answered that sanctions would be moderately or very important in deciding whether to remain teaching (table 11). Teachers were
somewhat more split on rewards or incentives for improving student performance. Only 20 percent would be moderately or very swayed to stay at a school needing improvement by rewards for improving student performance. Teachers in general seem to see reactions to standardized test performance as misguided whether or not is punitive in nature.

**Summary**

Teachers feel that NCLB is fundamentally unfair, causes undue pressure on teachers and negatively influences instruction. Teachers see NCLB sanctions as counterproductive. Most teachers surveyed disagreed that state standards improved their performance in the classroom.

**IV. Changes in Curriculum and Instruction**

NCLB has been thought to motivate schools to adopt changes to improve curriculum and instructional methods. Teachers were asked whether actions regarding curriculum and teaching methods have been taken at their schools and if these actions were a direct result of NCLB.

**Curriculum**

Teachers believe their curriculum is relevant and appropriate. As a result of AYP, 89 percent think some teachers have de-emphasized or neglected topics not required by NCLB tests (Table 12). They believe NCLB has caused teachers to ignore important aspects of the curriculum. One teacher stated that they teach subjects covered on the test “…at the expense of other areas of curriculum and time would be needed for students to thoroughly understand the topics.” In addition, they believe subjects such as fine arts and physical education have become secondary. For example, teachers reported students missing gym for test taking, spending less time on music education, and having fewer fine arts specialists.

**Instructional Methods**

Teachers reported changing their methods to teach more test-taking skills, standards, frameworks and subjects known to be on the test for NCLB. The most frequent change was an increased focus on test preparation. One teacher stated “I am rushing to expose students to as much material as I possibly can. There is less time to learn about each child as an individual and more emphasis on good test taking strategies. The students that have difficulty learning are not measured
in a way that shows their strengths, yet I am expected to prep them for the test. In return I am teaching them in a way that is not beneficial to helping them become their personal best.”

Sixty-seven percent of the teachers believe NCLB has led them to focus on students who just missed passing the state test at the expense of others. Seventy-five percent said they would have improved their instructional methods without NCLB’s influence. Furthermore, 87 percent said they do not believe AYP requirements prompt teachers to teach thematically and allow students to explore topics in-depth (Table 13). Several teachers reported decreases in “hands-on” and “investigative” learning strategies that promote critical and creative problem solving in order to focus on “one-size fits all instruction” due to NCLB.

Summary

NCLB has caused teachers to de-emphasize or neglect untested topics. Teachers believe the emphasis on untested subjects is waning. NCLB does not cause the teachers to increase their efforts to improve teaching. Teachers believe their methods have changed to cater to the NCLB test and test-taking skills, while putting in jeopardy “in-depth” and “creative” teaching strategies. Seventy-six percent believe teachers are committed to improving student achievement. NCLB has not improved teaching basic skills, providing rewards for test completion, linking curriculum to learning goals or the amount of time spent on group instruction and individual seat work.

V. What Teachers Need

The teachers said NCLB does not address their needs. These unmet needs can be categorized into four response areas. The first, funding, was expressed in terms of lack of materials and support, and the second, stress, has many sources. Third, unfair punishment and reward systems also contribute to teacher’s dissatisfaction. Finally, working conditions show an increased emphasis on competition coupled with decreased opportunities for collaboration.

Funding

NCLB is an unfunded mandate that has created new obligations and work for school districts. As a result, other aspects of the curriculum suffer when funds are transferred to support NCLB. Teachers strongly objected to NCLB’s policy of financially penalizing poorly performing schools. The majority believe underperforming schools need to be given help rather than being
penalized. One teacher points out the disparity, saying, “Do not let a few schools bear the burden while the affluent areas are meeting standards and receiving accolades.”

Teachers reported they were not influenced to stay at a school identified as “In Need of Improvement” by availability of transfers, rewards for student testing improvement, or sanctions for poor performance, but rather by class size, having experienced teachers on staff, and additional money for curricular and instructional materials. In contrast, 92 percent said additional money for curricular and instructional materials was moderately to very important in their decisions to stay at a school (Table 14).

**Stress**

Teachers took issue with the stress commensurate with the passage of NCLB as it affects students, teachers, and administrators. Many believe that too much importance is placed on students to perform on one test, with minimal emphasis placed on any other measure of their abilities. Teachers also said NCLB testing lumped all students into one group with only one skill set. One teacher stated that “Students are humans, and it is impossible to lump all students into one category. Right now, I do not feel that NCLB is accounting for students that do not fit into a category.” Furthermore, students who are not good test takers are likely to experience high amounts of stress at a young age, particularly if they are unable to meet the test’s expectations.

Teachers are also stressed when their personal evaluations and job security are measured by the test results; 89 percent agreed they were under undue stress to improve students’ scores on standardized tests, and that this has not had a positive impact on their ability to teach (Table 15). Many felt they and their students would benefit from a process that deemphasized one standardized test and instead focused on individual growth throughout a school year.

**Penalties and Rewards**

NCLB’s penalties and rewards concerned many teachers. They said NCLB could be improved if the program gave teachers the resources they need rather than penalizing poor test performance by cutting funds. Eighty-one percent thought it was unnecessary to reward individual teachers for improving test scores, while 95 percent believe NCLB sanctions unfairly punish students.

Many teachers responded that blame for poor test scores was unfairly placed on their shoulders. They feel that responsibility for learning should fall also on families, government funding
and policy, and the administration. One hundred percent proficiency is an unrealistic goal in some schools, teachers argue, either due to lack of parental support, a lack of proficiency in English, or large special education populations. They say it is wrong to penalize teachers working with a diverse group of students who are teaching without sufficient resources.

Furthermore, teachers felt that standardized testing is often to fully measure student’s learning progress, making the penalties/rewards provision of NCLB even less constructive. Twenty-nine teachers responded either those NCLB standards were unrealistic or standardized testing is not an accurate representation of student’s learning. One teacher’s response is representative of many:

“I would like to see the NCLB acknowledge growth over time instead of a year by year assessment of progress. There are many circumstances and too many variables with a student population to be able to determine if a school is successful or not.

Working Conditions

Teachers said the competitive atmosphere inherent to NCLB does not encourage collaboration between teachers. Teachers do not feel they need mandates to take education seriously, adding that since teaching is a poorly paid profession, few go into teaching if they don’t care for students. While only one teacher said NCLB “is politically motivated in order to smear public schools and use this as an excuse to re-organize or eliminate them, or to promote private schools,” many teachers did say public schools are not benefiting on the whole since the act’s passage.

Summary

Teachers believe NCLB needs to be re-evaluated. The funding system does not match the expectations, and teachers are often held accountable for student scores on a test that does not accurately represent many aspects of learning. NCLB does not fairly reward teachers but instead makes teaching stressful and decreases professional creativity and collaboration. Teachers expressed interest in professional evaluation by their peers as opposed to one standardized test, measured against every other teacher teaching their grade level, as well as a testing system that allows students to demonstrate improvement throughout the year.
CONCLUSION

NCLB’s goal is to improve student achievement by holding schools and teachers accountable with rewards and punishments based on school performance. For NCLB to achieve its goals, it is important to examine teacher opinions based on their day-to-day experiences. In this survey, teachers expressed major concerns about NCLB, and say NCLB policy has many shortcomings and contradictions.

The results send a strong message to both the governor and president about how NCLB has affected Minnesota schools. Based on these findings, the overwhelming majority of teachers do not believe NCLB properly measures student knowledge. Additionally, teachers do not believe sanctions would lead to better student performance. Since improving student performance is NCLB’s sole purpose, then a major reworking of the law is in order.

In addition, this survey reveals NCLB is harmful to teachers and students. Results show sanctions negatively affect teacher performance by causing them to feel stress and pressure. At the same time, the survey shows that labeling schools as “needing improvement” and financially penalizing them has created a harmful contradiction that hampers performance. Furthermore, NCLB has caused teachers to de-emphasize or neglect curriculum that is not tested. Teachers report that increased focus on improving test scores forces them to only teach what will be on the test. Simply put, NCLB is forcing a test-driven curriculum that does not permit teachers to concentrate on the development of vital analytical skills.

The survey also shows NCLB’s funding system is frustrating to many teachers. They believe their schools need more money to be able to meet NCLB obligations. Therefore, penalizing schools for poor performance on the test makes little sense. Teachers suggest schools identified as “needs improvement” should get the money they need to help students score well on the mandatory tests.

Nationwide research and studies are necessary to properly reshape the NCLB into an effective policy. Through teacher input, a policy can be formed which will successfully achieve NCLB’s main goal: A better education for all students.

Recommendations

NCLB’s funding system warrants immediate attention. Underperforming schools should receive funds to help improve student performance. This money should be spent not only on measures to increase student performance on NCLB tests, but also for professional development and training for teachers. NCLB’s current punitive funding formula only exacerbates the situation. Sufficient funds are needed for adequate progress.

The content and amount of NCLB tests must be altered so classroom instruction time is not wasted. Also, the tests’ emphasis on reading and math must be changed so other subjects such as social studies, science, art, and music are not ignored. Multiple criteria should determine student progress since standardized testing fails to take into account factors such as learning style, cultural background and test anxiety.
Additionally, NCLB should make allowances for English language learners and students with special needs. It is both unfair and unreasonable to hold all students to the same standards when some face immense obstacles. Thus, NCLB must be modified to make allowances for distinct groups of students.

Above all, there must be more input from teachers into NCLB’s implementation. It should reflect and uphold their ideas, concerns, and suggestions. It is they, not the lawmakers, who have firsthand knowledge of and experience with their students and NCLB. It is imperative they are consulted. This is important not only for the effectiveness of NCLB, but also for the benefit of the students.

**Teachers’ Voice**

A free response section was added at the end of the survey. Here are a few responses:

“If we are required to meet certain standards as dictated by NCLB, then NCLB must be funded appropriately in all areas: ELL, Special Education, Title 1, smaller class sizes, and so on. “

“Please use this to end the madness!!! It is undermining public education.”

“I feel holding schools to the same standards is unrealistic when you look at the make-up of certain schools. Even classroom-to-classroom comparisons are totally different. I don’t know how you can have classrooms with many ELL students or free/reduced lunch students meet or exceed those abilities of a classroom with many middle to high income families that have both parents living at home.”

“The testing is making me consider going back to business as a career. It is not fun anymore. From day one of the school year all we talk about it testing, testing and test results.”

“Parents need to take responsibility for their child’s education. Right now, the federal government is forcing schools to take on that role because they can’t tie federal dollars to parenting skills.”

“In all of my years of teaching, I have never met an educator who wanted to leave a child behind. We don’t need mandates to tell us that.”

“NCLB is taking the joy out of teaching and learning.”

“The MCA-II tests arrive too late to impact planning of student instruction and the development of interventions. A growth measure such as the NWEA MAP tests would be a better assessment of student growth. Its results are immediate, allow for educators to plan instruction/address needs and also would cut down on the number of times student instructional time is interrupted.”

“The biggest change I have seen in my building is the stress level rising among teachers and administrators. It makes me sad to think NCLB is behind this.”

“I am concerned that NCLB will narrow educational focus and produce a generation of students who are missing creativity, critical thinking skills and inquiry.”

“NCLB is another unrealistic fad that will fade and the sooner the better.”
### Table 1. Teachers’ Views of the School Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This school has high quality school-wide curriculum plans (n = 87)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school has well-defined learning expectations for all students (n = 87)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum is planned between and among grades to promote continuity (n = 86)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Relevance of the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum is relevant for the population of students (n = 87)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Student Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are well aware of the learning expectations of this school (n = 87)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards for student achievement are challenging, attainable, and measurable (n = 87)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students work hard in this school (n = 84)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4. Teachers’ Commitments and Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are committed to improving student achievement (n = 86)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school has consistent standards from classroom to classroom (n = 86)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Perception of Self-contained Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following best describes the ability/achievement level of this class?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High ability or achievement</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average ability or achievement</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ability or achievement</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed ability or achievement</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 81

Table 6. Teachers' Knowledge of NCLB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you know about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Much</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Little</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a Lot</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 87

Table 7: Sources for Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following sources was the most effective in informing you about NCLB?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Department of Education workshop/professional development</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District workshop/professional development</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School workshop/faculty meeting</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other colleagues</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local or national media</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On my own</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sources</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=86

Table 8. Teachers' Views on Adequate Yearly Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) will lead to school improvement (n=87)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9. Teachers Views on Sanctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cause teachers to increase their efforts to improve teaching (n=84)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teachers to focus on students who would otherwise receive too little attention (n=86)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teachers to focus on students who just missed passing the state test at the expense of others (n=85)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause teachers to better focus their instructional efforts (n=76)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10. Rewards and Incentives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will unfairly reward and punish many teachers (n=86)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are under undue pressure to improve student performance on standardized tests used for NCLB accountability (n=87)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11. Rewards and Sanctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards for improving student performance</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions for poor performance</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements have caused some teachers to de-emphasize or neglect untested topics (n=86)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements prompt teachers to teach thematically and allow students to explore topics in-depth (n =86)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Instructional Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Action taken unrelated to NCLB</th>
<th>Came as a result of NCLB</th>
<th>No Action Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased a focus on test preparation (n=85)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used standardized test score data to improve the instructional (n=85) program</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on improving teachers' instructional methods (n=85)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put new instructional programs in place (n=85)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: What Teachers Need to Encourage them to Stay at their Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional money for curricular and instructional materials</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 82)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15: The Impact of NLCB Sanctions on the Ability of a Teacher to Perform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are under undue pressure to improve student performance on standardized tests used for NCLB accountability</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n = 87)
REFERENCES

1 “Key No Child Left Behind Provision Is A Failure,” Minnesota 2020, Nov. 29, 2007

2 “How Educators in Three States Are Responding to Standards-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind,” Rand Education, 2007


5 “Does No Child Left Behind Set Unfair Expectations For Special Education Students?” Minnesota Public Radio, Oct. 4, 2007


8 “No Child Left Behind Receives Failing Grade from Teachers in UCR Study,” University of California Riverside, 2007

9 The Importance of No Child Left Behind, U.S Department of Education.

10 http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2004/0404sum.htm

11 http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2004/0404sum.htm

12 http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2004/0404sum.htm

13 http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2004/0404sum.htm

14 Self-contained classes are small, controlled settings with special education teachers who assist students at all levels of education.