



LWVGLC Unit Meeting Education Study Committee Session: Education Reform Movement

Topic: Impact of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB, passed in 2001, is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Objectives of NCLB

- Increased Accountability – national standards for reading and math defined; states required to do annual testing of students in grades 3 - 8 to demonstrate “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP); all teachers required to be licensed
- More Choices for Parents and Students – parents and students have the right to require improvement, corrective action or restructuring of schools. May create new schools, such as Charter Schools.
- Greater Flexibility for States, School Districts and Schools – states can allocate federal funds to new programs that improve teacher quality, education technology, drug-free schools, etc.
- Putting Reading First – every child must be able to read by the end of the 3rd grade; reading instruction should be modified to achieve this

Issues & Effects of NCLB

- Developed without teacher input.
- Rigorous standardized testing implemented by all states. Standardized testing used to identify good and poor performing students, schools and teachers. Poor performers are punished.
- Lots of new Charter Schools are created. The amount of oversight that these schools get varies greatly. The local public school system is still responsible for most administrative and logistics requirements, such as providing busing for students.
- Great emphasis on reading and math created changes in school curriculums. Courses like history, civics, and art are dropped.
- No evidence that there is noticeable, real improvement in education as a result of NCLB; national test scores are not improving
- An alarming number of schools are labeled as “failing”; Las Cruces Public Schools, while improving over the last 3 years, still labeled as “failing”
- Standards remain, but states continue to cut education budgets; achieving “100% Proficiency” mandated by NCLB is impossible to attain.

What’s Next

- Obama administration issued “A Blueprint for Reform” as basis for next reauthorization of ESEA; bill sent to congress on March 13, 2010. No congressional action. Administration considering issuing “flexible regulations” for states to start reforms.

Race to the Top

Race to the Top, funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is a competitive grant program aimed at encouraging states to improve their education systems so that students are better prepared for success in college and careers. It is NOT a replacement for NCLB.

Specific Reform Areas of Race to the Top

- Adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and career, and compete in the global economy
- Build new data systems (e.g., standardized tests) that measure student growth and success
- Recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers and principals
- Turn around the lowest-achieving schools

A total of 13 states have been awarded Race to the Top grants. New Mexico did NOT get an award.

Effects of Race to the Top

Program is new, first awards given in 2010, so no data on success stories. However, the criteria of Race to the Top have affected states' planning of their education systems.

- Standardized testing is retained, though there is a movement to make more flexible tests to include some "problem solving" testing
- Merit pay and promotion are encouraged for teachers and principals, threatening the current seniority-based system

Planned Use of Race to the Top Results

- Identify the best innovative approaches for educational reform
- Embed new approaches in future legislation

Issue: How will use of Race to the Top results jibe with Common Core Curriculum Standards?