



NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed: Not for release before Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

CONTACT: Chloe Louvouezo at (202) 955-9450 ext. 320 or clouvouezo@communicationworks.com

Classroom Impact of No Child Left Behind Includes Better Use of Data Teaching to Test

WASHINGTON—Nov. 25, 2008— A new report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) takes an in-depth look at how classroom practices have been influenced by No Child Left Behind and related state policies. Drawn from minute-by-minute classroom observations and interviews, the report sheds new light on how teachers, principals, and administrators have responded to the federal school accountability law.

The report, *Lessons from the Classroom Level: Federal and State Accountability in Rhode Island*, found that the high-performing schools in the study and their school districts seemed to have the greatest alignment between curriculum and state standards. Teachers and administrators interviewed for the study also acknowledged pressure to “teach to the test” by focusing on specific content or skills included on the state test.

Lessons from the Classroom Level focuses on case studies of six Rhode Island schools and their efforts to prepare students for the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), a state assessment for grades 3 through 8. The NECAP was developed by Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont to meet NCLB testing requirements. Rhode Island is one of three states participating in a larger study by CEP on the classroom impact of federal and state accountability.

Teachers interviewed in the study attributed improvements in student achievement to district and teacher support for state standards, effective use of data, and strong school leadership. These strategies could offer useful guidance to schools across the country in increasing performance and supporting teachers’ efforts to meet state standards.

Teachers also reported devoting more attention to students who scored slightly below the proficient level on the NECAP, also known as “bubble kids,” in an effort to raise their scores. The report findings show that these students are being targeted, in large part, because of the growing pressures teachers face to meet the goals of the state’s accountability system.

“Though this report is based on our research in Rhode Island, the findings are consistent with what we have seen in other states and what we have heard from other educators,”

said Jack Jennings, CEP president and CEO. “No Child Left Behind has led to changes in classrooms practices, though the changes are seen as both positive and negative.” Among other key findings, for example, study participants said that they focus more instructional time on English language arts and mathematics, though the increased attention comes at the expense of other subject areas, such as social studies and science. Detailed classroom observations revealed that teachers were using more teacher-directed instruction and passive learning strategies to keep up with the fast-paced curriculum and cover as much content as possible.

Participants said they are making greater use of test data to reach decisions about curriculum, instruction, teacher professional development, and other areas. They also expressed concern about the negative effects of test-based accountability on teacher morale and students’ development. In addition, some interviewees reported that a lack of sufficient resources to prepare students for the NECAP made it harder for teachers to keep up with the faster pace of instruction.

#

Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in January 1995, by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.

More information on CEP and its research is available online at www.cep-dc.org .
--