Arizona State University, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, 2005

Evolution of federal policy and implications for No Child Left Behind for language minority students

Focus

Analyzes the implications of NCLB for limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Methodology

Reviewed legislative requirements of Titles I and III of NCLB. Reviewed history of major federal education programs for LEP students.

Major Findings

- **Several negatives, one positive.** NCLB marks a dramatic shift in guiding federal principles toward LEP students and could become “a recipe for leaving students behind,” in the author’s words. The sole positive outcome is that schools which have neglected LEP students can no longer afford to do because of requirements to disaggregate LEP data by subgroups.

- **Testing policies.** As of 2005, the majority of LEP students had to take state exams in a language in which they were not yet proficient, a requirement that encouraged English-only instruction. Although NCLB allows for exceptions and accommodations to the testing policies, the exceptions were limited as of 2005, and acceptable accommodations were not defined.

- **Excluding LEP students from accountability.** While LEP students must be tested, states are using “psychometric gimmicks” to exclude their scores and help many schools avoid accountability for the LEP subgroup. This may create an illusion of success while the real needs of LEP students are being ignored.

- **Instructional goals.** The goals for LEP programs are simply to mainstream students as soon as possible and teach them the content of the state tests. Schools are under pressure to raise test scores, so instruction has narrowly focused on the test and discouraged a focus on the true needs of LEP students.

- **English language instructional programs.** The word “bilingual” was removed entirely from NCLB. Title III no longer makes a distinction between bilingual programs or special alternative instructional programs but only requires LEP students to be placed in “language instruction education programs.” The use of teaching the student’s native language is “optional.” Bilingual education programs still allowed but only if state education leaders deem them as “scientifically based” and are willing to fund them. In some states, anti-bilingual education measures make it extremely difficult for schools to offer quality bilingual education programs.

Where to Obtain

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2008

Left in the margins: Asian American students and the No Child Left Behind Act

Focus

Examines how the education of Asian American students has fared under NCLB and discusses policy considerations that should be taken into account in reauthorizing NCLB.

Methodology

Reviewed existing data for specific Asian ethnic groups on demographic characteristics of Asian American students, enrollments of immigrant and ELL children, availability of ESL and bilingual teachers, dropout and college attendance rates, and parental education.

Major Findings

- **Achievement struggles for many Asian American students.** Contrary to stereotypes that cast Asian Americans as model high achievers, data disaggregated by Asian ethnic group and income level reveal that many Asian American students are struggling, failing, and dropping out of schools that ignore their needs.

- **Inadequate services for Asian American ELLs.** Nearly one out of four (24%) Asian American students is an English language learner, and 12% of all ELLs are Asian Americans. Most school districts do not provide sufficient services for ELLs, especially those who speak a language other than Spanish. Asian language interpretation and translation services, bilingual programs, or translated assessments are hardly ever available even though they are essential.

- **NCLB policy recommendations.** To better serve Asian Americans, NCLB should deemphasize high-stakes testing, encourage states to develop more native-language assessments, use multiple forms of assessment, create more bilingual education programs, address high dropout or push-out rates, increase professional development and hiring to ensure ELLs are instructed by appropriately trained teachers, and improve parental involvement and communication with immigrant parents, particularly those with little formal education.

Where to Obtain

http://www.aaldef.org/docs/AALDEF_LeftintheMargins_NCLB.pdf
Some perspectives from rural school districts on NCLB

Focus

Examines the impact of NCLB on student achievement and teacher quality in some rural districts and the challenges those rural districts face in complying with the Act. Analyzes differences in responses to NCLB between rural districts and urban or suburban districts.

Methodology

Based on a nationally representative survey of NCLB implementation in 349 responding districts and interviews with administrators in eight rural districts in various parts of the country.

Major Findings

- **Causes of improved student achievement.** The rural districts surveyed, like the urban and suburban districts, rated their own district policies and programs as more important causes of improved student achievement than the provisions of NCLB were. Exceptions were Reading First programs and NCLB school improvement plans, both of which were rated as important or very important contributors to higher achievement by at least 72% of the rural districts that participated in these aspects.

- **Rural responses to NCLB.** As a response to NCLB, rural districts participating in CEP’s case studies had aligned their curriculum better with test content and had sharpened their focus on individualized instruction.

- **Achievement gaps.** Sizeable percentages of the rural districts surveyed had achievement gaps for students with disabilities and low-income students. About 68% of districts reported having an achievement gap for students with disabilities in English language arts and math, and 50% reported having an achievement gap for low-income students.

- **Subgroups too small to track.** A smaller share of rural districts than of urban or suburban districts reported having achievement gaps for minority students or English language learners, but this was because they enrolled too few of these students to calculate gaps under NCLB. At least two-thirds of the rural districts surveyed—or more, depending on the subgroup—reported having too few racial, ethnic, or language minority students to track separately for purposes of determining AYP.

- **Teacher requirements.** NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements appeared to have had a limited impact on teacher recruitment and retention in most rural districts. About 47% of rural districts reported no outcomes of these requirements. Rural districts reported having the most difficulty complying fully with the highly qualified requirements for secondary school science and math teachers.

Where to Obtain

www.cep-dc.org