



“Why The No Child Left Behind Act Needs To Be Restructured to Accomplish Its Goals And How To Do It”

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This path-breaking new article appearing in the *University of the District of Columbia Law Review* outlines how faulty assumptions undermine the effectiveness and good intentions of NCLB:

It’s unscientific. Even though NCLB demands that failing schools must adopt “strategies based on scientifically based research,” the Act’s central remedial concept—AYP—is itself patently “unscientific.” [I]t has never been shown to be achievable in practice. [The] annual “progress” percentages – the non-compliance with which is the entire basis for NCLB’s sanctions—are themselves arbitrary and unfounded. Thus, the entire AYP edifice is built on a foundation of sand.

It’s not fact-based. NCLB’s punishment scheme presumes that failing schools and districts largely know what to do to dramatically improve learning for their children and have the capacity to do it—all they are missing is the motivation. But that is belied by experience.

It induces manipulation. NCLB ...does not recognize that a remedial approach that puts overwhelming emphasis on producing “high” test scores and sanctioning failure to generate such scores will induce widespread manipulation of state/local testing criteria and concentration on “drill and kill” techniques to raise test scores, rather than providing the higher-level thinking skills and understanding that NAEP “proficiency” demands.

It’s ineffective. [A] sanctions-based remedial approach ... will not cause widespread enhancement of teachers’ and

administrators’ knowledge, skills and abilities, raise the level of the curriculum or increase the extent of family support. Public policy must address those changes directly.

It’s unrealistic. The Act is forceful in demanding that: ... all states’ departments of education must provide [Title I schools and districts] with technical assistance and support to enable them to [achieve AYP.] “It is almost impossible to exaggerate just how unprepared these departments are for the task [of turning around failing schools. The] states are a long way from having the capacity to carry out [NCLB’s] mandates.”

It’s unworkable. Even if NCLB could sustain the same improvement rates of 3% and 10% per decade in the future, it would take about 280 more years to raise the remaining 85% of poor and minority students to “proficiency” in reading and eighty-five more years to do so in math.

To learn more about how the NCLB Act should be restructured to truly help our children succeed, read the complete article at citizenseffectiveschools.org.

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