Which Students are Left Behind? The Racial Impacts of the No Child Left Behind Act

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The NCLB requires students in 8 subgroups to demonstrate proficiency on a high stakes test in order for a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

- American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islanders
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

- Low Income
- Special Education
- Limited English

Strategic Instruction

School administrators who direct resources toward racial groups projected as not making adequate yearly progress at the expense of other groups.

- Assigning weaker students to stronger teachers;
- Creating co-curricular activities targeted toward a particular group;
- Choosing a curricula that focuses on a particular group;
- Pulling out groups of students for special instruction.

Some Testable Hypothesis of Strategic Instruction:

- Students of races that previously demonstrated proficiency but who attend a school where another race failed, will gain less than those students attending a school where no race failed.

- This difference should grow as schools face more severe sanctions.

- This difference will be more prevalent at schools that initially face a greater danger of failing to make AYP.

Data

- 228,238 Washington non-special education 3rd graders followed through their 4th grade year (85.7% of all regular education students in the state).

- 4 observed cohorts: two prior to NCLB enactment and two after.

- Student-level controls for ethnicity, duration of enrollment, reading for fun, tv watched, native language, held back a grade, computer usage, and gender.

- Building level controls for free-reduced lunch, building enrollment, and building type.

- Controls for pre- and post-NCLB, and each school's prior attainment of AYP.

Data

- Students take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills at the end of the 3rd grade.

- Students take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) at the end of the 4th grade.

- My research focuses on math scores

- In 2008, 53.6% of Washington 4th graders demonstrated proficiency on the WASL.

- In 2008, 49.1% of 4th grade schools had enough students demonstrate proficiency to make AYP.

Students of races that previously demonstrated proficiency but who attend a school where another race failed, will gain less than similar students attending a school where no race failed.

- Students of a race that made AYP in the past but who attend a building that failed because of the past performance of another race are expected to score an additional .050 standard deviations worse than students of a similar race at a building that passed.

- Black: -.14; Read Often for fun: .08; Change School Midyear - .05; Held Back 1 grade: -.09

This difference should grow as schools face more severe sanctions.

- Students of a race that made AYP but who attend a building that failed for two consecutive years because of the performance of another race are expected to score .090 standard deviations worse than students of a similar race at a building that passed.

This difference will be more prevalent at schools which are more likely to fail AYP.

- Based on 2001 school-level data, I divided buildings into thirds based upon the probability of the building making AYP in the future.

- The racial effect for students at the schools with the highest probability of failure is triple that of the other two groups of students.

Policy Implications

- The NCLB may be closing the racial achievement gap by slowing the progress of successful students.
- This may not be inefficient if the distribution of educational resources was misallocated prior to NCLB.
- Under strategic instruction, it is possible that schools under-prepare AYP races for future high stakes tests.
- Strategic instruction can be reduced by rewarding schools based upon their gains made within each race rather than against a set percentage.