

Achievement Trade-Offs and No Child Left Behind (2009).

Ballou, D. and Springer, M. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, states have been required to set minimum proficiency standards that virtually all students must meet by 2014. Sanctions of increasing severity are to be applied to schools that fail to meet interim targets, known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The authors examine the effect of this legislation using longitudinal, student-level test score data from seven states ($N > 2,000,000$) between 2002-03 and 2005-06 school years. This paper addresses the following research questions: (1) Has NCLB increased achievement among lower-performing students?; (2) Have these gains come at the expense of students that are already proficient or that are far below the proficiency target? Identification is achieved by exploiting the fact that in the early years of NCLB, not all grades counted for purposes of determining AYP. The estimate of the NCLB effect is therefore based on a comparison of outcomes in high-stakes vs. low-stakes years. The authors find consistent evidence of an achievement trade-off in the hypothesized direction, though the effects on any given student are not large. Unlike some other researchers, they find mixed evidence at best that students far below the proficient level have been harmed by NCLB; indeed, at higher grade levels they appear to have benefitted. Effects of NCLB on efficiency, while positive, appear to be modest.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

The Achievement Consequences of the No Child Left Behind Act (2009).

Dee, T. and Jacob, B. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has compelled states to design school accountability systems based on annual student assessments. The effect of this Federal legislation on the distribution of student achievement is a highly controversial but centrally important question. This study presents evidence on whether NCLB has influenced student achievement based on an analysis of state level panel data on student test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This study identifies the impact of NCLB by relying on comparisons of the test-score changes across states that already had school accountability policies in place prior to NCLB and those that did not. Results indicate that NCLB generated statistically significant increases in the average math performance of 4th graders (effect size = 0.22 by 2007) as well as improvements at the lower and top percentiles. However, the authors do not find consistent evidence that NCLB generated similarly broad improvements in reading achievement or achievement among 8th graders.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

Leaving No Child Behind: Two Paths to School Accountability (2009).

Figlio, D., Rouse, C., and Schlosser, A. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

The relatively poor academic achievement of black and Hispanic students has been a national concern since the passage of the *Elementary Secondary and Education Act* in 1963. Frustrated with relatively slow progress in closing these educational gaps, the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA, the *No Children Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) attempts to employ rigorous accountability standards to speed progress. At about the same time, Florida implemented a change in its A+ Plan for Education that focused on the educational gains of “low-performing” students. These two systems provide incentives for schools to concentrate differently on students even though they both ostensibly focus attention on similar sets of students – those most likely to be marginalized in public education. In this paper the authors study whether either of these accountability systems improved the academic outcomes of black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students in Florida. The authors find evidence that schools that are labeled as failing or near-failing in Florida’s system tend to boost performance of students in these subgroups, while schools presented with incentives under NCLB to improve subgroup performance appear to be much less likely to do so. However, Hispanics appear to benefit from the NCLB sub-grouping requirements if they attend schools with low accountability pressure under Florida’s grading system.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

Supplemental Education Services under NCLB: Who signs up and what do they gain? (2009).

Henrich, C., Meyer, R., and Whitten, G. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Schools that have not made adequate yearly progress in increasing student academic achievement are required, under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), to offer children in low-income families the opportunity to receive supplemental educational services (SES). In research conducted in Milwaukee Public Schools, the authors explore whether parents and students are aware of their eligibility and options for extra tutoring under NCLB, and who among eligible students registers for SES. Using the best information available to school districts, the authors estimate the effects of SES in increasing students’ reading and math achievement. They find no average impacts of SES attendance on student achievement gains and use qualitative research to explore possible explanations for the lack of observed effects.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

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Which Students are Left Behind? The Racial Impacts of NCLB (2009).

Krieg, J. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

The No Child Left Behind Act imposes sanctions on schools if the fraction of each of five racial groups of students demonstrating proficiency on a high stakes exam falls below a statewide pass rate. This system places pressure on school administrators to redirect educational resources from groups of students most likely to demonstrate proficiency towards those who are marginally below proficient. Using statewide observations of 3rd and 4th grade math tests, this paper demonstrates that students of successful racial groups at schools likely to be sanctioned gain less academically over their subsequent test year than comparable peers at passing schools. This effect is stronger at schools more likely to suffer from NCLB sanctions and is robust to nonrandom sample selection.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

Status v. Growth: Distributional Effects of School Accountability Policies (2009).

Ladd, H. and Lauen, D. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Although the Federal No Child Left Behind program judges the effectiveness of schools based on their students' achievement status, many policy analysts argue that schools should be measured, instead, by their students' achievement growth. Using a ten-year student-level panel data set from North Carolina, the authors examine how school-specific pressure associated with the two approaches to school accountability affects student achievement at different points in the prior-year achievement distribution. Achievement gains for students below the proficiency cut point emerge in response to both types of accountability systems, but more clearly in math than in reading. In contrast to prior research highlighting the possibility of educational triage, the authors find little or no evidence that schools in North Carolina ignore the students far below proficiency under either approach. Importantly, they find that the status, but not the growth, approach reduces the reading achievement of higher performing students. The analysis suggests that the distributional effects of accountability pressure depend not only on the type of pressure for which schools are held accountable (status or growth), but also the tested subject.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

Left Behind by Design: Proficiency Counts and Test-Based Accountability (2009).

Neal, D. and Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Many test-based accountability systems, including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), place great weight on the numbers of students who score at or above specified proficiency levels in various subjects. Accountability systems based on these metrics often provide incentives for teachers and principals to target children near current proficiency levels for extra attention, but these same systems provide weak incentives to devote extra attention to students who are clearly proficient already or who have little chance of becoming proficient in the near term. The authors show that, based on fifth grade test scores from the Chicago Public Schools, both the introduction of NCLB in 2002 and the introduction of similar district level reforms in 1996 generated noteworthy increases in reading and math scores among students in the middle of the achievement distribution. Nonetheless, the least academically advantaged students in Chicago did not score higher in math or reading following the introduction of accountability, and the authors find only mixed evidence of score gains among the most advantaged students. A large existing literature argues that accountability systems built around standardized tests greatly affect the amount of time that teachers devote to different topics. Results for fifth graders in Chicago, as well as related results for sixth graders after the 1996 reform, suggest that the choice of the proficiency standard in such accountability systems determines the amount of time that teachers devote to students of different ability levels.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

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Supplemental Education Services and Student Test Score Gains: Evidence from a Large Urban School District (2009). Pepper, M., Springer, M., and Dastidar, B. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

This study examines the effect of SES on student test score gains and whether particular subgroups of students benefit more from NCLB tutoring services. The sample used includes information on students enrolled in 3rd through 8th grades nested in 121 elementary and middle schools over a five-year period from 2003-04 to 2007-08. A total of 17 elementary and middle schools were required to offer SES at some point during the period under study, and 9,861 student-year pairings in the sample were eligible to receive SES. While the authors' preferred analytic approach takes advantage of panel data to implement an analysis strategy with student fixed effect regression methods, they also test the robustness of these estimates to a number of alternative approaches, including a comparison of student test score gains between current and future SES participants. The authors find consistently significant and positive average effects of SES on test score gains in mathematics. Results in reading tend to be insignificant. SES tutoring does not appear to disproportionately benefit a particular racial/ethnic group or ability level. Female students and students with disabilities appear to benefit more from

participating in SES. SES has a significant, cumulative effect on students in both mathematics and reading. They also demonstrate that not accounting for content area of tutoring can cause downward bias in estimates of the SES treatment effect. These findings are qualified on a couple of dimensions.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

The Effects of No Child Left Behind on School Services and Student Outcomes (2009).

Reback, R., Rockoff, J., and Schwartz, H. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), in theory, schools on the margin for meeting AYP face strong short-term incentives to increase students' pass rates on specific exams, and may change their behavior accordingly. Using a comprehensive, national, school-level data set concerning schools' AYP status, student characteristics, and student test score performance, as well as NCLB test score performance and school characteristics, the authors predict which schools were near the margin for failing to meet their state's AYP standards in math and reading. Variance in state policies creates several cases where schools near the margin for satisfying their *own* state's AYP requirements would have almost certainly failed or almost certainly passed AYP if they were located in *other* states. Using the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey (ECLS), the authors examine how NCLB incentives affect students' academic achievement and non-academic outcomes, and school resource allocation. States vary widely in the percent of schools that fail or struggle to meet AYP, with cross-state variation in student academic aptitude or in exam difficulty explaining relatively little of this variation. Rather, cross-state variation in AYP failure rates is due to states' choice of policy parameters concerning AYP rules, such as the minimum student enrollment size required for student subgroups' pass rates to contribute to a school's AYP status, the size of confidence intervals and the "safe harbor" rules that effectively lower the minimum pass rates required for smaller subgroups to pass AYP. Our very preliminary results suggest that NCLB pressure influences student and staff attitudes and teachers' time use and instructional strategies but has little net effect on mean student test score growth on low-stakes exams.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

Going Down With the Ship? The Effect of School Accountability on the Distribution of Teacher Experiences in California (2009). Sims, D. NCPI Conference Paper Series. Nashville, TN.

Many school accountability programs, including the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act are built on the premise that the threat of sanctions attached to failure will produce higher student achievement.

However, the stigma associated with failing schools and the expected costs of possible future sanctions may lead experienced teachers to leave these schools for other opportunities. This may undermine the program's improvement efforts. Particularly it may lead failing schools to rely on a higher proportion of novice teachers. This study looks at elementary and secondary schools in California from 2002-2006 to determine the effect of failing to meet academic performance thresholds on teacher experience under the NCLB accountability system. Because failing schools differ in important ways from schools that meet performance targets, the author takes advantage of the racial subgroup rules to compare groups of schools that may have different failure probabilities despite similar profiles. The author finds that failure to meet AYP is associated with decreases in aggregate teacher experience and increases in the proportion of novice teachers.

To read this paper, please [click here](#).

Note: This paper was presented at the NCLB: Emerging Findings Research Conference at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.
