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Putting English Language Learners on the Educational Map

The No Child Left Behind Act Implemented

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Abstract

This brief presents research findings as well as policy recommendations arising from a study of the No Child Left Behind Act and its implications for immigrant children and English language learners (ELLs). Analyses are based on nationally-representative data from the Schools and Staffing Survey and detailed case studies of selected elementary schools and school districts serving high concentrations of ELL students. Results reveal an extraordinary degree of concentration of ELL students in a few schools that tend to be large, urban and serve a predominantly minority student population. Case studies at some of these schools suggest that, while implementation of NCLB has resulted in problems associated with increased testing (exacerbated by the use of inappropriate tests), the law has also had a positive effect on the education of ELL students as it has increased the attention paid to these students; fostered the alignment of curriculum, instruction and professional development; and raised the bar for student achievement. Implications of findings for the education of ELL students, particularly in schools serving low concentrations of English language learners, are discussed. Policy recommendations presented include the development of appropriate tests for ELLs, the inclusion of pre-K in NCLB legislation, and the provision of professional development for teachers.

Introduction

To expand knowledge about young immigrant populations and to document how the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) affects the education of English language learner (ELL) and limited English proficient (LEP) students, the Urban Institute was funded by the Foundation for Child Development to undertake a series of reports. The series includes

- A demographic profile of LEP children and children of immigrants with a special focus on pre-K to 5th grade.
- A statistical portrait comparing elementary schools with high enrollments of LEP students to schools with low or no enrollments of LEP students to examine differences that might affect schools' abilities to meet NCLB requirements.
- A report on the effect of NCLB requirements on high-LEP elementary schools (pre-K through 5th grade) based on case studies of six schools in three school districts.
- A "road map" that acts as a guide to negotiating the complexities of NCLB.

This policy brief draws on this work to address the main question guiding the series: *has NCLB improved education for ELLs as schools have become accountable for these students' performance?* This question applies not only to the educational levels subject to the law but to pre-K as well, for which there have been spillover effects. After presenting an overview of the ELL population's demographic profile, this brief focuses on the findings of the statistical portrait of schools and the case studies to answer the main research question. The findings reveal that, while implementation of NCLB in high-LEP schools has resulted in some problems for ELL students' education, the net effect of the law has been positive because it has (a) increased attention paid to ELL students; (b) increased the alignment of curriculum, instruction, professional development, and testing; and (c) raised the bar for ELL student achievement. The brief discusses the implications of the findings and gives recommendations for strengthening the potentially positive effects of NCLB on the education of ELL students. By documenting the benefits of spillover effects of the law on pre-K education, the brief also looks ahead to the reauthorization of NCLB and the implications of expanding the law to include this educational level.

(End of excerpt. The [complete report](#) is available in PDF format.)

Until 2001, when the No Child Left Behind Act was enacted, the BEA's key provisions have included: Emphasizing the goal of preparing English-learning students for regular classroom instruction while maintaining their native languages and cultures. Committing the federal government to supporting state bilingual education programs. Providing grants to states or school districts that adopt promising, innovative policies to assist English-learning students to attain fluency. Permitting funding to be used for English-speaking students to enroll in "immersion" and other bilingual educ... No child left behind is an act of the United States congress. This act was legislated to cover education matters of children who attended public academic institutions. This paper seeks to discuss the American No Child Left behind Policy. The act made provisions regarding the education system in American public schools with the aim of improving learning in these government institutions. The act, for example, provided that states in the country had to enforce standards-based assessments in reading and mathematics for pupils in grades 3-8 by the school year 2005-2006 (Oliver 2). Further provisions were made for similar standards in science in the subsequently following year.

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