

What are the "Real" Impacts of the NCLB Act on New Hampshire Schools after 2 years?

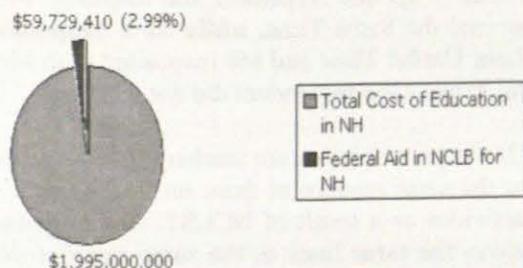
...A view of educational leaders' perceptions

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In response to repeated requests for an update of our initial study of the "impact(s)" of the NCLB ACT published in the fall of 2002, the New Hampshire School Administrators Association conducted a survey of members in December 2003 and January 2004. The purpose was to ascertain the positive and negative impacts to date of the NCLB Act. A full update on 2004 impacts will be published in March and available on www.nhsaa.org.

Each school system leader was asked to complete one survey for each school system under her/his leadership. As of the date of this publication, eighty eight (88) school districts completed the survey out of the 162 that operate schools.

Actual School Year 2003-04

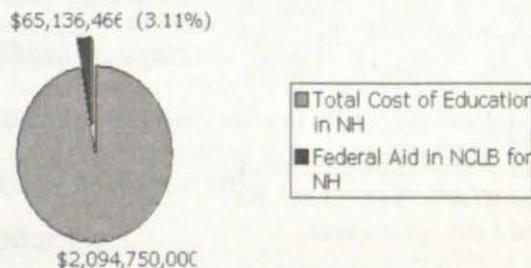


Survey questions were divided into three groups. The first set was designed to assess whether or not the school district is receiving more or less federal aid in FY04 than in FY01. The second set was designed to see if the NCLB Act has had an impact on the allocation of resources within school districts. Finally, a series of questions were asked to assess the district leader's perception of the effectiveness of certain major aspects of the NCLB Act.

In brief, respondents found that many districts were receiving more aid in FY04 than in FY01, however some districts were receiving significantly less aid as a result of changes in the Title 1 distribution

system. School leaders reported a large increase in staff time being spent on the extensive requirements of the Act, including work on application and paper work, high quality educator's rules and AYP compliance. When asked if the "NCLB Act has resulted in improvement in the district's ability to offer and deliver a quality education to all children?" over 71% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Estimated School Year 2004-05



Finances

Survey respondents reported varied levels of increases in federal aid from FY01 to FY04, however 15 respondents reported a net loss in dollars in Title 1 Aid from FY01 to FY04. This observation confirms the finding of NHSAA in November 2002. Namely, that there has been an increase in the amount of federal education aid that was received by NH. It is however important to note that the aid is not uniformly received by all school districts who must (eventually) comply with requirements.

Allocation of Resources

Survey respondents felt strongly (80%+) that there has been a significant increase in the amount of time, energy and dollars spent by local school districts in complying with just four areas of NCLB requirements. These include: paperwork (application and compliance materials), highly qualified educator and paraprofessional rules, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) compliance efforts.

When asked to estimate the number of hours

spent by employees in complying with these requirements, estimates ran from 200 hours to more than a 1000 hours per school district since the law was implemented. This is quite a significant finding since the full implementation of the law will not be felt for several more years.

When summarizing the impact of NCLB on the allocation of resources, the following section repeats the actual question together with response totals.

1) "Overall, has there been an increase in required time spent in work related to applying for and complying with federal projects, grants, and procedures as a result of NCLB?" Of the 88 responses received, **85.1% answered Yes**; 9.2% answered No; 5.7% were uncertain and 1 did not respond.

2) "Has there been an increase in required time spent in work related to complying with the high quality educator requirements as a result of NCLB?"

The overwhelming response was **87.4% Yes**, 12.6% No and 1 did not respond.

3) "Has there been an increase in required time spent in work related to complying with the high quality Para-educator requirements as a result of NCLB?" "Again, the majority of respondents, **70.1% answered Yes**, while 20.7% answered No, 9.2% were uncertain and one did not respond.

4) "Overall, has there been an increase in time spent on work related to complying with the testing and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements as a result of NCLB?" Of the 88 respondents, **85.1% answered Yes**, 12.6% answered No, 2.3% were uncertain and one did not respond.

Effectiveness

When NH school leaders were asked to share their opinion of the effectiveness of certain aspects of NCLB, they expressed strong concern that the current AYP process is not useful or valid (80.5%), that NH Department of Education has lost focus in providing useful services to school districts as a result of NCLB (81%) and that the law has required greater local ex-

penditures on professional development (74.7%).

In addition, 50% felt that the curriculum has been narrowed as a result of the increased emphasis on reading and math required by the law, and there is concern that both principals (31%) and teachers (25.6%) are spending "less useful time" on instructionally useful activities as a result of the law. These are quite significant concerns to be expressed at this early stage of implementation, since the full requirements and scope of the NCLB Act will not be applicable to all schools until 2005-06.

When summarizing effectiveness of the NCLB Act, the following section repeats the actual survey question with response totals.

1) "NCLB has resulted in improvement in this districts ability to offer and deliver a quality education to all children."

We received 88 responses and of the 88, **51.7% Disagree**, **19.5% Strongly Disagree**, 17.2% had No Comment and only 11.5% Agree. One respondent did not respond.

2) "In your opinion, are principals spending more, less, or the same amount of

time, on instructionally useful activities as a result of NCLB?" Of the responses, the majority, 60.9% answered the Same Time, **while 31% responded with Less Useful Time** and 8% responded with More Useful Time. One respondent did not respond.

3) "In your opinion, are teachers spending more, less, or the same amount of time, on instructionally useful activities as a result of NCLB?" The responses were along the same lines as the same question regarding principals. The majority, 66.3% answered the Same Time, **while 25.6% answered Less Useful Time**, 8.1% answered More Useful time and one did not respond.

4) When asked, "In your opinion, has the scope of school curricula been narrowed as a result of the increased emphasis on reading and math in NCLB?" respondents answered as follows: **50% Yes**, 34.9% No, 15.1% Uncertain and two unanswered.

5) Next, respondents were asked, "In your opinion, is the State's current process for measuring Adequate

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Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools valid and useful? An overwhelming majority, **80.5% answered No**, 3.4% answered Yes, 16.1% were Uncertain and one did not respond.

6) In your opinion, has NCLB caused an increase in local expenditures on professional development for employees? Again, the **majority, 74.7% answered Yes**, 19.5% answered No, 5.7% were uncertain and one did not respond.

7) In your opinion, has the NH DOE improved, maintained or lost focus on providing important services to school districts as a result of NCLB? Of the 88 responses, **81% said that the NH DOE has Lost Focus**, 15.5% that it has Maintained Focus, 3.6% feels the NH DOE has Improved Focus and four respondents chose to skip the question.

In summary, as asserted in NHSAA's original assessment of the "Impact (s) of NCLB" (Fall 2002), it is clear that there are significant local costs in the broadest sense, necessary to comply with the requirements of the NCLB Act.

Preliminary Observations and Findings

1. Not all communities received increases in federal aid from FY 01 to FY 04, yet certain requirements of the law apply to all districts either by NHDOE application or legislative action.
2. The state has made promises to the federal government obligations as "conditions of its federal funding". In order to meet these obligations, local districts are having to change priorities, and incur local costs that exceed federal aid in many cases.
3. "Costs" include: not only "dollars" but time, displaced local priorities, narrowing curriculum, lost service from NHDOE and increased demand for resources in the broadest sense.
4. School leaders find the current AYP process to be invalid and not useful to improving instruction.
5. These unfunded or under funded mandates (aka. conditions) will likely grow in number and significance as the law spreads its impact to all schools (not just Title 1), and the Federal Dollars continue to fall well short of NCLB Authorization levels. (NH is projected to be short funded by \$25 million dollars in FY05).