

Urban School Principals and the ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act

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Abstract This exploratory study investigated how six practicing school principals responded to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind law (United States Congress Public Law 107–110, 2002, January, No Child Left Behind Act, <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>) in light of the multicultural leadership demands presented by an urban setting. It examines perspectives of principals on the legal aspects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and what they did to manage its requirements. Multicultural leadership literature provided a framework to understand the perspectives of school leaders. The findings suggest three principals were engaged in meaningful and practical work to both fulfill the requirements of NCLB and meet the needs of their students. Three principals were focused on the requirements of the law and did not see the connection between multicultural leadership and NCLB. The study’s recommendations include a multicultural leadership approach to current NCLB school reform.

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Introduction

Principals have a key role in creating schools that value individual differences, and since public schools are diverse, this study began with the premise multicultural leadership is a critical skill for school leaders. The study was designed to explore the perspectives of six principals employed in urban schools (four elementary, two secondary) with diverse populations, and how they responded to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The main research question was: How are principals engaging in multicultural leadership within the context of the No Child Left Behind law? The purpose was to first, understand the work experiences and challenges of principals who were implementing NCLB in an urban school district named Adams School District (pseudonym). Second, we wanted to determine how the experiences and challenges might be communicated in administrator preparation programs.

America's school student body is diverse while teachers and administrators are predominantly white. Nationwide, 1.3% of US public school students are American Indian/Alaska Native, 3.9% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 16.8% are Black, 17.7% are Hispanic, and 60.3% are white (NCES 2006, p. 15). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) schools and staffing survey SASS (2003–2004) reported the following statistics for public school principals: 82.4% were non-Hispanic white and 17.6% were minority (p. 65). They served a population of 60.3% white and 39.7% minority (p. 15). In Idaho, the state where this study was conducted, 15% of elementary school students were Hispanic, however, only 4% of the state's public school teachers were Hispanic (US Census Bureau 2000). While students in US public schools are becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching and administrative force is decreasing in diversity and turning increasingly white. Branch (2001) notes, "Around the nation, fewer African Americans are entering the teaching force; indeed fewer people of color, generally, are entering the teaching profession."

The gap between the ethnicity of educators and public school students represents a critical issue facing US education. Citing the National Education Association (NEA) study *Status of the American Public School Teacher* (2003), *Assessment of Diversity in America's Teaching Force* by the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004), and the (2003) US Department of Education, NCES study *Condition of Success*, the NEA (2006) suggests:

Nearly four out of every 10 students is a minority (40.5%), yet the teaching profession is overwhelmingly white (90%). Some 40% of all public schools have no minority teachers on staff. Additionally, fewer than half of teachers participate in professional development related to managing diversity in the classroom.

The NEA report also notes, "The percentage of African-American teachers is the lowest since 1971 (6%). Only 5% of the nation's teachers are Hispanics, Asians or are from other ethnic groups."

Concurrent with the trend of a predominantly white education profession and an increasingly diverse school population, was the emergence of an educational accountability movement. Signed into law on January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (US United States Congress Public Law 107–110) is a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—the primary channel through which federal tax dollars are funneled to state departments of education for school operations and administration. No Child Left Behind contains four basic principles designed to bring about: (1) stronger accountability for student academic performance, i.e., tougher state standards for students; (2) increased flexibility and local control over school operations i.e., flexibility in the way states spend federal dollars; (3) expanded school choice options for parents, i.e., parental choice in those schools labeled as ‘chronically’ failing schools; and (4) an emphasis on effective teaching methods, i.e., focusing resources in proven ‘research-based’ approaches (Gibbons and Paige 2004).

No Child Left Behind legislation might appear progressive and supportive of multicultural education with its promising title, however, our research in one urban district finds when implemented, the law presents challenges to the advancement of multicultural education. This article focuses primarily on one aspect of the law regarding how principals addressed accountability for student academic achievement.

Multicultural Leadership Framework

The perspective of this article is that all individuals, whether they recognize it or not, are multicultural in one way or another, by ascribing to certain beliefs, political persuasions, religions, sexual orientations, or other societal differences. Multicultural diversity includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and language. Diverse groups of students have been treated unequally in education throughout the United States as evident in the section of this article, historical context of NCLB and education law.

Multicultural leadership is defined as the work principals do to ensure multicultural aims, objectives, curricular content, assessment content, and pedagogy are implemented effectively. The principal serves as a catalyst to guarantee the school embraces and affirms a multicultural and culturally responsive agenda, as opposed to an assimilationist agenda. Gay states, “decontextualizing teaching and learning from the ethnicities and cultures of students minimizes the chances that their achievement potential will ever be fully realized” (as quoted in Nieto 2004, p. 155; Marable 2005a, p. 33) emphasizes the key role of educators: “the diversity we say we want has little to do with the racial exclusivity we have constructed...children soon learn that ‘different’ can be a good or bad thing depending on how it is classified into the hierarchy that society has established”. (Also see Banks 2001; Marable 1999; Marable 2005b.) Critical work for principals, starting at the preschool level, is to establish a school climate and culture that recognizes and affirms diversity. Specifically, principals are responsible for teaching anti-racism and implementing equality of opportunity and outcomes (Hondo et al. 2008).

The underachievement of students of color in public schools illustrates the need for strong multicultural leadership to help close the performance gap, enhance communication across socio-economic, ethnic and racial lines, and is summarized in the literature (see Anderson 2006; Carter 2005; Delpit 2006; Gay 2001; Henze et al. 2002; Hollins 1996; Hollins and Oliver 1999; Johnson 2002; Lewis and Paik 2001; Lindsey et al. 2003; Lopez 2003; Nieto 2004; Paccione 2000; Riehl 2000; Robins et al. 2002; Ryan 2003; Sherman and Grogan 2003; Wallace 2000). Marion Wright Edelman also views the imperative to leave no child behind in much broader terms than the NCLB legislation. In her view, it is a “moral question about whether America truly values and will stand up for children” (1997, p. 16). Specifically, school leaders are urged to advocate for “child health, early childhood education, after school programs and family economic security” (1997, p. 16).

The trend to a largely white education force caused by the disparity between the ethnicity of students and their educators has profound implications for the educational process. Preliminary research indicates “classroom success depends on cultural diversity. Some research suggests students of color perform better-academically, personally and socially when taught by teachers from their own ethnic groups” (NEA 2006). Because the ethnicity gap between students and educators shows no sign of reversing, research is needed to examine the work of school administrators and how they incorporate multicultural leadership in the context of NCLB.

Historical Context of NCLB and Education Law

This section describes laws positively affecting multicultural education and equity, and those laws resulting in negative or mixed impacts. Though not intended to be exhaustive of all laws setting a standard for US public education (US Department of Education n.d.), this review reveals the context of NCLB and the shifting political-legal climate impacting education.

Equal protection. 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (1868) guarantees, “No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” This is the most significant federal law protecting the rights of students in the United States.

Desegregation. Brown v. Board of Education (1954). It has been just 54 years since *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed the legally supported separate and unequal education for African-Americans and whites, and began the integration of African-American students into the public schools. This landmark Supreme Court decision changed the course of American Public Education, by granting equal access to public schools for all students.

Equal Access to Federal Financial Assistance. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964). This law sought to provide meaningful access for all persons in public educational institutions, and prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in activities and programs receiving federal assistance from the US Department of Education. “... No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin ... be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to

discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Bilingual Education. Bilingual Education Act (1968). According to this law, all students, including English language learners, were to be held to high standards and instructed using programs tailored for students’ linguistic and cultural needs.

Bilingual Education. Lau v. Nichols (1974). The US Supreme court ruled it was a violation of students’ civil rights to place them in an instructional “sink or swim” situation where they were expected to learn in English only, and not receive full benefit from programs designed to meet their educational needs. The tenant *equal is not the same* was asserted in this law underscoring the belief education should instead take into account a student’s primary linguistic and cultural background and prior knowledge and abilities. The court found “... students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education when they are instructed exclusively in a language they do not understand” (Language responsibilities of Education agencies serving language minority students 1995).

Equal Opportunity to All in Public Schools. The Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO) Act (1974). This law expanded the prohibition of discrimination in Title VI to all public schools regardless of federal funding [20 U.S.C. 1203(f)].

Bilingual Education. Lau Remedies (1975). Guidelines were developed for school districts to follow to ensure compliance with the Lau v. Nichols ruling and any civil rights violations. Bilingual education programs were implemented permitting teachers to instruct ELL students in academic subject areas in their native language, while at the same time instructing them in English language [414 U.S. 563 (1974)].

Bilingual Education. Castaneda v. Pickard (1981). Mexican American families sought and were granted access to bilingual education (see Carter 2005; Rosario 1995) [648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir., 1981)].

Executive Order 13166 “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency” (2000, August 11). Signed by President Bill Clinton, the law afforded new opportunities for immigrants learning English, now referred to as English language learners (ELL). “The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English” (US Department of Justice 2000).

Racist, discriminatory and anti-immigrant laws have also been proposed or passed since *Brown*. In 1998 a backlash against immigration and equality of opportunity was seen in the legal propositions passed by citizens in California.

Anti-Bilingual Education. In Proposition 187 California law imposed social and educational restrictions on undocumented immigrants, preventing them from access to benefits and public services including public school education. In *Proposition 227 (1998)*, also in California, English was made the main medium for English Language Learners to be educated. Anti-bilingual political organizations successfully promoted the passing of laws imposing social and educational restrictions on immigrants (see Escobedo 1999).

Educational Equity. No Child Left Behind (United States Congress Public Law 2002). The next major piece of legislation affecting schools in their approach to

educational equity was the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) by President George W. Bush in 2002. Previously, under ESEA (1965) achievement results were reported as averages for a school or district. Thus, underachievement by sub-group student populations was hidden. The amendments and reauthorization of ESEA under NCLB (2002) attempted to hold schools and school districts responsible for the academic progress of all students by disaggregating student achievement data and reporting. In order to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), all subgroups in the school population, including economically disadvantaged ECON, ethnic and cultural (e.g., Hispanic), limited English proficient LEP, and special education SPED, must perform “adequately” on the state’s tests. Students are categorized as below basic, proficient or advanced levels. No Child Left Behind mandates the percentage of students meeting AYP increase annually until all students meet proficiency levels in math, reading or language arts by the 2013–2014 school year.

Much has been written about NCLB and educational standards reform (e.g., Emery and Ohanian 2004; Sunderman et al. 2005; Kim and Sunderman 2006; Meier et al. 2004). It is not the intent of this article to critique the law. Rather, NCLB is simply part of the legal and political context in which principals work. Some predict the upcoming federal elections may signal major revisions, or bring an end to NCLB and its sanctions imposed upon state standardized testing. However, the situation of public schools with diverse students, a predominantly white teaching force and accountability measures are likely to remain for some time. Therefore, educational research is needed on the day-to-day realities of what principals do in the context of NCLB with regard to multicultural leadership, which is the focus of this study.

The Study, the Setting, and the Participants

The aim of this research was to critically examine the perspectives of practicing school administrators on NCLB and multicultural leadership using a qualitative case study methodology. Six urban principals participated in the project. Data in this study were obtained during interviews with the school principals over the course of a school year. School district documents related to NCLB data were also collected and analyzed. Additional interviews were conducted with three district level administrators to provide a broader perspective on the principals’ work. Interview questions concentrated on the views of principals regarding preparedness for multicultural leadership, beliefs and values about the requirements of NCLB, and personal visions about leading schools.

Participants for the study were selected first by compiling a list of principals with at least 3 years of experience, who worked in the Adams School District schools. Next, individuals were purposively chosen from those who headed schools experiencing an increase in the number of ethnically and/or socio-economically diverse students. For information on the principals selected see Table 1 (below) which has the same participants as an earlier study (see Gardiner and Enomoto 2006).

Table 1 Principal data

	Kroll	Sanders	Caruthers	Brown	Garrison	Andrews
Years as principal	15	5	15	6	4	7
Years at school	3	1	1	5	2	7
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age	51	48	50	42	41	51
Education	B.A.-Sp.Ed.	B.A.-Ed.	B.S.-Ed.	B.A.-Elem. Ed.	B.A.-Ed.	B.A.-Soc/Hist.
	M.A.-Sp.Ed.	M.Ed. Ph.D.	M.S.-Ed.	M.Ed.	M.Ed.	M.A.-Anthro.
	Principal credential					

An analysis and comparison of the district's demographics in relationship to the state and nation revealed the following. Idaho's poverty rate, 13.9% is similar to the national average of 13%. In the County where Adams School District is located, 18.4% of families had an annual income lower than \$25,000, and 8.9% of families live below the poverty level (US Census 2000). Three of the four elementary schools in the study were designated Title 1 schools. The junior high contained the district's English Learning Academy for ELL students, and the high school was ethnically and socio-economically diverse. The school district had 53 public schools serving approximately 27,000 students. The majority of the student population was white, although cultural and linguistic diversity was increasing. During the data collection phase, a local newspaper, *The Idaho Statesman* reported the trend of a "middle class retreat" and growing enrollment in a neighboring suburban school district. In Adams School District, 2,200 ELL students represented 84 different home languages. Poverty levels in all schools ranked high. According to the Ethics Resource Center (1997) "high poverty schools exist where 40% or more of the students receive free or reduced lunches." Schools in this study ranged from having a free and reduced lunch count of 40.7–92.3%, with the exception of the high school where numbers were inaccurate because students often do not apply for free and reduced lunch. Instead, according to the high school principal, they prefer to "mask family circumstances" thereby avoiding the negative stigma associated with low income status. School information is also the same as in the earlier study (Gardiner and Enomoto 2006) and is presented below (see Table 2).

Initial fieldwork and collection of documents were aimed at learning the context of each school and community prior to the interviewing component of the study (Rossman and Rallis 2003). Interviews were then conducted with the six school principals and three district administrators. Each interview lasted 40 min to an hour and was conducted on-site in the principal's or district administrator's office by the first author. When transcribed, interviews totaled between 30 and 60 pages in length. Twelve formal interviews were tape recorded and transcribed yielding over

Table 2 School characteristics in school performance report 2004

School	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Names (pseudonyms)	Republic K-6 Principal Kroll	Colton K-6 Principal Sanders	Wakefell K-6 Principal Caruther	Lowen K-6 Prin. Brown	Valley View 7–9 Principal Garrison	Boyd 10–12 Principal Andrews
Grades	K6	K6	K6	K6	7-9	10-12
Enrolment	429	207	312	320	612	1,241
ELL ^a (%)	24.4	3.3	36.8	19.4	12.8	4.3
GT program ^b (%)	4.0	5.0	0.3	10	–	–
F/R lunch ^c (%)	75.5	46.5	92.3	63.1	40.7	15.7
SpEd ^d (%)	14.4	10.6	18.3	13.8	12.6	9.9
Attendance ^e (%)	97.6	98.3	92.4	95.4	93.5	92.8
Class size ^f	20.8	22.4	21.4	22.9	20.1	23.8

^a English language learners

^b Gifted & talented program participants at the elementary schools; advanced placement enrolment at the secondary school

^c Free or reduced lunch participants

^d Special education program participants

^e Average daily attendance

^f Average class size

600 pages of data. Data were then analyzed using the traditional qualitative methods described below.

The qualitative cross-case analysis used in this study (Creswell 1998; Merriam 1998; 2002) incorporated four stages. Case studies were written on each principal in the first stage from fieldwork observations, interviews, school web sites, reports and various publications. Information was collected on school mission, context, organization and aims, student enrollment, faculty, curriculum, pedagogy, and parent–school relationships. The second stage involved the process of seeking answers to the research questions regarding the principal’s perspectives on NCLB, and how this interfaced with the day-to-day multicultural needs they were facing in their schools. During the third stage, literature on multicultural leadership and NCLB was synthesized. After categorizing the data according to the principals’ work in relation to NCLB, the fourth stage involved writing the analysis in narrative form.

Findings

The findings for this study are presented in relation to the primary research question: How are principals engaging in multicultural leadership in the context of NCLB law? The investigation found principals were consumed with meeting the demands

of NCLB law. They engaged in multicultural leadership with varied levels of commitment ranging from uncommitted, and not really seeing the need for it on the one hand, to embracing a multicultural agenda on the other. Specific multicultural leadership approaches and NCLB issues prioritized by principals are described under three main themes: (a) multicultural knowledge and equity policies; (b) testing and assessment preparedness; and (c) connections with family and community.

Multicultural Knowledge and Equity Policies

The Idaho State Department of Education began the process of accountability for NCLB by developing a specific scope and sequence for curriculum, known as Standards. From the Standards, the state tests called the Idaho Student Achievement Tests (ISATs) were written and validated by the Idaho State Education Association (ISEA). Additional assessments for reading, math, and writing were also selected as accountability measures. Adams School District formed committees comprised of district administrators and teachers who volunteered or were invited to participate to align the district's curriculum with the standards. Language and math were the first content areas considered since NCLB law focuses on these areas. After this process, a committee of teachers selected textbooks whose content matched with the newly aligned curriculum. When the state tests were given, consistent with the requirements of NCLB, test results were disaggregated and the data were reported to the public.

Rationale behind the testing was based upon the notion that schools were more "accountable" to the public for their achievement levels, and teachers could improve student performance. Ninety five percent of the student population and 95% of students in each subgroup with a population of 34 or more students enrolled in Idaho schools during the testing window must be tested with the state test in order to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Annual Yearly Progress comprises the evaluative component of NCLB, used to determine whether schools are succeeding or failing. The testing requirement included all students regardless of mobility. Exceptions were students who were absent for a medical condition during the entire testing window, or LEP students enrolled in their first year in a US school (NCLB/AYP Summary 2004). The number of 34 students in a sub-group is significant. For instance, there were insufficient numbers of American Indian/Alaska Native to be reported in Adams School District which required a student population of 34 students. Adams School District had significant populations of socio-economically disadvantaged students, labeled ECON and limited English proficient students, labeled LEP to categorize as a subgroup.

Most schools in Adams School District were making annual yearly progress (AYP), yet limited English proficient students and Hispanic students were performing at a lower level than their Caucasian counterparts. Understandably, since the sanctions of NCLB law are considerable and include budgetary restrictions with a potential loss of Federal funding, the primary focus of these principals was on increasing raising test scores. District level administrators reported they faced the same pressures since they were responsible for their principals' performance. At the

beginning of the school year, district administrators shifted principals from low-performing schools and replaced them with principals with a record of “high performance.” Principals as well as students were being evaluated on their performance with regard to student learning outcomes, consistent with the intent of NCLB.

Categorizing schools as low-performing based on standardized test scores, and not allowing for individual student circumstance, was seen as unfair by three of the six principals. These principals stated they were committed to an equity agenda and were motivated to create opportunities for culturally diverse students in their schools. Three principals saw themselves as embracing NCLB by doing whatever it took to meet its expectations, which was interpreted as avoiding “extra-curricular” work such as multicultural education.

For all six principals in this study, multicultural leadership preparation was limited. The prior study discusses how the principals regarded their role as multicultural leaders (see Gardiner and Enomoto 2006). The six veteran principals received their training during a time when multicultural diversity was not a requirement in educational administration preparation programs, and their cultural backgrounds did not prepare them to be multicultural leaders. Despite their limited exposure to multicultural education, three principals stated they were intent on gaining the new knowledge they felt was necessary to enhance student learning.

Principals and district administrators alike prefaced their comments regarding the lack of multicultural education with the remark, “Remember, this is Adams, Idaho. We don’t have a lot of need for multiculturalism.” In contrast, three principals who saw themselves as multicultural leaders hired staff and teachers of color and recognized the importance of a diverse staff for role modeling inclusion. They also found ways to integrate curriculum that reflected multicultural curriculum, ideas, music, literature, and activities. These ideas resulted in prejudice reduction and the implementation of anti-racist and anti-sexist education. The focus was on diversity as an asset, culturally proficient instruction, and improved student outcomes. For instance, one principal worked with district administrators in a partnership with Head Start to offer an inclusion preschool for low-income families. Another principal relayed the joy of working with families who came directly from refugee camps in Africa, Somali, Bantu, and Rwanda. Principal Caruthers, reflecting on the importance of identifying low-income kids who are gifted, lamented:

Some of my colleagues seem to have a mindset that being poor is a choice someone makes. Many of our parents are doing the best they can in difficult life circumstances. A lot of our Hispanic families have just recently come to the United States and they may have come with nothing and are working very hard. Other parents are in and out of jail, but we always have to keep in mind it’s not the child’s fault. There’s no reason why the child can’t be a high achiever just because the parents are poor.

Three principals considered equity policies less important than “raising test scores” and what they called the “essential curriculum.” Although raising test scores for students is an important part of any equity plan, when clarifying how principals

were accomplishing this, data revealed the broader aspects of ensuring multicultural curriculum and instruction had been overlooked. Principal Sanders explained:

We are under pressure to produce test score gains. I think as a whole multicultural curriculum and teaching is pretty limited. The teachers have just had limited exposure. Would they be willing to learn? Sure. I don't think the need has been there ... We're still really naïve when it comes to working with different populations ... I think I'm very understanding, and in tune, but in reality I'm not. I just don't know what I don't know.

A district administrator described the curriculum as “somewhat multicultural.” Yet there were clear instances where the curriculum contained no multicultural components. For example, the fourth grade Idaho history text entitled *A Rendezvous with Idaho History* (Dutton and Humphries 1994) had males represented 73% of the time compared to females at 27%. Whites were represented in 60% of the pictures compared to 40% for all other ethnicities. In the chapter entitled “famous people,” all the famous people were white.

Principals Sanders, Garrison and Andrews attributed difficulties of low-achieving students to the “culture of poverty” in the home. Payne’s book *A framework for understanding poverty* (2001), was used for district in-service training, and the explanation of a culture of poverty was frequently cited as the key to understanding students’ lack of success in school. Principals Kroll, Caruthers and Brown did engage in culture change and raising expectations in the school, and this is to be commended. However, none of the principals critiqued the larger educational system and its inequities (see Berliner 2005; Kozol 1992). These urban principals were challenged, because their schools did not enjoy the same educational benefits afforded to more affluent schools in the district, and in a nearby suburban school district burgeoning with new students. This phenomenon was explained by one district administrator as “white flight.” An editorial (Richert 2005) on the increasing poverty in the school district labeled the phenomenon “middle-class retreat.” All school buildings in this study were physically deteriorating with the exception of Valley View Junior High School which was new, and Boyd High which was remodeled extensively in the early 1990s. In the elementary schools the staff was overburdened, and many of the resources found in the affluent schools were missing, such as computer labs, technology upgrades, outdoor gardens, basketball courts, soccer fields, and indoor gymnasiums.

The possibility of school related deficits, or what might be called the poverty of schools, as an explanation for school failure and achievement gaps related to the socio-political-economic system was not suggested by any principal. However, Principals Caruthers, Kroll and Brown noted the problem of prior low expectations by teachers and the current lack of culturally proficient faculty. Not discussed was the impact of this when combined with lack of resources, possible issues of racism, and classism among students and staff. Principals Sanders and Garrison argued they had no time or other resources to enhance multicultural knowledge in schools because they were consumed with meeting federal and state high stakes academic testing requirements. Anxiety was expressed over the punitive nature of NCLB, and

the diminishing of the capacity of public schools to meet the needs of their diverse populations.

Testing and Assessment Preparedness

Principals appreciated NCLB attention on the achievement of all students, particularly those traditionally underserved by schools. In the words of Principal Kroll, “It gave everybody the common language to understand the responsibility of having black and Hispanic kids achieve the same as white kids and to change some teachers’ thinking.” Conversely, the negative aspects of NCLB were described as the punitive nature of the law and the threat of taking away resources where they are most needed. Principals have reacted to the challenge of NCLB for increasing student test scores through the following specific strategies.

Focusing School Aims to a Single Goal of Raising Test Scores. The action plan of the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM) from Brazosport, Texas, was adopted in 2001 by the Adams School District and implemented. District administrators provided in-service training for the principals and staff to monitor curriculum by disaggregating test data and modifying the curriculum (teaching and re-teaching followed by retesting) with a goal to increase test score performance. Principals who participated in this study and lead Title 1 schools were involved with developing School Wide Improvement Plans (SWIPs). The plans centered on increasing achievement in reading and math for targeted students. For instance, Republic Elementary School created a Leadership Team of participants from Title 1 staff, Special Education, ELL teachers, parents, classified and certified staff. The team discussed and studied best practices in reading and math and presented their findings to all the teachers. The district Title 1 coordinator facilitated a faculty training to assist teachers in designing strategies for meeting the new (and narrower) school goal: increased test scores. The main objectives were stated as: “Improve K-3 percentages of grade level IRI scores; Work toward levels set in SB 116 for spring 2004, 2005, 2006; Improve reading percentage above/below average as measured by the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in grade 3.”

Given the emphasis on testing, it was important to analyze test scores in Adams School District. In Idaho, the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is used to determine if schools are meeting Annual Yearly Progress. During the data collection period, Idaho schools were not meeting requirements. Fifty-two out of 115 school districts statewide did not meet AYP expectations for the second consecutive year. This included Adams School District. (Roberts 2004). The lowest passing rates statewide for Hispanic students were 66.1% in math, 67.4% in reading, and 79% in language. In comparison, the passing rates for white students were 87.9% in math, 92.8% in reading, and 94.8% in language. Reading scores for Idaho ELL students who met proficiency on the ISAT scores during the 10th grade testing was at 33% compared to 80.2% of non-limited English proficient students (Westfall 2004). All elementary schools and the high school in our study met AYP. Of the six schools in the study, the only school not meeting AYP was the junior high school (indeed all the junior high schools in the school district failed to meet their targets). Valley View Junior High did not meet proficiency for the ELL population and was in safe

harbor status. The school was given 1 year to show an improvement on its test scores for this category or risk the loss of federal funding. Despite not meeting AYP, Adams School District during the same school year received other honors. In 2004, the district was ranked in the upper 16th percentile of the 2,800 districts studied by *Expansion Magazine*. Adams was the only school district in Idaho to receive a Gold Medal ranking.

Narrowing the Curriculum and Instructional Methods and Aligning the School's Curriculum with the Test. Principal Sanders observed, "We did show the growth but we are training kids to take the assessment through drills with sight words. Did they know what the sight words meant? No. But if we can say in grades K through 6 we taught them necessary reading and math skills we will have served them well." Principal Kroll adds, "We don't do as many other types of activities as we used to. We've just buckled down and had the kids focus on learning to read." Curriculum alignment and teaching to the test was considered good practice in this urban school district in light of NCLB law. With the standardization of NCLB reform principals were expecting teachers to focus on test preparation. Principals pointed out students who did not pass the standard in math or reading participated in repeat instruction and tutorial activities, while those who passed the tests enjoyed enrichment activities. At the high school level, strategies employed to increase test scores for lower achieving students included remediation (pull out classes to meet specific educational needs), double blocking students (giving extra help during an elective period), tutoring, and classes designed specifically for ISAT review. Principal Garrison expressed the concern that "We'll become so narrow minded to raise test scores that we forget that our intent is a well educated student in all areas for our society."

Counseling Underachieving Students into 'More Appropriate' Home or School Settings and Separation of ELL Students. Secondary students were enrolled in the ELL Academy located at a nearby Junior High School. This program was designed as a self-contained, pull out program more commonly referred to as a "school within a school". Language issues had been a problem since the implementation of NCLB. Principals complained about the unfair testing practices for students who may have recently arrived from Mexico, Africa, or Bosnia with limited or no English skills. "Wouldn't it make more sense to test students in their dominant language?" asked Principal Caruthers. Research by Tsang et al. (2008) also supports the position it is not appropriate to administer content area tests in English to young students who are beginning English learners. This study "supports the body of research which has shown English learners need 5–7 years before they can attain the academic literacy necessary to negotiate in mainstream classrooms ... schools need to be accountable to ensure ELLs are receiving appropriate services" (Tsang et al. 2008, pp. 19–20). The November 2002 NCLB revisions did allow for a relaxation of testing standards for students with limited English proficiency. The law now allows a 1-year transition period for English Language Learners (ELL). Additionally, it exempts the scores of those new students from the reported count for 1 year (NCLB/AYP Summary 2004).

Another concern in the school district was that the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) had resulted in the separation of ELL students from

the general student population at the secondary level. SIOP represents the middle of two extremes; total English immersion or transitional bilingual programs. Total English immersion programs deny students' backgrounds and begin with the premise that immersing in one language and setting aside one's native language and culture needs is the best method for English proficiency (Center for Applied Linguistics 2005). On the other hand, the transitional two-way bilingual education (TWBE) programs allow English Language Learners and native English speakers to be integrated and learn from each other. SIOP is a middle position and is somewhat sensitive to the value of a student's first language. It stresses the integration of language instruction along with context, but does not incorporate the first language to the extent of bilingual or dual immersion programs. In Adams School District segregated instruction was occurring for the duration of the English language learning process: 11 elementary schools had ELL pull out programs and the ELL academy for secondary students (using SIOP) was a school within a school. Separate instruction, under this model, could take a student 2 years to be declared "proficient" and returned to the regular classroom.

In addition to being concerned for the ELL population who were disadvantaged by the "same test in English" regulation contained in NCLB, principals criticized the requirement that students with disabilities be tested at their grade level and not their ability level. Idaho legislation changed the percentage of special education students eligible to take an alternative assessment from 1% to 3% which was an improvement, but did not fully meet the needs of students. Principal Brown noted under NCLB "a student has to have an IQ of below 55 [normal range is 90–110] in order to get an alternative assessment which is ludicrous and conflicts with IDEA" [Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) 1991]. His concern was based upon whether the emphasis on test scores for special education students would result in those students being counseled into a non-inclusion home or school setting.

Creative Thinking on "How Best to Serve Students". Administrators sought strategies to provide for the education of high impact students (students reported in more than one category) in ways that would reduce the negative effect of failing to meet AYP. Under NCLB a school can ignore a student subgroup if the number of students is not statistically significant. States are empowered to determine the numbers which typically range between 30 and 50 (Pinzur 2003). In Adams School District the number was set at 34. Administrators used creative thinking when struggling over the question of whether to shift low-performing ELL students to their home schools. However, doing this would not produce sufficient numbers for a sub-group. Another option was to segregate all low-achieving students in one or two locations, reducing the total number of schools failing in the district. A district administrator concluded:

We have eleven elementary schools with ELL programs which allows us to centralize services, but this is complicated by the fact one of the subgroups in NCLB is limited English proficient (LEP) so when you group all those students together in a school they count, making it harder for the school to make AYP when the students are not really from that school ... we haven't

solved this issue yet. We've been searching for a location in which we might centralize services.

Connections with Family and Community

Each reauthorization of ESEA, has strengthened Section 1118 in NCLB which mandates parent involvement. To enhance student success, research-based requirements supporting active involvement by parents have been mandated. However, as Epstein (2005) notes these requirements are only attainable if school districts can mobilize the necessary financial and human capital resources. No Child Left Behind establishes the need for parent partnerships, two-way communications, opportunities to design and evaluate educational programs, and the ability to recommend changes for failing schools. School leaders, who have an equity agenda, understand parent–school–community collaboration is a critical component of effective leadership (see Henry 1996, *Parent–school collaboration* for ways to include parents in the educational process).

All six principals in this study stated the importance of strong school–family–community connections and identified ways to draw in families. For instance community programs and partnerships were established with AmeriCorps volunteers, foster grandparents, college students completing culture and diversity internships, the Black History museum, Operation School Bell (which provides clothing and books), community churches, local businesses, refugee groups and agencies (e.g., Agency for Americans and World Relief), police departments, and the YMCA. Principals were sensitive to the socioeconomic situations of parents. In an interview, Principal Kroll related how difficult it was for many parents in her school to meet the costs of “free” public schooling and that educators must be sensitive to the situations of families. She recalled, “One mother needed two dollars for a field trip so she donated her plasma to get the money.”

Parents in Adams School District were connected to schools in traditional ways, and all principals were making an attempt to accommodate linguistic diversity. As noted earlier, the school district had 2,200 ELL students speaking 84 different languages. In one school a Welcome sign was posted in numerous languages, and in other schools interpreters were provided for students whose primary language was Farsi, Dharsi, or Spanish. At the same time, the principals lack of training in languages (most had only one language, English) was a source of difficulty. “It’s very frustrating,” complained Principal Caruthers.

Principals relied on their ELL faculty, sometimes the only person of color in the school, to connect with the Hispanic community. Principal Sanders commented on her previous work at Wakefield Elementary:

I was very blessed my ELL teacher was Hispanic because she really opened the door. The parents felt they had a connection to the school. They knew she was an advocate for them. We did a parent night for our ELL families in Spanish and there was standing room only. Dads came as well as Moms.

These qualitative data show principals in this study attempted to manage testing accountability required by NCLB, while simultaneously taking into consideration

the change in community demographics and the shift of white families moving to a neighboring suburban school district. They attempted to meet the needs of students and testing accountability through the variety of strategies presented in this section.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed the extent to which six urban school principals and three district level administrators were focusing on the testing accountability of NCLB through a variety of approaches. The primary challenge was meeting the testing requirement. However, principals encountered difficulty determining how multicultural education could better connect students with schools to improve test scores. Principal Brown argued:

When a school is labeled “failing” because they did not make AYP, people are going to say, ‘Don’t send me to that school because it has a high population of kids who don’t speak English.’ The job is twice as hard and now I am labeled as having a failing school. It is such a huge pressure.

Principals consistently put time and energy into closing the achievement gaps with limited resources. They resented feeling threatened by NCLB law. Principal Sanders’ stated: “The State Department of Education is going to come in and take over if you are in a failing school. For heaven sakes if they know better than us and they have a better plan why not tell us now? Why are they waiting 3 years?”

No Child Left Behind was shown in this study to render some beneficial elements for improved learning outcomes in schools. It influenced administrators and their teachers to critically evaluate performance gaps between groups of students. Principal Sanders explains, “I don’t know if we would have pushed ourselves [to focus on the students left behind] had we not been forced to.”

However, NCLB also presented many challenges that need to be communicated in administrator preparation programs. Creating learning environments promoting equity and social justice was particularly problematic for the principals. Teaching to a test, repeat instruction and requiring memorization should not be considered a substitute for learning to work cooperatively in multicultural settings. Successful students need to be engaged in cooperative learning, self-directed learning, meta-cognition, planning, reasoning, and problem solving activities. Moreover, No Child Left Behind may be escalating problems in schools through some of the strategies discussed in this paper, including, but not limited to: (1) administrators and their teachers focusing on test scores rather than the student, and (2) helping primarily at-risk sub-populations in ways that foster the segregation and isolation of students who are linguistically, socio-economically and culturally diverse.

The study also contributes to discussion of improved leadership preparation and professional development. Given the experiences and concerns of principals in this study it follows that continued reforms are needed for NCLB, and perhaps more importantly, for the preparation of principals as multicultural leaders. Principals must understand, embrace, and model leadership that enables their staff to be more

student oriented, aware of the educational importance of cultural responsiveness and communication, and less consumed by institutional regulations.

We want to advance discussion of multicultural *leadership*, beyond instruction, and its importance in administrator preparation. Multicultural leaders encourage staff to be sensitive and knowledgeable about the communication styles, backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and learning needs of students and families. Ferguson (2001) notes that educators who devalue ethnic and cultural differences view their students as “culturally disadvantaged” simply because of their ethnicity, which has a devastating effect on students’ willingness to learn.

Administrators and their teachers need to spend energy creating high expectations for all students in educational environments that are multi-culturally enriched, not segregated. Evidence of the significance of teachers holding high expectations for students and appreciation for cultural diversity is reported in the literature and many more studies are needed that examine the effects of a multicultural school culture. Smith’s (2002) research of a bilingual education program in Tucson, Arizona demonstrated how test scores rose when faculty created an educational environment that broadened students’ bilingual and bi-literate competencies.

Recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse teachers, some of whom may already be committed to multicultural leadership through their own life experiences into the ranks of educational administrators has the potential to improve leadership in schools. In this study few administrators or teachers of color were employed by Adams School District. This finding parallels the trend nationwide. Principals relied heavily on their ELL faculty who were frequently the only teachers of color in the school. Brosnan (2002) asserts, “You can support students of color all you want with white teachers, but it’s pretty clear that they’ll have a stronger self-image, and are thus more likely to be good students and contributors to the community, if they see themselves reflected in the adults around them” (p. 7). School districts need to find ways to recruit and retain diverse faculty and administrators perhaps through funded grow-your-own programs that support personnel in their rise from para-professional to teacher to administrator.

When state curriculum is inadequate multi-culturally, principals who are instructional leaders can assist teachers by providing the necessary enrichment to ensure a multicultural curriculum. In the future, white teachers will be instructing an increasingly diverse student body, justifying the need for all educators to become multi-culturally knowledgeable to teach all students. Anderson’s (2006) study provides strategies for white educators to teach effectively students of color, and these findings need to be tested in other school settings.

It is critical for school districts to reverse the practice of “centralizing” or segregating diverse students into select programs or schools. Instead, district boundaries and policies should be in place to ensure students are enrolled in socio-economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse and integrated schools. Segregating students represents a loss to both white and minority students and families. All groups will suffer from the lack of opportunities to learn, appreciate, and communicate effectively with people who have different values, beliefs, and cultural practices, a necessity in today’s global economy.

Finally, the neglect of multicultural education in the six urban schools in this study suggests the perpetuation of an assimilation agenda, and ethnic and cultural discrimination. Multicultural education was relegated to marginal status in favor of a testing focus, and culturally and linguistically diverse students were effectively segregated. Raising test scores, however, rests on educators' ability to make education interesting to students and families and engage them in the educational process, which in turn, rests on effective communication. Thus, multicultural education represents a means to deliver a more relevant education for *all* students to be successful in our culturally diverse world, and a necessary condition for closing the achievement gap. The goal for every teacher, administrator and counselor should be to reach and teach every student. To accomplish this, teachers must see, view and understand that each student or groups of students are as equal and as important as those students who most resemble the teachers. Understanding ethnicity, race, culture, language, educational learning styles, communication and attitude would change the school climate and culture to be more inclusive and allow for greater success and an enriched education for all.

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