

No Child Left Behind: Changing a Child's Education for the Worse

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law in January of 2002 by President George W. Bush. Since then it has been causing school districts to change the way they educate their students. Many subjects that used to be included in a child's education are being cut back or even eliminated from the school day. This is to make more time for the subjects that are being assessed on the statewide standardized tests. Currently, math, reading, writing, and science (the newest edition) are being tested by the states. This means the majority of class time is being devoted to these subjects, and little or no time is being

spent on any other courses. Social studies, physical education, music and art are the subjects that are losing time in the classroom. These subjects that are being cut out of the students' education contain many benefits and skills that the students are no longer receiving. This lack of education is causing children to grow up underdeveloped and undereducated.

What is NCLB?

NCLB is a law that contains many components with its end goal being an improved education for all students. This includes the elimination of the achievement



gap between white and minority children. Public schools are required to test their students in math and reading by giving standard, statewide tests. This law also controls federal funding of the school districts. In order for the schools to receive federal funding, all of their teachers must be considered “highly qualified.” Also, districts must set a goal for their schools to have all of their students reach proficiency levels in math and reading by 2014. In the process of doing this, they must show adequate yearly progress (AYP). By law, schools that do not show AYP in two consecutive years must give parents the option to choose whether they want their children to attend their current school or switch to a different one. Overall, NCLB raises the accountability of teachers and schools, and it has an end goal of improving students’ educations.

Problems with NCLB

NCLB is altering the way schools around the United States are educating their students. The driving force behind the changes being made in the classrooms is the need to have all students at proficiency levels in math and reading by 2014. Along with this, AYP must also be shown. If schools do not meet these standards, they are subject to receive less funding and eventually may be taken over by the government. In order for these things not to happen, teachers are changing what they teach in order to cover the topics found on the state tests. Not only *what* they teach, but *how* they teach is changing. These changes are having negative effects on the development and learning ability of students. The subjects that are being have many developmental and educational benefits that children are no longer receiving.

Changes Being Made in the Classroom

Subjects such as social studies, art, music, and physical education are either being cut back or, in some cases, completely eliminated from the school day. This is so teachers have more time to spend on math and reading lessons. For example, after the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) writing assessment was taken, fifth grade classes in the Dallastown Area School District no longer have writing during the school day. Instead, the teachers spend

the extra time drilling math problems. The phrase “teaching to the test” has come about because of occurrences like this. Robert Schaeffer, the director of public education for FairTest (an educational organization dedicated to ending the misuse of standardized testing), puts it very well by saying, “Classes have become little more than test-prep factories.”

Subjects Being Left Behind

Social Studies, once a “core subject,” is being taught less in the elementary

What the Proponents of NCLB Say

- It has greatly improved the education of disabled students.
- It is now possible (because of the standardized tests) for the U.S. to track year-to-year progress of its school districts.
- Educators and administrators are able to observe what works best in schools for improving the education of the students.
- High standards and accountability are the answers to raising student performance.

classroom since NCLB was enacted. Elementary social studies curriculum includes topics in history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology. Some schools do not cover many social studies topics until high school, and an important knowledge

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Robert Schaeffer

base in these topics is being missed in the students’ education. Students are also missing out on an education in democracy. The problem with this is, once out in the real world, graduates will not be able to perform their civic duties, and without a sufficient background of democracy, culture, and



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politics, the upcoming generations will not be able to adequately uphold democracy as it is today. Being educated in the social studies curriculum will also give people the knowledge to bring about much needed social change. Overall, children are not receiving as much instruction in social studies as they used to, which could lead to less civic oriented adults and a bleaker future for everyone.

Physical education is also being cut back on during the school day. In general, physical activity benefits the body in many ways; it increases the amount of blood flowing to the brain, enhances circulation, and raises the level of endorphins. All of these benefits lead to reduced stressed, calm behavior, improved attitude, and a better mood which may help children improve their academics. Studies show that students participating in a physical education class at school have better concentration during regular class time, exhibit fewer disruptive actions, and obtain higher math, reading, and writing scores. Children are physically and psychologically healthier when they are physically active. Despite these facts, school districts are still not including physical education in the daily curriculum. Only eight percent of elementary schools provide daily physical education for their students. Also, in an age where childhood

obesity is becoming a major concern, schools should not be eliminating a class as important as physical education. Abandoning physical education courses has a negative effect on students' bodies and chances of doing well in the classroom.

School districts are also eliminating music from the school day. There is a lot of evidence to show that music education has a profound effect on students' education. First of all, learning music teaches self-discipline and other effective study habits that can carry over into the classroom and real world after graduation. Music has also been shown to increase intelligence. Sight reading and playing music increases brain activity. Also, learning to adjust tempo, rhythm, phrasing, and style trains the brain to organize and perform many tasks at once. It can increase a person's abstract reasoning skills which are useful in learning science and math. One study involving second graders used keyboard training and math software to advance math skills. Students who used both the keyboard and the math software performed twenty-seven percent better on math tests than children who only used the math software. Also, data from the United States Department of Education shows that students who participate in instrumental music for several years have much higher math proficiency levels by the time they graduate than those

Changes Since 2001-02 in Instructional Time for Various Elementary Schools				
Subject or Period	Avg. Total Instruction Time Pre-NCLB (Min./week)	Avg. Total Instruction Time Post NCLB (Min./week)	Avg. Decrease (Min./week)	Avg. Decrease as a Percentage of Total Instructional Time
Social Studies	239	164	76	32%
Art and Music	154	100	57	35%
Physical Education	115	75	40	35%
Recess	184	144	50	28%

who do not participate. When music is taken out of a child's education, the child is missing out on many skills.

Art is the last class that is receiving less attention since NCLB was enacted. Evidence is beginning to show that student achievement—especially that of disadvantaged students—is greatly affected by art education. Students, who used to struggle, found success through the arts. They went from being withdrawn and unruly to active participants in class. Students learn better when they get involved instead of just sitting and watching.



Photo from www.sarasota.k12.fl.us

Possible Solution to Combat NCLB Changes: Integration

Integration is a teaching technique that combines two or more subjects into one lesson. This can be done with two “core” subjects (reading, math, social studies, or science) or, more commonly, with a core and one of the arts (art or music). For example, students could design a quilt with each patch pertaining to a key concept of the Constitution. With integration, questions and topics are pursued more in depth and students are able to better understand the information. Also, because two subjects are being combined, teachers are able to cover more information (which is necessary in order to fit NCLB's tight schedule).

Overall Effect of NCLB

NCLB is causing teachers to limit the subjects being taught in the classroom in order to cover the topics on the standardized tests. The subjects that are not being taught contain valuable skills and information that are no longer reaching the students. Overall, NCLB is leading to students growing up undereducated and underdeveloped.

Information from this article came from the following sources: David Blades and George Richardson, Cassandra Cole, Paul Eggen and Donald Kauchak, Jennifer McMurrer, [ASD Online](#), [Wikipedia](#), Judith Pace, Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond, MENC: The National Association for Music Education, Margaret Spellings, Kathy Speregen, Kelly Virella, and Melody Wolfe.