4-17-2012

School Improvement Plans and Their Effect on Student Improvement: An Evaluation

Lauren M. Lewis

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS AND THEIR EFFECT ON STUDENT IMPROVEMENT: AN EVALUATION

by

Lauren M. Lewis

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts

Major: Political Science

The University of Memphis

May 2012

Dedication

To my parents, Don and Lisa Lewis, who instilled in me a love for reading, a thirst for knowledge and the ability to think for myself; for which I will be forever grateful.
"I'll love you forever; I'll like you for always…"

To Priscilla Rose
"You make me happy when skies are grey."

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Larsen-Price, my thesis advisor, for your guidance, insight and patience through this process. Thank you also to Dr. Groenendyk and Dr. Imig for your thought provoking questions and eagerness to help me improve.

Thank you Roxanne for going through this with me and therefore being able to share in the frustrations as well as the accomplishments. Thank you to Jack and Jay, for the high-fives, hugs, and words of encouragement. Thank you Erin for your sympathetic ear and words of wisdom.

Thank you to Kate, for putting up with me on the bad days, and helping me to celebrate the good. Thanks to my grandparents for always believing in me. Thanks to my siblings, my niece, and Charlie for making me laugh and keeping me sane.

Most of all, thank you to my parents, for your unwavering support, continued guidance and unquestioned love.

Abstract

Lewis, Lauren Michele. M.A. The University of Memphis. May 2012. School Improvement Plans And Their Effect On Student Improvement: An Evaluation. Major Professor: Dr. Heather Larsen-Price

During the more than 10 years that the Federal No Child Left Behind Legislation has been in effect, a plethora of research has been conducted on the design, the implementation and the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind, but there has been little to no research on School Improvement Plans, or their effectiveness. For the purposes of my research I focus on the corrective action portion of NCLB, specifically with regard to school improvement plans. I create a dataset with information collected for over 260 schools in the state of Illinois. I analyze student scores and determine that while School Improvement Plans do contribute to overall student improvement; it is not enough improvement to be able to make their AYP rates. The results of this study represent more research in the School Improvement Plan process. They also show that while SIPs are useful tools, the expectations of the state are unrealistic, and therefore progress is not appreciated the way it should be.

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Background	2
Hypothesis	19
Methodology	20
Data and Analysis	22
Discussion	27
Limitations	30
Implications	31
Conclusion	33
References	36
Appendices	
A: Tables	39
B: Figures	48

List of Tables

Table Page

1. Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 All Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math 39

2. Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Minority Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math 40

3. Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Students with Disabilities: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math 41

4. Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Economically Disadvantaged Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math 42

5A. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: All Students- Reading 43

5B. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: All Students- Math 43

6A. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Minority Students- Reading 44

6B. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Minority Students- Math 44

7A. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Students with Disabilities- Reading 45

7B. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Students with Disabilities- Math 45

8A. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Economically Disadvantaged Students- Reading 46

8B. Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Economically Disadvantaged Students- Math 46

9. The Impact of School Improvement status on Percentage of Students Who Meet Minimum Scores, Reading and Math 47

Introduction

According to Section 1116 of NCLB, schools who fail to meet Annual Yearly Progress for two consecutive years, shall, "not later than 3 months after being so identified, develop or revise a school plan, in consultation with parents, school staff, the local educational agency serving the school, and outside experts, for approval by such local educational agency. The school plan shall cover a 2-year period and incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research that will strengthen the core academic subjects in the school and address the specific academic issues that caused the school to be identified for school improvement." A plethora of research has been conducted on the design, the implementation and the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind, but there has been little to no research on School Improvement Plans, or their effectiveness. Because of this, it is difficult to tell if the SIPs, or the corrective action portion of NCLB as a whole, are having a positive impact on those schools which are struggling and need the most help. If not, then the planning and resources that go into this process are wasted, and should be used to help the children of these schools in more effective ways.

For the purposes of this study I add to the limited research by focusing on the corrective action portion of NCLB, specifically with regard to school improvement plans. My research addresses two questions: Are School Improvement Plans effective in helping schools to raise their percentage of students meeting minimum standards in reading and math? And, are SIPs helping schools to meet their Annual Yearly Progress rates?

Previous studies show some evidence that there is a positive relationship between SIPs and a school's academic performance (see Fernandez, 2011). I develop a data set containing School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and student performance information. Using an impact analysis approach, I conduct a statistical analysis, comparing SIPs and

student performance over a two-year time span. I utilize the same control variables as previous studies. These include; percentage of student population that is minority; percentage of students with disabilities; percentage who are economically disadvantaged; type of school (high or middle); and size of school (enrollment numbers).

I hypothesize that I will find that the existence of an SIP increases school performance but that despite this progress, schools are still not making their Annual Yearly Performance rates.

The results of this study have many important implications. First of all, it represents more research in the School Improvement Plan process, of which, there is little previous research. It also gives us insight into the utility of having many schools go through this intensive restructuring process. If I find that SIPs are not leading to any improvement then this is all a waste of time and resources, especially for those schools who are worst performing, and whose students need all the attention and resources they can get. If I find that SIPs are contributing to improvement but not enough to meet AYP, then perhaps the expectations of policymakers are flawed.

Background

Contrary to current policies, the history of education policy in this country started with a mostly hands-off approach by the federal government for most of the history of our educational history. For the most part, education policy was left to the states as was considered by policymakers to be successfully handled at that level. The civil rights movement and the war on poverty, however, brought an end to this thinking. This change in perspective inspired the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA established a federal role in education policy, but this role was very

limited and included mostly increased financial support for the schooling of disadvantaged students. The overall story of the 1960s and 1970s for federal education policy was one of expanded national intervention in schools, but just in so far as it ensured compliance with integration mandates and programs for small groups of disadvantaged students (McGuinn, 2006).

The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk,* was therefore pretty shocking to many people, and brought about increased attention to education. The report highlighted the decline of public education and its impact on the country's economic competitiveness. During this time; however, President Reagan and the Republican Party were attempting to reduce federal role in education. Their attempts however, actually backfired. All it succeeded in doing was drawing media coverage to education and in ensuring that the media would general portray schools in a negative light. This increased attention would usher in a new era of federal school politics and policymaking in the 1990s (McGuinn, 2006).

The presidency of George Bush changed the Republican stand on the federal government's role in education. While his presidency did not see any major education reform, it did help to legitimize the idea that the country's historically decentralized public schools needed national leadership to help them improve. He sought to use federal influence to reform public schools and improve student performance (McGuinn, 2006).

Clinton's rhetoric regarding the need for a strong federal role in education during his 1992 campaign, and the legislative enactments of the first two years of his administration, helped to further nationalize politics and policymaking in education. In particular, "his linking of education to economic growth established strong and publicly accessible rationale for broader federal involvement in school reform efforts" (McGuinn,

2006). Clinton capitalized on the increasing salience of the education issue with the public and Democratic control to gain passage of two major reform bills-- Goals 2000 and the Improving America's Schools Act, along with a number of smaller bills, such as the Head Start reauthorization, the School to Work Opportunity Act and the Safe Schools Act (McGuinn, 2006).

Overall President Clinton and the Democrats had won a decisive victory in the rhetorical war over education by convincing citizens of the need for expanded federal spending and leadership, despite a concerted effort by some in the Republican party to pull back on the federal government's role in education, which resulted in Republicans dropping their proposal for decreasing in federal spending in education (McGuinn, 2006).

All of this history gets us to George W. Bush's presidency, during which there was a policy window opened in which the time was right for proponents of educational policy to be heard. This political maneuvering led to No Child Left Behind (McGuinn, 2006). The passing of this legislation is the perfect example of Kingdon's policy streams theory. This theory explains that policy streams consist of three elements: the national mood, pressure group campaigns and administrative of legislative turnover. National mood represents the thought that a pretty good amount of people in a given country tend to think along common lines and the mood swings from time to time. The government can monitor the mood and act to promote certain items on their agenda based on changes. Politicians can also look to the interest groups as indicators of consensus or dissent in the broader public arena. Lastly, influxes of new members of Congress that have similar ideologies or turnover of key personnel in governmental agencies can have a significant influence on policies (Zahariadis, 1999).

Choices are made when the three streams are couples or joined together at critical moments in time, called policy windows. These windows are opened by compelling problems or by events in the political stream. Coupling takes place during open windows when certain policy makers happen to be in power. These policymakers are called policy entrepreneurs. In other words, policy entrepreneurs are individuals or corporate actors who attempt to couple the three streams. When windows open, they must immediately seize the opportunity to initiate action. Otherwise, the opportunity is lost and the policy entrepreneur must wait for the next one to come along (Zahariadis, 1999).

No Child Left Behind was approved with impressive bipartisan support, and with an overwhelming majority. The final version of this bill was in every way a compromise. There was plenty in the bill to be liked, or disliked, by either party. As former House Education Committee coordinator and Department of Education congressional liaison Vic Klatt said; "The only way that a bill like NCLB could have pass was if a Republican president support it. There was a lot of stuff in that bill that congressional Republicans would not have put up with under Bill Clinton. Pretty much everybody voted for the NCLB in the end- most people who voted against it were Republican conservatives. This was a unique period of time where you had a new president with a fairly strong mandate on education and there were a few people on the Democratic side who were willing to lead on this and take some flak for it. They thought it was in their best interest to get a bill, and they were willing to take on the unions and some of the education groups in town" (McGuinn, 2006).

In the case of the final bill, both sides were forced to make concessions. At the heart of NCLB was a trade-off, school districts had to face prescriptive new mandates,

but they also saw an option for flexibility in how they used increased federal funding (McGuinn, 2006).

The passing of NCLB meant the implementation of many requirements for states and school districts. The most important of these was the annual testing requirement. By the 2005-2006 school year, states had to begin administering annual, statewide assessments in reading and mathematics for grade 3-8. States could select and design their own assessments, but the tests have to be aligned with state academic standards. By 2007-2008 states had to implement science assessments to be administered once during each of the three levels of K-12 education: elementary, middle, and high school. A sample of forth and eighth graders in each state must participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and math every other year to provide a point of comparison for the state's results on its own tests. Test results must include individual student scores and be reported by race, income level, and other categories to measure, not just overall trends but also, gaps between and progress of, various subgroups (McGuinn, 2006).

States are also supposed to attain academic proficiency for all students within 12 years of the law being signed, so by 2014. In order to get to that point, states had to set a minimum performance threshold based on the lowest-achieving demographic subgroup, or the lowest achieving school in the district, whichever is highest. Each state must raise the level of proficiency gradually, all leading up to the 2014 deadline (McGuinn, 2006).

Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, each state had to provide annual report cards with a range of information, including statewide student-achievement data broken down by subgroup and information on the performance of school districts in

making adequate yearly progress. Districts must also provide similar report cards, including district wide and school by school data (McGuinn, 2006).

All teachers hired under Title I, beginning in 2002-2003, had to be "highly qualified." "Highly qualified" means that a teacher has been certified under or licensed by a state, and has demonstrated a high level of competency in the subject that he or she teaches. By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, each public school teacher had to be highly qualified (McGuinn, 2006).

Authorized at $300 million in 2002, NCLB also provided aid to help states and localities support charter schools, including money to help with the planning and design of charter schools, the evaluation of their effectiveness, and facilities costs (McGuinn, 2006).

The most salient piece of this bill for the purposes of this study is the section devoted to corrective action of schools and districts. In this section, schools are identified for school improvement based on whether the school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as is designated by the state's accountability plan. AYP "represents the annual academic performance targets in reading and math that the State, school districts, and schools must reach to be considered on track for 100% proficiency by school year 2013-14" (Illinois State Board of Ed.). These targets represent a specific percentage of students who are meeting or exceeding the minimum standard scores for tests in these subjects. For example, in Illinois, in 2004, AYP was set at 40%, so, 40% of all students needed to meet or exceed minimum scores for reading and math. Because the goal of NCLB is for all students to reach proficiency or to have 100% of students meeting or exceeding these minimum scores by 2014, the AYP rates must increase every year.

Therefore, to continue my previous example, in Illinois in 2006, AYP is set at 47.5%, so 47.5% of all students need to meet or exceed minimum scores for reading and math by 2006. AYP for 2009 is 70%, which is an increase of 22.5% over three years. Again, by 2014 AYP is set at 100%. Figure 1, taken from the Illinois State Board of Education website, shows the increases in AYP over the 12 years of the legislation.

A school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years must be identified for school improvement. Once a school is identified for school improvement, the district must inform parents and the public in an easy to understand format, preferably in a language they understand. The district must also provide school choice to students by the first day of school year following identification. The school must also put together a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and submit it to the district. The district must provide technical assistance to the school in developing and implementing the SIP. Once the school has submitted an SIP to the district, it must conduct a peer review process, assist the school in revising the plan and approve it within 45 days of receipt (School Improvement, 2007).

The technical assistance which the school is entitled to includes; helping to analyze data, identifying areas that need attention at the school, implementing a parental involvement program, providing professional development, identifying and implementing scientifically based instructional strategies and methods, and budgeting (School Improvement, 2007).

In writing a School Improvement Plan, the school has the responsibly to provide a plan for how to improve the school in a two-year time frame. The plan should include ways to improve academics, involve parents, use 10% of its Title I funds for professional

development, notify parents, institute a teacher mentoring program and incorporate activities outside of the normal school day. The plan must include strategies based on scientifically based research. The plan must also specify the school, district, and state roles in the school improvement process. Once a school district approves the plan, the school must put it into practice the first day of the school year following implementation (School Improvement, 2007).

If the school fails to make AYP for two more years, they move into the "Corrective Action" stage. At this point the law requires the school to examine and reform the way it delivers core instruction to all students. Specifically, schools are given the following options: replace school staff that are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress, institute and fully implement a new curriculum based on state standards and provide appropriate professional development for all relevant staff, significantly decrease management authority at the school level, appoint an outside expert to advise the school on its progress toward making adequate yearly progress, based on its school plan, or extend the school day or school year. If it fails to make AYP for an additional two years, then they are designated for restructuring. The restructuring options in the law are: reopening the school as a public charter school, replacing all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal) who are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress, entering into a contract with an entity, such as a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the public school, turning the operation of the school over to the State Educational Agency, if permitted under State law and agreed to by the State, or "any other major restructuring" of the school's governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms, such as

significant changes in the school's staffing and governance, to improve student academic achievement in the school and that has substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress (ICW, 2011).

There has been much research done on the designing, implementing and effectiveness of No Child Left Behind. An often sighted work is a study done by Belfanz, Legters, West and Weber called, "Are NCLB's Measure, Incentives, and Improvement Strategies the Right Ones for the Nation's Low-Performing High Schools," and is a two part study that aims at understanding the utility of NCLB. They begin by using quantitative data to identify systemic ways in which low performing high schools that make AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) differ from low performing high schools that do not make AYP. They then conducted more detailed case studies of a subset of low performing high schools to more fully address the extent to which it is possible to say that low performing high schools that make AYP are performing better or improving faster than are low performing high schools that are not making AYP. Based on the first portion, the authors found that there are some characteristics that alter the chances that a low performing high school will make AYP. Low performing high schools that made AYP are more than likely smaller, better resourced, have smaller concentrations of minority students, are predominately located in Southern states and/or rural regions of the nation, are more homogenous (so they have less subgroups to report scores for and therefore less NCLB improvement pressures), and tend to be in states in which it appeared easier to reach required proficiency levels in the years previous. One of the main takeaways from this article is that individual states' standards factor hugely into consideration here. So much so that it can't be assumed that those schools failing to meet

AYP are really progressing at a slower rate than those that are, they could just be in a state which made reaching goals tougher (Belfanz et al., 2007).

The second portion of the research, the case studies, found two practices which stood out in helping schools in certain states make AYP that had nothing to do with any kind of overall education progress for those schools. First, that a number of states test in the 11th and 12th grades and have minimal gradual rate levels or gain goals. In these scenarios, high schools with low graduation rates and minimal or no improvement can make AYP by improving the achievement levels of only the students who make it to the 11th or 12th grade. A second practice that came to their attention was that each state sets its own baseline from which high schools are supposed to progress until 100% of students demonstrate proficiency on state tests. In sum, these authors stated that "problems with the implementation of the NCLB accountability framework for high schools are not limited to making it impossible for the public at large to know if low performing high schools are improving. Even more problematically, these problems encourage teachers and administrators in low performing schools to act in ways that are counterproductive to the intent of the law (Belfanz et al., 2007).

The authors of "Gauging Growth" bring to light the large amount of discrepancies between the states in terms of their standards for meeting NCLB regulations. Each state had the opportunity to select their yearly goals, and though the end goal was 100% proficiency for all students by 2014, each state has had very different ways of measuring their success at getting to these numbers. Therefore, the authors of Gauging Growth determined that it was not legitimate to rely on state testing programs and the jagged trend lines that stem from their results. Instead Fuller et. al relied on results from the

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) which has been given since the seventies. The authors of this article (written in 2007) found that achievement gains, caused by some policy mix, rooted in state-led accountability efforts, appears to have worked by the late 1990s, however, growth flattened over the 3 years after the enactment of NCLB. When it comes to narrowing achievement gaps, the historical patterns are similar. For reading, ethnic gaps on the NAEP closed steadily from the early 70s until 1992, then widened in 94, then narrowed through 2002, but no further narrowing has occurred since 2002. Overall, this article details how state results have exaggerated the percentage of students who are deemed proficient or above in reading and math, when compared to NAEP results (Fuller, Wright, Gesicki & Kang, 2007).

In his study, "No Child Left Behind: An Illogical Accountability Model," Donald Orlich began with some interesting facts about the status of America's educational system, as it compares to other nations. The results of several international studies place the US much higher than is conventionally known. The author quotes David C. Berliner who said that "The fundamental premise underlying the legislation known as the No Child Left Behind act is that the public schools on the US are failing. But that is a half-truth, at best." The author then goes on to list the staggering cost of administering high stakes tests to students, as is required by NCLB, which certainly takes away from money that could be spent on instruction and supplemental education for those struggling students. The conclusions of this article are harsh, but realistic, and though it was written in 2004 probably very much describe many of the reasons why NCLB has continued to fail. The author concludes that at the federal level there is a need to examine the practicality, reasonableness and statistical logic of setting adequate yearly progress

targets. Also that the NCLB underlying accountability assumptions appear to be invalid; there are not adequate fiscal, human and social resources to create fifty state systems of education that ensure 100% of all students passing one high stakes test (Orlich, 2004).

The article, "Failing Our Children," also presents false assumptions that NCLB is based on. The most serious of these assumptions is that boosting standardized test scores should be the primary goals of schools, and that because poor teaching is the primary cause of unsatisfactory student performance, schools can best be improved by threats and sanctions. The article goes on to parse out these fundamental flaws in the assumptions, and to ultimately suggest better ways of handling the educational progress in this country. According to the authors of this article, NCLB was basically set up to fail, and policymakers should begin the process of correcting this problem by listening to educators, parents and community people who advocate for high quality education, not test preparation, for the children (Guisbond & Neill, 2004).

Most recent research has focused on the closing of the achievement gap, which was one of the cornerstones of No Child Left Behind. In "Closing the Achievement Gap for Economically Disadvantaged Students" the authors sought to answer policy questions about improvement in student achievement for economically disadvantaged students since the enactment of NCLB. This study was clear in its quantitative analysis, and unique in the fact that it measured progress over all the states. Overall, the authors found that most states made significant gains in the student achievement performance of economically disadvantaged students. However, it is also the case that in most states, according to this research, achievement scores of all students increased. Unfortunately, achievement gaps continue to persist in all states for economically disadvantaged

students and a few states do not show significant improvement in economically disadvantaged achievement. Their data do show overall positive improvement, though small, in student achievement for one of the target populations of students for NCLB (Blank, 2011).

In "Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude," Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker and Durant (2011) explore the possibility that in an attempt to shrink the achievement gaps that exist in this country, whether those be racially divided or economically divided, the implementation of this policy has led to the subsequent ignoring, or driving funds away from, those who are the strongest students. The authors of this study found that while a majority of the so called "high flyers" did maintain their status over time, a substantial amount of them "lost altitude." However, they also found that most of these decenders did not fall very far. Lastly, and probably most concerning, the authors found that high flyers grew academically at similar rates to low and middle achievers in math, but grew at slight slower rates that low and middle achievers in reading. The authors also interestingly found that school poverty was not a strong predictor of student progress. While high achievers in high poverty schools grew slightly less than those in low poverty schools, the difference was marginal. The overall conclusion of the authors here was that "if we are truly serious about providing excellence in education for all students, then we should consider changing out accountability systems to place emphasis on the growth of the low, middle, and high achieving students alike" (Xiang et al., 2011).

As previously stated, for the purposes of my research I will be focusing on the corrective action portion of NCLB, specifically with regard to school improvement plans.

There has been extensive research on No Child Left Behind as I have shown, but there has been little to no research on School Improvement Plans, or their effectiveness.

As outlined above, according to Section 1116 of NCLB, schools who fail to meet Annual Yearly Progress for two consecutive years, must, within three months after being identified, develop or revise a school plan which places emphasis on involvement by teachers, parents, and other staff. The school plan shall cover a 2-year period and incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research that will strengthen the core academic subjects in the school and address the specific academic issues that caused the school to be identified for school improvement. It must show that the school will spend at least 10% of its funding each year for providing to the school's teachers and principal high-quality professional development that directly addresses the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified for school improvement; therefore meeting the requirements for professional development activities. It will establish specific annual, measurable objectives for continuous and substantial progress by each group of subgroup students, that will ensure that all such groups of students will, in accordance with adequate yearly progress as, meet the state's proficient level of achievement on the state academic assessment not later than 2014. The plan will describe how the school will provide written notice about the identification to parents of each student enrolled in such school, in a format and in a language that the parents can understand and include strategies to promote effective parental involvement in the school. Lastly, it will incorporate, as appropriate, activities before school, after school, during the summer, and during any extension of the school year; and incorporate a teacher mentoring program (School Improvement, 2007).

For as much research has been done on NCLB over all, there has been very little done in terms of research to determine if SIPs are effective in turning school achievement rates around, and if so, what makes a plan successful. In this way, there is no real way of knowing whether this step in the NCLB process is actually making a difference in the educations of our youth, or just putting a temporary Band-Aid on the problem NCLB seems to have failed at addressing, in general.

There are two studies that I have found which have proven to be helpful and have given me insight into SIPs. The first is a study done by Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Midwest. The study was done at the request of several educational administrators in the Midwest region, and addresses several key questions, basically centered on how well school improvement plans comply with NCLB regulations requiring parent involvement and extended learning activities. To examine these questions, this study reviews SIPs for five states in the Midwest; Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Plans were obtained for 93% of the schools identified as in need of improvement. The authors then coded parent involvement and extended learning plans by categories based on the language of NCLB, also utilizing information found in a similar study done in the Northwest Region (Kochankek, Wraight, Wan, Nylen, & Rodriguez, 2011).

The study found that almost 90% of the plans included plans to notify parents of the school's improvement plan status, parents' rights, or both; 57% reported having involved parents in developing or approving the plans and 91% included at least one potentially effective parent involvement activity as required under NCLB. Very few plans (15%) included activities that involved parents in decision-making, but 43% of

plans included advisory activities for parents. Across all 5 states, about half the schools whose plans were reviewed served English language learner students. Among them, only half reported presenting information to parents in a language other than English. About 70% of school improvement plans included at least one extended learning activity (Kochankek et al., 2011).

This study was focused on the plans that schools were presenting. It did not, however, go any further to decide whether these plans were implemented in the way that they were written. Further, this was not a study to discover the usefulness of SIPs in general, or in utilizing parent involvement and/or extended learning activities. The authors did hope, however, that policymakers could use this analysis to understand any potential mismatches between federal regulations and what schools plans to implement.

The most relevant article on SIP success is Evaluating School Improvement Plans and their Effect on Academic Performance by Kenneth E. Fernandez. The author set out to study SIPs and found very little to no studies that empirically examine their effectiveness. He does begin with a helpful review of literature on planning activities of organizations and companies in general, though there is still little consensus on whether or not such formal planning is even effective. In fact, some studies have even suggested that formal planning may be a waste of time and resources (Fernandez, 2011).

Fernandez's study in particular explores the relationship between the quality of SIPs and school performance using a unique data set that he developed based on his unique access to a local school district. He uses the Clark County School District (CCSD), which is the fifth largest school district in the nation. The author uses a scoring rubric to determine the quality of SIPs and compares them to provided school data on

student performance in the areas of reading and math. The author uses OLS regression, and controls for percentage of minority students, free lunch program participants, limited English proficiency, percentage of IEPs, enrollment numbers, schooling level, teacher quality and the transient populations (Fernandez, 2011).

The results of this study provide some evidence that there is a positive relationship between the quality of strategic plans (like an SIP) and a school's academic performance. This holds true even when controlling for various other factors. It was noted, however, that although the relationship was consistent and statistically significant, the coefficient was not exceptionally large. The authors also were sure to point out that correlation does not prove causation. The association between SIP quality and school performance could be tapping into some other institutional dynamics other than SIPs as well (Fernandez, 2011).

Overall, the takeaways from this study are quite important. It represents an important step in investigating the effectiveness of SIPs in quantitative ways that had not been done before. It also sheds light onto the fact that, though potentially minimal, high quality SIPs represent some positive attribute of a school that is associated with its performance.

I would like to contribute to the scant amount of research that has been done on SIPs and their effectiveness. Through my research, I will attempt to answer these questions: Are School Improvement Plans effective in raising student test scores? And are School Improvement Plans effective in helping schools to meet their Annual Yearly Progress rates?

Hypotheses

H1:

School Improvement Plans are effective in raising student test scores.

School Improvement Plans include ways to improve academics, involve parents, use 10% of its Title I funds for professional development, notify parents, institute a teacher mentoring program and incorporate activities outside of the normal school day. The plan must include strategies based on scientifically based research. I believe that, through this strategic planning, and a more intense focus on certain scientifically supported areas of school success, via SIPs, schools will see an increase in the number of students who are able to meet the minimum standard scores for both Math and Reading.

H2:

SIPs do not help enough for these schools to meet their AYPs.

Despite the fact that I believe we will see improvement in the percentage of students who are proficient in these subjects, I posit that we will not see an increase in the number of schools which able to meet their Annual Yearly Progress rates. This is because the AYP goals are increasing every year, as required by No Child Left Behind, and as set by the states, in order to reach goal of 100% proficiency by 2014. Due to this continuous increase, it becomes progressively more difficult to make AYP, and once a school fails to make their numbers for one year, they are not only trying to reach those original numbers for the next year, they then have to make even more progress to make the increased goal for that year.

Methodology

Historically, researchers have used many different theories to explain public policy. The field itself has often struggled to establish more than a very general definition. One that I think is particularly accurate, though admittedly broad, asserts that policy is "the actions, objectives, and pronouncements of governments on particular matters, the steps they take (or fail to take) to implement them, and the explanations they give for what happens (or does not happen)" (Wilson, 2006, p. 154). Another more narrow definition effectively defines public policy as "a purposive course of action or inaction undertaken by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern" (Anderson, 1994, p. 5).

One positive result of this lack of a formal definition, is that it allows the various subfields within policy to adopt their own definitions, without much regard for what other policy scholars in other subfields might be studying, or why. It also serves to allow policy scholars more freedom, to use whatever research method is most appropriate for what they are studying at the time.

The three main orientations that have developed under the general umbrella of policy studies are; policy (or program) evaluation, policy analysis, and policy process. Policy evaluation attempts to find out what has been done. It seeks to systematically assess "the consequences of what governments do and say" (Dubnik & Bardes, 1983, p. 203). It tries to identify and isolate a causal relationship between a policy or program and an outcome of interest (Smith & Larimer, 2009, p. 5). Policy analysis on the other hand, tries to determine what to do in the first place. The object is to determine the best policy for public authorities to adopt to address a given problem or issue of concern. This often

centers on both efficiency and effectiveness of a proposed solution. Lastly, policy process research centers on the how and why of policymaking. Researchers try to find out "why governments pay attention to some problems and note others, why policy changes or remains stable across time, and where policy comes from (Smith & Larimer, 2009, p. 6).

For the purposes of this research, I employed the policy (or program) evaluation framework of analysis. It was my goal to determine whether School Improvement Plans, a piece of the No Child Left Behind legislation, can be linked to increased levels of success in test scores, and/or whether or not a school met their Annual Yearly Progress rates.

Program (or policy) evaluation has a similar definitional problem as the field of policy studies in general. Program evaluation, therefore, has been formally defined in several different ways. What all these definitions have in common, though, and what conceptually separates program evaluation from other types of policy studies, is "its focus on the consequences of actually initiating a public policy, or program, and/or the judgment of the consequences based on some normative yardstick" (Smith & Larimer, 2009, p. 132).

Additionally, although there is some conceptual commonalities at the core of program evaluation, it is also somewhat of a malleable concept, with several different types of approaches to studying the field. The three primary approaches include; descriptive analysis approach, which seeks to describe goals, processes and outcomes, rather than form judgments about them. The second approach is normative; normative evaluation attempt to understand the worth of what is being done; for example, "Is this

goal realistic? Does the policy advance socially desirable goals?" (Smith & Larimer, 2009, p. 137). Finally, there is the impact analysis approach, which focuses on the outcome of a policy, and attempts to understand whether and to what extent a policy achieved its desired goals, and how much of any possible variation can be attributed to the outcome of policy.

For this research I employed impact analysis in order to understand the outcome of the School Improvement Plan section of the legislation. The main challenge with impact analysis is to find a counterfactual to compare results to. The researcher strives to find a counterfactual that is equivalent in all aspects to the resultant except for the presence of the public policy or program. There are three different types of research designs that researchers can use to achieve this end. Here, I used a quasi-experimental design, as it would have been impossible to arrange for a full blown experiment, with a control group and experimental group, because as mentioned previously, all schools which do not make their annual percentage rates are mandated by law to participate in school improvement planning. The type of quasi-experimental design that I employed for this research is a version of a time series analysis, which, at a base level, is essentially a before and after comparison.

Data and Analysis

This study utilized a unique dataset, created and collected for this project. The information comes from the Illinois State Board of Education website, though the Division of Student Assessment, which makes publically available yearly eReport Cards for every school and district in the state. I collected information from a random sample of 264 of the 700+ schools which were put into School Improvement Status following

testing in the 2009 school year. The information collected from these report cards includes; percentage of all students who met the minimum standards in reading, and whether this number was enough for the school to meet their Annual Yearly Progress goals; percentage of all students who met the minimum standards in math, and whether this number was enough for the school to meet their AYP goals; percentage of minority students who met the minimum standards for reading and math, and whether this was enough for their AYP goals; percentage of students with disabilities who met the minimum standards for reading and math, and whether this was enough for their AYP goals; and finally, percentage of economically disadvantaged students who met the minimum standards for reading and math, and whether this was enough for their AYP goals. This information was collected for both 2009, before these schools put into effect their School Improvement Plans, and for 2011, after the two-year plan had been executed. I also collected additional information from each school, for control purposes. This included percentage of student body that are a minority, type (or level) of school, i.e., High School, Middle, or Elementary), total enrollment numbers, low income rates, limited English proficiency rates, and student mobility rates. This information is important to control for because of the 2007 study done by the Government Accountability Office, which found that when compared to all other Title I schools, those in corrective action and restructuring served more than twice as many racial or ethnic minority students—96 % compared to 37 %—and a higher percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged—83 percent compared to 54 percent. More than twice as many of these schools served middle school students as compared to all other Title I schools (GAO, 2007).

I began with a basic t-test means comparison of the scores variables, comparing the percentage of students who met the minimum standards in 2009 to the percentage who met these standards in 2011. For the AYP indicators I was dealing with nominal variables (namely, was there a School Improvement Plan in effect, Yes or No; and, did this group of students make their Annual Yearly Progress rates, Yes or No), therefore, I did a cross tabulation and chi squared test of independence, in order to compare the two years this way. Here I compared whether schools made their AYP numbers without a SIP, versus when they did. Finally, I performed a regression analysis in order to more thoroughly understand the effect of School Improvement Plans on percentage of students who met minimum standards. I utilized my control variables here, in order to understand whether other factors contributed to success or failure as well.

The most critical value, as I see it, is the measure of the student population as a whole, as the primary goal of the legislation is to raise academic achievement in general. I will, however, mention other reported subgroups, because another important part of NCLB involves the closing of the achievement gap.

The first comparison I did was the percentage of all students meeting the minimum standards for reading, between 2009 and 2011, and I find that on average this percentage increased from 54.91 to 57.27. This is consistent with my first hypothesis (see Table 1).

At the same time, I also find, via the crosstab comparison, that the percentage of schools making their Annual Yearly Progress rates decrease from 20.45 in 2009, to only 2.27 in 2011, after a two year plan had been in place.. This finding supports my second hypothesis.

The percentage of all students meeting the minimum standards for math also increased, from 64.42 in 2009 to 67.68 on 2011. Percentage of schools making AYP, however, decreased during that time, from 60.98 to 23.48. Again these findings support both of my hypotheses.

In terms of the subcategories that I mentioned, I have more mixed results. In all categories, I find an increase in percentage of students meeting the minimum standards for both math and reading. Percentage of minority students meeting standards for reading increased from 50.03 to 54.26 and from 61.95 to 66.27 in math.

Percentage of students with disabilities meeting standards for reading increased from 28.11 to 29.14 and from 36.1 to 38.51 in math.

Lastly, percentage of low income students meeting standards increased from 50.83 to 54.19 and from 62.14 to 65.97 in math.

My second hypothesis, however, receives less support. As presented in Tables 6A and 6B, the percentage of schools making AYP for minority students increased from 44.14 to 57.92 in reading, but decreased from 57.92 to 55.66 in math.

Percentage of schools making AYP for students with disabilities increased in reading, from 22.97 to 26.67, but decreased in math, from 28.0 to 25.0.

Again, percentage of schools making AYP for low income students increase in reading, from 42.91 to 54.03, but decreased in math, from 68.7 to 51.61. (See Tables 2-8 for more information).

More testing should be done to determine why results are so different between the reading and math categories here.

I also ran a regression analysis to more completely understand the effect of School Improvement Plans on the percentage of students meeting minimum standards. I utilized the control variables that had been collected for each school in order to more fully understand potential causation. The full results can be found in Table 9. Notably, even when controlling for important socioeconomic characteristics of each school, spending the two years with an SIP was positively related to school improvement in math and reading scores and statistically significant. Although being in school improvement status seemed to have less strong of a relationship with school reading scores, the relationship was still statistically significant at the .05 level and in the hypothesized direction.

Some of the other control variables were found to be statistically significant as well, all of which had a negative relationship with scores. However, many of them were only related to very small decreases. The only other factor which I found to be heavily related to school improvement was type of school, which had a negative relationship with improvement. This means that as the level of schooling gets higher, the less improvement is found. This finding is similar to that found by Kevin Fernandez in his study of School Improvement Plans. It is also supported by other studies which have found similar declines in student achievement when students transition from elementary school to middle or high school (e.g., Alspaugh, 1998; Rosenblatt & Elias, 2008). The literature on middle and high schools suggest that these types of schools have more complex organizational structures (i.e., departments) and cultures that may make implementation of school improvements strategies more difficult (Little, 2002; McLaughlin, 1993; Siskin, 1991; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994).

Discussion

Based on the data presented, it seems that my hypothesis about School Improvement Plans helping schools to raise their percentage of all students meeting minimum standards is supported. I found evidence for this assumption, even when taking into consideration other variables which are commonly seen as affecting school outcomes. I would also say that my second hypothesis, about SIPs not ultimately helping schools to make their Annual Yearly Progress goals, is supported by the data as well, though with a bit more hesitation. As previously mentioned, this is true for the general population in both math and reading, and for all the tested subgroups for math. Even though I did not find consistent results with reading, it should be noted that schools need to make their AYP goals in both subjects for all subcategories in order to be removed from School Improvement Status, so finding that there is a slight increase in making AYP for reading, despite the decrease in math does not negate my overall point.

My hypotheses are further supported by the fact that there are an ever increasing number of schools in Illinois who are not making their AYP numbers, and who are being placed in School Improvement Status. The difference in the number of schools in School Improvement status during the time period studied is staggering. In 2009, out of 2,526 Title 1 schools 721 schools or 18.4% (of all the schools) were in Federal School Improvement Status. In 2011, out of 2,525 Title I schools, 1,240 schools or 31.8% (of all the schools) are in Federal School Improvement Status. That is an increase of 13.4%, or 519 schools in two years. If School Improvement plans were working the way they are supposed to, this kind of increase would not be happening. This is because schools would be taken out of this status as other schools are being put on. This is, obviously, not

the case. Of the random sample of 264 schools in my dataset, I found only 2 schools which did not meet AYP goals in 2009, but were meeting AYP in all areas by 2011. That is to say, that 0.0076% of schools in this dataset made enough of an improvement to meet their goals and be moved off of School Improvement Status.

It is clear, then, that as a state Illinois is not going to reach the initial goal of all students reaching academic proficiency by 2014. In fact, when looking at the state e-report card, which gives information about all the students in the state, there is further evidence of this inevitable conclusion. In 2009, in the overall student population, the percentage of students meeting the minimum requirement was high enough to make AYP in both reading and math. Additionally, all other subgroups were meeting AYP except; black students (reading and math), Hispanic students (reading), students with Limited English Proficiency and with disabilities (reading and math), and economically disadvantaged students (reading). By 2011, the overall student population no longer was meeting their AYP goals, nor were white students (reading), black students (reading and math), Hispanic students (reading and math), Native American students (reading and math), mixed race students (reading and math), Limited English Proficiency students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students (reading and math). Though I cannot say with certainty, I believe that many other states are in similar situations. That 2014 deadline is rapidly approaching, and instead of having fewer and fewer schools and groups of students unable to meet AYP standards, we have more.

There is a pretty specific reason why this is happening, and it has to do with the way that these Annual Yearly Progress Rates are being decided. At the beginning of this No Child Left Behind process, states had to set a minimum performance threshold based

on the lowest-achieving demographic subgroup, or the lowest achieving school in the district, whichever was highest. Each state must raise the level of proficiency gradually, all leading up to the 2014 deadline. This is why, despite the fact that schools are often making progress (sometimes minimal, but progress all the same) with the help of a School Improvement Plan, they are still not meeting their AYP goals. It is because these goals have been raised, and are continuing to rise every year until 2014. In this way, it seems almost impossible for a school to get out of School Improvement Status once they are in it, because not only do they have to make up the ground they lost in the first place, they also have to make additional progress in order to get to the new, higher, goals. This is evident in the State of Illinois eReport cards from 2009 and 2011. In 2009, the percentage of the overall student population meeting minimum standards was about 75% for reading, and about 80% for math. These numbers were high enough to meet AYP that year. In 2011, on the other hand, the percentages remained about the same; however, they were no longer high enough to meet the AYP rates for that year. Now the overall population is not meeting AYP for 2011 (as well as many other subgroups, as mentioned above.)

Another important goal of the legislation was to close the achievement gap between students in the majority and those in minority subgroups. This goal is not being realized either, as all subgroups other than Asian students consistently have a lower percentage of students meeting minimum standards than white students. Additionally, AYP rates for subgroups are lower than the standards for white students, and the general population, to begin with.

Limitations

As all research has its limitations, so too does this study. While I believe I have shown a positive relationship between School Improvement Plans and increases in percentages of students in given populations who meet minimum standards, I cannot say for certainty that these SIPs are causing this increase. There is always the chance that the association between SIPs and school performance may be tapping into some other institutional dynamics other than the SIPs actually increasing student performance.

Additionally, my analysis here treated School Improvement Plans as if they are all equal, which they are certainly not. Kevin Fernandez's article did an excellent job of investigating whether the quality of the SIP itself had an effect on student improvements. This is, perhaps, the direction that this study could take in the future, as Fernandez's study investigates only one school district. It would be interesting to discover whether his results could be replicated by conducting case studies in other areas.

Further, it is difficult to understand how much of the Plans are actually being implemented in the schools. A more qualitative study investigating this occurrence might also be a nice companion to this study. It might be that those schools that are using good quality plans, and actually implementing all the suggested reforms and improvements, will see much larger margins of improvement, versus those using poor plans, or not implementing the strategies contained in their plans.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, the data for this research comes from schools located in the state of Illinois only. As each state had the opportunity to set their own AYP rates, and each district and state gets a certain amount of leeway when it comes to enforcing restructuring and other regulations, this study may not be generalizable to other

states. I suspect, based on other studies (see Guisbond & Neill, Orlich, Belfanz, etc.), that other states are having the same issues because many of them are failing to make AYP and to close the achievement gap as well. In that case, the information here could be helpful to them too.

Implications

The findings in this study have several, very relevant implications. First of all, it represents more research on the School Improvement Plan process, of which, there is little previous research. Secondly, it is proof positive for the state of Illinois, that continuing in their use of School Improvement Plans will continue to lead to improvement in the percentage of students meeting minimum academic standards. It might be easy to focus on whether AYP rates are being met, but even without succeeding in that goal, it is still beneficial to the students of that state to continue following these plans.

This school year, 2011-2012, the Illinois Board of Education has moved towards a new School Improvement Planning system, which has a history of positive results in other states. In Illinois it is being called "Rising Star" but it originates from the Indistar system. Indistar was first developed in 2007 for use by the Virginia Department of Education and has since been adopted by an additional eight states. Over the first two years of its existence, Indistar helped Virginia schools demonstrate a Mean Gain in Reading scores of 13.47 percentage points and a Mean Gain in Math scores of 20.09 percentage points. The research presented in this paper is further proof that this advancement in School Improvement Planning is a worthwhile move for that state.

Further research should be done to determine if there is an increase in gains by schools after the instatement of this new program (Evidence, 2012).

Additionally, to the extent that these results are generalizable to other schools in other states, it can serve as evidence for other states that School Improvement Plans are worthwhile ventures and investments in their students' futures.

It is also clear, however, that meeting AYP goals is an unrealistic expectation, which is going to continue to be met with failure. Thankfully, it seems that the government has taken notice of this as well. Just this past month, the White House announced that 10 states are being granted waivers to free them from some requirements of the No Child Left Behind education reform law. Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Tennessee are the first of what could be many more states that will no longer have to meet 2014 targets set by the law. In exchange for that flexibility, those states "have agreed to raise standards, improve accountability, and undertake essential reforms to improve teacher effectiveness," the White House said in a statement in February 2012. Each state must produce its own plan for holding up their end of the agreement (CNN Staff, 2012). I believe that this study can provide states, especially Illinois, evidence that incorporating some kind of School Improvement Planning might be a good strategy for achieving these goals. And without the pressure to meet AYP, the schools can focus on celebrating the success that comes from SIPs and make improvements, without being distracted by unrealistic timelines.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that No Child Left Behind has been in effect for about ten years, there has been strikingly little research done on School Improvement Plans, which make up a very important piece of the legislation. The lack of study is especially surprising when you consider that some of the schools in my dataset have been in School Improvement Status for nine of those ten years. This study adds to the short list of previous studies done on School Improvement Plans and their effect on schools.

As my analysis shows, the presence of a School Improvement Plan is associated with success. On average, the schools in this study showed marked improvement in the percentage of students meeting the minimum standards in both reading and math after following an SIP, versus before. This is true for the general population as well as all the subgroups studied here. Upon further review, using a regression analysis, it was determined that while all other control variables were negatively associated with improvement, a School Improvement plan positively related to improvement, statistically significantly and in the hypothesized direction.

On the other hand, having a School Improvement Plan was not shown to help schools reach their Annual Yearly Progress goals. This finding coincides with my second hypothesis. I believe that the reason that schools are not making AYP has to do with the structuring and regulations of the legislation. As mentioned previously, each state has to raise their AYP numbers every year in order to get to the goal, which is to have all students academically proficient, by 2014. This is creating an even larger burden for schools that have gone into School Improvement Status, because they are then forced to

make up the ground that caused them to fall behind in the first place, while continuing to make forward progress to reach the new goals set every year.

The legislation in its current form is ineffective. The high stakes testing, and prioritizing of certain skills over others has been shown by many previous studies to fail to promote improvement in student achievement, and especially, to not close the achievement gap (see Belfanz et al., 2007, Fuller et al., 2007, and Orlich, 2008). It is clear that many, if not most, schools, districts, and states will not make the 2014 goal. This study adds to the research which shows that instead of decreasing, the number of schools not making AYP and being placed in School Improvement Status is growing, and at a relatively rapid pace. It also shows that only a very small percentage of schools in this status are making enough progress in the two years that these plans last to be back on the right track to making AYP again.

The light at the end of the tunnel, however, is that the federal government is finally recognizing that changes need to be made to this legislation in order to facilitate the improvement of the state of education in this country. The first ten states have been issued waivers to opt out of the regulations contained in No Child Left behind, and it is my prediction that many more will follow. These waivers come with stipulations which include the necessity of each state to outline alternative plans and agree to certain reforms. The results of this study, then, come at an opportune time, as many states are currently working on filing for a waiver and their proposals for what they plan to do if it is granted.

I would argue, based on the information contained in these pages, that requiring all schools (not just those that are struggling) to compile and submit high quality School

Improvement Plans would be in the best interest of the schools and the students. Without the unrealistic goals laid out by the current legislation, schools can have more freedom to attack school improvement in ways that make most sense for their specific schools, and they can continue to try to replicate the success that comes from these plans, without worrying about making it to an increasingly out of reach goal.

Works Cited

Alspaugh, J. W. (1998). Achievement loss associated with the transition to middle and high school. *Journal of Educational Research, 92*. 20-25. Print.

Anderson, James E. (1994). *Public Policymaking, an Introduction*. 2nd ed. Geneva, IL: Houghton Mifflin. Print.

Belfanz, R., N. Legters, T. C. West, and L. M. Weber. (2007). Are NCLB's Measures, Incentives, and Improvement Strategies the Right Ones for the Nation's Low-Performing High Schools? *American Educational Research Journal* 44(3), 559-93. Print.

CNN Wire Staff. (2012, February 9). 10 states freed from some 'No Child Left Behind' requirements. *CNN Politics Online*. Retrieved February 16, 2012 from http://articles.cnn.com/2012-02-09/politics/politics_states-education_1_waivers-flexibility-standards?_s=PM:POLITICS. Web.

Dubnik, M. & B. Bardes. (1983). Thinking About Public Policy. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons. Print.

Evidence of Effectiveness. *Indistar: Lighting Our Path to Stellar Learning.* Retrieved March 14, 2012, from http://www.indistar.org/evidence/. Web.

Fernandez, K. E. (2011). Evaluating School Improvement Plans and Their Effect on Academic Performance." *Educational Policy*, 25 (338), 338-67. Print.

Fuller, B., J. Wright, K. Gesicki, and E. Kang. (2007). Gauging Growth: How to Judge No Child Left Behind? *Educational Researcher* 36(5), 268-78. Print.

Government Accountability Office. "Education Should Clarify Guidance and Address Potential Compliance Issues for Schools in Corrective Action and Restructuring Status." *GAO Highlights, Sept. 2007.* Retrieved March 11, 2012 from http://rpumem.memphis.edu/ebsco-web/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8bcfa77e-5b17-42a7-a503-e7f60b783a65%40sessionmgr13andvid=2andhid=127. Web.

Guisbond, L. & M. Neill. (2004). Failing Our Children: No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education. *The Clearing House* 78(1), 12-16. Print.

Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW). "NCLB: Too Many Schools Identified; Too Little Improvement." *U.S. Chamber of Commerce.* Retrieved on March 27, 2012 from http://icw.uschamber.com/newsletter-article/nclb-too-many-schools-identified-too-little-improvement. Web.

Kochankek, J. R., S. Wraight, Y. Wan, L. Nylen, & S. Rodriguez. (2011). Parent Involvement and Extended Learning Activities in School Improvement Plans in the Midwest Region. *Issues and Answers,* 115, 1-35. Print.

Little, J. W. (1995). Contested ground: The basis of teacher leadership in two restructuring high schools [Special issue: Teacher leadership]. *Elementary School Journal*, *96*(1), 47-63. Print.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). What matters most in teachers' workplace context? In J. Little, & M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and Contexts,* 79-103. New York: Teachers College Press.

McGuinn, P. J. (2006). *No Child Left Behind and the Transformation of Federal Education Policy, 1965-2005*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Print.

Orlich, D. (2004). No Child Left Behind: An Illogical Accountability Model. *The Clearing House* 78(1), 6-11. Print.

Rosenblatt, J. L., & Elias, M. J. (2008). Dosage effects of a preventative social-emotional learning intervention on achievement loss associated with middle school transition. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 29, 535-555. Print.

"School Improvement, Corrective Action and Restructuring." *Questions and Answers about No Child Left Behind.* American Federation of Teachers, Apr. 2007. Web. <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/qa_sanctions0407.pdf>.

Siskin, L. S. (1991). Departments as different worlds: Subject subcultures in secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 27, 134-160. Print.

Smith, K. B. & C. W. Larimer. (2009). *The Public Policy Theory Primer.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Print.

Talbert, J. E., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school. *Journal of Education*, 102, 123-153. Print.

USA. Council of Chief State School Officers. *Closing the Achievement Gap for Economically Disadvantaged Students?* By Rolf K. Blank. Council of Chief State School Officers, Apr. 2011. Web. <www.ccsso.org>. Web.

Wilson, R. (2006) Policy Analysis as Policy Advice. In The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy, ed. Michael Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E Goodin, 152-168. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Print.

Xiang, Y., M. Dahlin, J. Cronin, R. Theaker, & S. Durant. (2011) Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude? *Thomas B. Fordham Institute*, 1-25. Northwest Evaluation Association, Sept. 2011. Web.

Zahariadis, N. (1999) Ambiguity, Time, and Multiple Streams. In Paul Sabatier (Eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process,* 73-93. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Tables

Table 1.
Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 All Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math

	All Students 2009 *Mean* (*SE*)	All Students 2011 *Mean* (*SE*)	Difference *Mean* *(SE)*
Reading	54.906 (.842)	57.268 (.979)	2.362** (.457)
Math	64.422 (1.18)	67.684 (1.24)	3.262** (.471)
N	264	264	264

Note: Results were obtained via t-test.
p<.01**. *p*<.05*. *p*<.10^.

Table 2.
Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Minority Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math

	Minority Students 2009 *Mean* (*SE*)	Minority Students 2011 *Mean* (*SE*)	Difference *Mean (SE)*
Reading	50.028 (.939)	54.264 (1.13)	4.237** (.519)
Math	61.952 (1.38)	66.268 (1.46)	4.315** (.521)
N	221	221	221

Note: Results were obtained via t-test.
p<.01**. *p*<.05*. *p*<.10^.

Table 3.
Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Students with Disabilities: % Meets Standard-Reading and Math

	Students w/ Disabilities 2009 *Mean* (*SE*)	Students w/ Disabilities 2011 *Mean* (*SE*)	Difference *Mean* *(SE)*
Reading	28.108 (1.23)	29.143 (1.49)	1.035 (1.13)
Math	36.1 (1.60)	38.508 (1.92)	2.408^ (1.24)
N	75	75	75

Note: Results were obtained via t-test.
$p<.01$**. $p<.05$*. $p<.10$^.

Table 4.
Comparison of Means: 2009 and 2011 Economically Disadvantaged Students: % Meets Standard- Reading and Math

	Economically Disadvantaged Students 2009 *Mean* (*SE*)	Economically Disadvantaged Students 2011 *Mean* (*SE*)	Difference *Mean* *(SE)*
Reading	50.830 (.802)	54.190 (1.03)	3.361** (.462)
Math	62.141 (1.25)	65.975 (1.34)	3.834** (.494)
N	246	246	246

Note: Results were obtained via t-test.
p<.01**. *p*<.05*. *p*<.10^.

Table 5A.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: All Students-Reading

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	210 (79.55)	258 (97.73)	468 (88.64)
Yes	54 (20.45)	6 (2.27)	60 (11.36)
Total	**264 (100)**	**264 (100)**	**528 (100)**

Chi-Square= 43.3231
P= 0.0000

Table 5B.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: All Students-Math

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	103 (39.02)	202 (76.52)	305 (57.77)
Yes	161 (60.98)	62 (23.48)	223 (42.23)
Total	**264 (100)**	**264 (100)**	**528 (100)**

Chi-Square= 76.0851
P= 0.0000

Table 6A.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Minority Students- Reading

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	124 (55.86)	93 (42.08)	217 (48.98)
Yes	98 (44.14)	128 (57.92)	226 (51.02)
Total	**222 (100)**	**221 (100)**	**443 (100)**

Chi-Square= 8.4087
P= 0.004

Table 6B.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Minority Students- Math

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	66 (29.73)	98 (44.34)	164 (37.02)
Yes	156 (70.27)	123 (55.66)	279 (62.98)
Total	**222 (100)**	**221 (100)**	**443 (100)**

Chi-Square= 10.1449
P= 0.001

Table 7A.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Students with Disabilities- Reading

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency* *(Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency* *(Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency* *(Column %)*
No	57 (77.03)	55 (73.33)	112 (75.17)
Yes	17 (22.97)	20 (26.67)	37 (24.83)
Total	**74** **(100)**	**75** **(100)**	**149** **(100)**

Chi-Square= 0.2723
P= 0.602

Table 7B.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Students with Disabilities- Math

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency* *(Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency* *(Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency* *(Column %)*
No	54 (72.00)	57 (75.00)	111 (73.51)
Yes	21 (28.00)	19 (25.00)	40 (26.49)
Total	**75** **(100)**	**76** **(100)**	**151** **(100)**

Chi-Square= 0.1745
P= 0.676

Table 8A.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Economically Disadvantaged Students- Reading

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	141 (57.09)	114 (45.97)	255 (51.52)
Yes	106 (42.91)	134 (54.03)	240 (48.48)
Total	**247 (100)**	**248 (100)**	**495 (100)**

Chi-Square= 6.1235
P= 0.013

Table 8B.
Effect of School Improvement Plan on School's Ability to Make AYP Goals: Economically Disadvantaged Students- Math

Meet AYP?	**No SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Yes SIP** *Frequency (Column %)*	**Total** *Frequency (Column %)*
No	77 (31.30)	120 (48.39)	197 (39.88)
Yes	169 (68.70)	128 (51.61)	297 (60.12)
Total	**246 (100)**	**248 (100)**	**494 (100)**

Chi-Square= 15.0379
P= 0.000

Table 9.
The Impact of School Improvement status on Percentage of Students Who Meet Minimum Scores, Reading and Math

	Reading Coeff. (SE)	Math Coeff. (SE)
School Improvement Plan	2.36* (1.01)	10.42** (1.08)
Minority (%)	-.048^ (.025)	-.064* (.026)
Enrollment Number	-.0003 (.001)	-.003* (.001)
Low Income Rate	-.232** (.034)	-.190** (.037)
Limited English Proficiency Rate	-.152** (.030)	-.063* (.032)
Mobility Rate	-.225** (.046)	-.261** (.049)
School Type	-12.54** (.965)	-16.67** (1.03)
Constant	102.5** (2.88)	110.8** (3.08)
R-squared	0.396	0.571
N	528	528

p<.01**. *p*<.05*. *p*<.10^.

Figures

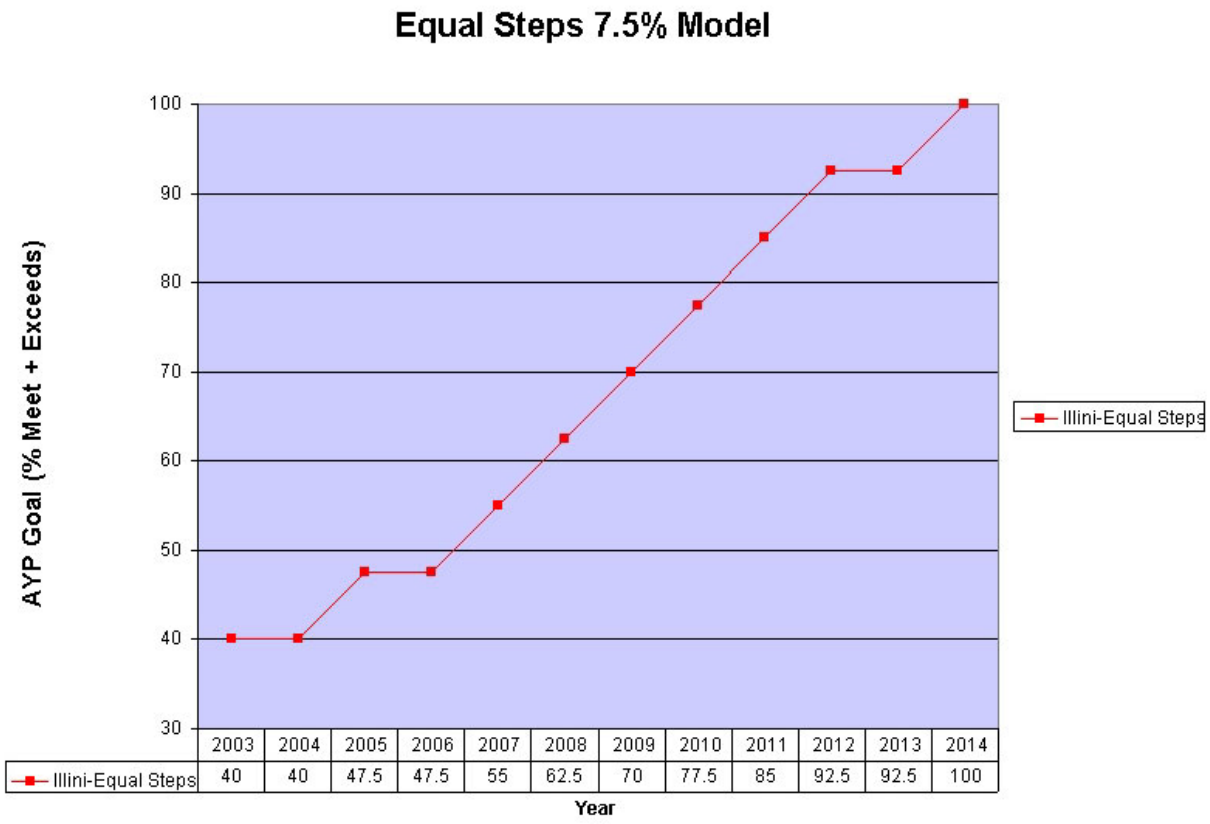

Figure 1. Illinois AYP Standards by year (from: Illinois State Board of Education website)