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COLLEGE

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL POLICY INSTITUTE

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND:
A GOOD IDEA NOT LIVING UP TO ITS PROMISE**

by

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LONG ISLAND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY INSTITUTE AT DOWLING COLLEGE

The Long Island Economic and Social Policy Institute at Dowling College (LIESP) was founded to provide a forum for discussion and to be a mechanism to formulate practical solutions for a variety of economic and social issues facing the Nation's first suburb.

Research comparing and quantifying differences between contemporary and past suburban communities is a primary focus of the Institute, which provides a curriculum for an interdisciplinary course of study on suburbia, sociology, culture, race and economics, and contributes subject matter for papers, publications and symposiums.

LIESP also provides thoughtful commentary and cutting edge enlightened thinking on the pressing social and economic issues of the day, providing crucial analysis of Long Island communities, all of which Dowling College students can benefit. By working with the Townsend School of Business, the School of Education and the School of Arts and Sciences, LIESP provides students and their professors with insights into community revitalization and business development strategies that can be used in their local communities, thus providing community development and economic leadership for decades to come.

LIESP hosts symposiums and workshops on various issues and publishes white papers which to date include the "Higher Education Attainment Gap Between the Races"; "The Economic Potential of the Minority Workforce"; "The Impact on the Alternative Minimum Tax"; "The Economic Potential of Brownfield Redevelopment"; "Economic Feasibility of Wind Farms" and a new "Paradigm for Financing Suburban School Districts." Including this research, LIESP presents testimony and analytical information at national, state and county legislative hearings.

Another important aspect of LIESP is hosting Roundtables on Long Island's Future to discuss the pressing issues confronting contemporary suburbia. What follows are the discussion and conclusions from the participants at a Roundtable on the "No Child Left Behind" whose reauthorization is currently being reviewed by Congress. Participating in the Roundtable was Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton), Dowling Education Professor, Dr. Patrick B. Johnson, and LIESP Director, Martin R. Cantor, CPA, M.A.

INTRODUCTION: ROUNDTABLE FOR LONG ISLAND'S FUTURE - NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The recent revelation in Newsday of possible tampering with student test scores at Long Island's Uniondale School District underscores the pressures that regional school districts are under for meeting standards established by the 2002 federal "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation. Uniondale is not alone; there have been other such cases as well as aggressive test monitoring and teaching to the test.

Thus, the nagging issue is whether NCLB has met the expectations of increasing students' abilities and that test scores must continuously improve, or should the law be revised to deliver better-prepared students with the required skill sets that will enable them to compete for the local jobs being influenced by the global economy?

How Congress evaluates that question and what actions it takes will impact the nation's educational policies and practices for years to come. On Long Island it will influence how our children are taught; for example, some policies produce teaching to the test--teaching the questions that must be answered on the evaluation tests, rather than teaching the overall content knowledge and problem-solving skills. Dr. Johnson will address these issues later in the following section of this report.

One unfortunate result of test scores being the sole evaluator of a student's progress, often resulting in teaching to the test, relates to a phenomenon known as Campbell's Law (a tested theory). Campbell's Law asserts that "the more any quantifiable social indicator, such as test scores, is used for social decision making, the more subject those scores will become to corrupting pressures, and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes that those indicators were intended to monitor." Basically, students, teachers, and administrators are more likely to do a little cheating as may have recently occurred in the Uniondale School District.

New York State and Long Island educators are paying attention, making their thoughts and feelings known to New York State's congressional and senate delegations, which are also paying attention. The issue has a high priority since Senator Hillary Clinton's challenge to NCLB was acknowledged at the recent New York State United Teachers convention by its president, Richard Iannuzzi, who said "the senator understands we are willing to be held accountable as long as we are given the tools."



The NCLB debate centers on whether tracking student performance through standardized tests and then imposing sanctions on poorly performing school districts has delivered on its promise to narrow the educational gap between minority and non-minority children. Thus, provide all children with equal educational opportunity. To influence the reauthorization legislation, data needs to be provided that shows whether or not student test results have met the expectations of increasing students' abilities rather than just increased test scores—if, in fact, that has even occurred. They also need to point out the other destructive effects of this legislation and its overemphasis on testing and sanctions on our children and their educational experiences. The data that LIESP presents later in this report titled, "January 2007 ELA Results: Children Left Behind and Linkage to Poverty" indicates that a student's ability to keep up with the requirements of NCLB may be influenced as much by poverty as race.

To be clear, the racial steering of returning black World War II veterans to communities such as North Amityville, North Bellport, Gordon Heights or Freeport because they were excluded by deed from Levittown where white veterans were able to live, was the beginning of a practice that still continues, and has made Long Island one of the most segregated communities in the United States. The impact of segregation can never be minimized, because it has institutionalized the racism existing today in many suburban and urban neighborhoods, while also nurturing the structural racism that continues. All this has created the poverty conditions that exist in households where lagging Black Long Island students live.

What also appeared in the LIESP study is that predominantly white school districts also had increasing percentages of lagging students between grades 3 and 8. Common to all districts was that they had students living at poverty levels exceeding the poverty rate of their respective county. The students that did not meet the standards, or lagged behind consistently tested in Levels 1 and 2, up to the 8th grade. These results may be influenced as strongly by poverty as by race. For Black students, the road to climb is made more difficult because they have to carry the weight of the poverty conditions that they live, but also must deal with the racial discrimination that still exists.

While the data presented by LIESP is developed from a review of the available data, the data developed is in of itself imperfect. The imperfection is not that the aggregate quantification of poverty is flawed, it is not; it is that the data presented is based on the results of the testing of each grade, with differences between year 3 and year 8 used as a basis for LIESP's study. A more reliable indication of a student's achievement level would be to extract the test results of each child as they progressed through school. This would provide data that presents a clearer view of a student's progress, and also targets where additional resources can be focused to insure that no child really gets behind.

While most agree that NCLB will be reauthorized by Congress, improvements to the legislation should be made. LIESP believes that its study linking poverty to lagging educational achievement as defined by NCLB, supported by the assertions made by Dr. Patrick Johnson of the Dowling College School of Education, presents credible, compelling and quantifiable data that casts doubt on President Bush's declaration at a Harlem charter school, whose students have shown grade improvements, that his initiative is working and doesn't need revisions. What LIESP's study questions is that the sociological foundation where students come from, and the poverty that they must deal with, can no longer be ignored in any strategy that is developed so no child is left behind.

Some educators believe that the law is not working, and for it to work mental models have to be broken so children are not just taught to darken ovals on answer sheets, but have the critical thinking skills to understand why they are darkening those ovals. That is also the challenge of the reauthorized NCLB. How do you assess growth in intellectual capacity by person, as well as grade?

With the education of the next generation of Long Island and American workers hanging in the balance, national education policy as defined by NCLB, must be seriously evaluated and changes made were necessary. What is clear is that changes need to be made to NCLB. To do otherwise will be to miss an opportunity to seriously match the students in need of intensified educational effort with the resources available to provide that effort. To do otherwise will continue the trend of leaving students behind.

With baby boomers longing for retirement, the issue of who will replace them in the workforce is hanging in the balance. Also impacted will be Long Island's educational infrastructure that will have to educate this future workforce with the skills that they will be required to have, understanding that these skill requirements are strongly influenced by the global economy.



What follows is an overview of NCLB and an evaluation of the legislation by Dr. Patrick B. Johnson of the Dowling College School of Education. This is followed by the LIESP analysis linking students living in poverty to lagging academic performance as defined by NCLB, concluding with the evaluation of NCLB by participants of the Roundtable for Long Island's Future.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: OVERVIEW

No Child Left Behind represents the joining of two separate problems confronting American society: racial prejudice and national economic decline. In both instances, many have come to see the solutions to these problems in our educational system and have asked our teachers and administrators to solve broad national problems whose origins reside far beyond school walls.

The corrosive impact of racial prejudice on American society was highlighted in the sociological work of Myrdal commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation in the 1940's and summarized in *The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. In this work, he catalogued the devastating effects that prejudice had exacted both on African American and white majority populations while arguing that true democracy would not flourish in this society until the twin problems of racial prejudice and economic inequality were addressed and overcome.

Within the next decade, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that "separate but equal schools were inherently unequal" and that our schools should be integrated "with all deliberate speed." While there are many elements of this important decision that have been discussed by political and social scientists, what is most important for understanding the historical underpinnings of NCLB legislation is that the unanimous decision placed our schools in the forefront of correcting racial inequality and insuring that all children had a fair chance at the American dream.

The 1960's witnessed a broadening assault on racial inequality with the passage of Great Society legislation and the advent of Head Start. This program sought to overcome a gap in educational preparation that was observed with children as they entered school in kindergarten, with white children scoring generally higher than African American children on initial standardized tests. Head Start was designed to overcome this early disadvantage. It should be emphasized that, while this program focused primarily on school preparation and attempted to provide early educational equality, Great Society legislation recognized that the problems of racial injustice and inequality went far beyond educational disparities and included an emphasis on addressing the economic inequalities that also resulted from discrimination and racial prejudice in American society.

It is important to understand that NCLB legislation, from this perspective, is a broader attempt to address the continuing problem of educational disparities, with the achievement gaps research clearly demonstrating that they persist today. Broader legislative attempts to address the underlying economic disparities have receded with an ever-increasing emphasis on the "educational solution." To the contrary, the analysis that follows clearly shows that poverty remains an element in students who fail to achieve under NCLB standards.

The second problem that NCLB was designed to address was the growing concern of policy makers and business leaders regarding national economic decline. The relatively poor performances of American students relative to students in other advanced technological societies on international comparisons of math and science have been frequently highlighted as harbingers of the coming decline.

This position was first articulated more than two decades ago in the report, *A Nation at Risk*, which emphasized our poor relative academic performance in comparison with other technologically advanced countries. The report argued that our educational system was a national disgrace and suggested that we move in the direction of a Japanese educational model with an increasing emphasis on high-stakes tests to insure the accountability of our school personnel including administrators and teachers, as well as students and parents.

Our analysis will also focus on the pros and cons of NCLB as its impact has reverberated through our schools in recent years. Has accountability or high stakes testing and associated sanctions been effective? Is parental choice that can transfer children via a voucher program be an effective tool in truly educating children as President Bush proudly proclaimed in his recent visit to a Harlem Charter School? Does NCLB weaken public education? Does flexibility given to administrators to shift funds deliver better results? How effective is a reading first initiative that emphasizes the importance of children learning to read by 3rd grade? And how effective in measuring educational



advancement are test scores (in the perspective of Campbell's Law) that are reported by gender, race/ethnicity, special needs status, and bilingual status in insuring that no child is truly left behind?

Our conclusion suggests that the current system is not the disaster so often lamented, but a system of separate districts and schools whose quality is most directly correlated with the economic resources of those who send their children to these districts or individual schools.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND AND THE ROLE OF HIGH-STAKES TESTING: RECENT BACKGROUND

With the passage of NCLB and its emphasis on accountability to insure students' academic achievement, student assessment has taken on far greater significance and urgency. In addition to providing a measure of whether a student has successfully reached some arbitrary standard or benchmark, assessment also provides a measure of whether a teacher's class as a group has reached a similarly arbitrary standard. With the passage of NCLB, failure to achieve the standard carries serious negative consequences both for students and teachers. For the student, it may result in mandated summer school, tutoring, or grade retention. For the teacher, it may result in special mentoring, after-school workshops, and increasing job insecurity. Students' scores obtained on single tests given at one point during the school year trigger all these consequences.

Much of the current concern about American academic performance and its ultimate impact on national competitiveness in the global economy can be traced to the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Council on Excellence in Education, 1983). This report decried the mediocrity of American education and offered Japan and its schools as an antidote. While the political motives behind this report have been widely circulated (Bell, 1988; Berliner & Biddle, 1995), for unknown reasons, most educators accepted the validity of the report and its indictment of American schools. Cremin (1989), an exception, suggested that the report, "is at best a foolish and at worst a crass effort to direct attention away from those truly responsible for doing something about competitiveness and to lay the burden instead on the schools. It is a device that has been used repeatedly in the history of American education" (pp. 102-103).

To provide additional historical perspective, Bracey (2003) suggested that any thoughtful analysis of subsequent economic history would have strikingly demonstrated the fallaciousness of the report's assumptions, findings, and conclusions. Shortly after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, Japan's economy fell into a long period of decline at precisely the same time that the American economy surged to become the standard to which other nations aspired. Interestingly, during this time or subsequently, little was said about the role American schools played in this unanticipated economic reversal (Bracey, 2003).

It is within this context that one should seriously question the current despair and hand wringing regarding the poor quality of American education and the poor comparative performance of American students in international studies. According to Berliner and Biddle (1995), the poor performance of American students in such studies can be explained, at least partially, by the fact that in the United States all public school students participate in these tests; while in other countries, only those students attending academically rigorous schools are included. Clearly, such an apples to oranges comparison places American "students" at considerable academic disadvantage compared to "students" from other countries.

An additional rationale for NCLB can be found in the long-standing racial disparities observed in American education (NCLB, 2001, Sec. 101) and an apparent desire by policy makers to enhance the academic performance of all groups (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Accordingly, school districts must now disaggregate performance scores separately for different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups to ensure that all groups are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). Unfortunately, because the law also requires that academic progress will be determined by mean group proficiency scores, schools with large populations of economically disadvantaged students and/or racially diverse student populations are more likely to fall short of their AYP requirements as recently demonstrated in the analyses of Kim and Sunderman (2005). This is because the mean accords greater weight to extreme scores than would the median score.



The term “high-stakes testing” does not appear in the hundreds of pages of the NCLB law. A central focus rests instead on accountability and holding key constituents responsible for educational outcomes. The general idea is that unless students and their teachers are held accountable for poor academic performance, the performance will continue to suffer or still worse, further deteriorate. From this perspective, it is the specter of these negative consequences or stakes that are supposed to motivate students to learn more and teachers to transmit information more effectively. It is the fear engendered by these consequences that will insure that “no child is left behind.” Now, of course, should a child fail to perform to standard, he or she, in reality, can be summarily left behind their current peer group.

B.F. Skinner, the most influential learning theorist of the 20th century, conducted countless studies on the differential impacts of carrots (reinforcements) and sticks (punishments) on learning. And, let’s not kid ourselves about the true meaning of the current high-stakes testing environment in which children are being threatened with the ultimate academic punishment—grade retention. According to Skinner (1951), punishment is a wholly ineffective technique because its most immediate effect is to suppress rather than to eliminate unwanted behavior. How suppression could move a child from ineffective to effective learning strategies is not readily apparent. Nor has anyone identified specific studies that demonstrate that fear and punishment produce more effective learning or a desire for lifelong learning.

Not surprisingly, short-sighted policy makers, looking for a quick fix to solve the “problems” of American education, have ignored this warning and plunged ahead without considering the likely consequences of severely punishing large numbers of children. While it can certainly be argued that high-stakes testing ultimately will hold teachers and administrators or even parents responsible for the poor education of American children, the cold reality is that in its most immediate impact, it is the children, especially those from disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances, who are being held responsible and being severely punished when they fail to perform well on these tests.

According to Spring (2004), using high-stakes tests to motivate school children is an attempt to motivate them by fear of failure. Following from this, one obvious way to avoid academic failure would be to drop out of school, a solution increasingly taken by students following the introduction of high-stakes testing in Chicago (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Allensworth, 2005) when social promotion was eliminated and in Louisiana, the first state to mandate such tests statewide, a state in which approximately 1 in 3 students drop out before completing high school (Harvard University, 2005).

In the current educational environment with its emphasis on evidence-based practice and data-driven decision for teachers, it seems only reasonable that a momentous policy decision such as mandating high-stakes testing for all public school children would be based not just on the results of a few studies, but rather on an avalanche of supportive findings. This is especially true given Skinner’s findings on the dangers associated with using punishment to modify learning. However, actually there is no data to support the contention that the use of such testing will enhance student learning or improve teachers’ teaching.

Unfortunately, our political leaders are not being held to the same evidentiary standards as the teachers they so often and easily criticize. A particularly egregious example of this know-nothing, anti-empirical approach can be found in the recently enacted New York City public school policy to end social promotion. Despite considerable evidence suggesting that such a policy was doomed to failure based on countless studies including a recent, nine-year study of the detrimental effects of a similar policy change in Chicago (Roderick et al., 2005), the Mayor of New York and his hand-picked School Chancellor, neither of whom had any background in education, imposed this policy on the largest school district in the country. Both dismissed the Chicago findings by emphasizing that New York City was not Chicago—a true but irrelevant point given that both are large, urban school districts with large numbers of poor, minority students. They contended instead, possibly based upon some intuitive “knowledge”, that the policy of ending social promotion and imposing high-stakes testing for third graders would be successful in New York.



THE IMPACT OF HIGH-STAKES TESTING ON STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

High-stakes testing impacts students in terms of their educational choices and options, their academic performance and intellectual development, and their psychological health. With regard to educational choices, empirical studies have repeatedly demonstrated positive associations between the introduction of high-stakes testing and increased student dropout rates (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haney, 2000; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). The associations have been especially strong among poor and minority students according to Madaus and Clarke (2001).

A great deal of attention has also focused on the psychological impact of high-stakes testing on American children and adolescents. Many students are intimately acquainted with the sympathetic nervous system signs of test anxiety including sweating palms, nausea, and inhibited concentration and recall (Gregor, 2005; McCarthy & Goffin, 2005). For the many afflicted with this test-taking malady, high-stakes testing is not a recipe for academic success but rather a recipe for physical discomfort and poor test performance.

General psychological distress is another common concomitant of high-stakes tests. According to Abrams, Pedulla and Madaus (2003), "increased levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue are often seen among students participating in high stakes testing..." (p. 20). Other examples of the psychological consequences for children can be found throughout B. Johnson and D. Johnson's (2002) compelling book on high-stakes testing. For example, "As the children begin the first timed test, Kevin vomits in his hands and runs to the bathroom." "Gerard takes one look at the first section and begins to cry." (p.141). Learning that they have failed the tests, "most of the children are crying." "One little girl in the room next door tells her friend, 'I'm going to kill myself.'"(p. 177). They also cite a headline in a local paper that read, "Failure of LEAP Test Prompts Suicide Attempt by Fifteen Year Old Student" (p. 42).

Some might argue that high-stakes tests and the negative consequences associated with failure will teach children that school is serious business to which they need apply themselves. The recently released summary of findings on Chicago's nine-year experiment to eliminate social promotion suggests otherwise (Roderick et al., 2005). Results revealed increased drop out rates among those children retained in the third grade, the same pattern observed by Haney (2000) in Texas following the advent of high-stakes testing there.

An educational practice that increases the likelihood of school dropout rather than enhancing student's academic performance surely must be questioned. To label such a program No Child Left Behind is nothing less than cynical political propaganda. But there may be other serious, unintended consequences associated with use of such testing procedures.

The introduction of high-stakes tests produces a narrowing of the school curriculum (Horn, 2003; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). In a high-stakes testing environment, rather than offering students a full-range of courses, what becomes emphasized is a narrow range of material focused upon the material and subject matter to be tested.

Kohn (2000) has suggested that such narrowing in combination with students focusing only on what will be assessed on exams has led to shallowness or superficiality in student thinking that inhibits their ability to think deeply about complex content material (Anderman, 1992).

Teachers are the other group of educational stakeholders most immediately impacted by the tidal wave of high-stakes tests. The effects of such testing on teachers have been widely reported and here will only be briefly summarized.

A frequent and commonly reported complaint is that high-stakes tests force teachers to "teach to the test" or to focus their classroom instruction on the material likely to be covered on the test (Popham, 2001).

Recently, an 8th grade science teacher described the pressure she was feeling to produce lessons that emphasized the material to be tested either on the math or English Language Arts portions of New York's high-stakes tests. She had been asked repeatedly by her principal to focus on these materials especially when the English teacher was absent, Increasingly content areas like science and social studies are being ignored only focused upon when they are included on the tests.

Not surprisingly, a recent article in the *New York Times* (Saulny, 2005a) revealed that middle-class parents are becoming restive about the restrictive educational practices currently in wide use in New York City. They "have complained of an increasing focus on test preparation and remedial work, of a decreasing focus on science education...(p. A1).



The emphasis on test score-driven instruction forces teachers to ignore important academic areas while focusing exclusively on those that will be tested. B. Johnson and D. Johnson (2002) highlight this tendency as teachers are explicitly told to ignore science and social studies because they will not be on the tests.

High-stakes testing impacts teachers and teaching in other, less direct ways. For example, the increased pressure on first-year teachers to produce positive test results heightens the stress in an already stress-filled first year. Terzian (2002) quotes a new teacher: "The pressures a first-year teacher faces are stressful enough; suddenly, I had to worry about keeping my job even before I had begun to teach." Such effects may be even more acute in teachers working in schools located in poor areas.

In addition, this pressure may negatively impact the relationships between teachers, both new and old, and their low performing students who may be subjected to additional strain in a high-stakes environment. While teachers normally might focus additional attention and provide more academic support for low performing students, in the high-stakes testing classroom such attention takes valuable time away from teaching those students likely to bring up the class average. In line with this, on more than one occasion I have heard school administrators recommend that teachers focus their attention on students most likely to show the most improvement in their scores or to move from one performance category to another even if they don't show a great deal of improvement. The implication here is clearly that it is not efficient to spend too much time with the lowest performing students.

This also appears to be the position taken by states generally, many who exclude large proportions of special needs and second-language learners from their state testing requirements. A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office report (2005) estimated that the average proportion of special needs students excluded by states was close to 40%! The effect of such exclusionary policies is, of course, to artificially enhance state test scores (Herman, 2000). At the same time, many states have requested variances to allow similar exclusions for NCLB-mandated tests and, in many instances these requests have been granted (Olson, 2005). In so doing, the Department of Education is clearly violating both the letter and spirit of "No Child Left Behind." One unintended benefit of granting these exclusions has been that at least the children in these groups are spared the stress and travails associated with high-stakes testing. However, in requesting and in granting these exclusionary requests, federal and state educational leaders and administrators are once again marginalizing special needs and second-language students.

In light of these and other practices, it is hardly surprising that many of the best teachers decide to leave the profession. Many became teachers because they wanted to educate children and help them acquire the necessary skills to be successful in life. They are now being asked to be complicit in a process that is antithetical to these goals and so choose to leave rather than participate (Spring, 2004; Wright, 2002).

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODS

In the controversy surrounding high-stakes testing, the distinction between testing and assessment is often blurred or ignored altogether. In contrast to the considerable controversy surrounding the academic value of high-stakes testing, most educators involved in this debate recognize the value of educational assessment. Without accurate assessment, it is impossible to know if children are learning or to determine how best to help them to learn more or to do more efficiently. To assess something means to measure or quantify it and there is little argument regarding the necessity of measuring student learning in some fashion. The real debates revolve around whether assessments should be summative and only provide information about what or how much a child has learned or formative and provide information about how to enhance teaching and learning (Roddy, 2005). Then too, debates continue regarding how to provide the most accurate, fair, and educationally sound method of conducting such assessments and the determination of what precisely should be taught and what assessed.

It is important to understand, therefore, that those educators, parents, policy makers, and students who are opposed to high-stakes testing are generally not opposed to assessment. They are simply convinced that reliance on single-moment assessments that mostly measure specific disconnected pieces of information or dead knowledge is not the best way to assess our children and to enhance their educational progress. Moreover, many are convinced that this approach may in fact be counterproductive when it comes to enhancing our children's knowledge base and their higher-order cognitive skills (Popham, 2001).



For example, the National Research Council's committee on appropriate test use has stated: "An educational decision that will have a major impact on a test taker should not be made solely or automatically on the basis of a single test score." (Heubert & Hauser, 1999) (p.15).

Moreover, the International Reading Association (2006) and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2006), organizations that represent reading teachers and mathematics teachers in this country, are both on record opposing high-stakes testing, each also recognizes the intrinsic value of assessment. The Reading Association's position is that, "Assessment should be used to improve education and benefit students rather than compare and pigeonhole them." According to the National Council of Mathematics Teacher' statement on high-stakes testing, "When assessments are used in thoughtful and meaningful ways, students' scores provide important information...The misuse of tests for high-stakes purposes has subverted the benefits these tests can bring if they are used appropriately." (page). It is worth noting that these two organizations represent the disciplines initially impacted by the high-stakes testing associated with NCLB.

There is little disagreement regarding the importance of identifying appropriate educational standards to be achieved. Serious and deep divisions arise, however, regarding whether high-stakes testing enhances or actually impedes the likelihood that children will achieve the standards.

In contrast to the high-stakes testing approach with its emphasis on summative assessment, there are examples of state programs that have clearly recognized the appropriateness of formative assessments and highlighted the importance of teaching and support to student learning and the local nature of this process. Rhode Island (Thompson, 2001) and Connecticut (Darling-Hammond, 2000) are two that have worked to improve their educational practices and whose student' learning has been enhanced as a result. Interestingly, both have been successful while emphasizing low-stakes rather than high-stakes testing where assessment is used primarily to provide feedback to enhance teaching and, thereby, enhance student learning.

Many educators agree that there are problems in the American educational system today. But as Madaus and Clarke (2001) have suggested it is simplistic to assume that we will be able to test our way out of these problems especially if we rely on summative rather than formative assessments. Instead a careful and systematic approach needs to be developed; one that provides teachers with the information they require to better educate children and with the economic and material supports only the most affluent school districts possess today.

CONCLUSION

Accountability and the high-stakes tests that are supposed to provide it are not new (Callahan, 1962; Darling-Hammond, 2000). What has changed recently is the age of the children being required to take these tests, the universality of their administration, and the belief that summative tests will somehow magically enhance student learning. While tests are mandated, there is little consideration given to explaining how more and more testing will improve student understanding of key content areas including math and science. It is easy to demand more testing and student and teacher accountability and to exact stiff penalties for failure to "perform." But it is difficult to see how simply giving more consequential tests is going to help students to learn more or teachers to teach more effectively. The absurdity of the current situation is has been amplified by reports highlighting widespread scoring errors that "raised fresh questions about the reliability of the kinds of high-stakes tests that increasingly dominate education at all levels (Arenson & Henriques, 2006).

An oft-stated rationale for the move to high-stakes testing is the concern of policy makers regarding, the much discussed, poor relative performance of American students' on international math and science comparisons. While serious questions have been raised about the validity of this concern (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), there can be little doubt that it has played a critical role in creating an unprecedented and deeply unsettling era of high-stakes testing.



This concern with comparative test scores is most certainly linked to the belief among business leaders and policy makers that if our students cannot compete academically against those from other countries, this will ultimately have serious negative consequences for the nation's economic competitiveness. This is, of course, the same concern raised in *A Nation at Risk* over two decades ago about how American school children and their academic failures would ultimately destroy our economic superiority if we did not change the educational system. As previously discussed, this position was wrong then and it is wrong now.

As Cremin (1989) emphasized then, the nation's economic competitiveness is far more "a function of monetary, trade, and industrial policy, and of decisions by the President and Congress..." Today, the economic future of the country is imperiled not by our school children's scores on international comparisons, but by the nation's astronomical trade imbalance, its tax policies, and the profligate personal spending and meager personal savings (Krugman, 2006; Phillips, 2006). By redirecting the focus to schools, students, and teachers, the business and political leaders are attempting to abnegate their responsibility for the nation's current economic crisis.

The American public and all involved in the American educational process must now demand more thoughtful educational policies from their national and local policy leaders. These "leaders" need to be held accountable for the serious damage caused by high-stakes testing, especially in the lives of the nation's poor and most vulnerable children.

NCLB AND LONG ISLAND: CHILDREN IN POVERTY THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND

Supporting the previous assertions that NCLB and high stakes testing have actually left children behind, is the following table titled "January 2007 ELA Results: Children Left Behind and Linkage to Poverty" which correlates another factor influencing education, that of poverty. As we have discussed, economic considerations weigh heavily on student achievement. The following analysis presents the percent of students who do not meet standards, defined as those who have serious academic problems (Level 1) and those who have met some standards (Level 2) in the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) examination administered in January 2007.

What we found in analyzing the January 2007 ELA test results, and then comparing those results with the Nassau and Suffolk County average, is that 49 school districts, or 39 percent of Long Island's 127 school districts had students that did not meet standards in Grade 3 or Grade 8 at levels that exceeded the average test results for each district's respective county. Furthermore, test scores of 3rd and 8th graders became worse in 36 or 73 percent of the 49 school districts, while improvement was shown for the same grades in 13 or 27 percent of the 49 districts.

There is a strong indication that the economics and culture of poverty that some Long Island children live in places an additional burden on them in meeting the NCLB standards, resulting in their being left behind. This relationship becomes clear when the poverty levels of students attending each of the 49 school districts was compared to the Nassau and Suffolk County average for people living in poverty. Forty-seven or 96 percent of the school districts had students living in poverty at rates that exceeded each district's respective county. These correlations would indicate that poverty plays a role in student under achievement, and a reauthorized NCLB should direct new resources that address the additional challenges facing children living in poverty. With the skills that today's workers must have, strongly based on intellectual capacity, leaving children living in poverty behind without these skills relegates them to a life of poverty, and without the skills necessary to help them to escape the poverty that they were borne into.



JANUARY 2007 ELA RESULTS: CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND AND LINKAGE TO POVERTY

	Grade 3 Left Behind	Grade 8 Left Behind	% Increase Left Behind	% Students In Poverty
NASSAU COUNTY AVERAGE	17.0 %	22.6 %	33.0 %	4.0 %
Baldwin	21.5%	19.8 %	(8.0 %)	6.15 %
East Rockaway	20.5%	18.2%	(11.0 %)	8.11 %
Elmont	25.0%	40.5 %	62.0 %	10.34 %
Farmingdale	22.6%	26.2%	16.0 %	5.39 %
Freeport	22.4%	42.5%	90.0 %	15.21 %
Hempstead	42.1 %	74.2 %	76.0 %	24.64 %
Hicksville	18.3 %	34.0%	86.0 %	4.22 %
Island Trees	21.0 %	10.8 %	(49.0 %)	7.22 %
Lawrence	28.7 %	36.4 %	27.0 %	8.81 %
Levittown	20.1%	17.7 %	(12.0 %)	3.12 %
Malverne	21.5 %	26.7 %	24.0 %	5.36 %
Mineola	24.6 %	35.2 %	43.0 %	3.51 %
Roosevelt	24.7 %	61.5 %	149.0 %	18.62 %
Uniondale	22.1 %	36.2 %	64.0 %	9.87 %
Valley Stream 30	21.0 %	22.4 %	7.0 %	6.27 %
West Hempstead	20.9 %	23.7 %	13.0 %	7.12 %
Westbury	32.9 %	22.8 %	(31.0 %)	15.44 %
Glen Cove	13.8 %	28.4 %	106.0 %	14.77 %
SUFFOLK COUNTY AVERAGE	24.7 %	29.6 %	20.0 %	3.4 %
Amityville	46.3 %	57.9 %	25.0 %	13.06 %
Babylon	14.4 %	36.4 %	153.0 %	4.02 %
Brentwood	53.1 %	46.8 %	(12.0 %)	15.61%
Bridgehampton	0.0 %	33.3 %	33.3 %	18.69 %
Center Moriches	32.1 %	31.4 %	(2.0 %)	12.36 %
Central Islip	49.3 %	67.5 %	37.0 %	17.77 %
Comsewogue	21.9 %	31.9 %	46.0 %	4.97 %
Connetquot	19.0 %	32.8 %	73.0 %	4.86 %
Copiague	38.8 %	46.6 %	20.0 %	13.73 %
Deer Park	21.3 %	39.5 %	85.0 %	7.18 %
East Islip	14.2 %	32.7 %	130.0 %	5.13 %
East Moriches	11.1 %	33.0 %	197.0 %	3.35 %
Greenport	44.7 %	48.3 %	8.0 %	18.83 %
Huntington	27.1 %	35.3 %	30.0 %	10.83 %
Longwood	26.9 %	32.7 %	22.0 %	9.64 %
Middle Country	26.4 %	17.7 %	(33.0 %)	5.51 %
Montauk	28.6 %	13.2 %	(54.0 %)	11.38 %
North Babylon	17.9 %	36.1 %	102.0 %	5.98 %
Patchogue-Medford	31.0 %	38.2 %	23.0 %	6.57 %
Riverhead	35.1 %	42.2 %	20.0 %	18.49 %
South Country	35.0 %	47.0 %	34.0 %	17.39 %
Southampton	33.3 %	26.8 %	(20.0 %)	10.30 %
Springs	29.1 %	22.6 %	(22.0 %)	10.48 %
West Babylon	25.5 %	35.4 %	39.0 %	8.06 %
William Floyd	35.7 %	41.0 %	15.0 %	18.46 %
Wyandanch	58.2 %	69.3 %	19.0 %	21.45 %
Hampton Bays	33.8 %	25.4 %	(25.0 %)	12.37 %
Islip	26.5 %	27.4 %	3.0 %	5.45 %
Southold	30.5 %	23.7 %	(22.0 %)	3.54 %
Rocky Point	24.6 %	33.1 %	35.0 %	9.42 %
Shelter Island	31.8 %	33.3 %	5.0 %	13.78 %

Source: -Grade 3 and 8 computed from information in Newsday, Wednesday, May 23, 2007 Page A 30 and www.newsday.com.

-Percent of Students in Poverty from New York State Education Department: *No Child Left Behind* Title I Parts A and D, 2006-2007 Child Data Count. Internet: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/titlei/childcount0607.htm>. 9 June 2007.

-Nassau and Suffolk County poverty level from U.S. Census Bureau 2005 *American Community Survey*. Internet: <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?> 9 June 2007.



EPILOGUE: NCLB AND LONG ISLAND: CHILDREN IN POVERTY THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND

Three conclusions can be drawn from the above table and related analysis. The first is that despite improvement in student achievement, there continues to be students who remain at ELA test result level 1 and level 2, and they are represented in 36 or 28 percent of all Long Island school districts. Second, is that the growth of those left behind has grown by 33 percent in Nassau County and by 20 percent in Suffolk County. Finally, the analysis strongly suggests that there is a correlation between poverty and Long Island students not meeting the standards of NCLB. It can thus be reasoned that poverty plays a role in a student not meeting the standards of NCLB. What other explanation is there when 47 or 37 percent of all school districts on Long Island have children attending whose poverty level exceeds that of the county in which they are located? What is apparent is that if NCLB is truly to be successful and remain true to its mission that no child is to be left behind, then the reauthorized bill needs to address the role that poverty plays in education.

Supporting the analysis and narrative of NCLB that has been presented in this report are the interactive comments received from the participants in the LIESP Roundtable for Long Island's Future held at Dowling College. What follows are their thoughts.

VOICES FROM THE ROUNDTABLE FOR LONG ISLAND'S FUTURE: NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

After hearing the merits and concerns about the 2002 No Child Left Behind Legislation presented by Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) and Dr. Patrick B. Johnson of the Dowling College School of Education, the Roundtable participants focused on the crucial elements of reauthorizing NCLB. Interesting was that their perspective correlated to the table presented above.

Participants, whether they supported the current NCLB or wanted significant change to the law, understood the defining issues. Those supporting NCLB said that the legislation must be reauthorized because of the importance of having children being able to read by the third grade; because of the law's intent to address racism and the associated inequality; and because it started the discussion in the first place. Yet despite this good start, the feeling was that there needs to be more focus on: "teacher quality" and accountability, parental involvement, encouraging collaborations with community and spiritual groups that will advance student educational and intellectual growth, developing and strengthening character and integrity, and developing an experienced core of education based on balanced evidence.

Some noted that financial resources must be prioritized and reallocated to provide incentives for teacher effectiveness and teacher reallocation, in a manner that is based on school district need so our very best teachers will go into the very worst performing schools. This will change the teaching curriculum and environment.

Others supporters of NCLB suggested more competition for the public school dollar by informing parents of education choices for their children who attend poorly performing school districts. Opinions were that the choice for parents must be real, since there are few educational alternatives that conform to NCLB.

Those opposed say that NCLB, lacking the funding promised by the 2002 legislation is an unfunded mandate, is anti-teacher, is favorable to the test industry with overemphasis on testing and teaching to it, has a punitive approach to teaching and learning, focuses on bubble children, thus ignoring those most in need, and narrows curriculum to certain academic disciplines, often ignoring art, music and business. Certainly the presented table titled "January 2007 ELA Results: Children Left Behind and Linkage to Poverty" supports those opposed to NCLB.

What we know is that education attainment and achievement is a multifaceted issue that involves sociology, economics and education and that teachers are not the cause of the education gap facing America today, nor are they the cause of poverty or of our national economic decline making financing the education of poorer Americans that much more difficult.

A pervasive feeling among participants opposing NCLB was to scrap NCLB because it was ill conceived, poorly implemented and has been advocated in a politically partisan fashion. Called for was a fresh start that effectively addresses the pervasive educational inequality. However, the political reality is that there are not enough votes in the United States Senate to scrap NCLB. Given this political reality, suggestions for improving NCLB included:



-There was strong support for English Language Learning (ELL) test being administered later than the end of the first year, with each successive test following that student until the 8th grade. This will provide a baseline for student improvement and teacher effectiveness as the student advances through the grades. This is important since not all students arrive with English proficiency, with many who cannot read and write after one year. Additionally, tests should be administered for the fourth grade but administered to the same cohorts as tested in the first year of ELL. Thus, in each year it will be able to see what improvement has been made to each cohort. This will provide real and verifiable individual student improvement. This differs from testing only fourth graders, which effectively gauges what improvements have been made between previous fourth graders, which tell us only that one set of fourth graders may be more or less proficient than those that succeeded them.

-Offer and fund in-school tutoring for those cohorts who do not improve their reading level. These tutors can be provided by retired, educated and experienced individuals, even retired teachers, under a stipend program that requires a commitment of six hours per week to an in-school tutoring program for at-risk or students graded at the lowest two levels. A school faculty member will supervise and administer the program. Another benefit of this approach is that it keeps children occupied with tutoring at the very time that FBI statistics indicate that young people get in trouble. That is between dismissal from school and the time when the parent comes home from work.

-There is a concern about the array and variety of tests that students must take. Special Education students have to take a regents or alternative assessment and may inflate those that are left behind. Opinion was there needs to be a "middle assessment level" which gauges improvement with these students.

-Recognize that there are different modes of thinking: critical, analytical and creative. Teaching to tests, which is occurring so test improvement is shown so punitive financial measures are avoided, does not allow for development of creative thinking. Emphasis on NCLB should not only include reading, but should also include creative thinking. Extended response questions that evaluate critical thinking and analytical and creative skills should be included in the tests.

-With the United States workforce of this century riding on the success and effectiveness of NCLB, the lack of resources should not be the reason why a total appraisal of a student's true achievement levels should not be undertaken in the evaluation process required of NCLB. Testing for NCLB is a quick numeric quantification of a student's academic achievement, and is effective in illuminating problems. However, NCLB has been ineffective in providing a process for addressing the cost of remedying the problems. It also has shortcomings in the quantification and evaluation of a student's overall academic level. Included in this process should be other elements where the numeric test results would be just one component. Others would include portfolios created by the students, research projects, and essays that would be prepared over a period of time during each term.

-Teachers should be relieved of any administrative responsibilities and use their time to teach. Also, teachers and administrators should identify with, and proportionally reflect the race and ethnicity of the students that they teach. Talented people of color must be attracted to the teaching and administration professions.

-State education departments should not be influenced by test publishers, who should be ineligible to participate in the assessment and monitoring program of the effectiveness of the tests that they have prepared. This prevents independent evaluation of test validity and efficacy.

Then there are those who believe that a better target for resolving the education gap should be public officials, who generation after generation have not adequately funded education, thus allowing the gap to remain unabated.



While most Roundtable participants agreed that providing more funding might be the answer, consensus was that the funds had to target specific uses, with strict spending guidelines. To overcome the funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts, more focused financial solutions are required. Property tax alternatives that equalize the lack of financial resources between poorer and wealthier communities need be identified. It is an undeniable fact that good schools are well funded and failing schools are not. Educational equality is not possible when, students live in poverty, schools are unequally funded and teacher retention in poorer school districts lags behind wealthier districts.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

At a 2001 press conference, President Bush stated, "Too much precious time has lapsed in this for us to achieve what we want: every child being able to learn. Testing every child every year is the way to stop the cycle. We must care enough to ask how our children are doing." (G.W. Bush, press conference, January 2001).

As the No Child Left Behind reauthorization legislation awaits action by Congress and the President, remaining unanswered is exactly how do we fairly, effectively and realistically evaluate how America's children are doing in school? How can we do this without acceptable resources for addressing the special needs of Long Island students living in poverty? Clearly LIESP has presented a serious analysis and discussion on how to improve NCLB.

Many feel that incessant testing is not the way to guarantee that children will learn what they need for success in the 21st century. An unwanted consequence will be that for the many lessons preparing for the SLA, it would be unstimulating, extremely negative and counterproductive to their prospects for lifelong learning.

While it is certainly important to ask how our children are doing, it is far more important to provide them with the resources necessary to improve their educational experiences and to enhance their current learning while motivating them to continue learning in the future. High-stakes testing is not a solution to our current problems, but rather a symptom of what is wrong with current educational policy. Rather than focusing so much time, energy, and scarce school dollars on test preparation and testing, all involved in schools should work together to focus more directly and systematically on teaching and learning and on ways to make the American educational process more fair and equitable for all students. That was the message loud and clear from participants at the Long Island Economic and Social Policy Institute at Dowling College's Roundtable for Long Island's Future.

The sad irony is that the true legacy of NCLB legislation is likely to be that those economically disadvantaged groups that most support it will be more disadvantaged because of it. To be effective, the reauthorized NCLB priorities must not only include education advancement, but it must also recognize and address the weight that students in poverty must carry. Unfair is that this weight has been thrust on them from the social and institutional structure effecting students of color that live in poverty, as well as others trying to work their way out of poverty in the Long Island region. Resources have to be allocated that address this socio-educational-economic issue. To do otherwise, as our data indicates, will truly leave students behind, and thus begin the foundation for a permanent underclass lacking the intellectual and educational tools to access the jobs that will set them on the road out of poverty. In this global economy, education doesn't guarantee more money, but you can't earn higher wages without education.

Five years have passed since President Bush made that speech about leaving no child behind. However, that rhetoric has been replaced by hard realities. The participants at the Roundtable For Long Island's Future have seen those realities, so has LIESP, which is why we have prepared this white paper, and so have many other American parents of students. NCLB has to do more. The recommendation is to scrap No Child Left Behind. It was a good idea gone badly. Its financing was ill-conceived, its implementation was poorly executed, and its administration driven by ideology and a partisanship. Let's leave it behind. We need a fresh start that really addresses our persuasive educational inequality. America's future depends on it.



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