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African American Achievement Under No Child Left Behind Within the San Francisco Unified School District

Sekou Richards

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GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

AFRICAN AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND WITHIN THE SAN
FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

BY:
SEKOU RICHARDS

Presented to:
Dr. Jay Gonzalez

EMPA 393
Graduate Research Project in Public Management

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
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536 Mission Street
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DEDICATIONS

THANK YOU TO MY MOM WHO ASSISTED ME THROUGH THIS PROGRAM
AND ENCOURAGED ME TO CONTINUE ON DESPITE ALL SET BACKS.

IN LOVING MEMORY TO MY DEARLY DEPARTED SISTER, JILL L. HECTOR
BLEDSE.
YOU ARE MISSED!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	ABSTRACT	4
II.	CHAPTER 1	
	- INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND	5
	A. PLESSY VS. FERGUSON	5
	B. EDUCATIONAL AND SECONDARY ACT OF 1965	6
	C. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND GOALS	6
	- SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY	7
III.	CHAPTER 2	
	- LITERATURE REVIEW	9
	A. ASSESSED ISSUES	9
	B. CALIFORNIA ACCOUNTABILIY PROGRESS REPORTS	10
	C. Adequate Yearly Progeess (AYP)	10
	D. PREVIOUS FEDERAAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS	15
	E. ELEMENTARY AND SECONDAY ACT	15
	F. IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOL ACT	17
IV.	CHAPTER 3	
	METHODOLGIES	18
V.	CHAPTER 4	
	RESULTS AND FINDINGS	20
VI.	CHAPTER 5	
	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	23
VII.	APPENDIX A	
	STUDENT SURVEY	25
VIII.	APPENDIX B	
	TEACHER SURVEY	26
VIII.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	27

ABSTRACT

The literacy rates in America amongst African American secondary students (Grades 9-12) are lower than their European American counterparts. For the past six years, President George W. Bush has claimed that his No Child Left Behind initiative will help bridge the educational gap between students in lower socio-economic underperforming schools and schools that have traditionally been academically higher achieving.

The intent of No Child Left Behind is to hold teachers, administrators, and school districts accountable for the achievement rates of their students. This study will examine the success of the No Child Left Behind initiative within the San Francisco Unified School District amongst African-American students.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the separation of race in public schools is not permitted under the jurisdiction of the 14th Amendment. The separate but equal doctrine adopted in Plessy v. Ferguson, was supposed to grant the races separation of schools, however, maintain equal facilities and accommodations. The issue with the separate but equal ideology/ law was contradictory due to the lack of quality and accommodations the black facilities encompassed. The courts later decided that separate educational facilities were inherently unjust and therefore unconstitutional.

Fifty years later, public schools, while not under a governmental mandate of segregation, are still seen as segregated and unequal. The disparities of a quality education are seen most notably in low-income Black and Latino neighborhoods/ communities. The educational system in the United States is undoubtedly separated in the "haves" and "have-nots."

President George W. Bush has proclaimed that his educational reform - No Child Left Behind, which is a reauthorization of ESEA (Educational and Secondary Act of 1965) will, bridge the gap between white and black, rich and poor from an educational

standpoint. While NCLB has received countless criticism from politicians across the aisle, teachers, administrators, and parents, the promises of guaranteeing stronger schools in failing urban areas such as San Francisco, could partially determine the effectiveness of the President's educational reform if these promises are fulfilled.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has six goals:

- Goal 1: All students will attain proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014.
- Goal 2: All English learners will become proficient in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- Goal 3: All students will be taught by highly qualified teachers by the end of the 2005-2006 school years.
- Goal 4: All students will learn in school that are safe and drug free.
- Goal 5: All students will graduate high school.

In order to insure these goals are attainable, Goal 3 is seen as the catalyst for all other goal attainments. Without highly qualified teachers nothing else is seen as possible or relevant to attain.

The NCLB Act is designed to help all students meet high academic standards by requiring that states create annual assessments that measure what children know and can do in reading and math (Department of Education, NCLB Desktop Reference).

All San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) teachers of core academics must obtain Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) certification prior to the June 2008 deadline. Following the 2008 deadline, the Local Education Authority (LEA) must maintain at least 95% compliance at all schools and programs. Any teacher who has not

attained NCLB HQT status must be reported as non-compliant annually until HQT status is achieved. Non-compliant teachers will create a professional development plan and be monitored until HQT status is obtained.

Significance of Study

As early as 1840, government-mandated standardized testing was used in conjunction with America's new effort to educate the masses. The stated objective of early achievement test was to ensure that all children had equal opportunity to receive the same academic level of education (Haladyna, Haas, & Allison, 1998).

The quantifying goal of No Child Left Behind is insure 100% passage for all students regardless of background and economics. With the San Francisco Unified School district being one of the largest urban school districts in the entire United States we will be observing through this study, three traditional high schools in San Francisco with an African American population of at least 20 percent. The three schools being assed are Balboa High School, Mission High School, and Thurgood Marshall Academic High School.

The purpose of this study is to determine what effects the initiative - No Child Left Behind, which mandates the State of California to hold all districts accountable, has had on African-American 12th graders during the academic years of 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 within the three mentioned high schools.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of written sources about the effects of No Child Left Behind within the San Francisco Unified School District, with direct correlation to African Americans is extremely limited. Most of the information is secondary data gathered by the California State Department of Education. These reports are known primarily as School Accountability Report Cards. However, there is a plethora of information in regards to No Child Left Behind in general. The purpose of this literature review is get a complete and accurate understanding of why African-American academic success has been substandard for so many years and the remedies that have been taken and are in the process of being implemented. Therefore, the following issues will be assessed within the literature review:

ASSESSED ISSUES

1. Statistical finding within the California Accountability Progress Reports
2. Understanding the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)
3. Legislative mandates on NCLB
4. NCLB (No Child Left Behind) mandates on states
5. Background information on previous educational standards
6. Teacher preparedness and approved certifications
7. African-American and European-American literacy correlations
8. Consequences for not meeting AYP (NCLB) requirements

California Accountability Progress Reports

The 2006 Accountability Progress Report (APR) provides information about schools and school districts prior to the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year in regards to their (schools and school districts) progress on the State Academic Performance for the 2005-2006 reporting cycle. The Accountability Report is based on a growth model which measures the academic success of a school on the basis of how much it improves. The main intent of the Accountability Progress Report is to insure that school districts respond to inadequate and inefficient progression of students. The State of California, like every other state in the Union, must meet particular federal requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The Accountability Report under NCLB determines academic success on how well schools meet annual performance targets.

Each high school in San Francisco publishes a School Accountability Report, which is mandated by the State of California. The three high schools that are being assessed - Balboa High School, Mission High School, and Thurgood Marshall High School, all address the issue of African-American underachievement specifically and the measures that are to be taken in the next school year to rectify the disparity. According to the reports, the primary concern amongst each school is the abnormally higher levels of suspensions and expulsions of African-American students. A reform in disciplinary actions and implementations are mentioned, however, there are no

outlined methods of how to raise the academic performance solely amongst African American students but all students collectively.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal government mandates that each state establishes a benchmark in which all students are required to meet. According to, The ABC's of "AYP" - Raising Achievement for All Students, written by The Education Trust, in order to determine whether schools and districts are adequately meeting these expectations, they are required to monitor and measure each groups Adequate Yearly Progress. Schools are expected to meet clearly defined goals for teaching all students to state standards. According to the NCLB legislation, states determine what all students should know and be able to do. Each state must set a specific score on its tests that indicate whether students at different grade levels are proficient in language arts and math (The Education Trust, Updated Summer 2004). Being proficient means that a student is on grade level in math and language arts (The Education Trust, 2004).

States calculate the starting point of the AYP. Each individual state is permitted to establish what percent of students should be proficient in a particular subject. States are permitted to set standards as low as they deem fit in accordance with NCLB, however, each state is required to improve substantially over the course of a each year and to eventually attain a 100% language and math proficiency rate by 2014.

The beginning targets have to be set at least as the greater of the following two numbers:

- the percent proficient in the lower performing group of students in the state (low income students, students with disabilities, students who are limited-English proficient, or students from each major racial and ethnic group); or
- the percent proficient in the school at the 20th percentile of student enrollment within the state (The Education Trust).

In order to determine the percent proficient in the schools at the 20th percentile of student enrollment in the state, states first rank all schools according to the overall percentage of students meeting proficiency on the state assessment from the highest achieving to the lowest. In addition, starting with the students at the bottom of the list, they move up, adding the number of students in each school along the way until 20% of the state's enrollments have been counted (The Education Trust).

The state is permitted to establish different starting baseline points for individual grade levels or calculate individual baselines for elementary, middle, and high schools. However, states are not permitted to lower a baseline for a particular group of students - i.e. special education, remedial students. All students - limited English learners, low-income students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, must pass the state test. This mandated practice forces schools and school districts to target and help those

students who are below grade level proficiency in math and language arts.

Performance testing for high school has not yet been developed; however, high schools are still required to adhere to the AYP by means of the graduation rate's through the California Exit Exams, which differ from NCLB testing due to the fact that high school exit exams technically are taken throughout a students high school tenure and not in a sanctioned grade. The graduation rate is utilized in the same fashion as school testing for elementary and middle schools, in that the lowest graduating group of students must meet the state established baseline.

Under NCLB, the AYP must be creditable and the results must reflect the achievement of the entire student body. Therefore, 95% of all students and all groups must be administered the test. Those students who do not participate because of approved medical reasons will be omitted from participation rate calculations.

If the school as a whole and each individual group within the school has met or exceeded the statewide goal in math and language arts, 95% of all students and groups of students have taken the test, and the school has met the statewide benchmark, then the school is considered to have met AYP (Education Trust, 2004).

Sam Dillon of the New York Times reported in an article titled, "1 in 4 Schools Fall Short Under Bush Law" are profusely suffering because of the stringent requirements placed on these schools. The dichotomy is the fact the non-English speakers and the disabled

students or EC (Exceptionally Challenged) students are required to meet the same the academic goals and attainments of traditional performing students, hence causing for one in four schools failing under the NCLB legislation.

Those students who are granted exemption from taking any state mandated exam are those students with severe cognitive disabilities for who grade-level standards not appropriate. School districts can exempt 1% of all students from grade-level test who meet this criterion (The Education Trust, 2004). The purpose of this 1% limit is to curtail a system that has established lower expectations for students with disabilities and ensures that all students are granted the skills to attain appropriate grade-level standards.

There are seven steps that are taken over seven years to help those students within schools that are unable to make AYP. Schools that receive Title I funding - a program which provides extra funding for additional educational assistance to low-income students, will be required to adhere to the conditions set forth in the stipulations of not meeting AYP standards:

- Year one: A school may continue to operate as normal
- Year two: School finds out it didn't make AYP the previous year and must identify areas that need attention.
- Year three: School is labeled as "needing improvement." School must identify specific areas that need improvement. Parents are given the option transfer their children to higher performing schools.
- Year four: If school's continually not meet the AYP, then funding will be provided to assist those students who are failing to reach the state established benchmark. Tutors and other supplemental educational services would be provided.

- Year five: If a school continues to not meet the standards then the school is identified for corrective action. The school must do one of the following: appoint outside expert, new curriculum, extend the school day, restructure the schools internal organizational structure, decrease management authority, replace the staff who are "relevant to the failure to make AYP."
- Year six: School must continue corrective action and develop an alternative plan which would include one of the following: reopen the school as a public charter school, replace all or most of the staff responsible for lack of progress, enter into a contract with a private company, turn over operation and management to the state.
- Year seven: Implement alternative plan from year six.

Monique McMillian, from North Carolina Central University, discusses the issue of African American underachievement in an article titled, "Is No Child Left Behind, 'Wise Schooling' for African American Male Students?" Within this article, McMillian discusses the issues of the achievement gap between African American students and European-American students within the United States. In her article, she argues that African-American students in comparison to European American students have relatively maintained the same percentage range of literacy for the past 30 years. One of her objectives in ridding the African-American achievement gap is to eliminate the "soft bigotry of low expectations" (McMillian p.26). The causes of the African-American achievement gap are discussed within McMillian's article along with debatable theories. For years, theories have been developed on why African American's achieve at such lower levels than other ethnic groups. One of the most famous and controversial writings was, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, written by

Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray. This book establishes the theory that African American brain capacity is the smallest of all human ethnicities. McMillian refutes this absurd theory by addressing certain disadvantage variables such as quality of schools, home-structure, and pre-school availability (McMillian p.27).

An editorial from the Los Angeles Times, "Left Far, Far Behind; Kids and schools are unfairly being punished by overly rigid educational reform (October 2004)." The editorial examines the rewriting of the educational laws in California that mandates schools to be at proficient level of literacy and mathematics skills. However, the term 'proficient' has different interpretations in every state in America (Los Angeles Times pg.B20 October 2004). Proficient in California is defined as being on track to attend a four year university. Other states interpret 'proficient' much softer, therefore, appearing stronger academically on paper than in reality.

Previous Federal Educational Programs

Elementary and Secondary Educational Act

The Elementary and Secondary Educational Act was enacted nearly forty years ago by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Act is an elaborate program that funds primary and secondary education. The funds are allotted for the development of teachers, school resources to promote educational learning, and parental involvement. This Act

has been renewed every five years since 1970. No Child Left Behind is an extension of ESEA of 1965.

Title I, a primary and essential statute of both the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act and No Child Left Behind was erected through the ESEA. Title I (Title One) is a set of programs established by the U.S. Department of Education to distribute funding to schools with high poverty rates and low-income families (usually greater than 55%). Title I is the largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education (funded at \$10.4 billion in FY 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Education, schools with poverty rates of 50% or higher received 73% of Title I funds the over the past 8 years, and nearly all (96%) of the highest-poverty schools (those with 75 percent or more low-income students) received Title I funds.

Title I's intent is to provide reform throughout non-performing/under-performing schools through scientifically/theoretical based instructional tactics. Funding provided to Title I was flexible in that it was allowed to be used to provide additional instructional staff, professional development, extended-time programs, and other strategies for raising student achievement in high-poverty schools.

No Child Left Behind strengthens Title I accountability by requiring states to implement statewide accountability systems covering all public schools and students. Assessment results, as well as state progress objectives, must be categorized by race,

poverty, disability, ethnicity, and English literacy to guarantee that no group is substandard in learning.

Improving America's School Act - 1994

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, signed/renewed the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1964 (which must be renewed every 5 years). In renewing the Act, the president virtually reworded aspects of Title I, however, changing nothing in doing so. The main difference in the Improving America's School Act of 1994 and NCLB is the accountability factor. While the 1994 Act gave billions of dollars to schools (approximately 9 billion) to educational agencies, the guidelines specifications on how the money was to be spent was not directly addressed. The Federal government under the 1994 Act did not mandate direct inconclusive consequences for students not obtaining specified benchmarks. Each state was entitled to set (if any) its own standards of educational achievement. In California any district that doesn't meet set educational standards is "reconstituted". This process entails the State relieving administrators from their duties within a school or in the case of Oakland Unified School District, the Superintendent of schools. The State Superintendent of schools assigns an administrator/ intern superintendent to the district(s) to re-establish/ constitute a successful plan for obtaining higher academic performances.

The biggest variance in the 1994 Act and today's NCLB legislation is the level of increased accountability.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGIES

With such detailed statistical and secondary data provided through the Accountability Progress Report, I will be able to compare and contrast my primary data and the San Francisco Unified School District data (secondary data).

A qualitative research study will be utilized to determine if African American 12th grade students from three traditional San Francisco High Schools, under the federally mandated initiatives, No Child Left Behind, with a population of not less than 20% African American are improving academically through the measurements of standardized testing and unconditional promotion.

The secondary data will encompass information provided from the three schools - Balboa High School, Mission High School, and Thurgood Marshall High School. This data will be obtained from each school's Accountability Report Card, which is published by each school. The sample population will include 25 African American students from each of the respective schools. The 25 student sample is approximately 12%-15% of each of the African American populations in the three academic institutions. The percentage range of the African American population of the three schools is 22.7% - 28% of the total populations.

The hypothesis for my research proposal states that African American 12th grade students in the San Francisco Unified School

District are improving academically through the No Child Left Behind initiative, by measurement of standardized testing results. My independent variable will be the No Child Left Behind initiative and the standardized test used for measuring academic achievement. The independent variable would be the academic improvement of the 12th grade African American students from the three selected high schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

My primary data will be obtained through the methods of surveying and interviewing both teachers and students about their viewpoints and outlooks on NCLB. The proposed study would enable a comparison between the viewpoints of those implementing the NCLB initiative and the actual outcomes of the NCLB mandate. Two type of surveys will be administered - a students survey and a teacher survey. Both surveys will be structured using an ordinal scale for the purpose of identifying and categorizing the particular degree levels of satisfaction with NCLB (O'Sullivan p.104). Considering that students are less informed about the intricate policy functions of NCLB, their survey will be composed mainly of perception questions (Appendix A). Twenty-five teachers from all three schools combined will be administered the survey. The questionnaire for teachers will include their perspectives on the operations, fairness, and effectiveness of the federal initiative (Appendix B) based on their direct implementations of NCLB. Furthermore, the teacher's surveys will be measured using an ordinal scale with the values ranging from 1-4.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

From all the data compiled, the twenty-five teachers who agreed to the survey overwhelmingly disapproved of the NCLB initiative. In response to question four on Appendix B, teachers strongly agree that No Child Left Behind puts an undue burden on both teachers and the school district. Teachers who were surveyed felt as if though their focus has changed from educating the entire person - mind, body, and soul. Instead, these teachers see themselves as teaching to a test that is viewed unfair and not withstanding valid interpretation of a student's ability. However, teachers did average a 3.12 on question two of Appendix B. Teachers felt that many of the goals and initiatives of NCLB would be beneficial if federal recommendations included funding. For instance, it is suggested that students who constantly are unable to meet particular benchmarks be provided a tutor from the district or private entity. However, when requested, teachers are often told that funds are no longer dispersible for the particular school year.

The student's responses to their survey were very mixed. Many of the twelfth grade students had known of NCLB. Some student's jokingly referred to it as the 'Pink Slip Program.' When asked why, I was told because their teachers claim that if they don't meet state standards then they (the teachers) will receive their pink slips.

Survey question two stated, "My instructor teaches toward testing instead of wholesome knowledge," had drawn mixed response from all respondents. From the interviews conducted, students claimed that some of their teacher never mentioned NCLB to claiming that one teacher actually read standardized test questions from the test booklet the day before administering the exam.

Many students feel that a strong emphasis has been placed on reading and mathematics than in previous years. The only question to garner a score of lower than 2.0 was question seven. Question seven asked, "Do you consider yourself a strong test-taker?" Of the 75 students surveyed, a score of 1.98 was the given average for the question.

The literacy levels for current 12th grade students were obtained from each of the schools Accountability Report Cards. The African-American literacy and math comprehension rates were analyzed from the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. At Mission High School in 2005-2006, 12% of the current 12th grade students were above the 50th percentile in literacy (CA Department of Education pg16). In the 2006-2007 school term, 15% of the students had raised their literacy rates above the 50th percentile mark. In mathematics, 10% of the African American students scored above the 50th percentile in 2005-2006 compared to 14% in the 2006-2007 school term.

Balboa High School in 2005-2006 had 7% of the current 12th grade students scoring above the 50th percentile in literacy (CA Department

of Education pg17). In 2006-2007, 9% of the students were above the 50th percentile in literacy. In mathematics, 10% of the students scored above the 50th percentile and in the following school term there was no recorded change in achievement.

Thurgood Marshall High School in 2005-2006 had 32% of the African American population testing above the 50th percentile benchmark in literacy. In 2006-2007, 37% of the African-American's tested above the 50th percentile in literacy. Fifteen percent of the African-American students at Thurgood Marshall tested above the 50th percentile in mathematics in 2005-2006. In 2006-2007, 18% of African-Americans scored above the 50th percentile (CA Department of Education p36).

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be debated that the No Child Left Behind educational reform is one of the most sweeping and progressive changes to the educational system in decades. The purpose of this initiative is solely to help underachieving students regardless of race or sex. Despite the lack of popularity of NCLB, my findings about the progress of African American students under the No Child Left Behind initiative in San Francisco was congruent with my primary and secondary research. Under the program, African American students have improved within the San Francisco Unified School District. The students who were surveyed felt as if though their academic performance had improved over the course of three years. Regardless of the severe lack of approved literacy rates (at or above 50th percentile) amongst African American students, upward trends in those rates have continually occurred under NCLB.

The secondary data that was collected shows an increase in the achievement of African American students under NCLB. It could be objective to say that NCLB is responsible for the increased rates of literacy and mathematics ability; however, rises in performance prior to NCLB amongst African Americans were non-existent. Of the 75 students surveyed, 85% had claimed to be in the process of applying to at least one post-secondary institution. Even though aesthetics wasn't included within the study, it was apparent that the school

that was the best kept, orderly, clean, free of graffiti and littering (Thurgood Marshall) had the higher test scores and academic performances. While I doubt this was the sole reason for greater performances it's a factor that should be observed in future studies.

Based on my findings, I would recommend that No Child Left Behind include other subject areas such as science. With such a high tech industry that we live in today, science could offer more opportunities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, the State of California, under the mandates of No Child Left Behind, only requires reading and mathematics regulated and monitored within every school district in California.

APPENDIX A
(Student Survey)

- 1. I consider myself very informed on the federal educational program – No Child Left Behind.**

(1 – I am NOT familiar / 4– I am fully familiar)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 2. My teacher teaches toward testing instead of “wholesome” knowledge.**

1.....2.....3.....4

- 3. My teacher mentions No Child Left Behind with a frequency of:**

1.Never.....2. Once in a while..... 3. Often..... 4. Constantly

- 4. I feel as if though my math skills are for the most part strong.**

(1 – Weak / 4 – Strong)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 5. My skills in grammar, writing, and literature are for the most part strong.**

(1 – Weak / 4 – Strong)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 6. I fee well prepared for the rigors of school beyond high school.**

1.....2.....3.....4

- 7. I consider myself a strong test taker.**

(1 – Weak / 4 – Strong)

1.....2.....3.....4

Appendix B
(Teacher survey)

- 1. There has been an increased emphasis on raising test scores than in years prior to NCLB.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 2. If given the resources, No Child Left Behind could be more beneficial to students.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 3. Regardless of test scores under the tenure of No Child Left Behind, I have seen a positive change in my students' academics.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 4. Regardless of test scores under the tenure of No Child Left Behind, I have seen a negative change in my students' academics.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 5. African-American students have faired well under No Child Left Behind.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

- 6. There needs to be more of an emphasis on grades received in the classroom over the course of the school term, than on any lone administered test.**

(1 – Disagree / 4 – Agree)

1.....2.....3.....4

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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, UNITED STATES

<http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>

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