

Utilizing Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People to Implement No Child Left Behind

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ABSTRACT

With this manuscript, the authors provided an overview of the salient points of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and implementation strategies using Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989). The ultimate achievability of reaching the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standard is discussed in relationship to the statistical probability. Having highly qualified teachers and trained paraprofessionals in classrooms are additional standards that are discussed. Once the standards are examined, the reader is presented with practical, workable suggestions for increasing student performance in reading, writing and mathematics over the next ten years.

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 80's and early 90's, school administrators across the nation embraced the teachings of Stephen Covey. As educational leaders planned for change, Covey's (1989) *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was the model utilized. Districts sent entire administrative teams to Covey workshops to understand his writings more fully and, in many cases, to become certified as a Covey trainer. Covey's seven habits are as follows:

Habit One – Be Proactive – The Habit of Responsibility

Habit Two– Begin With The End In Mind – The Habit of Leadership

Habit Three- Put First Things First – The Habit of Management

Habit Four- Think Win-Win – The Habit of Mutual Benefit

Habit Five - Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood – The Habit of Communication

Habit Six - Synergize – The Habit of Interdependence

Habit Seven - Sharpen The Saw – The Habit of Continuous Improvement

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, administrators found the timing appropriate to use Covey's model to implement the new federal mandate. As such, educational leaders throughout the United States are using Covey's seven habits to plan strategically how to meet the new accountability standards of NCLB signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002.

NCLB replaces the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which has been reauthorized by Congress systematically from inception in 1965. Not since the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957 has the federal government mandated such all-inclusive charges to public school administrators. No matter what leadership model, systems theory, or strategic planning model selected, the accountability movement, using various tests, has arrived with the year 2014 as the target date for completion of all facets of the legislation. NCLB has both critics and supporters. The critics are already lining up to try to defeat President Bush for re-election thinking that if he goes, so does NCLB. The supporters of NCLB are touting the positive aspects of accountability and competition for public schools. Many fail to realize that U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, with Bush's full support, presented the legislation to Congress. It was a positive bipartisan

vote of Congress that placed the bill on the President's desk that he quickly signed into law. With much pomp and circumstance, Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy joined President Bush announcing the passage of NCLB. Covey (1989) would label this action as his "Habit 4 – Think Win-Win" (p.204). With the presidential election rapidly approaching, the public can anticipate that this single piece of federal legislation will be gaining momentum and attention, especially as the various school districts continue to use the court system to bring the legal challenges to full implementation of NCLB. Up to this time, districts have initiated *limited* legal action due to lack of standing; a district has to be affected adversely before the courts will hear the respective cases. The Reading School District v. Pennsylvania Department of Education (2004) is one of the more recent cases to appear on the horizon. Reading joins a list of other districts throughout the nation that contend the federal government does not have the right to impose unfounded mandates on public schools.

The role of the federal government in education dates back to the Northwest Ordinance of 1785 and the later Ordinance of 1787 when the legislators stated, "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged by the states" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). The organization and administration of public schools received additional attention from the federal government in the early 1950's when the United States Supreme Court decided to hear segregation cases from South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and Kansas. In the 1954 landmark decision *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, the courts held that separate but equal as espoused in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case "was held to have no place in the field of public education" (Brown, 1954). Unrelated to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board*, the next major involvement from the federal government took place with the enactment of the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Money literally poured from the federal government to public schools to stimulate and increase science and mathematics education. The nation was soundly awakened to the fact that the Russians were ahead of us in space exploration. In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that brought focus to disadvantaged students in reading and mathematics. ESEA was funded through federal Title I funds from 1965 to the present time. President Bush, with bipartisan support in Congress, changed ESEA to NCLB and established a federally mandated accountability system for all public schools in the nation.

OVERVIEW OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

School administrators throughout the nation have followed Covey's (1989) "Habit 5 – Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood" (p.235) when approaching NCLB. When President Bush first signed Public Law 107-110, later named No Child Left Behind, educational leaders took a wait and see attitude so that federal and state leaders could interpret the 700 plus page document. As originally written, the law has four main themes: (a) all children can achieve to high standards; (b) districts must be accountable for results; (c) states and districts must have flexibility; and (d) districts must focus on scientifically based research (Public Law 107-110,2001). The overall purpose is "...to ensure that all children can have fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum proficiency on challenging state academic

achievement standards and state academic assessments” (Public Law 107-110, 2001). The ultimate goal is to have ALL students demonstrate AYP on some type of approved reading and mathematics assessment system in grades 3-8 and not less than once during grades 10 thru 12. This can be achieved by placing highly qualified teachers in every classroom in the nation. By definition NCLB states: “Highly qualified elementary (K-6) requires a Bachelor’s degree and rigorous state tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and other basic parts of the elementary school curriculum.” And “Highly qualified middle/secondary requires a Bachelor’s degree and either a core content test or academic major, graduate degree, or coursework equivalent to an undergraduate major in the subject area to be taught” (Public Law 107-110, 2001). In addition to the annual testing, school leaders will be held accountable for a minimum student attendance rate of 95% in the elementary school and a high school graduation rate of at least 95%. Assessments, attendance, and graduation are the three accountability issues that can lead the state to take corrective action against the building and school district.

Systematic, mandated corrective actions imposed when failing to meet AYP begins in year one with a warning. Year 2 requires the district to develop an improvement plan and provide school choice within the district if the district is large enough and has available multiple building choices for the families. Year 3 mandates an improvement plan, supplemental services such as before/after school tutoring, and school choice across school districts. Year 4 corrective action requires changes in the leadership, curriculum and delivery of education combined with supplying supplemental services, allowing school choice (not limited to public school choice), and implementing other strategies leading to the attainment of AYP. Year 5 brings the possible privatization of the public school, reconstituting the staff (teachers and administrators) and converting the school to a charter or cyber school. Year 6 could result in the state taking control and administering the schools.

Other provisions of the law that are not attracting as much public scrutiny but yet require educational leaders to respond and to react are addressing the needs of limited English proficiency (LEP) students, consolidating federal funds from fourteen grant programs to one major application, publishing state and local report cards, and basing educational programs on scientifically based research.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

There are three areas of accountability for public schools to demonstrate AYP: (a) assessing students yearly in grades 3- 8 and once in grades 10 –12 using either a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced test with the ultimate result of having all students score at the proficient or advanced level by the year 2014; (b) maintaining a student attendance rate of 95% in elementary and/or middle school grades; and (c) achieving a minimum student graduation rate of 95%. Educational leaders will have to demonstrate continuous progress in the attainment of these areas by annually distributing a report card to the public. For achievement to take place school administrators will need to be “Pro-active” (Covey, 1989, p.67) requiring the superintendent to champion the potential for success

and to begin strategic planning by “Putting First Things First” (Covey 1989, p.145). As the leader, the superintendent will need to think in terms of the whole and provide for opportunities for the parts to fit into the whole. Covey (1989) would label this activity as “Habit 2 – Begin With the End in Mind” (p.95). Including all parties into the decision making process and the development of the plan will bring “synergy” (Covey 1989, p. 261) to the organization and result in a “Win-Win” (Covey 1989, p. 204) situation for the students and staff with the ultimate goal of attainment in the three areas of AYP.

Scientifically based research is an area that the federal government has included in NCLB, so it is fitting to take a look at the statistical probability of having all students score proficient or above on a state assessment approved by the federal government by the year 2014. Each state is allowed to select the assessment instruments as long as it meets the criteria imposed by the federal government. Texas, home of President Bush and Secretary of Education Rod Paige, used the criterion-referenced Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Test, and the norm-referenced Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), while Iowa will continue to use the norm-referenced Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Pennsylvania was already using the state developed criterion-referenced Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) for grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 and is in the process of selecting a norm-referenced test to administer in grades 4, 6 and 7. “Seventeen states administer only criterion-referenced tests and two states—Montana and South Dakota—use only norm-referenced tests in their state assessment systems. The remaining 29 states administer a combination of criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests” (Goertz, Duffy & Le Floch, 2001). (See below for definitions and further discussion.)

NCLB contains four levels of academic performance in reading and mathematics: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. One feature of the Act is that by the year 2014 *all* students must perform at the proficient or advanced level in reading and mathematics, as noted above. Between now and 2014, however, schools must make AYP; that is, each succeeding year a larger percentage of students must achieve at least at the proficient level until 2014 when all students must achieve at least at the proficient level. (In order for a school to make AYP, each subgroup, e.g., students with diagnosed learning disabilities and students from minority racial groups, must meet the percentages.) This feature raises a fundamental question: Is it possible for *all* students to perform at least at the proficient level? An attempt to answer this question requires a look at test standardization.

Standardized tests are bifurcated into two types: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. A test is norm-referenced when an individual’s score is interpreted in light of the other individuals’ scores, whereas a test is criterion-referenced when an individual’s score is interpreted in light of a particular standard. Ebel and Frisbie (1991), however, asserted that the terms norm-referenced and criterion-referenced “more precisely describe types of test-score interpretations” (p. 34). As such, it is possible to interpret any test—standardized or non-standardized—in a norm- or criterion-referenced manner. For example, suppose a teacher administers a test that he/she constructed—a non-standardized test—to a class of 25 students. A student whom we shall call Ashley

receives a 75 on the test. The teacher tells Ashley that her score of 75 is the third highest score on the test. This is a norm-referenced interpretation because the teacher is comparing Ashley's score with the other students' scores. The score of 75 in this case indicates that Ashley did fairly well on the test. (The teacher may have constructed a difficult test, or the teacher did not effectively convey the material). If, however, Ashley's score of 75 is the lowest score on the test, then that is an indication that Ashley did not do well on the test.

Now suppose the teacher establishes a score of 70 as the passing score on the test. Any student who has a score of 70 or higher passes the test, whereas any student who has a score of 69 or below fails the test. The teacher tells Ashley that her score of 75 is a passing score. This is a criterion-referenced interpretation because the teacher interprets Ashley's score of 75 in light of the standard 70, the passing score. If the passing score were 80, then Ashley would not have passed the test. When a test is criterion-referenced, it is possible for all students to pass the test, and it is possible for all students to fail the test. Hence, whether Ashley's score is the third highest in the class or the lowest in the class is irrelevant because the interpretation is criterion-referenced.

Good, well-constructed standardized tests hold in common three characteristics. First, the tests are expertly constructed. Ideally, experts in both the discipline and psychometrics collaborate in the test construction. Second, the tests contain instructions for uniform administration and scoring. And, third, the tests have manuals that contain tables of norms for norm-referenced interpretation. We shall focus on this third characteristic.

Through a complex process of sampling, the test constructors establish a sample of students called the norm group. For interpretations to be meaningful and accurate, this norm group must be representative of the students who will ultimately take the test and be assessed on their performance on the test. After the test is administered to the norm group, the test constructors establish the norms by calculating a series of standard scores. For standardized tests that school districts choose to administer to their students, the most commonly used standard score, but, unfortunately, the one most subject to misinterpretation, is the grade-equivalent score (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2003). The grade-equivalent score is determined by taking the median score, i.e., the score that has an equal number of scores above and below it. This score then becomes the score needed to perform at the particular grade level. For example, suppose the test is given to a norm group of fifth-grade students at the end of October. The median score of the norm group is 36 correct responses out of a perfect score of 50. Hence, a score of 36 constitutes a grade-equivalent score of 5.2, which means the second month of fifth grade. Any fifth-grade student with a score of 36 is then regarded as performing at the second month of fifth-grade. Fifth-grade students with a score above 36 are performing above the 5.2 level, and students with a score below 36 are performing below the 5.2 level. It is important to note that the standardization process necessitates that roughly half the fifth-grade students will perform below the grade standard. Any school district whose students are performing at national norms will have roughly half its students performing below the grade standard and half its students performing above the grade standard.

Another common standard score is the *T*-score. *T*-scores are scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. As such, the computation of *T*-scores require that the mean rather than the median be used. If, however, the norm group is sufficiently large, the mean and median will be virtually the same. Assuming that the median score of 36 on the fifth-grade test also constitutes the mean, the score of 36 will have a *T*-score of 50. Hence, roughly half of the test scores will have *T*-scores below 50, and half the test scores will have *T*-scores above 50. The theory behind the normal distribution tells us that if the norm group is sufficiently large, 34.13% of the students will have test scores whose *T*-scores are between 40 and 50, and an equal percentage of students whose test scores have *T*-scores between 50 and 60. The theory further tells us that 13.59% of the students will have test scores with *T*-scores between 30 and 40, and an equal percentage of students with *T*-scores between 60 and 70. Finally, 2.28% of the students will have test scores with corresponding *T*-scores below 30, and 2.28% of the students will have test scores with *T*-scores above 70.

Although there are other commonly reported standard scores, we shall forego a discussion of them, as an understanding of grade-equivalent scores and *T*-scores should help us answer the question posed above. It should be emphasized, however, that the generic formula that results in *T*-scores is capable of providing standard scores with a different mean and standard deviation. The standard scores provided by the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), the test that most institutions of higher education use as part of their admissions criteria, have a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 for the verbal section of the test and for the mathematics section of the test. That means that about half of the norm group had a verbal score below 500 and about half of the norm group had a verbal score above 500.

After a state establishes the standard scores for the test that it will use to comply with the strictures of the NCLB, it must determine which standard score demarcates below basic performance from basic performance; which standard score demarcates basic performance from proficient performance; and which standard score demarcates proficient performance from advanced performance. Given that the goal of the NCLB is to have all students perform at least at the proficient level by the year 2014, the salient standard score is the one that demarcates basic performance from proficient performance. If the state establishes the mean standard score as the demarcation between basic and proficient performance, then roughly one half of the students will meet the criterion, i.e., they will have a standard score in either the proficient or advanced level, and roughly half of the students will not meet the criterion, i.e., they will have a standard score in either the basic or below basic level. If the state establishes as the demarcation between basic and proficient performance the score that is one standard deviation below the mean, then, using the percentages of the normal distribution provided above, roughly 84% of the students will meet the criterion, whereas roughly 16 percent of the students will not meet the criterion. If the state establishes as the demarcation between basic and proficient performance the score that is two standard deviations below the mean, then roughly 98% of the students will meet the criterion, while roughly 2% of the students will not meet the criterion.

Former President Clinton once proposed that by 1999 every state, using a national test, should test all fourth-grade students in reading to see if students meet national standards. This laudable but statistically questionable goal animated Fry (1998) to respond, "...even the President of the United States can't get rid of the normal distribution curve" (p. 367). Therefore, it appears to us that there are two ways, neither of which is satisfactory nor meaningful, that *all* students will perform at least at the proficient level. One way is to set the proficiency level at the lowest possible standard score. The second way is not to renorm the test but to use the norms that are currently in place. This second way will require that the students taking the test in 2014 perform on the tests at a higher level than students taking the test prior to 2014. This second way is not satisfactory because highly regarded, ubiquitous standardized achievement tests are renormed about every six years (T. P. Hogan, personal communication, January 30, 2004).¹ Hence, even if students in succeeding years perform at a higher level academically, the renorming will still mean that some students will perform below the score that demarcates the basic from the proficient level, unless that score is the lowest possible standard score.

Even though policy makers cannot eliminate the normal distribution curve, educational leaders and teachers should eschew complacency and adopt scientifically verified policies and strategies designed to improve student learning. Maximizing learning on the part of all students should be the goal of educational leaders and teachers, even while recognizing that current test standardization procedures and the normal distribution curve make it impossible for all students to perform above a *meaningful* standard.

Everyone knows that individuals do not rise to low expectations so it is appropriate for the federal government to raise the level of student performance. Reaching that higher level, however, presents certain challenges that could result in just the opposite effect in the states. Expectations are raised but the passing score on the criterion- reference tests are lowered so that nearly all students can comply with the federal mandate of being at the proficient level by the year 2014. Two states serve as prime examples of this phenomenon taking place. New York state education officials have been concerned about the number of students unable to pass the state Regents Examination for graduation so instead of maintaining the level of expectation, officials simply decided to lower the passing score on the examination. In Texas, after the *New York Times* did an investigation of the Houston test results and found wide discrepancies between the criterion-referenced state developed TAAS and the norm-referenced Stanford Achievement Test, state leaders quickly eliminated TAAS and replaced it with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test (Schemo & Fessenden, 2003). Changing tests is not the only way in which schools may attempt to raise the scores. Although illegal, according to NCLB, some students have been excluded from taking the test. Other districts have uniformly under reported dropouts and over reported attendance. With the high stakes testing and large funding issues, the federal government will need to monitor closely the AYP of all schools. As NCLB brings more focus to public schools individuals will clearly see in each district those that are managers and those that are the true leaders. As Bennis (1989) clearly stated: "Leaders are people who do the right things; managers are people who do things right" (p.18).

The focus thus far has been on AYP as it relates to tests and test results. Two other aspects that need some attention are the mandated 95% attendance rate in elementary and the mandated 95% graduation rate in high school. In order to meet these expectations, educational leaders will have to implement fully Covey's (1989) "Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence" (p. 261) – by developing an even stronger relationship with the family. School administrators have to take a positive stance in communicating the need for daily attendance, not only to comply with NCLB, but also to insure that students are learning. Saying there is a need to communicate more effectively is far easier than actually having the parents understand the importance of daily attendance, even from an educator's perspective. Recently, in a graduate class the various requirements of NCLB were the topic of discussion. When discussing the attendance requirement, one graduate student (a teacher) indicated that he may take his child out of school on a vacation every year, and no school official is going to prevent him from doing so. He further indicated that his child learns more on the trip than in school. This educator is very typical of parents/families today. How then does a school leader bring the district into compliance with a 95% attendance rate if the "customers," that is, parents, do not see the need? Following that thought process how does an educational administrator guarantee a 95% graduation rate if, in fact, graduation is based on attendance, completion of schoolwork, and passing a mandated state, federally approved, test?

Another aspect of AYP that needs to be addressed is the impact the disaggregated students have on the entire building. AYP in the three areas of testing, attendance, and graduation is reported for the total population, as well as for the disaggregated groups of students according to race/ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic level, gender, migrant status, and limited English proficiency. It is not uncommon for the school to achieve overall compliance with the various standards but when the information from one or more disaggregated groups displays a deficiency the entire building is labeled as "needs improvement." An example would be a small, rural school district that has a special needs population in excess of 30%. All grade levels that took the state assessment scored proficient or advanced as a total group but when the special needs population was reported separately the district was placed on the school "needs improvement" list. The even greater issue that needs to be reconciled is the conflict in language between the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and NCLB. The IDEA requires special accommodations for special needs students, while NCLB requires disabled students to be tested with all students and the test results reported in the aggregate and disaggregate forms. As of yet, no legal action has been taken concerning this aspect of NCLB.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

At the start of the 2001-2002 school year there were approximately 53.2 million students being educated in roughly 95,000 public elementary and secondary schools in nearly 17,000 individual school districts in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. (www.nces.ed.gov/surveys). Section 1119 of NCLB specifies that all states

“shall include an annual increase in the percentage of highly qualified teachers at each local education agency and school, to ensure that all teachers teaching in core academic subjects in each public elementary school and secondary school are highly qualified not later than the end of the 2005-2006 school year” (Public Law 107-110, 115 Stat. 1506). Looking carefully at the target date educational leaders will have to follow Covey’s (1989) “Habit 3: Put First Things First” (p. 145). Putting first the employment of all highly qualified teachers should result in the highly qualified teachers being able to stimulate academic improvements among the students. If students improve academically, their scores on the state assessments will improve; as a result, the district will make AYP. Ideally, that is the goal of NCLB. Realistically, having all teachers highly qualified is dependent on what each state considers to be the definition of “highly qualified”. NCLB allows the states to determine the qualifications for the credentialing of teachers in each state.

When one examines the teaching certification requirements in each of the fifty states plus Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands a person will clearly see that practically no two states have identical qualifications. The myriad of titles used by the states – professional educator, interim provisional educator, temporary certificate, provisional certificate, reciprocal secondary license, type A, B or C or level I or II certificate and many others – adds confusion to the whole concept of what is a highly qualified teacher (“Types of licenses, 2002). Covey’s (1989) “Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence” (p.261) – is clearly what the federal government intended with this section of the law. There is a need for interdependence but at the same time one needs to value diversity and differences in approaches (Covey, 1989). Pennsylvania is one of the leading states in the nation to certify teachers and to have better than 97% of the teachers classified as highly qualified under NCLB (Cooke, 2004). Only 5200 emergency certificates were issued in 2001-2002 with nearly 1400 of those emergency certificates utilized in the Philadelphia City School District. (<http://www.pa.state.org>). In contrast, “this year, 42,000 of California’s 301,000 public school teachers had emergency teaching credentials, and that number is expected to increase to 65,000 in the next two years” (“Let’s Get it Right”, 2002). Following the NCLB guidelines, both states will comply with the law even though some groups such as The Education Trust think that California is out of line by issuing the multitude of emergency certificates. One of the major concerns for continuing to place emergency certified teachers in the field is that historically those teachers end up being assigned to the lowest achieving schools with high rates of impoverished students. There are more than enough certified teachers in Pennsylvania to fill the vacancies in the Philadelphia City School District but many teachers decide to be unemployed rather than work in an inner city, thus resulting in individuals with emergency certificates filling the vacancies. This same scenario is true of Los Angeles, Clark County (Las Vegas, Nevada), Chicago, Phoenix and most, if not all, urban areas. The challenge will be for the federal government to monitor teacher certification and professional development in all fifty states while still allowing the freedom and flexibility for state issued certification.

A long-standing, continuing debate has ensued to determine the essential of a successful teacher. NCLB appears to be contributing to the debate. Which is more important

content or pedagogy, subject matter or delivery, an in-depth knowledge of the subject or an understanding of youth? An example of this debate is evidenced in an article “Certification tests teacher who has reading disability” that appeared in a local newspaper (Devlin, 2004). The article discusses a veteran teacher who will lose his job because he is unable to pass a test (Praxis Vocational General Knowledge Test). The students, fellow staff and numerous students are quoted listing the qualities possessed by the teacher and the loss he would be to the school. The teacher has developed a strong rapport with the students but does not possess the content knowledge to continue in his position. Allowing the states to decide which is more important, content or delivery, will only add to the difficulties of enforcing NCLB. Some states allow individuals from industry to teach based on content knowledge while other states provide alternative certification routes for subject specialists but only with completion of teaching and methods type courses. New York appears to have some of the tougher standards requiring a BS degree that includes content and pedagogy followed by the attainment of a Masters degree within five years of teaching. Pennsylvania comes in as a close second by also requiring a BS degree that includes content and pedagogy plus the attainment of twenty-four credits within six years of teaching. Pennsylvania has the additional requirement of six credits or 180 hours of continuing education every five years to maintain the teaching certificate.

Professional development is another component of NCLB. Covey’s (1989) “Habit 7—Sharpen the Saw” (p. 287) – emphasized the need to renew and update professional skills continuously. NCLB, however, does not specify what is considered professional development or what is required to update or renew teaching skills. Similar to teacher credentialing, this is an area that is left to the discretion of the states and, hence, many differences exist between them. Arkansas’s license is renewable based on an on-the-job performance assessment requiring no additional credits or staff development. Alabama requirements range from 3 years of teaching experience plus 50 clock hours of professional development to six credit hours. Utah is much less direct and vague by stating the license is valid for 3 years with continual professional development under the district supervision (Types of Licenses, 2002).

Regardless of the state or the state requirements for credentialing and professional development, NCLB gives to the parents the right to request certification data on any and all professionals in the district. NCLB goes even further with this disclosure of information, by stating that any time a district places a less than highly qualified teacher in the classroom the district must notify the parents. This section of the law will provide the “parental choice” as President Bush wrote as one of the purposes of the law (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb>).

HIGHLY QUALIFIED PARAPROFESSIONALS

The 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which mandated a free and appropriate education for all students, and later changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, opened the doors for the usage of increased numbers of paraprofessionals in the public schools. As a result, paraprofessionals that

formerly served as monitors in the hall, cafeteria, bus or playground were now placed in the classroom to assist the teacher and work directly with the students. With the enactment of NCLB those paraprofessionals that provide instructional support and are being paid from Title I funds are required to meet new standards to keep their positions. Under section 1119 of NCLB, existing paraprofessionals hired before implementation of NCLB must, by 2006, meet the same standards as paraprofessional hired after the enactment of NCLB. Paraprofessionals must meet one of the following:

(a) completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education; (b) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or (c) met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate through a formal State or local academic assessment, that is, (i) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; or (ii) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate (Public Law 107-110, 115 STAT. 1506-1507).

An examination of the paraprofessional requirements clearly indicate the states are given far less flexibility in meeting this standard than those open-ended standards for highly qualified teachers. Two years of training at an institution of higher learning will mandate a minimum of 45 credits. Previously, no experience or training was required. Paraprofessionals learned on the job. Many, if not the majority of paraprofessionals, were parents that enjoyed working in the schools in which their children attended. This resulted in paraprofessionals being paid far less than professionals and sometimes less than the janitors and secretaries. Mandating a minimum of an associate degree or two years of college has the potential of changing the pay scale. This section of NCLB may have an impact on those states and districts that have collective bargaining agreements with classified or support personnel. As one rural superintendent stated, "This will cost us much more money and probably the issuance of benefits which we can not afford" (R. McNamara, personal communications, September 20, 2002).

Public school districts have been able to support large class sizes and meet the challenges of the IDEA by using paraprofessionals. Economically, it is more advantageous to place a teacher and a teaching assistant in a classroom with thirty plus students rather than hire two professional educators. It is more economically feasible to have three or four special needs students located in a regular education classroom with support from a teaching assistant than to hire an additional special needs teacher. NCLB may force school leaders to think about alternative ways to meet the needs of the students if, in fact, paraprofessionals demand and receive more funds. However, with additional training and knowledge educational administrators may have another person in the classroom that can truly help improve the academic achievement of youth. Working together the teacher and the paraprofessional can have an impact on student performance.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The challenge of meeting NCLB mandates falls upon each and every educator, paraprofessional, administrator, and school board member. This challenge is not to be

taken lightly, but should not be viewed as simply a legislative hurdle to leap. Rather, the challenge should be confronted from the perspective of Covey's (1989) "Habit 2 – Begin With the End in Mind" (p. 95)—with the realization that the ultimate outcome will be the enhancement of the educational experience for all students. By focusing on this end result, administrators can approach the challenge from a positive mindset.

In order to incorporate Covey's (1989) Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence (p. 261)—administrators must create a collaborative environment within their schools. Therefore, administrators should make an effort to "include all stakeholders" and "emphasize the school and team level" (Hirsch, 2004). These "stakeholders" include the teachers, parents, and students. When teachers view themselves as part of a collaborative change process, they are more likely to engage in goal-oriented behaviors (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). "High quality professional development is not a program or an activity, but an ethos—a way of being where learning is suffused throughout the teachers' working lives" (Renyi, 1998, p. 73). Hirsch (2004) stated that effective professional development must be "results-driven, standards based, and focused on educator's daily work" (p. 13).

Similarly, administrators must involve parents in the effort to increase their children's test performance. Typically, parents are eager to participate in their children's education, but often view themselves as alienated from the schools. Administrators can help to change this perception by establishing a "Parents as Partners" club, publishing regular parent newsletters and conducting informative workshops. For example, a local school district held a widely publicized meeting to provide parents with information and advice that the parents could use to help improve their children's performance on the upcoming state assessment. Another school district held an open forum focused on NCLB and invited teachers, administrators, and higher education officials to share thoughts about NCLB and answer questions from the audience.

Finally, administrators must motivate students to encourage optimum performance on the assessments. Research has found that practice with test formats produces increased performance on assessments (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Tolfa-Veit, 1986), and in one of its position statements, the International Reading Association (date belongs here) maintained "spending time on this type of instruction is helpful to all and can be supportive of the regular curriculum" (p. 12). However, in order to prepare students for the state assessments, teachers often plan a week or two of intensive practice prior to the date of test administration. This intense drill can cause induced test anxiety in the students (Phillips, 2003), resulting in a lack of motivation to perform at high levels on the test (Hancock, 2001). In addition, excessive test format practice can hinder children because they will "overexpect these formats...and be confused if formats change" (Guthrie, 2003, p. 384). Instead of this consolidated method, other options should be employed. One option is the use of start-at-the-bell activities. With this approach, teachers can incorporate test practice and review of pertinent concepts on a daily basis. After surveying the students and the staff, a middle school principal enlisted the help of the student run morning newscast program. The students wrote daily one to two minute stories about test-taking strategies, sample test questions, and ideas to consider when

taking tests. Students, teachers, and building and district administrators were asked to read a story each morning several days prior to the administering of the state assessments. The end result was a significant increase in student test scores.

Recommendations For Improving Reading Performance

When considering improving reading performance, Covey's (1989) "Habit 1 – Be Proactive" (p. 65)—should take prominence with a goal of preventing reading difficulties rather than waiting to identify struggling readers. It has been well-established that the most powerful predictor of reading achievement of young children is the ability of the reading teacher. The teacher's important role in reading instruction was an important finding of the First-Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967). This study sought to determine the best method for teaching reading; however, findings indicated that the teacher, not the method, was the variable that was the best predictor of reading achievement. In its publication *Excellent Reading Teachers: A Position Statement of the International Reading Association* (2000), the organization indicated "every child deserves excellent reading teachers because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read" (p. 1). Therefore, administrators must ensure that they hire the best candidates for teaching positions and provide their current faculty with professional development to broaden current teachers' knowledge base of the best practices for reading instruction.

An example of continuing professional development is occurring at the state level in South Carolina. In response to NCLB, the state collaborated with the National Council of Teachers of English and initiated the "South Carolina Reading Initiative (SCRI), a multi-year, research-based professional development model" (p. 130). Professional development through the SCRI combines administrators, teachers, university professors, and state department liaisons in a program that utilizes literacy coaches and bimonthly study groups. At the conclusion of its first year, SCRI has found that participating teachers have increased their knowledge base and level of confidence for teaching reading.

A proactive stance should also be taken when planning and developing curriculum. Reading performance must be addressed at all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12 contrary to the old adage that states students in the primary grades "learn to read" and that children in subsequent grades "read to learn." This viewpoint falsely indicates that children have developed all necessary reading skills by the time they approach middle school. Any middle or high school teacher can testify that this is simply not true; adolescents and young adults continue to require instruction in reading strategies, particularly in comprehension. Conversely, the adage posits that young children do not gain information when reading text. However, every primary grade teacher can attest to the fact that their students have gained critical subject area knowledge through the acts of reading and read alouds of informational text. Reading comprehension can and should begin in kindergarten, and the teaching of reading skills must continue in all grade levels (International Reading Association, 1999). Therefore, a proactive administrator will

ensure that a solid reading program exists throughout the curriculum, addressing student needs in order to prevent subsequent reading difficulties.

Building on Covey's (1989) "Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence" (p. 261) – reading should not be viewed as the responsibility of only the reading teacher. Instead, reading skills can be addressed and developed in all content areas. For example, the Strategic Literacy Institute's Reading Apprenticeship approach helps students understand the reading strategies and processes that are discipline-specific (Schoenbach, Braunger, Greenleaf, & Litman, 2003). Using this Apprenticeship approach, content area teachers conduct explicit instruction of "how we read and why we read in the ways we do" (p. 134). Although it is relatively simple to incorporate reading strategy instruction in subject area classrooms, it requires that teachers be trained in content area reading instruction (Vacca & Alvermann, 1998). Consequently, professional development for middle school and high school teachers should include instruction for teaching reading in the content areas.

NCLB legislation places an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work" (U.S. Department of Education), and many of these scientifically based methods have been based upon the findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP). The NRP was initiated by Congress and formed in 1997 with the task of reviewing research pertaining to reading instruction in an effort to determine best practices. The NRP focused its study on the areas of alphabets, fluency, comprehension, teacher education and reading instruction, and computer technology and reading instruction; the resulting recommendations of the NRP cite the first three areas to be critical elements of reading programs. Therefore, when adopting a new reading curriculum or revising an existing one, administrators should insure that the program offers a balanced approach and includes those elements. The NRP's complete report is available free of charge from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) web site at <http://www.nifl.gov>. Furthermore, a condensed version of the report entitled *Put Reading First: The Research Building Block for Teaching Children to Read* is also available; this version would be useful to distribute to all elementary teachers.

Recommendations for Improving Writing Performance

Children who view themselves as writers write more and produce writings that are rated more favorably than children who lack confidence in themselves as writers (Maimon, 2002; Pajares & Valiante, 1997). Administrators should seek ways to encourage students' positive views of writing. To facilitate this, students should be given many opportunities to write about topics important to them (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2003). In addition, word processing should be utilized for writing assignments. Vacca et al. note that word processing "can encourage children to perceive text as flexible and malleable, and it can increase teacher involvement in writing and, paradoxically, student independence as writers" (p. 341). Similarly, Beck & Fetherston (2003) found that the "incorporation of word processors...resulted in better constructed stories, students' increased motivation to write stories and students' enhanced risk taking behavior when writing their stories" (153).

Similar to reading improvements, Covey's(1989) “ Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence” (p. 261)—should also be applied to improvements in writing. Writing should occur and be taught in all content areas and can help clarify complex topics (Gunning, 2003). One very effective account of this approach was undertaken by a high school in Arizona (Scott, 2002). This school's philosophy embraced the idea that all teachers are responsible for teaching writing, and writing skills should be taught in all subject areas. All teachers in the school were trained in the writing process and in the use of the rubric from the state writing assessment. All content area teachers are required to administer two writing assignments per year; these assignments must use the writing process and be assessed with the state writing rubric. The final outcome of this approach was that the school scored the same or better than the state average in all of the six writing traits that are assessed with the rubric which is quite an achievement considering that 75% of the students qualify as English language learners when they begin high school. A similar effort of making writing a priority in all subject areas was undertaken in Rutherford County Schools. After a year a two-year enhancement of the writing program, results on the state writing assessment showed gains in writing achievement.

Recommendations for Improving Mathematics Performance

When applying Covey's (1989) “ Habit 6 – Synergize: The Habit of Interdependence” (p.261) – to improving mathematics performance, it is clear that parental involvement is critical. Parent roles in mathematics development include helping students memorize math facts, overseeing the completion of homework assignments, and engaging in discussions about mathematical relationships. Parent involvement can be encouraged through the use of family-oriented homework assignments, parent newsletters, and the use of an interactive web site. An example of an excellent web site is the one created by Kent School District, WA, for its Kentridge High School students and parents (<http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/KSD/KR/WASL/>). This site contains information for parents regarding the state assessment and quizzes and worksheets to help student prepare for the state assessment.

The goal of professional development for mathematics teachers is to improve students' understanding of mathematical content. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1998) stated:

The professional development of teachers of mathematics is a process of learning: learning mathematics and about mathematics; learning about students and how they learn, individually and in the social setting of school; and learning the craft of teaching. In light of the *Standards*, professional development must also include learning new ways to develop mathematical power in all students. (¶ 2)

Furthermore, the NCTM believes that teacher's school schedules should be restructured in order to provide opportunities for professional development, personal reflection, and peer collaboration during the school day. “This vitally important time must be provided for in addition to structured, on-going professional development opportunities” (¶ 4). Accordingly, administrators should create teachers' schedules with a goal of providing common release times for mathematics teachers who teach similar content or grade

levels. In addition, math specialists' schedules should contain regular blocks of time to provide professional development for mathematics teachers.

Finally, to improve performance in mathematics administrators should consider Covey's(1989) "Habit 3 – Put First Things First" (p. 145). In this area, this tenet applies the technological resources available to students and teachers of mathematics. Researchers have noted that students who are provided with calculators, computers, and other technological resources are able to tackle more sophisticated mathematical problems. "Using the tools of technology to work in interesting problem contexts can facilitate students' achievement of a variety of higher-order learning outcomes, such as reflection, reasoning, problem posing, problem solving, and decision making" (NCTM, 2003, ¶ 3). A priority of a successful math program, therefore, is to provide students with technological resources to enhance their achievement.

CONCLUSION

In a comparison of the recommendations for specific subject areas, many commonalities may be seen. In particular, Covey's(1989) Habit 6 – Synerize: The bit of Interdependence (p. 261)—is a prominent recommendation in all subject areas. Change is more effective when teachers are given the opportunity to work collaboratively and to view themselves as part of the change process. It is the role of the administration to promote this interdependence among faculty and administration. As Bolman and Deal (1995) wrote: "The spiritual journey that leaders must take, and inspire others, begins with ourselves but necessarily by ourselves" (p 57). Bolman and Deal (1995) offered additional advice by stating: "Leaders learn most from their experiences—especially from their failures" (p. 168). School administrators need to be willing to celebrate failures as a means to bringing about substantive changes in the delivery of instruction for youth. Leaders must demonstrate the importance of failure to insure success in the future.

The task of meeting the mandates of NCLB may seem insurmountable and may be statistically impossible, but it is the responsibility of each educator and administrator to strive to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress for each and every student. If we maintain Covey's(1989) "Habit 4 – Think Win-Win" (p.204)—we can approach this charge in a positive light. By striving to meet the mandates, we improve the educational experience for every child.

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Footnotes

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