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Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and No Child Left Behind

By

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September 2004

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice survey grew out of our national study on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which is examining many aspects of NCLB implementation in six states and eleven school districts. Since there is much in NCLB that is aimed at teachers, we wanted to know what teachers think about the law and how they, and their schools, are responding to its strategies for change.

Thanks to the cooperation of two urban school districts in Fresno, California and Richmond, Virginia, we obtained survey responses from two groups of teachers on opposite ends of the country. These two school districts serve many low-income and minority students, with one serving mostly Latino students and the other mostly African-American students, and each operates within a very different state policy and reform context. The response rate of the teachers to our survey was 77.4%. The survey was administered in May-June 2004.

Key Findings

1. Teachers have a thoughtful and nuanced view of reform that is quite consistent across districts and across teachers in both schools that are doing well and those that have been identified as in need of improvement under NCLB.
2. Teachers believed their schools have high standards and that the curriculum in their school was of high quality and linked to academic standards. They believed teachers in their schools were working hard to provide quality instruction, were dedicated to improving student achievement, and were accepting of accountability if it was based on a system that fairly measured instructional performance. They think their schools can improve more.
3. They did not believe that identifying schools that had not made adequate yearly progress would lead to school improvement. They viewed the transfer option quite negatively but were somewhat more positive about the potential of supplemental educational services to improve schools. Teachers strongly believed that the NCLB sanctions would unfairly reward and punish teachers.
4. Many of the teachers in schools that were identified as needing improvement do not plan to be teaching in them five years in the future. Teachers also believed that the NCLB sanctions would cause teachers to transfer out of schools not making adequate progress. These results suggest that there is a very serious problem in getting teachers to make a long-term commitment to teach in poorly performing schools and that designating schools as “in need of improvement” under NCLB may make things worse.
5. Teachers confirm that the NCLB accountability system is influencing the instructional and curricular practices of teachers, but it is producing unintended

- and possibly negative consequences. They reported that, in response to NCLB accountability, they ignored important aspects of the curriculum, de-emphasized or neglected untested topics, and focused instruction on the tested subjects, probably excessively. Teachers rejected the idea that the NCLB testing requirements would focus teacher's instruction or improve the curriculum.
6. Teachers reported that reform was underway prior to NCLB, and in some cases NCLB disrupted these reform efforts. There is evidence from the survey to support the idea of "policy churn," that is, schools in high-poverty districts, and particularly low-performing schools, are continually changing their educational programs in response to calls for reform.
 7. Teachers provide some insightful thoughts about what they need to meet high standards and improve student performance:
 - They need more resources, and they had highly nuanced views of what resources matter. In particular, teachers desired more money for curricular and instructional materials aligned with state standards.
 - They favored additional time to collaborate with other teachers more than increased professional development.
 - They voiced support for the importance of small classes.
 - They want experienced administrators in their schools, to work with experienced teachers, and more involvement of parents. They were not opposed to removing ineffective teachers.
 - They believed public recognition and rewards for improving student performance were more effective than sanctions for poor performance.

Recommendations

The teacher responses to the survey questions, and the highly consistent information we have received in our work on our long-term, six state study suggest the following priority issues for consideration as NCLB continues to evolve.

1. Schools need additional resources, but not just more money. Current resources could be reallocated, particularly the 20% set-aside for supplemental educational services and transfers, and better focused on curricular and instructional materials tied to state standards and on developing coherent instructional programs.

2. There is an urgent need for strong, committed, long-term leaders in poorly performing schools. There is nothing in NCLB to attract administrators to such schools, which should become a key goal in reforming schools and districts.
3. To mitigate the high turnover and low retention of teachers in high-poverty schools serving large numbers of minority students, NCLB should provide funding for improving the working conditions in these schools and additional support for helping teachers with out-of-school problems. NCLB should facilitate teachers' desire for more time for school staffs to work together to improve learning by funding the time for these efforts.
4. Accountability should be continued but refocused in critical ways. Standardized testing should be only one part of assessing school performance and should measure not only existing achievement levels but also the contribution a school makes to improving student achievement. Accountability should continue rather than disrupt good reform programs already underway and should reinforce rather than take time away from the basic activities of teaching and learning.

While opinion surveys have limits as a source of policy guidance, teachers' views are very important to the success of any educational reform, including NCLB. These survey responses deserve serious consideration given their thoughtfulness, the complexity of opinions expressed, the close divisions on some issues, and the fact that the teachers whose schools are succeeding under the law report most of the same things that the teachers in the less successful schools say. These opinions cannot be interpreted as defensive justifications of failure. The fact that teachers from two very different cities in two very different states that are three thousand miles apart often agree is noteworthy. We hope that this report will help teachers to be heard as the debate over the law's future continues.

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is largely built on assumptions about ways to change teachers' behavior that were based on hunches or ideology rather than work with teachers or education experts. Everyone who has been a teacher knows that once the classroom door is closed what happens is not about theory but about interactions between students and teacher that are not easy to control from far away. Like all professionals, teachers desire autonomy and respect in their work. No one could criticize the goals of NCLB, which aims to have all groups of students move steadily towards a high level of achievement and promises to hold all schools responsible for providing all children a good education. The requirement that all teachers in poor schools be highly qualified is also excellent.

The criticisms of NCLB concern the way success is defined and the means chosen to try to accomplish it. NCLB judges the success of schools by mathematics and reading scores and mandates that they rise rapidly, largely through external pressure. The gains required by the law far exceed those documented for any major educational reform program. The original intent of the law was also to add substantial resources to schools, and indeed there was a large increase in federal appropriations in the first year. However, the level of federal dollars projected for the second and third year were not provided and the state and local effects of the recession meant that many districts and schools actually experienced cuts in total resources. Even so, the requirements for large educational gains remained.

The NCLB policies assume that teachers can be led to perform better if they are made much more accountable for test score gains, and that sanctions directed at their schools and, eventually, at them, will motivate teachers to improve their instruction. Specified targets of test score gains in certain grade levels become all-important for a school under the law, since a school can eventually be severely sanctioned or closed if it fails to meet such goals. Nothing else that teachers do counts as a measure of success under NCLB, except the test score gains of their students in two subjects. Schools and school districts cannot alter the standards, which are set by state governments, or the level of gains needed each year for every subgroup of students.

These policies reflect the continuation and intensification of the approach of test-driven reform that began in the South and became a national force with the Reagan Administration's 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. This approach led almost all states to impose state achievement goals and tests. It was also the basis, in a much milder form, for the Clinton Administration's 1994 reform of Title I. The approach represents a judgment that teachers have not focused enough on mathematics and reading in ways that produce progress that can be measured by a state's standardized tests, and that teachers will focus and teach more effectively under intense, focused pressure on their school. If there is not substantial progress each year for every group of students, the school is labeled as "needing improvement," and the parents are notified that they can transfer their child to other schools or use federal NCLB monies for purchasing supplemental

educational services provided outside the regular school day. Schools “needing improvement” are often branded as “failing schools” in the local press, putting strong pressure on faculty and administrators. The law says that after several years of not meeting increasingly more difficult goals the school can be dissolved, turned into a charter school, or be subjected to other sanctions. It assumes that competition with private providers will produce better performance by the teachers in the sanctioned schools.

The law requires that all schools receiving NCLB aid must have “highly qualified” teachers for their students. This goal was a response to increasingly clear evidence that low-income students had the least prepared and experienced teachers, and that the quality of teachers substantially impacts student achievement. Research suggests that both the knowledge and the experience of teachers matter, and that a combination of characteristics best define a highly qualified teacher. This part of the law assumed that school districts were not trying hard enough to obtain such teachers for their impoverished schools and that they could rapidly remedy this problem if required to by federal law. The law also requires that paraprofessionals have at least an Associate’s degree, something that many of the paraprofessionals, including those who speak the languages of immigrant children and their parents, do not have.

Three years after NCLB passed, with a national controversy raging over the law, we need to know what teachers think about it and how they and their schools are responding to the law’s pressures. As we move toward implementation of more severe sanctions, it is very important to have evidence from the field on the validity of the law’s basic assumptions and strategies for change.

Many of the questions in this teacher survey have emerged from our national study of NCLB, which covers many aspects of NCLB implementation in six states and eleven school districts, and from other teacher surveys. Field tests with teachers in other communities helped frame questions in ways that made sense to teachers about the way NCLB is working and whether various elements help or hinder educational progress. Response categories were framed to allow expression of a full range of opinions on the issues. Thanks to the cooperation of two urban school districts serving many minority and low-income students in Richmond, Virginia, and Fresno, California, we were able to find out how two groups of teachers on opposite ends of the country, one serving mostly African-American students and the other mostly Latino students, think about this law.

It turns out that the teachers’ responses from these two urban districts will be of interest to all sides in the current national debate. Teachers take a much more thoughtful and nuanced view of the reform than most of the advocates or detractors, who often picture it with extremely positive or negative views. Both sides in the public debates will find things to identify with in the teachers’ views, which turn out to have a good deal of consistency among teachers in failing and successful schools in these two quite different districts.

For the supporters of the law, the good news is that teachers believe that there should be standards and that the law has had some real benefits. They believe that their schools

have coherent educational programs linked to standards, that the schools' goals are clear to the students, and that the teachers have been working hard to accomplish them, even before NCLB. Teachers were not completely opposed to sanctions for failure and believe that ineffective teachers should be removed from schools. They believe that standards and tests have focused attention on the subjects tested, probably excessively. They are strongly dedicated to improving student performance and they want to have the parents more involved in supporting the educational process. There is a strong belief that student performance can get better.

Critics of the way the law is being administered may emphasize the findings that teachers feel strongly that they need more funding for their schools to meet the NCLB requirements and that teachers point to a number of key needs in their schools and communities besides money. They may also emphasize the findings that teachers say that the subjects not on the test are being taught less, and that many believe that the standards are not fair and, in fact, can be seriously counterproductive both for teaching and for attracting and holding good "highly qualified" teachers in their schools.

Teachers recognize the impact that sanctions can have, but also tend to believe that rewards and positive recognition for improvements in outcomes are more powerful. They feel much more pressure now to do whatever they can to raise test scores. They would like to have more assistance, texts and materials better related to the standards and more opportunity to work together with their colleagues on school reform. State and local officials will be interested to learn that many teachers report that there were substantial reforms operating in their schools before NCLB and believe that their schools are well organized, have clear educational goals, and that the faculty is working hard. They see a very high value in having good educational administrators leading the educational change efforts in the school, something largely neglected in the reform discussion.

On the very important issue of getting and holding more highly qualified and experienced teachers in those high poverty schools that are not meeting adequate yearly progress requirements, the survey provides some important information. Most of the teachers in those schools do not plan to be teaching in them five years in the future. In one of the two districts, three-fourths of the teachers in the sanctioned schools plan to be somewhere else. Teachers also believe that the NCLB sanctions will cause teachers to transfer out of schools not making adequate progress. Overall, the survey suggests that there is a very serious problem in getting teachers to make a long-term commitment to such schools and that the NCLB designations of schools failing to make adequate yearly progress may make things worse.

Obviously, opinion surveys have limits as a source of policy guidance, but teachers' views are very important to the success of any educational reform plan. Among the reasons these responses deserve credibility is their thoughtfulness, the complexity of opinions expressed, the close divisions on some issues, and the fact that the teachers whose schools are succeeding under the law report most of the same things that the teachers in the less successful schools say. These opinions cannot be interpreted as defensive justifications of failure. The fact that teachers from two very different cities in

two very different states that are three thousand miles apart often agree is another check on the data. These survey responses deserve serious consideration.

Many teachers added written comments, expressing their deep concern over the issues, the work they are trying to do, and the impact on their students of the education reforms. Some said that they were very glad teachers were being asked about the policy. One of the teachers wrote:

Teachers in low-performing schools work harder than the government can imagine! We are blamed for everything that causes a child to fail, and yet there is no accountability on the part of the student or the parent...

Low performing schools make progress, and yet nothing is good enough. When we say that we deal with absenteeism, verbal student abuse, etc., we are told these are excuses...

We are dedicated people who have been treated unfairly...

Pay attention, NCLB, to the good things that are done by teachers.

Teachers speak with many voices and share many of the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. We hope that this report will help them to be heard as the debate over the law's future continues. In the following section, we describe the theory of educational change and the assumptions underlying NCLB. In the third section, we outline the design of the study, explain the survey and sampling methodology, and describe the districts and teachers that participated in this survey. The fourth section presents various aspects of the findings of the survey. In the final section of this report, we offer our reflections on the implications of the teachers' beliefs and experiences under the law for the creation of more effective school reform.

THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND THEORY OF ACTION

NCLB codified into federal law a theory of educational change that assumes external accountability and the imposition of sanctions will force schools to improve and motivate teachers to improve their instructional practices, resulting in improved student performance. NCLB reorients educational policy and practice by subjecting all schools to the same yearly progress goals, even though state standards and tests vary, and by adopting market-based theories of reform as remedies for poorly performing schools. While the shift to performance-based accountability has been underway in many states and districts primarily as a means of improving student performance and dealing with failing schools, there is limited knowledge about the effects of these policies or how they might work in practice.

Two of the primary assumptions underlying NCLB are that (1) external accountability and the imposition of sanctions will force schools to improve and motivate teachers to change their instructional practice, resulting in better student performance; and (2) that market mechanisms will lead to school improvement. Under NCLB, schools that do not meet the state's proficiency goals on a standardized test in reading and math for two consecutive years are identified as needing improvement. To make adequate yearly progress (AYP), schools must improve the proficiency rates of different subgroups of students. Since NCLB establishes a single performance standard for all students, schools with lower-scoring students will have to make substantially larger gains to make AYP than schools with higher performing students (J. Kim & G. L. Sunderman, 2004b). In other words, since the performance standards are the same for all students regardless of where they start, those who are further behind have further to go to meet the cut-off scores.

A key mechanism of the NCLB accountability system is to identify schools that do not make adequate yearly progress as "in need of improvement." This identification is based on students reaching a state defined level of proficiency in reading and math on state tests. This method has been called a "status model" of measuring student achievement since it relies on the percentage of students who score at the proficient level or higher on statewide reading and math tests. A number of researchers have argued that this method fails to acknowledge achievement gains of students who are below proficient or to give credit for improving student achievement over time (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). They have argued that it sets unrealistically high expectations and requires an unrealistically rapid rate of improvement, which many fear will result in almost all schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (Lee, 2004, April 7; Linn, 2003). While subgroup accountability has the potential to focus attention on the performance of different groups of students, this provision penalizes schools that are diverse and serve large numbers of minority and low-income students since they are required to meet more achievement targets than more affluent and homogenous schools (J. Kim & G. Sunderman, 2004; Novak, 2003, December).

Once schools are identified for improvement, they are subject to a series of sanctions. These sanctions were shaped by theories of markets and privatization. For schools that

are in year one or year two of school improvement, there were two required sanctions. Schools in their first year of school improvement are required to offer all students the option to transfer to another, higher performing school. Students in schools that are in their second year of school improvement are eligible for supplemental educational services. These, by definition in the law, are opportunities for additional academic instruction that are provided outside the regular school day by private, non-profit, or public organizations. Both the transfer option and supplemental educational services are based on the assumption that competition will expand the educational opportunities of students and create incentives for low-performing schools to improve their instructional program.

This study evaluates the efficacy of the law's theory of change by asking teachers how they perceived the law and its effects on their schools, their instructional practice, and the curriculum. NCLB and other standards-based reform measures emphasize accountability as a tool of educational change and rely on the response of the key agents of change, teachers, to this new framework of incentives. As improved student achievement is ultimately linked to the actions of these teachers, it is important to gain insight into their responses to NCLB. By comparing the responses of teachers in schools subjected to the law's sanctions with those of teachers in schools not yet subjected to the sanctions, we can evaluate the impact of the law's reform interventions.

The *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey was designed to test the theory that identifying schools for improvement and requiring these schools to offer choice and supplemental educational services will improve the quality of the school's instructional program and the quality of teacher's instructional practice. The design of the survey was based on the theory that improvements to the instructional program and instructional practice could be observed through increased instructional program coherence, increased collective accountability, and/or improved instructional practice (D. M. Koretz & Hamilton, 2003, October; Ladd & Fiske, 2003; Newman, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Wong, Sunderman, & Lee, 1997). The survey focused on whether teachers had observed positive changes in such areas at the school and classroom level. The study concentrated on teachers in urban settings since this is where the NCLB sanctions have been concentrated.

DESIGN OF STUDY

The *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey was developed by the research staff of The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, using items modified from previously conducted teacher surveys and newly-designed items that were field tested in three states (Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2001; Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2003; D. Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Stecher, 1996; D. M. Koretz & Hamilton, 2003, October; Ladd & Fiske, 2003; Mintrop, 2004; National Staff Development Council, 2003; Pedulla et al., 2003). It consists of over one hundred individual response items designed to collect data regarding both the reactions of teachers to the NCLB accountability system and their opinions on whether the NCLB accountability mechanisms are likely to lead to school improvement.

The survey addressed the following topics:

- Knowledge of NCLB and sources of information on the law
- Perceived effect of the NCLB sanctions and AYP requirements
- Perceived changes in instruction activities and curricular focus
- Perceptions of the school's instructional program
- Classroom activities related to state-mandated tests
- Perceived conditions needed for school improvement

The survey employed several types of items related to NCLB. A five-point Likert response scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used for most items to assess the depth of teachers' opinions. Teachers were asked to choose among several fixed alternatives about their knowledge of NCLB, the source of their knowledge, and the demographic breakdown and ability level of their students. In addition, they were asked a combination of fixed-alternative and open-ended questions about their educational, professional, and personal background, and they were given the option to add their written comments about the law.

To field test the instrument, two groups of teachers were asked to review the survey, and a pilot administration of the survey was conducted. The groups of reviewers included teachers in California and Maryland, and the pilot administration was conducted in two schools (one identified for improvement and one making adequate progress) in the Mesa Public Schools (Mesa, Arizona). The 42 teachers who participated in the pilot administration were asked to complete the survey and encouraged to provide comments on individual items. These comments, as well as the feedback from the teacher groups informed the final edits. The survey was administered during May-June 2004 in Fresno, California and Richmond, Virginia.

Background on Districts

This survey and the districts participating in the survey are part of a larger, five-year study examining the implementation of NCLB. The study, which began in the 2002-03 school year, includes six states (Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, Virginia, and Georgia) and eleven districts located in the six states. Four major reports from the study have already been released (J. Kim & G. L. Sunderman, 2004a, 2004b; Sunderman & Kim, 2004a, 2004b). Districts selected for the larger study enroll large numbers of low-income and minority students, the groups of students that NCLB was meant to aid.

We selected the Fresno Unified School District (Fresno) in Fresno, California and Richmond Public Schools (Richmond) in Richmond, Virginia for the teacher survey because they represent different regions of the country, one serves predominately Latino students and the other predominately Black students, and each operates within a very different state policy and reform context. As shown in Table 1, Fresno enrolls predominately Latino students (53.7%) while Richmond serves predominately African-American students (89.5%). Fresno is among the nation's 50 largest school districts (Sable & Young, 2003) with an enrollment of 81,408 students. It is the fourth largest school district in California. Richmond is smaller, with an enrollment of 25,545.

Table 1: Total Enrollment and Racial/Ethnic Characteristic of Students, 2003-04

District	Total Enrollment	% Asian	% Black	% Latino	% Native Amer.	% White
Fresno	81,408	16.6	11.5	53.7	0.7	17.5
Richmond	25,545	0.6	89.5	2.4	0.1	7.4

Source: California Department of Education, <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/> (Fresno); Virginia Department of Education, http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm (Richmond)

Both districts are heavily impacted by NCLB. Richmond contains just 3% of the schools in Virginia, but over half of the schools that were identified for improvement under NCLB (Sunderman & Kim, 2004b). Fresno, which contains 1.1% of the state schools, had 4.8% of California's schools identified for improvement. Over 60% of the students in both districts are low-income students, as determined by their eligibility for a federal meal subsidy (Table 2). The concentration of poverty in Fresno is the highest among urban districts in California and one of the highest in the nation (Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, 2002). As a result of this poverty, the majority of students in both districts qualify for Title I services. Fresno has a large population of English language learners (ELL), and both districts have significant populations of special education students. Under NCLB, test scores for each of these subgroups must be included in the determination of whether adequate progress has been made. The graduation rate in Fresno is 55.8%, based on the average success of a group of students moving from grade 9 through to graduation (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). As shown in Table 3, the student/teacher ratio is 20.6 to 1 in Fresno and 11.1 to 1 in Richmond.

Table 2: Characteristics of Students in Fresno and Richmond, 2002-03

District	% Low- Income*	% Eng. Lang. Learners	% Special Education	Graduation Rate (%)**
Fresno	68.1	31.9	10.4	55.8
Richmond	62.7	N/A	16.1	N/A

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core Data, <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>

*We defined “low-income” as the percentage of students receiving free- and reduced-priced lunch. Data on lunch subsidies was obtained from State data files obtained from the California Educational Demographics Office (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>) and the Virginia Office of Information Technology (www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm). Calculations are our own.

**The Civil Rights Project (Orfield et al., 2004).

Table 3: Number of Classroom Teachers and Student/Teacher Ratio, 2002-03

District	Classroom Teachers FTE	Student/Teacher Ratio
Fresno	3,938.30	20.6
Richmond	2,360.50	11.1

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core Data, <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>

These districts operate in very different policy and reform contexts. Virginia has been cited as a leader in adopting state-mandated standards and testing requirements (Ravitch, 2002). Before NCLB, Virginia had developed a coherent set of accountability policies, and its governor, the State Board of Education, and the State Education Agency were committed to implementing the state accountability plan. The state first started testing students on the Standards of Learning in 1998. Since the state’s standards and assessments met all the 1994 Title I requirements, and these requirements closely mirrored those of NCLB, state policymakers were able to focus their attention on plans for improving reading instruction statewide and building the instructional capacity of the small number of low-performing schools identified for improvement under NCLB. In California, NCLB added considerable uncertainty to the accountability system. California has experienced many contentious political battles since the 1970’s among policymakers over the adoption of a statewide testing and accountability system (Kirst, 2002; Citizens’ Commission on Civil Rights, 2002). Throughout this period, changes in political leadership, shifts in the political winds, or the collapse of political coalitions led the state to dismantle earlier reforms and assessments or layer on new ones (Kirst, 2002). The most recent reform, adopted in 1999, has the backing of state policymakers and business but only lukewarm support from local educators and parents. Even these and related reforms have been changed or reversed since they were first adopted. The state initiative to reduce class size, for example, was reversed by the state budget crisis, and bilingual education was limited to one year by referendum.

Both districts had accountability and reform plans in place prior to NCLB. Fresno had developed its own measures of accountability in order to comply with the 1994 Title I requirements. The district designed an accountability system that used a local formula to determine whether schools met performance goals, and whether schools were in need of program improvement. The Fresno model of accountability used multiple measures to

show school progress, including test scores, grades, teachers' ratings on standards, and a writing sample (Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, 2002), whereas the state system introduced in 1999 used a single measure based only on test scores. Once NCLB was passed, Fresno had to drop its own multiple measures model in favor of the state system since NCLB only values gains on state reading and mathematics tests. Fresno had also developed its own content and performance standards in the early 1990s. These were dropped when the state developed state level standards in the late 1990s because the district did not want two separate sets of standards.

Richmond follows the state accountability system, which issues school accreditation ratings based on student achievement on the Standards of Learning (SOL) and other tests in English, history/social studies, mathematics and science. To assist schools not meeting the state standards, Richmond developed a district review process that monitors schools to make sure they are on track for improvement. There are also two state programs that monitor schools not meeting the state accreditation standards by visiting schools to review instruction, climate, and other factors affecting student achievement. There is considerable disconnect and overlap between the state and district monitoring programs, according to district administrators.¹ The district has put a number of programs in place to help students improve, including extended day programs and after-school and in-school tutoring programs. It has also made changes in its curriculum and instructional program at all levels of the school system (elementary, middle, and high school). There are special programs, for example, to raise reading and math achievement. Richmond adopted a uniform reading curriculum, lengthened the reading period to two hours a day, and adopted direct instruction in elementary schools. Middle schools use a ninety-minute reading block, and both middle and high schools use the state's Algebra Readiness program.

Sampling

To ensure an adequate sample of schools that included both improvement and adequate progress schools and to minimize the burden on the districts, 30 schools in Fresno and 25 schools in Richmond were included in the sample. Since a central goal of the data collection process was to compare teacher reactions to the law in schools that had been identified as needing improvement (improvement schools) with those making adequate progress (adequate progress schools) under the NCLB accountability framework, purposeful decisions regarding the sampling framework were combined with random sampling procedures. Our goal was to select a final sample of schools that included 20 improvement schools in Fresno, 15 improvement schools in Richmond, and 10 schools in each district that were making adequate progress.

Secondary schools and schools serving special populations of students were excluded from the pool of eligible schools. Secondary schools were excluded because NCLB focuses its testing requirements on grades 3-8. After these exclusions, 80 schools in Fresno and 49 schools in Richmond, all of which included at least three grades tested by NCLB, remained.

¹ District official, personal communication with G. Sunderman, 12-3-02.

Next, the schools identified as needing improvement were split into two groups, those that were in year one or two of school improvement and those that were in year three of school improvement. Schools were categorized in this way because those in year one or two of school improvement status under NCLB must provide students with the option to transfer to another school and/or provide supplemental educational services, both sanctions targeted at individual students, while schools in year three of improvement are also subject to corrective action, which is targeted at the school level. This framework was established to allow us to gather more nuanced information about the opinions of teachers in improvement schools. In this report, however, the responses of teachers in improvement schools are reported as one group.

After establishing this framework and narrowing the number of potential schools, there were only 15 schools labeled as needing improvement in Richmond. Since we had aimed for a sample of 15 improvement schools, all were selected. In Fresno, there were 37 schools labeled as needing improvement and eligible to be included in the sample. Fourteen schools in Fresno were in year one of improvement status, and five of those were randomly selected. There were only five schools in year two of school improvement, and all five were selected. We then randomly selected 10 of the 18 schools in year three of school improvement.

In Fresno, one school identified as needing improvement had been restructured and was eliminated from the sample, resulting in a final sample of 19 schools identified as needing improvement and 10 schools that had made adequate progress. The final sample in Richmond included 15 improvement and 10 adequate progress schools. All schools in the final samples participated in the survey. As a result, all teachers in more than one-third of the eligible elementary and middle schools in Fresno and one-half of those in Richmond were surveyed.

Student Characteristics

In both districts, the sampled schools serve a substantial percentage of the overall population of students in the district. The schools sampled in Fresno serve over 21,000 students, approximately one-quarter of the students district-wide. In Richmond, the sampled schools serve just over 12,000 students, approximately 46% of the students district-wide.

The racial/ethnic characteristics of the students in three of the four categories of schools in the two districts are similar to the same types of schools district-wide. The exception is the group of improvement schools in Richmond, which has a population of Black students (95.7%) that is higher than that of the district (89.5%) and a population of White students (2.1%) that is lower than the district (7.4%).

Table 4: Total Enrollment and Racial/Ethnic Characteristic of Students in Fresno and Richmond Samples, 2002-2003

Sample	Total				% Native	
	Enrollment	% Asian	% Black	% Latino	Amer.	% White
Fresno Need Imp.	14,461	18.8	13.2	59.1	0.7	8.2
Fresno Adeq. Prog	6,853	8.9	10.7	54.1	0.9	25.3
Fresno Tot Sample	21,314	15.6	12.4	57.5	0.8	13.7
Richmond Need Imp.	7,143	0.3	95.7	1.9	0.0	2.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog	4,963	0.8	87.5	2.0	0.1	9.5
Richmond Tot Sample	12,106	0.5	92.4	1.9	0.1	5.1

Source: State data files obtained from the California Educational Demographics Office (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>) and the Virginia Office of Information Technology (www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm).

The percentage of low-income students in three of the four categories of schools was consistent with similar schools district-wide. The one exception was in Fresno, where nearly 95% of the students in the improvement schools were low-income students, but 81.2% of students in improvement schools district-wide were low-income. The higher concentration of poverty in the improvement schools in Fresno may be the result of the large number of schools selected for the study that were in their third year of improvement status.

Table 5: Low-income* Students in Fresno and Richmond, Schools Sample and District-wide, 2002-2003

	Need Imp.		Adeq. Prog.	
	Total Enrollment	% Low-Income	Total Enrollment	% Low-Income
Fresno Sample	14,461	94.8	6,853	67.9
Fresno District	30,919	81.2	52,493	67.1
Richmond Sample	7,143	74.2	4,963	63.1
Richmond District	8,201	73.6	17,935	57.7

* Eligibility for free and reduced price school lunch was used to determine low-income status. Source: State data files obtained from the California Educational Demographics Office (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>) and the Virginia Office of Information Technology (www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm).

Teacher Characteristics

Of the 1,866 teachers who were eligible to receive the survey, 1,445 returned surveys², for an excellent response rate of 77.4%. In Fresno, the response rate was 80.7%, and in Richmond it was 73.0%. Over three-quarters of the teachers in both districts were female and, most often, were assigned to teach all elementary subjects. The racial demographics of the teachers varied depending on the district where they taught.

In Fresno, a total of 862 teachers completed surveys. Teachers both in schools making adequate progress and in those labeled as needing improvement were approximately 60% white. In Richmond, 583 teachers completed and returned surveys. Teachers from schools that had been labeled as needing improvement were 60.8% African-American, while 48.4% of the teachers from schools making adequate progress were African-American.

Table 6: Self-Reported Teacher Demographics in Fresno Sample, 2004

Sample	% Asian	% Black	% Latino	% Native Amer.	% White	% Other
Fresno Need Imp.	6.4	4.3	20.9	1.0	56.3	5.2
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	6.8	0.7	21.1	0.7	62.0	3.6
Richmond Need Imp.	0.3	60.8	1.6	0.3	26.8	3.6
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	0.7	48.4	0.7	0.4	39.7	3.6

Source: *No Child Left Behind: Teachers' Voice* survey, question 24 (Fresno) and question 23 (Richmond)

Data Collection and Analysis

Administration of the surveys was coordinated with district-level officials and conducted by school staff members. Teachers were asked to complete the survey at faculty meetings and were provided envelopes to return completed surveys. To ensure the anonymity of the teachers during the handling of the surveys by school and district officials prior to their return to The Civil Rights Project, the envelopes could be sealed.

After receipt, the survey data was transferred to scannable forms to enable consistent entry into an electronic database. Once the database was established, we selected a random 10% sample of surveys from each category of schools and reviewed them to evaluate the accuracy of the data-entry process. This review found a 99.5% rate of accuracy. This high rate of accuracy should ensure that data-entry errors had a negligible effect on the analysis of the data. For the purposes of this report, we calculated simple frequencies and percentages based on the responses to the survey items. On occasion, the

² The number of teachers answering each question varied slightly due to non-response and technical errors in the data entry and scanning process. These small differences have a negligible effect on the analysis of the data.

results reported in this document may be reported according to categories collapsed during data analysis. When this is the case, proper notation accompanies the data.

Generalizability of Findings

The data reported in this report should be considered reasonably representative of the opinions of elementary and middle school teachers in Fresno and Richmond. The views of teachers expressed in this report should not be considered representative of the views of teachers at the state or national level.

RESULTS OF THE TEACHERS' VOICE SURVEY

In this segment of the report we present the results of the survey, beginning with how teachers view their schools and their perceptions of the school's instructional program and culture. Section II talks about teachers' general impressions and knowledge of NCLB. Teacher perceptions about NCLB accountability, sanctions and incentives are presented in Section III. Section IV talks more specifically about changes schools may have made to improve curriculum and instruction. The final section summarizes what teachers believe they need to improve their schools.

I. Teacher Views of their Schools

Teacher views about the quality and rigor of their instructional program provide a measure of how well they perceive the school is doing apart from their opinions about the merits of the NCLB requirements or its effect on schools. We asked teachers to provide their perceptions of the curriculum and instructional program in their school, including the rigor of standards, the quality of the curriculum, the dedication of the teaching staff and the quality of their instruction. Their responses provide a good idea of the status of the school's instructional program and insight into teachers' opinions regarding its effectiveness.

Teachers in schools both labeled as needing improvement and those making adequate progress were positive about the instructional program in their schools. Teachers were also realistic. Teachers in schools that had been identified for improvement were slightly less positive about their school's instructional program than were teachers in schools making adequate progress. While recognizing that improvements were possible, they also believed that they were limited in what they could accomplish in their school.

Standards for Student Achievement

A high percentage of teachers in both districts agreed that the standards for student achievement are challenging, attainable and measurable. Teachers in adequate progress schools were more likely to agree with this statement than their counterparts in improvement schools (Table 7). Teachers in schools designated as needing improvement in Fresno were least likely to provide a positive review of the standards, with approximately 40% of teachers agreeing and one-quarter of teachers disagreeing with the statement. A high percentage of teachers did not express an opinion on the issue, as there was a high rate of neutral responses.

As such standards are usually set externally, often at the state level, differences in the responses between localities are also worth considering. Teachers in Virginia responded positively regarding the standards at higher rates than their peers in California, with an approximately 15-percentage-point difference between the responses by state in each category of school performance. While it is difficult to definitively explain such differences, one might speculate that such differences in this instance are related to the

stability of standards and accountability system in Virginia versus the less stable standards and accountability system in California.

Table 7: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:
Standards for student achievement are challenging, attainable, and measurable.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	11.5	31.2	33.1	16.5	7.7	42.7	24.2
Richmond Need Imp.	21.4	39.5	28.4	7.7	3.0	60.9	10.7
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	28.5	27.4	12.3	4.7	17	27.1	55.9
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	28.8	41.7	21.4	6.3	1.8	70.5	8.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question: 8j (Fresno) and 7j (Richmond)

Teachers were even more supportive of the notion that school-level standards for student achievement were high in the schools in which they work. There were slight differences between the rate of agreement among teachers in schools that had made adequate progress and the rate of agreement in schools that had been designated as needing improvement. Teachers in adequate progress schools were more likely to say that their schools had high academic standards than were teachers in improvement schools. In each of the four types of schools, a very low percentage of teachers disagreed.

Table 8: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:
This school has high standards for students' academic performance.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	29.4	38.2	21.2	7.1	4.2	67.6	11.3
Richmond Need Imp.	35.3	38.0	20.3	3.4	3.1	73.3	6.5
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	51.3	30.7	10.5	6.1	1.4	82.0	7.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	48.5	34.9	11.8	3.7	1.1	83.4	4.8

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 8f (Fresno) and 7f (Richmond)

Curriculum

A majority of teachers in both districts and in both improvement and adequate progress schools believed that their schools had high-quality, school-wide curriculum plans. There was very little difference in the responses of the teachers between the two districts. Two-thirds of teachers in schools designated as needing improvement and three-quarters of teachers in schools that had made adequate progress agreed with this view of the curriculum. In improvement schools, the ratio of teachers who agreed to those who disagreed was just over 5 to 1. In adequate progress schools, this ratio was over 10 to 1.

Table 9: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:
This school has high quality school-wide curriculum plans.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	28	37.2	21.9	8.2	4	65.2	12.2
Richmond Need Imp.	26.3	40.4	21.2	6.7	5.4	66.7	12.1
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	44.4	31.8	16.2	4	3.6	76.2	7.6
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	40.1	35.3	18.4	4	2.2	75.3	6.2

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice survey*, question 8a (Fresno) and 7a (Richmond)

There were only slight differences between schools labeled as needing improvement and those making adequate progress when teachers were asked their opinion concerning whether the curriculum in their school was linked to measures of student achievement, an important aspect of standards-based educational reform. The percentage of teachers agreeing that the curriculum was aligned with academic standards was very high, with over three-quarters of teachers in each district agreeing with the statement. Again, very low percentages of teachers in each category of schools disagreed with this notion.

Table 10: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:
The curriculum is aligned with established academic measures (e.g.; standardized tests, rubrics, etc.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	30.7	45.1	17.5	4.8	1.9	75.8	6.7
Richmond Need Imp.	36.3	40.0	18.7	2.7	2.3	76.3	5.0
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	46.9	34.3	14.8	2.2	1.8	81.2	4.0
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	41.8	41.4	13.2	2.2	1.5	83.2	3.7

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice survey*, question 8g (Fresno) and 7g (Richmond)

Such teacher beliefs regarding the quality of curriculum and the links between the curriculum and measures of student achievement indicate that teachers believe that students in their school are being provided adequate opportunity to learn the material covered by the state tests. However, when these results are considered within the context of teacher feedback on the impact of NCLB accountability on curriculum and instruction (see section III), it suggests that NCLB may be establishing conditions that undermine rather than support a school's instructional program.

Achievement-oriented Culture

We asked teachers three questions to help evaluate whether they believed that their schools had an achievement-oriented culture. Two of these questions related to the dedication and skill-level of teachers and the third related to student work ethic. As

might be expected, teachers responded strongly to the questions regarding their dedication and instructional skills. An extremely high percentage of teachers agreed with the statement that teachers were committed to improving student achievement, with a very small percentage of teachers disagreeing. Both in schools designated as needing improvement and in those meeting performance goals in each locale, half, or more, of teachers strongly agreed that their colleagues were committed to improving achievement outcomes.

Table 11: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:

Teachers are committed to improving student achievement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	53.4	32.4	10.6	2.1	1.5	85.8	3.6
Richmond Need Imp.	48.5	32.9	14.2	2.7	1.7	81.4	4.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	67.5	23.5	6.5	0.7	1.8	91.0	2.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	57.7	32.0	9.2	0.4	0.7	89.7	1.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 8h (Fresno) and 7h (Richmond)

Teachers were also very supportive of the notion that they and their colleagues provided students with high quality instruction. In each district, less than 6% of teachers disagreed with the statement. Rates of agreement with the statement that teachers in their school provide high quality instruction exhibited a 10 percentage-point difference between improvement schools in Fresno (77.4%) and Richmond (77.2%) and adequate progress schools in Fresno (87.4%) and Richmond (87.2%). There was also a 20-point difference in the percentage of teachers *strongly* agreeing with the statement between the two categories of schools in Fresno.

Table 12: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school:

Teachers provide a high quality of instruction.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	33.1	44.3	15.4	5.3	0.0	77.4	5.3
Richmond Need Imp.	38.9	38.3	18.8	2.3	1.7	77.2	4.0
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	54.5	32.9	8.7	2.9	1.1	87.4	4.0
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	44.9	42.3	10.7	1.8	0.4	87.2	2.2

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 8k (Fresno) and 7k (Richmond)

Numerous studies have confirmed that there is an important relationship between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Loeb, 2000; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). While teachers were generally supportive of the instructional skills of their colleagues, the differences between teachers in improvement and adequate progress schools regarding how they perceived the quality of the instruction suggests that high

quality teachers may be unevenly distributed among schools, a problem that NCLB purports to help solve. Studies of such distribution problems, and the impact of NCLB on this distribution, should be encouraged.

While teachers generally believed that their colleagues were effective instructors, a high percentage of teachers indicated that it was important that ineffective teachers be removed from schools. In schools labeled as needing improvement, nearly 60% of teachers in each district indicated that removing ineffective teachers was either moderately or very important, with even higher percentages of teachers expressing this opinion in schools that had made adequate progress. Few teachers (16% or less) indicated that removing ineffective teachers was “not at all” important.

Table 13: To what extent are the following conditions important to you in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement?
Removing ineffective teachers

	Not at all	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Very Important
Fresno Need Imp.	15.9	26.7	25.6	31.8
Richmond Need Imp.	8.3	24.7	30.9	36.1
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	16.1	23.8	28.6	31.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	4.5	18.8	30.8	45.9

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 18q (Fresno) and 17q (Richmond)

Teacher support for removing ineffective colleagues indicates that they are willing to accept an accountability system that fairly measures instructional quality. Teachers’ beliefs that NCLB will unfairly punish and reward teachers (see section III), however, may indicate that they do not believe that the current design of the NCLB accountability system fairly measures instructional quality.

When asked about the third component of an achievement-oriented culture, student work ethic, teachers in adequate progress schools supported the notion that students worked hard, but teachers in improvement schools were divided. Nearly identical percentages of teachers in improvement schools agreed and disagreed with the idea that students worked hard at their studies. In both districts, there were differences of over 20 percentage-points between improvement and adequate progress schools on this topic. Such discrepancies may provide insight into factors relating to school culture that teachers feel account for their inability to increase student achievement at a rate acceptable under NCLB, given that they hold curriculum and instruction in their schools in high regard.

Table 14: Please indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with the following statement about the curriculum and instruction in your school.

Students work hard in this school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	13.3	19.2	37.3	20.8	9.5	32.5	30.3
Richmond Need Imp.	13.0	20.7	38.0	16.7	11.7	33.7	28.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	27.6	30.2	29.5	8.4	4.4	57.8	12.8
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	24.0	31.0	29.2	11.4	4.4	55.0	15.8

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, Question: 81 (Fresno) and 71 (Richmond)

Summary

Teachers believed their schools had high standards and that the curriculum in their schools was of high quality and linked to academic standards. They rated their colleagues highly in terms of quality of instruction and dedication to improving student achievement, and appeared to be accepting of accountability if it was based on a system that fairly measured instructional performance. Teachers in improvement schools were split regarding whether students in their school worked hard, while their colleagues in adequate progress schools were not. There were persistent differences between the rate of positive reviews on the items in this section between improvement schools and adequate progress schools, suggesting that teachers are realistic about their assessment of their schools.

II. General Impressions and Knowledge of NCLB

NCLB is a complex law with a myriad of requirements that went into effect almost immediately after it was enacted and signed into law in 2002. When we conducted the survey in the spring of 2004, schools were completing the second full year under the NCLB provisions. Teachers reported that they were informed about the law, as shown in Table 15. About a quarter to a third of the teachers in the two districts reported that they knew “quite a lot” about NCLB and about two-thirds to three-fourths of the teachers reported knowing “a little or some” about the law.

Table 15: How much do you know about the No Child Left Behind Act?

	Not much	A little/some*	Quite a lot
Fresno Need Imp.	9.0	58.7	32.1
Richmond Need Imp.	2.7	71.0	26.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	11.2	64.0	24.7
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	3.3	66.9	29.8

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 1 (Fresno) and 1 (Richmond)

* The categories “A little” and “Some” have been collapsed in Richmond.

In Fresno, information about NCLB came primarily from school-level workshops, with 32.4% of teachers in improvement schools and 35.9% of teachers in adequate progress schools reporting this as their primary source of information (Table 16). Teachers were much less likely to receive information about NCLB from either the state or district, although improvement schools reported the district as a source of information about NCLB at a higher rate than did adequate progress schools (13.5% for improvement schools versus 7.7% for adequate progress schools). Thus, improvement schools did receive some attention from the district as a result of being identified for improvement. While the school level workshops could have used state or district materials, teachers did not perceive the district or state as a primary source of information on NCLB, suggesting that communication linkages between teachers and other levels of the school system may not be well established. The media was another source of information on NCLB. About a quarter of the teachers in adequate progress schools (23.6%) reported that they relied on local or national media for information about NCLB.

Table 16: Which of the following sources was most effective in informing you about NCLB? *Check only one.*

	Fresno Need Imp.	Fresno Adeq. Prog.
State Department of Education workshop/professional development	3.4	1.8
District workshop/professional development	13.5	7.7
School workshop/professional development	32.4	35.9
Other colleagues	13.0	11.4
Local or national media	17.0	23.6
On my own	13.0	10.5
Other sources	7.6	9.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 2 (Fresno).

About half of the teachers in Richmond did not believe there are sufficient resources for their school to meet the AYP goals, with little difference between teachers in improvement schools (20.6% disagreed and 26.7% strongly disagreed) and adequate progress schools. (20.7% disagreed and 29.2% strongly disagreed). Less than a fifth of the teachers in improvement schools believed there were adequate resources. Among those who expressed an opinion, there was a 2 to 1 ratio of teachers who believed the available resources were insufficient to those who believed available resources were sufficient to meet the AYP goals.

Table 17: There are sufficient resources for our school to meet the NCLB adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Richmond Need Imp.	5.4	13.5	33.8	20.6	26.7
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	4.1	21.4	24.7	20.7	29.2

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 5f (Richmond)

A primary purpose of accountability programs with high stakes attached is to exert pressure on teachers to change their instructional practices in ways that will increase student achievement. Teachers in Fresno reported feeling implementation pressures that were having a negative, rather than positive, effect on their morale and performance. In Fresno, 40.9% of the teachers in improvement schools and 34.9% of the teachers in adequate progress schools reported “experiencing implementation pressures that were negatively impacting their morale and/or performance.” Only 21.4% of teachers in both types of schools believed that teachers were making changes that would improve student performance. Instead, many believed that most teachers had made no changes (improvement schools, 18.2%; adequate progress schools, 21.8%) or that NCLB was diverting attention away from more important issues (improvement schools, 13.6%; adequate progress schools, 17.5%). We discuss the effects of the NCLB provisions on instruction and curriculum greater detail in sections III and IV.

Table18: In my school, I believe the major effect of NCLB to date is that most teachers are (*check only one*):

	Fresno Need Imp.	Fresno Adeq. Prog.
Carrying on their work much as they did before NCLB.	18.2	21.8
Beginning to think, talk, and/or act in new ways that may ultimately result in more students performing at higher levels.	21.4	21.4
Diverting their attention from more important issues that can improve teaching and learning.	13.6	17.5
Experiencing implement pressures that are negatively impacting their morale and/or performance.	40.9	34.9
Leaving or thinking about leaving teaching.	6.0	4.4

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 3 (Fresno)

In Richmond we asked teachers “what overall effect do you think NCLB is having on your school?” Teachers in Richmond were divided about the overall effect of the law, perhaps reflecting the complexity of the law itself. Close to half of the teachers believed that the overall effect of NCLB was negative, with 45.7% of teachers in improvement schools and 47.3% of teachers in adequate progress schools responding negatively. But substantial numbers of teachers also thought the overall effect was positive, with 36.4% of teachers in improvement schools and 39.4% of teachers in adequate progress schools responding positively. Few believed NCLB was having no effect.

Table 19: What overall effect do you think NCLB is having on your school?

	Very Positive	Positive	No Effect	Negative	Very Negative	Sum Positive	Sum Negative
Richmond Need Imp.	5.5	30.9	17.9	35.7	10.0	36.4	45.7
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	3.5	35.8	13.5	38.1	9.2	39.4	47.3

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question: 2 (Richmond)

Summary

Teachers reported that they were informed about NCLB and that they learned about the law from school workshops. They also believed there were insufficient resources to meet the NCLB requirements. This should not be surprising since low-performing schools must make very large gains to reach the state defined proficiency levels, which may be difficult for schools serving large numbers of poorly performing students given their current level of resources. Finally, teachers are feeling the pressure exerted by the NCLB requirements, but believe these are having a negative rather than positive effect, particularly on their morale and performance.

III. Accountability, Incentives and Sanctions

By holding schools accountable for student improvement and labeling low-performing schools as in need of improvement, NCLB assumes that school improvement will occur as a result of changes in the direction of the school and work effort of teachers. It relies on sanctions to motivate teachers to make the needed changes. Teachers in Fresno disagreed with the notion that identifying schools that have not made adequate yearly progress will lead to school improvement—49.9% of teachers in improvement schools and 42.1% of teachers in adequate progress schools disagreed with this statement. Reflecting the complexity of this notion is the large number of teachers who expressed no opinion—30.3% of teachers in improvement and 40.3% of teachers in adequate progress schools. Teachers recognized the value of knowing how their students are doing, but also that improving schools requires effective teachers, committed administrators, and sufficient resources in the form of instructional and curriculum materials (see section V).

Table 20: To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?
Identifying schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) will lead to school improvement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	3.3	16.5	30.3	28.0	21.9	19.8	49.9
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	3.2	14.4	40.3	26.6	15.5	17.6	42.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 4a (Fresno)

NCLB Sanctions

Teachers in both Fresno and Richmond agreed that NCLB sanctions would unfairly reward and punish teachers. Teachers in Fresno were more likely to express such a belief, and teachers in schools making adequate progress were slightly more likely to share such a belief. As shown in Table 21, 80% of teachers in Fresno and 64.1% of teachers in Richmond who taught in an adequate progress school agreed with this statement. In schools that were identified for improvement, 73.9% of teachers in Fresno and 60.7% of Richmond teachers agreed. Teachers felt strongly about this, with over half of the teachers in Fresno *strongly* agreeing that sanctions were unfair and about a third of the teachers in Richmond *strongly* agreeing.

Table 21: NCLB sanctions will . . .
Unfairly reward and punish many teachers.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	52.1	21.8	11.9	8.2	6.1	73.9	14.3
Richmond Need Imp.	35.6	25.1	27.5	6.8	5.1	60.7	11.9
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	50.9	29.1	13.1	4.4	2.5	80.0	6.9
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	35.5	28.6	17.9	10.6	7.3	64.1	17.9

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey. Question 6b (Fresno) and 4b (Richmond)

Teachers agreed that NCLB sanctions would encourage teachers to transfer out of schools identified for improvement, with about half of teachers in both districts, and in both improvement and adequate progress schools, agreeing with the statement (Table 22). Among teachers responding to this question, the ratio of teachers who believe NCLB sanctions will encourage teachers to transfer to those who do not was about 2:1 in Fresno and about 3:1 in Richmond.

Table 22: NCLB sanctions will . . .
Encourage teachers to transfer out of schools identified for improvement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	23.8	23.2	26.4	15.7	10.9	47.0	26.6
Richmond Need Imp.	31.1	24.3	28.0	9.5	7.1	55.4	16.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	25.0	29.0	23.5	11.8	10.7	54.0	22.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	31.0	25.5	25.8	9.6	8.1	56.5	17.7

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 6f (Fresno) and 4f (Richmond).

Data on how long teachers plan to remain in teaching lends credence to the idea that an unintended effect of the NCLB accountability system is that it will make it more difficult to attract and retain teachers to low-performing schools. When teachers were asked how long they plan to continue teaching in their present school, teachers indicated in large numbers that they plan to leave within 5 years, with teachers in improvement schools (Fresno, 51.5%; Richmond, 75.5%) more likely to leave within 5 years than teachers in adequate progress schools (Fresno, 40.5%; Richmond, 67.3%). In improvement schools in Richmond, only 24.5% of teachers plan to remain at their current school for more than 5 years. To compare, data from a national study found that 44% of teachers would likely be in the same school for five years (Luekens, 2004). Fresno compares favorably with the national statistics (48.5% of teachers in improvement schools; 59.7% in adequate progress schools plan to continue teaching in the same school for more than five years) whereas Richmond compares unfavorably (24.5% of teachers in improvement schools; 32.7% in adequate progress schools plan to continue teaching in the same school for more than five years). This data is consistent with other research showing that school-based accountability systems exacerbated the challenges that schools serving low-performing students face in retaining and attracting high-quality teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Diaz, 2004).

Table 23: How long do you plan to continue teaching at this school?

	0-5 years	More than 5 years
Fresno Need Imp.	51.5	48.5
Richmond Need Imp.	75.5	24.5
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	40.5	59.7
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	67.3	32.7

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 32 (Fresno) and 31 (Richmond)

The differences between Fresno and Richmond in teacher retention may be related to differences in the recruiting and retention environments of the districts. Our district interviews indicated that Fresno has a favorable environment for attracting and retaining teachers because the city has a low cost of living and is considered a more attractive place to live than the rural districts that surround it. Thus, few districts compete with Fresno for the teachers coming out of the area's three local teacher-training programs³. The situation is very different in Richmond, which must attract teachers from out of state because of the state's high certification requirements and an inadequate supply of teachers coming from the state colleges. Retaining teachers in Richmond is exacerbated by the option teachers have to transfer to the higher socio-economic districts that surround the city of Richmond.

Teachers' views about sanctions are complex. Our data indicate that teachers did not entirely oppose the idea of either incentives or sanctions. When asked what conditions were important to them in deciding whether to stay and teach in a school identified for improvement, they voiced moderate support for rewards for improving student performance, public recognition for improving student achievement, and, to a lesser extent, sanctions for poor performance (see Table 34 on page 41). In other words, teachers would like to see some rewards and public recognition for their work, but their responses to NCLB accountability and sanctions indicate that the way NCLB sanctions are currently structured is counterproductive, both in terms of encouraging school improvement and attracting and retaining teachers in low-performing schools.

Improving School Performance

Teachers were split about the effect of the NCLB sanctions on improving school performance. They rejected the notion that transfers would improve schools but were more favorable about the potential of supplemental educational services to improve them. Teachers in Fresno did not believe that allowing students to transfer to another school if their school had been identified as in need of improvement would lead low performing schools to improve; less than 7% of teachers agreed. Teachers in both adequate progress schools and improvement schools overwhelmingly disagreed with the efficacy of this reform—45.2% in improvement schools and 50.5% in adequate progress schools strongly disagreed (Table 24). Overall, 75.6% of teachers in schools identified for improvement

³ District official, personal communication with J. Jellison Holme, 8-1-03

and 81.0% of teachers in schools making adequate progress disagreed with this statement. There was a 12:1 ratio between teachers who disagreed with the idea that transfers would lead to school improvement and those who agreed.

Table 24: Allowing students to transfer to another school if their school has been identified as “in need of improvement” will lead low-performing schools to improve.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	1.5	4.8	18.1	30.4	45.2	6.3	75.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	1.4	2.9	14.7	30.5	50.5	4.3	81.0

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 4b (Fresno).

On the other hand, teachers in Fresno were somewhat more supportive of the idea that supplemental educational services would improve student achievement, although this support varied depending on the type of school (Table 25). Teachers in schools identified for improvement were less supportive of the value of supplemental educational services than were teachers in schools making adequate progress (31.1% of teachers in improvement schools agreed whereas 40.3% of teachers in adequate progress schools agreed).

Table 25: Providing supplemental educational services (out of school tutoring provided by private or non-profit organizations) for students attending schools identified as “in need of improvement” will lead low-performing schools to improve.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	8.6	22.5	30.1	19.4	19.4	31.1	38.8
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	14.4	25.9	32.4	17.4	10.1	40.3	27.4

Source: *No Child Left Behind, The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 4c (Fresno)

Notwithstanding the support for supplemental educational services, this support may be theoretical—that is, teachers are favorable towards the idea of students receiving extra help—rather than based on actual experience with the services or the success of these services in improving student achievement. As shown in Table 26, participation in the supplemental educational services program was very low during the first year, with less than 1% of students receiving services in Fresno and about 2% receiving services in Richmond. While participation increased during the 2003-04 school year, it was still extremely low. As evidence of the effectiveness of these services becomes available and teachers gain experience with them, these views on supplemental educational services may change. Our question did not note that money for supplemental educational services is set aside from money allocated for Title I reforms in their schools.

Table 26: Student Participation in Supplemental Educational Services by District, 2002-03 and 2003-04.

District	Eligible Students		Requested Supp. Ed.				Received Supp. Ed.			
	Number		Number		% of eligible		Number		% of eligible	
	02-03	03-04	02-03	03-04	02-03	03-04	02-03	03-04	02-03	03-04
Fresno, CA	16,831	21,051	234	288	1.4	1.4	36	119	0.2	0.5
Richmond, VA	6,033	N/A	600	N/A	9.9	N/A	122	N/A	2.0	N/A

Source: Personnel communication with district officials in Fresno and Richmond. See also (Sunderman & Kim, 2004b).

Finally, teachers may voice more support for supplemental education services because they believe supplemental services hold more potential to return value to the school than the transfer option. A student receiving services would hopefully improve his or her overall performance, thus helping the school improve its average test score performance. Students who transfer out of a school do little to add value to the school or improve its average test scores. Since higher performing students are more likely to transfer, there would be little contribution from students leaving to measures of school progress. While the assumptions underlying NCLB are that sanctions will motivate teachers to improve their instructional practices, teachers have a more nuanced view that recognizes the contribution students make, particularly when average test scores are the benchmark used for accountability.

Effect of NCLB Accountability on Curriculum and Instruction

Our survey results confirm that the NCLB accountability system is influencing the instructional and curricular practices of teachers, but that it is producing unintended and possibly negative consequences. Teachers believed that both sanctions and the AYP requirements cause them to ignore important aspects of the curriculum (Tables 27 & 28). For example, 46.0% of teachers in improvement schools in Fresno and 34.2% of teachers in improvement schools in Richmond *strongly* agreed that the AYP requirements caused teachers to de-emphasize or neglect untested topics (Table 27). Teachers in adequate progress schools were even more likely to *strongly* agree with this change, with 54.0% of teachers in Fresno and 39.5% of teachers in Richmond strongly in agreement (Table 27). Taken together, this is a ratio of 8:1 in Fresno and about 5:1 in Richmond.

Table 27: The adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements have caused some teachers to de-emphasize or neglect untested topics.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	46.0	28.2	16.1	4.8	4.8	74.2	9.6
Richmond Need Imp.	34.2	26.8	26.5	6.7	5.7	61.0	12.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	54.0	24.5	12.2	5.4	4.0	78.5	9.4
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	39.5	31.0	14.4	10.7	4.4	70.5	15.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 7e (Fresno) and 5e (Richmond)

Table 28: NCLB sanctions will . . . Cause teachers to ignore important aspects of the curriculum.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<i>Sum Agree</i>	<i>Sum Disagree</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	31.6	20.5	19.2	13.6	15.1	52.1	28.7
Richmond Need Imp.	22.8	20.5	25.8	17.1	13.8	43.3	30.9
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	35.0	25.3	21.7	6.9	11.2	60.3	18.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	23.9	20.6	22.4	19.5	13.6	44.5	33.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 6g (Fresno) and 4g (Richmond)

Teachers are shifting their attention away from teaching subjects that are not tested to increasing the amount of time they spend teaching subjects that are tested. To prepare for the state-mandated testing program, teachers spent more time on subjects that were tested and less time teaching subjects that were not tested (Tables 29 & 30). About 70% of teachers in both districts indicated that they increased the amount of time they spend teaching the tested subjects. Almost none of the teachers, less than 4% in both districts, said they decreased the amount time spent on tested subjects. Since time on tested subjects has increased, it is no surprise that time spent teaching subjects that are not tested has decreased. About half of the teachers in both districts said they had decreased the amount of time spent on subjects not tested.

Table 29: In what way, if any, has the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities changed in your classroom in order to prepare students for the state-mandated testing program?

Teaching on subjects that are tested.

	Increased Greatly	Increased Somewhat	About the Same	Decreased Somewhat	Decreased Greatly	<i>Sum Increase</i>	<i>Sum Decrease</i>
Fresno Need Imp	34.8	37.8	23.9	1.9	1.7	72.6	3.6
Richmond Need Imp	36.9	33.7	26.3	2.4	0.8	70.6	3.2
Fresno Adeq Prog	33.3	38.1	26.2	1.6	0.8	71.4	2.4
Richmond Adeq Prog	35.8	35.0	26.1	1.8	1.3	70.8	3.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 10m (Fresno) and 9m (Richmond)

Table 30: In what way, if any, has the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities changed in your classroom in order to prepare students for the state-mandated testing program?

Teaching subjects that are not tested.

	Increased Greatly	Increased Somewhat	About the Same	Decreased Somewhat	Decreased Greatly	Sum Increase	Sum Decrease
Fresno Need Imp	2.1	7.1	33.3	27.7	29.8	9.2	57.5
Richmond Need Imp	3.9	12.6	36.2	22.4	24.8	16.5	47.2
Fresno Adeq Prog	0.8	6.7	39.5	28.1	24.9	7.5	53.0
Richmond Adeq Prog	4.8	10.6	33.5	23.8	27.3	15.4	51.1

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question 10n (Fresno) and 9n (Richmond).

Summary

Our survey results reveal that teachers did not completely oppose the idea of sanctions but they did question the efficacy of the NCLB accountability reforms. Teachers did not believe that identifying schools that did not make adequate yearly progress would lead to school improvement. We found that teachers held nuanced views about the NCLB sanctions. The transfer option, for example, was viewed quite negatively while teachers were more positive about the potential of supplemental educational services to improve schools. Teachers may recognize that students transferring out of their schools, particularly if they are the better performing students, will not improve the school's overall average test scores, the gauge used by NCLB to measure schools. Supplemental services are more likely to benefit the school since students receiving the services are likely to remain and may contribute to improving the school's average test scores. Teachers rejected the idea that the testing requirements would focus teachers' instruction or improve the curriculum. Instead these reforms created the unintended consequence of narrowing the curriculum and focusing instruction on the tested subjects. Teachers also believed that the NCLB sanctions were counterproductive because they were likely to cause teachers to leave schools identified for improvement. These findings suggest that teachers did not believe that the NCLB accountability requirements or sanctions were designed in a way that would lead to school improvement. They did not support the notion underlying NCLB—that external accountability and the imposition of sanctions will motivate teachers to improve and lead to school improvement—and they are dubious about the value of market competition, as manifest in their responses to the transfer option, for school improvement.

IV. Changes in Curriculum and Instruction

An underlying assumption of NCLB is that accountability and the application of sanctions will motivate schools to adopt changes that will improve the school's instructional program. We asked teachers in Fresno to consider whether their schools were putting new instructional programs in place, upgrading the curriculum, or focusing on improving teachers' instructional methods and whether these actions were unrelated to NCLB, came about as a result of NCLB, or there was no action taken by the school. As shown in Table 31, these changes had taken place in most of both improvement schools and adequate progress schools. For example, only 10.3% of improvement schools and 23.9% of adequate progress schools reported that no action had been taken to put a new instructional program in place. Teachers were more likely to link a new instructional program to NCLB in improvement schools (51.9%) than in adequate progress schools (34.9%)

Teachers in both improvement schools and adequate progress schools also reported that the school had upgraded the curriculum. However, they were less likely to link this to NCLB. In improvement schools, 48.8% of teachers reported that upgrading the curriculum was unrelated to NCLB and 35.5% reported that it came about as a result of NCLB. In adequate progress schools, 53.6% of teachers reported that upgrading the curriculum was unrelated to NCLB and 23.0% that it came about as a result of NCLB.

The most frequently adopted change was to focus on improving teachers' instructional methods. Only 6.3% of the improvement schools and 11.5% of the adequate progress schools reported no action was taken. Improvement schools were split as to whether this was related to NCLB (43.8%) or unrelated to NCLB (50.0%).

Table 31: Please indicate whether the following actions were taken that were unrelated to NCLB, came about as a result of NCLB, or there was no action taken by the school.

Put new instructional programs in place			
	<i>Action taken unrelated to NCLB</i>	<i>Came about as a result of NCLB</i>	<i>No action taken</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	37.8	51.9	10.3
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	41.2	34.9	23.9
Upgraded the curriculum			
	<i>Action taken unrelated to NCLB</i>	<i>Came about as a result of NCLB</i>	<i>No action taken</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	48.8	35.5	15.7
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	53.6	23.0	23.4
Focused on improving teachers' instructional methods			
	<i>Action taken unrelated to NCLB</i>	<i>Came about as a result of NCLB</i>	<i>No action taken</i>
Fresno Need Imp.	50.0	43.8	6.3
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	56.7	31.9	11.5

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey. Questions 5g, 5a, & 5f (Fresno).

Summary

The data from the survey indicate that schools are making changes and that many of these changes were underway prior to NCLB, something that was confirmed in our district interviews. Improvement schools were more likely than adequate progress schools to have taken action to establish new instructional programs, upgrade the curriculum, or focus on improving teachers' instructional methods, and to link these actions to NCLB. Our evidence supports the idea of "policy churn," that is, schools in high-poverty districts, and particularly low-performing schools, are continually changing programs in response to calls for reform (Hess, 1999). Our data show that adequate progress schools are more likely *not* to take any action, supporting the idea that churning may be more prevalent in low-performing schools. The data also suggest that poorly performing schools know they need to improve and had been working to do so prior to NCLB. However, since changes take time to have an effect, a constant churning of programs and curriculum can make it more difficult for schools to improve.

V. What Teachers Need

Teachers were in agreement about what they would need to improve their schools, with few differences between Fresno and Richmond or between adequate progress schools and improvement schools. They need more resources, but not just more money (Table 32). They want more money for curricular and instructional materials, but equally important is access to curriculum and instructional materials aligned with state standards. Close to 90% of the teachers in Fresno and Richmond think more curriculum and instructional materials aligned with the state standards are very important or moderately important to them (86.6% of teachers in need improvement and 85.4% in adequate progress schools in Fresno; 93.6% of teachers in need improvement and 94.4% in adequate progress schools in Richmond).

Additional time to collaborate with other teachers was more important than more professional development. When we compare teacher responses on these two questions, teachers were more likely to rate more time to collaborate with other teachers as very important than they were to rate more professional development as very important (between 54.5% and 69.0% rated more time to collaborate as very important compared to between 35.9% and 61.0% who rated more time for professional development as very important). Teachers also favored smaller classes, with over two-thirds of the teachers in both districts saying this was very important. Teachers in Fresno considered small classes the most important of all the resources they were asked about. California is a state that has experimented statewide with lowering class size, but was unable to continue funding for the initiative once the state budget shortfalls began.

Table 32: To what extent are the following conditions important to you in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement?

RESOURCES				
Additional money for curricular and instructional materials				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	4.4	10.5	28.6	56.4
Richmond Need Imp.	1.4	9.1	22.6	66.9
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	4.4	8.4	26.6	60.6
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	1.5	6.3	23.9	68.3
Curriculum and instructional materials aligned with state standards				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	5.0	8.4	29.0	57.6
Richmond Need Imp.	1.7	4.7	25.5	68.1
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	4.4	9.9	31.8	53.6
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	2.2	3.4	19.0	75.4
Opportunities and planning time to collaborate with other teachers				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	3.8	10.9	30.8	54.5
Richmond Need Imp.	2.3	5.0	25.4	67.2
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	4.0	5.4	25.4	65.2
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	0.7	6.0	24.3	69.0
Opportunities for professional development				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	8.4	20.5	35.2	35.9
Richmond Need Imp.	1.3	6.7	34.3	57.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	5.4	16.2	36.8	41.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	3.3	10.0	25.7	61.0
Small Classes				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	5.1	8.6	18.7	67.6
Richmond Need Imp.	2.0	10.7	20.8	66.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	5.4	5.4	16.3	72.8
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	4.5	7.9	19.9	67.8

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, questions 18f,o,d,l,a (Fresno) and 17f,o,d,l,a (Richmond).

Teachers also want to work with experienced teachers and administrators (Table 33). They were overwhelming in their support for having experienced administrators in their schools, and were not entirely opposed to removing ineffective teachers. Over 90% of teachers in both districts believed experienced administrators are very or moderately important, for a 30:1 ratio between those believing experienced administrators are very and moderately important and those who believe they are not important at all. Teachers

also expressed support for having more instructional assistants on staff, with a third to half of the teachers voicing support for more instructional assistants.

Table 33: To what extent are the following conditions important to you in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement?

EXPERIENCED STAFF				
Experienced teachers on staff				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	7.1	14.2	34.5	44.1
Richmond Need Imp.	4.0	11.8	26.6	57.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	6.2	9.1	31.6	53.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	3.0	10.2	27.4	59.4
Experienced administrators on staff				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	2.9	7.1	27.3	62.7
Richmond Need Imp.	2.0	4.1	21.3	72.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	3.3	5.4	21.4	69.9
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	1.1	3.0	17.8	78.1
Removing ineffective teachers				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	15.9	26.7	25.6	31.8
Richmond Need Imp.	8.3	24.7	30.9	36.1
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	16.1	23.8	28.6	31.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	4.5	18.8	30.8	45.9
More instructional assistants				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	16.7	22.6	27.0	33.8
Richmond Need Imp.	8.5	13.9	29.3	48.3
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	13.2	15.4	34.8	36.6
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	8.2	15.7	23.9	52.2

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, questions 18b,e,q,i (Fresno) and 17b,e,q,i (Richmond).

The support teachers voiced for additional resources and experienced staff is far greater than their support for accountability reforms as conditions important to them in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement. Teachers did not think that the option for students to transfer to another school, for example, was very important to them (Table 34). Over half of the teachers in Fresno and a third of the teachers in Richmond said that transfers were not important at all. Their support for out-of-school tutoring opportunities for students was stronger, but it was about the same as their support for rewards and public recognition for improving student performance. Support for sanctions for poor student performance was not strong in Fresno where

almost half of the teachers said it was not at all important. Teachers in Richmond were more supportive of this idea.

Table 34: To what extent are the following conditions important to you in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement?

ACCOUNTABILITY REFORMS				
The availability of out-of-school tutoring opportunities for students				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	25.4	22	26.4	26.2
Richmond Need Imp.	8.0	17.4	37.8	36.8
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	15.7	20.4	31.8	32.1
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	8.9	20.4	34.2	36.4
Opportunities for students to transfer to other schools				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	56.7	25.6	12.4	5.3
Richmond Need Imp.	30.7	28	22.6	18.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	53.3	26.1	15.1	5.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	35.3	26.7	25.6	12.4
Rewards for improving student performance				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	24.1	28.5	26.6	20.9
Richmond Need Imp.	10.7	11.7	33.8	43.8
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	24.4	26.9	31.3	17.5
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	9.3	16	35.4	39.2
Public recognition for improving student performance				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	31.9	27.1	19.7	21.2
Richmond Need Imp.	11.6	20.4	23.5	44.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	26.4	30.8	25.0	17.8
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	13.4	17.5	27.9	41.3
Sanctions for poor (student) performance				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	45.3	23.8	16.7	14.2
Richmond Need Imp.	13.2	19.9	34.5	32.4
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	48.7	22.3	18.7	9.9
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	24.4	20.6	26.3	28.6

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question: 18h,j,k,n,p (Fresno) and 17h,j,k,n,p (Richmond).

Finally, teachers in both districts appeared accepting of their students and willing to work with them regardless of their academic skills. They were fairly evenly divided on whether having students with strong academic skills or having fewer students with weak academic skills was important to them (Table 35). Teachers in Richmond did, however,

express very strong opinions about more parental involvement—over 70% of the teachers said having parents more involved in their school was very important. These findings suggest that teachers are willing to work with students who may be difficult to teach, but can do so only if they have the support of parents, administrators, and their colleagues, and only if they have the adequate resources to do the job entrusted to them.

Table 35: To what extent are the following conditions important to you in deciding whether to stay and/or teach in a school identified as in need of improvement?

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS/PARENTS				
Students with strong academic skills				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	21.8	33.8	23.9	20.5
Richmond Need Imp.	17.2	28.7	29.7	24.3
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	20.6	22.8	30.9	25.4
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	12.9	28.4	33.3	25.4
Fewer students with weak academic skills				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Fresno Need Imp.	24.2	33.5	20.0	22.3
Richmond Need Imp.	21.6	25.3	30.4	22.6
Fresno Adeq. Prog.	25.7	28.7	24.6	21.0
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	19.4	30.6	26.1	23.9
Greater Parental Involvement				
	Not at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Richmond Need Imp.	2.0	9.2	18.0	70.8
Richmond Adeq. Prog.	1.9	7.1	17.1	74.0

Source: *No Child Left Behind: The Teachers' Voice* survey, question: 18c.g (Fresno) and 17c.g (Richmond).

Summary

When it comes to understanding what teachers think they need to improve their schools, these findings point us in some important directions. Teachers need more resources, but they believe these resources should be for curricular and instructional materials aligned with state standards. They want more time to collaborate with other teachers more than they want additional professional development time. And they want to have experienced administrators in their schools, to work with experienced teachers, and to have more involvement of parents. Their support for directing resources to the curriculum and for experienced staff is far greater than their support for accountability reforms or their desire to teach better performing students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If No Child Left Behind is to succeed at the school level, it must take into account the attitudes of teachers, it must avoid policies that would make teachers behave in ways that would compound inequality over time, and it must find ways to positively engage teachers in the complex and long-term work of school reform. The thoughtful responses of the teachers in these districts give voice to the opinions of many teachers who are living day to day with the implementation of NCLB in districts with exactly the kinds of students whose problems it was supposed to solve.

The teachers appear to be telling us that strong educational reform plans are necessary, that teachers and schools should be held accountable, within reason, for achieving progress regardless of the problems they face, that sanctions can be an appropriate part of the mix, and that their schools were working hard to do this before NCLB became law. They accept the idea of accountability but believe it has been pushed too far and is being used in a counterproductive way that narrows education and unfairly burdens schools serving very poorly prepared students without requiring any changes in conditions that make some schools profoundly unequal. They believe that the curriculum has been seriously narrowed, and that there is less attention paid to those subjects not tested.

On other basic issues, they think we need more money and better materials related to the state's standards and an end to an excessive focus on tests that distorts and narrows the educational process and is unfair to the schools that are struggling with the least prepared students. They believe that good administrators play a large role in school improvement. Many believe that the policies are pushing good teachers to leave the schools that need them the most. Clearly there would be a preference for policies that have incentives and rewards for schools that make progress, something that is seen as more important than sanctions. Workable goals, an appropriate mix of carrots and sticks, better resources and materials, and more respect and positive treatment of teachers might be the recipe for lowering the tension over NCLB, producing a more positive, less polarized climate, and moving things forward.

Recommendations

The teacher responses to the survey questions, and the highly consistent information we have received in our work on our long-term, six state study, suggest the following priority issues for consideration as NCLB continues to evolve.

Resource Allotment

- We need to bring new resources to the schools, particularly those schools where teachers have been given a mandate to rapidly improve student achievement. There could be an immediate increase of 20% in NCLB dollars available for in-school reforms, for example, if set-asides for supplemental educational services and transfers were eliminated or replaced with additional appropriations. These additional resources need to focus on better curricular and instructional materials

tied to the state standards and on developing coherent instructional programs that are not constantly changing.

- There is an urgent need for strong, committed, long-term leaders in schools needing improvement -- leaders with educational vision and the ability to find and hold a strong staff. There is nothing in NCLB to attract administrators to such schools and much to push them in the opposite direction. This should become a key goal in reforming schools, and districts should be encouraged to develop and evaluate plans to reach this goal.
- Parent support is seen as lacking and essential for serious reform in many high poverty, low-performing schools. NCLB should fund serious parent outreach, efforts to involve parents in their child's education, and experiments in parent training.

Teacher Support Systems

- It is vitally important to increase the long-term attachment of quality teachers to Title I schools. There should be funding for improving the working conditions in these schools and more support for helping teachers with out-of-school problems affecting their students. Part of this effort will doubtless involve mitigating the extreme pressure and narrowing of the curriculum that comes with high stakes accountability.
- NCLB should facilitate teachers' strong desire for more time for school staffs to work together to improve learning by funding the time for these efforts.
- Accountability should provide rewards and explicit recognition of teachers and schools that make high levels of progress. Negative reinforcement is producing negative reactions, especially when teachers are working hard and making gains, and needs to be balanced by a focus on the positive work teachers do.

Accountability Systems

- It is important to continue rather than disrupt good reform programs already under way. Many of our teachers report that there were positive, sometimes better, reforms working with considerable success before NCLB. There should be strong encouragement to build on successful comprehensive reform efforts.
- Standardized testing should be only one part of assessing school performance and this assessment should measure not only existing achievement levels but also the contribution a school makes to improving student achievement. Multi-year rather than single-year measures will be less susceptible to false negative conclusions about schools.

- Accountability should be continued but refocused in critical ways. Accountability should be diagnostic. We should not have a measurement tool that takes excessive time away from the basic activities of teaching and learning and actually distorts the curriculum and eliminates or severely devalues other important learning goals.

From the responses of teachers and the many written comments they added to the surveys, it is clear that they want less focus on standardized tests, less time lost to testing and test preparation, a broader range of subjects and skills emphasized, and analysis of results that is based on how much progress students have made during a particular period. We recommend that more school districts and communities survey their teachers and we urge policymakers to listen seriously to these thoughtful voices when they consider modifications in the law or administrative policy. We believe that what is often seen as teacher opposition to the goals of the law is actually frustration with some of the means it employs to induce change and that teacher perceptions are crucial parts of devising policies and practices that move us further toward achieving the good goals of NCLB.

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