

# **What Will Be the Effects on Assessment and Accountability in Local School Districts of the “No Child Left Behind Legislation”?**

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## *Table of Contents*

### **An Overview of Issues Concerning Cheating on Large Scale Tests**

**Gregory J. Cizek.....1**

### **Security in a High-Stakes Environment: The Perceptions of Test Directors**

**Mary E. Yakimowski-Srebnick .....11**

### **Cheating on Large Scale Assessments: A Publisher's Perspective**

**Michael Kean .....76**

### **Discussant Comments**

**Joe O'Reilly.....86**

# Getting Ready for No Child Left Behind: The Perspective of a School District Already Undertaking Reform

Mary Yakimowski

Baltimore City Public School System

My presentation today could have delved into addressing the most significant changes in the *Leave No Child Behind* legislation. It will not. On seeing that Michael Kean was presenting first on the panel, I suspected that he would provide this for us.

My presentation today could also have focused on the impact of this legislation on urban school districts across the country. It will not. On seeing that Sharon Lewis was also on the panel today, I anticipated that she would be providing many substantive implications for those of us from large urban communities.

My presentation today could be on analyzing the good and bad elements of the legislation. Knowing that Joe O'Reilly was on the panel, I decided to leave that to him.

The focus of my presentation today will be the impact of this legislation on the public school system of one urban community—Baltimore City. Baltimore has over 100 Title I schools, is well underway in its reform, and we have begun to see the fruits of these labors.

I will begin by giving you a brief contextual and historical overview of the results of Senate Bill 795, which established the State-City partnership and started our reform. I will then discuss the many solid parallels we have with the new federal law, along with numerous challenges to be faced. I will end my presentation by suggesting changes to the Division of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, and to other offices serving in this capacity at the local school level. I will take a three-pronged approach, addressing two important questions.

1. How will already existing frameworks for reform fit in with the proposed changes defined in the federal education law?
2. How will legislation reshape existing assessment, research, accountability, evaluation, and strategic planning practices?

While the nationwide impact of the law will be felt by education systems in all states (though probably to a lesser degree in Texas and perhaps Florida), I believe it will be particularly significant in Maryland districts that have already undertaken a path for reform, and have received high rankings for programs in progress.

It will also be particularly significant in urban districts such as BCPSS [Baltimore City Public School System], where we are in a legislated City-State partnership, are under court decree to better meet the needs of students with disabilities, and are well into the process of implementing major reform efforts to enhance student achievement.

## **BRIEF CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

As one of 24 school systems in the State of Maryland, BCPSS serves 95,475 students across pre-kindergarten through grade 12. This includes 88% African-American and 10% Caucasian children. Approximately 67% of students participate in the free/reduced lunch program. We serve 10,106,034 lunches and 4,056,322 breakfasts in 173 schools.

The system employs 11,333 people; 8,039 are instructional staff. The total cost per pupil in BCPSS is \$7,907. The local wealth per pupil in the community is \$137,321,

the lowest in the state and \$125,026 below Maryland's average. To tell it like it is, we are poor.

## **THE CITY-STATE PARTNERSHIP**

It was in 1997 that Maryland's General Assembly passed Senate Bill 795, creating the City-State partnership with the goal developing educational reforms. Control of the schools was transferred from the City of Baltimore Mayor's Council to the New Baltimore Board of School Commissioners, which is the leadership of the City-State partnership.

The need for the partnership originated due to "widespread and chronic low achievement ... and the resultant entry of many schools into local reconstitution" (BCPSS, 2001 p. I-1). Special funding was provided, along with the requirement to develop and implement a long-term plan for educational reform.

Known as *Master Plan I*, this document outlined specific strategies designed to improve student achievement and establish effective management systems in support of quality instruction. *Master Plan I* was implemented in school year 1998-99, covering a four-year period ending with the current school year.

Senate Bill 795 required two external evaluations of the effectiveness of the four-year reform effort and City-State partnership, an interim assessment and a final evaluation. The final evaluation was to provide "a broad-based analysis to examine the degree to which, under the City-State partnership, BCPSS is moving toward providing a more effective and efficient educational system."

## **THE WESTAT EVALUATION**

Westat completed their study in December 2001, showing that achievement has improved in BCPSS, especially at elementary school level. Results also indicated that management was improving, the new governance structure was effective, and that funds, though limited, appeared to be properly channeled.

In my recent presentations to the New Board of School Commissioners, I shared the current results of two of the state's testing programs, the MSPAP and the TerraNova. MSPAP data suggest that despite a statewide decline the past year, BCPSS, for the past five years, has evidenced growth at every grade level. In fact, when looking at the grade 5 results, we see, in each of the six content areas assessed (which include science), there has been an increase in student performance relative to the percent meeting standards over each of the past five years.

Also, for the first time in two decades, student achievement as measured by the TerraNova was above the 50<sup>th</sup> national percentile in reading and mathematics at grade 1.

“With the support of MSDE, the New Board of School Commissioners has responded to every one of the requirements specified by the legislation and begun to establish a coherent administrative and management structure, based on a set of clearly articulated goals and objectives. The Master Plan has evolved into a framework that ties together what were previously disconnected, isolated, and too often, dysfunctional units” (Westat, p. iv).

The Westat study also identified areas for further growth. Two of these overarching areas are stakeholder involvement and improving and enhancing the information available to guide reform and assess its results. Program evaluation is a new unit established this year with more staff devoted to the effort.

## **MASTER PLAN II**

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly passed House Bill 863. A provision of this bill is the continuation of the City-State Partnership and the creation of a strategic plan for 2002-07. This document, *Master Plan II*, will serve as a blueprint for the continued embrace of continued educational reforms in BCPSS. As noted by Cook (1990), “Strategic planning is the demand by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose” (p. 74), and it is this methodology that includes both a process and a discipline “characterized by originality, vision, and realism” (p.83).

## **THE NEW FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND BCPSS**

So this leads me to ponder: How well do the newest federal regulations fit into our reform efforts that have been underway since 1997? Considering the overview of the Baltimore City Public School System and its Master Plan strategic planning process, I want to review the contents of the new federal education legislation to show some of the parallels and differences with our reform efforts.

Among the most obvious features of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is that the federal government requires more pervasive accountability measures. The current legislation expands its demands on states and local school systems to a great degree, for the purpose of improving student achievement and elevating the quality of teaching staff.

The federal requirement in this area matches both our legislation and the first objective of our *Master Plan* strategic planning process, which states our intention to “Increase

student achievement pre-kindergarten through grade 12.” It also matches our second objective: to attract and retain highly qualified staff.

High levels of accountability already exist in our system. We have a bill that requires quarterly and annual reporting, a special education court decree that requires reporting on 16 designated outcomes, and a requirement that the more than 80 of our schools in local reconstitution have detailed plans and demonstrable objectives.

We also have a number of strategies designed to recruit and retain eligible staff members, although we still have 20% uncertified who teach in our Title I schools. Regarding *No Child Left Behind*, this makes me wonder. Despite extensive efforts to recruit, and research that suggests a teacher shortage, will we be able to continue to attract individuals to work with our children—especially when even more levels of accountability are placed on our schools?

### **The NEW Federal legislation also specifies ...**

Under the new legislation, in alternating years each state must select a sample test group from grades 4 and 8, and test students in math and reading using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This test will show the relationship between individual scores and state standards.

By 2005-06, states are required to test student performance in math and reading/language arts in grades 3-8, and at least once in grades 10-12.

By 2007-08, states must establish an assessment program in science for grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.

In 2002-03, states must test the English proficiency of students and compare the results to state standards.

In BCPSS, we already administer 1.6 million tests annually to our 95,000+ students:

- NAEP (just administered)
- MSPAP at grades 3,5, and 8
- TerraNova at grades 1-8 (grade 8 twice each year)
- Maryland Functional Testing Program
- New High School Assessments, currently 5 course content areas
- Curriculum Assessments
- At extreme grade levels we have the Work Sampling System (pre-K and K) and post-secondary testing (such as PSAT, SAT, AP, IB, and ACT)

In an effort to raise the performance level of all student groups, the new federal law requires that school systems disaggregate test scores by race/ethnic background, income levels, students with disabilities, and program status.

What will be the impact of analyzing this desegregation of data when the students who reflect these characteristics are not represented in a comparable manner when the test is piloted and standards established? What happens to those systems that have a disproportionate number of students in these categories? These are important questions.

After five years, if the school system does not reach Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) performance levels described by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, federal law provides for a change of governance in which the school may become a charter school, a state school or a school under private management

This makes me wonder: How will we have full alignment among the newest federal, state, and local assessment programs? If in this process we find that even more testing is required, how will we find the time to actually teach our students rather than have them spend so many days in testing? When our state assessment program changes, will we lose the wonderful opportunity to assess the longitudinal impact of Senate Bill 795 on student achievement because, once again, a baseline will need to be established?

We have many concepts in the BCPSS system. We already have our New Schools Initiative project, Public management, Victory Schools, Edison Schools, State reconstruction.

In several ways, changes in the Title I portion of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* are the wind in the sails of the BCPSS Master Planning process and efforts toward state-funded educational reform. Yes—wind in the sails. But is the wind blowing in the right direction?

## **CHANGES IN THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Roles of the individuals serving within the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability will certainly change, and more resources will be needed to accomplish the requirements of this legislation. I can think of hundreds, but let me point out four at this time.

First, as the facilitator of our Master Plan strategic planning process, I must now look to ensuring alignment with not only the 10+ state-legislated reporting requirements, but how this new federal legislation works once the regulations are developed.

Second, with an office within this division responsible for student assessment, we must retool ourselves, reassess the tests we administer, and provide professional development to teachers and other educators on tests that have been either revamped or changed in order to meet the federal requirements.

We also need to continue to help people understand the data, as we know this is not even a focus in most teacher and administrative leadership programs. For example, most educational leadership programs do not require future principals or superintendents to learn how to analyze, interpret and present test results.

Third, as the part of the organization responsible for research, we must provide school profile reports that are even more complex, yet responsive, to the federal legislation. We must also reach out and expand efforts to inform others about what research is and why it is important to use research to help select instructionally sound programs and instructional practices. We must explain why one might not always want to trust what the salesperson or glossy literature purports.

We must establish vehicles to share research findings that exist in ways that practitioners can clearly understand. These individuals do not need to know about F test statistics, for example. They do need to know to critique the quality of research and to understand the most salient findings and how the results can be applied in “real life.”

Finally, as a division, we need to evaluate programs in a more comprehensive manner. If we can accept for a moment that evaluation is a bigger umbrella over research and assessment, then evaluation will be the catalyst in our quest for excellence, which will provide the information to integrate these reform efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Evaluation is the lifeblood of an educational institution, nourishing each of its components with the knowledge necessary to understand its history, locate itself in the present, and confidently plan for the future.

The challenge we look forward to in the Baltimore City Public School System in embracing *Leave No Child Behind* will be to integrate the reform mandates of the new federal education legislation with the existing reform efforts in our partnership with the State of Maryland through the Master Plan strategic planning process.

The Baltimore City Public School System is one dimension of a national education system which faces the same complex, changing needs. As our future unfolds, I hope I will have the opportunity to share our experiences with you again. I welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions you may have today or at any point in the future.

## **REFERENCES**

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## ESEA Comments

Lee called me up and asked me to participate in this session. In a moment of weakness I said yes. After all, I had been the most actively involved person in my district on ESEA.

Then I sat down to write my comments. Remember the Shining – Jack Nickolsen was a writer and a caretaker at a snowed in Colorado resort. And after several months of writing all he had was the same phrase over and over again.

Same thing with me – I faced the same question over and over – how will ESEA affect our district? And the same answer keeps coming back – damned if I know.

But I did do my homework – for your information here is a list of websites with information on ESEA.

***The USDOE ESEA website:***

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/index.html>

***How much your state will receive under ESEA:***

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/budnews.html>

***The Education Commission of the States*** just released their summary of ESEA. The report, No State Left Behind: The Challenges and Opportunities of ESEA 2001, summarizes the law, includes information about timelines and funding levels, looks at states' readiness to implement provisions of the new law and provides key questions for policymakers to consider. <http://www.ecs.org/>;  
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/32/37/3237.pdf>

***EdWeek***: Provides a primer and the archive section provides news information on the latest developments: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=16eseabox.h21>

A good, comprehensive 45 page summary can be found at the ***Montana School Boards Association*** site: [http://www.mtsba.org/esea\\_letter\\_files/esea\\_summary.htm](http://www.mtsba.org/esea_letter_files/esea_summary.htm)

***CTB's Title I Communique***, which contains succinct summary information on ESEA that is easy to understand for principals and superintendents:  
<http://www.ctb.com/communique/2001dec-3-7.shtml> [or, just go to [www.ctb.com](http://www.ctb.com) and in the search box enter 'Title I Communique']

***Oregon's response***: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/nclb/>

**North Carolina's response:** <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/esea/>

**AFT's powerpoint presentation:** <http://www.aft.org/esea/>

**NAEP & ESEA:** <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nclb.asp>

**Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment.** Reports titles "Building Tests To Support Instruction and Accountability: A Guide for Policymakers" offers nine requirements for states to design tests that promote better teaching and learning. [http://www.aasa.org/issues\\_and\\_insights/assessment/index.htm](http://www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/assessment/index.htm)

First, let me say I like the bill and I think it has great potential. Of course, to use an analogy this is like responding to an ad in the personals section – what you read sounds good, and the first things you hear sound promising but it isn't until you can see and spend time with the real thing you are not really sure. So with that caveat, let me share with you the positives and negatives I see from my point of view.

What do I like:

- ☺ It is consistent with state and district initiatives, so there is congruency, we serve one master, not many.
- ☺ We must get all students to high levels. As we implement standards I see teachers demanding more of their students and raising the level of their instruction for more students.

But I reserve the right to recall this point on my 'con' presentation because I am not sure how we get all students to mastery, especially as some states have defined it and how we are likely to measure it.

- ☺ Changing existing tests to reflect academic standards in grades three through eight. In Arizona this is a good thing. In the past few years we have tested grades on thru ten with an NRT plus a standards test at three through five and eight through high school.

Focusing on standards is good. But taking an NRT, adding a few supplemental items and using that as a CRT, a very high stakes CRT, is problematic. For example, 59 Prof = 65 percentile, Below Basic – Lt 23 percentile.

- ☺ I like the focus on disaggregation. I think test directors have always said a lot gets lost in an average and have provided disaggregate scores. Now

principles and teachers have an impetus to look at them and act on them – to leave no child behind.

- ☺ Requiring standards for each grades three through eight.
- ☺ Teacher quality – training (but who wants to teach math in why Arizona?)
- ☺ More money – about 125 percent of appropriations.
- ☺ The special interest items from specific appropriations to the ‘no boy scout left behind’ provision.

What are my concerns:

- ☹ While we are getting more money, it is in different pots and while we know what we have lost, we’re not sure what we’ve gained yet until rules are final – cut but not added.
- ☹ Paraprofessionals – It is the right thing, we know what the research says about the impact of aides and people’s overreliance on them. But this is tough. Especially, when your aides are the child’s translators. Four year, but turnover.
- ☹ State’s rigor varies – if you are in a state with tough standards you are in for some scary times with AYP.
- ☹ AYP – Rules are coming later – speak up  
Uses prior system – many start in year three of improvement – reliance on these scores primarily (AZ required a site visit; gave credit for moving up within categories.)
- ☹ State’s capacity to help  
Currently can support about 70 of the lowest performing schools with about \$30K.
- ☹ NAEP – We may pay attention, students may now

And some minor points:

- ☹ Reporting requirements may change testing dates – can we score April open ended and report by July?
- ☹ Ninety-five participation requirement – good thing to focus on, we do it, but we average five percent absent, in some grades higher on test dates.
- ☹ We could use a ‘Math in the Middle’ focus to compliment ‘Reading First.’

- ✿ Finally, does it matter?  
Arizona – not in compliance with all ESEA  
No consequences

