

Perceptions of Secondary Principals and CTE Teachers Concerning the No Child Left Behind Act

Final Report

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Rationale – The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has impacted schools in various ways, especially in the basic academic subjects outlined in the legislation (reading, math, science) for which students take standardized tests that result in school ratings. CTE programs and teachers may be impacted differently; however, this is to be determined. The results of this research will offer some insight into the affects of NCLB on CTE programs and teachers.

Objectives –

1. Identify factors of the No Child Left Behind legislation that may impact CTE teachers in the secondary schools.
2. Collect data to determine if Illinois Learning Standards are being addressed in CTE classes as a result of NCLB.
3. Collect data to determine the perceptions of CTE teachers toward NCLB.
4. Analyze and interpret the data collected in objectives two and three.
5. Report the results of the research conducted through this project.

Objective 1: Identify factors of the No Child Left Behind legislation that may impact CTE teachers in the secondary schools

A review of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the State of Illinois' response to this legislation was conducted to identify factors of the legislation that may impact career and technical education (CTE) programs and teachers in the secondary schools. Literature related to the legislation and CTE programs was also reviewed to help determine which factors might most impact the programs and teachers.

The NCLB legislation requires states to raise academic achievement levels for all students. The emphasis is on closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students and children and youth from disadvantaged groups and minority

populations. All students' progress in the fundamental subjects of reading and math must be annually tested at least once in grades 10 through 12.

Another of the requirements of NCLB is that by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, all teachers in core academic subjects must be highly qualified in the areas in which they teach. None of the CTE areas (agriculture, business, family and consumer sciences, health occupations, or technology education) was mentioned as a core academic subject in the legislation. The fact that CTE is not recognized as a core academic subject may end up being an important factor to its future existence at the secondary level.

The State of Illinois has developed six primary goals to achieve the requirements established by NCLB. These goals include: all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014; by 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers; and all students will graduate from high school. Due to the fact that CTE is not mentioned as a core academic area in the legislation, it is more important now than ever to determine if principals and CTE teachers believe CTE courses can help their schools and ultimately the State meet their goals. The survival of CTE at the high school level may be dependent upon its ability to be recognized as an effective force in helping students and schools meet the goals the legislation and State have established.

Objective 2: Collect data to determine if Illinois Learning Standards are being addressed in CTE classes as a result of NCLB

Objectives 2 and 3 require collecting data. Based on the literature review, an instrument was developed to be administered to secondary CTE teachers. After a group of subject matter experts reviewed the survey, it was decided that secondary principals' perceptions should also be included. The teacher instrument was revised and an instrument for principals was developed. The survey for teachers was mailed to

499 secondary CTE teachers representing all five areas of CTE. The survey for principals was sent to 499 secondary principals. The surveys were also posted onto Web sites so that the respondents could complete the paper survey or the online version. A follow-up postcard or e-mail was sent to non-respondents with the Web site address included. Both of the surveys are attached.

The initial research to identify factors of the NCLB legislation revealed data should be collected to determine if Illinois Learning Standards are being addressed in CTE classes. The Illinois Learning Standards include English/language arts and mathematics standards, which were used to develop the assessments used to determine the students' proficiency levels. The items on the survey mailed to secondary CTE teachers included the following:

- a) Indicate your level of agreement with the statement "English Language Arts Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school"
- b) Indicate your level of agreement with the statement "Mathematics Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school"
- c) What course activities or teaching approaches do you use that help students reach high standards in reading?
- d) What course activities or teaching approaches do you use that help students reach high standards in mathematics?
- e) How often do you incorporate English Language Arts Illinois Learning Standards into your lessons? (Choices were Daily, 3 or 4 times a week, 1 or 2 times a week, and Never)
- f) How often do you incorporate Mathematics Illinois Learning Standards into your lessons? (Choices were Daily, 3 or 4 times a week, 1 or 2 times a week, and Never)

The secondary principals were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following items:

- a) "English Language Arts Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school"

- b) “Mathematics Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school”

Objective 3: Collect data to determine the perceptions of CTE teachers toward NCLB

After sending the teacher survey to a group of subject matter experts, it was determined that it would be important to gather secondary principals’ perceptions toward NCLB so this objective was altered to include principals’ perceptions as well. Items that addressed principals’ and teachers’ perceptions toward NCLB included an open-ended item asking respondents to share “comments regarding the impact of No Child Left Behind on Career and Technical Education” and Likert-scale items indicating their level of agreement with the following:

- a) No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact on CTE enrollment at your school.
- b) No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact on the image of CTE at your school.
- c) No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact on how CTE courses are taught at your school.

Objective 4: Analyze and interpret the data collected in objectives two and three

The survey sent to principals generated 134 usable responses, a 27% return rate. The teachers returned 130 usable surveys, a 26% response rate.

The responses to the first set of items, which asked the respondents their level of agreement regarding items involving CTE courses’ ability to help schools achieve the goals of NCLB, were as follows.

Item	Principals’ Responses	Teachers’ Responses
English Language Arts Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school	Agree – 77% Disagree – 22%	Agree – 77% Disagree – 22%
Mathematics Illinois Learning Standards can easily be incorporated into many CTE courses offered at your school	Agree – 88% Disagree – 11%	Agree – 97% Disagree – 2%
No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact	Agree – 67%	Agree – 11%

on CTE enrollment at your school	Disagree – 33%	Disagree – 87%
No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact on the image of CTE at your school	Agree – 8% Disagree – 89%	Agree – 14% Disagree – 80%
No Child Left Behind has had a positive impact on how CTE courses are taught at your school	Agree – 15% Disagree – 83%	Agree – 40% Disagree – 55%

Teachers revealed a variety of activities and teaching methods were being utilized to assist students in reaching high standards in reading and math. These activities and methods included article reviews, summaries, comprehension questions, interest calculations, geometry in drafting class, word problems, and other practical applications. Teachers also indicated they included Illinois Learning Standards into their lessons daily for English language arts (21%) and math (22%). Others shared they incorporate English language arts standards (23%) and math standards (21%) either three or four times a week and English language arts (42%) and math (47%) once or twice a week. Ten percent said they never incorporated English Language Arts Illinois Learning Standards and 5% said they never incorporate the math standards.

Some of the comments from secondary principals regarding the impact of NCLB on CTE were:

- “As graduation requirements increase, CTE classes get the squeeze. Only the strong community-supported programs will survive and even that is no guarantee”
- “Due to increasing requirements for math and science, our CTE courses will suffer from reduced enrollment. We may have to cut staff”
- “They could be a great resource to reinforce and apply academic skills. A new outlook by staff where they realize this role is necessary. Evaluate curriculum and build more lessons to do this”
- “We have incorporated reading and mathematics across the curriculum- even in CTE courses. However, CTE was already using the math and reading extensively before that decision. CTE courses are necessary for kinesthetic learners”
- “This depends on whether people think you can learn reading, math, and science from CTE courses. Offering academic credit for CTE is difficult because of highly qualified requirements”

Teachers comments included:

- “Currently, the entire school is focused on reading and math. My department (Ind Tech) is doing developmental reading for information (work keys) exercises. Overall time in each I.T. course, 1 period per week (20%).”
- “I am concerned about the future of electives because the state is mandating more science, English, and math and this could affect how many electives a student will have time for”
- “I believe that many law makers do not realize the impact Vocational Ed has on society at large”
- “NCLB and the Illinois Learning Standards are not discussed much at all at my school so it has not had too much of an impact on me or my classes”
- “NCLB is not preparing the students for life. In the CTE courses, the students learn not only by reading and by doing math problems but actually taking it one step further and applying it to everyday situations”

Based on the responses, there is not much of a difference in the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the impact of NCLB on CTE. Principals and CTE teachers do believe CTE courses are beneficial in helping high schools achieve the goals of NCLB. CTE courses are able to help high schools meet the goals of NCLB.

Objective 5: Report the results of the research conducted through this project

The preliminary results of the research were shared with teachers and administrators at the 2006 Connections Conference. A proposal has been submitted to Delta Pi Epsilon to present the findings at their annual conference this fall. Plans also include submitting the results for publication and to the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Office of Educational Services.