

Summary of Findings from NCLB: A Study of Its Impact on Art Education Programs

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This is a summary of selected findings from the National Art Education Foundation funded study of the Impact of No Child Left Behind on Art Education. Research topics the study addressed included the impact NCLB has had on the following areas: staffing, teaching loads, enrollments, funding, scheduling, curriculum, teaching and instruction, and assessment. The full report and executive summary released in February of 2010 by the National Art Education Association (NAEA) are available on the NAEA website (www.arteducators.org).

Methodology

Research methodology included a survey of a stratified random sample of 3,000 art educators from elementary, middle, and secondary schools, supervision and administration, higher education, and museum education. All 50 states and the District of Columbia were represented in the sample. Responses were received from each of these levels and from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A 55 item questionnaire was mailed to the sample. The questionnaire consisted of demographic, Likert attitude measure, forced-choice, and open-ended items. Qualtrics software was used to analyze quantitative data and content analysis methodology was used to analyze qualitative data produced for open-ended response items. In addition to using hardcopies of the questionnaire for data collection, a website was developed that included the questionnaire. Announcements were made to the field about the availability of the website and subjects who self-selected were invited to submit their responses to the questionnaire on the website. A combined total of 3,412 responses were submitted as hardcopy and on the website.

Respondents

Makeup of the 3,412 respondents included:

- 34% elementary level, 22% middle level, 32% secondary level, 7% higher education level, 3% supervision and administration level, and 2% museum education art educators.
- 85% of subjects were female with 15% being male.
- The average age of respondents was 47.7 years of age.
- 63% of subjects taught between 13 and 26 years. The average number of years respondents taught was 16.4 years.
- 76% of respondents held graduate degrees.
- Respondents taught in suburban (35%), urban (25%), rural (21%), and town (19%) settings.

Principal Findings Regarding the Impact of NCLB on Arts Education

(1) In the areas of staffing, teaching loads, and enrollments art education programs have experienced limited negative consequences because of No Child Left Behind.

The study's findings suggest that art programs generally have not experienced significant negative consequences because of NCLB in the areas of staffing, teaching loads, and enrollments. Although modest negative effects were reported in each of these areas, with some being more pronounced than in others, the overall impact of NCLB in them has been limited.

Staffing

68% of subjects reported that staffing stayed about the same. 25% reported that it had decreased, and 7% reported increases because of NCLB. 41% agreed or strongly agreed that staffing had not been affected, while 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Teaching Loads

65% of subjects reported that teaching loads stayed about the same, while 26% reported they had increased, and 9% reported decreases in teaching loads.

Enrollments

62% of respondents reported that enrollments in their programs had stayed about the same, while 21% reported decreases in enrollments, and 16% reported increases in enrollments. 23% reported that enrollments in Advanced Placement (AP) courses had increased and 32% reported that enrollments in their art programs had decreased because students were denied access to art classes because they were required to take extra math or language arts courses or because they had failed to pass language arts or math tests required for the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

(2) No Child Left Behind has created a number of negative affects on art education programs in the areas of scheduling, increased workload, and funding.

In a number of areas, art education programs have experienced significant barriers that teachers in those programs attributed to the restructuring of educational priorities brought about by NCLB. Scheduling, workloads, and funding were areas of the most pronounced negative impact for NCLB on art education programs.

Schedules

67% of subjects reported that art schedules had been affected by NCLB.

- 47% of subjects reported that their art schedules had increased interruptions, conflicts, and problems.
- 37% reported that their schedules became more complicated.
- Subjects reported that students were pulled out of art classes for remediation (14%) or for testing or practice testing (11%).
- 7% reported teaching multiple courses during the same period.
- 6% reported losses or reductions of planning time.

1% reported decreased interruptions, conflicts, and problems.

32% reported that their schedules had not been affected.

Increased Work Load

Although teaching loads had not been affected, art educators were teaching fewer art classes, because they were required to teach classes in other disciplines, such as language arts and math, provide remediation, or conduct test preparation in subjects. 58% of respondents reported that their workloads had increased because of NCLB.

Funding

53% of subjects reported that funding stayed about the same and 43% reported decreases in all areas or in some areas. 51% agreed or strongly agreed that funding for their programs had been affected by NCLB, while 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

- Funds cut from art programs were redirected toward core classes, for test prep, remediation, and for special needs and low performing students support.
- 63% of respondents reported budget cuts in the funds needed to purchase consumable supplies.
- 34% reported cuts in budgets for instructional resources.
- 4% of subjects reported that all funding for their art education programs had been cut.
- Other funding reductions were experienced in the area of budgets for field trips.
- Those reporting funding cuts reported cuts ranging from 75% (7%) to 5% (7%).
- The average funding cut reported was 30%.

Only 4% of respondents reported increases in their budgets.

(3) Art educators generally have negative attitudes about the overall impact NCLB has had on art education programming

The general response participants had about the overall affect of NCLB on their programs was not positive. Art educators in this study, as a group, have negative attitudes about the impact NCLB has had on a number of essential aspects of their programs. Collectively, these negative effects have damaged the scope and quality of art education in the United States. Moreover, they appear to be widespread and present to varying degrees, at all instructional levels within public schools. Many respondents suggested that instead of improving the status of art education, NCLB has contributed to furthering its marginalization and diminishing the status of art education.

Art Educators Attitudes about NCLB

- 67% of subjects felt that NCLB has not helped students in their programs become better learners.
- 75% of subjects felt that the quality of their students work has not improved because of NCLB.
- 89% of subjects felt that NCLB has had a negative impact on faculty morale.
- 61% of subjects felt that NCLB has not made them a better teacher.
- 73% of subjects felt that NCLB has had a negative affect on their attitude about being an art educator.
- 54% of subjects felt that the quality of education in their schools has not improved because of NCLB.
- 71% of subjects felt that NCLB has not had a positive affect on their art education programs.
- 70% felt that the status of art education has not been improved by NCLB.

(4) Some aspects of art education programs have experienced positive affects from NCLB.

Art educators found a number of positive affects from NCLB. As a group art educators feel that NCLB has contributed to making them become more reflective about their programs and their teaching. They have come to the understanding that adjustments to accepted practices and expectations have enabled them to make improvements in their programs and instruction. They reported spending more time revising curriculum and instructional practices and increasing their emphasis on assessment of learning in art.

Curriculum

68% of subjects reported that their curriculum had been affected by NCLB, including the following areas of impact:

- 60% of subjects reported increased emphasis on national and/or state standards in their curriculum.
- 43% reported spending increased time building or revising their curriculum.
- 38% increased emphasis on higher order thinking in class assignments.
- 65% reported decreased studio time due to increased emphasis on NCLB content in their art classes.
- 36% of subjects reported decreasing art content from their curricula due to increased demands to include language arts and math content in its place in their curricula.

Only 19% reported no changes in their curriculum.

Teaching and Instructional Practices

48% of subjects reported that their instructional practices had not improved because of NCLB. However,

- 51% reported that they are more reflective about the effectiveness of their instructional practices.
- 42% reported using more varied instructional methods for instruction.
- 37% reported that they use technology more frequently for instruction than previously.

15% felt NCLB had no effect on the instructional practices.

Assessment

57% of subjects reported that assessment of learning in their art programs had been affected by NCLB.

- Of those 50% reported increasing emphasis on assessment in their art programs.
- 43% reported using more types of assessments.
- 33% reported conducting more assessments.
- 51% negatively reported that they spent more time grading, creating, or explaining assessments to their students, or managing assessment data.
- 21% reported decreases in studio time because of increased assessments in their programs. 17% reported that the quality of student studio work diminished due to less uninterrupted work time.
- 17% reported that art class time was spent on test prep for other disciplines or subjects.
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General Drawbacks of NCLB on Art Education Programs

A total of 41 specific topics for drawbacks were reported by subjects.

- 21% reported decreases in funding for art programs.
- 19% reported decreases in instructional time.
- 19% reported increased marginalization of art programs.
- 19% reported increased emphasis on assessment.
- 18% reported increased teacher stress because of NCLB.
- 11% reported increased insensitivity to the needs of children.

In an open-ended item related to curriculum,

- 32% of respondents reported having less time to cover visual arts curriculum content.
- 29% reported increasing emphasis on language arts, math, social studies, and science content in art curriculum.
- 24% reported having less time for students to engage in studio work.

General Benefits of NCLB on Art Education Programs

A total of 30 topics were reported as possible benefits from NCLB to art education programs. Of reported benefits,

- 11% reported that NCLB increased credibility for art education.
- 10% reported that NCLB improved curriculum.
- 6% reported that NCLB improved instruction in art education.
- 5% reported that NCLB improved assessments.

84% of subjects felt that no benefits were experienced for their programs because of NCLB.

NCLB has caused the American public to focus its attention on the purposes of education in the United States and its expectations for the education systems in the nation. As the era of NCLB comes to a close with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the continued inclusion of the arts as one of the core subjects is more important than ever to have in the legislation as the nation moves forward on a renewed agenda for improving America's schools. While the arts have been included among the core subjects in this important legislation, they have yet to realize parity in the curriculum with other core subjects. It is hoped that the next reauthorization will not only affirm the importance of the arts as a core subject, but will find ways to support the allocation of federal, state, and local resources to fully realize this important vision for all students.

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