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Developmentally Appropriate Practice And No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study Of Teachers' Experiences

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DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE AND NO CHILD LEFT
BEHIND: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

by

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A DISSERTATION

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DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE AND NO CHILD LEFT
BEHIND: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

LINDA MARIE HOGUE

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The authorization of The Elementary and Secondary Act—No Child Left Behind
(NCLB) Act of 2001 provided new federal guidelines for accountability in the United
States. As a result, schools are required to provide statistical data through standardized
test scores to measure adequate yearly progress benchmarks set by each state. The agenda
of the federal government was to force school equity for all children. Since the inception
of NCLB, teachers have begun the struggle of meeting the demands of federal, state, and
local guidelines that impose harsh penalties if benchmarks are not attained by their
students. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC,
1997), the Association for Childhood International (ACEI) and other watch-group
organizations endorse instructional practices or methods of teaching that focus on the
needs, interests, and life-long experiences of the child (Bredekamp, 1997).

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the experiences of early
childhood teachers who were faced with accountability mandates as measured by
standardized testing. The sample included 11 early childhood teachers in a southeastern,
public school system. All of the participants were women, taught grades K through 3, and
had 6-35 years of teaching experience. Data were was collected through a researcher-
produced teacher survey, group and individual interviews, and participants' journals.

The data analysis followed the procedures outlined by various experts on
qualitative research (Creswell, 1998, 2005; Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1938, 1988;

Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2000). The researcher transcribed all interviews verbatim

to provide a useable data set for analysis. Each transcription was hand-coded using

marginal notes, and a list of themes began to develop, along with supporting statements.

A peer reviewer followed the same procedures for hand-coding. Several debriefing

meetings were held to confer and agree upon the data analysis. The statements were

organized into a set of 17 themes, with supporting statements dealing with the

experiences teachers encounter when using developmentally appropriate practice in

classrooms controlled by mandates of NCLB (2002). These findings will help school,

local, and state administrators understand the dilemmas teachers face in today's

classrooms and help them make informed decisions about requirements for curriculum,

assessments, and accountability.

DEDICATION

-for Hugh, Melissa, and Hugh Jr.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Professional organizations such as the National Council for Teachers of

Mathematics (NCTM, 2002), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

(NBPTS, 2002, 2006), the International Reading Association (IRA, n.d., 1999), and the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, n.d., 1997) all

support the use of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms.

The use of child-centered instructional methods that focus on the life experiences and

interests of the child are considered the backbone of education today. However, President

George W. Bush signed into law The Elementary and Secondary Education Act—No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), which called for

an equal, quality education for all children. Within the mandates of NCLB, schools are

required to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as measured using standardized test

scores. In February of 2001, in its *ACEI Statement Regarding President Bush's*

Education Program Proposal, The Association for Childhood Education International

(ACEI, 2001) gave commendations to President George W. Bush for "placing education

at the forefront of the national agenda" (¶1). However, ACEI was concerned about the

constricted focus and limitations that would be imposed on students and teachers by

NCLB legislation. Since that time, classroom teachers have felt a pull toward using more

mechanistic, teacher-directed instructional practices that are not a part of

developmentally appropriate practice.

Purpose of the Study

Given the mandates of NCLB and the accountability measures that seem to require teacher-directed instruction in classrooms today, the purpose of this study was to describe the experiences, concerns, conflicts, and barriers of teachers who continue to use developmentally appropriate practice in their early childhood classrooms. Developmentally appropriate practice is defined by NAEYC (1997) as instructional practices or methods of teaching that focus on the needs, interests, and life-long experiences of the child. Although there has been significant research on the use of developmentally appropriate practice (van Horn, Karlin, Ramey, Aldridge, & Snyder, 2005), there is a lack of research concerning the use of developmentally appropriate practice and NCLB (2002) in early childhood education.

Research Questions

The central question of this study was "Do today's teachers of young children use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms when faced with accountability issues and mandates as measured by standardized testing procedures?" Three subquestions were used to answer this central question.

1. How do teachers of today define what is developmentally appropriate for young children?

2. How do early childhood teachers satisfy their commitment to developmentally appropriate practice and adhere to their responsibility to teach state-mandated skills?

3. What evidence is there that early childhood teachers may be abandoning developmentally appropriate practice in order to meet AYP goals?

Terms and Definitions

Most terms and their definitions are provided throughout the text. The following terms and definitions may not be as clearly understood because they were specifically used by the teacher-participants and the researcher.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)—the requirement set forth by NCLB legislation for states to develop measurable objectives, set goals of proficiency, determine statewide assessments to measure goals, and develop specific guidelines for specific subgroups such as economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. (See Defining Adequate Yearly Progress, below; Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002; NCLB, 2002.)

Administration—local school, county, state, and/or federal personnel who develop guidelines and hold teachers accountable.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice— a set of guidelines initially developed by Bredekamp (1997) and published by NAEYC (1997) in answer to the rising number of out-of-home daycares that resulted from an increased number of women joining the work force. The guidelines emphasized the education of the whole child, individualized instruction, and active learning experiences (See Definitions, History, and Opinions, below; Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, 2007.)

*No Child Left Behind (*NCLB*) Act*— the short title of The Elementary and Secondary Act—No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. NCLB (2002) is the latest iteration in the 7-year cycle of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was initially designed to provide financial support to assist in narrowing the

achievement gap between extreme socioeconomic groups and race. The design of

NCLB was to provide greater accountability and continued support for

disadvantaged students. (See Defining No Child Left Behind, below; Aldridge &

Goldman, 2007.)

Early Childhood Teacher—a teacher who teaches kindergarten, first, second, or third

grade.

Elementary School—a school housing grades K-5.

ELL—English language learners, synonymous with ESL (English second language) and

LEP (limited English proficient) learners. All of these terms refer to students who

are not proficient in the English language.

High School—a school housing grades 9-12.

Inclusion—the practice of placing special education students in regular education

classrooms with the support of special education teachers and paraprofessionals

(i.e., non-certified personnel).

Intermediate School—a school housing grades 4-5.

Middle School—a school housing grades 6-8.

Non-tenured—a 3-year period during in which a teacher can be dismissed from a teaching

position without being given just cause. During this time, teachers must undergo

rigorous observations and evaluations.

Primary School—a school housing grades K-3.

Sub-system—an area within the school system; primarily based on locale.

Teacher—within the text of the Findings section, only the teacher-participants in this

study.

Tenure—the completion of a 3-year period, after which the teacher can no longer be

dismissed from a teaching position without being given just cause.

Qualitative Research and the Tradition of Inquiry

Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2005, p. 203), qualitative inquiry is not used to generalize

to a population, but to "develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon."

Qualitative researchers seek understanding from participants in a natural setting to

explore a key phenomenon. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of

data collection, using documents, field notes, interviews, photographs, and other data

sources. The resulting product is richly descriptive, relying on words and pictures to

convey the findings of the researcher. The researcher gathers data to inductively build

concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than test a predetermined hypothesis (Creswell,

1998; Merriam, 2002). A qualitative approach best suited the purpose of this researcher

to understand the experiences, concerns, and conflicts faced by early childhood teachers

today who must adhere to the mandates of NCLB, and interpret the findings into useful

information for teachers and administrators.

Tradition of Inquiry

The tradition of qualitative research used in this study is phenomenology; "The

foundations of phenomenology are rooted in the work of the German philosopher

Husserl, and later Heidegger, who described the basic structure of the life world, focusing

on the lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44). According to Van Manen

(1990, p. 9), phenomenological study is "the study of the lifeworld" that "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences." Creswell (1998, p. 51) described a phenomenological study as "the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon." From the phenomenological point of view, "to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (van Manen, 2000, p. 5). In this type of study, the researcher "sets aside all prejudgments, bracketing his or her experiences [and relies] on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience" (Creswell, 1998, p. 6). In addition, Van Manen (2000) stated that phenomenological study is the attentive practice of thoughtful research and is practical for educators, and that phenomenological study is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness, "a minding, a heedful, a caring attainment – a heedful, mindful wondering" which is "practical for educators" (p. 12). As a study of the lived experiences, thoughts, feelings, and concerns of early childhood teachers, the use of phenomenological research best met the purpose of this qualitative study (Creswell, 1998; Morse & Richards, 2002; van Manen, 2000).

Assumptions

It was assumed that there was a population of early childhood teachers who would meet the requirements of this study. It was also assumed that the researcher would be able to access this population. Other assumptions were that participants would have prior knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice and the mandates of NCLB; that the participants would openly and honestly answer the questions of the researcher; and that

the researcher would withhold bias to allow the meaning of reflection to emerge from the lived experience of the participants.

Philosophical Assumptions

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 19), "All research is interpretive: it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied." Of the four major interpretive paradigms in qualitative research—positivist and postpositivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical, and feminist-poststructural—this researcher relates more closely with the constructivist paradigm, which "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 21).

The objective of this study was to use a transformative lens to relate the experiences, concerns, and feelings of early childhood teachers who were faced with possible barriers and conflicts while adhering to developmentally appropriate practice in their classroom. The ontological assumption was met by this researcher's understanding of multiple realities. Two perspectives are represented in this study: the participants' and the researcher's. The resulting report relies on the voice of the participants and presents themes that reflect the words of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Two delimitations (Creswell, 2005) affected this phenomenological study. The first was the fact that this study had a narrow focus, involving teachers from four schools

in the southeastern United States. The second was that all four of these schools were in the same public school system, which further narrowed the scope and limited the generalizability of this study by portraying only the expressions and opinions of the participants.

In addition to the assumption that the teacher-participants were honest concerning their teaching pedagogy and their use of developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms, it must be assumed that the words of each participant provided a realistic picture of regular classroom instruction and were not contrived to impress the observer. Also, because of the interpretative nature of qualitative research, the findings reflect the feelings of only those teachers who participated in the study. All of the participants were Caucasian females, which further limits the study. This limitation was the result of a low response rate from teachers during the recruitment stage. The identity of all participants was held in anonymity, and a guarantee was made that there would be no adverse impact on the teacher-participants' teaching position from being in this study. Although four schools were represented, the majority of the participants were colleagues of the researcher. Finally, as an early childhood teacher myself, I had to be diligent in withholding my own opinions and not leading the participants during the interview process or skewing the interpretation of the data—especially with my colleagues.

Significance of Study

Because of the ongoing accountability requirements in the United States education system, teachers of today are caught between the rules and guidelines of NCLB and their personal dispositions toward teaching. This research provides invaluable

information that will support and sustain teachers of young children as they diligently strive to provide the best education possible for their students. It will also inform federal, state, and county administrations about the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers who work for them—specifically in the area of the use of developmentally appropriate practice with young children. This research may be used to drive changes in federal mandates concerning teaching practices and requirements of NCLB. It is the belief of this researcher that NCLB mandates do not have to be in opposition with the use of developmentally appropriate practices in teaching young children.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides a background, states the problem and the purpose of the study; outlines the research questions, and describes the significance and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 provides a summary of past, present, and related research and general literature in the areas of NCLB, developmentally appropriate practice, and other subjects relevant to this study. Chapter 3 explains and describes the sampling procedures, site, recruitment procedures, and specific details on collection, storage, and analysis of data. Other subjects covered in Chapter 3 include verification procedures, ethical considerations, and the role of the researcher. Chapter 4 presents a thick, rich description of the data collected in this study. Chapter 5 provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Summary

NCLB (2002) is a primary force behind the decisions and practices of teachers in today's classrooms. Early childhood teachers are currently concerned with their students' academic progress and performance on the tests required by NCLB to measure that progress. However, there are conflicts between the recommendations or requirements for instruction as defined by NCLB mandates and the use of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences, concerns, conflicts, and barriers encountered by early childhood teachers who strive to continue to use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. Other teachers may benefit from this study by the affirmation of their own beliefs about developmentally appropriate instructional practices and by the effect of this research on public policy and opinion. As stated earlier, it is the opinion of this researcher that NCLB mandates and developmentally appropriate practice do not have to be in opposition.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review defines NCLB (2002) and developmentally appropriate

practice and provides comprehensive research on both areas. Each section is prefaced

with general descriptive information concerning NCLB and developmentally appropriate

practice from professional organizations, government documents, and general articles in

the professional literature. Each section is followed by summaries of criticisms, support,

and research.

More specifically, the first section provides general information, criticisms,

support, and research concerning NCLB. This is followed by a section on the

requirements for AYP and research in this area. A third section focuses on opinion and

research of high-stakes tests that are used to determine achievement and proficiency

levels, including information about a widely used predictive assessment. The final section

defines developmentally appropriate practice, provides information on the history of

developmentally appropriate practice guidelines by reviewing general articles and

position statements, and reports on various peer-reviewed studies dealing with the use of

developmentally appropriate instructional practices.

There is evidence that few connections have been made between developmentally

appropriate practice and NCLB. This literature review provides a broad spectrum of

information concerning NCLB and developmentally appropriate practice, and is used to

establish the need for research in the area of addressing teachers' concerns and

experiences in the classroom as they struggle to provide instruction that will produce the achievement levels required by NCLB mandates while adhering to developmentally appropriate teaching practices.

<div align="center">No Child Left Behind</div>

This section first defines NCLB and its mandates, followed by a section that provide supportive research for the five essential components of reading as listed in NCLB (2002), intervention, and criticisms of the findings of the National Reading Panel report. The next section provides a brief synopsis of issues with and criticism of NCLB. The final section provides information on research studies that focused on NCLB in terms of public opinion, teacher response, effect on teaching practices, and impact.

Defining No Child Left Behind

NCLB has been described as the "most important legislation since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (Shannon, 2004, p. 12). Actually, NCLB is simply the latest iteration in the 7-year cycle of reauthorization of the original 1965 education legislation, but it warrants notoriety because of the fear factor it imposes on today's educators. Originally, the focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was on the poor, disadvantaged students as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. It was based on the assumption that, by providing financial support, schools could narrow the achievement gap between children separated by extreme socioeconomic groups and race. However, during the time of President Reagan's administration, a report called "A Nation at Risk" determined that America's public

education system was inadequate as compared with other countries. This inadequacy would have economic implications, such as less productivity of American workers, as a result of America's students not being able to compete academically with their international counterparts. This surge toward the needs for higher academic standards during the Reagan and Clinton administrations resulted in high-stakes testing and parental choice (Jaeger, 2007; Shannon, 2004).

None of the components of NCLB were the invention of President George W. Bush. Rather, NCLB was patterned after programs that had been established in the state of Texas during his term as governor. Texas had implemented a

> tight centralized system of curricular and instructional standardization enforced by strict school, teacher, and student accountability procedures which lowered school dropout rates, improved student scores on state tests of reading and math, and narrowed the achievement gap between poor and middle- and upper-class students and minority and white students. (Shannon, 2004, p. 12)

This standardization led to the use of scripted lessons from commercially produced programs, twice the instructional time for reading and math (limiting science, social studies, and the arts), competency testing for teachers and principals, and making school funding and teacher employment contingent on students' scores on statewide tests. Under the direction of Ron Paige, former Secretary of Education and previously the Superintendent of Houston City School District, NCLB simply replicated the Texas plan on a national scale (Shannon, 2004).

NCLB was a "landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools" (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, [USDOE OESA] 2002, p. 9). The four key principles of NCLB are to provide (a) stronger accountability for results; (b) greater flexibility for states, school districts, and schools in the use of federal funds; (c)

more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and (d) an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to work. More specifically, NCLB was established to give greater control and flexibility to schools and local districts, to require scientifically based teaching methods, and to make states and local school districts accountable for test results. NCLB requires testing in all states and territories under the jurisdiction of federal law in the United States for all children in public schools in Grades 3 through 8. Testing has been required for these students in the areas of reading and math since the onset of NCLB, and in the year 2007 additional testing will be required in the area of science (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; USDOE OESA, 2002).

"The NCLB Act puts a special emphasis on determining what educational programs and practices have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research" and "federal funding will be targeted to support these programs and teaching methods that improve student learning and achievement (USDOE OESA, 2002, p. 11). The purpose of NCLB is to focus on what works. Title I funds are used only for effective educational practices that are guided by scientifically based research methods— "proven strategies and methods for student learning, teaching, and school management that are founded on scientifically based research and effective practices and that have been replicated successfully in schools" (USDOE OESA, 2002, p. 49). NCLB required states to develop plans and measurable objectives to ensure that all teachers teaching in core subjects were highly qualified by the 2005-2006 school year. In addition, requirements for paraprofessionals were increased. NCLB increases accountability in student performance measured by annual assessments in Grades 3 through 8 for all students, and one assessment between Grades 10 and 12. States are required to implement

a statewide accountability system and to provide state and local report cards on academic achievement of all students. Each uses a formula to rate schools called average yearly progress (AYP). The target set by each state moves higher and higher, moving toward the goal of 100% by 2014. Each school or district must improve dramatically at least bi-annually in order to meet this goal and to avoid sanctions. Finally, NCLB empowers parents through school choice, through requiring parents be notified about supplemental educational services, and through reporting information about the qualifications of teachers (Jaeger, 2007; USDOE OESA, 2002).

NCLB is divided into ten major areas, or provisions, called titles. Each is described in the following paragraphs.

Title I, Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, is focused on improving programs that are operated by local education agencies. For example, two federally funded programs, Early Reading First and Reading First, were added. Early Reading First was established to prepare preschool children for kindergarten by strengthening their reading and language skills as a preventive measure. Both public and private organizations are eligible to apply for funds, either individually or collaboratively with other agencies. Reading First is focused on improving literacy in kindergarten through third grade:

> Reading First is designed to help states, school districts and schools address this issue and to ensure every child can read at grade level or above by the end of third grade through the implementation of instructional programs and materials, assessments and professional development grounded in scientifically based reading research. (USDOE OESA, 2002, p. 23)

The money for Reading First is funneled through the state department of education to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged and middle-class students. The program increases the accountability in funded schools for student performance in five areas of

emphasis: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Other programs under Title I focus on Even Start Family Reading Literacy Program for low-income families—integrating literacy services for parents and their young children to "break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy for low income families" (USDOE OESA, 2002, p. 31). Other programs are focused on improving school libraries, educating migrant children; increasing strong parental involvement; educating children who are neglected or at-risk; improving school reform and advanced placement; and preventing student dropouts (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Title II, Preparing, Training, Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals, clarifies and sets standards for advanced certification and credentials. Each state or territory is given the burden of fulfilling specific standards as presented by the law, but must define its own requirements for high-quality teachers. This section also discusses the Troops-to-Teachers Program, the National Writing Project, civic education, and enhancing teaching through the use of technology (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Title III, Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students, discusses the requirements for teachers of English language learners (ELL). Teachers of ELL students must be proficient in English. The teaching methods for limited English proficient (LEP) students must be based on scientifically based research programs. Teachers of ELL students must provide reports that define the type of program being used for instruction and its effectiveness. The students in this program must meet the AYP goals of the school (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Title IV, Twenty-First Century Schools, focuses on safety issues such as providing an environment free of tobacco smoke, guns, and drugs. Provisions are made for reporting unsafe schools. After-school services, not limited to those provided by public schools but including faith-based organizations and community centers, may apply for funds under Title IV as providers of assistance in promoting students' performance in academics (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Title V, Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs, requires schools to inform parents about the academic performance level of the school in making AYP and, therefore, offer parents alternatives for their child's education. The book distribution program also falls under Title V. This program provides monies to grantees for the purpose of expanding early childhood education programs and assists schools in meeting the parental involvement component of Title I (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Title VI, Flexibility and Accountability, provides grants for assessment and incentives for rural and low-income schools. As a provision of Title VI, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exclusively provides high-quality test data based on reading, mathematics, science, and other subjects in the form of the Nation's Report Card since the 1960s (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Titles VII–X provide other requirements under NCLB as they pertain to Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native education systems. Title VIII discusses provisions for schools on federal property. Title IX explains general provisions that affect all programs under NCLB, and Title X discusses repeals, redesignations, and

amendments to other statutes (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; NCLB, 2002; USDOE OESA, 2002).

Supporting Research for No Child Left Behind

The National Reading Panel was established to "assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read" (Sweet, 2004, p. 24). In conjunction with The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), a rigorous and comprehensive review of reading research was conducted and published in the National Reading Panel's report (NICHD, 2000). This report included research on explicit and systematic instruction on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies. These components are also specifically listed as essential components in the writing of NCLB. The following summaries are representative of the research studies used by The National Reading Panel to support the NCLB legislation.

Phonemic awareness and phonics. The meta-analysis used by the National Reading Panel to study phonemic awareness included research collected from electronic databases and reference lists. Only experimental studies testing the effectiveness of phonemic awareness were chosen for the meta-analysis. To be chosen, a study was required to report on research concerning the direct instruction of phonemic awareness with a control group; measure the impact of phonemic awareness on reading, and be published in a peer-reviewed journal. The purpose of the meta-analysis was to determine whether phonemic awareness instruction would help students acquire phonemic

awareness, and whether it affected their reading and spelling ability using assessments in reading, word reading, pseudo-word reading, reading comprehension, oral text reading, reading speed, miscues, and spelling (both invented spelling and spelling tests). The researchers found that phonemic awareness instruction was more effective than alternative forms of instruction or no instruction. Instruction affected reading not only at the end of instruction, but also beyond. In addition, students who received instruction in phonemic awareness showed improved abilities to read words and pseudo-words and to comprehend text, both on various standardized tests and on tests created by the researchers in their (Ehri, 2004; Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Ehri et al., 2001; NICHD, 2000).

The second part of panel's study of phonics involved explicit instruction in phonics. The purpose of the study was to find experimental evidence showing that systematic phonics instruction helps children read more effectively than unsystematic phonics instruction or no phonics instruction. The approaches studied were synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, phonics through spelling, embedded phonics, analogy phonics, other approaches including whole-language and look-say, and basal programs that used structured books and materials. The meta-analysis also included other attributes of instruction, such as how it was sequenced and its pace. The studies chosen for the meta-analysis included introductory phonics in Grades K-6. The studies were analyzed to determine whether phonics instruction would prevent reading failure in at-risk beginning readers and to remediate difficulties in older readers. The meta-analysis distinguished readers into three groups: at-risk students, low-achieving students, and students with reading disabilities. Six outcomes were analyzed: decoding regularly spelled words,

decoding pseudo-words, comprehending text, reading connected text orally, and spelling

words correctly or with developmental criteria. The study also included measurements

taken at the end of instruction, at the end of the first school year the program was used (if

more than one year), and after a delay (for long-term effects). It was found that phonics

instruction facilitated reading acquisition in both younger and older readers. All types of

phonics programs were more effective than nonsystematic or no phonics as long as the

programs were systematic. There was a larger impact on kindergarten and first-grade

students than on students in later grades who had already been exposed to other methods

of instruction. It was concluded that phonics instruction should be combined with other

forms of instruction to create a comprehensive reading program (Ehri, 2004; Ehri, Nunes,

Stahl et al., 2001; Ehri, Nunes, Willows et al., 2001; NICHD, 2000).

Fluency. Fluency is one of the five goals of reading stressed in the Reading First

program incorporated into NCLB (Stahl, 2004, p. 187). According to Stahl, there is much

confusion about how fluency is defined and about how to achieve fluency in the

classroom and in remediation. The panel's purpose in this meta-analysis was to review

what was known about fluency and to discuss effective approaches that promote fluency.

Stahl defined fluency as accurate reading without too many miscues; reading at a

reasonable rate; and prosodic reading (i.e., reading with expression to make it sound like

real language). Stahl and others associated with the National Reading Panel examined

several different approaches including round robin reading, guided oral reading, and the

"Mulligan stew" approach of using mixed methods of instruction. The studies included in

this meta-analysis were divided into three groups: repeated reading, assisted reading in

clinical studies, and classroom approaches to fluency development. Stahl reported that

several of these studies used vote counting as a method to examine trends, but also that

using meta-analysis would be more sensitive to small differences. Stahl found that

fluency instruction seemed to be effective. Children with reading problems rarely made

more than one month's progress in one month's time, but may have made more progress

in fluency instruction than they made in other types of instruction. Stahl also concluded

that repetition did not lead to improved fluency, but that assisted reading did. Overall, the

characteristics of fluency-oriented instruction include the use of repetition (but this does

not seem necessary), increased time reading at appropriate grade level, and the provision

of monitoring and guidance during remedial and assisted reading (reading at the same

time). Stahl recommended that children should be given support with difficult material

rather than repeatedly reading easy material, and that teachers should scaffold children so

that they can read materials successfully. Although fluency, accuracy rate, and prosody

are important components of effective reading, they are not sufficient to make a child a

reader. Stahl (p. 208) suggested that "disfluent reading can limit children's

comprehension, but more than fluency is needed to make a child a successful reader."

Children must know the language of the text, especially the meanings, and need to

integrate words into coherent messages (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NICHD, 2000; Stahl,

2004).

Vocabulary and comprehension instruction. The following research reflects the

research and findings of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000), Kamil (2004), and

the RAND Reading Study Group (RRSG, 2002). The researchers reviewed only reports

that met the criteria of experimental or quasi-experimental research in the area of vocabulary instruction, comprehension strategy instruction, and preparing teachers to teach comprehension. Support was found for a variety of methods, including the use of multimedia aspects of learning, richness of context in text, active engagement in learning words, and increased exposure to words. The studies did not include research that dealt with college-age students or adults, that dealt with languages other than English, or that were exclusive to learning disabilities.

The first area of focus addressed here is vocabulary. The researchers found that learning words in context was a key element for vocabulary instruction. They also reported that students should be actively engaged in the task of inferring meanings from context rather than being given the definitions of words in such tasks as mental pictures, acting out definitions, using the word in writing tasks, and actively attending to context clues. However, for low-achieving or at-risk students, they noted it may be necessary to restructure instruction by providing vocabulary within a sentence structure until the students understand the task of giving meaning to a word. Group formats such as pairs, peer tutoring, and reciprocal teaching strategies (listening to others' responses) are beneficial for learning vocabulary. In addition, the use of computer-based vocabulary instruction that provides animation of key words is especially beneficial for ELL students. The researchers concluded that ELL students need vocabulary to be taught directly; that is, by providing instruction with specific words in text to be read as part of the lesson. The researchers also stated that not all vocabulary has to be taught explicitly. Incidental learning activities such as listening, other reading instruction, and storybook readings also proved beneficial in learning vocabulary. No definitive evidence was given

on how to decide which words must be taught, but all of the previously discussed

methods can be incorporated into regular reading instruction (Kamil, 2004; NICHD,

2000; RRSG, 2002).

"Comprehension is the ultimate goal in reading" (Kamil, 2004, p. 221). The

purpose of direct instruction is to help students develop cognitive strategies and

processes, practicing these strategies until readers gradually achieve internalization and

independent mastery. The research represented in these meta-analyses included

comprehension monitoring; cooperative learning with small groups and kid-talk; the use

of graphic organizers; using story structure (setting, initiating events, internal reactions,

goals, attempts, and outcomes); questioning (both answering and generating);

summarization; and the use of multiple strategies. The evidence from the meta-analyses

indicated that the teaching of comprehension strategies shows improvement in reading

comprehension. There were also indications that

> comprehension instruction with typical children [should] include the suggestion
> that teachers help students by explaining fully what it is they are teaching: what to
> do, why, how, and when; by modeling their own thinking processes; by
> encouraging students to ask questions and discuss their own thinking processes;
> by encouraging students to ask questions and discuss possible answers among
> themselves; and by keeping students actively engaged in their reading by
> providing tasks that demand active involvement. (Kamil, 2004, p. 228)

Further, comprehension instruction should not be neglected during the important

period when children are beginning to master phonics and word recognition and

are developing reading fluency (Kamil, 2004; NICHD, 2000, RRSG, 2002).

Intervention research. Torgesen (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of intervention

research. According to Torgesen, intervention studies historically focus on "questions

about the efficacy of one method versus another or the effectiveness of a particular

method when compared with a control group that did not receive the intervention" (p. 358). Furthermore, "if one method produces better reading growth than another, it is judged to be more effective" (p. 358), which leads to the conclusion that the method should be used with children who have similar types of reading difficulties. Torgesen cited instructional research as well as prevention and remedial studies in his meta-analysis and concluded that "schools must work to provide preventative interventions to eliminate the enormous reading practice deficits that result from prolonged reading failure" (p. 376). Torgesen maintained that educators should find more ways to provide interventions for older children with reading disabilities that are appropriately focused and sufficiently intensive. In this meta-analysis, even the most effective remedial studies showed that significant numbers of children still had poor reading skills at the conclusion of the intervention, and that more information is needed about the amount and intensity of such instruction to help all children acquire adequate reading skills (Torgesen, 2004).

Criticisms of the National Reading Panel report. Shanahan (2004) researched reports of criticism of the National Reading Panel's report (NICHD, 2000). First, Shanahan emphasized that this report was a summary of available reading research that met certain criteria for experimental and quasi-experimental studies. The National Reading Panel report was supported by NICHD at the request of the United States Congress and in cooperation with the United States Department of Education. Shanahan's scientific reexamination of the findings confirmed the panel's findings. Criticisms aimed at the panel's report included complaints that it did not pursue other important areas of research such as preschool years, home influence, and writing; omitted many reports; and

was narrow in paradigm, including only experimental and quasi-experimental studies and excluding qualitative works. In addition, there were reports that questioned the panel's qualifications and motivation, and possible connections with publishing companies that would lead to professional and financial gain. Shanahan dispelled these criticisms:

> As this analysis shows, however, the critics usually have not made challenges to the [panel's] findings—in fact, most of the critics have expressed agreement with the findings of the report. Furthermore, the few actual challenges to applying the [panel's] findings have been controversial even among the critics themselves and are on shaky philosophical, logical, and methodological grounds. (Shanahan, 2004, p. 262)

Issues and Criticisms of No Child Left Behind

In criticism of NCLB, Goodman (2004a) developed a list of ten alarming facts that threaten the education of children in the United States today. Each is summarized below.

First, the long- and short-term effects of NCLB will be devastating for American education. NCLB is both negative and punitive and is designed to force conformity and achievement of impossible goals through a system of punishments of local and state authorities, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. In addition, schools identified as failing would be closed, taken over by the state, or turned over to private, profit-making interests.

Second, NCLB is the climax of a long-term campaign to privatize American education. This movement was created to discredit and destroy public education—"There is no other explanation for the impossible, destructive conditions it imposes on the nation's schools" (Goldman, 2004a, p. 7).

Third, NCLB is driving students and teachers out of education through high-stakes testing, by narrowing the curriculum, and by controlling what teachers teach. The dropout and push-out rates are rising as a consequence of the stress levels imposed on students, and teachers are leaving to "escape being required to conform to aspects of the law that they believe make it impossible to teach in the best interests of their pupils" (Goldman, 2004a, p. 8). In addition, certification requirements are causing teachers to lose certification, especially in middle schools and smaller, rural secondary schools where teachers must teach multiple subjects.

Fourth, NCLB centralizes the control of every aspect of American education. Every aspect of American education—including policy, methodology, curriculum, choice of text books, evaluation, and staffing—is being shifted from local districts and states to federal control and bureaucracy.

Fifth, NCLB defines what is and is not science. Materials, teacher certification, staff development, and curriculum is based on a narrow definition of "science."

Sixth, NCLB makes scores on mandatory tests the basis of all major decision-making in the schools. This has created a legal way to discriminate in American schools through the identification of subgroups. When one group falls short, the school fails. Parents are denied the right to withhold their child from the testing. States are required to absorb the cost for testing and are mandated to participate in NAEP. It is the test companies that profit from these requirements.

Seventh, NCLB requires the busing of pupils, a district expense, from non-improved schools to other schools—creating more failing schools and overfull classrooms.

Eighth, NCLB controls who may teach and not teach and how they will be certified.

Ninth, the enforcement of NCLB employs blacklists. This list consists of people, institutions, methods, and materials that do not conform to scientific criteria.

Tenth, and finally, NCLB violates the Constitution of the United States by taking control of education from state departments of education. It has established a national curriculum and methodology in reading and math (Goodman, 2004a).

According to Goodman (2004b), there has also been evidence that bureaucrats are culling ERIC documents with "intentions to eliminate the ERIC system and wipe the pages of research history clean so they will no longer be accessible to future scholars and researchers" (p. 43). These practices will restrict informative research and control both current and future belief and practice:

> Now federal and state law is being used to define what is and isn't literacy research and educational research in general, which materials can claim a basis in research, and precisely what teachers may and may not do. And the National Reading Panel among other federally funded efforts is being used to excommunicate and brand as heretical, researchers, their methodologies and their findings. (Goodman, 2004b, p. 45)

Aldridge and Goldman (2007) identified a number of issues related to NCLB. The first of these is the issues is funding. The federal government requires the states to "pick up some of the slack" (p. 116) in funding assessments and instructional programs. Another issue is definitions, which are varied and cannot be used for valid state-to-state comparison. Each state or territory is required to determine its own definitions for highly qualified, set up its own battery of tests to measure AYP, and determine the definition of a safe school. NCLB also conflicts with the Individuals with Disabilities Act, which requires modifications for students. Because 95% attendance is a requirement for testing,

small schools in poverty are penalized by their lower attendance rate. The de-professionalism of teachers is a major concern. Goodman (2004b) supported this issue by stating, "One avowed purpose of NCLB is to eliminate the gaps between white middle-class and minority children in school achievement. But NCLB thinks that is to be accomplished by treating all children alike" (p. 198). The use of scripted reading instruction destroys the professionalism of teaching and takes from teachers the role of reflective decision makers (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Aldridge and Goldman (2007) also reported that expectations for students of low income, special needs students, and ELL are unrealistic. Most teachers have high expectations for students regardless of those students' race, ethnicity, gender, disability, primary language, or immigration status. However, it is not always possible for these students to meet the same standards, same pacing, and same level of progress. Aldridge and Goldman cited issues related to the experience of the current Secretary of Education and a lack of experience in the area of education. Finally, they concluded that the goal of all children reading on grade level by 2014 is an impossible dream (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007).

As part a series of articles titled "Evaluating 'No Child Left Behind,'" Darling-Hammond (2007) stated that the initial response to NCLB was "a victory for American children, particularly those traditionally underserved by public schools" (p. 11). According to Darling-Hammond, civil rights activists "praised NCLB for its emphasis on improving education for student of color, those living in poverty, new English learners and students with disabilities" (p. 11). In addition to the focus on the differences of marginalized students, NCLB provided legislation that recognized the students' right to qualified teachers. But Darling-Hammond continued that "this noble agenda, however,

has been nearly lost in the law's problematic details," and that NCLB has been dubbed

such nicknames as 'No Child Left Untested' and 'No School Board Left Standing' (p.

13). According to her article, more than 20 states and dozens of school districts have

protested NCLB and voted to resist specific provisions. The lack of funding by the

federal government has brought litigation from at least one state's national teachers

association. Darling-Hammond pointed out that there is a focus on testing that further

exacerbates the inequities between poor and wealthy school districts. Low-income

schools systems, already struggling to provide up-to-date materials and books, must cut

special programs to pay the cost of the testing. She stated that the law "wastes scarce

resources on a complicated test score game that appears to be narrowing the curriculum,

uprooting successful programs, and pushing low-achieving students out of schools" (p.

13). Darling-Hammond proposed that there are better ways to bring United States schools

up to date: centrally and equally funding schools; providing better teacher preparation,

mentoring, and competitive salaries; and focusing on curriculums that emphasize critical

thinking, problem solving, research, and scientific investigations rather than returning to

skill-and-drill techniques that only narrow the curriculum and lessen the quality of

teaching:

> A new paradigm for national education policy should be guided by dual
> commitments to support meaningful learning on the part of students, teachers and
> schools; and to pay off the educational debt, making it possible for all students to
> benefit from more productive schools. (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 16)

She called for a new ESEA that will return our education system to a more

productive approach with focus on performance based evaluations and more

comprehensive measurement for student success:

> Students will not learn at higher levels without the benefit of good teaching, a
> strong curriculum and adequate resources. Merely adopting tests and punishments

will not create genuine accountability … [A] policy agenda that leverages equitable resources and invests strategically in high-quality teaching would support real accountability—that is, accountability to children and parents for providing the conditions under which students can be expected to acquire the skills they need to succeed. (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 18)

Pedro Noguera (2007) provided a partial counter-point to that of Darling-Hammon. He agreed that NCLB has its problems, but also wrote that

it's important to emphasize that opposition to NCLB is not based on a desire to return to the past—to the time when it was possible for poorly educated students to graduate with meaningless diplomas or when many schools showed little interest or ability in promoting higher levels of learning and achieving for all students without regard to race, disability, language or background. (Noguera, 2007, p. 18)

Noguera had determined that the tenets of NCLB continue to strive toward educating students under higher academic standards and that those responsible for educating students are held accountable. But Noguera also pointed out that schools, "in pursuit of higher test scores" (p. 18), have eliminated subjects that are not covered on standardized tests. NCLB also places accountability on the shoulders of students, teachers and principals, but not the government officials that control funding and who are responsible for setting standards. Noguera argues that if NCLB meets the needs of poor, struggling students, then it would ensure students have their basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, and support; safe, clean, well-maintained facilities with qualified teachers; and teachers that mentor and evaluate their peers.

Velma Cobb (2007) agreed with Darling-Hammond on the issue of the need to invest in our schools. She stated that "we must invest in high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education for all 3- and 4-year olds. Children must enter school ready to take advantage of teaching and learning" and that "we must address the growth and development of adolescents as well" (p. 20). She pointed out that NCLB

poorly addresses the needs of high schools. She explained that "all young people need access to the structures, supports, and opportunities that yield positive youth outcomes" (p. 20), and that the reauthorization of NCLB should address these needs by redirecting resources to the greatest areas of need. She concluded,

> Whether we make strategic changes to NCLB or abolish it completely, we are in danger of coming apart at the seams if we do not address the larger issues of poverty and race in which access to quality education is embedded. (Cobb, 2007, p. 20)

As the final contributor to this series of articles, Deborah Meier (2007) also supported the opinions expressed by Darling-Hammond; however, she was also convinced there should be a concern for narrowing obvious health and income gaps, which will result in narrowing the achievement test gap. Meier supported measures that would concentrate on improving childcare and poverty levels:

> The continuous focus on which kids fail to live up to our ideals—higher test scores—reinforces an ugly aspect of our every fiercer competitive culture. The idea that the poor, especially the poor of color, are pulling down our system is repeated over and over. (Meier, 2007, p. 21)

In addition, Meier also suggested that we should not rely on a "few bare tools of measurement—mainly those based on fill-in-the-bubble answers to test questions" (p. 21). Instead, schools should be "where we turn to reinforce the intellectual and moral rationale for democracy" (p. 21).

William J. Mathis (2003) weighed the costs and benefits of NCLB. It was his fear that the government required much but gave little: "It is the cruelest illusion to promise far more than we will ever deliver" (¶1). He continued to address the legislation that produced NCLB as follows:

> The rhetoric was certainly noble, and the law was sold with the guarantee that, at last, we would leave no student behind. The poor would have the same as the rich, and the strong arm of resolute government would make it so. (Mathis, 2003, ¶2)

Mathis cited a diverse set of studies from the states of Indiana, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin that show the massive cost for "making sure all children pass the mandated NCLB tests" (¶12). Seven of the ten studies showed an average increase of base cost that were greater than 24%, some higher and some lower. Mathis also addressed the unintended consequences of NCLB, including the narrowing of curriculum, failing schools, and an increased dropout rate. According to Mathis,

> The assumption of the NCLB system is that the test results represent what an educated person should know and be able to do. Few would say that an educated person only has high test scores. Most would say good scores are desirable but not sufficient to define an educated person. Most would say that schools must also produce good citizens, strong family members, contributors to society, and people engaged in democratic governance. None of these characteristics are measured by or deemed of importance in the federal accountability system. (Mathis, 2003, ¶51)

Mathis concluded that the disparity between the language of the federal government and its actions places the United States "among the least equitable nations in the world" (¶58).

Hatch (2002) did not specifically address NCLB, but criticized the movement toward pushed-down curriculum and the use of standards-drive programs. According to Hatch (p. 458), "the standards movement—so pervasive across educational settings today—is threatening children in early childhood in the same ways as the curriculum shovedown movement did in the 1980's." He purported that the ongoing standards movement causes undue pressure on children and narrows the experiences of young children to accommodate the standards promoted by the Bush administration. Hatch is convinced that accountability is being used as a punishment and that "using the threat of failure as a tool to motivate young children and their teachers is an absurd notion that characterizes a system designed to punish rather than improve" (p. 459). As a result,

teachers "abandon their mission of teaching young children in favor of teaching a core set of competencies" (p. 458). In addition to this problem, the standards movement values performance over learning, sameness over diversity, and devalues the individual strengths and needs of young children. Hatch concluded, "Standards-based approaches represent backward movement, designed to force early childhood programs into molds that don't work with older students and are downright harmful for young children" (Hatch, 2002, p. 462).

General Research and Studies on No Child Left Behind

　　　　Public opinion study. Ritter (2007) and Rose and Gallup (2007) reported that Americans are knowledgeable about NCLB and that 52% of Americans say that NCLB limits curriculum—specifically subjects such as art, science, health, and social studies. According to Ritter, teachers have sounded an alarm on the trend to narrow curriculum and to teach to the test. In addition, educators have stated that the focus on test preparation is "robbing students of the opportunity to think critically and solve problems" (Ritter, 2007, ¶3). A recent Gallup Poll (Rose & Gallup, 2007) reported that there appears to be a shift in popular opinion, from blaming schools to blaming the law for a growing number of failing schools. There also seems to be increasing public criticism of the use of standardized testing as a primary means of evaluation, and an increase in public opinion that the emphasis on standardized testing causes teachers to teach to the test.

　　　　Teacher response studies. Hirsch-Pasek and Golinkoff (2007) reported that more than two-thirds of the 50 teachers at a brain and learning conference in Boston,

Massachusetts, with an average of 23 years experience, felt that NCLB legislation only

hinders educational achievement. Hirsch-Pasek and Golinkoff stated that decades of

research on successful education and child-development suggests five fundamental

principles that define good education and that NCLB "runs counter to all of them" (¶4).

These principles are the holistic view of the child, accommodating differences in learning

style and capacity, promoting mastery of content rather than rote memorization,

providing a nurturing environment that is open to new experiences without fear of

negative consequences, and the importance of grooming a love of learning and creating

life-long learners. Hirsch-Pasek & Golinkoff (2007) suggested that

> Thanks to No Child Left Behind, education is no longer a nurturing environment
> where children's needs are primary. Children are overly stressed during testing
> time and our assessments focus on negative feedback. Children do not learn best
> in a pressure-cooker atmosphere or when their shortcomings, rather than their
> strengths are emphasized. (¶19)

At the Boston conference, a third of the teachers did mention that NCLB had at least one

positive effect, a national focus on education and the call for accountability. However,

92% were more focused on the negative impact of the law, and 69% said it "hindered

general educational goals" (¶12).

Rand Corporation study on effects on teaching practices. In 2002, the Rand

Corporation launched a project to study the effects of the new accountability

requirements presented by NCLB on teaching practices in the states of California,

Georgia, and Pennsylvania, which represented a diverse range of approaches, regions,

and student populations (Rand, 2007). Hamilton et al. (2007) used a combination of

large-scale, quantitative data collection and small-scale case studies to examine NCLB

implementation at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. The researchers

focused their attention on the area of mathematics and collected data over a period of 3

school years from 2003-2006. They found that although all three states developed and

implemented standards-based accountability systems, the details of these systems varied

in the content of academic standards, the difficulty level of performance standards, choice

of additional indicators, methods of calculating AYP and AYP trajectories, and assistance

mechanisms. However, the states' responses to the new accountability showed similar

coping mechanisms for school-improvement. Hamilton et al. also reported a varied

response in the way NCLB influenced instruction in the classroom. Some teachers

reported an increased effort in improving their own practices to align instruction with

standards. Teachers also reported a negative impact of the narrowing curriculum and that

instruction tended toward tested topics and certain problem styles or formats. Teachers

expressed concerns about spending more time with students who were near the proficient

cut score and giving less learning opportunities to high-achieving students. Both

administrators and teachers identified adverse factors that affected their efforts to meet

NCLB goals. Administrators were concerned about inadequate funding. Both teachers

and administrators saw insufficient instructional time and insufficient planning time as

barriers. Teachers reported a lack of support from parents, student absenteeism and

tardiness, and the lack of basic skills hindered progress toward meeting goals. In addition,

large numbers of educators considered the expectation of raising achievement levels

despite these conditions to be unrealistic (Hamilton et al., 2007; Rand, 2007).

Impact study. In a scientifically based investigation of the impact of NCLB on

student achievement and growth conducted by the Northwest Evaluation Association,

Cronin, Kingsbury, McCall, and Bowe (2005, 2005a) concluded that student growth

scores had decreased since the onset of NCLB; that students in grades with state tests

have higher achievement and growth than those in other grades; and that student growth

in every ethnic group has decreased. They also found that during the 2 years of

implementation prior to this study, there was an increase in mathematics and reading

scores, with greater changes in performance in mathematics. However, growth in

Hispanic students as compared with European-American students tended to be lower in

every grade and subject area. The researchers concluded that, at the time of this study, "it

is very early to identify the extent to which NCLB will influence educational change in

the future" (Cronin et al., 2005, p. 60). They defined achievement level as a specific score

at a given time, and achievement growth as the difference in two scores made by a single

student from one point in time to another.

Cronin et al. (2005) identified two positive trends at the time of the research.

First, state-level tests tend to improve observed achievement; therefore, increasing the

number of grades in which they are given may improve achievement even more. Second,

there is evidence that NCLB has improved student achievement since its adoption

(although this effect is much smaller than the testing effect). However, they also reported

two possibly negative effects. First, if change in achievement of the magnitude seen so

far continues, it still will not bring schools close to the requirement of 100% proficiency

by 2014. Second, students in ethnic groups that have shown achievement gaps in the past

grow less under NCLB, and may grow less than comparable European American students

(Cronin et al., 2005).

Summary of No Child Left Behind

Several organizations were formed to provide information and supporting evidence for the NCLB legislation. The What Works Clearinghouse summarizes evidence on the effectiveness of different programs and products that enhance academic achievement (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/). The National Research Council (http://sites.nationalacademies.org/nrc/) formed the Committee on Research in Education to improve scientific research in education. The National Institute for Literacy (http://www.nifl.gov/) was formed to disseminate information on scientifically based reading research pertaining to children, youth, and adults. Finally, the National Reading Panel was formed to provide a "comprehensive review of reading research literature" (Sweet, 2004, p. 24). All of these organizations provided support for NCLB. Currently the United States Department of Education is developing a plan to reauthorize NCLB. Spelling (2007) reported that according to 2005 NAEP results, more progress has been made in academic progress between the years 1999 and 2004 than in the previous 28 years combined. She also reported that gaps in reading and mathematics between African Americans and Hispanic 9-year-olds have fallen to all-time lows. However, Spelling identified a need to improve assessments for students with disabilities and for LEP students, and a need to improve graduation rates and ensure that students graduate ready to achieve. Spelling outlined new programs to promote improvement in mathematics and reading and mentions rewarding exceptional teaching with a proposed Teacher Incentive Fund. With new guidelines that should help schools with various subgroups such as special education, low socioeconomic groups, and LEP groups, NCLB will continue to be a driving force in our nation's education system (Spelling, 2007; Sweet, 2004).

A multitude of studies support or criticize NCLB, but few address the issues of both NCLB and developmentally appropriate practice. Some research suggested or touched on the impact of NCLB on teachers and their instruction, such as spending more instructional time on tested skills, narrowing the curriculum, and being inadequate funded (Cronin et al., 2005, 2005a; Hamilton et al., 2007; Hirsch-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2007). Among these studies, however, there is minimal or no reference to the effect NCLB has played on the use of developmentally appropriate practice in the early childhood classroom.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Former Secretary of Education Ron Paige (2002) addressed the issues of accountability in his *Dear Colleague Letter* as follows: "Accountability is central to the success of *The No Child Left Behind Act*: States need to set high standards for improving academic achievement in order to improve the quality of education for all students"(¶2). Paige explained: "The law does not prescribe how States must officially designate schools that do not meet AYP requirements" (¶5). However as reported in the *Federal Register*, a daily publication dealing with proposed rules and notices of Federal agencies and organizations including executive orders and other presidential documents, concerns were still being expressed in governmental meetings about clarification of definitions, the flexibility offered states to develop accountability systems, timeline issues, and other specific information regarding AYP a year after the establishment of NCLB (Rules and Regulations, 2002).

The preponderance of research focused on AYP is available primarily in the form of state and federally funded projection studies or by government-supported education advocate groups. These projection studies are primarily based on available test data made available to the public via the internet or other government documents. The underlying theme for most of this research is a concern that a large number of schools in the United States will fail to meet AYP by the school year 2013-2014 as designated in NCLB. This section on AYP will begin with introductory material including definitions of AYP which will be followed by a review of studies that will include a study on the House and Senate accountability mandates, a summary of research evaluating the House and Senate accountability mandates; a report compiled by Education Trust, an education advocacy group and one sponsored by The Center for the Study of Evaluation: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing; two research projects funded by the federal government; and finally two state-funded projection studies and a qualitative study of concerns for small schools.

Defining Adequate Yearly Progress

NCLB specifies that states must develop AYP objectives with the following requirements:

1. States must develop AYP statewide measurable objectives for improved achievement by all students and for specific groups: economically disadvantaged, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency.

2. The objectives must be set with the goal of having all students at the proficient level or above within 12 years (i.e., by the end of the 2013-2014 school year).

3. AYP must be based primarily on state assessments, but must also include one additional academic indicator.

4. The AYP objectives must be assessed at the school level. Schools that have failed to meet their AYP objectives for 2 consecutive years will be identified for improvement.

5. School AYP results must be reported separately for each group of students identified above so that it can be determined whether each student group met the AYP objective.

6. At least 95% of each group must participate in state assessments.

7. States may aggregate up to 3 years of data in making AYP determinations. (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002, p. 4).

In 2001, the House and Senate Conference Committee presented their own versions of NCLB, setting targets based on increasing the percentage of students scores at the proficient level or higher by at least one point per year prior to agreeing to allow states to specific AYP objectives. This would also apply to each subgroup. However, even with a steady increase of one percentage point per year, a large number of schools would fall short of the goal for all students to achieve proficiency by the year 2014 (Linn et al., 2002).

Buchanan (2004) interviewed Ross Wiener of Education Trust; Alexa Pochowski, Assistant State Commissioner of the Kansas State Department of Education; Robin Taylor, Associate Secretary for Assessment and Accountability in the Delaware Department of Education; and Bill Walsh, spokesman for the Minnesota Department of Education. Buchanan explained concerns in the disparities in the way states measure AYP. Since NCLB did not provide a true national system, "each state has its own expectations and its own means of testing, making it tough to get an accurate picture of how the nation as a whole is performing" (p. 10). Buchanan reported that schools 53 percent of schools in North Carolina, 30% of schools in Oregon, 13% of Kansas schools; and 87% of schools in Florida missed making AYP. However a fair comparison in

schools in Kansas and Florida was not possible because of the tough accountability

program in Florida and a small school system like Kansas. Other factors that affected

schools making AYP goals include such factors as distribution of low-performing

students; the initial benchmark set by each group; the minimum number that establishes a

subgroup; participation in testing; and the number of tests used to assess academic

performance. Although Buchanan reported these disparities, he did find that "NCLB

offers one positive method for making state-to-state comparisons.... All states must

administer the National Assessment of Education Progress reading and math tests, which

at least will give one means of comparison" (Buchanan, 2004, p. 12).

Research and Studies on Adequate Yearly Progress

  House and Senate bills accountability provisions. In conjunction with the

reauthorization of ESEA, otherwise known as NCLB, the United States House of

Representatives and the United States Senate passed education bills with tough school

accountability provisions. Kane, Staiger, Douglas, and Geppert (2001) conducted a study

of these measures to assess the way AYP was defined and the effects on schools. The

House and the Senate bills made the achievement of AYP contingent on improvements in

each subgroup of students based on each school's population. Kane et al. (2001) used

scores from between the years of 1994 and 1999 from the states of North Carolina and

Texas to project acquiring AYP based on the definitions provided. The first area of

concern was that both bills ignored the "natural volatility" (p. 3) in school test scores; in

other words, that a school's test scores naturally fluctuated and did not always reflect

positive gain. The second area of concern was based on available test scores. Each state

had schools that failed at least once between 1994 and 1999. Finally, Kane et al. stated that

> for purely statistical reasons, diverse schools are much less likely to achieve AYP. Even if they are doing as well on average as all other schools in raising achievement for each of their racial subgroups, there is often a good chance that not all groups will see improvements in the same year. (Kane et al., 2001, p. 9)

Education trust study. As a part of Education Trust, an organization working with policy makers, education professionals, and community and business leaders who are concerned with schools and colleges and their mission to serve all students, Hall, Weiner, and Carey (2003) used AYP data released by states as available on state websites to determine whether or not the accountability system established by NCLB is working. Based on their research, Hall et al. (2003, p. 1) determined that "the AYP process that forms the heart of the accountability system is working" and provided more information about school and student performance than has ever been available before. He discovered that the AYP process was identifying large achievement gaps, recognizing the good work of previously low-performing schools, and demonstrating that schools educating large numbers of low-income and minority students "are capable of not only meeting state standards for achievement, but vastly exceeding them" (p. 1). In other words, Hall et al. found that the AYP system was

> doing what it was meant to do: shining a bright light on the state of achievement in America, identifying schools that need improvement, and allowing us to take important steps toward closing achievement gaps and having all students proficient in reading and math over the coming decade. (Hall et al., 2003, p. 1)

This study provided data that show schools previously designated as needing improvement can improve and move off the list of schools needing improvement.

Additional information supported the conclusion that programs implemented by schools

to target improvement strategies are working. Hall et al. (2003) stated that,

> we can already see how the law is having positive effects by focusing attention on
> the goal of holding all schools within a state to the same standards of student
> achievement and bring urgent attention to achievement gaps between different
> groups of students. (p.10)

The authors supported the implementation of using AYP data to close gaps, change

instructional practice, and provide a high-quality education to all students, but there was

no explanation about the type of programs being used (although it is assumed this is a

reference to research-based instruction), and there was no correlation with using

developmentally appropriate practice instructional practices (Hall et al., 2003).

Center for the study of evaluation study. According to Linn (2003) much concern

has been raised about the AYP mandates and their possible consequences for schools that

repeatedly fail to make AYP target goals. School systems are seeking ways to minimize

the number of schools that are placed in the needs improvement category. One way to

make improvement would be to use the schools that make large gains as proof of

ambitious, but realistic targets. Setting a realistic target, for example a 4 % increase in

each subject, would be a challenge, but "would not be so far out of touch with reality as

the targets that were plucked out of the air and dropped into the legislation" (p. 12). In

other words, no goal should be set so high that no school has been able to achieve it. Linn

identified four critical components that must be addressed in establishing student

achievement expectations: (a) content domain should be defined, (b) how identified

content domains should be assessed, (c) the establishment of performance standards that

are used to report achievement, and (d) the establishment of long-range goals and

intermediate performance objectives. NCLB addresses all of these components and delegates the responsibility of setting these content and student performance standards. (NCLB, 2001, P.L. 107-110, Section 111b)(1)(A)). All of these factors are important because of the AYP component of NCLB. States are required to define AYP in a way "that enables students to meet the state's student achievement standards" (Linn, 2003, p. 7). Again, there was no mention of instructional programs that enable a school to meet performance standards and long-range goals.

SCASS and CAS joint-study. After the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as NCLB, a joint-study group met to gather information on AYP requirements. This group was comprised of state education specialists and consultants from two State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) projects: Comprehensive Assessment Systems for ESEA Title I (CAS) and Accountability Systems and Reporting (ASR) Interviews and video-conferencing of chiefs and state leaders were used to discuss issues of AYP under NCLB. This study provided information for the State Educational Agency staff to assist in developing and implementing a single, statewide accountability system. The joint-study group ended with a final meeting to discuss insights and ideas including (a) multiple, separate indicators, (b) the definitions of proficient, (c) selecting assessments, (d) starting points and goals, (e) minimum n, (f) including all students and schools, and (g) multiple years of data. The SCASS and CAS Joint-Study group concluded that

> The NCLB Act did not include transitional language providing further direction to States in moving from the 1994 to 2001 ESEA Reauthorizations. Final regulations related to standards and assessments were published earlier this year, and final regulations related to accountability systems have just been promulgated. Non-

regulatory guidance has not been issued in either of these areas. (Marion et al., 2002, p. 6)

Although the authors were concerned about how accountability is determined there is no reference to instructional programs that are required to help all children meet proficiency levels (Marion et al., 2002).

National conference of state legislatures. Evaluation reports. In 2005 the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2005c, p. 2) wanted to "put aside the rhetoric and growing controversy and develop a comprehensive and balanced look" at how NCLB was structured and implemented. NCSL put together a task force which consisted primarily of bipartisan chairs of the legislative education committee or fiscal committees and nonpartisan education staff from several states and represented a diverse group of philosophies and judgments about the law. Over a 10-month period this group met eight times in seven regions of the United States to discuss and share information in order to "make recommendations for changes to the statute and its regulations" (p. 2).

The NCSL (2005c, p. 14) "consistently heard concerns that AYP, the core accountability concept under NCLB, is an incomplete measurement of student achievement." There were concerns about flaws in measuring groups of students a state, arbitrary standard, not by tracking the progress of the same group overtime, the use of standardized testing, and provisions that identified too many ways for schools to fail, spreading resources too thinly and reducing the chances that schools are truly in need of improvement. As a result, the following recommendations were made:

1. Provide states much greater flexibility in meeting the objectives of the adequate yearly progress provisions.

2. Give states an option of adding or substituting a "student growth" approach to testing and accountability, rather than the "successive group" approach prescribed by NCLB.

3. Allow states to use multiple measures rather than relying exclusively on standardized tests to evaluate performance.

4. Reduce the over identification of failure and make the adequate yearly progress provisions less prescriptive, rigid and absolute.

5. Allow states to decide the order of interventions when a school is identified as being in need of improvement (NCSL, 2005c, vii).

The final, published report titled, *Delivering the Promise: State Recommendations for Improving No Child Left Behind,* listed a total of 43 recommendations "to improve the quality of education for all students and close the gaps in achievement that exist in schools today" (NCSL, 2005b, ¶4). Other recommendations made by NCSL included the areas of the role of the federal government in education reform, flexibility for states to address unique schools and districts, highly qualified teacher and paraprofessional requirements, and the cost of closing the achievement gap (NCSL, 2005a).

More recently, both NCSL (2007) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA)—representing 7,300 state legislators and 14,000 school administrators—continue to make recommendations because of the impending reauthorization of ESEA), otherwise known as NCLB. NCSL and AASA call for improvements in the federal government's role in education by "creating a revitalized state-federal partnership that focuses on results, no on processes, and fosters accountability without stifling state and local innovation" (NCSL, 2007, ¶2). Other areas of concern addressed in this joint statement are the areas of compliance vs. proficiency (to study cost and funding), accountability, the subgroups of special education and English language learners, flexibility for states to address unique schools and districts,

and requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals to be highly qualified (NCSL, 2007).

Both NCSL (2007, ¶13) and AASA have concerns that the methodology is "insufficient

and inaccurate, with calculations systematically over-identifying schools as failing."

They also support the need for Title I to support flexibility states and school districts to

use a variety of standards-based assessment and accountability systems to measure the

academic progress of students including value-added models, benchmarking models,

computer-adaptive assessments, and instructionally sensitive assessments. And finally,

NCSL (2007, ¶15) and AASA "believe that ESEA should affirm the authority of states to

differentiate levels of achievement when determining the application of appropriate

rewards, sanctions and consequences." NCSL and AASA make recommendations to help

states develop accountability systems that are directly related to standards and that are

instructionally sensitive. However, there is no indication of type of instruction upon

which the assessments are based (NCSL, 2007).

State impact studies. Lee (2004) and Wiley, Allen, and Garcia (2005) completed

studies to project the feasibility of schools reaching the goal of 100% of their students

becoming proficient by the year 2013-14 according to AYP guidelines. Both studies

investigated various ways to analyze data to allow schools to meet these standards.

Lee (2004) used simulation analyses of Maine and Kentucky school performance

data which was collected during the 1990's. This study investigated the feasibility of

schools meeting AYP targets with "uniform averaging (rolling averages)" and "safe

harbor" options to reduce the potential of schools needing improvement and corrective

action. Lee's final analysis based on retrospective school performance data (1993-98 in

Kentucky and 1995-98 in Maine) resulted in an exponential decrease in the percentage of

schools that would make AYP over the course of the first few years, and a continuing

drop as low as 10% for Kentucky and 6% for Maine (Maine's baseline AYP goal was set

to 0 the first year). The rolling average only "slightly increased the chance of schools'

meeting the AYP target" which "implies that the rolling average has very weak potential

to save schools from being identified as failing when their scores decline" (¶20). The

"safe harbor" slightly increased the possibility of schools making AYP goals, but there

was still risk and "up to 90% of schools will be regarded as needing improvement" (¶31).

Although Lee based this estimation on the subgroup of economically disadvantaged

students, it was concluded that evaluations of other subgroups including students with

learning disabilities and language proficiency students may result in greater failure rates

Using various scenarios, Lee concluded that using the "rolling average" and "safe

harbor" options would provide either no or marginal improvement in the potential of

schools meeting AYP goals. Lee suggested statistical measures that will help schools

meet AYP, but he does not correlate his data with the type of instructional programs used

by the schools included in his study (Lee, 2004).

In their technical report, Wiley and Allen (2005) described a study using scenario-

based schools focusing on the number of subgroups and projected the potential of making

AYP for each type of school by providing an estimate of statewide rates of success and

failure in meeting annual measurable objectives relative to AYP. After compiling

simulation data based on different types of schools and subgroups, Wiley et al. (2005)

determined that making or failing AYP is affected by changes in student body makeup

and the number of grades tested as well as the federal requirements in making AYP. They

made four broad statements based on their findings:

- Schools are not capable of closing the achievement gap without resolving the social problems that underlie the gap.

- Adequate funding for remediation and social infrastructure is essential to meet the proposed goals.

- The AYP system does not measure the quality of a school's academic programs.

- The multiple purposes of education are not properly measured through a test-based accountability system. (Wiley et al., 2005, p. 56)

The data from the study by Wiley et al. (2005) indicated accelerating numbers of schools

failing to make AYP as 2014 approaches which warrants concern, but the authors did not

address the type of instruction a school needs to close the achievement gaps other than

"providing the funding for remediation" (p. 57).

Small school—special education study. Mitchem, Kossar, and Ludlow (2006)

focused their qualitative research study on two provisions of NCLB: "the mandate that

schools must ensure that students are taught by highly qualified teachers (HQT) with

content expertise and the mandate that schools are accountable for promoting AYP for all

students" (p. 13). Their primary concern was the unique challenges for small, rural

schools with other resources that face difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly

qualified teachers; especially special education personnel. Mitchem et al. (2006)

conducted a national survey to gather comments from educators, administrators, and

teacher educations for the purpose of giving "voice to the concerns expressed by

educators on the front line in rural schools and compare their perceptions with concerns

expressed by commentators in the professional literature" (p. 13). Mitchem et al. (2006)

found that "educators at all levels expressed concerns about the possible conflict between

IDEA's [Individuals With Disabilities Act] focus on the individual education plan (IEP)

outcomes and [NCLB]'s focus on standardized test scores" (p. 22). Administrators were

more concerned about school funding for resources and personnel. The respondents in

this study identified three main issues rural schools face when attempting to achieve AYP

for students with disabilities:

> The many contextual factors that affect student learning and achievement, such as cultural differences, poverty status, and family involvement….
>
> Whether AYP as measured by standardized test scores is even an effective mechanism to ensure desired educational outcomes for all students, but especially for those with disabilities….
>
> Being held collectively or even individually accountable for failure of some groups to achieve AYP, when they had little control over or influence on these contextual factors. (Mitchem et al., 2006, p. 22)

In addition, Mitchem et al. made positive correlations between the results of the survey

and professional literature.

Summary of Adequate Yearly Progress

Failure to make AYP has caused schools to spend resources and time developing

school improvement plans and completing paperwork instead of concentrating on the task

at hand—teaching children:

> A well-designed accountability plan may go a long way toward giving school personnel the kinds of signals they need to improve performance. However, a poorly designed scheme, which ignores the statistical properties of schools' average test scores, may do more harm than good. (Kane, Staiger, & Geppert, 2002, p. 57)
>
> The research presented in this paper shows a trend for identifying weaknesses in

the following areas: (a) development of accountability plans for states; (b) identifying

(minimum *n*) and reporting scores for subgroups; (c) participation in testing; and (d) the manner of aggregating test data. In addition there is a need to recognize variables in school populations: "Data on contextual and process variables are needed to interpret results on the outcome measures and to suggest desirable directions for change" (Linn, 2003, p. 3-4). In a related study of accountability, Linn et al. wrote

> The notion is that given enough pressure from the accountability system and some additional resources, the schools will improve. One can agree that schools should improve and that holding schools accountable will contribute to improvement but still conclude that the goal of having 100% students reaching the proficient level or higher, as proficient is currently defined by NAEP or by many state tests, is so high that it is completely out of reach. Furthermore, having a goal that is unobtainable no matter how hard teachers try can do more to demoralize than to motivate greater effort. Goals need to provide a challenge but not be set so high that they are unachievable. (Linn, et al., 2002, p. 12).

Accountability measures have held center stage with state and federal agencies that shape educational policies: "True accountability means broadly shared responsibility, not only among educators and students, but also administrators, policy-makers, parents, and educational researchers" (Linn, 2003, p. 10). Accountability systems must be broadened to include definitions that are realistic (Linn, 2003).

Although there is mention of federally funded programs such as Title I and the need for interventions in the form of remediation for low-achievers, the primary focal point of these studies is the statistical procedures and the definitions of AYP. It is assumed that the programs mentioned in these studies are those supported by NCLB or research-based instruction. There are no references to or correlations with achieving AYP and the use of developmentally appropriate practice.

High-Stakes Tests

This section of the literature review begins by defining high-stakes tests and

providing a brief history of standardized testing in the United States. This is followed by

recent national assessment information as reported in the National Assessment of

Educational Progress. The third portion summarizes various criticisms by individuals

concerned with education today and recommendations for assessment made by

organizations that support the education of young children. The fourth section focuses on

research studies on high-stakes testing. A summary concludes this portion of the

literature review.

Defining High-Stakes Tests

In a document prepared by the National Education Association (n.d.) the testing

requirements of NCLB have the potential for "disrupting the more-comprehensive

student and school assessment programs developed by states over the past 15 years" (¶1).

Standardized testing is required annually in reading and math for grades 3 through 8 and

a minimum of one time for students in Grades 9 through 12. During the 2002-2003

school year, all states, if appropriate funds are provided, must voluntarily participate in

NAEP (National Assessment Educational Progress) reading and mathematics assessments

at Grades 4 and 8 every 2 years. Beginning in the year 2007-2008 public school systems

will be required to administer science assessments to all students in Grades 3 through 5, 6

through 9, and 9 through 12. The design of the tests purchased by the state must be

aligned with state content and performance standards. If the standards span more than one

grade, the teachers must be informed as to what portion of the multi-grade standards are

to be taught at each grade. The purchase of said tests must be the same for all students. They must be valid and accessible for all students with appropriate accommodations for students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities. Tests chosen for assessment purposes must meet required professional and technical standards and have uses that include measuring higher-order thinking skills. Selected tests must also measure academic achievement objectively without evaluating or assessing family beliefs and attitudes. All states are required to provide individual reports in a comprehensible format. According to NEA (n.d., ¶4): "Many teachers and other educators are concerned about heavy reliance on standardized testing."

A standardized test is one that is administered under controlled conditions such as where, when, how, and for how long. Some of these tests serve important purposes; but when the results of these tests are overgeneralized or misinterpreted problems arise. "This is an era of strong support for public policies that use high-stakes tests to change the behavior of teachers and students in desirable ways. But the use of high-stakes tests is not new, and their effects are not always desirable" (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, ¶7). According to Heubert and Hauser (1999), high-stakes testing is the use of tests in decisions involving tracking (assigning students to schools, programs, or classes based on their academic achievement levels); whether a student will be promoted to the next grade; and whether a student will receive a high school diploma. High-stakes tests are seen as a means to raise academic standards, hold educators accountable, and boost public confidence.

High-stakes tests have a historical significance in the United States. They have been used for choosing places to live, ascertaining property values, evaluating programs,

and the allocation of educational resources. The push for increased student achievement began in the 1950s with the space race with the Soviet Union. Then in the 1970s some states, including Florida, began implementing competency testing to measure gains for school improvement because of the belief that student achievement was falling behind as evidenced by the plateau of perceived gains and the increase in dropout rates of ethnic minorities and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. By the early 1980s competency testing had been postponed; but in 1983 it inaccurately found that United States schools were performing poorly when compared to other countries, and the high-stakes testing movement began in an effort to raise the nations' standards of achievement (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Standardized Tests, n.d.).

The effects of high-stakes test on America, as a result of the 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," many states implemented high-stakes tests with serious consequences attached in order to hold schools, administrators, and students accountable for newly imposed high standards. Under these new guidelines, high performing schools were rewarded and under performing schools were penalized. It was stated that these conditions would cause school personnel to make improvements to avoid further penalties by motivating students to learn. It was argued that students and teachers needed high-stakes tests to know what was important to learn and teach. The belief that teachers would be motivated to teach better and that students would work harder to learn more when they were held accountable was held by supporters of high-stakes tests. Of course these supporters assumed that the tests were good measures of the curricula taught in the nation's schools, that they provided an equal opportunity for all to demonstrate knowledge, and that the tests were a good measure of an individual's performance. They

also assumed that teachers would use the results of the tests to provide better instruction, and that administrators would use test results to improve student learning and provide better professional development opportunities for teachers. And finally, it was assumed that parents understood high-stakes tests and how to interpret the scores (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2007c) web site, NAEP is the "only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas" (¶1). Policy for NAEP is set by the National Assessment Governing Board which is appointed by the Secretary of Education but is independent of the department, and the Commissioner of Education Statistics, who heads the NCES, "is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project" (¶2). NAEP does not report scores for individual students; instead, it provides results of required testing regarding subject-matter achievement within various populations including ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender groups. NAEP results are published as the *Nation's Report Card*. "This report will provide two kinds of results for each subject assessed: scale scores and achievement levels" (NCES, 2007, ¶6). NAEP results are generated and made available to the general public approximately 6 months after the administration of the assessments (NCES 2007; 2007c).

NAEP is required to conduct state assessments in Grades 4 and 8 in public schools in the areas of reading and mathematics every 2 years. During the fall of 2007, "a special computer-based pilot study of science tasks will also be conducted in a small

number of schools" and "subsamples of students will begin to be assessed on such

interactive computer tasks beginning with the 2009 science assessment" (NCES, 2007a,

¶5). There will be no state reports generated for these assessments because these

assessments and studies will only be conducted at the national level (NCES, 2007a).

The NAEP reports assessment data based on three levels of achievement by

grade: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The achievement levels are specifically defined

by subject matter and grade level. For example in the area of reading,

> Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should demonstrate an
> understanding of overall meaning of what they read. When reading text
> appropriate for fourth-graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious
> connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in
> the text by making simple inferences. (NCES, 2005, ¶2)

Rubrics for both reading and mathematics can be obtained through the NCES website

(http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard), choosing the appropriate subject area from the

menu, and finding the link for levels. *The NAEP Glossary of Terms* (NCES, 2007b)

provides a general definition for all three achievement levels:

Basic—The Basic achievement level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite

knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade assessed.

Proficient—The Proficient achievement level represents solid academic

performance for each grade assessed. Students who reach this level have demonstrated

competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge,

application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate

to the subject matter.

Advanced—The Advanced achievement level denotes superior performance at

each grade assessed.

Lee, Grigg, and Donohue (2007) reported in *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007* that fourth graders scored higher in 2007 than in all previous assessment years, and eighth graders' scores were up one point from 2005 and three points since 1992. However, eighth graders in the United States did not show this increasing trend consistently over all assessment years: 4 states made gains in both grades, 13 states and Department of Defense schools made gains only in fourth grade, 2 states made gains at eighth grade only, 2 states declined in grade eight, and 30 states showed no significant change in the area of reading. Four of five ethnic groups made improvements in the area of reading: White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander. The only group that showed no significant change was the American Indian/Alaska Native group. Students designated as free and reduced lunch (low-income socioeconomic group) scored higher in 2007 than in previous years, but students in the reduced lunch group scored higher than those in the free lunch group. Their report also outlined achievement gaps for minority students, socioeconomic groups, and gender groups. It was reported that improvements for minority groups did not always result in narrowing achievement gaps. Only the White-Black gap narrowed as compared with gaps in the years 1992 and 2005. There was no significant difference reported in the gap between Hispanic and White students. Both male and female student made gains in achievement in Grade 4, but not in Grade 8. The gap between female and male gender groups was not significantly different than those reported over a period of 15 years (Lee, Grigg, & Donohue, 2007).

Lee, Grigg, and Dion (2007) reported an increase in the area of mathematics over a period of 17 years for both fourth and eighth graders. It was found that White and Black students showed better understanding than in 2005. Asian/Pacific Islanders made gains in

the area of mathematics in fourth grade, but no significant changes in eighth grade. Black students had greater gains than White and Hispanic students over the assessment period of 1990 through 2007. Since all groups were reported as having achievement gains, this also held true for free and reduced lunch groups and both gender groups: 23 states were reported as making gains at both grade levels, 8 states made achievement gains in fourth grade only, 11 states made gains at grade eight, and 17 states and Department of Defense schools made no significant gains. The White-Black achievement gap narrowed over the entire 17-year assessment period in fourth grade; however, the achievement gap for eighth graders only narrowed between the years of 2005 and 2007. The gap between White and Hispanic groups had no significant change (Lee, Grigg, & Dion, 2007).

Lee, Grigg, and Donohue (2007) and Lee, Grigg, and Dion (2007) reported that accommodations were made to students who could not fairly demonstrate abilities without modifications in the test-administration process. Accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners were not provided prior to 1996 in the area of mathematics and 1998 in the area of reading.

According to the United States Department of Education (2007), NCLB promises a new era for American education. According to the mandates of the law, all students will be at grade level in the areas of reading and math by the year 2014. NCLB has established higher expectations for students, greater accountability for schools, the requirement of highly qualified teachers for schools, and timely information for parents. Citing NAEP and NCES as sources, the Department of Education reports that NCLB is working. The Department's fifth anniversary report states that all 50 states and the District of Columbia have accountability plans in place; that all 50 states assess students

in Grades 3 through 8 and once in high school in the area of reading/language arts and mathematics; that more than 90% of classes are taught by highly qualified teachers; and that 450,000 students are eligible for supplemental educational services or public school choice.

In accordance with the *Nation's Report Card*, from the years 1999-2004 the achievement gaps are closing between ethnic groups. Student achievement is on the rise showing that more reading progress for 9-year-olds has been made in the last 5 years than in the previous 28 years combined, and that reading and math scores of 9-year-olds are at an all-time high. The Department of Education is confident that the achievement gains are holding form toward the 2014 deadline (United States Department of Education, 2007).

Criticism and Opinion Statements on High-Stakes Tests

FairTest: The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (n.d.) questions the effectiveness of standardized tests. This organization advocates that standardized tests are objective and superficially unbiased; however, standardized tests reward those who are able to answer quickly, encourages a narrowed curriculum, encourages outdated methods of instruction, encourages retention and tracking, and focuses on middle-class students. Standardized tests test recall of isolated facts, but they do not measure a student's ability to write, use math, or make meaning from text by measuring thinking skills or assess the ability of people to do real-world tasks (FairTest, n.d.).

The NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) published a joint position statement

concerning childhood curriculum and assessment. These two organizations take the position that "policy makers, the early childhood profession, and other stakeholders in young children's lives have a shared responsibility to: make ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment a central part of all early childhood programs" (NAEYC, 2003, p.1). According to their guidelines, assessments should be used to assess young children's strengths, progress and needs. They also support the use of assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, and tied to children's daily activities. Assessment should be supported by professional development, should include families, and should be connected to specific beneficial purposes such as making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identifying concerns that require focused intervention for individual students, and helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions. The joint position statement also lists indicators of effectiveness for assessments including using tests for its intended purpose, using multiple sources, and limiting the administration of norm-referenced tests with young children. According to these organizations "assessment tells teachers what children are like and allows them to modify curriculum and teaching practices to best meet the children's needs" and "the most important thing is to work with other staff and administrators to develop a systematic plan for assessment over time, using authentic measures (those that reflect children's real-world activities and challenges) and focusing on outcomes that have been identified as important" (NAEYC, 2003, p.12). It is also their position that the results of single assessments are often unreliable as a result of the possible influence of fatigue, poor health, or other distractions (NAEYC, 2003; 2003a).

The IRA (1999) published a position statement on high-stakes assessments. This organization is concerned with the trend of increased reliance on single test scores for making important decisions about students, placement in programs, college entrance, teachers' salaries, and in comparing schools: "Our central concern is that testing has become a means of controlling instruction as opposed to a way of gathering information to help students become better readers" (¶2). The IRA recognized that testing is important for the purpose of collecting data to inform actions. However, they proposed that high-stakes decisions cause problems and can lead to bad decisions including narrowing curriculum and inflating the importance of a test especially in high-poverty schools that tend to have the lowest test scores. According to IRA test pressures affect attendance and drop out rates and create a loss of instructional time. They also stated that: "instructional decision making in high-stakes testing situations is diverted from local teachers and is concentrated in a central authority far away from the school" (¶18). The IRA recommended that teachers construct more systematic and rigorous assessments for their classrooms so that external audiences will gain confidence in measures used to inform decisions; use classroom-based assessment in addition to standardized tests; familiarize students with test format without spending time teaching the test; and keeping parents informed. The IRA's recommendations for policy makers included being aware of pressures to use tests in making high-stakes decisions; using multiple measures to inform decisions; refraining from providing incentives such as resources, money, and recognition or punishing schools based on test results; and manipulating instruction through assessment (IRA, 1999).

According to Paris, Lawton, Turner, and Roth (1991), assessment establishes performance standards and goals. The tests results indicated benchmarks of learning and educational effectiveness. Assessment must also drive the design of curriculum and instruction "by signaling the valued objectives of education" (p. 12). Educational achievement testing becomes high-stakes when the consequences are profound for the participants. It is their belief that testing should be collaborative and authentic to promote learning and motivation. Also, testing should be longitudinal: "The one-shot assessment is a high-stakes measure because these summative scores are used for political purposes (e.g., certification and comparisons) but rarely for the students' benefit" (p. 18). Assessment should be multidimensional rather than a measurement of discrete skills. It should include the dimensions of comprehension, calculation, and communication; and should be a measure of student motivation, strategies, familiarity with tasks, and their background knowledge. "Personal control, efficacy, ownership, and self-regulation are critical constructs for achievement and deserve to be assessed" (Paris et al., 1991, p. 18).

Alfie Kohn (2004) expressed concern about the use of accountability as a means to privatize schools. Kohn supported the public school system because,

> Ideally, public schools can enrich lives, nourish curiosity, introduce students to new ways of formulating questions and finding answers. Their existence also has the power to strengthen a democratic society, in part by extending those benefits to vast numbers of people who didn't fare nearly as well as before the great experiment of free public education began.(¶10)

Kohn argued that no positive effects of high-stakes tests including an increase in the drop-out rate for students of low-income and minorities, more teachers leaving the profession, and the increase of test preparation taking the place of genuine instruction. He expressed concern about the increase value of conformity over curiosity; the prevention of students designing their own learning; and the systematic deskilling of educators.

Kohn (2004) disagreed with the argument that the establishment of testing requirements is the last chance to save public education and by holding schools to a higher standard. He responded to this idea by saying, "the idea that we should scramble to feed the accountability beast is based on the rather desperate hope that we can satisfy its appetite by providing sufficient evidence of excellence" (¶34). Kohn witnessed growing evidence that "teaching is being narrowed and dumbed down, standardized, and scripted—with poor and minority students getting the worst of the deal as usual" (¶35). It was his opinion that "by the virtue of its definition of qualified teacher, NCLB helps to cement the idea that education consists of pouring knowledge into empty receptacles (¶45). He continued to say that according to the mandates of NCLB, schools no longer need teachers who can help students become proficient learners; instead they only need people who can help children pass tests (Kohn 2004).

McKenzie (2003) agreed with Kohn's ideas about the push for privatizing schools. He stated that "NCLB is actually a cynical effort to shift public school funding to a host of private schools, religious and free-market diploma mills or corporate experiments in education" (¶2). McKenzie outlined a simplistic plan that is being used by the government to make this happen: (a) placing unrealistic demands on public schools, (b) providing too little capacity building support and too little time to meet new demands, (c) labeling schools as failures, (d) permitting wholesale transfers, (e) mandating transfer of public funding to charters and alternatives, and (f) funding the education of many previously private school children with public monies (McKenzie, 2003).

Kohn (2001) also argued that an emphasis on testing leads to sacrifices in other areas. In this article Kohn identified the sacrifices being made in school systems all over

the nation as a result of the rise in standardized tests: Science and social studies are severely trimmed when they are not included on standardized tests. Recess time is reduced and schools are built without playgrounds, despite expert views that play is critical to development. Art and music disappear. Instruction focuses on isolated language skills, so students have less opportunity to read real books. Character education and democracy receive less focus in classrooms. And finally, students are given fewer extended activities in which they are able to solve complicated problems, apply skills to real-life situations, or work on projects that encompass many subject areas (Kohn, 2001).

Research Studies on High-Stakes Tests

 Inequities of high-stake tests. Amrein and Berliner (2002), after analyzing archival time series data, historical records, and extensive telephone calls and emails, concluded that "distortions and corruptions that accompany high-stakes tests make inferences about the meaning of the scores of those tests uncertain," and that "unaware of this ominous warning, supporters of high-stakes testing, particularly politicians, have caused high-stakes testing to proliferate" (¶20). In effect, the high-stakes testing policies do not promote learning, will not have value in determining the success of communities and schools, and will not improve the schools attended by poor children and ethnic minorities because of the disproportionate negative effects on poor and minority students. High-stakes tests will have the unintended consequences of narrowing the curriculum, increasing the drop out rate, and contributing to higher rates of retention especially for children of low socioeconomic groups and minorities. They determined that there is no compelling evidence that high-stakes testing policies result in a transfer of knowledge to

broader domains and knowledge; and that high-stakes tests are not valid indicators of genuine learning. As a result of their study, Amrein and Berliner (2002) called for debate over testing policies using high-stakes tests in light of the unintended negative consequences.

Heubert and Hauser (1999) focused on tests with high stakes for individual students. In this committee report, Heubert and Hauser determined that overall educational outcomes of high-stakes tests should be weighed against its potential unintended negative consequences. "It is also a mistake to accept observed test scores as either infallible or immutable. When test use is inappropriate, especially in making high-stakes decisions about individuals, it can undermine the quality of education and equality of opportunity" (¶19). In addition, "members of some minority groups, English-language learners, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are overrepresented in lower-track classes and among those denied promotion or graduation on the basis of test scores" (¶21). Heubert and Hauser (1999) recommended that accountability for educational outcomes should be shared by all stakeholders including states, school districts, public officials, educators, parents, and students. They also suggested that high-stakes tests should be used for decisions of individual mastery only after implementing the necessary changes in curriculum to ensure students are taught the knowledge and skills that are tested. Also, they recommended that high-stakes educational decisions should not be made "solely or automatically on the basis of a single test score but should also take other relevant information into account" (¶25). This committee report identified additional recommendations and encouraged further research in the area of examining the use of high-stakes tests and their effects (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

Firestone, Camilli, Yurecko, Monfils, and Mayrowetz (2000) conducted a survey study of 245 New Jersey teachers. This study examined how the introduction of state standards and assessments affect the teaching of math and science in fourth grade. It was determined that access to inquiry-oriented science teaching was more prevalent in wealthy districts; teaching to the test was more prevalent in the poor districts. It also appeared that some middle-income districts appeared disadvantaged (Firestone et al., 2000).

Haney (2000) conducted a study on the recent history of education reform and statewide testing in Texas. In 1985, the state of Texas set out to remedy the problem of inequity in the schools as a result of a federal court's ruling that the financing of public schools in Texas were unconstitutional and discriminatory against poor school districts. Although the U. S. Supreme Court reversed the decision, the State Board of Education took steps to pass a comprehensive education reform law mandating a new testing program called the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). In 1990 they implemented a new criterion-referenced testing program, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in order to shift the focus of assessment away from minimum skills to higher-order thinking skills. By the year 1990-1991, miraculous progress in reducing dropouts and increasing achievement in Texas was reported according to TAAS results. However, in a closer inspection there are several issues that were not adequately reported. There was a decrease in the number of minority students passing from Grade 9 to high school graduation. The rate of black and Hispanic students required to repeat the ninth grade climbed nearly 30% with an increase in the retention rate. Special education was excluded in the schools' accountability ratings which led to an apparent increase in

TAAS pass rates. The results of three independent educator surveys showed that schools in Texas devoted an increased time in test preparation which hurt more than helped teaching and learning especially with at-risk students. It was also found that TAAS contributed to the increase in the retention and drop-out rates. There were also an increased number of students taking the GED examination. In addition, the state required college entry exam showed a lack of improvement especially in the area of math as compared with students on a national level (Haney, 2000).

Effects on students and teachers. Nichols, Glass, and Berliner (2006) found no dependable or compelling evidence that the pressure associated with high-stakes testing leads to increased achievement. Their study examined the relationship between high-stakes testing pressure and student achievement. Data was gathered from over 300 graduate-level education across twenty-five states. It was also concluded that reaching the goal by 2014 as set by NCLB is impossible, and that there should be a moratorium on accountability systems that require high-stakes testing (Nichols et al., 2006).

Goodson and Foote (2001) conducted a case study to chronicle the resistance of a particular school in a fight against the imposition of state standards and mandated tests. Their highly successful, innovative and creative curriculum was being confronted by the demands of contemporary standardized accountability. In 1997, the Durant School, located in the northeastern United States, applied for a variance from the state exams which allowed the school to continue to evaluate students' of learning standards using its own performance-based assessments. It was determined by the school's administration and faculty that public support would be of crucial importance in its fight against the state

standards mandates. By 1999 enough local support for a variance had been attained, but the education commissioner increased missives from the state department emphasizing that only externally developed assessments would be considered, and that the internal performance-based tests were not considered to be an option. Finally the commissioner issues a partial variance through 2000-2001 and approved an extension to any school that could demonstrate they had met specified criteria for assessment. At the time of this study, the Durant School continued to attain full variance from state testing. The coalitions of teachers, students, and parents said that educational success can only be attained through the efforts of internal agents; and that "these are the only agents who can truly know a particular school, thus possess the insight to determine what makes it 'succeed' in the most profound sense of the word, and not as a simplistic reduction to a standardized test score" (Goodson & Foote, 2001, ¶22).

Harrington-Lueker (2000; 2000a) conducted research in the area of the coexistence of high-stakes tests and developmental practice. Her research encompassed schools in South Carolina, Ohio, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Texas, and Oregon that were leaders in standards-based reform, multiage classrooms, and an emphasis on using developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom. She found that these schools were having serious conflicts between using teacher-driven instruction for the purpose of passing standardized assessments and their desire to provide open, supportive, co-constructive environments. Harrinton-Lueker (2000a, ¶45) concluded that "despite tensions, child development experts say, developmentally appropriate practice and state-level standards and accountability don't have to be at odds." She reported that instruction does not have to be an either/or decision between highly structured, teacher-driven

academic life versus the provision of open, supportive, co-constructive environments. Instead they can coexist with a great amount of work and dedication to teaching young children (Harrington-Lueker, 2000; 2000a).

Jones et al. (1999) studied the impact of high-stakes accountability program in North Carolina. They interviewed 470 certified teachers in 16 elementary across five school districts in North Carolina. Teachers were asked to respond to questions concerning the impact of assessment on instruction, practicing for the tests, the impact on children, the impact on instructional strategies, teachers' beliefs about accountability, and views of the stakes in assessments. According to Jones et al., after the implementation of the accountability program, more time was spent on preparing students in the basic skills as defined by the testing program. It was found that a typical effect of standardized testing was a narrowing of the curriculum. Material involving higher-order thinking and problem-solving fell by the wayside. The teachers reported that they used more worksheets and less hands-on experiences especially in the area of science. Teachers also reported an increase in anxiety, a lack of confidence, and a negative impact on students' love of learning. "These changes in instruction suggest that teachers are trying to adapt their instructional practices to meet the new demands of end-of-grade testing" (p. 202). Teachers also felt that their jobs were more stressful, and that they had a lack of confidence in the validity of the tests being used to assess their students. More than half of the teachers in this study reported they would consider changing schools if their school was designated as low-performing (Jones et al., 1999).

Nichols and Berliner (2005) researched the use of a quantitative indicator for decision-making and the increased corruption pressures that are apt to distort and corrupt

the process. They found that the over-reliance on high-stakes testing has negative repercussions at every level of the public school system. According to their research, this picture of corruption could be organized into ten categories that reveal a picture of the corrupting effects of high-stakes testing: (a) administrative and teacher cheating; (b) student cheating; (c) the exclusion of low-performance students from testing; (d) misrepresentation of student dropouts; (e) teaching to the test; (f) narrowing the curriculum; (g) conflicting accountability ratings; (h) questions about the meaning of proficiency; (i) declining teacher morale; and (j) score reporting errors. Nichols and Berliner concluded that high-stakes tests cannot be trusted—"they are corrupted and distorted (Nichols & Berliner, 2005, iii).

Summary of High Stakes Tests

During the 1990s, states adopted high-stakes accountability system. Schools, districts, students, teachers, and administrators were held accountable based on scores on achievement tests. These accountability systems embodied the belief that public education would be improved through the strategy of testing all students, and rewarding or sanctioning schools based on these scores. NCLB promotes scientifically based instructional methods and standardized testing to evaluate the effectiveness of public schools in the United States. However, much of the research shows that this emphasis on high-stakes tests leads to undesirable changes in curriculum and instruction by placing more emphasis on tested subjects and less emphasis on nontested subjects. There is also a concern that test scores are often influenced by factors outside the school due a diverse

school population with varying experiences and levels of skills (Stecher & Hamilton, 2002).

Paul D. Wellstone (2000) delivered a speech at Columbia University speaking against the trend toward high stakes testing prior to his tragic death on October 25, 2002. He concluded that the overemphasizing high-stakes standardized tests created a risk in taking much of the excitement out of teaching and learning. He prophetically addressed the issue of student stress and focus on the test as follows:

> Education is, among other things, a process of shaping the moral imagination, character, skills and intellect of our children, of inviting them into the great conversation of our moral, cultural and intellectual life, and of giving them the resources to prepare to fully participate in life of the nation and of the world. But today in education there is a threat afoot to which I do not need to call your attention: the treat of high stakes testing being grossly abused in the name of greater accountability, and almost always to the serious detriment of children. (¶3)

This section on high-stakes tests has provided a definition of high-stakes tests and a brief history of how standardized tests have been used in the United States, and the most recent findings as reported by NAEP showing positive growth in student achievement. The United States Department of Education has determined that test results have demonstrated a positive affect on education in the United States and an increase in accountability, an increase in the number of highly qualified teachers, and an increase in the identification of students who are eligible for supplemental services or public school choice. However, organizations responsible for making recommendations concerning the education of young children have expressed concerns about the use of single tests for making decisions that affect the lives of these children. These organizations call for the use of authentic assessments for young children. Critics of high-stakes tests are concerned that there is a narrowing of curriculum and an increase in drop-out rates and

retention especially with children from low socioeconomic groups. The research studies give credence to these same concerns.

Although one research study addressed the coexistence of developmentally appropriate practice with the push for skills-based instruction and high-stakes testing, most of the emphasis is placed on the affects on student achievement. Goodman (2006) also addressed the appropriateness of using timed tests with young children.

Kohn (2000) closely addressed one of the issues of educators, saying

It also seems clear that most of the people who are quitting, or seriously thinking about doing so, are not mediocre performers who are afraid of being held accountable. Rather, they are among the very best educators, frustrated by the difficulty of doing high-quality teaching in the current climate. (¶9)

The opinion of this researcher is that there is a need to look more closely at teachers' feelings and concerns about the conflicts between using developmentally appropriate practice and skills-based instruction that has been created by the requirement of high-stakes.. Other related studies can be found in the section on Adequate Yearly Progress.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

NCLB requires states to provide test data to prove AYP. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is one of the most widely used tests to predict reading problems and identify children who need interventions. The DIBELS website (https://dibels.uoregon.edu/data/index.php) reports that currently 11,212 schools are using DIBELS and the DataSystem (K-3) for the 2007-2008 school year.

This section of the literature review begins by providing information about the purpose of DIBELS and how this assessment is used with children. This is followed by reliability and validity studies that support the use of DIBELS and its predictive value.

The next portion provides criticisms and negative research concerning the use of the DIBELS. A summary concludes the section.

Defining Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

DIBELS is defined as a prevention-oriented assessment that is designed to "preempt reading difficulties and support all children to achieve adequate reading outcomes by the end of third grade" (Good, Kaminski, Simmons, Kame'enui, 2001, p. 3; Good, Gruba, & Kaminski, 2001, p. 698). The purpose of DIBELS is to provide measure foundational skills on a frequent ongoing basis, predict success or failure on criterion measures of performance, and provide an instructional goal that will prevent reading failure and promote reading success before high-stakes assessments. DIBELS identifies five essential skill areas of early literacy: phonemic awareness, or (hearing and using sounds in spoken words); alphabetic principle and phonics (knowing the sounds of letters and sounding out written words); accurate and fluent reading (reading stories and other materials easily and quickly with few mistakes); vocabulary (understanding and correctly using a variety of words); and comprehension (understanding what is spoken or read). The DIBELS assessment is used to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties and monitor at-risk students while they receive additional, targeted instruction by providing teachers with materials to use as interim assessments to monitor growth and build skills (Dynamic Measurement Group, n.d.; Good, Gruba et al., 2001):

> The bottom line in the Outcomes-Driven Model is the achievement of crucial literacy outcomes for both individual students and systems at the classroom, school, and school-district levels. The outcomes drive the decisions. If outcomes for individual children and/or groups of children are adequate, the instruction and curricula are deemed to be adequate. However, if outcomes are not adequate, a

change is warranted. Changes that increase outcomes are maintained; changes that decrease outcomes are abandoned. (Good, Kaminski et al., 2001, p. 22)

Coyne and Harn (2006) supported the use of DIBELS as an early literacy assessment that provides schools with access to "critical information about students' foundational beginning-reading skills" (p. 42). They reported that implementing comprehensive school-wide assessment systems such as DIBELS provides teachers with data to make informed, timely, and strategic decisions about their students.

More recently the publishers and distributors of the DIBELS have defended the use of their Outcomes-Driven Model as appropriate for all students whose goal is learning to read in English. They identified a few exceptions to this group: (a) students who are deaf; (b) students who have fluency-based speech disabilities, (c) students who are learning to read in a language other than English; and (d) students with severe disabilities: "Use of DIBELS is appropriate for all other students, including those in special education for whom reading connected text is an IEP goal" (Kaminski et al., 2006, ¶6).

There have also been concerns about the use of DIBELS data as a part of high-stakes accountability decisions, consequences, and teacher evaluations. The position of the creators of DIBELS is as follows: "It has never been the intention of the developers of DIBELS that the data be used to evaluate individual teachers or be used for other high-stakes decisions" (Kaminski et al., 2006a, ¶7). According to their position statement on the subject of using DIBELS data as a part of system-wide accountability decisions, this is a "misuse of data and will compromise instructional practices" (Kaminski et al., 2006a, ¶10).

Reliability and Validity of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

Reliability and validity issues have also being called into question by educators concerning DIBELS. The creators and distributors of DIBELS provided research studies to validate the use of their methods. Kaminski and Good (1996) examined the reliability, validity, and sensitivity of the measures used by DIBELS to assess early literacy skills. They compared data from three sections of DIBELS (phonemic segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency, and picture naming fluency) with other standardized testing measures and a teacher rating scale. Although this study was limited in size and geographical distribution, Kaminski and Good found evidence to support moderate to high reliability. They indicated that DIBELS should not be used as the sole form of assessment for making decisions about children, and fewer reliability estimates were found for first-grade students (Kaminski & Good, 1996).

Elliott, Lee, and Tollefson (2001) examined the psychometric properties of the preliteracy measures from the DIBELS assessment. Their study included a sample of 75 kindergarten students over a 2-week period at the end of the kindergarten year. Three achievement measures, a teacher rating scale, and a brief intelligence test were used as criterion measures. This study concurred with previous research and supported the use of using DIBELS measures for identifying kindergarten students who are at-risk for reading failure. Reliability measures were computed for interrater reliability, test-retest reliability, and alternate forms reliability. It was found that letter naming fluency and phonemic segmentation ability had weaker correlations with criterion measures. However, they did find that letter naming fluency and a experimental measure, sound naming fluency, yielded the highest reliability and concurrent validity (Elliott et al., 2001).

Buck and Torgesen (2001) studied the predictive value of oral reading fluency on achievement in reading. This study involved 13 schools from one Florida district. Oral reading fluency scores were compared with the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test- Sunshine State Standards (FCAT-SSS). Buck and Torgesen found that for a large heterogeneous group of third graders, the performance on the oral reading fluency portion of DIBELS has a high predictive value on whether or not students will have a satisfactory performance on the FCAT.

In a 2005 study, Wilson conducted a study to determine whether third-grsde students who reached benchmark on the oral reading fluency were likely to meet the standard on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). His study focused on low risk and at risk students. Wilson's concluded that the oral reading fluency portion of the DIBELS can identify students who are likely to meet the proficiency standard on AIMS with good accuracy. In his examination of subgroups, Wilson found that this portion of DIBELS provides equal measures for all subgroups. Although Wilson's research provided positive correlations between oral reading fluency and the AIMS, he did suggest replication of the study using a broader sample in order to generalize findings.

Another comparison study resulted in strong correlations between DIBELS and the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP). Hintze, Ryan, and Stoner (2003), examined the concurrent validity of DIBELS with CTOPP. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the decision validity of DIBELS. This study involved 86, primarily Caucasian, kindergarten students in a northeastern city. The results of the

measures showed a moderate to strong correlation between DIBELS and CTOPP. The analysis of decision accuracy indicated a high-sensitivity in predictive value.

Rouse and Fantuzzo (2006) studied the validity of three subtests of DIBELS with kindergarten children in a large, urban school district. They cited the previously discussed reliability and validity studies of the DIBELS. This study included a random sample of 330 kindergarten children that were representative of an urban school district. The purpose of this study was to investigate the validity of three subtests of the DIBELS with urban kindergarten students. Multiple individual and group tests with known validity and reliability measures were given for comparison. In addition, a teacher rating scale was used to measure success and positive peer interaction and relationships. It was found that letter naming fluency and phoneme segmentation provided the strongest predictor for at-risk students. It was also found that Nonsense Word Fluency does not provide unique predictive information about alter reading competency. These researchers concluded that DIBELS could be used to identify children who are "not on target for meeting national mandates and adapt curricular efforts to target specific early literacy skills with which children are having the most difficulty (Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2006, p. 353).

Criticisms and Negative Research

Although test developers present DIBELS to educators as a prevention-oriented assessment, there are those who disagree. Tierney and Thome (2006) questioned whether or not the use of DIBELS actually improves literacy performance. They also addressed concerns that "such assessments [like DIBELS] do not contribute positively to the achievement improvements that they rout" (p. 51). They reported that DIBELS simply

"what DIBELS measures and what teachers teach become the same" (p. 52), and the focus on reaching benchmark goals, other forms of literacy including oral language experiences, writing, and other modes of representation that build meaning-making skills have been pushed aside or banned from the classroom. They elaborated that their findings showed that teachers are pushing aside best practice to teach the test because of the comparisons that are made with their peers. According to Tierney and Thome (p. 55), "With DIBELS teachers are not able to be engaged professionally to use their judgments in a fashion that is discerning. Teachers are faced with a search for workbooks that teach, for example, nonsense words in a fashion akin to how DIBELS might test." They agreed that DIBELS results may be useful to identify students who need more intensive instruction, to aid in organizing instructional groups, and in making adjustments in instruction; but with the focus on making sure students achieve their bench marks, limits are placed on teachers' decision-making and the tools they might enlist to meet the needs of their students (Tierney & Thome, 2006).

In a 3-year study to examine statistical relationships between the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) subtest and the SAT 10 Reading Comprehension subtest in the state of Alabama, Seay (2006) found only a moderate positive correlation. The data did not indicate that DIBELS ORF is a strong predictor of performance on the SAT 10. It was also found that a high percentage of students never got out of the at risk category for reading difficulties. Students identified in first grade or second grade as needing intervention and receiving intensive intervention were still in the at risk category by the end of the third-grade year. Seay also found the same persistent gaps between male students, students of poverty, and minority students that are also reflected on NAEP

results (see previous information concerning NAEP results). According to Seay, reading scores in Alabama are stagnate, and that "the expectations that state authorities had that DIBELS would improve reading achievement have not been fulfilled" (p. 62). She concluded that it is time for these authorities to take a serious look at assessments and strategies that focus only on speed and accuracy rather than comprehension (Seay, 2006).

Wilde (2006) examined the findings from two studies (previously discussed) from the DIBELS website at the University of Oregon (see Buck and Torgesen, 2003, and Wilson, 2005). Her evaluation of Buck and Torgesen found that the some risk group was left out in calculating sensitive scores that would influence the predictive value of the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency subtest. Wilde concluded that DIBELS may help predict the proportion of students in a school that are likely to fail the state reading test, but it is not "that good at identifying *which* students they'll be" (p. 69, emphasis in original). In Wilde's study, communications with teachers in Oregon, provided personal reports that the DIBELS oral reading score determines which students will get intervention and the type of instruction they will get. Wilde's teacher-participants addressed issues with students who pass benchmark level on DIBELS but fail the state assessment. The teacher-participants reported that these students' scores do not indicate they are at-risk for oral reading fluency; these students do not receive additional support; and the opinion of the teacher concerning the needs of individual students left unheeded (Wilde, 2006).

Manning, Kamii, and Kato (2006) and Kamii and Manning (2005) analyzed mid-semester scores of 101 first graders in a public school in a small southern town on the Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtests of the DIBELS. The students in six of the classrooms received isolated instruction and

practice in phonemic segmentation and phonics. Within 1 or 2 weeks of the

administration of the DIBELS, each child was individual administered the Slossom Oral

Reading Test and a researcher-developed writing test which was based on "the theory

that reading and writing involve children's knowledge of our writing system, which each

child constructs by going through one level after another of being 'wrong'" (Manning et

al., p. 77). These researchers found a low correlation between the Slosson and PSF, but a

high correlation between the NWF subtest and the Slosson. It was also found that

students who scored low on the PSF subtest and the NWF subtest could write words at

relatively high levels. They concluded that:

> DIBELS is based on an outdated, limited scientific theory, and the evidence
> provided by the present study does not justify its use for the evaluation of an
> instructional program. Each successive subtest is not a good predictor of success
> on the next subtest, and none of the tests we examined show much relationship to
> real reading and writing. (Manning et al., 2006, p. 77)

> In a critical review of the DIBELS assessment), Goodman (2006) outlined and

critiqued all of the elements addressed by this assessment system. Goodman addressed

concerns for using timed tests with very young children. According to Goodman, the

authors of DIBELS assume that formal reading instruction begins in kindergarten and

recommend that the Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) subtest should be given in preschool. He

stated:

> Early childhood educators ask whether a particular activity is 'developmentally
> appropriate.' Simply, is it suitable for very young children? Should 5-year-olds be
> repeatedly tested with timed tests? Should those who can't perform on these one-
> minute tests be drilled on naming letters and sounding out words while their
> classmates play? And should children come to see themselves as failures before
> they even start first grade? (Goodman, 2006, p. 11)

Goodman also discussed several problems concerning DIBELS and its use in the public

school system, but his primary concern is the way children and teachers are being treated

because of DIBELS. He reported that children are treated the same regardless of their prior experiences, culture, and cognitive and linguistic backgrounds. Instead, what counts is their score. Goodman (2006, p. 35) concluded that teachers are treated as "prisoners of war," and "the authors of DIBELS believe they know better than the most experienced teachers what instruction a given child or group of children need at any point in time."

Summary of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

The DIBELS assessment is being used to assess young children beginning as early as kindergarten. The authors of this prevention-oriented assessment (as previously defined) suggested that the DIBELS should be used to predict possible reading difficulties and to provide teachers with information to guide intervention. Most of the supportive research proved validity and reliability in the DIBELS measurements of Phonemic Awareness, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency. But other researchers have shown concerns about changes in teachers' classroom practices that include teaching the skills necessary for students to attain the established benchmarks as indicated by the DIBELS. In addition, there are concerns for the use of assessment programs such as DIBELS to predict future test scores and to determine interventions for young children. This section included both positive and negative articles and research reports on DIBELS. Kaminski et al. (2007), from the Dynamic Measurement Group, have responded to accusations that DIBELS is being misused as a high-stakes test in making decisions about children, and has created a narrowing of the curriculum in order to teach the skills needed for children to pass set benchmark scores. As in previous literature, this group insisted that DIBELS must be used only for its predictive value, and not for high-

stakes decisions. They also addressed misconceptions about DIBELS. First they explained that DIBELS measures are timed to measure fluency, accuracy, and automaticity as well as to monitor progress efficiently. In this position paper, the authors stated: "The test offers no guarantees—continued good instruction is required for students who meet the goal in order for them to stay on track" (Kaminski et al., 2007, ¶9).

This section on the DIBELS provides a glimpse at just one of the assessments used in today's schools to provide test-data for measuring AYP. There is a growing body of research that provides evidence that the DIBELS has weaknesses that need to be addressed, but more is needed. Although there are criticisms concerning the use of the DIBELS with young children, research does not specifically address concerns of the appropriateness of using the DIBELS. There is also a lack of research in the area of teacher opinions, concerns, and experiences with using the DIBELS to evaluate young children.

<div style="text-align: center;">Developmentally Appropriate Practice</div>

This section reports on developmentally appropriate practice to provide historical aspects and definitions, documented publications of support and criticism, and available research. The first subsection begins with the definitions and historical aspects of developmentally appropriate practice from general articles and publications. It presents a general timeline of changes that have been made since the inception of the term *developmentally appropriate practice*, and will include both articles of support and criticism. In addition it will address issues of today concerning the regulated requirements of NCLB and the position statements of those who support developmentally

appropriate practice. The following subsections focus on available research on developmentally appropriate practice, including cognitive and social development; stress; connections to brain research; and teacher beliefs, concerns, and dispositions.

Definitions, History, and Opinions

According to Katz and Chard (2000), "When we say that an activity is developmentally appropriate or speak of grade-level achievement, we are employing the normative dimension of the concept of development" (p. 22). However, development is dynamic; "It addresses the sequence of learning, the transformations that accrue in capabilities from one age to another, and the order in which the stages of development and learning occur" (Katz & Chard, 2000, p. 22). Developmentally appropriate practice has influenced educational practice for young children by emphasizing the whole child's developments: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. It emphasizes the need for individualized instruction—that children learn at different rates. The developmentally appropriate practice guidelines support active learning, using hands-on materials and movement by interacting with the environment, allowing children to build knowledge on previous experiences (prior knowledge) (Kamii, 2000). The importance of play, multiage grouping, and parent involvement are other major components of the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, 2007; Bredekamp, 1997; NAEYC, 1997).

The history of developmentally appropriate practice dates back to the early 1900's when the International Kindergarten Union appointed 19 experts to be a part of a committee whose task was to develop standards for kindergarten children. This

committee, The Committee of Nineteen, issued three reports which addressed teacher-directed instruction; a program that emphasized play and child-initiated activities, and a third that was a compromise, but included the need to involve the home and community in the life of the school (Bredekamp, 1997). In 1930 the National Committee on Nursery School, founded by Patty Smith Hill, published the first book which filled the need standards and regulations for the operation of nursery schools. That committee later became the NAEYC (NAEYC), and in the 1980s NAEYC again, as a result of an "explosion of out-of-home child care" (Bredekamp, 1997, p. 35), began developing criteria for high-quality early childhood programs which resulted in the publication of position statements on developmentally appropriate practice (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, 2007; Bredekamp, 1997; Bredekamp & Glowacki, 1996).

The original publications in 1986 and 1987 by NAEYC were written "to provide guidance to program personnel seeking accreditation; the accreditation criteria call for developmentally appropriate activities, materials, and expectations" (Bredekamp, 1997, p. 35). In 1997 Bredekamp and Copple revised the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines to emphasize the teacher as a "reflective decision maker, planning for children on three important dimensions" (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, p. 100) including what is known about child development and learning, what is known about the individual child in a group, and what is known about the cultural and social contexts of the students we teach. In addition, special educators have determined recommended appropriate practices, especially for in the area of early interventions by dividing services for special needs children into areas: (a) direct (assessment, child-focused practices, family-based practices, interdisciplinary modes, and technology applications) and (b) indirect

(recommendations concerning policies, procedures, and systems change, as well as personnel preparation issues) (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005).

In multiple 1994 publications, Mallory and New (1994), Lubeck (1994), New (1994), McCollum and Blair (1994), and others addressed concerns about the 1987 guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) and implications for children from diverse populations. Lubeck (1994) wrote, "There are three principal features of the ideology of developmentally appropriate practice that are especially problematic with reference to children and families from Traditional disenfranchised groups" and that "developmentally appropriate practice is an effort to teach dominant cultural practices to both teachers and parents, a retooled and repackaged variation of work within the broad purview of the environment perspective that has dominated early education initiatives since the 1960's" (p. 30). New (1994) considered the 1987 version of developmentally appropriate practice guidelines as a "renewed commitment on the part of early educators" (p. 65), but that "the knowledge base and related recommendations for practice [of the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines] reflect norms and values primarily associated with white middle-class America" (p. 65). McCollum and Blair (1994) expressed concerns for the broad universal principles of the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and implications for children with disabilities.

Charlesworth (1998a, 1998b) and Lubeck (1998a, 1998b) debated the appropriateness of developmentally appropriate practice for all children. Charlesworth (1998a) stated that developmentally appropriate practice is equally beneficial for all young children from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups, specifically in the areas of

a child's "psychological, social, and academic well-being" (p. 280). However, Lubeck (1998a) challenged the view that developmentally appropriate practice is for everyone. Lubeck proposed that "even when we say that our classrooms are 'developmentally appropriate,' they do not all look the same" (p. 284). Lubeck also stated that "individual teachers are expected to foster community and individual values and to find a balance between teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities in the classroom, while the normative beliefs and practices that deeply structure our professional lives are themselves not open to discussion" (p. 286). In response to Lubeck's rhetorical article, Charlesworth (1998b) wrote, "Although Sally Lubeck and I disagree on what provides the foundation for early childhood practice, we do seem to come up with actual practice exemplars that are similar, or at least not in conflict" (p. 293). Charlesworth addressed Lubeck's criticisms of developmentally appropriate practice guidelines as follows: "I see the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines as a starting point for making decisions that recognize diversity, not as a means of squelching diversity" (p. 293). Charlesworth agreed that not all developmentally appropriate practice classrooms look alike, and that teachers must solve problems through collaboration with families and other stakeholders. Charlesworth also pointed out that there is a misconception that direct instruction is not developmentally appropriate practice. Instead it is more "the content and the degree to which the teacher promoted students' active engagement" (p. 296) during direct instruction that needs to be monitored. Finally, Lubeck (1998b) concluded: "We do not have boxes big enough to contain such crashing complexities, no simple answers, no tried and true schemes. We must learn to question our own thinking—and to listen well" (p.

301). While issues of culture were debated before NCLB, few discussions about government regulations were debated.

In a joint position statement of the NAEYC (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) addressed the issues of standards-based environment for early childhood education. Rather than writing new guidelines, NAEYC and NAECS/SDE described "four features that are essential if early learning standards are to be developmentally effective" (NAEYC, 2002, ¶1). The goal of these two organizations was to promote the young child's innate desire to learn and develop learning standards that provide "greater opportunities for positive development and learning" (NAEYC, 2002, ¶2). The four essential features were (a) effective early learning standards emphasize significant developmentally appropriate content and outcome, (b) effective early learning standards are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes, (c) early learning standards gain their effectiveness through implementation and assessment practices that support all children's development in ethical, appropriate ways, and (d) effective early learning standards require a foundation of support for early childhood programs, professionals, and families (NAEYC, 2002).

Goodman, Shannon, Goodman, and Rapoport (2004) specifically addressed today's concerns for the survival of developmentally appropriate practice in light of the stringent accountability assessments and interventions for at-risk children that require the use of scientifically based methods as dictated by NCLB. Goodman et al. (2004) reported that developmentally appropriate practitioners do not agree with scripted programs that fit this definition are developmentally appropriate. It was also reported that proponents of

developmentally appropriate practice also promote the use of qualitative, authentic

assessments instead of the high-stakes tests that are used for accountability measures

(Aldridge & Goodman, 2007; Goodman et al., 2004).

Research Studies on Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Much of the research on developmentally appropriate practice targets the

differences between groups of children participating in developmentally appropriate

practice versus developmentally inappropriate programs. The goal of this research is to

determine which program is more effective. Other research focuses on the stress levels of

children in these developmentally appropriate practice and developmentally inappropriate

practice programs. This section of the review of literature begins with summaries of

research dealing with cognitive and social development and is followed by research

concerning stress behaviors. The third and fourth sections provide information on

connections of developmentally appropriate practice to brain research and two studies on

teachers' concerns with and dispositions toward using developmentally appropriate

practice in their classrooms.

Cognitive and social development. Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Milburn (1995)

conducted a study on a substantially low-socioeconomic, minority and middle-class

population to compare didactic and child-centered teaching models. The purpose of this

study was to gather data in the areas of (a) basic skills achievement; (b) self-perceptions

about academic ability; (c) expectations for success; (d) enjoyment of school and school-

like activities; (e) dependency and need for approval; (f) preference for basic skills tasks

and challenge; (g) anxiety; and (h) pride in accomplishments. Stipek et al. (1995) divided the sample into two groups, didactic (D) and child-centered (CC) based on six criteria: student-choice and diversity; response toward children; approaches to maintain student engagement; amount of time spent on academic topics and basic skills; degree of negative teacher-produced responses; and degree to which teachers used extrinsic reward systems. In achievement, kindergarten students from didactic (D) programs performed better on letters and reading than kindergartens in child-centered programs as well as pre-school students. Also, kindergarten students performed better on numbers than pre-school students but there was no difference between programs. Stipek et al. concluded that teacher-directed instruction produced better knowledge of letters and words because of the memorization element in recognizing numbers, but the same may not apply to other literacy related skills. In addition, math skills that deal with one-to-one correspondence to not depend on this same type of rote memorization; math concepts are better understood with manipulatives rather than didactic methods using paper and pencil (Stipek et al., 1995).

Marcon (1999) was concerned about the downward shift in curriculum, pushing skills normally introduced in first grade to kindergarten. Marcon examined three preschool models—the child-initiated model (CI), middle-of-the-road (M), and academically directed model (AD)—by analyzing teacher responses on a survey about beliefs and practices. The child-initiated model allowed children to actively direct the focus of their learning; the academically directed model provided direct instruction and teacher-directed learning experiences; and the middle-of-the-road model was between the opposing models or a combination of both. Student data was gathered in the areas of self-

help, social skills, motor skills, adaptive development, and mastery of basic skill. Marcon used the students' competency-based report cards to determine academic growth and to compare the three models. All students made good progress during their kindergarten year although math and science skills were lower than other areas. CI students had significantly higher scores in math and science; verbal, social, and work habits, and physical development. AD students scored higher than M in verbal and social skills. CI students performed better than AD in all subject areas measured. It was determined that there were minimum discrepancies attributable to sex; however, there were some effects for ethnicity. African-American students in CI had a higher mastery of basic skills than those in AD or M. Marcon (1999) concluded that "the combination approach was ineffective" and that "children's development was not notably hindered by the strong academic focus presented by Model AD" (p. 369). Marcon also noted that students in "CI actually mastered more basic skills" (Marcon, 1999, p. 369).

Huffman and Speer (2000) investigated achievement levels for kindergarten and first grade in the areas of letter/word identification and applied problems. The subjects in their study were predominantly African American and Hispanic in urban schools and considered to be at-risk as the result of declining achievement levels, frequent school moves, and increasing grade retention. The male subjects were at greatest risk because of poverty, the absence of a father-figure, and racial prejudice. In this study, sex was not considered to be a significant factor in the results. The Huffman and Speer study compared students from classrooms that they classified as "DAP," for developmentally appropriate practice, or "DIP," for developmentally inappropriate practice. They identified DIP classrooms as those which "emphasized basic skills and highly-structured,

direct teaching approaches" (Huffman & Speer, 2000, p. 169). developmentally appropriate practice classrooms were defined as child-centered, emphasizing applied knowledge and real-world tasks. According to Huffman and Speer (2000),"the ambiguity of the educational beliefs for developmentally appropriate practice and DIP methods has led to a debate among proponents of each approach" (p. 170). Classrooms in this study were divided into three levels depending on a researcher's observation of instructional practices, classroom environment, and student interaction. They were classified as high-, moderate- and low-DAP. It was expected that DIP-oriented classrooms (low-DAP) would yield students who scored better on simple, rote learning tasks such as calculation and letter-word identification; and students from DAP-oriented (high-DAP) classrooms would achieve better on applied knowledge and real-world tasks such as applied problems and passage comprehension. Moderate-DAP classrooms used hands-on activities and varied instructive techniques. Huffman & Speer did not find any significant differences for sex and DAP. It was found that moderate-DAP students performed significantly higher on letter-world identification and applied sciences in the spring semester in both kindergarten and first grade. However students in low-DAP classrooms scored higher on measures of math calculation than those in moderate-DAP. This study provided evidence that there are positive effects for kindergartners and first graders in developmental appropriate classrooms, and students from an "impoverished urban setting performed significantly better on tests of letter-word identification and applied problems in more DAP classrooms than did children in less appropriate classrooms" (Huffman & Speer, 2000, p. 180).

Jones and Gullo (1999) also measured academic achievement of first grade students in areas of language and mathematic, but also included social skills. They analyzed self-report data from teachers to determine the beliefs and practices of the teachers as related to the tenets of developmentally appropriate practice, and divided the students into three groups: DAP, average, and DIP. The students and teachers included in their study were from inner-city schools, and the majority of the students were African-American. Academics were measured in the areas of mathematics (whole score, reasoning concept knowledge, communication procedures); reading and writing (response to reading, management of content, command of language); and reading (reading comprehension, writing performance, higher-level thinking) during the last trimester of the school year. Social skills were measured by the teacher using a rating scale. No significant differences were found in math achievement between the three groups, but DIP students scored higher on language and reading. DAP students had the highest scores on the social skills measure; but this may have been influenced by the tendencies of DAP teachers to support student interaction, independence, and creativity in learning. Jones and Gullo (1999) suggested the "gap between inappropriate beliefs and practices are not as wide as might be expected" (p. 33). They also concluded that since language arts is primarily skill-based, students from DIP classrooms would do better on language assessments (Jones and Gullo, 1999).

Miller and Bizzell (1983, 1984) conducted two longitudinal and studies to compare the long-term effects of four different preschool programs in the areas of IQ and achievement for sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. The preschool programs examined in this study included two didactic programs the Bereiter-Engelmann Preschool

Program (B-E) for disadvantaged children (Seigfried Engelmann, n.d.), and the

Demonstration and Research Center for Early Education (DARCEE) program (DARCEE

Report, 1971); and two child-centered program, Montessori (The Montessori "Method",

n.d.) and Traditional. Miller and Bizzell compared the academic and intellectual

performance of these four experimental, Head Start groups with a comparison group

made up of students that had no prekindergarten experience from the same neighborhood

to control demographics which were primarily low-income and predominantly African

American. Miller and Bizzell found that Montessori males in nondidactic groups

performed higher than boys in didactic programs especially in the area of reading.

Females from didactic programs were slightly but not significantly higher than females

from other groups. According to Miller and Bizzell (1984, p. 1586) "there was a

disastrous drop in performance for B-E males who subsequently entered kindergarten

classes that were quite different in format from the kindergarten program—that is, very

child-centered, individualized, and nondidactic." By the ninth and tenth grades B-E males

were the second highest group in their combined achievement test scores (Miller &

Bizzell, 1983, 1984).

Stress. Ruckman, Burts, and Pierce (1999) examined stress and nonstress

behaviors during an existing computer-based literacy laboratory. A secondary objective

study was to determine the interactive effect of type of learning activity and gender on

the frequency of observed stress behaviors. This literacy program, Writing to Read, had

components that can be classified as more or less developmentally appropriate practices

(M-DAP and L-DAP, respectively). M-DAP activities included writing/typing, art,

making words–independent, library book, other tape individual tape activities, other manipulatives, and working both individually or collaboratively. L-DAP components included computer, work journal, making words–guided, library tape, *Reader Rabbit*, reading group, vocabulary review–guided, waiting, and punishment. Socialization is not encouraged and teacher direction is required for participation and finishing. Stress behaviors were classified as passive (yawning, sleeping, frowning, and refusing); self with self (nose picking, hand-hand manipulation, and foot shuffling); and self with others (arguing, sassing, stuttering, compulsive talking). There was an increased level of stress behavior associated with L-DAP activities. There were no differences attributable to gender in this controlled setting. Ruckman et al. (1999) commented, "Teachers must thoughtfully evaluate the literacy activities they provide for young children, the commercial programs they use, and all the modifications they make to those programs" (p. 44).

In a study of stress in preschoolers, Hart et al. (1998) compared preschool more and less developmentally appropriate classrooms, as decided by a teachers' beliefs rating scale, in the areas of behavior and activity type. In addition, socioeconomic level and sex were evaluated as variables. Stress behaviors were categorized by self with self (hand-hand manipulation, mouth manipulation, ear pulling, twisting/biting clothing, rocking, and repetitive leg and arm movement); passive behavior (withdrawal from group, off-task behavior, and gazing without focus); self with others (teacher-attention seeking in disruptive ways, refusing to talk, talking at inappropriate times, whining); and self with object (pencil tapping, fumbling behavior, sucking/biting object, doodling on desk or paper at inappropriate times, and destroying worksheets/workbooks). The children in

developmentally inappropriate classrooms exhibited more self with self, passive, and self

with others stress behaviors including such behaviors as nail biting, aggression, and

nervous laughter. Low socioeconomic (SES) students in DIP classrooms exhibited more

stress behavior during activities that involved waiting and television watching. Both high

and low SES groups had higher stress in DIP classrooms as compared to DAP

classrooms. Male students had more stress behavior during worksheet/workbook

activities than female students in DIP classrooms. The same behaviors for male students

were observed in DAP classrooms, but worksheet/workbook activities were the least

observed in DAP classrooms. Male students also displayed more stress during music,

group story, and small-group activities regardless of classroom type. Overall stress levels

were higher in DIP classrooms than DAP classrooms. Hart et al. (1998) concluded that

"less developmentally appropriate early childhood programs have concurrent, as well as

lasting, potentially harmful effects on young children" (p. 192). In addition they stated:

> Today's young children are exposed to numerous stressors outside the school
> setting, and low SES children are particularly vulnerable. Based on studies to
> date, it appears more certain that developmentally appropriate practices serve to
> reduce stress to a supportive level and provide strong foundational experiences for
> children's later development (Hart et al., 1998, p. 192).

Connection to brain research. Rushton and Larkin (2001) completed a

comparison study of the principles of developmentally appropriate practice and available

brain research. The premise of their study was based on the position that "brain research

supports the importance of developing and implementing a curriculum that is appropriate

for the learner's particular developmental age" (p. 26). They found nine principles for

developmentally appropriate practice that are affirmed by brain research:

1. Physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains of development are closely related.

2. Development occurs in a relatively orderly sequence.

3. Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child.

4. Early experiences have both cumulative and delayed effects on individual children's development.

5. Development proceeds in a predictable direction toward greater complexity, organization, and internalization.

6. Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understanding of the world around them.

7. Development and learning result from the interaction of biological maturation and the environment.

8. Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know.

9. Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure. (Rushton & Larkin, 2001, p. 27-28)

According to Rushton and Larkin (2001) technology has enabled researchers to better understand the human brain. "This technology and subsequent understanding of the brain, albeit overwhelming or most educators, supports many of the philosophical tenets of constructivism" (p. 32).

Teacher beliefs, concerns and dispositions. In a case-study research project, Goldstein (2007) found "that using the [developmentally appropriate practice] versus standards dilemma framing to represent the variety of challenges presently facing teachers blurred significant details, minimized important distinctions, and obscured the complications involved in teaching kindergarten in today's educational climate" (p.40). Both of the participants in her study had multiple years of experience and became

teachers when a "child-centered, play-based approach was considered best practice for kindergarten" (p. 45). They both had strong convictions about creating a learning environment with materials and opportunities that allow children to explore their world through play and experimentation. The teachers in Goldstein's study did not find it difficult to maintain their commitment to using developmentally appropriate practice, but their new obligations to teach the standards made their jobs complex. Instead they found new ways to use established practices and preferred activities to teach the standards using developmentally appropriate ways. However, one key factor that influenced the outcome of this study was the high performance status of their school on the high-stakes standardized tests required by their state. The principals were relaxed about allowing teachers teach "the standards guided by their own professional judgments" (p. 47). The primary source of concern for these two kindergarten teachers was the pressure they received from first grade teachers who demanded a higher mastery of skills prior to entering first grade and parental demands for academic skills or traditional materials used for instruction. Goldstein admitted that this study was limited to a high-performing school with a population from upper middle class homes. As cited by Goldstein, it has been found that there is a high correlation between "socioeconomics such as the parents' occupations, levels of education, the family's income bracket, and the location of [the school]" (Wesson, 2001, p. 16). Also, the feelings and concerns of other early childhood teachers, first through third, were not addressed (Goldstein, 2007).

File and Gullo (2002) examined the beliefs of pre-service teachers in an early childhood education (ECED) and elementary education (ELED) program. They found that ECED students favored child-centered practices in the areas of "teaching strategies,

expectations of the children, assessment strategies, and teacher- and child-directed

activities" (File & Gullo, 2002, p. 126). They also found that, compared with other

students, student teachers often favored less developmentally appropriate behavior

management strategies such as time-out and external reward; but that may be attributed to

the management techniques used by the cooperating teacher. They concluded that "in

spite of the fact that the constructivist underpinnings of [developmentally appropriate

practice] are now widely espoused in the higher education arena, traditional differences

continue to influence the fields" (File & Gullo, 2002, p. 135). Also differences in ECED

and ELED students may be attributed to the fact that ELED students feel more pressure

to adhere to the growing trend of direct instruction brought on by the use of standardized

testing for evaluation. ECED students feel less pressure because they have placement

options outside the public school system (File & Gullo, 2002).

Summary of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Van Horn, Karlin, Ramey, Aldridge, and Snyder (2005) conducted a simulation

study to evaluate the hypothesis of the effects of developmentally appropriate practice.

They concluded that "empirical evidence of effectiveness of [developmentally

appropriate practice] is limited in quantity, and what evidence is available is mixed" (Van

Horn et al., 2005, p. 348), and that more evidence is needed.

There is a degree of instability in much of the available research as a result of the

unreliable nature of asking teachers to rate their own style of teaching. Also, in the area

of rating the stress levels, the developmentally appropriate practice teachers are more

likely to provide higher evaluations as a result of the child-centered nature of their

instructional practices. Only one research article included in this review of literature included activity-type within the classroom as a variable, and the majority of developmentally appropriate practice research is restricted to lower socioeconomic groups and minority-group students which decreases its generalizability.

The developmentally appropriate practice research presented in this section represents only a portion of what is available. Most of this research was completed prior to NCLB, and does not address the accountability and assessment issues teachers face today. There is evidence of research concerning teacher preparation programs and concerns with future teachers' dispositions toward developmentally appropriate practice, and research in the area of kindergarten teachers' dilemmas while faced with high curriculum requirements. However, there is a need for additional research that includes all primary grades (K-3) to identify and provide information to help teachers cope with these higher demands of NCLB.

Chapter 2 Summary

This review of the literature provided a comprehensive examination of research and informative analysis of articles of criticism and support. Definitions and background information was provided concerning (a) NCLB, (b) AYP, (c) high-stakes tests, (d) DIBELS, and (e) developmentally appropriate practice. Each of these topics was treated separately to make available comparative research. Throughout this research there are few if any connections or correlations made between the requirements of NCLB mandates and developmentally appropriate practice. Negative research studies and articles of criticism on NCLB, AYP, high-stakes tests, and DIBELS address such issues

as a decrease in instructional time caused by testing, a narrowed curriculum, and inadequate funding. But there are few direct references linking these areas of concern connected with NCLB and early childhood teachers use developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and principles in their classrooms.

Only four research studies provide limited connections between NCLB and developmentally appropriate practice. The research conducted by Jones et al. (1999) studied the impact of high-stakes tests and a state accountability program prior to the authorization of NCLB. Goodman and Foote (2001) conducted a case study to chronicle the resistance of an individual school's fight against the imposition of state standards and mandated tests. Harrington-Leuker (2000, 2000a) conducted research on the coexistence of high-stakes tests and developmentally appropriate practice. However, this research was conducted prior to the testing requirements imposed on schools through NCLB mandates. Hirsch-Pasek and Golinkoff (2007) conducted a teacher survey which suggested that "education is no longer a nurturing environment where children's needs are primary" (¶19), but there was no mention teachers thoughts and feelings concerning the use of developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms.

Conversely the research on developmentally appropriate practice primarily provides support for using the guidelines and principles in early childhood classrooms (Bredekamp, 1997; Bredekamp & Glowacki, 1996, NAEYC, 1997). Much of the research was conducted in the 1990's, prior to the authorization of NCLB. In a more recent study, Rushton and Larkin (2001) affirmed developmentally appropriate practice principles in a comparison study of brain research, but no connections were made to NCLB. Goldstein (2007) cited Dever, Falconer and Kessenich (2003) in her case-study of kindergarten

teachers and their preferred use of developmentally appropriate practice. According to Dever et al., teachers who philosophically adhere to best practices are struggling with the structured, narrow curriculum mandated by state and local schools. Goldstein's study closely parallels the research represented in this paper; however, it was restricted to the dilemmas of two kindergarten teachers rather than addressing the full spectrum of early childhood.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The methods employed by the researcher follow guidelines provided by experts in the qualitative research tradition of phenomenology. As previously stated in Chapter 1, phenomenology is the study of the "lifeworld" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) of the participant. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to gain a "deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The researcher used the five phases outlined by Denzin (1989) for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data, and used rich, thick description (Geertz, 1983, 1988) to describe the experiences of the participants and the relationship of these experiences to the phenomenon being studied.

This section includes sampling procedures to include a general description of the participants, the site, and recruitment procedures. It also outlines the type of data and how this data was gathered, stored, and analyzed. Verification procedures and ethical considerations are addressed. This section concludes with a description of the role of the researcher.

Sampling Procedure

Participants

The participants in this study included 11 early childhood teachers with 6 or more years of experience. These participants represent a purposeful, criterion sample in which the participants have experienced the changes in instructional methods and practices

brought on by NCLB. This sample included four kindergarten teachers; two teachers

from first, second, and third grades; and one special education specialist. One of the

kindergarten teachers did not complete the study and chose to withdraw following the

group interview. The number of participants and the purposeful, criterion sampling meets

the requirements for a phenomenological study in which all participants met the criterion

for this study of having teaching experience prior to the establishment of NCLB. The

participants were carefully chosen using a researcher-produced survey (See Appendix A)

to garner their experience level and their pre-conceived ideas about developmentally

appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994;

van Manen, 1990).

The overall sample included 11 female early childhood teachers (Grades K-3) and

one special education teacher serving second grade. The years of teaching ranged from 6

to 35 years of varied teaching experience. One teacher was presently in her sixth year of

teaching. All of the teachers were Caucasian. The educational backgrounds of the

teachers ranged from Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education to a PhD in Early

Childhood Education with a focus in Educational Leadership. All teachers in this study

are Highly Qualified, meeting the requirements of the state of Alabama and NCLB.

Site

The participants in this study were a representative sample of early childhood

teachers, including four public schools in the southeastern United States. Although the

schools are in the same school system, the student population represents a mixture of

socioeconomic and cultural groups to better represent a larger population.

Recruitment Procedures

Following the acquisition of necessary permissions (addressed in ethical considerations), an email was sent to the principals of nine representative schools to be forwarded to the teachers of their school. This email contained a letter attachment to the principal (see Appendix B) that outlined the type of study, and participation requirements. Separate attachments, providing a copy of the Teacher Response Form (Appendix A) and a copy of the participant recruitment letter (see Appendix C), were included in this email. The researcher offered to provide copies of the county-level permission letter (Appendix D) and other proof of the authenticity of this study upon request. After receiving permissions from all nine schools, the researcher sent a second email including the attachments (see Appendices A and C) mentioned above, excluding the principal's letter explaining the research study, and requested that it be forwarded by the principal to the teachers in their school. The recruitment email requested that teachers willing to participate in this study download the teacher survey and either complete the form and return it electronically or complete the form manually and fax it to the researcher. After an initial lack of response, the researcher re-sent duplicate emails to the principals approximately three times with a note of encouragement for teachers to participate. Finally, it was necessary to make direct contact with teachers from the researcher's home school to gain support and interest in the study. After receiving several completed teacher survey forms, the researcher contacted those participants who met the requirements and began establishing a rapport to begin the data-gathering process.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Set

    Type of data. The nature of data in a phenomenological study uses personal experience as a starting point. Information is gathered using stories, anecdotes, and recollections of experiences or serve as an occasion to reflect with the participant (van Manen, 1990). This study used the following types of data: a teacher survey (see Appendix A) for participation; an informal, group interview; individual, semi-structured interviews; and a participant journal. A researcher-produced protocol was developed for the group interview (see Appendix E) and the semi-structured interview (see Appendix F) to provide a guide and resource for the researcher.

    The group interview was an informal session to discuss the rigors of classroom instruction as defined by NCLB and the use of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms. Seven of the nine initial participants participated in the group interview. Two of the participants were unable to attend because they had other responsibilities; and the two participants recruited subsequently to the group interview did not participate.

    The individual, semi-structured interview was the primary source of data for this study. One participant requested to provide a written interview because of scheduling problems with professional and family responsibilities. A copy of the semi-structured interview protocol was sent via an email attachment. She downloaded the protocol, answered the questions in a written format, and returned it to the researcher in the same manner. This participant was asked to clarify one area of her response via an email from the researcher, and the participant complied. A second participant unofficially withdrew

from the study when she did not respond to set up an individual interview. The researcher

contacted this participant numerous times via email and once by phone to establish

continued interest in participating. This participant responded, indicating that she would

complete the interview in a written format, but never provided it or indicated withdrawal

from the study. Information and statements garnered during the group interview were

used in this study. All other individual interviews were conducted person-to-person.

In addition to the researcher-produced survey which provided demographic

information and the group and individual interviews, the researcher requested that the

participants provide a simple, reflective journal to express their concerns, feelings, and

classroom experiences. Six of the eleven participants provided a journal response either

electronically via email or in a hard-copy format. Entries in the participants' journals

were used as a separate source of data. The researcher also used informal journaling and a

planning calendar to document dates and procedures during the data gathering process.

Data-gathering procedures. Each data-gathering process was composed of a

different set of procedures.

Teacher survey—This questionnaire was composed of demographic information

and a single question that focused on the teachers' beliefs concerning the use of

developmentally appropriate practice in today's classrooms (see Appendix A). In

addition, it was used to discern the participants' understanding of the term

developmentally appropriate practice, and their knowledge-base concerning NCLB. The

teacher survey was sent as an attachment with the initial letter of recruitment through the

gatekeeper of the local school (See Recruitment Procedures and Ethical Considerations).

Group interview—The group interview was arranged at an informal, central location after school hours via a distribution list email. The interview was audio-recorded to garner the words of the participants. The researcher kept notes regarding each speaker to allow accuracy in producing the final written transcript and the emotional responses of the participants. A group-interview protocol (see Appendix E) was used to help the researcher remain focused and organized so that discussion was guided as necessary by the researcher, but remained informal. This group interview required approximately 1.5 hours of audio-taped responses after each participant were given the proper consent forms. Refreshments were served during the interview session to help promote a relaxed atmosphere. Seven of the initial nine participants attended the group interview. (See Data Set for more information.)

Semi-structured interview—The semi-structured interview was the primary source of data. During the interview process, the researcher guarded against too many questions (van Manen, 1990) by using a researcher-produced protocol (see Appendix F) with broad open-ended questions to gather descriptive data about the participants' experiences. The researcher practiced the questions on a colleague, presented the questions to the researcher's governing committee members, and made necessary changes in phrasing and intent of the question before beginning the data collection process. The researcher arranged to conduct the semi-structured interview at the convenience of the participant via email communication. This interview either took place after school at a location agreed upon and convenient to the participant. Each participant was provided a copy of the semi-structured interview protocol prior to the meeting via an email attachment. The researcher met with all but three participants in their personal

classrooms. Two interviews were conducted in the researcher's classroom by choice of the participant. One interview was electronically sent to the researcher in written form to overcome conflicts in scheduling. The semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix F) included 12 focus questions beginning with an invitation for the participant to provide personal information concerning their life and experiences. The researcher reviewed *The Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation* (Smith & Dickinson, 2002) as a resource to develop questions. All researcher-conducted semi-structured interviews took a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 1.5 hours. The interviews were audio-taped for transcription by the researcher. It was during this interview that the researcher was able to enter the life world of the participant and observe the classroom plan of seven of the participants. The researcher was already familiar with the classrooms of the two teachers that chose the researcher's classroom as the interview site. The classrooms of two participants were not observed: one who provided a written response to the semi-structured interview protocol, and another who unofficially withdrew from the study. (See Data Set for more details.)

Participants' journal—The participants were asked to reflect on their classroom experiences, feelings about their instructional practices, and the concerns they have addressing the mandates of NCLB. This informal journal required no more than one entry per week over the period of the data collection period. No protocol was given to the participants, and personal reflection was encouraged. The researcher sent out periodic emails to remind and encourage participants to make entries in their journals. Participants were allowed to send this journal electronically via an attachment in email or provide a

hard-copy. Six of the eleven participants provided a brief journal to use as a supplementary data source.

Researcher's journal—The researcher's journal was used to keep dates, times, and data sets organized. This researcher used a spiral notebook and a planning calendar to provide an accurate record of the data gathering process. The researcher's journal also provided an audit trail to keep track of research events and decisions, and to make notes during the writing process. Hard copies and/or electronic copies of emails received from doctoral committee members, the county and local gatekeepers, and the participants were kept to provide further documentation of occurrence of events during the data-gathering process for this study.

Data Storage

All data sets to include audio-tapes, questionnaires, journals, and transcriptions will be stored in a locked box in the home of the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of no longer than 5 years unless the research is extended or required. After this period of 5 years, the data will be destroyed to protect the participants.

Data Analysis

According to Denzin (1989) the researcher moves through a series of five phases in the analysis of data: deconstruction, capture, bracketing, construction, and contextualization. The first of these phases involves deconstruction which involves the researcher in a critical analysis of prior studies related to the phenomenon. In the second phase, the researcher must capture the phenomenon. "Capture makes the phenomenon

being studied available to the reader. It presents experiences as they occur, or as they have been reconstructed" (p. 55). Through the use of capture, the multiple stories of the individuals in a study are grouped according to common themes allowing the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences under investigation. "Multiple stories allow convergences in experience to be identified" (Denzin, 1989, p. 55).

Bracketing or reduction is the third phase identified by Denzin (1989). By using bracketing, the researcher "holds the phenomenon up for series inspection" (p. 55) by dissecting and taking it apart to uncover, define, and analyze the elements and essential structures. Bracketing involves locating and examining the key words, phrases and statements of the participants that are directly related to the phenomenon in question. These statements are interpreted and inspected to determine what they reveal about the phenomenon (Denzin, 1989).

The fourth phase of analysis is construction. Construction builds on bracketing by classifying, ordering, and reassembling the phenomenon "back into a coherent whole" (Denzin, 1989, p. 58). Denzin states: "The goal of construction is to re-create lived experiences in terms of its constituent, analytic elements" (p. 59).

Finally contextualization shows how the "lived experience alters and shapes the phenomenon being studied" (Denzin, 1989, p. 61). Contextualizing involves placing the participants back into their world by presenting meanings in their own words, language and terms to reveal how the phenomenon is experienced by ordinary people.

It is the use of rich, thick description that contextualizes all qualitative research traditions. The results of this research was described using the words of the participants, descriptions of observations, and the provision of detailed information to provide an

accurate story or picture for the audience. Van Manen (1990) phenomenology is a "poetizing" (p. 13) activity—unlike other research—in that the link with the results cannot be broken. The description of a phenomenological study is a telling of the original experience with authentic language. In this way rich, thick description lends itself to the dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the information provided by this study (Creswell, 1998; Geertz, 1983, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990).

After generating a list of themes from the words of the participants, they were organized to provide a logical, coherent order for the Findings section. This computer-generated tool (list of themes) was used by the researcher to provide rich, thick description for each theme by incorporating verbatim statements to tell the story in the words of the participants. Quotes from the participants' journals were used as an additional source to provide depth. In addition, a combination of the information garnered by the researcher during the individual interview and information provided by the teacher survey was used to add demographic information for the description of each participant.

During the collection and analysis phase of a phenomenological study, it is necessary for the researcher to look at the phenomenon as if for the first time to and to gain an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon. In this type of qualitative research, the researcher must also attempt to imagine all possible meanings by viewing the text-rich data from many perspectives (Denzin, 1989, Morse & Richards, 2002; Moustakas, 1994).

Data analysis followed the phases outlined by Denzin (1989). The primary sources of data included interview transcriptions and questionnaires. Both semi-structured and group interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The transcription

provided a useable data set for analysis. The researcher divided the original

questionnaires to divide the statements or horizontalization process to develop themes

found in the text data. This process began hand-coding each document using marginal

notes to create initial codes or themes, treating each statement as equally relevant. A

peer-reviewer followed the same procedures (as discussed further in the Verification

Procedures). Then the units were transformed into clusters of meaning that expressed

related themes (related to the central phenomenon) (Creswell, 1998, 2005; Merriam,

2002; Morse & Richards, 2002; Moustakas, 1994).

As themes emerged, the researcher began developing a computer-generated list

of themes, removing any overlapping or repetitious themes and combining them into

themes that were most closely related to the central phenomenon or purpose of the study

to allow the researcher to develop a rich, thick description of the meaning of the

phenomenon. This organization technique provided in vivo (in the words of the

participant) documentation to ensure accuracy in reporting the findings and the rich, thick

description required by qualitative research. The transformations of data allowed the

researcher to produce textural descriptions (what happened), structural descriptions (how

it happened), and finally an overall description or essence of the experience (Creswell,

1998, 2005; Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1983, 1988; Merriam, 2002; Morse & Richards, 2002;

Moustakas, 1994).

After each interview transcript was repeatedly studied, the researcher typed

bulleted, verbatim statements under each theme to provide an organizational tool for

writing the findings section. Each statement was given a code that indicated the (a) name

of the participant, (b) the line number of the interview, and (c) a the letter to indicate

interview type (group or individual) to provide a method of finding statements for verification if necessary. After the first list was generated, the researcher contacted the peer reviewer via telephone for discussion and mutual agreement to provide an additional measure of dependability and transferability. Each time subsequent changes were made to the original theme structure a new list submitted to the peer reviewer via email attachment for agreement with a subsequent telephone conversation or email. A final list of 17 themes emerged.

<div align="center">Verification Procedures</div>

In qualitative research verification procedures must be used to guarantee credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This primarily takes place in the data analysis procedures. In this study data was verified using four different processes to include: (a) member checking, (b) external audit, (c) triangulation, and (d) rich, thick description (as previously discussed in the Data Analysis section) (Geertz, 1983, 1988; Moustakas, 1994).

Member Checking

Transcripts of interviews were returned to the interviewee to confirm the accuracy of the textual information. Interviewees were allowed to make notes concerning the data and address any possible misconceptions that may arise in the analysis of the text data. Member checking confirms the accuracy of data, the credibility of the researcher during the transcription (Creswell, 1998, 2005).

Peer Review and Debriefing

According to Duke (1984) there are distinct procedures that exist for verification in a study and include the lens of both the researcher and outside peer reviewer. During the analysis of this data a peer reviewer, one who has no connection to the study but is familiar with qualitative data analysis, simultaneously examined data sets to determine themes through horizontalization (as previously described). This peer reviewer was a special education teacher in a city school system from another state. The peer reviewer and the researcher met regarding each data set and compared themes as they emerge from the text data in two peer debriefing sessions. The peer reviewer and the researcher threw out any themes upon which they could not concur. This process provides a measure of dependability and transferability. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the job of the peer reviewer is to keep the researcher honest by asking questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; as well as providing the researcher with an opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings and thoughts (Creswell, 1998; Duke, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

Triangulation

Triangulation confirms results and findings through the comparisons of multiple data sets (Creswell, 1998, 2005). Three data sets provided documentation and agreement in participants' responses in this study: (a) a teacher surveys; (b) interviews in semi-structured and group format; and (c) the participants' journal entries. Each data set was carefully studied by the researcher making hand-coded notes. The notes were compared to establish verification of data (Creswell, 1998, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning this study, the researcher gained permission for human study through the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix G). This organization reviews study purpose and procedures to protect the rights of the participants. Following approval from the IRB, the researcher obtained permissions from gatekeepers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) in the school system such as county-level supervisors and principals of the public schools included in this study (see Appendix B and H). The county supervisor was provided a copy of all pertinent documents: IRB approval form (Appendix G); participant's consent form (Appendix I); access letter for principals (Appendix B), and recruitment letter for participants (Appendix C). The principals were provided a letter explaining the purpose of the study and the procedures for recruitment (Appendix B), a copy of the participant recruitment letter (Appendix C), and a copy of the IRB approval form (Appendix G) upon request. In this case, the county-level Assistant Superintendent of Instruction provided written consent (see Appendix D). A hard-copy of this letter was mailed to the IRB, and an electronic copy with a verification stamp was electronically sent to the researcher for documentation. The principals were requested to respond via an email that specifically provided the name of their local school. After receiving approval from the gatekeepers, the researcher began the participant-recruitment procedures. (See Data and Collection Analysis for additional information.)

Additional ethical considerations were also addressed with the participants. Each participant was required to sign a consent form (Appendix I) that outlined the requirements of participation including time elements, types of data being gathered, and scheduling procedures. Each participant was informed that she may withdraw from the

study without any type of penalty or repercussion. In addition the researcher guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality when dealing with the text data gathered from each individual as stipulated by Creswell (1998, 2005) and Merriam (2002).

The Role of the Researcher

As a teacher with over 25 years of varied experience, and 18 years of experience in first grade, I have been pressured to make many changes in my day-to-day instructional practices. Throughout my years of experience, I have seen many programs and extreme instructional methodologies come and go or come and stay, including the open-classroom, scripted reading programs, whole language, inclusion, and presently NCLB. I am increasing concerned about the pressures that are now being inflicted on very young children to pass predictive tests and high-stakes tests. I have seen curriculum being pushed down so that kindergarteners are now expected to master skills that were once introduced in first grade. More and more is expected of children without acknowledging prior experiences, background, socioeconomics, and culture. Teachers today are focusing more time on teaching specific skills that are needed to pass the tests so that children are not left behind, and so that data reflects progress. I am not against accountability for teachers, but I feel that we are placing unnecessary pressure on students because of stressful assessments.

It is my experience that I am seeing more children having difficulty with school. There is little time for play and social growth. So much time is focused on reading and math that little time is spent on social studies and science. And now that science will be tested, there has been an increase in the number of minutes required daily for science

instruction. Classroom intervention and pull-out intervention sessions spent with a small number of students are also taking up precious time that could be spent with the whole class; sharing literature and discussing subject matter that is relevant in their lives. There does not seem to be enough time to fulfill all of these requirements, and there is definitely no time left for having fun. But I am determined that my students will learn a lot and have fun learning. I meet the requirements of my school and school system, but I will not abandon what I feel is necessary for helping my students become life-long learners.

So as I began interviewing my peers concerning their thoughts and feelings about NCLB and developmentally appropriate practice, I found it hard not to share my own feelings about the matter; but it was necessary to listen to their feelings—not influencing them with my own. This study has been enlightening and fulfilling. It was good to find that I am not alone in my feelings about what is going on in education.

Chapter 3 Summary

This study explored the thoughts and feelings of 11 early childhood teachers concerning the imposed accountability mandates of NCLB coupled with the desire to use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. The teachers in this study were required to have 6 or more years experience in teaching, to garner evidence of changes these teachers may have made as a result of the accountability mandates, the restrictions and guidelines for curriculum and instruction, and the increased importance of assessments in making decisions that affect classroom practices. This chapter provided a discussion of the participants, the site, data collection and analysis, verification

procedures, and ethical considerations made during the course of this study. The final

section of this chapter provided information on the role of the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter will provide a detailed description of the research setting and the teachers who consented to give their time and to share their thoughts and feelings for this study. The findings of this research emerged in the form of themes that were primarily developed from group and individual interviews. In addition, the participants provided electronically submitted journals to give the researcher a peek into their thoughts and feelings. After reading though each interview several times and consulting with the peer reviewer the researcher developed a list of themes with clusters of statements relevant to the central phenomenon. Each statement was coded according to the participant's pseudonym, the line number in the interview, and the type of interview (group or individual). This provided a way to cross-reference the statement for clarification during the writing process. Journal entries were added to provide additional support and texture to their statements.

This chapter provides descriptions of the four settings with demographic information gleaned from the county and local school websites. This is followed by descriptive information about each participant including their experience level, degree of education, current classroom position and situation, and their understanding of AYP. The next section contains a list of the themes, sub-themes, and in vivo (as previously defined) statements that support these themes. The final section of this chapter provides a summary of information.

Setting

This research study was conducted in a large, county school system in the southeastern United States. This county school system consists of 19 elementary and intermediate schools, 14 middle and high schools, a school designated for special education instruction, a school of technology, and an alternative school. Currently two more schools are under construction, one high school and one middle school. The area represented in this study has been impacted by a steady growth in student population increasing over 1600 students over the past 2 years and including a high number of students from various cultures, race, and disabilities. All of this county's schools are accredited by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), and many of the schools in this county participate in reading, math, and science initiatives funded by the state. At the time of this study it was reported that there are a total of 26,488 students including 12,891 elementary/intermediate students, 13,362 middle and high school students, and 235 students of unique situations. The demographics vary from school to school depending on their locations. However, all schools have representative populations from all socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial groups. All demographic information was garnered from the school system's website.

Site A—Elementary School—K-3

Site A had the largest population of participants and is the home school of the researcher. This school has a student population of over 1000 students and is part of a subsystem in the county that includes two primary (K-3) schools, one intermediate (4-5) school, one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12). Site A's student population

reflects the diversity of the area. At this time, Site A receives no federal funds; however, there is an ever-growing number of free and reduced lunches as a result of the increasing population of Hispanic students.

Site A was built approximately 8 years ago (prior to this study) as a result of the rising growth of population in the area. Over this period, three subdivisions have been built beside and across from the school plant. The two playgrounds and a walking track located on school grounds are frequently used by the students, faculty, and the surrounding community.

As you enter the school building, there is evidence that it is well maintained. There are wide halls with glistening floors, and the walls are decorated with framed art pieces produced by students and other work. There is an obvious pride in the school and a feeling of mutual respect between administration, faculty, and students.

Because I am currently a first-grade teacher at Site A, I have a deeper knowledge of the faculty's and administration's commitment toward their students. Eight of the eleven interviews and the group interview took place at Site A. The group interview was conducted in the school's library media center because Site A is centrally located, and because the majority of participants were teachers from Site A. Three individual interviews took place in my classroom at the request of the participant. The other five interviews took place in the classrooms of each teacher. The participants from this school included two kindergarten teachers, two first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, one third grade teacher, and a special education teacher. Five of the eight participated in the group interview.

Site B—Elementary School—K-5

Site B is part of a county-school subsystem. This subsystem includes one elementary school (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12). Site B has a student population of around 800 students. Although it is a smaller school, the student population reflects the diversity of the county. This kindergarten teacher from Site B attended the group interview at Site A; and because of scheduling difficulties and family responsibilities, she did not meet with me for the individual interview. Instead, she chose to respond to the interview questions in a written format and send them electronically via email. This participant also responded to a follow-up question in the same manner.

Site C—Elementary School—K-3

Site C is located in another growing area of this large county school system and is a recent result of that growth. Site C is part of a subsystem that includes two primary schools (K-3), one intermediate school (4-5), on middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12). It was built as part of a new subdivision on land that was donated by the developer. It is an attractive school, but lacks some of the warmth of some of the older schools because of its "newness." Site C has a student population of approximately 600-700 students; and based on the comments of the participant, this school does not represent a large amount of diversity. However, I do not have specific information concerning socioeconomics, ethnic, and racial diversity. The participant and I met in her third grade classroom.

Site D—Elementary School—K-5

The kindergarten teacher from Site D only participated in the group interview which took place at Site A. She did not respond to my repetitive inquiries about scheduling a time we could meet. And although she agreed to answer the questions in a written format, this did not happen. I did not visit this school location, but because I had visited this school as part of a requirement for a master's level graduate class, I have some knowledge of the school facility. Site D is an older school facility and has withstood the test of time. There have been many additions built throughout its long history. This subsystem includes one elementary school (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12). Although there are students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, Site B has a population that is 58% free and reduced lunch and qualifies to be a Title I School-Wide Project School, and received federal monies. Although this participant did not take part in an individual interview, I value the way she shared her experiences, thoughts, and feelings during the group interview.

Participants

This section includes demographic information concerning each of the eleven participants to include teaching experiences and qualifications. Each participant's basic knowledge concerning NCLB and accountability will be briefly discussed. Each participant was given a pseudonym to provide anonymity. The participants are listed according to school site and in order of their current grade level experience. The information for each participant was found in both the initial teacher survey and the individual interview (See Table 1).

Table 1

Study Participants

Location and Pseudonym	Degree	Experience (Years)	Current Grade Level Position
Site A Participants			
Sally	M Ed	23	K
Kate	PhD ECE	35	K
Lily	M Ed	12	1
Sarah	BS Ed	8	1
Barbara	M Ed	24	2
Tabitha	M Ed	11	2
Kelly	EdS	12	3
Stephanie	M SE & M Admin	7	SE2
Site B Participant			
Rose	M ECE	6	K
Site C Participant			
Debra	M Ed & M Admin	10	3
Site D Participant			
Susie	Unknown	10	K

Note. B = bachelor's degree, M = master's degree, EdS = educational specialist degree, PhD = doctoral level degree, Ed = education, ECE = early childhood education, SE = special education, Admin = administration.

Site A Participants

Sally, Kate, Lily, Sarah, Barbara, Tabitha, Kelly, and Stephanie were all teachers at Site A. Sally had been a teacher for 23 years. She had experience teaching fourth, second and first grades. Sally was currently teaching a self-contained kindergarten class, and had been in her current position for 4 years. She had also taught reading with second and first grades and kindergarten. She was certified to teach kindergarten through sixth grade, and had recently completed her master's degree. Sally also had a special certification to teach reading in kindergarten through high school. Sally explained her feelings about teaching:

> God put me on this earth to teach children. And I love teaching kindergarten. I, um feel like it is a very important job. It's not valued very much by people that are not in the profession of being a kindergarten teacher. And it's not valued from high school or college professors, I don't think.

Sally's classroom had seven Hispanic students. Only one of these seven students could speak English well. She also had one Chinese student who did not speak English. Sally explained that standards for AYP are set by the state, and that this standard increases so that eventually it reaches 100 %. She said:

> I know, this is my understanding, that every state decided on their own what progress would be needed for each year, um, after this act. And that, um, when it's reported they do separate groups like whites, blacks, special needs, and ELL's.

Kate had been teaching for 35 years. She had taught every grade level from eighth grade to kindergarten except second. She began her career teaching seventh and eight grades in a public school. She then took successive positions at two different private, Christian schools where she received experience teaching both sixth and third grades. After moving to her current location, Kate decided that she wanted to move back to the public school sector. She substituted in the local school system for one and one-half years and then was hired for a position teaching first grade. When a kindergarten position opened in her current system, she took the job and had been teaching a self-contained kindergarten for 8 years. In making the transition from private to public schools, Kate explained, "I realized this is where I really wanted to be." She said that she was more "spiritually enriched" than she was at a private school because she was given choices rather than both teaching and personal restrictions. Kate had completed her PhD in Early Childhood Education with an expertise in education leadership. Recently Kate had retired from her active teaching role because of health issues. Kate explained her knowledge about AYP as follows:

> I feel sorry for schools…that don't have parents that are helping the children at home. Because they don't make annual yearly progress, a lot of them don't. And I think that they were not given the money.... I believe the children are there and

that the potential is there, but they don't have the money. The government did not give them money. They said, "You've got to do this. But no money."

She did not know how accountability is measured or specific state requirements for AYP, but is not concerned about her lack of knowledge. Kate stated, "No, it does not bother me. It does not bother me because we are a nice school, and we're meeting our goals although as difficult as it may be."

Lily had been teaching for 12 years in the same school system. She taught 1 year of kindergarten, and had been teaching first grade for the remaining 11 years. Lily had taught inclusion students in the regular classroom setting for a many years. Lily did not begin her teaching career until 1993, after returning to a local university to earn her teaching degree as an adult student. She had recently earned her Master of Education. As an inclusion teacher with both autistic and Hispanic students, Lily shared her thoughts about the standards of accountability for special education students and English Language Learners (ELL). She stated: "I think we are trying to be accountable; everybody is supposed to be on grade level, when some children are not developmentally, are not ready for that."

Sarah had been a teacher for 8 years. She had experience teaching third grade and kindergarten as well as pre-school or K4. She had been in her current position, teaching first grade, for 6 years. In the current year, she had both Chinese and Hispanic students with limited English language proficiency. Her Chinese student spoke no English when she started this school year. Her Hispanic students were more fluent in oral language but struggled with written language. Sarah had a bachelor's degree in education; however, she completed the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation), which is based on college credits and professional development credits, to obtain highly

qualified status according to state requirements. When asked about her knowledge of

AYP, Sarah identified AYP as "Academically Yearly Progress." However, she primarily

related AYP to all of the testing and the required preparation for those tests. She

explained her concerns about the way the test results are used, specifically with

struggling students as follows:

> And if they are making the smallest gain, they're trying to say the child has, they made a little bit of progress even though they may be far behind where they are supposed to be.... And they're trying to measure kids with tests, like such as DIBELS which I think is very…You know, I can teach a dog tricks, you know, and I feel like we're teaching them tricks and letting them get by on the same test that is repetitive.... They're making progress, so we're not going to help them.

According to Sarah, some test results are often misleading, and do not provide a true

picture of a child's ability.

Barbara had 24 years of teaching experience. She had taught both kindergarten

and first grade. The majority of her teaching experience was in second grade, which was

her current grade level. Barbara has a master's degree in Education. Barbara explained

that the accountability measures for AYP are unrealistic. She said,

> I know that there are deadlines and that all children are supposed to be up to a certain standard by a certain time. I don't know specifics. I know that I don't believe that's realistic, because I believe that students work at different paces, they have different abilities, and um, I feel that the measures are based on test results which are not always accurate, and not the most important thing we should be looking at.

Tabitha had been teaching 11 years at her current position in second grade. Prior

to her present position, she was employed as a special education teacher's aide for 4 years

working in an inclusion classroom with a student who had severe cerebral palsy. Tabitha

worked with this student from the time he was 18 until he had to leave the public school

system at age 21. She taught an inclusion classroom with multiple special education and

Hispanic students. Tabitha had her master's degree in Elementary Education. Her

undergraduate degree was in Early Childhood Education. Although she had her master's

degree, she had to complete the HOUSSE to receive highly qualified status. Tabitha

shared her understanding of AYP as follows:

> I know that for a school to reach AYP, every accountability group must reach
> AYP. Um, which means you know, Hispanics, your special ed. group, your free
> and reduced lunch group. Uh, let's see, AYP is determined primarily by student
> achievement in your testing which includes [state required tests] and SAT. If a
> school does not make AYP then the school is considered not to, well they'll just,
> aren't they, I think, I think they're put on academic probation or something. And,
> um, they receive academic assistance from the state.

Kelly had 12 years of experience in the teaching field. All of her experience was

in third grade. Kelly had recently returned to teaching after a 7-year break. After

beginning her teaching career, she decided to stay at home with her young children. She

shared: "A lot has changed in 7 years. I think if I had continued teaching it would have

been a gradual change for me. But to have that 7-year lapse was a shocker coming back."

Kelly has completed her Educational Specialist degree. This year had been especially

difficult for Kelly. Her class was made up of a high number of students identified as

Other Health Impaired (OHI) because of their having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

and other medically diagnosed disorders. She shared concerns that several of her students

would not be able to handle the stress and pressures of testing. Kelly explained AYP is

"based on the progress and how much progress the school makes each year." She tried to

research NCLB prior to the interview, but felt like there was so much information that

nothing was clear. Kelly knew that there were issues with subgroups such as ELL

students and special education students, but was unsure about how they were counted.

She shared: "I'm unclear about how those scores are factored in and how much they're

weighted into this for each school." Kelly explained that the law and the accountability

measures do not consider environmental and cultural limitations. She discussed the

limitations placed on children by family issues and the emotional "baggage" they carry. Kelly questioned the ability of special education students to perform on grade level when they did not have the "innate capability" to do so. She said, "To me that's not realistic.... That's fantasy land. To me that's putting too much on those people [special education students]."

Stephanie had been a special education teacher for 7 years, and had been in her current position for 2 years in which teaches a "more self-contained class." Although her students were in regular education classrooms part of the day, they came to her classroom for an extended amount of time because of their special needs. Stephanie had a wide range of second and third grade, special needs students including children with autism, mental retardation, and other health impairments. Prior to her current teaching situation, she taught in a more inclusive setting for 4 years working with second grade students, and had 1 year of pre-school special education experience in another state. Stephanie had a total of 7 years of experience teaching in her field. Stephanie had her bachelor's and master's degrees in special education. However, she had more recently completed her master's level certificate in administration. She planned to pursue an administrative position in the near future. Stephanie explained her knowledge about how AYP is measured for her students. She shared that her students are expected to take all required tests and that her students are counted in the total number of students that participate, and their scores are also counted as part of the school's total score. Stephanie said: "I guess I can speak from my standpoint as a special ed. teacher.... My students are also accountable for the testing. They are counted in the number of students that participate. Also, their scores are counted." A few of Stephanie's students were allowed to take an alternative

assessment because of their disability, but the use of the alternative assessment is limited

to only a few students who have an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) that is below 55. Only 1%

of students at any given school can be given the alternative assessment. She said: "It

makes me very sad for some of my other third graders that have to take that test and it's

not appropriate for them because it's not the program they've been working on all year. It

makes me sad for them." Stephanie shared feelings of frustration about watching students

take a test that requires them to do grade-level work:

> And it is also frustrating to watch the child because they are so frustrated because they can't read the reading test or they can't do the math problem. And they are so frustrated. And they [the government] think that just because they, the state, I guess, or the government, the federal government; they think that just because they can "bubble in" a little circle that they need to take it [test]. But it's really not testing my child or my student on the goals that have been set for them which is in their IEP.

Stephanie also explained her misgivings about the way special education students' test

scores are counted in school and classroom totals:

> I don't think it's fair that they're counted in the same way that the others are as far as that goes. I guess as far as participation, in that area, I mean, they participate— that's fine. But I wish we could just have them participate in a different way.

Site B Participant

Rose had been a kindergarten teacher for 6 years. She began teaching in August

of 2002, after the ratification of NCLB. Rose had a master's degree in Early Childhood

Education. She had no desire to "teaching anything besides kindergarten at this time."

She loved to see young children learn, and she loves to see their desire for learning. Rose

was co-teaching this year. They were able to work together on planning instructional

strategies and teaching to their personal strengths. Rose did not provide any demographic

information about her classroom. Rose shared that AYP is connected to the requirement

for kindergarten students to make benchmark scores on DIBELS. She also knew that

AYP is based on the scores students make on tests in "upper grades."

Site C Participant

Debra had 10 years of experience. She had taught fourth and second grades. She

had been her current position of teaching third grade for 7 years. Although she had taught

three different grade levels, her entire experience had been in the same school system.

Debra had her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and held a master's degree in

administration. She had very little socioeconomic or ethnic diversity in her classroom this

year; however, she had experienced working with groups of diverse students in the past.

Debra explained that AYP is measured by standardized testing. She also pointed out that

this year's third grade class will be compared to last year's third grade class. She shared

concerns that "we're comparing one set of students to a completely different set of

students." It has been her experience that students can differ in their needs and struggles

from year to year. According to Debra, "the thing that bothers me is the, um, what I

understand, I guess, about the consequences for not meeting AYP."

Site D Participant

Susie had been teaching kindergarten for 12 years. Susie withdrew from the study

following the group interview. However, many of her statements during the group

interview hold valuable information that needs to be included in this study. On her survey

she stated,

> Yes, I feel that accountability mandates and pressures due to NCLB Act does
> limit the use of developmentally appropriate practice in my classroom. Working

in a Title I school that I very concerned with test scores and bottom lined numbers

has forced me to teach skills in isolation. I feel it is more appropriate to use these

skills in reading and writing as a whole.

Susie taught at a Title I school that placed a great emphasis on test scores. Her school had

a population that was 58% free and reduced lunch and qualified to be a Title I School-

Wide Project School, and received federal monies; so it was assumed that her class

represented a microcosm of the school population.

Themes

The purpose of the data collection process was to find informative data

concerning teachers' experiences, concerns, conflicts and barriers between the use of

developmentally appropriate practice and NCLB mandates. After transcribing interviews

verbatim and hand-coding each document, a list of initial themes was populated to

summarize findings based on the statements of the participants. Verbatim statements or

invariant horizons were chosen based on their significance to understanding the central

phenomenon of this study. The peer reviewer independently hand-coded a copy of each

interview; then met with the researcher to compare notes. Overlapping or repetitious

themes were combined to develop a list of closely related statements that reflected the

central phenomenon or purpose of the study. Then the verbatim statements were

organized into clusters of meaning that expressed related themes (related to the central

phenomenon) by comparing hand-written notes. As multiple themes emerged, the

researcher began developing a computer-generated list of themes. After each interview

transcript was repeatedly studied, the researcher typed bulleted statements under each

theme to provide an organizational tool for the writing of this section. After the first list

was generated, the researcher contacted the peer reviewer for discussion and mutual

agreement to provide an additional measure of dependability and transferability. During the writing process of the Themes portion of this chapter, the statements were frequently reorganized, additional themes emerged, and others were merged when overlapping ideas were discovered. Each time changes made to the original theme structure, they were submitted to the peer reviewer for agreement. Finally, the word data was organized into four major themes, which include the original themes as sub-themes to provide clarity for the reader.

For the purpose of this study, the term *teachers* refers only to the participants in this study. From the study, four major themes with sub-themes emerged regarding teachers' beliefs and feelings about NCLB and using developmentally appropriate practice in today's early childhood classroom. The themes and sub-themes are listed below, and then described in the words of the participants in the sections that follow.

Theme 1: Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practice

1. Teachers had different definitions of developmentally appropriate practice.

2. Teachers explained how they recognize diversity while using developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms.

3. Teachers tried to combine developmentally appropriate practice with state and local curriculum and testing requirements.

4. Teachers were frustrated when mandated curriculum and testing take away the opportunity to use developmentally appropriate practice in the early childhood classroom.

Theme 2: De-professionalization of Teachers

1. Teachers felt restricted in their teaching practices when mandated curriculum and test-taking takes away time for using developmentally appropriate practice in the early childhood classroom.

2. Teachers took risks but reported that they felt empowered to use developmentally appropriate practice in their early childhood classrooms.

3. Teachers said they are de-professionalized because they are not allowed to make best practice choices for young children as a consequence of NCLB mandates.

4. Teachers reported that some teachers are leaving the teaching profession as a consequence of the stress and frustration created by NCLB mandates.

5. Teachers suggested that tenure can provide a wall of protection around the use of developmentally appropriate practice.

Theme 3: Beliefs About Teaching Children

1. Teachers supported accountability, but suggested that there should be more flexibility for teachers to make decisions about their students.

2. Teachers were thankful for supportive, local school administrators, and recognized that there are other schools being pressured to perform.

3. Teachers said prior knowledge, familial experiences, socioeconomics, disabilities, and culture are not considered by NCLB mandates.

Theme 4: Concerns for Children

     1. Teachers said all children can learn, but there cannot be time constraints for mastery.

     2. Teachers reported that children's social and communication skills are suffering as a consequence of the time constraints and concentration on mandated curriculum.

     3. Teachers said children have too much stress as a consequence of the push created by NCLB and testing.

     4. Teachers expressed concerns about the future of children affected by NCLB mandates.

     5. Teachers were concerned that children are losing the "joy of learning."

Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practice

     Teachers defined developmentally appropriate practice differently. The teachers in this study were given no definition or information about the meaning of the term "developmentally appropriate practice," or DAP, before the interviews. Teachers' responses were varied and there were several definitions that stood alone. One area that most of the teachers agreed upon was the need to provide instruction based on the individual child, but they explained it differently. Stephanie said, "DAP is when you look at a child at where they are, not their age, not their grade, but where they are." Kate concurred that children should be "working up to their potential. That they are doing what they can do." Lily explained by saying,

> Developmentally appropriate practice is, um, working with the children *at their level* at a given time.... If they are not developmentally ready to learn something or to perform a task; then I am asking them to do something they can't do. So it

just ends up frustrating the children. So, developmentally appropriate practice would be working with them on their personal level.

Stephanie and Sally agreed that developmentally appropriate practice is meeting the child's needs. But they both explained that a teacher should address the needs of the whole child. Stephanie said teachers should "find the child where they are developmentally, academically,…socially, emotionally; and meeting their needs; and helping them grow and build on those skills." Sally shared that developmentally appropriate practice is "giving children tasks that they are ready to do. Not asking them to do something they're not ready to do." However she also said that she "look[s] at the whole child … whether it be academic, emotional, or physical.... I look at the whole child and try to meet their needs where they are."

Kelly viewed developmentally appropriate practice as providing instruction based on the child's rate of development. She defined it as "tailoring instruction that is appropriate for where a child is developmentally; not chronologically, age, or grade-based." She gave an example based on a personal experience with her own children:

> On a personal note, my own children, my oldest child was ready at 4 years old to read and he read. And my third child right now is seven, and he's in first grade this year. He repeated kindergarten. He's just now starting to read. There's nothing wrong with him. He just wasn't ready. It was not, he was not developmentally ready to, um, actually go from kindergarten to first grade the first time.

Lily also mentioned rates of development in the statement: "Children develop at different rates. They don't all learn to swim at the same time; to learn to walk and talk." Debra also referred to matching cognitive ability level to what is being taught. She said that developmentally appropriate practice is "matching their cognitive abilities to the information that I'm giving them or expecting them to accomplish and be successful." Finally, Susie explained that it is important to know the needs of the child: "The big thing

for me is making sure you know where that child is and not just blanketly [*sic*] screaming it out there without knowing what that child needs."

Another view of developmentally appropriate practice is looking at the varying instruction according to learning style. Sarah said, "I think DAP is when you use varied types of instruction to meet your students' needs. You don't teach all your children the same way." She explained that developmentally appropriate practice is "integrating and teaching a classroom curriculum and showing students how everything just fits together kind of like pieces of a puzzle." Tabitha has a different way of explaining the same idea but refers to differentiated instruction rather than learning styles. She said, "It means using a variety of instructional strategies and techniques to differentiate your instruction."

Lily and Tabitha agreed that direct instruction is a part of developmentally appropriate practice. Lily said that she preferred using direct instruction with small groups, "giving them explicit, exactly what they need instruction." Tabitha said that there are certain situations where direct instruction is applicable; but in other situations she likes to "turn them loose…and let them explore; let them learn and figure it out."

Several teachers concurred that developmentally appropriate practice includes providing support and materials that allow children to explore and become engaged in their own learning. Rose said, "DAP is meeting students where they are and providing them with the support and material needed to take them where they need to be." She continued, "DAP is letting students learn by playing: the students engaged in learning through talking, exploring, touching, and experimenting with different materials and supplies." Barbara agreed, but explained it differently. She said that developmentally appropriate practice is "involving the child in doing; and not just teaching them, but have

them participate in their learning.... They just need to be concrete, hands-on, learning and discovering for themselves; problem-solving."

Only one kindergarten teacher, Rose, included student interest as part of developmentally appropriate practice. She said, "I also think it's important to know the interests of the children." Sarah is the only teacher who mentioned supporting student choice as a part of developmentally appropriate practice as follows: "A lot of times, [I] ask my students what they want to do, give them choices, make them feel like their opinions are important whether or not I may agree with their decision or not agree with their decision."

Finally, only Sally mentioned the need to provide a safe environment for students to learn. She stated: "I think it's necessary to be able to…have a safe classroom for children not to feel pressure or [to be] expected to do something they're not ready for."

Teachers recognized diversity as part of DAP. The teachers in this study revealed several strategies and techniques for instruction that they considered to be indicative of developmentally appropriate. They included using individual instruction, small-group instruction, teacher-modeling, peer-helpers, acknowledging learning styles, and the importance of play in their planning and instruction. The teachers expressed the importance of acknowledging academic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in planning educational experiences.

Sarah shared that she uses the diversity in her first grade classroom to "teach things and to share ideas and share their culture and share their [the students] background; and to build on that." She explained that she plans instruction based on

student need and what they are able to do. She plans activities and modifies them to "meet their needs and meet their level of understanding." She confirmed intuitiveness toward her students' needs by adjusting or modifying her original plan. She explained, "I may start an activity that I may plan, and I say, 'They're not going to get this. This isn't going to work.' And I change right then and there." She shared that she has an active classroom with a lot of teacher-student interaction and teacher modeling. She elaborated: "So there's a lot of teaching, a lot of modeling, a lot of, you know, going over it, going to their desks, working on them.... So it's just about meeting the child's individual needs and letting them learn from where they are."

Lily emphasized the need to identify academic, cultural, and experiential diversity to plan activities. She explained: "You just have to, to really think about what each child brings to the table and what their experiences are; and try to mesh everybody's experience and academic levels and interests." She reported the need to acknowledge a child's prior experience during instruction. Lily said that she needs to have the "opportunity to let the children bring in extra knowledge, some of their knowledge. They all have background knowledge." Lily shared that the students in her first grade class have different levels of ability, especially in reading. She elaborated that she has "children who are still learning letter sounds and children who are reading well above third grade level," and plans different levels of instruction to meet this diversity in academic ability.

Debra addressed the importance of recognizing learning styles for her third grade students. She shared that she tries "to do visual stuff and give them hands-on stuff.... and also for the auditory learners. I just try to make sure that I'm not just teaching one way."

Debra explained that she provides a mixture of small and large group instruction for math and reading. She shared: "A lot of times I'll introduce a concept with large group and then break it down smaller to make sure I'm getting to all the kids."

Rose explained her preference for small group instruction with her kindergarten students. She suggested that this is the best way to "meet them where they are" because of their differences in levels of ability. Rose shared that she provides time for language development in her classroom for all of her students especially those who are limited in English proficiency. She said, "We also allow for lots of talking and sharing of ideas so that English can be modeled and learning." Sally echoed this statement, but she wants her kindergarten students to feel success. Sally stated it this way: "It [diversity] changes my expectations for them, because I set the expectations to where they can meet success. So what I have for them in one reading station is different for another child in that reading station. I try to meet them where they are."

Teachers combined developmentally appropriate practice and mandated requirements. Most of the teachers in this study refer to the local, county course of study and the state curriculum guides or standards while planning instruction, but do not overlook the needs and experiences of their students. Tabitha explained that she bases instruction on the "needs, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses" of her students. She looks at the course of study and state standards, and tries to "use a variety of different teaching methods and techniques." Rose shared that she uses the course of study and state standards, but also takes "into consideration the needs of our students." Rose provided additional information about her classroom practices in a journal entry:

> To me, this year I feel that I am better meeting the needs of all of my students. I am in a team teaching classroom so we have two teacher groups going. Also, I have special needs students in my room so I am fortunate to have a wonderful special education teacher in my room.... The students are grouped heterogeneously and they are called to the teacher table based on needs. One teacher in the room is doing guided reading with the students who are ready for that. The other teacher is working on skills that are needed to be reinforced or taught. The special education teacher is also working on different skills that are needed.... The students are working on their own levels and there are no worksheets or teacher directed centers. The children have choices when they go to certain centers. (ABC—there are letter puzzles, letter beads to string, dry erase boards, magnet letters etc.) The students choose which activity to complete. Also, we have divided the class into groups during our writing time. One teacher is working with kids on fine motor skills—using play dough, stringing beads, using clothes pins to race to fill the basket with cotton balls, etc. Another teacher is doing modeled and shared writing and the writing process.

Sarah said that she uses the course of study to plan instruction, but she arranges the objectives into a "logical order where it makes sense to the students." Then she explained that she tries to "build on social studies objectives and science objectives that may correlate with things that are actually going on in their world." Finally, Barbara shared that she plans weekly by looking at the standards and the course of study. But after she puts her plans in place she plans from "day-to-day depending on how the students do in a particular lesson; who needs re-teaching; and who's ready to go on with an enrichment activity."

Lily said that teachers "have to be very creative" in order to use developmentally appropriate practice in today's classroom. She reported that she integrates curriculum and capitalize on teachable moments with her young students:

> There are a lot of days when even it's [instruction] on a theme that I've chosen we'll get off the subject because they're wanting to learn something else different about this thing, but it's taking it [focus] away from where I wanted it to go. And we fly with it.

Kate emphasized the importance of play with her students. She explained that she meets school requirements, but refuses to dispose of her blocks and home living centers:

> The children migrate to them.... because it's where they can get involved with each other and be with each other. And you can see the little Hispanic children. They'll get the dishes and the plates and the forks. And they'll have their own little thing, and they'll be rocking their babies, and talking to each other.... I think it's important because it will help them be good readers, good writers, and be able to use words better.... in their story making skills.... They're pretending. One of the authors that I love and I would love to do my classroom like she does, and that's Vivian Paley.... She's the one that wrote *You Can't Say You Can't Play.*

Sally shared that she has retained the use of her blocks center, but less openly. She explained that she allows her "line leaders" for the day to rest in the playhouse area in her classroom. During that period of time, they have the opportunity to play with blocks.

Teachers in this study also fulfill local and state requirements in the area of assessment. In this school system, local school assessment requirements may vary. However, all of the schools use the DIBELS for preventive, predictive and evaluative purposes. In addition, third grade takes a standardized achievement test and a statewide test for math, science and technology to measure AYP. All of the teachers in this study are required to prepare students for this testing. The teachers in this study use authentic, teacher- and commercially-produced assessments to drive instruction in their classroom and to meet the individual needs of their students.

Stephanie, a special education teacher, uses the state- and school-wide assessments. She also must meet IEP (Individualized Education Plan) goals for each of her students. Stephanie reported that she documents progress by collecting work samples and creating a portfolio:

> All of my kids have a folder where I keep work samples and kind of have a portfolio…on each of my kids to show growth toward their IEP goals, or what needs to be worked on, data collection, there's just so much that goes into it.

Lily reported that she used a variety of assessments. She explained that she keeps a notebook specifically for making anecdotal notes about observations during writing conferences and observations she makes throughout the day. Lily shared that she does the required running records for reading, but sometimes she will "just sit and listen to a child read; just sitting there and make anecdotal notes. Just, just to hear them read to where they know I'm not just sitting there ticking off words." A second grade teacher, Tabitha, also shared that she uses anecdotal records and observation. She said, "I do a lot of observation; base it on participation." Tabitha explained that she also uses the commercially produced tests provided by the county as part of her assessment plan.

Sally stated: "Most assessments in kindergarten are done by observation; by watching the children." She reported that she uses writing journals to evaluate their progress in writing. Another kindergarten teacher, Rose, explained that she uses a lot of one-on-one assessments that are "conducted verbally." Rose elaborated by saying that she and her co-teacher use assessment "to find needs of students and to find what we need to teach" or drive instruction.

Debra, a third grade teacher, described the way she provides opportunities for her students to work on group or individual projects and presentations. She grades them "based on a rubric." And Kelly, another third grade teacher, explained that she uses the standard paper testing that "we've got to obey," but prefers "conferencing with children, talking to them, checking what they're doing on their daily…work–not tests or graded [work]."

Finally, Sarah reported that assessment should be used to drive instruction. She explained that she is constantly "trying to meet their [her students] needs and making sure

my assessments are driving my instruction." She also shared that she uses assessment to make sure that she is "on the right page" or to determine if her students understand the instruction. She explained, "That's part of assessing … observing, seeing, and then teaching it again or varying your instruction to where children can understand the objective."

Teachers were frustrated by mandated curriculum and testing. The teachers in this study reported that curriculum controls make it difficult to provide the necessary instruction for young children to be successful. These teachers were frustrated with controls on time requirements for isolated subjects and testing; forced sequencing and pacing; and the isolation of skills and lack of integration in curriculum. They were also frustrated that there is less time for creativity or enrichment, less time to learn basic personal and coping skills, and less time for play.

Teachers expressed personal feelings of frustration and concern for their students. Sarah expressed frustration by saying that she feels like she is "up against a wall and there's nothing more that I can do," and that her "hands are tied." She also shared that she is failing her students. She said, "And they're not getting it. And it just wears you down, and you feel, you almost take it personally." Kelly suggested that she is on a "mad mission—each day with goals, deadlines, scoring, and testing." She explained: "There's no time to just enjoy the children and teaching and the wonder of learning." Kelly questioned whether or not "we [teachers] are really being mindful of each child." She continued: "We're just being mindful of test scores and keeping our jobs and making AYP."

Barbara suggested that teachers are spending so much time on strugglers:

> It's sad. It's depressing.... I think we're really missing the boat here. And I believe we should not leave any behind. But realistically we're looking at a small population that maybe can't be pulled up to the levels that are expected.

Barbara provided the following analogy:

> It's like telling a doctor that you're going to have all your patients well by such and such a time next year; when you have some terminally ill patients and you, you have patients that are just not going to get any better.

> Rose explained in a journal entry that her students can feel her stress levels

increase during testing:

> There seems to be a lot more assessments than in the past. I don't feel like I am teaching and having fun because of the pressure of all the assessments that have been placed on us. There are many new teachers who need help this year also. Therefore, I am helping them, testing kids, and trying to do what I believe in. I feel that I am pushing kids harder and harder. There are some days when I feel good about what has gone on in the classroom and other days where I know that the kids feel how stressed I am. (This makes them feel the pressure.)

> Teachers were also frustrated with the problem of not having time to provide

basic pre-learning skills. Sally just explains: "We can't even let them be kids." She felt

like teachers "miss out on a lot of moments" because there is no time to address student

interests or give students the opportunity to extend their learning in different ways. Sarah

explained that teachers are required to leave out play activities that would provide

opportunities to develop fine-motor skills and problem-solving:

> They have no self-help skills or independence on how to be problem-solvers. And I think that interferes with us being able to teach, because all of that's put on the back-burner and it's not important.... And it's making it harder on us because we have to stop and do so many things for them that they can't do independently.... They can't function and do any other kind of thing. I mean, they can't hold a pencil correctly, tie their shoes, grasp objects…because we leave out those basic skills. And then it falls into a problem with academics."

Susie said that she is so "frustrated like [she] could cry." She expressed the

feeling that "so much of what [she has] to do now, because of what's mandated" is taking

time away from providing opportunities to play with play dough or use a hole punch

because "someone has deemed that's not the best thing for him."

Teachers were frustrated by the increased time spent on mandated curriculum and

instructional controls. Lily suggested that there is not enough time to provide "one-on-

one" help for her students. She explained that a mandated pacing scale does not allow for

differences in her students' abilities to learn. She provided the following example:

> Well pacing scale for Johnny might be different because of his developmental level than for little Joe. Little Joe might be ready to be moved on. Little Johnny doesn't need to. But because of a pacing guide, because we're trying to get everything in, because of NCLB; then you know, we're actually leaving little Johnny.

> Lily elaborated: "You know, you feel like you're in that box. And you're that

little mouse that can go a certain way to get to one point. And you can't branch out, and

you have to do it that way." Lily's opinion is that all of this frustration has "made us not

excited" about teaching." In a journal entry Lily shared,

> Planning today was actually fun! We were able to plan some activities that were "out of the box" but teaches so many skills in science, social studies, and math. Gave me great new ideas for the rest of the year. Where has my brain been? Too many things to attend to and too little time. Maybe that's where I need the most help…Time management!

> Barbara suggested that pacing guides do not allow time for re-teaching skills:

> It's difficult because I think the most important thing is to re-teach and to continue on whatever the skill is as long as needed rather than to be mandated by a piece of paper that says a child will be at a certain point at a given time.

Barbara shared that she would like to provide opportunities for her students "to be

creative, to explore, to experiment, to problem-solve on their own."

Sarah explained her difficulties with scheduling caused by pull-out times for

students that require intervention. She reported having difficulty in making schedule

adjustments and while still providing the required number of minutes for instruction per

subject area. She also shared that time restrictions for isolated subject areas take away her

ability to take advantage of teachable moments:

> "This has got to go! This child has got to go here. This child's got to go there!"
> And I feel like there's no time to spend quality time. And I feel like just when I'm
> getting in a good lesson and we're rolling and moving…we've got to do
> something else. It's time to stop, and it's frustrating. "Stop! Put that in your daily
> work folder. We'll get to it tomorrow."…. I think it's hard to move on teachable
> moments because I'm stuck in a time pattern.

In a journal entry Sarah shared the following:

> This week I felt frustrated about meeting Science and Social Studies objectives.
> Week by week it is harder and harder to come up with activities when there are
> not enough objectives to last all year. We are told to focus on Science, but have
> not training or materials to help us. I am doing the best I can. Luckily, I have
> peers that help with planning and ideas.

> Debra reported that teaching third grade has become "more structured" with less

"flexibility and letting them do those extra things." She shared that the expectations for

third graders are "so more grown up than what [she] used to do when [she] started

teaching." She explained that she would like to include more enrichment through art and

music as well as be able to "take projects a little bit further." Debra elaborated that she

would like to use a child-centered math program that promotes problem-solving and

thinking. She explained that "it is really fun to watch the way that they're thinking," but

she does not do those things until after the third grade testing.

> Both Lily and Stephanie expressed feelings of frustration with scripted, research-

based programs that are required for intervention and for use with special education

students. Stephanie said,

> It's frustrating to me…They [administration] are also telling me that I should use
> these scripted lessons. Well the scripted lessons, if you follow them, they're not
> necessarily teaching what their IEP goals say. So it's almost like a tug-of-war;
> like they're pulling you one way and pulling you another way.

Stephanie admitted that her students "make a lot of progress" using research-based

programs, but this success does not transfer. She said, "They make progress; but it's

when they, you put another book or a different style of book in front of them, they don't

carry it [the skills learned] over. And it's just frustrating." Lily reported that scripted

lessons do not allow students to interject their own background knowledge into the

lesson. She said, "You're not teaching anything. They're just sitting there listening to you

babble."

Another area of frustration is the element of time spent on testing and direct

instruction of tested skills. Kate said that she has done so much testing that it "breaks my

heart." She explained that she prefers use less formal means of assessment with her

kindergarten students, but now "you've got to do this test and that test." She suggested

that the focus on testing is pulling her "away from the other children." Barbara expressed

concerns about the time needed for testing:

> I do experience a lot of testing; taking up a lot of time. So in a sense I'm not as
> available to my students as I would like to be.... That would be my biggest
> conflict—the time taken away from my teaching.

In a journal entry Barbara stated,

> The reading test required for a benchmark for our county every 9 weeks is due
> again. I feel like this test is a result of the NCLB pressures to improve reading
> scores. Giving the test feels like just testing to meet a mandate. The results of the
> test will not be helpful to drive instruction. It feels like "mass testing"; not taking
> into account any student differences or needs. It will take up time I could be
> teaching and learning with students.

Debra admitted that she is behind "as soon as the year starts sometimes." She

shared that she spends a lot of time assessing. She admitted that her "instruction has

changed" because she is always getting her third grade students ready for an assessment.

Debra said, "I feel pressure for having my kids perform well on the standardized tests.

And I feel fortunate that I'm teaching at a school like this that is in the middle socioeconomic level, because I don't know what I would do." Debra reported concerns about the use of high-stakes tests and the consequences for not meeting AYP. She said, "But the thing that bothers me is…the consequences for not meeting AYP." She reported that there is a lack of time for enrichment activities like those she has done in the past. Instead, she just teaches "the basic concepts and hope[s] they get it and move on to the next thing."

Sally expressed convictions that the increase in testing is directly related to problems with social skills. She said,

> Okay, they are not learning their social skills because we are focused on testing. We are focused, we have to learn this. And they are not allowed to get in and mingle and talk and use conversation.... because it is a structured, "Okay we are here. This is what we're going to do."

Sally described her teacher-table time as focused on skills for the DIBELS. But she explained that she treats math time differently because it is not tested in the same way. In math Sally shared that she wants her students to have a good understanding of number and uses more constructivist teaching methods. She said, "My math…don't …necessarily…go along…with what I'm supposed to do because I know in my heart that's just what I feel."

Other teachers reported frustration that was directly related to their feelings that the tests and teaching the skills needed for the test do not transfer to other learning experiences and subject matter. Rose said, "It seems like a lot of drill and practice of the same thing. So they may benchmark the DIBELS, but they can't sound out words to write or anything like that." Sarah reported that it is like she is "doing everything but giving them the answer," and that she is "failing them [her students] even more" by teaching the

test. Sarah suggested that she is simply teaching her students tricks: "You know, I can

teach a dog tricks.... I feel like we're teaching them tricks and letting them get by on the

same test that is repetitive.... It's never varied or changed or anything like that." Sarah

shared the following in a journal entry:

> I think frustrated is a great word to describe how I feel this year. I thought that I
> had been frustrated in the past, but now it seems worse. I try to not to get [*sic*] all
> the "demands" get the best of me, but they really do. I signed up to be a teacher
> and that is all I want to do is teach !!! Instead, I have to do this or that, assess here
> and there, and worry about this child and that. It is not that I don't want to do
> these things, but at somewhat of my own needs would be nice at times.... It seems
> as if nothing slows down. Then in a month I will have to assess again and change
> again. It seems like I can never get "settled."

Lily reported that there is too much focus on DIBELS. She suggested that

DIBELS is only an indicator "that doesn't tell [her] how well a child is doing."

According to Lily, DIBELS does not tell her "the progress that a child has made across

the board" and that it should not be used as "the end all be all" for assessing students.

The teachers in this study desired to meet the demands for accountability. Rose

said, "We feel so much pressure, but we have to do what is said." Susie admitted that she

is "having a hard time," but she is "trying and being the team player and trying to do all

the right things." Sarah said that she can not ignore her responsibilities. She shared that

teachers must "do what you're supposed to do, teach it the best way you know how to

do," and "give all your required assessments." Kelly said that she is "trying to comply

with what [she] is supposed to do and expected to be doing," and that "you have to

comply the best you can." She explained:

> But also to be realistic with um, you know, there are, it's just like there's more
> than one way to solve a particular math problem. There's many more ways than
> this to teach and get a certain goal. And to…mesh both of those together.

> Sarah agreed with Kelly:

> I just want to learn how I can follow the NCLB Act and still be the best teacher I can be. How can I learn to make those things go hand-in-hand—like we're seeing right now? 'Cause that's how I feel. Not that's totally impossible, but it is very frustrating to try to be a good teacher.

Sarah also explained it this way in a journal entry:

> I am really tying [*sic*] not to let all this bother me and be the teacher I know to be and do what is best for my students! That is why I took this job in the first place—for the kids!!! ☺ My children are showing some progress and others more, so I know I am doing something right. As long as they continue to make progress then I know I am doing my job!

De-professionalization of Teachers

Teachers felt restricted by mandated curriculum requirements. While teachers reported their feelings of frustration, there were also indications that teachers felt restricted by required curriculum and time requirements. After much discussion and debate, the researcher and peer-reviewer decided that there should be a separate section on the theme of restriction; therefore, the themes of frustration and restrictions may overlap.

Teachers in this study were required to change their instructional practices as a result of restrictions placed on them by NCLB mandates and the need to teach tested skills. Susie said, "Gone are the days of integrating my centers." Her centers must be focused on reading rather than cover different subject areas." Rose shared: "We don't have rest time any more. Some schools have replaced rest time with instruction." She reported that the rest time often necessary for young children has been replaced by increased academic requirements. Stephanie said that creative activities have "gone by the wayside," and been replaced by required research-based programs. The research-

based programs are being used as primary learning tools for special education students and for interventions. Teachers reported that they have little time for using creative learning opportunities. Rose suggested that "NCLB mandates are not practical for students." She explained that "DAP is the best way to teach and NCLB forces us to push kids when they are not ready for certain things." She said, "Students need to have time to explore and learn through play and talking. They need to learn in meaningful ways; meaningful experiences; exploration." She agreed that there are restrictions placed on time available for "artsy" activities without linking them to some type of writing, math, or reading. Rose said that these types of activities have positive value in building "fine motor skills" that young children need to develop. Sally provided additional support for Rose's experience with restrictions on teaching basic pre-learning skills. Sally said, "The children need to learn how to cut. They need to develop these fine motor skills. And we're not really giving them the opportunities to do that because it's so pressured with the testing."

Sarah reported that she is constantly pushed for time to get everything taught. She explained that she is required to "rush and skim through the top of it [required curriculum]." Sarah elaborated that she is controlled by the need to have "so many minutes of this and so many minutes of that." In other words, there are required time allotments per subject as well as required sequencing and pacing. Lily said that she can't move her scheduling around because of the time requirements for reading groups. She explained:

> We are also having to meet with our, the lowest students during a 30 minute reading group time, a 30 minute intervention time, and during that 30 minute intervention time I have 14, 15 other students in the classroom who receive no support.

Sarah shared that her instructional time is monopolized by the restrictions placed on her concerning specific time requirements for intervention.

Lily addressed the time allotments that are required for isolated subject areas. She said, "In the past, if I had, if math and science went together that day, I combined it and didn't feel like I had to spend forty-five minutes on science and an hour on math. It was a combined lesson, and the children got more out of it." Kelly agreed by adding: "I think a lot of teachable moments are missed because boom, boom, boom, we got to go."

Tabitha reported that she is spending more time "focusing on the skills they [her students] need for the test." She shared that she provides practice in building the speed necessary to pass the fluency section of the DIBELS; but suggested that this assessment measures only measures speed—not fluency.

Debra stated that she is "crunched for time" to get "everything in there that they are gonna be exposed to on those standardized tests." She shared that she does not "stray much from that." She does not provide exploratory math instruction in lieu of test preparation. Debra reported that there is a "lot of stress about getting it done." She shared that at one time she used more problem-solving for math instruction and loved doing those lessons, but now according to Debra: "I don't use it [the math program] until after the SAT's are over with." In fact she said,

> But to tell you the truth, I really don't stray much from the standards until after we take the test in April. After that I might do some things that I just feel like are interesting, or I know will be interesting to them.

Debra suggested that her students are "missing out on art and music" and other extracurricular activities because of the pressure to "perform on those standardized tests." She reported that she doesn't have the time to address cultural diversity until after

standardized testing. Debra shared that there are standards and pressures for getting her

students ready for SATs:

> What drives the decisions that I make are the standards that I have; but then also
> the pressures for getting them ready for SAT's. So I wouldn't exactly…I mean,
> ultimately, yes I do make the decisions, but my decisions are based on the needs
> for my students to perform well [on standardized tests].

Teachers felt guilty and empowerment. Teachers reported that they are willing to

take risks for their students, but they feel like they must hide what they are doing in their

classrooms. Sally said: "There are barriers. And sometimes, when I think I do what is

DAP, I feel like I'm trying to get away with something." Kelly said, "You feel guilty."

Kelly also shared that there are a "lot of fine learning activities [that] are no longer an

option." She explained that she is afraid that "someone's going to walk in here [her

classroom] and go, 'You know, you're not supposed to be doing puppets. That's not part

of …blah, blah, blah.' And I'm really getting to the point that I don't care." She also

shared, "I, um, am more bold to do it because I feel so strongly that these things are for

kids, and they need to have fun." Rose shared: "I'll just lock my door and they'll have to

knock before they come in." Barbara has not felt the pressure to change her instructional

practices. She said, "I've tried to close the door and do what I know is best for the child

which is continuing with activities that I've done in the past." Barbara shared that she has

seen the "pendulum swing back and forth to the extremes, and what's required for

teachers," and reported that "it makes absolutely no sense." Lily explained that she has

become an empowered risk-taker, especially after last year's frustrations when she "got

so frustrated that I cried because it was, it felt like it was being crammed down my

throat." She said that she is going to be "proactive" and challenged those who question

her methods to "tell [her] a better way to do it." Lily shared that she does not like getting in trouble, but that "good teachers know what works in their classrooms, and some are willing to be reprimanded." She said, "You know what? My children are learning. I've got to do what's best for them." Sally shared that she wants to be a "good employee and do what they [administration] expect me to do." But she also suggested that her students need her to make the decisions that will meet their needs. Sally explained that she has decided to put back enrichment activities into her classroom curriculum. She said, "In my heart I know it's right because I'm meeting children in different ways.... I guess I'm doing something wrong, in someone's eyes but in my eyes I'm not!"

Teachers felt de-professionalized. The teachers in this study went through many hours of training focused on learning how to teach children. They have all completed college coursework, professional development hours, and years of experience working with children. The teachers in this study expressed feelings of resentfulness and a lack of control because of the restrictions brought on by NCLB and the forced requirements in the name of meeting AYP. Susie stated:

> You compromise what you know, what you've been trained for 4 years. Somebody's decided, 'Hey! You can go out there and be in charge of children.' But then you get down to it and you're just given, 'Do this. Do this task. Oh you don't agree doing [*sic*] it. Sorry do it anyways [*sic*].' You know, but that's not the best thing for children. You have to do it. It doesn't matter. And I don't know, someone, I guess, someone in a big office is are [*sic*] making these decisions, who are not, you know, consulting someone who's trained.

Sally agreed with Susie that years of experience and knowledge have provided her with the skills she needs to teach young children effectively. She said,

> I've been teaching twenty-three years, all right. And I find myself becoming extremely resentful because I think that I have been pretty successful teaching my kindergarten children. Each year I learn how to do something new. And I get

better each year. But I'm very resentful for someone to tell me to change what I'm doing when it's working.

Lily reported that teachers are trained professionals who are often treated as though they do not understand how to teach young children. She explained that she must use methods and techniques that she has learned through training and experience. She shared:

> Sometimes you can train a monkey to do some of the things that they actually expect us to do. You know it is, 'You do this. You do this. You do this.' Train a monkey to do that! Let me use what I have in my head and what I've learned from school and college and children themselves. Let me use that in my classroom.

Lily also suggested that being told when and how to teach takes away the individual strengths of teachers that may benefit their students. She said, "Something that may be a strength of mine is being left out; and therefore, I'm not being able to give everything I've got to my students."

Sarah explained that if teachers were left alone to make choices and decisions for instruction, using developmentally appropriate practice as a guide, the students would still meet all of the accountability goals. She said,

> I think we can use DAP to meet all these guidelines if they would let us. If we could just show them that we could do this. Just let us teach the way we are trained to teach. And it's more about proving them wrong.... I believe we can do it if they'll just let us try…Just let us teach the way our classroom is and we can meet all those guidelines. We were before. And now all we're doing is getting frustrated about it.... They're almost wanting us to be like robots.

Barbara reported that there is a lack of freedom to make choices and preset timeframes and restrictions. She explained that "teachers are given, given the freedom to do the job they were, they were hired to do." She continued:

> I'm thinking that we're so restricted with timeframe and all the things that have been given us that we're expected to do; almost anybody could come in and follow that. It's almost like you were just a practitioner instead of a teacher.

Barbara said that she experiences a "lot of stress that a lot of other people are trying to be the decision-maker" in her classroom; but she insisted: "I haven't been kicked out yet and I'm the decision-maker."

Teachers are leaving teaching profession. According to the teachers in this study, they either knew of teachers who are leaving their profession to do other things or early retirement, had feelings that this may be a possibility, or were willing to do so themselves. Sarah said,

> I also think all these barriers and stuff, and us [teachers] not being able to do what is appropriate is going to push a lot of teachers to early retirement, because they just can't handle it. We're going to lose all of our good teachers.

Stephanie knew several teachers who are "retiring that could stay longer." Lily pointed out that "younger teachers aren't staying either. That's what's so sad. They're not even having babies, and leaving." Kate provided a possible explanation for the departure of young teachers. She said, "I feel sorry for young teachers.... I think they [new teachers] are stressed out. I really do." Debra shared that she knows one teacher who did not leave teaching, but changed grade levels (from third to a lower grade), "not because of the kids or the curriculum, but because of the SAT's."

Kelly, a returning teacher without tenure, indicated the possibility that she could be asked to leave the teaching profession this year. She explained her feelings:

> I'm not afraid to defend what I feel is right.... I don't feel that threat if I know I'm doing all that I can do.... But if I know I'm giving it 100% and I'm trying and I'm doing the best I can do; and they said 'Okay you're not tenured.' I don't, okay, obviously I don't need to be here.... I don't mean to have such a flippant attitude. But I know what's in my heart and I know what's in my, what I put into my job and what I put into these children.... I mean, that would be great to get tenured. And who knows, I may get pink slipped. Who knows? If they want to do that, fine! I'll just stay home again.

Only Sally retained a positive view toward teachers leaving the teaching profession, but she viewed forced accountability as a way of pushing ineffective teachers out of the schools to protect young children. She said, "That's a positive! Because I know there were some children not getting what they were supposed to get."

Teachers reported reliance on tenure for job protection. Ten of the teachers in this study are tenured teachers. Only Kelly is non-tenured, as the results of a long sabbatical for child-rearing and family. The tenured teachers provided statements that supported the position that tenure provides a wall of protection around them which leads to being able to challenge local, county, state, and federal mandates for curriculum and instruction. Sally said, "Well, being tenured you are more free to do that [referring to challenging requirements for instructional practice]." She explained that she does not "feel as much pressure" because of her tenure. Sally continued:

> I have a little more freedom, but I don't want to get in trouble. I don't want to get scolded, you know, for letting a child do a puzzle. But I don't feel as much pressure as a non-tenured teacher.

Stephanie shared that tenure gives her job security, but does not want to get in trouble. She said, "I think there are also teachers that are like me; no matter if they had tenure or not, they don't want to be called on the carpet. They want to be doing the right thing. You know. So, in a way, it does release some of the tension, because I know that, you know, I will still have a job."

Lily suggested that she is empowered by her tenure. She shared that over time teachers can prove that developmentally appropriate practice will provide students with the skills necessary to pass the tests. Lily explained,

And if I try and keep trying for the next couple of years, maybe I'll have to where it, I can, I can show, "Hey! I did it this way And look at my scores.... Mine are just as well, just as good as anybody else's compared to where they came from."

She explained that it has taken her along time to gain this feeling of empowerment:

I've been tenured for…10 of the last 13 years, and it's taken me this long because, you know, because I was always, 'You've got to go by the book.' Well I'm just starting to be independent.... I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching, but I have to do it my way and do what's best for the kids.

Although teachers expressed feelings of empowered and protected by their tenure, they also recognized the position that non-tenured teachers when faced with making classroom decisions. Lily, a mentor coordinator for her school, said that non-tenured teachers are "scared to death if they buck the system [and] they're not going to do it."

Debra supported Lily's statement by saying:

I am actually a mentor for a teacher this year. And she's having those conflicts [wanting to use DAP]. And um, I've told her that, "I'm sorry…I know that you know what you feel what's right and you see these things; and I see the same things as you, but these are the demands that we have and that we have to deal with."

Barbara explained that she would advise non-tenured teachers differently than Debra. She shared that she has had a pre-service teacher as an observer in her classroom and has openly told her to try to make the best choices for her future students. She explained:

She [the pre-service teacher] will face the same thing [making choices about using DAP], and I hope she will do what she thinks is best for the, the students. I know that's hard until you get your tenure, but I have told them [pre-service teachers] that.

Beliefs About Teaching Children

Teachers supported accountability. The teachers in this study support accountability measures to ensure students the education they deserve. They do not,

however, agree with the restrictive nature of NCLB mandates; but some suggest that

there should be more flexibility concerning how it is measured.

Sally suggested that there should be accountability for teachers in order to weed

out ineffective teachers. She said,

> There has to be some kind of accountability for teachers, because you have
> teachers that do not teach and they stay in the system. I think there should be an
> easier way to get rid of teachers that don't teach.... So, I think there, I understand
> the need for trying to, um, to hold teachers accountable; to meet every child's
> needs. I understand that, and um, it is getting some teachers out of the system or
> really starting to work with their children.

Sally explained that the accountability measures of NCLB have caused her to be a

better teacher. She shared that teachers must strive to pay more attention "to every child's

individual needs and try to meet the child as an independent person." She explained that

she does not "totally agree with everything that we have to do," but "it [accountability]

does help us meet, out, the children's needs and see where they are." So she feels that "it

has made me a better teacher." Sally reported that NCLB's accountability mandates force

teachers to make improvements in the way they teach. She said, "I think we all, you

know, need areas of improvement every year, and need to grow and learn how to teach a

certain area better."

Sarah agreed with Sally by suggesting that accountability has helped teachers

improve the way they teach. She said, "I think it's helped the teachers, from what I can

see just amongst our school, really teach and not be the, 'behind the desk teacher' or

'stand up in front of the class teacher.'" But Sarah expressed distrust in agents of control

making decisions about classroom practice. She questioned their experience and

qualifications for making these decisions. She explained:

> I still believe there's people making decisions for me, that don't have any blessed
> idea what goes on in a classroom for day to day. And I think that's frustrating....

And they either don't have any educational background; they've not set foot in a classroom since they graduated from high school or college, and don't know what it's like to be day to day.

Lily simply reported that accountability promotes honesty for teachers, but there may be too high a cost for the students. She said, "I feel like it keeps me a little bit more honest because I know I am more accountable.... I think we're asking too much of the children."

Teachers did not blame administration. The teachers in this study recognized that local school administrations are placed under high-pressured situations to ensure their schools are not placed on academic probation. There were differences concerning the flexibility and trust of the administrator in their local school. They expressed feelings of thankfulness that their schools are making AYP as stipulated by the state. However, the teachers were knowledgeable about schools that do not have this advantage.

Lily, Sarah, Barbara, and Sally are teachers at the same school site. They recognized there are differences in administrative control from school-to-school and feel lucky and thankful for their local-school position. Lily explained it this way:

> One thing here, we are lucky that we have administrators who are willing to an extent, to let us explore opportunities…but they are also being pressured.... There's a fine line and some schools, it's not a fine line; it's a solid line that they can't cross.

Sarah shared that she "work[s] for an administration that has confidence in their teachers to do the right thing and make the right choices." She continued: "That we're not barked at day-to-day, 'You have to do it this way. Do this. Do that. Do that.' And I know of other teachers at other schools that are unhappy because that's the way it is." Barbara reinforced Sarah's feelings by saying: "Our administration allows teachers to, as much as

they can, as much freedom as they have; they allow the teachers to develop our own plans and trust us to teach; to do our job." Barbara shared that she has experienced problems with administrative trust:

> Nobody seems to be watching that closely; but I think that has a lot to do with the, the setting, the school that we're at. Because I think where I was previously there were some problems because there were, there were people who expected it [instruction] to be done exactly like they wanted it done, and um, I haven't experienced that here.

Sally also recognized there are administrative pressures; especially for increasing test scores and making AYP. She said, "I believe that the county and our administration feel the pressure for that [increasing test scores]. They don't want to have our school put on warning or probation or anything."

Debra came from a different school site. She "really admire[s] teachers that are teaching in lower socioeconomic areas because [she] feels that is where it is hardest. And that's also where administrators have the most pressure. Because Debra has an administrative degree, she has empathy for her local administrator. She explained: "I would say she does [push focusing on the test]. But no fault to her at all.... She's just trying to keep her job. But that's how she's basically judged. So I don't blame her, but I don't agree with her at all." Debra has also had personal experience with non-supportive administrators. She described the following experience:

> I had a principal who was very…worried about standardized tests. So much to the fact that he would take your results and compare the children who did not meet their abilities based on standardized tests. We [the teachers] had consequences, and we were expected to write papers.

Tabitha shared a different attitude toward administration. In the following journal entry she agreed that administration feels pressured by AYP; but she also suggested that administration desires teachers to "teach the test:"

I am getting anxious for our statewide assessment DIBELS to be administered the week of Dec. 10th. Our principal really likes it when our students have shown growth in their DIBELS scores. Administration does not say it, but I feel they do want us to teach to the test. This makes their scores for the school look good and we stay AYP for No Child Left Behind. Meanwhile, a lot of children still stay behind when they are on these crazy accommodation plans! I hope my class is prepared for DIBELS.

NCLB does not recognize diversity in children. The teachers in this study reported that prior knowledge, familial experiences, socioeconomics, disabilities, and culture are not fairly or adequately acknowledged by NCLB mandates. The teachers knew that children come to the classroom with varied abilities and support structures; but, have no control over these factors that greatly affect the progress and growth of their students.

The following teachers reported that home environment plays an important role in helping students develop social skills, practice using materials, and learn to work independently which are pre-learning skills which must be developed to promote success in the classroom. Susie said, "And some children don't get the start that other children get. And they don't have that [opportunities to develop fine motor skills]." Lily referred to home environment as a factor, she said: "So many of those children don't come to kindergarten knowing that [work independently]. They've been home with mother or they've been in, in day cares that don't operate like schools do." Rose said, "Many of my kindergarten students come in not knowing how to handle books correctly or how to use writing materials, but I am expected to have them naming their letters in 1 minute when some don't even know what letters are for." Kelly reported that a lack of prior experience also plays an important role for children of all ages. She explained:

There are children that have never been to the zoo. They've never been out of their city. A trip for them is to go to Wal Mart. Um, you know, they've never been to a museum. They've never been to a movie. Or these children that have so

many limitations.... They carry emotional baggage. They carry a lot of baggage from home and their home life; and what they're growing up in, the values that are bestowed upon them, and their, um, genetics or, you know, their mentality.

Finally, Sarah referred to the changes in society including family breakdown, lack of parental support, low socioeconomics, and other external forces that influence a child. She said, "I think a lot of that comes from how society has changed.... and there's different things affecting the way kids learn."

Another area of concern included language and cultural issues. Sally explained:

I am forced to have my ELL students segment words and they don't have the sounds yet. I am forced to progress monitor my ELL's and they don't know what these are. They cannot hear the sounds. And I'm asking them to tell me which picture begins with /g/. And they don't know; they can't hear that sound. So I'm doing things I know I should be doing. And I don't like it!....the same time to expect an ELL student to make sounds that they don't even hear. It's not right. It's not fair to them, to put stress on them. I think it affects them.

Stephanie addressed the same issue with ELL students and special education students. She said "It's [testing] not helping the child. She does not see any benefit in using such a test when teachers know they will not benchmark. She continued: "It's not benefiting your teaching practices, it's not benefiting you, and it's not benefiting your children [students]."

There were also problems with special education students. The inclusion teachers and special education teacher all agreed that the testing procedures used with special education students are unfair to the school systems, the teachers, and the local schools. These teachers did not see any positive value in testing these students. Stephanie, a special education teacher, said that it is very hard for her students to take mandated tests. She said, "And that frustrates me because they are not developmentally ready for [high-stakes] tests." She explained that there is an alternate assessment that can be given to students who have an Intelligence Quotient below 50; but that 70 or below is considered

to be mentally retarded. She said, "We're talking about young children. It breaks my heart to see these children trying so hard and getting nothing out of it." Stephanie also explained that the tested skills are not part of their Individual Education Program (IEP): "It's [the test] not appropriate for them because it's not the program they've been working on all year.... I don't think it's a fair assessment of what they have learned throughout the year." Stephanie reported that this type of testing is unfair to the inclusion teacher. She gave the following example:

> One of my third grade teachers has four of my kids [special education] in her class. That is, you know, if she has 20 kids in her class, that's 20% of her class. I don't think that's fair that it makes her scores look bad as a teacher.

As inclusion teachers Tabitha and Lily expressed concerns about the way NCLB requires special education students to have the same accountability measures as regular education students. Lily said, "It's almost like a double standard. We're supposed to do one thing because they're special needs, but NCLB says, 'Oh it doesn't matter that they're special needs.'" Tabitha said, "We're finding it hard to kind of stay afloat in the regular classroom because they [special education students] still seem to fall behind and [we] just move them up with accommodations."

The final area of concern was for NCLB's lack of recognition of diversity in the way children learn. According to Sarah, the required instructional methods do not address varied learning styles and preferences. Sarah said, "We need to go back and look at the child and the way the child learns." She reported that all children have different backgrounds, home-life situations, personalities, and learning styles; but "they're [the government] wanting to use all these testing and standardized testing and measure everybody [the same way]."

Concerns for Children

All children can learn. The teachers in this study said that all children have the capacity to learn. However, they also suggested that there cannot be time constraints for mastery. Susie said, "You know, and it just makes me feel bad for them that maybe I'm having to push, and yes they can do it. All children can learn. All children do learn. I'm totally for that, you know. It's not that, it's just that some children take longer and it's okay."

Some of the teachers also reported that the push for mastery does not provide adequate time to provide the building blocks needed for mastery. Stephanie said, "If we don't give them a chance to get the basic level; then sometimes the building blocks don't stack the way they are supposed to." Susie agreed: "I'm not able to lay a good foundation." Debra said that children need time to think about their learning. She explained: "I would much rather prefer them to work through things and give them longer to work through things in groups and by themselves before I give them an answer." Stephanie agreed: "We don't have time for that. We don't have time to just sit down and play. Learn how to figure something out on their own." Tabitha suggested that expecting everyone to meet a timetable is "for the birds." She said, "I think that's virtually impossible, uh, in a normal world."

Social and communication skills are suffering. The teachers in this study reported witnessing a decline in social skills in their classrooms as a consequence of the push for academics at an early age. Susie said that she is "a little scared also to what we're doing to these children.... In the area of social skills, you know. I don't get to spend a lot of time

about, you know, how to get along." She expressed concern about the "kind of person" she is sending on to first grade and helping to develop. She had no time for those "teachable moments" to help them address social problems. Kate, another kindergarten teacher, also reported concerns about the social development of her students. She said, "To me, it's [academics] taken away something that I want them to do. I want them to be able to go over and play and socialize. And to me, I think, we're raising some, uh, monsters." Sally recognized the importance of play for learning social skills. She said, "I worry just like you, how it is going to be when they're older? And they're going to get into fights because they don't know how to get along." Sally reported that taking away housekeeping centers and the opportunity to play in kindergarten classrooms is also impacting their language development. She said, "We had to take out our housekeeping, uh, allowing the children the opportunity for language development, has been taken out. The language development that blocks offered—that's been taken out."

Lily and Sarah have seen problems in first grade as a result of the restrictions on providing opportunity for social development and the push for academics in kindergarten. Lily said, "It shows up in first grade. Problems in this area are showing up as soon as first grade!" She provided this explanation: "They're coming to us [first grade] from kindergarten without social skills, without being able to work independently for short periods of time because we've pushed, pushed, pushed." Sarah agreed: "We're pushing, pushing for academics." She explained: "We're going to have smart children, but they're not going to know [how] to behave in society." Sarah suggested that the heart of the problem lies in the fact that "we want kids in kindergarten reading." She explained:

> And to me it's okay if they are reading in kindergarten. But it's not something that
> I think they need to know. I would rather they know how to share and work

together, be a team player, know how to take care of themselves. And they're not taught that anymore.

Sarah also suggested that a lack of learning social skills often leads to putting students on medications to control behavior.

Kelly and Debra had witnessed problems with social skills in third grade classrooms. Debra said that her students are more competitive with each other, but are also "socially a little bit more immature and quicker to cry about things and get upset about things than they used to be." Kelly mentioned that she had to go to the school's counselor to help with social skills issues. She explained: The counselor…gave me a book to copy that has lots of social skills lessons that we'll be starting next Monday, doing each month, just to try to iron out some of the problems." Both Kelly and Debra agreed that these older students are unable to handle problem-solving situations with other students.

Too much stress created by NCLB. The teachers in this study were concerned about the stress levels of their students brought on by NCLB mandates and high-stakes testing. Most of the stress is seen at the third grade level and manifests itself in a variety of ways. Lily shared that parents are coming by to discuss the problems their third-graders are having. She elaborated: "I'm getting to the point where I've had parents come by, and the kids are in third grade, saying that they [the children] absolutely hate to read because they're choking on it. It's being forced down." Lily also commented that "they're asking us to, uh, push students way beyond what they are comfortable doing and it's frustrating a lot of students." Debra said there seems to be more focus on grades and scores: "It seems like there's more focus on that [making A's and B's].... Sometimes to

me it seems like the parents don't even care if they learn the concepts, they just want that A or B on that paper." She shared an experience with one of her students who was dealing with a lot of stress because of this parental pressure. She said that this child is suffering "emotionally and psychologically because there is so much pressure on him with the grades." Kelly shared that the push on academics and testing is actually destroying self-worth: "They're going to experience so much failure. In that, 'You're supposed to be here. But you're still just down here.' What self-worth are they going to have? In the long run?"

Kelly shared that she had a student who is struggling with meeting academic standards. This child is still working on a first grade level in a third grade classroom. Kelly reported that "he's going to be very frustrated. It's going to be very difficult for him, and to me it seems like that frustration, in the long run, actually throws them behind." Stephanie reported the following concerns about her special education students: "It is also frustrating to watch the child [special education student] because they are so frustrated because they can't read the reading test or they can't do the math problems [on the test]."

Concerns for the future. The teachers in this study had a variety of concerns for the future of their students. Lily predicted an increase in the drop-out rate. She reported that even her first graders are "beginning…to act like they care less about school." She continued: "And when they start in first grade not liking school, what happens when they get to high school?" Sarah suggested that the focus on struggling students may be detrimental for the average child. She said, "And the average kids are either going to stay

average and some of them may build and become above average, or some of them are going to drop."

Barbara shared concerns for the average child and reported that "we're almost leaving the most important children behind" because of the increased focus on struggling students. She explained it this way:

> I think we're really doing an injustice because the bulk of the population and the children that are going to be our leaders; the teacher does not have the time with them to prepare them—to take them on, to enrich them to the level that, levels that they could achieve. It bothers me a lot. I think we're doing an injustice to the, to the students that will be our future leaders.

Stephanie shared concerns about the way NCLB mandates are affecting special education students. She reported that the new guidelines are making it difficult to place students in special education when it is obvious that they need additional support. She explained,

> I think I have a lot of conflicts within myself about it. Because on one hand, I think it's great that when you look at evaluating children for special ed. They're making it hard for us to place kids in special ed. because they don't want to put a label on kids…they're going to put in the regular classroom; or whatever their excuse is. It seems like there's a thousand. In one, on one hand, I think it's because I feel like students need to be given the opportunity to grow and, you know, blossom before we put this big label on them. But on the other hand, if they're not making progress, if it's obvious to the teacher who is experienced and has worked, you know, sometimes 15 and 20 years in their grade level. I mean, they know when a child comes in and something's not right.... And it's like we can't sometimes like feels like we can not take that into account.

Children have lost the joy of learning. The teachers in this study expressed concerns for their students' loss of joy for learning. Sally shared that her own children "used to love books" and have shelves filled with books that are never touched, but reading is not considered "fun anymore." She said, "The fun of it is out of it. There are very few kids that love reading because it's not fun anymore. It's work." Sally shared: "I

think my teacher-table is not enjoyable as it used to be because we would have more

'love of books' opportunity. I think, I guess, it's [NCLB] just geared me toward skill

mastery." Kelly said that her third grade students hate reading. She explained, "It's read,

read, read, read, read." So she shared that she tries to bring other interesting options into

her classroom to promote reading as fun. Kelly also suggested that "learning used to be a

lot more fun." She continued:

> We used to have a lot more…it was not so test-driven, it was not so achievement driven.... Fun learning activities have been tossed aside in order to comply with the data driven- test result- achievement score-oriented expectations of No Child Left Behind.

Chapter 4 Summary

The teachers in this study wanted their students to be confident, life-long learners.

They wanted to provide learning opportunities that not only build academic skills. For

example, Rose shared,

> I want the children I teach to be confident life-long learners. I get the opportunity of providing an early learning experience and I want it to be one that the students enjoy and also benefit from. I want the student I teach to love school and learning because they have lots of schooling ahead of them.

> Barbara agreed with Rose by stating, "I want to make sure that I prepare them

[her students] to be productive citizens.

The teachers also addressed concerns for students to be accomplished in problem-

solving and personal skills needed to be successful, productive citizens. These teachers

wanted their students to be able to make good life-choices and meet personal potential.

Kate said her goal for her students was,

> That they grow up to be productive citizens, good social skills, they live up to their potential. I don't want to see them on the newspaper or the evening news later down the road.

However, there were feelings of frustration and restriction for both the teachers and the learners that have caused a negative impact on these goals. Sarah said that she wants to "instill into them now that they [students] all matter, no matter what their needs are; and we all care about them, we're here to teach all of them instead of shoving them aside."

The teachers in this study desired to use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. Several have developed attitudes that the risk is never too great. Others feel more restricted in their instructional practices—especially teachers of second and third grade. These teachers reported that these pressures are the result of a focus on skills that will be tested in third grade.

The teachers in this study offered suggestions for leaving no child left behind. Some of these suggestions included creating more time for pursuing the child's interests, time to talk and play, and most importantly time to play. Some suggested there should be less focus on preparation for test-taking. Others reported that classroom teachers need more help—both financial and by providing paraprofessionals. The following quotes reflect their suggestions.

Barbara: I think to get good teachers and that seems like such an understatement. To hire good teachers that you know are going to do a good job, to have workshops on best practice, and let the teachers teach and do the job they were give to do.

Rose: To meet students where they are. We need to talk to kids and find their interests. We have to let them talk and play and have time to be kids!

Lily: Get the government out of it.... Work with what they are developmentally ready to do. And do what you've learned, do what you've noticed through the years.... It's not all about test scores.

Kate: It's not possible. Every child should reach their maximum potential, that's what I think it needs to say.

Debra: To teach the child developmentally appropriate concepts and activities for them instead of just getting them ready for the test kind of things.

Tabitha: I think No Child Left Behind is so totally not realistic.... You're always going to fall behind because of language barriers, attention issues, behavior problems, disability issues, socioeconomic background, um, home-life problems, retardation, severe handicaps, things like that. Um, and it's just, I think, I think it's, it's impossible to leave no child behind. There's always going to be some child who is not on grade level.

Kelly: Absolutely more funding and re-structuring of educational systems so that every teacher has a paraprofessional; so that ultimately each child has more individual instruction and just more help.

Sally: I think it's going to go away. That is my feeling. I think it's going to go away.

Stephanie: I think that the best way to make sure that no child is left behind is by looking at teachers, talking to teachers. I think that's the fastest way that children are left behind is you have a bunch of frustrated teachers.

The teachers in this study were concerned about the future of their students. Several teachers feel that students are less able to handle social problem-solving situations. They also reported concerns that children are losing their joy for learning and

have developed negative dispositions toward school because of the high focus on testing and academics.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences, concerns, conflicts, and barriers of teachers who continue to use developmentally appropriate practice in their early childhood classrooms. A central question guided this research: Do today's teachers use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms when faced with accountability issues and mandates as measured by standardized testing procedures?

This central question was supported by the following research subquestions:

How do teachers of today define what is developmentally appropriate for young children?

How do early childhood teachers satisfy their commitment to developmentally appropriate practice and adhere to their responsibility to teach state-mandated skills?

What evidence is there that early childhood teachers may be abandoning developmentally appropriate practice in order to meet AYP goals?

This section presents a discussion of the major findings in this study, the overall significance of the study, and the implications for further research.

Major Findings

Analysis of the data gathered from group and individual interviews, surveys, and journals revealed 17 original themes pertaining to the experiences, concerns, conflicts, and barriers that early childhood teachers face while attempting to adhere to

developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and principles. Through a continual analysis of these themes there emerged four themes of concern toward teacher conflicts in using developmentally appropriate practice in today's early childhood classrooms: (a) understanding developmentally appropriate practice, (b) de-professionalization of teachers, (c) beliefs about teaching children, and (d) concerns for children. The theme concerning teachers' definitions of developmentally appropriate practice is addressed in the Research Questions Answered section. The explanation of how teachers recognize diversity was merged with the theme concerning NCLB's mandates lack of recognition of diversity in the fifth category. The reorganization of themes and sub-themes is shown in Table 2.

Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Teachers recognize diversity as part of DAP. The teachers in this study recognized diversity as part of developmentally appropriate practice. Teachers used multiple strategies and techniques for instruction including individual instruction, small-group instruction, teacher-modeling, peer-helpers, learning styles (Gardner, 1999), and the importance of play. Teachers also recognized the importance of acknowledging academic, familial, cultural, and linguistic diversity in planning educational experiences. However, teachers reported that the testing requirements, accountability mandates, and required instructional programs do not adequately address diversity. Special education students and limited English language learners are required to be evaluated in the same way as regular education students. There are no accommodations made for students from adverse family situations or students who have had limited opportunities and experiences.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes That Emerged From the Study

Theme	Sub-Theme
Understanding developmentally appropriate practice	Teachers have different definitions of developmentally appropriate practice (addressed in Research Questions Answered section of Chapter 5).
	Teachers explained how they recognize diversity while using developmentally appropriate practice.
	Teachers tried to combine developmentally appropriate practice with state and local curriculum and testing requirements.
	Teachers were frustrated when mandated curriculum and testing takes away the opportunity to use developmentally appropriate practice in the early childhood classroom.
De-professionalization of teachers	Teachers reported they were restricted in their teaching practices when mandated curriculum and test-taking takes away time for using developmentally appropriate practice in the early childhood classroom.
	Teachers took risks but reported that they felt empowered to use developmentally appropriate practice in their early childhood classrooms.
	Teachers said they are de-professionalized because they are not allowed to make best practice choices for young children as a consequence of NCLB mandates.
	Teachers reported that some teachers are leaving the teaching profession as a consequence of the stress and frustration created by NCLB mandates.
	Teachers suggested that tenure can provide a wall of protection around the use of developmentally appropriate practice.
Beliefs about teaching children	Teachers supported accountability, but suggested that there should be more flexibility for teachers to make decisions about their students.
	Teachers were thankful for supportive, local school administrators, and recognized that there are other schools being pressured to perform.
	Teachers said prior knowledge, familial experiences, socioeconomics, disabilities, and culture are not considered by NCLB mandates.
Concerns for children	Teachers said all children can learn, but there cannot be time constraints.
	Teachers reported that children's social and communication skills are suffering as a consequence of the time constraints and concentration on mandated curriculum.
	Teachers said children have too much stress caused by the push created by NCLB and testing.
	Teachers expressed concerns about the future of children affected by NCLB mandates.
	Teachers were concerned that children are losing the "joy of learning."

Teachers considered this practice to be unfair to students, teachers, and local schools as their progress is measured by mandated testing procedures and an increase in scripted learning programs.

Teachers combined developmentally appropriate practice and mandated requirements. All of the teachers in this study reported that they use state and local curriculum guidelines and standard while planning instruction. Although they used these guidelines, they continued to place an important role on using what they considered to be developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. They emphasized the need to be creative and capitalize on the interests of their students by providing learning experiences that incorporate a variety of techniques to make sure their students learned. Some kindergarten teachers refused to eliminate play from their curriculum, but continued to meet obligations for covering state and locally mandated requirements.

In the area of testing, these teachers were responsible for state and local-school assessment programs that were required as a part of meeting AYP. However, they also incorporated authentic assessments depending on grade level in the forms of (a) portfolios, (b) observation, (c) anecdotal records, (d) conferencing, (e) authentic writing, and (f) projects. Kindergarten and first grade teachers were more willing to incorporate authentic assessments. Second and third grade teachers who felt increased restrictions and testing requirements used authentic assessment but not as a primary source of test data. They also used more teacher-generated or commercially provided tests along with required state and local assessments to evaluate their students.

Teachers were frustrated by mandated curriculum and testing. The teachers in this study reported that curriculum and testing made it difficult to provide adequate instruction for young children. The kindergarten and first grade teachers were primarily concerned with the increase focus on isolating subjects rather than merging them into themes. Most of the teachers in this study were frustrated that they are not able to provide enriched and creative lessons. They were also frustrated by required time allotments and schedule blocking for teaching isolated skills lessons.

Another area of concern expressed by the teachers in this study was a lack of time to adequately cover subjects that need to be taught as a consequence of following pacing guides. They were concerned that there is less time to re-teach difficult skills, use problem-solving and thinking skills, and capitalize on teachable moments because they were required to follow a pacing guide.

The teachers in this study were also concerned about the amount of time spent in testing. Teachers reported that a great portion of their time was spent working with struggling students which in turn pulled them away from the other students in the classroom. Teachers expressed feeling of always being behind in teaching skills tested on the standardized test used to measure AYP. A first grade teacher shared that the development of social skills is being hindered by the increased time in testing.

Kindergarten and first grade teachers indicated a lack of time to teach the basic pre-learning skills necessary for success. The time for required curricula mandates does not allow adequate time for providing opportunities to develop fine-motor skills and problem-solving. This finding was similar to the findings in the research of Jones, Jones, Hardin, et al. (1999) as previously discussed in this study.

The teachers in this study felt pressured by the demands of accountability measures; but they do not ignore their responsibilities. They complied with the required guidelines for assessment and curriculum. However, they desired to mesh the use of developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and still provide necessary instruction for meeting accountability demands.

De-professionalization of Teachers

Teachers felt restricted by mandated curriculum. Although similar to the theme on frustration, the teachers were restricted by mandated curriculum. The restrictions were identified as (a) lack of integration of subjects, (b) removing rest time from the schedule of kindergarten students, (c) requirements to use research-based, scripted lessons for intervention, (d) lack of focus on developing fine-motor and pre-learning skills, and (e) restrictions from using enrichment activities. Teachers were restricted by time allotments for isolated subject areas, and had less time for exploratory and problem-solving activities. Jones, Jones, and Hardin et al. (1999) reported similar findings in their research study on high-stakes tests.

Teachers took risks. The teachers in this study were willing to take risks for their students. They agreed that there are barriers to using developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms, and that they often feel guilty when they stray from mandated curriculum and instructional methods. Several of the teachers shared that they "close the door" and do what they know is right for their students.

Teachers felt de-professionalized. The teachers in this study are highly qualified teachers with multiple hours of professional training and experience. Yet they expressed feelings of resentfulness, lack of control, and restrictions of NCLB mandates. They wanted to be treated as professionals who know how to teach young children and are distrustful of those who push down methodologies for teaching from county and state agencies. Teachers should be given the freedom to make choices and remain the decision-maker in their classrooms.

Teachers reported some teachers are leaving the teaching profession. According to the teachers in this study, some teachers are leaving the teaching profession. Some teachers are choosing early retirement as an option. Young teachers are leaving the teaching profession because of the stress and pressures created by NCLB mandates. Other teachers are changing grade levels to reduce feelings of stress. This finding is similar to the research findings of Jones, Jones, Hardin et al. (1999).

Teachers relied on tenure for job protection. The tenured teachers in this study relied on their tenure to protect them when they stray from mandated curriculum and instruction. Some teachers shared that tenure gives them job security to allow risk-taking. Although the teachers indicated that there is less pressure once they are tenured, they were also conscientious and did not relish being reprimanded by administration.

Beliefs about Teaching Children

    Teachers supported accountability. The teachers in this study supported accountability for teachers but did not agree with the restrictive nature of NCLB mandates. Some teachers have been forced to make better choices for their students and take a closer look at individual needs as a result of the state and local assessment guidelines. Teachers agreed that accountability promotes honesty and integrity in teachers, but they did not trust the agents of control who make decisions for classroom teachers today.

    Teachers do not blame administration. Although teachers reported directly to their local administration, they recognized that local administrators have been placed in a high-pressure position of ensuring their schools make AYP. In this study, the teachers recognized that schools on probation or that represent predominantly low socioeconomic groups have increased pressures. This finding mirrored the findings of Goldstein (2007).

    NCLB does not recognize diversity in children. The teachers in this study reported that prior knowledge, familial experiences, socioeconomics, disabilities, and culture are not fairly or adequately acknowledged by NCLB mandates such as testing and intervention programs. Although test scores are divided by subgroups to determine AYP, all students are tested the same way regardless of language barriers or other disabilities. Teachers are concerned that this creates undue stress on young children. Family life, culture, and other external forces that are beyond the control of the school and the teacher and that influence children are not considered by NCLB mandates as part of the

evaluation for determining AYP. In addition, the research-based intervention programs employed for at-risk students often provide scripted lessons that do not allow children to express or utilize prior knowledge and experiences.

Concerns for Children

All children can learn. Teachers reported that all children have the capacity to learn. However, they were concerned with the time constraints established by AYP guidelines. Teachers desired to have adequate time to provide the basic building blocks for learning and mastery.

Social and communication skills are suffering. Teachers said that social skills and communication skills have been increasingly diminished since the onset of NCLB. Teachers recognized the importance of play and time for socialization in the early learning years. An increasing trickle-down effect has been seen in first, second, and third grade classrooms. Students are having problems with social and personal problem-solving, and have difficulty collaborating with other students. This lack of social development was directly correlated to the lack of time for creative play in kindergarten.

Too much stress created by NCLB. Children are showing an increase in stress due the demands of high-stakes assessments. As students approach third grade, testing pressures and the stress of meeting academic requirements increase. Students are expressing their dislike for reading and school. The teachers in this study were concerned with this negative disposition toward school and learning.

Concerns for the future. Teachers were concerned for the future of their students. Although their opinions were not based on scientific fact, research (as reported in the literature review portion of this paper) supported their predictions of increased drop-out rates. There were also concerns for the average child. Teachers said that spending an inordinate amount of time with struggling students decreases the time spent with students who are considered average or above-average. Teachers also had concerns for the new guidelines and restrictions for special education students making it more difficult to place them for additional support.

Children have lost the joy of learning. Teachers were concerned about their students' loss of joy for learning. The focus on skill mastery and the push to increase reading scores has taken precedence over fun learning activities that bring joy to young learners. This finding is similar to the research of Hirsch-Pasek and Golinkoff (2007) and Jones, Jones, Hardin, et al. (1999).

<div align="center">Research Questions Answered</div>

The central research question asked, "Do teachers of young children use developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms when faced with accountability issues and mandates as measured by standardized testing procedures?" The teachers in this study are committed to using developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms despite the accountability issues and mandates that force curriculum, pacing, time constraints, skill isolation, and teaching tested skills. The teachers are part of schools

that are not having problems meeting AYP benchmarks or have not been placed on probation because of failure; but they recognize that not all teachers have the same advantages of supportive administration and flexibility in decision-making. The teachers in this study use developmentally appropriate practice in varying degrees. There is more evidence of developmentally appropriate practice in the early grades of kindergarten and first grade, and less focus on developmentally appropriate practice as the grade level increases toward third grade.

The first research subquestion asked, "How do teachers of today define what is developmentally appropriate for young children?" developmentally appropriate practice guidelines support the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. The guidelines were first developed by Bredekamp (1997) to provide guidance for early childhood practitioners. The developmentally appropriate practice guidelines emphasized the importance of providing active learning experiences, hands-on materials, child-interaction with the environment, and building knowledge based on prior experiences. In addition, the importance of play, multiage grouping, and parent involvement are a part of the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, 2007; Bredekamp, 1997; NAEYC, 1997). The teachers in this study were given no information related to an explanation of developmentally appropriate practice. Some of the teachers in this study defined developmentally appropriate practice as (a) working up to their potential; (b) meeting the individual's needs; (c) rate of development; and (d) varying or tailoring instruction according to learning style. However, some teachers included in their definitions (e) meeting the emotional, social,

and physical needs; (f) the need for providing exploratory materials; (g) the importance of play; and (h) providing a safe classroom environment.

The second research subquestion asked, "How do early childhood teachers satisfy their commitment to developmentally appropriate practice and adhere to their responsibility to teach state-mandated skills?" All of the teachers in this study reported that they use state and local curriculum guidelines and standard while planning instruction. However, they are dedicated to providing the best instruction they can provide for their students. These teachers are committed to using developmentally appropriate practice in their early childhood classrooms by incorporating a variety of learning experiences and techniques to make sure their students learn. They are willing to provide these opportunities at the risk of being admonished by administration and county-level specialists. They are willing to "close the door" of their classrooms and continue using tried and proven learning experiences that provide enriched opportunities for learning. They place a high value on recognizing the diversity and prior knowledge of their students when planning instruction. In the area of testing, the teachers in this study are obligated to fulfill required assessments that are used for providing information to measure AYP. They also incorporate authentic assessments such as (a) portfolios, (b) observation, (c) anecdotal records, (d) conferencing, (e) authentic writing, and (f) projects.

The third research subquestion asked, "What evidence is there that early childhood teachers may be abandoning developmentally appropriate practice in order to meet AYP goals?" There is some evidence that indicates teachers are moving away from using developmentally appropriate practice, specifically in grades where the focus is on

high-stakes testing. Kindergarten and first grade teachers feel less pressure and continue to enforce the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines more vehemently. Some, but not all, second grade teachers still incorporate developmentally appropriate practice as part of their instructional guidelines. However, third grade teachers are given the task preparing their students to take a high-stakes test for the purpose of measuring AYP. One teacher indicated that she abandons or limits creative and exploratory learning experiences until after testing has been completed in the later portion of the school year.

Overall Significance

This phenomenological research study provided insight into the experiences, concerns, conflicts, and barriers early childhood teachers face as they strive to use developmentally appropriate practice in an educational environment controlled by NCLB. There have been studies on using developmentally appropriate practice on the various elements of NCLB including AYP, high-stakes testing, and DIBELS. There have also been research studies examining the effects of using developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms. There is little research combining all of these elements with a focus on the thoughts and feelings of early childhood teachers.

There are multiple references in this study to the importance of play. Curwood (2007) reported that research supports the opinion of the teachers in this study:

> Imaginative play is the catalyst for social, physical, emotional, and moral development in young children. With guidance from an observant teacher, kindergartners can use imaginative play to make sense of the world around them—and lay the critical groundwork for understanding words and numbers. (p. 30)

The words of the teachers in this study expressed multiple times a growing decrease in children's social skills, self-help skills, and personal problem-solving skills. There were

also multiple references to evidence that children were lacking necessary pre-learning skills. These problems are attributed to the push-down curriculum and the expulsion or reduction of imaginative play in kindergarten classrooms. Curwood reported: "The pressures on schools to prepare children for testing in third grade has helped to eradicate the block area and the dress-up area of the kindergarten classroom" (p. 30). And she continued: "By beginning the first-grade reading curriculum in kindergarten, schools have effectively gained an extra year of instruction" (p. 30).

Another concern related to the eradication of play and the increase in skill mastery is the lack of oral language development. Goldman, Aldridge, and Russell (2007) explained that "oral language development is the foundation for reading and writing, and many of our struggling readers have limited experiences in the development of oral language" (p. 14). This statement supports the concerns the teachers in this study had for lack of language development and communication skills. They attribute this problem to the lack of time for social and imaginative play in kindergarten.

This study also shows that increased pressures and stress levels for both teachers and students are brought on by the accountability measures imposed by the state and the local school system. Tyre (2006) quoted an elementary school principal as saying "I worry that we are creating school environments that are less friendly to kids who just aren't ready.... Around third grade, sometimes even the most precocious kids begin to burn out" (p. 36). The teachers in this study echo this concern by predicting increased drop-out rates for students who can not meet grade level benchmarks. They also reported increased problems with negative dispositions toward school and learning as early as third grade, and increased problems for students in third grade.

Lack of time, as identified by the teachers in this study, was a barrier to using developmentally appropriate practice. Time spent in test preparation, time spent in assessment, and time spent with strugglers were all considered to be barriers to meeting the instructional needs of the students. Increased time spent in these areas also decreased the time that could be spent in rich, child-centered lessons that are built on prior knowledge and need time to develop. Time allotments required for individual subject areas was another time barrier—providing less time and opportunity to integrate subject matter.

Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed in the area of teachers' experiences, conflicts, concerns, and barriers in using developmentally appropriate practice in today's classrooms. This study was limited to teacher-participants from a suburban, public school system. It would add to the body of knowledge to conduct this type of research with teachers in federally funded schools, schools that are on probation and schools that have been identified as failing schools. Additional research in this area should include schools from other settings such as urban school systems and small, rural school systems.

Because of the disparities among grade levels identified in this paper concerning the use of developmentally appropriate practice and the mandated requirements of NCLB, there are implications that additional research be conducted. Such research can used to identify differences in the dispositions of teachers to use developmentally appropriate practice across the grade levels identified as early childhood.

In addition, there is a need to study the effects that NCLB's mandates are having on young children in the areas of social skills, communication skills, behavior problems, personal problem-solving, and collaborative skills. All of these areas were identified as concerns for the teachers of this study.

Future studies should include the following types of research: (a) longitudinal studies of the effects of NCLB mandates on students beginning from kindergarten through third grade and beyond in the areas of: social skills, language development, and communication skills; (b) studies on long-term effects of NCLB on teacher stress; (c) studies to determine factors causing teachers to leave the teaching profession early; (d) studies that compare the use of developmentally appropriate practice by teachers of kindergarten and first grade with teachers of second grade and third grade; and (e) studies that examine pre-service teachers' and practicing teachers' knowledge of the meaning of developmentally appropriate practice.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

Suggested implications for practice derived from this study follow:

1. There is a need to educate local, state, and federal administrators on the need for using developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms.

2. Round-table discussions between administrators and teachers are needed to allow teachers' voices to be heard concerning the effects of NCLB mandates on young children.

3. Because of the varied responses concerning the definition of developmentally appropriate practice, teachers need on-going professional development in this area.

Will teachers give up their personal pedagogies as a consequence of the pressures of accountability? Will the use of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms eventually be replaced by skills-driven models of instruction? Are teachers who have knowledge of and understand the value of developmentally appropriate practice be replaced by robot-like teachers who are not willing to question politically established mandates? These questions and many more are left unanswered by this study, and only the future will provide the answers.

Conclusion

In a recent article concerning the cuts made in funding for the federal reading plan and state reading initiatives, Margaret Spellings, the current Secretary of Education for the United States, was quoted as saying, "No Child Left Behind is here to stay. It does not expire" (Leech, 2008, ¶14). Spellings also discussed the fact that NCLB "needs to be tweaked, and she hopes it comes up for reauthorization this year" (Leech, 2008, ¶13). In an effort to garner teacher opinions about the learning conditions in the classrooms of the southeastern state represented by this study, the governor in conjunction with state professional organizations have asked teachers to participate in an online teacher survey. The purpose of that study was to gather information that "will be used to improve working conditions, increase recruitment and retention of quality teachers and ultimately—improve the educational experience for all students" (Education Watch, 2008, ¶7). It has been purported by Tony Thacker, the project administrator, that this survey will "provide education stakeholders with the kind of information needed to address the concerns of school-based practitioners" (Education Watch, 2008, ¶13).

Neuman and Roskos (2005) asked the question: *Whatever happened to Developmentally Appropriate Practice?* They reported that "Content-rich literacy experiences involve children in integrated instruction that helps them build an understanding of ideas, connecting new learning to what they already know and can do" (Neuman & Roskos, 2005, ¶21). Neuman and Roskos continued with that idea:

> Children of today are being subjected to a narrow, limited curriculum. Each day more and more children are sitting station style, learning to follow, comply, and obey for hours on end. And every day more and more children are losing their eagerness for learning to read and write. We must speak up. We owe this to the profession we love and the children we teach. (¶26)

In conclusion, it is time for teachers to speak to the inequities of our education system. It is time for teachers to let our state and federal legislators, senators, and our president know our professional opinions and suggestions about the changes that need to be made in NCLB and what is happening in our schools today before it is too late. It is time to be bold and speak out against inappropriate testing and unfair accountability mandates for young children.

A book begun by Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) and finished by Prelutsky and Smith (1995) tells of Diffendoofer School. Students love the school because they are taught how to learn, to think for themselves, and to seek new experiences. But they learn that they must also take a test:

> All schools for miles and miles around
> Must take a special test.
> To see who's learning such and such –
> To see which school's the best.
> If our small school does not do well,
> Then it will be torn down,
> And you will have to go to school
> In dreary Flobbertown.
> (Seuss, Prelutsky, & Smith, 1995, p.21)

Perhaps Geisel predicted the future of the United States' education system. In that future, teachers and students prove there is value in creative and enriched curriculums with child-initiated and problem-solving activities.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher's Survey for Doctoral Study:
Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind

Instructions: Please download this form by saving it to your desktop, complete and save, and then send it via an email attachment with your letter of intent to participate to [e-mail address]. Your interest in participation is greatly appreciated. You will be notified within two weeks.

Name: _____

School: Grade Taught: _____ _____

Years of Experience in Current Grade Level: _____

Other Teaching Experience: (Please state grade level and number of years):

_____

_____

_____

Total Number of Years Experience: _____

Please answer the following, briefly in 50 words or less:

Do you feel that accountability mandates and pressures as a result of *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* limit the use of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in your classroom? Please briefly discuss.

APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER FOR ACCESS

[Name of school redacted]
[Address redacted]
[Location redacted]

Dear _____,

During the fall semester of 2007, I will be conducting a qualitative research project to complete my dissertation for doctoral studies in Early Childhood Education at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. The title of my project is <u>Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences</u>. This research study will involve ten to fourteen participants (teachers) who have six or more years experience in teaching and are familiar with the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood classroom. These teachers will be asked to speak to experiences and feelings as early childhood teachers and the conflicts they encounter in today's world of education.

This project will involve one initial group interview that will be both audio- and video-recorded, one individual interview of approximately 1 ½ hours that will be audio recorded with possible follow-up communications for clarification, and one observation of one hour during classroom instruction at a pre-arranged time. In addition, each participant will be asked to keep a reflective journal with a minimum of one entry per week. There will be no cost for participation other than the time volunteered and possible transportation expenses. The data collection process will occur over a three month period beginning in September, 2007 and ending in December, 2007. Participants will be free to withdraw at any time during this project without prejudice, and participants' identities will be kept confidential and all research documents will be kept in a secure location.

All participants will be asked to sign a consent form that outlines the rights of each participant, and will be provided a copy of said consent form. This research study will be approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board for Human Use) using an Expedited Review of Human Subjects Protocol.

As principal of _____ Elementary School and the gatekeeper for your teachers, it is important for me to gain your permission for access to your school, teachers, and faculty. If you have any questions, please contact me at [e-mail address redacted]. Upon request, copies of the *IRB Consent Form* and *IRB Application for Expedited Review of Human Subjects Protocol* will be as well as letters of permission from [name of Assistant Superintendent] and IRB.

Thank you for your continued support in my educational endeavor. Please send a letter of permission and support for the purpose of gaining access to your school.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Hogue

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANTS' RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Name of school redacted]
[Address redacted]
[Location redacted]

Dear Colleagues,

This semester I will be conducting a qualitative research project to complete my dissertation for doctoral studies in Early Childhood Education at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. The title of my project is <u>Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences</u>. This research study will involve ten to fourteen participants (teachers) who have six or more years experience in teaching and are familiar with the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood classroom. You will be asked to speak to your experiences and feelings as an early childhood teacher and the conflicts you encounter in today's world of education.

This project will involve one initial group interview that will be both audio- and video-recorded, one individual interview of approximately one and one-half hours that will be audio recorded with possible follow-up communications for clarification, and one observation of one hour during classroom instruction at a pre-arranged time. In addition, you will be asked to keep a reflective journal with a minimum of one entry per week. There will be no cost to you from participation other than the time you volunteer and possible transportation expenses. The data collection process will occur over a three month period beginning in September, 2007 and ending in December, 2007. You will be free to withdraw at any time during this project without prejudice. All participants' identities will be kept confidential and all research documents will be kept in a secure location.

You will be asked to sign a consent form that outlines your rights as a participant, and you will be provided a copy of said consent form. This research study will be approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board for Human Use) using an Expedited Review of Human Subjects Protocol.

If you are willing and interested in being a participant in this Phenomenological research study, please notify me at the following email address: [e-mail address redacted] or call me at home at [telephone number redacted]. Please complete the attached survey and include it as an attachment with your email of intent to participate. You will be notified of my selection via email within one week of IRB approval of this study. Please remember that only ten to fourteen teachers will be chosen based the survey attached with this letter of recruitment. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Hogue

APPENDIX D

COUNTY LEVEL PERMISSION LETTER

[LETTERHEAD
Name redacted]

March 20, 2007

UAB Institutional Review Board for Human Use
Attention: Charlene Walker
470 Administration Building
701 20ᵗʰ Street South
Birmingham, Al. 35294-0104

Dear Ms. Walker:

The purpose of this letter is to give Linda Hogue permission to conduct a qualitative research project within our school system. Mrs. Hogue has provided us with a copy of her project application titled Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences.

Mrs. Hogue has the   Board of Education's permission and support for her research. We encourage her doctoral studies and wish her well in regards to her dissertation.

Sincerely,

[Name redacted]
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

APPENDIX E

GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Informal Group Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Time: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Place: _____

Description of Setting:

_____

_____

Names of Participants:

_____

_____

_____

Interviewer: I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study concerning Developmentally Appropriate Practice in today's classrooms. Feel free to express your ideas, opinions, feelings, or concerns at any time. You will not be forced to verbally participate unless you feel comfortable in doing so. Let us begin by talking about your definitions of Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Who would like to begin?

The interviewer will use the questions below to prompt discussion as needed. However, additional topics may be discussed as introduced by the participants. The interviewer will also re-direct the discussion as needed.

Prompting Questions:
1. What is your definition of Developmentally Appropriate Practice?
2. How do you feel about DAP?
3. What type of shifts or changes, if any, have you experienced in your classroom pedagogy since the passing of *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*?
4. How do you feel about the mandates of NCLB and its effects on children? Our classroom? Our teaching practices?
5. Let's discuss the types of barriers toward DAP exists in today's classrooms, or do you feel that these barriers exist?
6. How can teachers today continue to use DAP in their classrooms and still meet the local, state, and federal guidelines for teaching?
7. Why did you agree to be a part of this study?
8. What would you like to learn from being a part of this study?

APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Teacher's Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire:
Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind

I want to thank you for your participation in this interview. Please respond to each question reflectively. Take as much or as little time as you need to provide informative answers.

1. Please tell me about yourself: (Researcher asks guiding questions as needed to provide and verify personal information concerning participant.)

2. What are your primary concerns for the children you teach?

3. What is your definition of developmentally appropriate practice? Direct instruction?

4. What can you tell me about the accountability measures for AYP that are set in place by *No Child Left Behind* legislation and requirements?

5. How do you plan instruction and activities for your classroom?*

6. How is the diversity that your children bring to the classroom reflected in your curriculum and instruction?*

7. How do you evaluate children's learning? Assessment techniques? Utilize resources such as specialists?*

8. Have you made changes in your instructional practices as a result of *No Child Left Behind?* How? (Guiding questions as needed.)

9. Have you experienced any conflicts between using developmentally appropriate practices and NCLB mandates? If so, how? If no, why not?

10. Do you feel that you are the decision-maker in your classroom?

11. What would you tell a new teacher if they were having conflicting feelings about using what is developmentally appropriate when pressured by the need to "raise test scores?"

Final Question for Response: What do you think is the best way to ensure that "No child is left behind?"

All of your answers will be audio-recorded and written transcripts will be made for data analysis. You will receive a copy of the written transcript. Any corrections in content or message will be greatly appreciated. Again, thank you for your participation in this study.
Linda M. Hogue

APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Institutional Review Board for Human Use

Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56 and ICH GCP Guidelines. The Assurance became effective on November 24, 2003 and expires on February 14, 2009. The Assurance number is FWA00005960.

Principal Investigator: HOGUE, LINDA

Co-Investigator(s):

Protocol Number: **X070312015**

Protocol Title: *Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences*

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on ⟨03/30/07⟩ . The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.

IRB Approval Date: *3-30-07*

Date IRB Approval Issued: *03/30/07*

Marilyn Doss

Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair of the Institutional Review
Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.

470 Administration Building
701 20th Street South
205.934.3789
Fax 205.934.1301
irb@uab.edu

The University of
Alabama at Birmingham
Mailing Address:
AB 470
1530 3RD AVE S
BIRMINGHAM AL 35294-0104

APPENDIX H

COUNTY-LEVEL LETTER FOR ACCESS

Linda M. Hogue
[Name of school redacted]
[Address redacted]
[Location redacted]

[Name redacted]
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

Dr. [name redacted],

During the fall semester of 2007, I will be conducting a qualitative research project to complete my dissertation for doctoral studies in Early Childhood Education at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. The title of my project is <u>Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences</u>. This research study will involve ten to fourteen (teachers) who have six or more years experience in teaching and are familiar with the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood classroom. These teachers will be asked to speak to experiences and feelings as early childhood teachers and the conflicts they encounter in today's world of education.

This project will involve one initial group interview that will be both audio- and video-recorded, one individual interview of approximately 1 ½ hours that will be audio recorded with possible follow-up communications for clarification, and one observation of approximately one hour during classroom instruction at a pre-arranged time. In addition, each participant will be asked to keep a reflective journal with a minimum of one entry per week. There will be no cost for participation other than the time volunteered and possible transportation expenses. The data collection process will occur over a three month period beginning in September, 2007 and ending in December, 2007. Participants will be free to withdraw at any time during this project without prejudice, and participants' identities will be kept confidential and all research documents will be kept in a secure location.

All participants will be asked to sign a consent form that outlines the rights of each participant, and will be provided a copy of said consent form. This research study will be approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board for Human Use) using an Expedited Review of Human Subjects Protocol.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [e-mail address redacted]. Copies of the *IRB Consent Form* and *IRB Application for Expedited Review of Human Subjects Protocol* have been provided as separate attachments.

Thank you for your continued support in my educational endeavor. Please send a letter of permission and support for the purpose of gaining permission from the International Review Board for Human Use at UAB to

Attention: Charlene Walker
470 Administration Building
701 20th Street South
Birmingham, Alabama 35294-0104

Sincerely,
Linda M. Hogue

APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

	Consent Form	**irb**

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Developmentally Appropriate Practice and No Child Left Behind: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Experiences

INVESTIGATOR: Linda M. Hogue

SPONSOR: None

Explanation of Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative study to describe the experiences of teachers at an elementary school during the school year using the qualitative method of phenomenology. As a participant in this study, your involvement will be necessarily substantial. You will be asked to participate in a maximum of two individual, audio-recorded interviews and one group audio- and video-recorded interview pertaining to your experiences as an early childhood teacher. The initial interview will last 1 to 1 ½ hours in duration, and the follow-up will last approximately 30 minutes. The researcher will ask that you also participate in a total of one or two classroom observations during your regularly scheduled math instructional period. Further you will be asked to keep a journal of experiences to include a minimum of 1 entry per week during the duration of the study. Finally you will be asked to provide the researcher with a document in the form of a questionnaire that will speak to your teaching experiences and other pertinent background information. All audio- and video-recordings will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed after three years. Other documents may include e-mails or letters.

The time frame for your participation in this research study will be September, 2007 through December, 2007.

Risks and Discomforts

There is a possibility of risk of loss confidentiality. The individuals in this study are asked to keep information discussed during the group and individual interviews confidential. There is also a possibility of participants becoming uncomfortable while discussing their personal feelings and opinions concerning the topic of this study in front of others during the group interview.

Benefits

You may not personally benefit from your participation in this research; however, your participation may provide valuable information to the academic community about the academic experiences of a primary teacher in a public school in the Southeastern United States.

Alternatives

An alternative to participating in the study is not participating in the study.

Page 1 of 3
3/30/07

UAB – IRB
Consent Form Approval 03/30/07
Expiration Date 03/30/08

Participant's Initials_____

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study through the use of pseudonyms for participants. In addition all data collected and materials related to the research will be kept by the researcher in a secure cabinet. The UAB Institutional Review Board for Human Use may review the research records for auditing purposes.

Withdrawal Without Prejudice

You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice.

Significant New Findings

Any significant new findings that develop during the course of the study that may affect your willingness to continue research will be provided to you by the researcher.

Cost of Participation

There will be no cost to you from participation in the research other than possible transportation expenses.

Payment for Participation in Research

You will receive no monetary payment for participation in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about the research, Linda Hogue, the principal investigator, will be glad to answer them. Linda Hogue's phone number is ▮▮▮▮ (wk) or ▮▮▮▮ (cell). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore, Director of the UAB Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB). Ms. Moore may be reached at (205) 934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816, press the option for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday.

Legal Rights

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

Participant's Initials_____

Signatures

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed informed consent.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

_____

Signature of Witness   Date