

Annual Forum October 20, 2005
Making the Most of our Early Education Investments

PK-3 and NCLB

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What impact does No Child Left Behind testing have on PK-3?

GENE MAEROFF: The first time the state would be testing them would be as fourth-graders and NCLB as third-graders. What impact does that have? Maybe the three of you can talk about that.

ADRIANA BIRNE: In Union City, we are a high-performance district in comparison to other Abbott districts in the state of New Jersey. Last year, our third year in the program, we were number two in the state compared to the other Abbott districts. Yes, No Child Left Behind has made a tremendous impact in our district because of our English language learners, our high number population. But what we have done in our district is to ensure that these children are being serviced in their native language first so that the transition from one language to the other proceeds consistently.

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EDITH ALLEN-COLEMAN: I think what we're doing in Chicago based on the effects of the NCLB at the third-grade level is placing a higher emphasis on standard-based education in the Early Childhood Program. We have just developed a language arts program and an early standards program that's being implemented in all the Early Childhood programs in Chicago. So there's more of an emphasis on literacy training in Prekindergarten programs.

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JIM HINSON: Even though I say this with caution, NCLB has enhanced our ability to take early - education to other school districts and it has enhanced our ability to say to other superintendents "Here's your answer. And it is in early -education." NCLB hasn't had any direct impact on us in our district. In our own programs in relation to early -education, it has made an impact on subgroup performance, ELL and other subgroups. Missouri is in the process of a statewide initiative for early - education. We have been able to generate a lot more interest from school districts in discussing early -education as a result of NCLB. That certainly wouldn't be an endorsement of all the components of NCLB, but it's related to your question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How has NCLB affected the federal money available for PK-3?

JIM HINSON: As a result of NCLB, our school district has received more federal funding than they ever had. Financially, it's been good for us. It has caused many districts that have subgroups to acknowledge that we have subgroup performance issues. Before, we were unwilling to admit in public education as administrators that all of our kids were not performing equally and we were not meeting the needs of all of our kids. I think acknowledging this fact is a good thing and is the result of NCLB. Now I have the freedom to stand before my public and say, "Here are the dropout rates and we need to figure out a way to address what's going on."