

## Study: Little evidence that No Child Left Behind has hurt teacher job satisfaction

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The conventional wisdom that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has eroded teacher job satisfaction and commitment is off the mark, according to new research published online today in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Educational Research Association.

"Estimating the Effects of No Child Left Behind on Teachers and Their Work Environment," by Jason A. Grissom of Vanderbilt University, Sean Nicholson-Crotty of Indiana University, and James R. Harrington of the University of Texas at Dallas, finds that while there is some evidence that NCLB's accountability pressures reduced feelings of cooperation among [teachers](#), its implementation may also have improved their sense of classroom autonomy and administrator support. Overall, NCLB was found not to have much of an impact on [job satisfaction](#) and commitment to the profession – let alone the large negative effect sometimes attributed to the law.

To examine the impact of NCLB on teachers' job demands, perceived autonomy, and workplace support, as well as on satisfaction and commitment, the researchers analyzed a nationally representative sample of 140,000 regular, full-time public school teachers from four waves of the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey. Two of the waves collected data during the 1993-94 and 1999-2000 academic years – prior to NCLB's implementation in 2002-03 – while the other two did so during the 2003-04 and 2007-08 academic years.

"Public perception is that NCLB has increased teacher stress due to accountability pressures, negatively impacting job satisfaction," said Grissom. "This narrative, which has been driven mostly by anecdotes and studies with limited or non-representative findings, turns out not to be supported by our results."

"Surprisingly, we found positive trends in many [work environment](#) measures, and in job satisfaction and commitment during the time coinciding with NCLB's implementation, with only modest evidence that NCLB itself had an impact," said Grissom.

Among other findings:

- In 2008, 77 percent of teachers intended to remain in the profession until retirement or as long as possible, compared to approximately 65 percent in 1994.
- Compared to pre-NCLB, teachers after NCLB's implementation are working longer hours. However, there's little evidence to suggest NCLB is the cause.
- There is no evidence of different effects of NCLB on teachers at high-poverty and low-poverty schools, or on teachers in states with and without prior accountability systems.

"Simply put, our results do not support media accounts or policy rhetoric that portray NCLB as undermining teacher morale and intent to stay in the profession," said Grissom.

The researchers note that NCLB's accountability standards may have given districts and schools more incentive to provide teachers greater classroom autonomy and administrator support. However, since 2012, the federal government has granted NCLB waivers to dozens of states, potentially weakening that incentive.

As NCLB implementation continues to undergo changes and Congress works to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, said Grissom, "our research makes clear that administrators and policymakers can't rely solely on [conventional wisdom](#) to evaluate a policy's effect on teachers."

**More information:** [www.aera.net/Newsroom/RecentAEd/15549/Default.aspx](http://www.aera.net/Newsroom/RecentAEd/15549/Default.aspx)

Provided by American Educational Research Association

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