

## NCLB: No Impact on State Fourth Grade Reading Test Scores

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As usual, the latest report on testing the impact of NCLB resulted in claims of victory from the Bush administration. The report, from the Center on Education Progress (Center, 2007a), examined test score data from individual states, and, as usual, focused on the percentage of children to achieve “proficiency.”

A previous report on tests administered by the states suffered from the flaw of not including a comparison group (Krashen, 2007). In this report, however, a comparison was possible. A supplement to the report (Center, 2007b) contained details of test scores for each state, and in some cases it was possible to compare the gains made before NCLB was implemented (2001-2002) and after (2002-2006) (Some of this data was also contained in the body of the report (Center, 2007a), but the supplement contained more information.)

The supplement contained pre-post NCLB average yearly rate of improvement for fourth grade reading for 11 states. This data is presented in table 1. The “difference” column indicates the difference that NCLB made in rate of improvement.

The rate of improvement was increased by less than 1/3 of a percent, moving from 1.2 more children classified as proficient each year before NCLB to 1.51 after NCLB.

Table 1: Average yearly gain, pre and post NCLB, 11 states

state	pre NCLB	post NCLB	difference
Colorado	-1	1	2
Conn	4.3	-0.9	-5.2
Florida	2.3	2.8	0.5
Kentucky	1.3	2.7	1.4
Louisiana	0.7	1.8	1.1
Mass	3	-0.9	-3.9
New Jersey	0.1	0.2	0.1
New York	4.3	3	-1.3
S. Carolina	-4	2.1	6.1
Washington	2.2	3.8	1.6
Wyoming	0	1	1
mean	1.2	1.51	0.31

Percentage of children rated as “proficient”

Recalculation taking into consideration the number of children tested in each state produced nearly identical results (mean gain = .35 percent).

In some states, fourth graders were not tested, but third and/or fifth graders were. Including these states brings the number of states with pre and post-test scores to 18. Table 2 presents the results for these 18 states. This time the impact of NCLB is slightly negative. Again, recalculation considering the number of children tested in each state resulted in nearly identical results (mean = -.13 percent).

Table 2: Average yearly gain, pre and post NCLB: 18 states

State	Pre NCLB	Post NCLB	<u>difference</u>
Colorado	-1	1	2
<u>Conn</u>	4.3	-0.9	-5.2
Delaware gr5	5.1	2.4	-2.7
Florida	2.3	2.8	0.5
Kansas gr5	-0.1	4.9	5
Kentucky	1.3	2.7	1.4
Louisiana	0.7	1.8	1.1
Missouri gr3	3.8	-1	-4.8
New Hampshire gr3	1.5	1	-0.5
New Jersey	0.1	0.2	0.1
New York	4.3	3	-1.3
Oregon gr5	3.3	1	-2.3
Pennsylvania gr5	0.9	0.9	0
S. Carolina	-4	2.1	6.1
Washington	2.2	3.8	1.6
<u>mean</u>	1.7	1.56	-0.14

Percentage of children rated as "proficient"

This analysis shows that reading scores were going up before NCLB and it shows that NCLB did not improve the rate of improvement. NCLB has cost an enormous amount of money, and takes a great deal of time in the school day. Reading First, the reading component of NCLB, takes up an extra 100 minutes per week. These results strongly suggest that this huge investment has not paid off in improved reading for elementary school children.

## References

Center on Education Policy. 2007a. [Answering the Question That Matters Most: Has Student Achievement Increased Since No Child Left Behind?](#)

Center for Education Policy. 2007b. [State Achievement Profiles.](#)

Krashen, S. 2007. [Reading First: 'Impressive' Gains?](#)