



Supplemental Education Services under NCLB: Emerging Evidence and Policy Issues

ABSTRACT

PATRICIA BURCH, Ph.D.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice

PO Box 1263

East Lansing, MI 48826

Phone: (517) 203-2940

Email: greatlakescenter@greatlakescenter.org

Web Site: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

May 2007

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Abstract

This policy brief analyzes evidence relating to the implementation and effects of the supplemental education services (SES) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The SES provision requires school districts to pay the cost of third-party, after-school tutoring services for eligible students. Four areas of analysis in this brief are:

- Student eligibility and participation in SES;
- Services provided by SES firms;
- State and district implementation; and
- Impact on student achievement.

The data and analyses presented here highlight limitations in the current law and implementation of SES: low participation rates; limited services available for English Language Learners and special education students; and, state and district capacity to implement the law and monitor program quality. Even with improvement in such areas, however, it is unclear how SES might affect academic achievement, because existing research leaves many questions unanswered. Similarly, existing research offers little information about specific conditions that support positive outcomes. To make well-informed decisions in the future, policy makers will require additional empirical evidence.

Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers do each of the following.

- Redesign the law to address the core problem of local administrators lacking fiscal resources and expertise to successfully administer SES programs.
- Commission federally funded, comprehensive evaluations to determine: (a) to what degree SES may affect student achievement, and (b) to what extent at-risk student populations have access to SES services.
- Investigate the feasibility and desirability of reallocating Title I funds from SES programs to existing successful state and local reform efforts.

- Examine and reconsider NCLB's apparent tension between the high-stakes accountability imposed on schools and the more limited measures for holding SES providers accountable for their contributions to student achievement.