

The Effect of No Child Left Behind Sanctions on College Outcomes: Examining Kentucky's ESEA Waiver



Alex E. Combs

The Martin School of Public Policy and Administration
University of Kentucky

NCLB Policy Change in Kentucky

Sanctions for Failing NCLB Standards

Title 1

Non-Title 1

NCLB School:
Redirect Funding
School Choice
Change Leadership
Improvement Plan

Assist School:
Improvement Plan

2012-13 ESEA Waiver

NCLB School:
Improvement Plan

Assist School:
Improvement Plan

Sanctions for Failing New Standards

Methodology

A difference-in-differences approach is used to estimate the effects of waiving NCLB sanctions on college outcomes.

- The first difference is driven by college outcomes pre- and post-waiver.
- The second difference is driven by comparing pre/post change to Assist schools.

College Rate: the percent of high school graduates who enroll in college the next year
GPA Difference: (high school senior year GPA) – (first year college GPA)

Avg. High School College Attendance and GPA Difference

Ending AY	School	Sanctioned	College Rate	GPA Difference	School	College Rate	GPA Difference
2009	NCLB	Yes	-	0.76	Assist	-	0.56
2010	NCLB	Yes	53.02	1.07	Assist	61.55	0.88
2011	NCLB	Yes	57.21	1.05	Assist	61.48	0.85
2012	NCLB	No	54.87	1.06	Assist	60.42	0.85
2013	NCLB	No	55.52	-	Assist	60.72	-

NCLB & College Outcomes

A common criticism of NCLB was the failure to align high school student achievement with postsecondary admission standards, without which, NCLB was not expected to have much impact on college outcomes. The punitive nature of the sanctions applied considerable pressure on Title I schools to meet misaligned standards compared to other schools. In 2012, NCLB was replaced by a new program (Unbridled Learning) with an explicit goal to improve college outcomes.

Model

$$y_{jt} = \delta_1 S_j + \delta_2 W_{jt} + \delta_3 S_j W_{jt} + \beta X'_{jt} + \alpha_j + \theta_t + \theta_t S_j + \epsilon_{jt}$$

Dependent Variable

Model 1: College rate; j = high school; t = year

Model 2: GPA difference (overall, English, math, science, college ready)

Independent Variables

S = Sanction (1 for NCLB School); W = Waiver (1 for 2013 & 2014)

X = Model 1: Avg. GPA, Percent FRPL, ACT, Percent Black, Percent Hispanic

Model 2: Avg. GPA, 4-year rate, percent male, percent female, percent white, percent black, percent Hispanic, percent FRPL, ACT 2-year, ACT 4-year

α = school fixed effect; θ = time trend

Research Question & Hypothesis

Following the Kentucky ESEA waiver, did schools previously under NCLB sanctions experience significant changes in college outcomes compared to other schools?

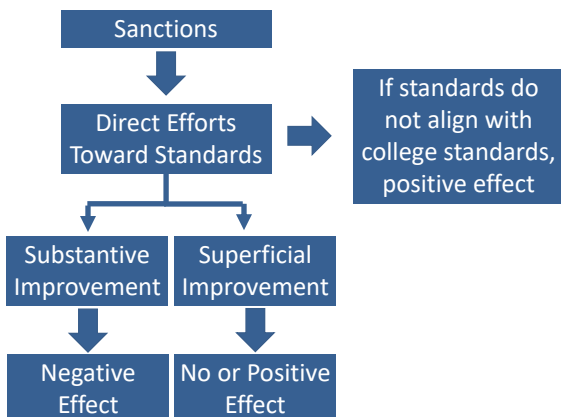
If NCLB schools directed efforts toward misaligned standards compared to Assist schools, the waiver should have led to an improvement in college outcomes.

Results

Variables of Interest	College Rate	GPA Difference	College Rate	GPA Difference	Various GPA Diff
Sanction	-0.84	0.04	-	-	-
Waiver	-2.87 ***	-0.01	-3.48 ***	0.01	Robust
S=1 X W=1	0.32	0.06	1.84	0.04	Robust
GPA	21.01 ***	0.60 ***	27.78 ***	0.52 ***	Robust
ACT	3.98 ***	-0.06 ***	1.25 ***	-0.05 ***	Robust
FRPL	-0.04	0.01 *	-0.04	0.01	Robust
Observations	653	437	653	437	437
Estimation	OLS	OLS	FE	FE	FE

*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01
Standard errors clustered by school

Theoretical Expectations of Waiver



Summary

- The evidence does not support that NCLB schools experienced a significant change in college outcomes after the waiver from sanctions compared to other schools.
- For college attendance rates, both groups of schools experienced a substantial decline after the change in accountability systems.
- The findings suggest NCLB sanctions did not induce schools to focus efforts toward activities that were unaligned with college standards.
- Some doubt exists whether enough time has passed for the new accountability system to have intended effect or to expect a change in college outcomes.