

# The Politics of Knowledge

## Why Education Research Does (or Does Not) Influence Education Policy

Frederick M. Hess

The American Enterprise Institute

May 21, 2007

The collected papers from this conference are available online  
at [www.aei.org/event1455](http://www.aei.org/event1455).



# **Double Standard?**

## **“Scientifically Based Research” and the No Child Left Behind Act**

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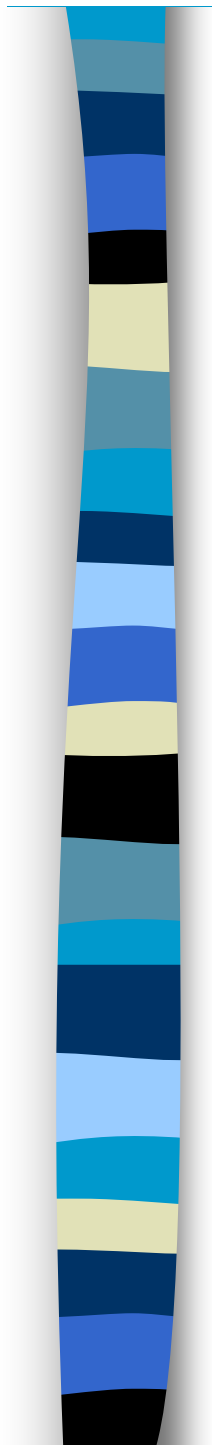


# Key Questions

- Where did the phrase “scientifically based research” come from? What were the authors of NCLB trying to achieve with this language?
- How closely has the actual construction of NCLB and its implementation lived up to this high standard? Does the law itself rest on a foundation of scientifically based research?

**Table 1. Where the phrase “scientifically based research” appears in NCLB**

Title of NCLB	Number of references to “research”	% of references modified by “scientifically based”
<b>Title I.</b> Achievement of the Disadvantaged	84	81.0
<b>Title II.</b> High Quality Teachers & Principals	28	35.7
<b>Title III.</b> Language Instruction	30	46.7
<b>Title IV.</b> 21st Century Schools	14	71.4
<b>Title V.</b> Choice & Innovative Programs	37	24.3
<b>Title VI.</b> Flexibility and Accountability	2	50.0
<b>Title VII.</b> Indian, Native Hawaiian / Alaskan	17	11.8
<b>Title VIII.</b> Impact Aid	0	--
<b>Title IX.</b> General provisions	4	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	216	54.6





**Table 2. Number of articles discussing “scientifically based research” and education, 1995-2006**

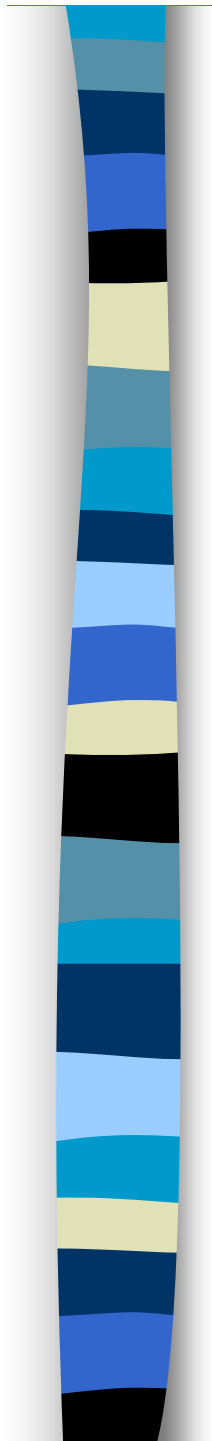
<b>Year</b>	<b><i>Education Week</i></b>	<b>Major U.S. newspapers</b>
1995	0	0
1996	0	0
1997	2	0
1998	0	0
1999	0	0
2000	1	0
2001	2	2
2002	16	6
2003	14	3
2004	16	2
2005	18	2
2006	15	9



# Is NCLB Itself “Scientifically Based”?

**Table 3: Affiliations of witnesses from hearings in NCLB's legislative history, 1995-2001**

<b>Witness category</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Median hearing size</b>
Research profession	17.4	7
Federal level	12.4	6
State level	11.8	9
Local level	29.8	9
Groups and individuals	26.2	9
Other affiliations or not ascertained	2.5	16





# Case Study: Highly Qualified Teachers



# The Synthesizers

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Key Publication</b>
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future	<i>What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future</i>
Education Trust	<i>Good Teaching Matters: How Well-Qualified Teachers Can Close the Gap</i>
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation	<i>The Teachers We Need and How to Get More of Them</i>



# House Hearing on Teacher Quality, 1998: Witness List

- **Gene Hickok**, Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- **E.D. Hirsch, Jr.**, President, Core Knowledge Foundation
- **Eric Hanushek**, Professor, University of Rochester
- **Richard Ingersoll**, Professor, University of Georgia
- **Emily Feistritzer**, President, National Center for Education Information
- **Dale Ballou**, Professor, University of Massachusetts
- **Kati Haycock**, President, The Education Trust
- **Paul Steidler**, Director, Alexis De Toqueville Institution
- **Barnett Berry**, Associate Director, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future



## Areas of Agreement → HQT

- Teacher quality matters a lot
- Teacher are inequitably distributed
- Subject matter knowledge is very important



# Recommendations

- Researchers should bring work to the attention of synthesizers (particularly those whose mission overlaps with findings) or circumvent them through op-eds, user-friendly briefs for policymakers, etc.
- Policymakers should ask synthesizers and researchers to come clean about the limits of their research. What would their critics say?

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