Case Study Reports

to Accompany
From the Capital to the Classroom

3 Year of the No Child Left Behind Act

Center on Education Policy
Washington, DC
MARCH 2005
Introduction to the Case Studies

To learn more about how school districts are implementing the No Child Left Behind Act, the Center on Education Policy conducted case studies of local implementation of NCLB in 36 school districts throughout the country. Conducted between May and December of 2004, these case studies were one of several research methods used by the Center to inform our multi-year national study of state and local implementation of NCLB. Our findings from the overall study are contained in the March 2005 report, From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 3 of the No Child Left Behind.

Because the full report of the study includes only a portion of the rich information collected through the case studies, we have also made available the individual case study reports for each of the 36 districts and, in some cases, for schools within those districts. These case study reports describe our detailed observations and findings for each district. The 36 case study reports, as well as the full study report, are available to read or download on the Center's website at www.cep-dc.org.

Our case studies focused on major aspects of NCLB implementation, including accountability and assessment, school choice, supplemental education services, and teacher and paraprofessional requirements. The case studies also looked at the impact of the Act in such areas as student achievement and curriculum and instruction. In addition, we sought to learn more about the provisions of NCLB that were having positive effects and those that were creating the greatest challenges. We asked districts to describe how they were meeting the Act’s challenges.

The case study districts were selected to be geographically diverse and to reflect the approximate distribution of urban, suburban, and rural districts in the nation. Three districts from Michigan were included because Michigan is one the first states to have schools in the restructuring phase of NCLB, and CEP wanted to gain a better understanding of this important phase of NCLB accountability.

Four CEP consultants conducted the case studies. Elizabeth Pinkerton conducted 19 of the 36 case studies, Caitlin Scott conducted 9 case studies, Scott Jofus did 7, and Nancy Kober did 1. For 15 of the 36 case studies, the consultants made site visits to the district and, in some cases, to individual schools, and conducted personal interviews with key contact people. Site visits were made to the following districts:

- Calhoun County School District, Alabama
- Grant Joint Union High School District, California
- Fort Lupton Weld-Re-8 School District, Colorado
- Independent School District #2 – Meridian, Idaho
- Chicago Public Schools, Illinois
- Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
- Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts
- Willow Run Community Schools, Michigan
- Cloquet Independent School District #94, Minnesota
For the remaining 21 districts, the consultants collected information for the case studies through telephone interviews with key contact people, in addition to doing other research. For both on-site and telephone interviews, the primary contact in many districts was the district’s federal and state programs administrator or the Title I director, but contact people also included superintendents, assistant superintendents, assessment personnel, pupil services personnel, principals, directors of curriculum and instruction, and others.

In 16 of the districts, we also conducted case studies of individual schools to better understand the effects of NCLB at the school and classroom levels. Altogether, we collected information from 37 schools in these districts, mostly schools that had been identified for improvement. The districts with school-level information include the following (with the number of schools studied in each district shown in parentheses):

- Escondido Union Elementary School District, California (2)
- Grant Joint Union High School District, California (2)
- Fort Lupton Weld-Re-8 School District, Colorado (2)
- Independent School District #2 – Meridian, Idaho (2)
- Chicago Public Schools, Illinois (2)
- Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (3)
- St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools, Louisiana (2)
- Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts (3)
- Flint Community School District, Michigan (2)
- Harrison Community School District, Michigan (2)
- Willow Run Community Schools, Michigan (1)
- Pascagoula School District, Mississippi (3)
- Cleveland Municipal School District, Ohio (3)
- Cuero Independent School District, Texas (4)
- Marlboro Elementary School, Vermont (1)
- Orleans Central Supervisory Union, Vermont (3)

Our case studies focused on actions to implement NCLB during school year 2003-04, with some information about activities in the fall of school year 2004-05. A data file at the end of each case study report provides basic information about district enrollment and demographics; percentages of teachers and paraprofessionals that are highly qualified according to the NCLB definitions; numbers of schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB; and numbers of schools offering choice and supplemental education services. Decisions and data are continually changing, however; for example, the numbers of schools identified for improvement were still subject to appeal or correction in many states when we completed our case studies. So the information in these reports should not be viewed as the final word, but rather as a picture of where NCLB stood in these districts in late 2004.
List of Case Study Districts

Alabama: Calhoun County School District
Alaska: Kodiak Island Borough School District
Arkansas: Fayetteville Public Schools
California: Escondido Union Elementary School District
California: Grant Joint Union High School District
California: Oakland Unified School District
Colorado: Colorado Springs District 11
Colorado: Fort Lupton Weld–Re-8 School District
Florida: Collier County Public Schools
Idaho: Independent School District #2 – Meridian
Illinois: Chicago Public Schools
    Rachel Carson Elementary School
    Walsh Elementary School
Kansas: Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
Louisiana: St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools
Massachusetts: Avon Public School District
Massachusetts: Boston Public Schools
Michigan: Flint Community School District
Michigan: Harrison Community School District
Michigan: Willow Run Community Schools
Minnesota: Cloquet Independent School District #94
Mississippi: Pascagoula School District
Missouri: Hermitage School District
Nebraska: Heartland Community Schools
Nevada: Clark County Schools
New Jersey: Bayonne City School District
New Mexico: Bloomfield School District
New York: Romulus Central School District
North Carolina: Wake County Public School System
North Dakota: Napoleon School District
Ohio: Cleveland Municipal School District
    J.D. Rockefeller Elementary School
    Mary B. Martin Elementary School
    Wade Park Elementary School
Oregon: Tigard-Tualatin School District
South Carolina: Berkeley County School District
Texas: Cuero Independent School District
Vermont: Marlboro Elementary School
Vermont: Orleans Central Supervisory Union
Virginia: Waynesboro Public Schools
Wisconsin: Sheboygan Area School District
Alabama

Calhoun County School District

Superintendent of Schools: H. Jacky Sparks
Contact: Bobby Burns, Deputy Superintendent
9,019 students, K-12, rural

District Description

The Calhoun County School District in the northeastern corner of Alabama includes a large rural area as well as the city of Anniston, which is the county seat, and the small cities of Oxford, Piedmont, and Jacksonville. A large chemical storage site is located in Anniston—all that is left of the military presence that defined the area for decades. Fort McClellan is now closed, but an incinerator that burns chemical weapons has been in operation for the past year at the Anniston Army Depot. What effect that will have on Anniston and Calhoun County in the future remains to be seen, but even the schools are kept on alert status when there is concern about the status of the incinerator.

Key Findings

■ The Calhoun County district has not yet seen the full implications of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) because the state is under a compliance agreement with the federal government and will not fully implement its NCLB accountability plan until 2005.

■ To improve academic learning for students with disabilities, the Calhoun County schools no longer pull out these students from their regular classrooms for special instruction, but instead bring special education teachers and paraprofessionals into the regular classrooms to work with students with special needs.

■ The district hopes to improve overall student performance through a collaborative process in which teachers share ideas about curriculum and instruction. The district has also undertaken extensive professional development for principals and teachers. Principals are trained in ways to become better instructional leaders, and teachers are trained in ways to better align instructional practices with state standards and target the students’ specific needs as determined by assessments.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Calhoun district staff members recognize the many challenges for their district with meeting all the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. They know there have
been obstacles related to adequate yearly progress (AYP) and highly qualified teachers, but state officials are handling these issues, and there is general belief that they will be resolved. “Until it all gets settled,” said Bobby Burns, deputy superintendent for the Calhoun County Schools, “we are confident that we are on the path that will bring about higher levels of student performance.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
The state of Alabama is still operating under the terms of a compliance agreement it reached with the U.S. Department of Education after the Department found the state to be out of compliance with some aspects of the Improving America’s Schools Act, the predecessor law to NCLB. Under this agreement, Alabama has been given more time to comply fully with the NCLB assessment and accountability procedures and has until 2005 to fully implement its accountability plan. In the meantime, the state is using interim tests and measures to track whether schools are making adequate yearly progress.

Under the interim state system, Calhoun schools have made AYP each year. Calhoun County tests students from grades 3–8 with the SAT 10 and in 2004–05, students in grades 3 through 8 are taking the criterion-referenced Alabama Reading and Math test. A criterion-referenced reading and math test, which is also a requirement for graduation, is given to students in grade 11. Results from all three tests are part of the state’s interim accountability measure for AYP. Calhoun staff members anticipate that when the state’s new accountability plan is implemented in 2005, the district will continue to make AYP.

TEST PARTICIPATION ISSUES
Calhoun County staff members are concerned whether the district will meet the NCLB requirements for test participation in the future because regular school attendance is not as high as the district would like. As Burns stated, “Our average daily attendance is 94%, so it is going to be hard for us to test 95% of all our students. We can’t test them when they aren’t here,” he added, “so this is something we are going to work on with parents and with the students themselves.”

Strategies for Improving Schools

RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
Improving overall school attendance is a set goal in all Calhoun schools, but the district staff recognizes there are some barriers to accomplishing this. One problem is that Alabama has no state policy on truancy, which means that family court judges do not handle issues related to school attendance. If a parent does not see to it that the student attends school, district staff members realize that it is difficult for the school to make it happen. With the challenge of improving attendance falling on the schools, a renewed focus on parent involvement is part of the plan, along with helping students to see the value of regular attendance.

Calhoun is also focusing on improving the academic progress of the district’s secondary students. Increasing the graduation rate and the pass rate on the 11th grade test are priority areas. One of the ways these are being addressed, according to Burns, is through a collaborative method in which teachers of various grade levels review the progress of all students to determine what students need to be successful. One successful district effort is the student advocacy program, which has been in existence for the past two years. “What we were trying to do was to work on poor behavior, apathy, and of course academic failure,” said Burns of the advocacy program. Under this program,
selected groups of at-risk students are given staff member “guides” who help them find successful ways to turn around their declining progress. “This program has seen 60 students meet graduation requirements,” Burns said, “and it would not have happened without the extra help.”

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The analysis of what students know and do not know is an important part of the curricular and instructional changes taking place in the Calhoun district. Teachers benchmark student progress and keep track of skills that need to be re-taught. Some skills need to be taught again to the entire class, some just to small groups of students who did not master them, and some to individual students who have difficulty reaching levels of competence. Recognizing that keeping records of individual student progress can take a great amount of time, the district is considering the use of handheld computer devices that teachers can access quickly and use efficiently for that purpose.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The special education and content teachers who teach individual students with disabilities work closely as a team. They have made changes to improve learning for these students. For example, students with disabilities are no longer taken from their classroom for specialized instruction in a resource room. Instead, the special education teacher and/or paraprofessionals work in the regular classrooms with students who have special needs. This change has necessitated much training and support for content teachers, but district officials anticipate that students will benefit from the new approach. The gap between regular and special education students on SAT 10 scores was reduced in grades 3 and 4 after just one year of the implementation of these changes.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

To improve students’ academic performance, Calhoun County is focusing intensively on professional development. Workshops on topics such as brain-based learning and how to differentiate instruction are designed to help teachers make a better connection between teaching and learning and individualize instruction based on student needs. Deputy Superintendent Burns recognizes that change is not easy for all teachers but emphasizes the need for the district to change instruction to improve student learning. “I can’t accept teachers telling me that they have always taught this way,” said Burns. “The kids aren’t going to change. We have to be the ones who change.” He added, “I do appreciate it, however, when a teacher says she is willing to try a new instructional strategy, but I also have to make it clear that this is not just about trying out the new strategy. We expect that it will become a part of regular classroom instruction.” As Burns observed, “The days are gone when a teacher can stand in front of the class and lecture until the bell rings.”

Training of Calhoun principals preceded the professional development for teachers, but according to district staff, it was very hard for some principals to move from a school management frame of reference to one of being an instructional leader. Several elementary schools in the district do not have an assistant administrator, so it is difficult for the principal to spend as much time in classrooms as is needed. “Change has to start with the principal,” said Burns. “Otherwise, we can’t reach every student and do the job that needs to get done.”

When Burns and two staff members observed a teacher in a grade 8 algebra class, they were so impressed with the teacher’s efficient student grouping and well-developed, effective lessons that they realized they needed a way to share this. They found a way—they arranged for substitutes to free other teachers to observe this practice and take ideas back to their classrooms. District staff and principals realize that true collaboration
among teachers takes time. Superintendent Jacky Sparks is confident that this change will bring about higher levels of learning for students in Calhoun schools, particularly at the middle and high schools.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
A teacher testing issue that is in the process of being resolved in Alabama is whether existing teachers can be required to take a professional test to meet NCLB qualifications. Calhoun teachers who take the test must sign an affidavit indicating that they understand that taking the test is their choice. The situation is likely to stay the same for existing teachers but change for new teachers.

Competency tests have not been used for Alabama teachers since 1981, when a class action suit was filed by students at Alabama State University over a new teacher test that they claimed discriminated against black students. The state stopped using the test under a consent decree, but the case lingered for more than 20 years. When Alabama selected the Praxis II test in 2000 for teachers to take to become highly qualified according to NCLB, the consent decree was modified to include subject matter testing. In 2004 the consent decree was modified again through an agreement among three groups—the lawyers from the original case, university officials, and the Alabama State Board of Education—to allow subject matter tests for future and current teachers. The testing situation was put on hold, however, when three new students requested to intervene in the case. In December 2004 a testing program was approved by the Alabama Board of Education that would exempt existing teachers from the test unless they want to teach new subjects, but all new teachers would have to pass the competency test. The issue appears to be very close to being resolved.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Many of Calhoun’s paraprofessionals met the NCLB requirements for being highly qualified in the past year by passing the Work Keys test made available for this purpose.

Funding and Capacity

FUNDING AND COSTS
Calhoun County has found its Title I allocations going from high to low in the past several years, but in 2004-05 the district received an increase from the previous year. According to Burns, Calhoun’s Title I funds remain significantly lower than what the district was accustomed to prior to the closing of the military base and the loss of so many families.

CAPACITY
Superintendent Sparks spoke to the Calhoun County Board of Education in March 2004 and explained what the district was doing to train teachers and administrators and to carry out the academic requirements of NCLB. He stressed how difficult it would be to accomplish the district’s other goals, such as reducing class sizes, creating preschool programs, and hiring more teachers without additional funds. At least one board member believes that the law is complicated and that some of the expectations are not realistic. Member Shirley Cash was quoted in the local newspaper as saying, “I really don’t think the government even understands what they’re asking us to do.”
Data File — Calhoun County School District

Location: Northeastern Alabama
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
Total: 18
Elementary: 7 (K-3, K-4, K-6)
Elementary/junior high: 1 (K-9)
Middle/junior high: 1 (5-7)
High schools: 7 (4-12, 5-12, 7-12, 8-12)
Other: 2 (career tech center and alternative school)

Number of Title I Schools: 9

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total: 9,019
White: 85%
African American: 13%
Hispanic: 2%
Low-income students: 49%
Students with disabilities: 14%
English language learners: 0.5%

Teachers
Total: 612
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 92%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 159
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 48%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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Alaska

Kodiak Island Borough School District
Superintendent: Betty Walters
Contact: Brian O’Leary, Director of Educational Support Services
2,703 students, K-12, rural

District Description
Located in the Gulf of Alaska, the Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) serves both town and village schools in the region of Kodiak Island. Six of 12 district schools are within the town, but five of the six village schools can only be reached by boat or plane. These village schools typically enroll 10 to 60 students from families living around the island. The students in the remote village schools range from kindergarteners to high school seniors. One village school that serves students in grades K-10 is on the “road system” so students who are in grades 11 and 12 can be bused on the gravel road to Kodiak High School.

Key Findings
■ The State of Alaska changed the minimum subgroup size for students with disabilities and English language learners, which helped four KIBSD schools make adequate yearly progress in 2004.
■ The village schools of KIBSD have a difficult time finding and retaining teachers who are “highly qualified” according to the No Child Left Behind Act and who can meet students’ diverse academic and cultural needs. This problem is especially acute in the remote island schools because the class sizes are so small and teachers must teach multiple core content areas to multiple grade levels.
■ Paraprofessionals, particularly at KIBSD’s village schools, are important connections between the schools and the community, and they are a vital source of continuity and cultural connections for Kodiak students. Some have met the requirements of NLCB, and some have not yet done so.
■ Kodiak plans to use video technology to provide high-quality instruction in certain content areas to the village schools that have trouble recruiting and retaining NCLB-qualified teachers, but the implementation of the system has been slow. In the meantime, the problem of finding NCLB-qualified teachers for island schools remains unsolved.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The No Child Left Behind Act is affecting Kodiak Island in both positive and negative ways. The small district, with its tiny schools that serve many varied student and community needs, is trying to fulfill all the NCLB requirements. District staff members realize that it is no easy task. The academic progress of students is impacted by large numbers of English language learners at the larger town schools, and getting all teachers and paraprofessionals to a “highly qualified” status is daunting for many reasons. The district is finding it very difficult to meet staffing challenges for reasons that include island isolation, obstacles in providing training across the miles, and the need for more sophisticated technology that will enable video courses to reach the island schools.
The district has stepped up its efforts to educate students who traditionally have performed poorly, according to Brian O’Leary, director of educational support services, and has made good progress. “We see the good in accountability, but NCLB has also left us somewhat demoralized,” he said. “When small subgroups do not make AYP and the entire school gets reported by the media as a failing school, this is hard on everyone.” In one school, for example, 80% of students scored proficient in reading on the state test, well above the state-required level of 65% proficient, but the school did not make AYP because of subgroup performance.

**Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress**

**ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS**
The state raised from 21 to 41 the minimum number of students required to be in two subgroups—students with disabilities and English language learners—for those groups to count for AYP purposes. This change made a difference for KIBSD schools in 2004. Of the five schools that did not make AYP in 2003 because of the disabled and/or ELL subgroups, four made AYP in 2004. The new designation was a better reflection of the quality of education in the schools, according to district staff.

Only one KIBSD Title I school did not make AYP in 2004; the issue was not student achievement but rather the graduation rate. When the number of students in a graduating class is very small, if even one student drops out, the graduation rate can be greatly affected.

**TESTING ISSUES**
Alaska used two different types of tests for accountability in past years. Students in grades 6, 8, and 10 took criterion-referenced tests, and those in grades 4, 7, and 9 took norm-referenced tests. This will change in 2005. A new criterion referenced test, aligned with state standards, has been field tested, and all students will take the new test.

**Strategies for Improving Schools**

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**
KIBSD continues to provide ongoing curriculum development in both reading and math. Math standards in the state were changed from standards covering multiple grade levels to standards for each grade level, so the district is aligning the curriculum with the new standards. A common model curriculum is being prepared as the district moves toward a combination of district-required curriculum and site-specific curriculum at individual schools. What works at one school may not work at another, district officials said, so principals and staffs make some site-based decisions about what to use for various groups of students, such as those who are at risk and those who need advanced instruction. Teachers monitor progress weekly and use a common database. Teachers have access to students’ assessment portfolios, and through technology they can follow a student’s progress across the grades.

KIBSD is also planning to use video technology that will enable students to access courses taught by teachers who meet NCLB content requirements if their teacher does not. “For example,” O’Leary explained, “if a teacher in an island school does not meet the qualifications to teach algebra to the two students at the school who need algebra, we will have a computer hookup in the classroom.” This setup will allow the island students to participate in a class at another district school taught by a highly qualified teacher. “When the system is complete, we will have greatly increased the number of courses taught by ‘highly qualified’ staff to our village middle and high
school students,” O’Leary continued.

After-school programs exist at most elementary schools in Kodiak. Tutors work with students at the schools, and the programs are funded from special grants, including the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. A standards-based report card has been developed and will be used in 2004-05 for the first time.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Seventeen languages are spoken on Kodiak Island. In one town elementary school, 70% of the students are Asian or Pacific Islander. Most of the students in the school are English language learners so English acquisition is the main focus. Immersion is the most common strategy used for English language development, but the district is reviewing the delivery of instructional services to these students to determine the most effective strategies, particularly for the growing population of Tagalog and Spanish speakers.

Resources are very limited at the district and state level; the district’s grant under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is small, barely enough to pay for translations and interpreters.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

KIBSD’s professional development program has changed from total teacher choice of in-service classes to required training for all. This is part of the district’s systemic change and reflects its desire to provide a continuum of offerings related to the delivery of instruction. One of the districtwide professional development courses uses a problem-solving model to teach staff how to identify factors that impact or impede student learning.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

KIBSD employs 213 teachers, and only half of them meet the highly qualified expectations of NCLB. According to records submitted to the state, 25% of the core content classes were taught by a qualified teacher in 2002-03. In 2003-04 the percentage rose to 32%, and for 2004-05, it is 50.

“In both the village and town schools, the goal is to hire the best teachers available and give them the support they need,” O’Leary explained. The district faces challenges in meeting the teacher requirements of NCLB. A KIBSD village school may have 10 students of all ages, including 4 who are in high school, all taught by one teacher. “You can see the problem,” said O’Leary. “That one teacher does not have certification in all the core content classes.”

To alleviate the problem, Kodiak has found two partial solutions for high school students at the village schools. They can move to Kodiak and live with relatives or friends so they can attend Kodiak High School, where they will be taught by highly qualified teachers. As the other solution, the district is developing distance learning classes through a video technology plan.

Another NCLB challenge relates to elementary teachers who meet state certification requirements but still need to take a test to become highly qualified under NCLB. O’Leary expressed his frustration with this requirement, particularly as it regards a particular Kodiak teacher. “She was recognized in the Rose Garden of the White House several years ago as teacher of the year, and she is an excellent teacher,” said O’Leary. “But now, according to NLCB, she is not highly qualified. There is something wrong with that.”

The district uses the Praxis 2 test to help teachers demonstrate their qualifications. The district also purchases practice books and pays the fee for elementary teachers to take the test. In addition, funding is available for high school teachers to become certi-
fied in multiple content areas. Special education teachers who work in a resource room and teach many subjects to individual students also present a “highly qualified” problem. The state HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) system will assist in some of these areas.

At the end of the 2003-04 school year, almost half of the village teachers left the villages and moved to other places for employment. “This was typical,” O’Leary said. “When we replace teachers we rely on generalists, but we train them. They are provided with support and mentoring by village itinerant master teachers.”

PARA PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

All KIBSD’s Title I schools are targeted assistance schools, so only four paraprofessionals must meet the NCLB qualification requirements. Training and coursework at Kodiak College is available for credit during a summer institute that lasts two to three weeks. The courses were designed by the school district and taught by the district staff. This was done for two summers and will continue. Other courses are offered to paraprofessionals throughout the school year for those who wish to attend. The district also uses the HELP (Higher Education Learning Profile) test for meeting the NCLB paraprofessional requirements, so paraprofessionals have a choice in how they become qualified.

The village paraprofessionals in Kodiak Island play a unique role. “These employees are part of the indigenous population, so when someone leaves, and we have to hire a replacement, who applies?” O’Leary asked. “It is someone who lives in the village, and although they have a high school diploma, most don’t have two years of college.” O’Leary explained how vital these paraprofessionals are in maintaining the consistency and structure of the village educational program, where teacher turnover is high.

Funding and Capacity

Alaska had budget problems last year, and state funds to schools were reduced. Some of the cuts, however, have been restored for 2004-05. Brian O’Leary pointed to the discrepancy in funding for special needs students. With somewhat equal numbers of students with disabilities and English language learners, the district receives nearly a half million dollars for special education, but only $15,000 for ELL.

Data File — Kodiak Island Borough School District

**Location:** Gulf of Alaska  
**Type:** Rural

**Number of Schools:**  
Total: 12 (6 town schools and 6 village schools)  
Grades levels vary: K-6, 7-8, 9-12, K-10, and K-12

**Number of Title I Schools:** 7

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**  
Total number of students: 2,703  
White: 46%  
Asian-Pacific Islander: 23%  
Alaska Native: 21%  
Hispanic: 7%  
American Indian: 2%  
African American: 1%
Low-income students: 33%
English language learners: 16% (17 languages)
Students with disabilities: 16%

**Teachers**
- Total number: 213
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 50%

**Paraprofessionals**
- Total number: 4
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 25%

### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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<td>Schools offering choice only:</td>
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<td>Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice:</td>
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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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Arkansas

Fayetteville Public Schools
Superintendent: Dr. Bobby C. New
Contact: Michelle Boles, Federal Programs and Assessment Administrator
8,337 students, K-12, small city

District Description
The Fayetteville Public School District is located in northwestern Arkansas within the city of Fayetteville, which has a population of 67,515. The area has a large poultry industry and is home to the University of Arkansas. The combination of these two employers brings a diverse range of cultures, languages, and academic needs to the public schools.

Key Findings
■ The Fayetteville Public School District has undertaken a unified effort that includes all district departments and school site administrators to improve overall student performance and keep schools out of school improvement under No Child Left Behind. In particular, the district is implementing more effective instructional practices, making sure state standards are being taught, establishing additional help for students who need it, increasing parental involvement, and providing extensive professional development.

■ Parent involvement has taken on a new dimension in Fayetteville schools with teachers required to communicate directly with parents and make home visits if necessary. The purpose is to improve home-to-school communication and ensure that parents know what their children need to do to improve their academic achievement.

■ Arkansas’s High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (ARHOUSSE), developed as a way for experienced teachers to demonstrate they meet NCLB teacher qualifications, has unwittingly created problems in Fayetteville because the new system does not presently have a recertification process for elementary teachers who teach grade 5.

■ During the past year, Fayetteville has made progress in demonstrating that its paraprofessionals are highly qualified by encouraging them to take the Praxis exam and paying test fees for those who passed.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The greatest impact of No Child Left Behind on Fayetteville schools has been the combined effort of district departments to provide professional development, curriculum and instruction, and research and assessment services to all schools. The goal is to intervene with schools before they fail to make adequate yearly progress. Areas of focus are establishing additional help and tutoring for students, encouraging more effective instructional practices in classrooms, making sure that state standards are being taught, working with parents to help them better support their children’s learning, and providing extensive teacher training to improve academic achievement. Although student progress has been good, NCLB has spurred the district to try to make student achievement even better, according to Michelle Boles, the district administrator for federal programs and assessments.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Fayetteville has no schools in school improvement. The district attributes this to the efforts it put in place in 2003-04 for schools that were on alert status because one or more subgroups did not make AYP. By reviewing student needs individually and providing students with the help they needed, all schools made AYP in 2004. One school appeared to be heading into school improvement, but it was found that this was because of a coding error in the state test results. The affected school was not a Title I school, but the situation was corrected upon appeal, and the state determined that the school had met AYP requirements.

Arkansas has been testing students only in grades 4, 6, and 8, but in 2005, students in grades 3, 5, and 7 will be tested as well. At the high school level, algebra and geometry tests are given, and a literacy test is administered in grade 11. Special education students take a math test in grade 9 which is an alternative portfolio assessment. Arkansas also allows portfolio assessments for English language learners. The ELL students are allowed to take the ELL alternative assessment for up to three years.

Arkansas will be changing its reporting system in 2005 because of the additional testing. The state’s new assessment and accountability plan will give districts and schools credit for the year-to-year growth of students as an additional indicator for meeting AYP achievement targets, according to district staff.

Strategies for Improving Schools

GENERAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Each Fayetteville school has a committee made up of parents, school staff, and the principal to review student progress periodically and make recommendations for ways to improve achievement. A district committee made up of Title I principals meets regularly to review the success of the district’s programs. The principals share their experiences with curriculum and instruction and discuss ideas and effective strategies for continued implementation of NCLB.

Fayetteville teachers, especially those at Title I schools, use a computerized data system to stay on top of the academic achievement of individual students and see how well each subgroup is mastering the state standards at each grade level. Teachers are then able to supplement instruction for individual students and schedule extra help for students who are falling behind.

Parent involvement has taken on a new dimension in Fayetteville schools. Teachers are required to communicate directly with parents and make home visits if necessary. The purpose is to ensure that parents know what their children need to do to improve their academic achievement and to help parents with home-to-school communication.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Arkansas added 10 days in 2004-05 to the teacher work year, raising the requirement from 180 days to 190 days. Students must attend school for 178 days, which means there are now 12 additional work days for teachers in the school year. Fayetteville had to adjust its salary schedule to account for the extra days—a cost of about $2,500 per year for a teacher with an annual salary of $45,000. The state mandated that the extra 10 days be used for professional development. To meet this requirement, the Fayetteville district and schools put in place a whole range of activities, some district-directed and some individualized, to meet school site needs. All registration for courses by teachers can be done electronically. Teachers sign up for their courses via e-mail and submit their evaluations electronically, which allows the district to compile data effectively and create future plans based on the impact of the first round of training.
Initially, this professional development focused mainly on helping teachers learn how to analyze student assessment data and teaching them how to create individual academic improvement plans for students who had not reached proficient levels of performance. Other topics in the first year of the new program included training on working effectively with parents, understanding poverty and cultural issues that affect families, using technology effectively in the classroom, and understanding civil rights issues involved with English language learners.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of the 609 Fayetteville teachers, 67 are completing the process to become highly qualified according to NCLB. This means that 89% of the teachers in the district already meet the highly qualified expectations of NCLB. Most that do not meet the qualifications are teachers of special education.

A new problem has come about, however, as the result of the new ARHOUSSE, which was recently approved by the Arkansas Department of Education to allow current teachers to demonstrate they are highly qualified. The problem greatly affects elementary teachers assigned to grade 5. Under the old licensure system, elementary teachers were given a K-6 certificate, Michelle Boles explained. But under the new ARHOUSSE plan, when these teachers’ certificates are renewed, they receive a P-4 certificate that covers kindergarten through grade 4, even though elementary schools in Fayetteville and elsewhere cover grades K-5. “This appears to mean that our elementary certified teachers are not qualified to teach grade 5,” said Boles, noting that if this is the case, 30 more teachers will have to take steps to meet NCLB qualifications. “It’s a strange and complex problem that we hope gets resolved,” she added.

The Fayetteville district sees no difference between its high-poverty schools and its low-poverty schools in the number of teachers who meet NCLB qualifications. Fifty of the teachers who do not meet the qualifications teach in the district’s nine elementary schools, but most of these are assigned to fifth grade; 47 of the teachers not yet highly qualified under NCLB teach in the district’s six secondary schools.

What each teacher needs will be reviewed by district staff on an individual basis using the ARHOUSSE plan. Additional professional development, especially in the core content areas of math and language arts/reading, will be offered for those who need more points to qualify under ARHOUSSE.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Arkansas chose the Praxis test as the means to allow both existing paraprofessionals and newly hired ones to demonstrate they are highly qualified according to NCLB criteria. The Fayetteville paraprofessionals who took the test received reimbursement if they had a passing score, which most did. Of the district’s 158 paraprofessionals, 113 met the NCLB requirements a year ago, and now 143 (91%) have done so. Although the trend in the district has been to decrease the use of paraprofessionals and hire additional teachers instead, a school that is new to Title I in 2004–05 chose to hire paraprofessionals in its first year. A large number of Fayetteville paraprofessionals are bilingual in Spanish, and they help English language learners to learn and master history, mathematics, and science concepts.
Data File — Fayetteville Public Schools

Location: Northwest Arkansas
Type: Small city

Number of Schools:
Total: 15
  Elementary: 9 (K-5)
  Middle: 2 (grades 6-7)
  Junior high: 2 (grades 8-9)
  High schools: 2 (grades 10-12)

Number of Title I Schools: 8

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 8,337
  White: 78.5%
  African American: 8.4%
  Hispanic: 8.4%
  Asian: 3.6%
  American Indian: 1%

  Low-income students: 31% (individual school range from 7% to 89%)
  Students with disabilities: 13%
  English language learners: 12%

Teachers
Total number: 609
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 89% (or 84% if grade 5 teachers are included)

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 158
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 91%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years): 0  0
Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years): 0  0
Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years): 0  0
Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years): 0  0

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools offering choice only: 0  0
Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice: 0  0
Schools offering SES and choice: 0  0
California

Escondido Union Elementary School District

Superintendent: Dr. Mike Caston
Contacts: Pat Peterson, Coordinator, GATE/Title I
Randy Garcia, Principal, Grant Middle School
Jim Scott, Principal, Glen View Elementary School
19,328 students, K-8, suburban

District Description

Escondido Union Elementary School District serves students in kindergarten through grade 8 and is the feeder district for Escondido Union High School. Both districts are located in the city of Escondido in the northern suburbs of the city of San Diego. Nearly two-thirds of the Escondido students are Hispanic-Latino, and approximately half of the district’s students are considered English language learners, with Spanish as their primary language. The majority of the students are from low-income families; Escondido’s poverty rate is 62%.

Two Escondido schools are included in this case study: Glen View Elementary School and Grant Middle School.

Key Findings

■ In 2004-05, Grant Middle School entered the corrective action phase of the No Child Left Behind Act. The school had already been assigned a new principal two years ago, and an administrative coach had been hired to assist with curricular and instructional changes. This year, school staff members are visiting or hosting teachers from successful schools with similar demographics to share strategies for improving achievement, and the principal is meeting monthly with principals of the Grant feeder schools to better coordinate curriculum across grades. The entire math program is also being reevaluated to determine why math achievement is lower than it should be.

■ In the fall of 2004-05, six of Escondido’s Title I schools restructured their school day to allow for uninterrupted blocks of 150 minutes for reading instruction in grades 1–3 and a 30-minute literacy block in kindergarten. This change occurred as a result of the implementation of the NCLB Reading First program, which is blended with Title I in the schoolwide program.

■ In order to make school choice available to students, the district provided students with city bus passes or gave mileage reimbursements to parents for transporting children to the school of their choice. Escondido does not provide its own bus transportation for students because its schools are located in densely populated neighborhoods, and children walk to school. The cost to the district of choice-related transportation for the small percentage of students who transferred schools was about $25,000 in 2003-04.

■ The Escondido staff works closely with outside providers of supplemental education services and does not charge providers to use school facilities as sites for tutoring. The district does ask providers to do pre- and post-testing of the students it serves. Even with this cooperative effort, only a small percentage of students participate in the after-school services.
Overall Impact of NCLB

Escondido has had schools in improvement for several years, but until 2004-05, the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act was felt only at the district’s Title I schools. In the fall of 2004-05, however, Superintendent Mike Caston extended accountability for higher student performance to all schools. Title I principals had become accustomed to regular meetings with the superintendent to talk about NCLB requirements for teacher quality and student achievement. This year, for the first time, the principals at all schools are having individual “collegial conversations” with their teachers three times during the year. The intent of these meetings is to review assessments and look at benchmark data to identify areas where changes need to be made. Programs for English language learners across the district are being reviewed to determine the most effective strategies for teaching English. Math has also been identified as an area of study across the district to determine which practices are showing the greatest results for the subgroups of English language learners, Hispanic students, and low-income students.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

In 2004-05, three Escondido schools are in the school improvement or corrective action phase of NCLB accountability. Central Elementary School is in the first year of school improvement and is offering choice. Glen View Elementary School is in its second year of school improvement; its English language learner subgroup did not make adequate yearly progress in 2003 or 2004 testing. This school is offering choice and supplemental education services.

Grant Middle School is in its third year of school improvement, which means it has moved into the corrective action phase of NCLB. In 2003-04, three of the school’s subgroups—low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities—did not make AYP. In 2004-05, although the school made gains on California’s state academic performance index, it missed even more AYP targets. All three groups that had not made AYP in 2003 missed it again in 2004 in both math and reading/language arts; in addition, Hispanic students did not make AYP in math. The entire math program is being reviewed because so many students fell short of the AYP targets, and the school expects to make changes.

Jennifer Walters, deputy superintendent for educational services, called the AYP determination “dichotomous for Grant staff, since great progress had been made according to the California State Academic Performance Index, which measures growth from one year to another.” Grant has made a 53-point gain on the API over the past two years, Walters explained.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Principal Jim Scott said he is pleased with the 2004 overall testing results at Glen View Elementary but disappointed with the progress of English language learners. This subgroup did not make AYP in 2004, and Scott has no simple explanation for why it did not. “Our focus is on kids,” he said, “especially our English learners, and since that means more than half of our students, we need to look closely at what we are doing.” He conjectured that one factor contributing to poor student performance may be that families in Escondido move a lot; many also go back and forth to Mexico, which means that they miss school. Scott and others, however, are not willing to use high student mobility rates as an “excuse for students not learning,” he said.
Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

Glen View Elementary was identified for improvement three years ago under California’s Immediate Intervention for Underperforming Schools program. The school’s improvement status continued under NCLB, but the efforts made were not enough to make AYP in all areas and for all subgroups. Glen View enrolls 830 students, of which 53% are English language learners and 70% are from low-income families.

Two years ago the superintendent placed new principals at several schools to help improve student performance. According to district and school staff, teachers at the schools were working hard, but they felt discouraged and were open to discussions about how instruction could be changed to improve students’ learning. To support the principals, an administrative coach was hired to assist the schools in making structural changes to curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessments, as discussed below.

The coach, Carolyn Mosier, also prepared a Reading First grant application for Glen View and five other Title I schools. The grant was funded, at $1,000 per student for a total of $1,215,500. These funds, which were authorized by NCLB, are now available to improve reading instruction at the schools. At Glen View, four new instructional support/specialist and/or coach positions were created to assist teachers with instruction and to work with small groups of students. A computer technician and a person to work on parent involvement were also hired.

Glen View teachers also developed the school’s plan for improving curriculum and instruction and are working on implementing it by redesigning lessons to focus more on standards. “Our assessments are driving change,” said Jim Scott, the Glen View principal. “Language arts is okay, and so is science, but math needs work,” he admitted. “Reading has been our focus and it will continue to be, but now that kids can read better, we have to look at math.”

Although Glen View fell short of making AYP again in 2004, the school has made some encouraging gains. Students met the overall AYP proficiency targets in 2004 for both English/language arts and math. The English language learner subgroup met the AYP targets in math but missed them in English/language arts.

Grant Middle School, now in corrective action, has had the most difficulty in meeting AYP targets. The school had more than 1,470 students, but boundaries were changed in 2004, and now the school has 1,256 students. The poverty rate of the school is 85%, and 74% of the students are English language learners. Several changes have been made in the past year to address deficiencies in student performance, and more are underway. Paraprofessionals were replaced with additional teachers, who work with students in small groups. Class sizes in math and English were lowered from 30 to 20, and an intervention coach was hired to help prevent low-performing students from falling farther behind. Principals of the elementary schools that feed into Grant Middle School meet monthly with Grant’s principal, Randy Garcia, to create better articulation across grade levels, and research continues to identify middle schools with similar demographics that have been successful in making academic improvement. Recently a team of teachers and other staff from a Long Beach school that has greatly boosted its performance spent a day at Grant. The visitors were excited about sharing their program, according to Pat Peterson, Escondido’s Title I coordinator, and the Grant staff “gained a lot” from the teacher to teacher exchange. “They were able to get down to the basics,” she said. “They talked about changes such as having standards posted in the classroom and addressed during the lessons. When teachers hear from other teachers how important something like this is, they really pay attention.”

Principal Garcia sees Grant Middle School as three almost separate schools: a grade 6 block, a grade 7-8 program, and the English Language Development (ELD) program. The ELD program is for the 200-plus students at the lowest levels of English acquisition;
these students are taught by a team of seven teachers. All the teachers are bilingual, so they can help students understand the concepts they are learning in math, science, and social studies. The ELD program is somewhat isolated from the rest of the school. “There are some advantages in how we do this,” said Garcia, “but we are looking at how the structure supports student achievement, and if it does not, we may have to change it.”

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

According to Peterson, every curriculum area in the district now has a district “road map.” She is pleased with the Houghton Mifflin reading series because it “provides a very balanced program with a strong emphasis on phonics.” Student-teacher ratios are 20:1 in kindergarten through grade 3, as a result of California’s class size reduction program in the primary grades. In grades 4 and up, the ratio is about 30:1.

The Title I elementary schools have made reading the main focus of the curriculum, with uninterrupted blocks of 150 minutes for reading instruction for all students in grades 1–3. Children in kindergarten also have an uninterrupted block designated for literacy and pre-reading activities, but it lasts just 30 minutes per day because kindergarten is a half-day program. These changes were made because of the new NCLB Reading First program.

For the middle schools and grade 5, the district adopted the High Point reading curriculum for students who are two or more years below grade level. Math instruction and math support in grades 6–8 are provided for students during two periods of the school day, and there is additional assistance available both before and after school. Grant Middle School has kept its strong elective program and still offers wood shop, home economics, music, and band. Students participate in athletics too, but the programs are community-based and not directly connected to the school.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Escondido offers a variety of programs for students who are learning English, and the staff is now reviewing these programs to determine their effectiveness. Parents can choose a bilingual program that provides most instruction in Spanish for children. About 1,200 students at seven schools receive bilingual services. Other programs for English language learners include structured English immersion, two-way bilingual (English and Spanish), and a parallel language development program that maintains the student’s primary language. Some of these programs were developed in response to parents’ requests, and others were developed by teachers who believed strongly in a specific approach to learning English.

According to Pat Peterson, the district is taking a strong look at the programs for English language learners to determine their effectiveness. By examining the disaggregated data from 2003 and 2004 testing, district staff hopes to see patterns in achievement and gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the various types of programs. “We have to peel the onion back,” she said, “and that means taking a serious look at what is happening. We are concerned about kids who never leave the ELL programs. We have to get beyond the problems of the past and look ahead.”

The district has had three superintendents in seven years, and during those years, there have been many changes in the programs for English language learners—both the bilingual and English-only programs—but Peterson said that things are “moving in the right direction” now and the leadership from the superintendent is “making things happen.”

English language learners in Escondido are tested on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) for language proficiency in four areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This testing is done when a student enrolls and each
year thereafter, so that a student’s progress in language acquisition can be reviewed and appropriate placements can be made. The ELD curriculum guide used by Escondido teachers is aligned to California’s state standards for English language learners. Instruction is based on the developmental level of the student, and teachers benchmark student progress according to the standards.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Escondido’s professional development for teachers has focused on changing instructional practices in reading and math. Some of the training has sought to help teachers better differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students, especially for the many students who are learning English. Some training is done before and after school, and at times substitute teachers are provided so that teachers can attend training during the day. The student population in Escondido has changed immensely over the past decade, and teachers have had to adjust to the changing needs of the population.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
Three Escondido schools—Central Elementary, Glen View Elementary, and Grant Middle School—are offering school choice in 2004-05. Parents were notified of their eligibility for choice before the school year began but, as in previous years, most parents chose to keep their children at their neighborhood school. Of the 2,800 students who could have gone to another school, only 79 transferred. Some of the students who left Grant Middle School last year wanted to return to Grant in 2004-05, according to Principal Garcia, but because the middle school boundaries were changed over the summer, Grant could not re-enroll the students who had left.

Escondido does not provide any busing for students because the schools are all within walking distances. Choice meant that students had to take city buses to get to the choice schools, a distance of three to four miles from their home school, or their parents had to transport them. The district pays for city bus passes or reimburses parents for gas, and the total cost of choice-related transportation was about $25,000 in 2003-04.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
Grant Middle School was the first school in Escondido that was required to provide supplemental education services for students, and in 2003-04 the district was one of four state-approved providers in the area. An extensive array of after-school programs was made available for the Grant students, but of the 1,245 students who were eligible for supplemental services, only 143 participated.

In 2004-05, both Grant and Glen View are offering supplemental services. Pat Peterson organized a vendor fair and has worked closely with the outside supplemental service providers to make sure students benefit from the program. The after-school offerings at Grant Middle School are extensive, and parents selected what they thought was best for their children. “We don’t charge the vendors to use the school facilities,” said Peterson, since “they are helping our kids.” The school is already open after the regular school day for other activities. “A custodian is there, and we also have a coordinator, so there was not much point in charging [the outside providers],” she explained. “Besides, we want to have a good working relationship with the providers.”

Although NCLB does not impose achievement-related accountability requirements on supplemental education providers, Escondido has the providers administer pre- and post-tests. Providers can use their own tests, said Peterson, who monitors the programs, but the district wants to follow the progress of the students. Parents also release school assessment data to the providers so they know what kind of assistance the students need.
“Our kids need help, so we want to work with the providers in making sure that they get what they need,” said Peterson, adding that, “we try hard to get the lower achieving students in the program because they need to be there.” The after-school programs also help students form bonds with adults who care about them, she said.

Both Grant Middle School and Glen View use the time before and after school for tutoring, extra help, and enrichment programs. In Grant, for example, the regular school day runs from 8:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., but as Garcia explained, the doors open at 6:00 a.m., and students can stay until 6:00 in the evening. Some before- and after-school programs are provided by vendors, while others are supported through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program or the YMCA. “This is a busy and active place,” said Garcia. “It is not unusual to have 300 students here after school.”

Glen View teachers tutor their students for an hour after school and are paid an hourly rate of $30 to do so, but they must have at least eight students in the group. Kindergarten children can stay for additional instruction beyond their half-day class if they need more time to get ready for first grade, and 35 do so.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of the 1,164 teachers in Escondido, 159 have not yet completed all requirements to be considered highly qualified under NCLB. The California beginning teacher support and assistance program is used to help new teachers fulfill the requirements, and the district has implemented coaching and mentoring programs to further assist teachers. The district has also used the California HOUSSE process to assist those teachers who need it, and some teachers are still working on their certification to teach English language learners.

The six Title I/Reading First schools have full-time reading coaches at the schools, and the new Reading First program is coordinated by a district coach. The new program requires at least 40 hours of specialized training and professional development for all teachers. Teachers get paid an hourly rate to attend the training.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
In past years, Escondido relied heavily on paraprofessionals to assist with student instruction in the Title I schools. In 2003 the district had 123 paraprofessionals at the Title I schools that had to meet NCLB qualifications. Only 30% of them did, but in 2004 most of these positions were eliminated because of budget cuts and the desire to use the funds for more teachers. Now there are only seven paraprofessionals, and of these, all have either passed the district-approved test or have the two years of college required by NCLB.

Funding and Capacity
Escondido receives large amounts of state and federal funding from special programs because of its high poverty rate, large numbers of English language learners, and student achievement needs. Schools use their Title I funds primarily for personnel, and in 2004 that has meant additional teachers and coaches. Title I funds have also been supplemented by NCLB Reading First funds.

The district also needs more facilities, particularly at the middle school level, but construction funds are not easily obtained. A recent legal settlement in California that seeks to improve equity in the distribution of resources for students will bring the district additional funds for textbooks and instructional materials.
Data File — Escondido Union Elementary School District

Location: Northern San Diego County
Type: Suburban

Number of Schools:
Total: 20
Elementary: 15 (K-5)
Middle/junior high: 5 (6-8)

Number of Title I Schools: 11

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 19,328
Hispanic: 61%
White: 31%
Asian/Filipino: 4%
African American: 3%
Other: 1%

Low-income students: 62%
English language learners: 48%
Students with disabilities: 10%

Teachers
Total number: 1,164
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 86%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 7
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

| Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years): | 1 | 1 |
| Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years): | 1 | 1 |
| Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years): | 0 | 1 |
| Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years): | 0 | 0 |

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

| Schools offering choice only: | 1 | 1 |
| Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice: | 0 | 0 |
| Schools offering SES and choice: | 1 | 2 |
California

Grant Joint Union High School District
Superintendent: Dr. Larry Buchanan
Contacts: Rick Carder, Director, State and Federal Programs
Additional contacts: Pat Newsome, Associate Superintendent, Education Services
Cathy Orosz, Program Assistant, Categorical Programs
Phil Spears, Research and Evaluation Consultant
Samuel Harris, Principal, Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School
Steve Liles, Principal, Rio Linda High School

13,210 students, 7-12, urban

District Description

Grant Joint Union High School District in Sacramento County, California is a secondary school district with grades 7-12. The district enrolls students from six elementary districts that have students in grades K-6. Grant has six junior high schools, four high schools, and several alternative and specialized schools. The district covers the northern part of the city of Sacramento and includes a somewhat rural portion of Sacramento County and an adjoining county, areas that are becoming suburban as development continues in the region. The neighborhoods served by Grant include some of the highest-poverty areas in northern California and Sacramento County.

Two schools, Rio Linda High School and Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School, are included in this case study.

Key Findings

- The two accountability systems that exist in California, the federal measurement of adequate yearly progress and the state’s Academic Performance Index (API), often show different results for schools because one indicates whether students have met a fixed achievement target and the other measures growth in student achievement. The dual systems are often confusing to the school staff, parents, and the community.

- Several Grant schools have had school assistance teams from the state and county work with their staffs as an intervention for underperforming schools. Because the teams have received high marks from the sites and there is evidence of improved student achievement, plans are in place to expand the assistance teams to more schools.

- Grant staff members have found the task of arranging for supplemental education services for students at six schools to be a huge, time-consuming job, and they have experienced multiple problems in working with some of the outside providers.

Overall Impact of NCLB

The No Child Left Behind Act is having a large impact on the Grant district as it strives to improve low student achievement and meet the law’s requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals. As a positive result of NCLB, the district and its schools have instituted technology-based systems to provide teachers with current information and assessment data about their classes and individual students. The district has also expanded after-
school and Saturday tutoring opportunities for students. Other positive impacts are the growing range of supports to help teachers fulfill the NCLB requirements for subject area expertise and improved collaboration among the district departments of personnel, professional development, research, evaluation, curriculum, and federal programs as they work together to meet NCLB requirements.

As explained in the section below on supplemental education services, a somewhat negative impact of NCLB for the Grant district relates to the many difficulties encountered by district staff in trying to communicate, manage, and provide supplemental services for hundreds of eligible students.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

**AYP STATUS OF THE DISTRICT AND SCHOOLS**

Schools in the Grant district have as many as 10 subgroups large enough to be required to make adequate yearly progress—7 racial-ethnic groups, students with disabilities, low-income students, and English language learners. “That’s a lot more than what is required for schools and districts that are not as diverse as ours,” said Rick Carder, director of state and federal programs, adding that the district is doing its best to address the needs of all its subgroups.

**DISTRICT AYP STATUS**

Although Grant schools show growth on the state accountability system, known as the Academic Performance Index, most of the district’s schools have had difficulty making AYP. The lowest achievement has been in the schools with high numbers of low-income students. California has used the API system for the past seven years. Although the API calculations factor in the performance of racial-ethnic subgroups and low-income students, the system is based on year-to-year growth in achievement. API gains may or may not be consistent with AYP, which is based on students meeting fixed achievement targets, and the dual measurements are a source of confusion.

A large number of Grant schools were immediately designated for school improvement when NCLB went into effect because of their prior status under the California accountability system. The status of school improvement schools for 2004-05 is as follows:

- One school that was a new school in 2003-04 did not make AYP in its first year of testing
- Two schools are in their first year of school improvement
- Two schools are in their second year of school improvement
- Two schools are in their third year of school improvement
- Two schools are in their fourth year of school improvement

The most common reason why the schools are not making AYP is because one or more subgroups did not reach proficiency targets in reading/language arts and/or math. The targets rise each year, so even if students improve, they still may not reach the bar. Also, students who score far below the proficiency target could improve but still not meet the target. The two high schools that were in Year 3 of school improvement last school year both made AYP in 2004, but because two consecutive years of meeting the targets are required, they remain in the same status. Nevertheless, Grant schools have improved according to many AYP indicators, and both district and school staff members anticipate even greater improvement in coming years because of changes made across the district.
RIO LINDA HIGH SCHOOL
Rio Linda High School, which enrolls 1,853 students in grades 9-12, is one of four comprehensive high schools in Grant. A Title I targeted assistance school, Rio Linda is in Year 2 of school improvement. It met all AYP criteria in 2003 but did not make the 95% participation target. Had that not been an issue, Rio Linda would have exited school improvement.

Over the past two years, Rio Linda High School increased its student performance and showed improvement in all content areas. The 2004 state assessments that measure growth showed that Rio Linda exceeded its growth target goal on the state’s Academic Performance Index. The principal of the school, Steve Liles, expects the school to meet the state growth target. He also expects the school to be out of school improvement in 2005. All students in grades 9, 10, and 11 are tested. Due to concentrated efforts to keep students in school, Rio Linda also met the graduation rate target with an increase from 87.3% in 2003 to 93.6% in 2004. The high school does well on other indicators not included in AYP. For example, Rio Linda students performed better than the California state average on tests in Algebra I, geometry, biology, chemistry, and physics.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School is located in the highest poverty area of the Grant District and enrolls 979 students in grades 7 and 8. A schoolwide Title I school, MLK Jr. is in Year 4 of school improvement. The school met the participation rate for 2004 testing with an impressive 98% of the students tested but did not meet the AYP test score targets for either the school as a whole or any of its subgroups. Five subgroups—African American, Hispanic, and Asian students, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students—showed growth but did not meet their targets. On the California API measurement, the school showed growth of 45 points in two years, from 511 to 556.

On the California Standards Test, the main assessment used to determine AYP, only 10% to 21% of students in the various subgroups reached the proficient level in reading in 2004 testing. In math the range of students reaching proficiency was 5% to 20% for the four major subgroups. The highest performers were white students in reading (21%) and Asian students in math (20%).

Because MLK Jr. is in Year 4 of school improvement, serious sanctions loom. “We realize the situation we are in,” said Samuel Harris, the school’s principal, “but we are determined that our students will reach the necessary performance levels. We have come such a long way, and we know where we are going.”

TESTING ISSUES
California tests students in English/language arts and math at all grade levels from 2 through 11, and in history and science in grades 9, 10, and 11. Science will be added in 2005 for grades 5 and 8. Two tests are administered—the California Standards Test, which forms the basis of AYP determinations, and the California Assessment Test. This means that Grant students in grades 7 through 11 take two state English/language arts tests and at least two math tests, depending on their highest level of math. In some grades they take additional exams in history and science.

California also has a separate high school exam that students must pass for graduation. “A high school sophomore, for example, takes eight separate tests plus the exit exam,” Carder explained. Although some Grant staff members are concerned about over-testing students, Carder emphasized that this testing schedule makes it possible to follow the progress of grade level cohorts of students from year to year on all the tests. “We know the areas in which standards are being met, and we know which kids are meeting them,” he said, “and we also know which skills are not being mastered and who the kids are that are having academic problems.”
TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Grant has a special school for the most severely disabled students in the district from all grade levels. Because of their severe cognitive disabilities, education for these students focuses on helping them become self-sufficient. Students whose disabilities are less severe go to other schools in the district; in most cases, the numbers in individual schools are not large enough for the subgroup to count for AYP. Phil Spears, Grant’s consultant for research and evaluation, asserted that the disabilities subgroup will never meet the proficiency levels that NCLB requires. In his view, the new federal guidance for testing students with disabilities did not make much difference in the AYP status of the district.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
The neighborhoods that make up the Grant school district are very diverse but changing, as large numbers of recent immigrants and refugees move into the district. More than one in five Grant students (23%) are considered English language learners. Hmong, Spanish, and Russian are the major languages, but large numbers of students speak Ukrainian, Lao, Mien, Hindi, and Romanian, and there are 27 others languages represented.

Grant High School has the highest number of English language learners in the district—nearly 800 of the school’s approximately 2000 students. At Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School, nearly half (47%) of the students are English language learners, and of this group, 70% are at the beginning and intermediate levels of English proficiency. Rio Linda High School has 325 ELL students, about 19% of its enrollment, but most of them are at the higher levels of English language acquisition.

Schools are gearing up for many more English language learners because hundreds of Hmong families are leaving refugee camps in Thailand and being resettled in Grant neighborhoods. District staff recognizes that adjustments will be difficult for these students, who are entering school without any English. In addition, their education levels are low, and many have had no education at all. The district is preparing to assist teachers with appropriate strategies to use with these newcomers, who will need considerable intensive instruction in English at the same time they adjust to life in the U.S.

English language learners in California are tested for oral English proficiency and basic reading, writing, speaking, and listening on the statewide English Language Development Test. When ELL students score at level 5, they can be redesignated as “fluent English proficient” if they meet other criteria, such as being able to function at normal classroom levels of performance. ELL students take the same tests for AYP that other students do, and those who speak Spanish can take a test in that language. Tests are not available in other languages, however. The California Department of Education’s ELL proposal was approved by the U.S. Department of Education to allow students who are redesignated as fluent English proficient to remain longer in the ELL subgroup for AYP purposes. Until these students meet grade level proficiency levels on the English/language arts test for three years, they are counted for AYP purposes in the ELL subgroup. This allows ELL students more time to master the standards and be on equal standing with other students.

TEST PARTICIPATION ISSUES
Grant had problems with test participation in 2003 because in the past California had required a 90% test participation rate. When the federal requirement of 95% took effect, some schools were caught by surprise and later found they had not met AYP because they had not tested enough students. In 2004 all schools except one, Grant High School, the district’s lowest-performing high school, were deemed to have met the participation rate in the state’s initial AYP report, but after the district requested a state review of the numbers, Grant High School was also found to have met the 95% rate.
Parents in California have a legal right to “opt out” of testing for their children, which makes it difficult for many schools to maintain test participation, but this has not affected the Grant district. “I am not aware of a single parent taking advantage of this right,” said research and evaluation coordinator Phil Spears.

Strategies for Improving Schools

IMPROVEMENT AND CORRECTIVE ACTION ACROSS THE DISTRICT

The Grant district is using a variety of strategies to improve school and student performance.

GENERAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

“Across the district, teachers are changing their teaching to make sure state standards are addressed,” said Pat Newsome, associate superintendent for educational services. Two years ago, the district made changes in curriculum and instruction at schools identified for NCLB improvement, which represented a majority of the schools in the district. Similar changes have also been made in the district’s other schools to keep them out of improvement status.

In all schools, the Grant district staff has put in place technology-based systems to collect and analyze assessment data. Through this system, teachers can identify the specific needs of individual students and use that knowledge to individualize instruction and ensure needed skills are taught. “We are able to get assessment results into the hands of teachers, and we train teachers how to use student data,” said Newsome.

The district is also bringing School Assistance and Intervention Teams (SAITs) into schools to do a specialized analysis of curriculum and instruction. This effort began in the district in 2003-04 at Foothill Farms Junior High School because the school had missed the mandatory California API growth target for two consecutive years. Grant district staff and the Sacramento County Office of Education arranged for a SAIT to come to Foothill Farms to help staff conduct a thorough analysis of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. The team also provided the staff with professional learning opportunities throughout the school year. Additional state funds were used for a mentor for the principal and other kinds of support. The effort paid off when Foothill Farms made AYP in 2004 and also exited the California state sanctions. If the school does so again in 2005, it will be out of school improvement. District and school officials attributed part of the school’s academic success to the SAIT process and teamwork throughout the school.

“Opportunities for students to get extra help have expanded during the past two years,” said Rick Carder. Anytime School is a districtwide program that provides after-school tutoring and enrichment classes to help students improve academically. Begun four years ago, the program has grown each year, and now hundreds of students participate at several schools, Carder explained. A recent innovation to Anytime School was the opening of Saturday sessions for athletes and other students who are unable to attend after school. The program has also been redesigned to include tutoring related to the specific standards for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN CORRECTIVE ACTION

The district also has efforts targeted on the schools now in corrective action. Implementing new curriculum was the first piece, followed by intensive intervention in reading and math—a triple block of instructional time for reading and a double block for math. Next, the district put in place intersession classes for low-performing students, along with literacy training and support classes for teachers. A math coach was hired
to strengthen the math program in the corrective action schools, and the scope and sequence of the math curriculum was reviewed. In the targeted school, the school day starts late on Wednesdays to make time for professional development. During this time, teachers work in groups to analyze student achievement data and learn how to effectively implement new instructional strategies. Staff members share what they learned from training session presenters and explain how to use this knowledge in the classroom.

“Coaches were also hired to assist with English language development and general curriculum in the corrective action schools,” Newsome said. The coaches help teachers by doing in-class observations, coaching and additional training. “We also hired a full-time consultant,” she said, “and this person has expertise in standards, assessments, and accountability to work with teachers, counselors, and site administrators.”

In 2004-05, the Grant district also plans to use the School Assistance and Intervention Teams in all district schools in corrective action, according to Pat Newsome. Although the program was designed for schools on the “watch” list or in earlier stages of improvement, Newsome believes that the staff and students in the corrective action schools will benefit even more from the specialized analysis of curriculum and instruction and the follow-up training.

**STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Students in the Grant district who score at beginning and intermediate levels on the California English language development test are placed in English immersion classes, while those who score at the early advanced and advanced levels of proficiency are enrolled in English language mainstream classes. Teachers of ELL students must meet the state requirements, which they can do through a bilingual designation or one that indicates certification for language acquisition.

**IMPROVEMENT AND CORRECTIVE ACTION STRATEGIES IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS**

In addition to districtwide activities, Grant also uses specific strategies tailored to the needs of individual schools, as the following examples show.

**GRANT HIGH SCHOOL**

The district implemented a special “school within a school” program for a targeted group of 100 low-achieving students at Grant High School. Now in its second year, the goal of the program is to establish a small learning community within the large school that fosters positive adult-student relationships. The program is somewhat separate from the regular school program but not isolated from it. The students in this group are taught by a team of teachers in math, reading/English, science, and history. For these core subjects, the students stay with the same teachers, who also offer major doses of counseling, but the students go to other classes for electives and physical education to maintain a connection with the rest of the school. “We want to keep our students learning and get them thinking about their lives beyond high school, including jobs and careers, and we do not want to see them drop out of school,” said Newsome. “We believe that parent involvement is a critical part of the program, and our teachers make special efforts to reach out to parents.”

**RIO LINDA HIGH SCHOOL**

Like all California schools, Rio Linda High School has a comprehensive plan for student achievement that lists goals, objectives, and activities for each school year based on an annual needs assessment. Rio Linda’s plan targets the improvement of attendance as a way to increase learning. Attendance has been a concern for several years, both in the district and at this school. To assist with improving attendance, an outreach counselor was hired and funded under a state pupil retention grant, and motivational incentives are offered to the students.
Rio Linda also provides additional support in language arts and math for low-achieving students. Anytime School tutoring is available for all students, including those who need to pass the CAHSEE. Higher achieving students can take Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and the school has increased both its AP and Honors classes from 3 to 11 classes in the past two years. The AVID program (Advancement via Individual Determination) matches students with mentors who help them take on challenging coursework to prepare for college.

Professional development was also a major focus of improvement activities at Rio Linda High School, according to principal Steve Liles. District staff worked closely with school leaders to assess individual professional training needs in all areas of instruction. The result is an ongoing and varied program of professional development that includes regular classes for teachers, specialized requested training, and support for beginning teachers. “We cover the California Teaching Standards in all training,” said Liles, “and this staff has developed ways to collaborate on assessing, analyzing, and planning for the different instructional needs of the students.” The district’s program specialist assigned to Rio Linda High School follows up with teacher support where it is needed and/or requested.

In collaboration with the Sacramento County Office of Education, teams of Rio Linda staff designed workshops in such areas as developing lesson plans, meeting the needs of students with special needs, deconstructing and unpacking the state standards, providing explicit direct instruction, and preparing students for testing, among others.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

A few years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School had serious problems in student performance and general management of the school. Turnover among teachers and administrators was extremely high and morale was low. Students had high rates of truancy, suspensions, expulsions, and out-of-control behavior. Severe scheduling problems kept some students out of classes they needed, and parents had little confidence in the school. Things have changed at MLK Jr., in large part because of the greater accountability imposed by NCLB. “We have resolved major problems of school safety, inadequate facilities, and the poor learning environment,” said principal Samuel Harris. “We no longer have such dismal attendance, and the scheduling disasters of the past are long gone.”

“Teacher retention and training are high priorities at the school,” said Harris, “along with greater use of technology and parental involvement.” Harris added, “This is a very different school now. It generates a positive attitude, and you can feel it when you walk the halls and enter classrooms.”

The school’s comprehensive plan for student achievement lists several improvement strategies. “We have to use direct and explicit instruction in our lesson planning and our delivery systems throughout the school, and we have to continue to improve classroom management,” Harris said. “We must teach our students study skills and we have to provide remedial instruction for those who are not at grade level.” In addition, said Harris, “the school will continue to make assessment and diagnostic software readily available for teachers and counselors.” The school has also hired an outside mathematics consultant to focus on closing the mathematics achievement gap.

MLK Jr. teachers have participated in numerous workshops, inservice sessions, and collaborative sessions through the school’s program of professional development aimed at aligning curriculum, instruction, and materials. The school leadership team underwent extensive training by a statewide training group in the effective use of the district’s newly adopted standards-aligned textbooks. A math resource teacher was assigned to work with teachers in the math department to make sure that intervention and remedial programs were closing achievement gaps.
MLK Jr. holds regular monthly meetings of the school site council, which is made up of parents and school staff and serves as an advisory group for state and federal program implementation and funding. Many parent and student recognition programs are scheduled during the year, and the career fair helps students set direction for their learning.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

With several schools in the later years of school improvement, Rick Carder and Cathy Orosz, federal programs assistant, have had much experience in working with both the choice and supplemental education services requirements of NCLB over the past two years. “We had to learn a lot of this on our own,” said Carder, “and there weren’t many guidelines for us to follow. But now we find ourselves giving advice to other districts that are just getting into choice and SES.”

**NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE**

Notifying parents about choice and preparing to move students who wanted to transfer was a huge job in Grant, according to district officials, even though relatively few students changed schools. Most parents chose to keep their children in their neighborhood schools. Grant officials also found that junior high and high school students were not interested in leaving their friends to go to a different school. For the ones who did want to leave, there were not many choices in the Grant district because most of the schools were in improvement—and adjoining districts were not willing to take Grant students.

Of the 8,893 students eligible to transfer to another school in 2003-04, only 31 went to a different school. For the 2004-05 school year, 9,259 students were eligible to transfer, and letters were sent to parents in August explaining the choice options. As in the past, the letters included translations into the district’s major languages of Spanish, Hmong, and Russian. But only 55 students transferred—11 high school students and 44 junior high students, somewhat higher than in 2003 but still only a very small percentage.

Steve Liles, principal of Rio Linda High School, notified the parents of 1,838 students in August 2004 that the students could transfer to Foothill Farms High School and that the district would pay for transportation, as was done in 2003-04. Only one receiving school was available to accept transfers because only one high school in the district was not in improvement. Only three students transferred.

**SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

Before the start of the 2003-04 school year, letters were sent to the families of 9,000 students who could be eligible for supplemental education services. Only 30 families contracted with providers, and only eight students took advantage of the tutoring services. In most cases, the tutoring took place in the student’s home, although some services were provided in a community library or at a school. A total of six providers were involved, including one that used free computers as an incentive for families to sign up. Most of the students did not follow through on this company’s tutoring services, even though their parents received a computer.

In the summer of 2004, to prepare for supplemental services for the 2004-05 school year, Carder prepared letters of intent for the district to send to the 50 providers on the state list that had shown interest in serving the Grant district. “I met individually with the 15 that responded,” said Carder, “I told them about our provider fair for parents, and I explained their role and how they could communicate with parents.” Carder said he made sure the providers knew how parents would select their provider, what was included in the provider contract, and the dollar amount available per student. “I also wanted them to know how the services would be monitored throughout the year,” he said.
Rick Carder found that making the arrangements for supplemental education services took considerable effort and time from his staff in both 2003-04 and 2004-05. His list of the procedures he follows for supplemental services includes the following items:

- Notify parents about which services are available from various providers
- Translate parent information into at least three languages and communicate orally with parents who need help in other languages
- Meet with the providers on the state list that are offering services in the Grant district
- Set up meetings where parents can review the offerings from the providers
- Establish written contracts between parents and providers that describe the services for students
- Determine the funding amounts and how providers will be paid
- Resolve misunderstandings and problems that arise between parents and providers
- Find space where the providers can work with students
- Monitor the services that students receive
- Help with student attendance at the service centers

Carder and his staff developed sample questions that parents could ask the providers about the services they were offering. “We want parents to know a lot of things about the providers,” explained Carder. “They need to know the qualifications of the provider’s staff, the types of assessments used to measure progress, evidence of the provider’s effectiveness, instructional methods used, expectations for students, logistics of service delivery, and many other areas. I can see how all this help can be truly beneficial for students, but there are many problems that still have to be resolved.”

Providers that were willing to work in the Grant district were requesting $26 to $50 per hour for services, but one provider was asking $475 an hour. This provider, according to Carder, spent a total of three hours with parents and got 20 of them to sign up for a free computer. All the instruction for the student is online and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That sounded good to the parents, said Carder, but the families did not have Internet service or the money to pay for it. Some parents did not even have a telephone, and they didn’t realize they needed one for the Internet. “The provider told me that after the parents sign up and get their computer, they are on their own,” Carder said. “They don’t do follow-up support, and for this he is billing us $425. One of my frustrations has been all the parents who are calling to ask if they can have a free computer. They have heard about the program, but they aren’t interested in getting help for their student—they just want the computer.”

Despite all the work by Carder and his staff, only 165 of the 4,200 eligible students signed up for supplemental education services for 2004-05. At Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School, 956 students were eligible for supplemental services in 2004-05, and 23 of these students are participating, an increase over the 5 students that participated last year. The same low participation occurred among students at Rio Linda High School, where just 45 of the 911 eligible students are participating. However last year, only 16 Rio Linda students took advantage of the assistance.

Rick Carder is concerned that so few students have taken advantage of these services, even with the massive efforts to communicate with parents about the benefits to their children. Carder believes that the district’s high transiency rate and frequent moving of students and families contribute to the situation. A large number of Grant stu-
dents are in foster care or involved with juvenile protection and custody, and for many of their families, the academic part of their children’s lives may not be their highest priority at the time. The general achievement of students is hampered when they move in and out of the district and it is difficult to follow their progress.

The providers offered help with just about anything that students need, according to Grant staff. Students could have assistance with preparing for exams; remedial coursework in English, math and writing; individual tutoring including problem-solving activities; group tutoring with incentives such as CDs and books; one-on-one tutoring in the home in all subjects; computer-assisted math tutorials; small group settings with standards-based lessons; literacy and reading software; and even tutoring that included time management, life skills, and development of future plans. “There is so much available to the kids,” said Carder. “I continue to be hopeful that they and their parents will make better use of these great opportunities to improve their skills.”

The Grant district submitted the following suggestions for improving supplemental education services to the California Department of Education’s legal division in October 2004 in a response to a request about the district’s experiences:

- Approve providers annually and not monthly
- Release per student allocations for supplemental services no later than June 1
- Provide training under NCLB about supplemental services
- Improve the state website to link all supplemental service providers with the districts they are willing to serve
- Take action against providers who are violating the intent of NCLB law
- Allow districts greater flexibility in terminating inappropriate services
- Provide direction to school districts in regard to parent incentives and offers that conflict with California regulations

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

Grant officials used a district survey of teachers to determine school by school which teachers met NCLB teacher qualifications and what the most effective ways would be to provide support for the teachers who needed to become highly qualified. The teachers’ responses were linked to specially designed software programs that made it possible to efficiently collect and analyze data about NCLB teacher qualifications. Every teacher assigned to teach a core academic class filled out the survey. The survey showed that many Grant teachers who had a bachelor’s degree and a California teaching credential were teaching in their minor areas of study rather than their majors.

The percentage of teachers who meet NCLB requirements varies by school. At Rio Linda High School, 47% of the school’s core academic classes were taught by teachers who met NCLB criteria in 2003-04, while 53% of the classes were taught by teachers who had not met all the requirements. In most cases, the teachers were teaching in their minor areas of study. Of the total teaching staff at Rio Linda, 86% have met the highly qualified requirements of NCLB, and 50 teachers are currently working on meeting those requirements. At Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High at the beginning of school year 2003-04, only 35.8% of the school’s core academic classes were taught by teachers who met NCLB requirements. All of the 39 teachers assigned to teach these core content classes participated in high quality professional development. The percentage of highly qualified teachers at the school for 2004-05 is 65%.
To fulfill NCLB requirements, teachers in the Grant district can take different paths. New teachers can either pass an exam to demonstrate their subject matter competency or fulfill coursework requirements for the subject they teach. Appropriate coursework would include having an undergraduate major or its equivalent in the core subject being taught or a graduate degree in the subject. Teachers whose credentials were issued before July 1, 2002 have two additional choices. They can obtain National Board Certification for teachers or fulfill California’s HOUSSE option. The HOUSSE option requires teachers to accumulate 100 points, based on their prior teaching experience in the core subject; additional coursework; and their experience with a service or leadership role in the core subject, such as serving as a mentor, academic curriculum coach, supervising teacher, college or university instructor, or site team leader, or being recognized at the national or state level as an outstanding educator in the subject.

Teachers who cannot accumulate 100 points can still demonstrate subject matter competence through a classroom observation by an administrator based on the National Teaching Standards or a portfolio assessment. By the beginning of the 2004-05 school year, 73% of Grant’s 750 teachers who were required to meet the NCLB definition of highly qualified had done so. The others, as well as new teachers who began in fall 2004, have until the end of 2005-06 to complete their requirements. Teachers who met the requirements received a “Certificate of Compliance—NCLB Teacher Quality,” signed by Superintendent Buchanan.

All district parents were notified by a letter dated August 24, 2004 of their right to request specific kinds of information about the professional qualifications of their child’s teachers. The letter directed parents to contact the district’s categorical programs office if they wished to have information about their child’s teacher.

A new problem related to teacher qualifications emerged at Foothill Farms Jr. High School. To raise achievement in reading and math, the school enrolled low-performing students in two hours of math or English instead of one hour. To do this, science or social studies (or both) were eliminated from these students’ school day. That change left surplus teachers in science and social studies, but more teachers were needed for math and English. Because of teacher contracts and tenure, the teachers could not be released, so they were reassigned to new content areas in which they were not licensed. Although the teachers received additional training and have until the end of the 2005-06 year to become fully qualified in the new content areas, they still count as “not meeting the NCLB requirements.”

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

Grant’s paraprofessionals who are paid with Title I funds or work in schoolwide Title I schools are a diverse group of employees. They range from long-time classroom aides who assist teachers with instruction to recently hired bilingual interpreters who help the growing number of English language learners master learning in subjects other than English. Grant has 133 paraprofessionals who are required to meet NCLB qualifications. To help them do so, the district developed an assessment to measure their skill levels. As of December 2004, 121 of the paraprofessionals had passed that test, a 91% rate of qualification.

At the school level, only 1 of the 11 paraprofessionals employed in 2003-04 at MLK Jr. Junior High met NCLB requirements at the beginning of the year. By the beginning of 2004-05, all of the paraprofessionals in the school had met the requirements.
Funding and Capacity

FUNDING AND COSTS
Grant received increases in Title I funds in 2003-04 and in 2004-05 because the updated census data used for Title I allocations showed the district had growing numbers of low-income students. However, the state of California has cut many programs over the past two years, and Grant, like most California districts, is receiving fewer state funds. This makes federal funding all the more critical for carrying out the goals of NCLB.

One of the most unanticipated costs for Grant was the cost of arranging for supplemental education services, both in 2003-04 and 2004-05. Furthermore, NCLB mandates to set aside funding for school choice transportation, supplemental education services, and professional development took 30% of the Title I funds away from school site budgets. Because only small numbers of students transferred to another school and participated in supplemental services, these dollars were redistributed in 2003-04, but a new 10% set-aside for district school improvement was taken from the 2004-05 allocation for Title I.

CAPACITY ISSUES
Grant officials believe that the district could benefit from more technical assistance for its academically troubled schools, but staff resources are limited at the district and state levels. The technical assistance provided in past years by the state was very useful, but this support is no longer available.

Data File — Grant Joint Union High School District

Location: Northern part of the city of Sacramento and Sacramento County
Type: Urban

Number of Schools:
   Total: 14
   Middle/junior high: 6
   High schools: 4
   Other: 4
Number of Title I Schools: 14

Student Enrollment and Demographics
   Total number of students: 13,210
   White: 36%
   Hispanic: 22%
   African American: 17.5%
   Asian/Filipino: 13%
   Multiple or No Response: 8%
   Pacific Islander: 2%
   Alaskan Native: 1.5%
   Low-income students: 61.2% (range from 47.5% to 82%)
   English language learners: 23%
   Students with disabilities: 12%

(Note: District staff estimate that the low-income percentage at the schools is much higher and closer to 100% at some schools because many secondary students do not apply for free or reduced-price lunches.)
Teachers
Total number: 750
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 73%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 133
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 91%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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<th>Based on 2002-03 testing</th>
<th>Based on 2003-04 testing</th>
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<td>Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years):</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years):</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years):</td>
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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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California

Oakland Unified School District

State Administrator: Randolph Ward
Contacts: Dorothy Norwood, Director, Department of Accountability, Oakland Unified School District
Robin Hall, Executive Director, Region IV System of District and School Support
Steven Jubb, Executive Director, Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools
Jeanne Ludwig, Education Program Consultant, California Department of Education

49,334 students, K-12, urban

District Description

Oakland Unified School District is a high-minority, high-poverty, large urban district in northern California. Placed in state receivership in June 2003 due to financial difficulties, the district has continued to face a shrinking budget as a result of declining enrollment. For the past five years, enrollment has decreased by 2,000 students per year on average. In addition, the district has lost approximately 6,000 students to charter schools since 1999. Total enrollment as of fall 2004, including students now in charter schools, was 49,334.

Key Findings

- Financial difficulties and staff turnover have made implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act difficult in Oakland, where the district central office staff has been shrinking. For example, tracking data for NCLB was an additional responsibility for staff members who were already overextended.

- School choice through NCLB has not been popular with parents. However, choice numbers are obscured by the fact that the district has opened 20 new schools, which are all schools of choice. Nine are small high schools in existing buildings, previously occupied by large comprehensive high schools targeted for NCLB corrective action or restructuring. Students who might have sought transfers under NCLB may have actually exercised school choice by enrolling in a district school of choice.

- Supplemental services have been used by about one-third of the eligible students in Oakland. District officials reported that due to the constraints of the law, they have had difficulty ensuring the quality of supplemental services offered by outside providers, although they have taken steps to monitor these outside programs. For example, district staff observations of last year’s tutoring programs showed that some were overcrowded and that some tutors had difficulty with classroom management.

Overall Impact of NCLB

While Oakland Unified School District officials called the mandates of NCLB “credible and beneficial,” they said they have struggled to meet the logistical requirements. Often they found that NCLB overtaxed staff, which was already stretched thin due to budget constraints, declining enrollment, and employee turnover. District officials added that NCLB does not provide enough funding to cover the extra work needed to
implement mandates like school choice and supplemental services, especially in large urban districts where implementation involves numerous schools and students.

**Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress**

Based on 2004 testing, 61 schools, or about 52% of Oakland’s schools, did not make adequate yearly progress based on 2004 testing. Testing from the previous year, school year 2002-03, showed that a total of 54 schools, or about 46%, had not made AYP. While academic achievement improved at some of these schools, it did not improve fast enough to meet state targets.

**Strategies for Improving Schools**

**STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS**

Four years ago in reading and two years ago in math, Oakland adopted new elementary instructional programs. This was followed by adoptions at the secondary level. Since then, staff has worked toward aligning new district-level texts with state standards. However, “there has been a lag in implementation,” according to Dorothy Norwood, director of the district’s department of accountability. This year the district will continue to work with identified schools to make sure teaching is aligned to state standards.

The district is also partnering with outside experts to help schools improve. For example, the Region IV System of District and School Support (RSDSS) provides a coaching network for principals who are in their first year as administrators or who are new to the district. Of the 30 principals receiving the coaching, about half are in schools in need of improvement, said Robin Hall, the RSDSS executive director. The program is designed to help principals become better curriculum and instruction managers, Hall explained.

Despite these interventions, the district is not satisfied that it is doing all it can to help schools improve. Randolph Ward, the administrator appointed by the state to oversee the Oakland school district, has appointed a school intervention team, composed of district and community leaders, which will make recommendations to the Oakland school board this fall about future interventions to help schools improve. Action was expected by early 2005.

**STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS IN CORRECTIVE ACTION OR RESTRUCTURING**

When Oakland schools enter corrective action, they often also become part of the state assistance intervention team program, a state monitoring system designed prior to implementation of NCLB. The schools are grouped geographically and assigned to a district-level executive director. With the help of the executive director, these schools come up with plans for improvement. Frequently this involves updating textbooks, providing additional training for teachers, and implementing research-based reforms. The schools also receive an additional $75,000 in Title I funding to support these plans, which districts must then match with $35,000 of district funding. To implement the plans, the state provides an additional $150 per student, which the district must match.

In addition, some schools in corrective action or restructuring have been closed by the district. Often, declining enrollment as well as academic failure plays into the decision to close a school. Some of these school buildings have reopened as schools of choice within the district. Twenty such schools are operated in partnership with the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES). These schools are completely new schools,
with a different culture and a clean slate in their record of making AYP. In addition, the new schools must be small—300 to 500 students in high schools, 300 to 400 in elementary schools, and 400 to 600 in K-8 schools, said BayCES Executive Director Steven Jubb. In general, the new schools use the district curriculum, but some schools obtain waivers. Their curriculum depends on the student population, the needs of the community, and the past history of failure, Jubb explained. Some schools have brought in nationally recognized reform models, while others have invented their own. “We do have some homegrown models here that have been put into place by some exceptional principals,” Jubb said. But in other buildings, Jubb noted, “There’s not a lot to build on.”

While the new schools have a great deal of autonomy and operate like charter schools in terms of starting new initiatives, they are district schools. They are still governed by the school board and still employ union teachers. BayCES’s involvement is a partnership that will be phased out over time. Jubb sees the process as an alternative to school restructuring options that turn schools into charters or for-profit entities. “Instead of crying and complaining about charter schools, we decided we would develop attractive in-district options,” he explained.

Choice and Supplemental Services

**NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE**

While Oakland did offer school choice, some successful schools in the district did not have room for new students, Dorothy Norwood noted. “We had to narrow the list down,” she said, explaining that the district removed overcrowded schools from the list of receiving schools.

Only 39 of the 17,609 eligible students took advantage of the NCLB choice option in 2003-04; perhaps because Oakland already has another school choice program within the district. The 20 schools operated in partnership with BayCES, for example, all have waiting lists for attendance. However, students who transfer to these schools are not counted as NCLB transfers.

In addition, many parents are involved in their neighborhood schools’ governance and may therefore want to stick with their school and leverage change internally. Oakland schools have school site councils made up of parents, school staff, and students in secondary schools. The councils are responsible for preparing and implementing a “single site plan for student achievement” that includes funding for Title I and other categorical programs.

**SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

School year 2003-04 was the second year supplemental education services were offered in Oakland. Of the state-approved providers, 25 expressed interest in serving Oakland and 9 followed through with services. For 2004-05, the number of providers increased to 13.

In 2003-04, supplemental services were not in place in schools until January. “It wasn’t through anybody’s fault. It was just the process of implementing a new program,” noted Norwood. Of the 8,814 students eligible for services, 2,864 (or 32.5%) participated.

While it is perhaps too early to evaluate the effect of these services on students, Oakland district staff did observe each tutoring program once during the year and gathered anecdotal information about the services. Results were mixed, Norwood reported. “There was a wide, wide range of quality,” she said. While some programs worked well, in others, she said, “We saw classes with 25 students. How is that offering quality tutor-
“In addition, she said some tutors had trouble with basic classroom management and some programs did not have bilingual staff to communicate with parents.

Of supplemental services, Norwood concluded, “As a concept, I agree with it.” She emphasized that more accountability is needed for service providers. “I just feel that more guidelines should be given to providers about their responsibilities to the children,” she explained. Next year, she would also like to see multiple observations of programs, stronger connections between the program and the students’ classrooms, and both mid-year and annual reports so that problems can be addressed sooner.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Data on teacher qualifications has been difficult to gather in Oakland, and the district has been hampered by staff changes in its human resources department. Last year, letters reporting information on teacher quality went out to parents in mid-October. This year, the information was slated to be sent later.

State officials explained that for the 2003-04 school year, California districts reported the number of core classes taught by teachers meeting the state’s definition of highly qualified in October. Oakland reported that 81.3% of teachers met the definition. Oakland is in the process of reporting for 2004-05. “But that data won’t be available until February 2005,” said state education programs consultant Jeanne Ludwig.

While finding special education teachers who meet the state’s definition of highly qualified remains a challenge in 2004-05, shortages in areas such as math, science, and bilingual education have eased somewhat in Oakland. “It’s better, but it’s not perfect,” Norwood said. She attributed better staffing this year to the fact that the district was able to meet budget constraints without laying off teachers. The prior year 500 teachers received layoff notices because of the fiscal crisis but these cuts ended up being too deep.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Data on paraprofessionals’ qualifications for 2004-05 are also still being collected. For 2003-04, Ludwig reported that of the 318 Title I paraprofessionals in Oakland, only 4 people, or 1.3%, met the state’s definition of highly qualified.

Norwood said the district thinks this percentage will improve in two ways. First, she said, “The district offers some training classes with local colleges.” In addition, the union and the adult education program have worked together to offer courses to prepare paraprofessionals to pass the examination that allows them to be certified as highly qualified.

Funding and Capacity

CAPACITY ISSUES

The district’s capacity to implement NCLB is stretched, said Norwood. The central office in particular has difficulty managing all the data collection and tracking due to a shrinking staff and staff turnover, Norwood explained.

Of all the NCLB mandates, supplemental services are the most difficult to manage, Norwood said. “It’s labor intensive. It requires dedicated staff within your department,” she explained. In Oakland, implementing the program requires flyers and information sessions for parents, as well as contracts, invoices, and billing for providers.
Data File — Oakland Unified School District

Location: Oakland, California
Type: Urban

Number of Schools (Data include charter schools)
Total: 118
Elementary: 71
Middle/junior high: 21
High schools: 19
Other: 7

Number of Title I Schools: 89

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 49,334
African American: 41.3%
Hispanic: 34.3%
Asian: 15.6%
White: 6.0%
American Indian: 0.5%

Low-income students: 73.4%
English language learners: 39.4%
Students with disabilities: 11.8%

Teachers
Total number: 2,888
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 81.3%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 318
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 1.3%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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Colorado

Colorado Springs District 11
Superintendent: Dr. Norman F. Ridder
Contact: Holly Hudson, Title I Coordinator
31,421 students, K-12, urban

District Description

Colorado Springs School District 11 is located in southeastern Colorado. The school district serves the city of Colorado Springs, a gateway to the Rocky Mountains. One of the largest school districts in the state, District 11 has a student enrollment that is very diverse, both culturally and economically. The 64 schools in the district serve nearly 32,000 students, of which 21% are Hispanic. The percentage of low-income children in the district’s schools ranges from 10% to 82%, with a district average of 41%.

Key Findings

- Twelve Colorado Springs Title I schools reversed their declining student performance in the past two years and improved enough to exit school improvement status. District officials attribute this improvement to involving teachers in decisions about curriculum, instruction, and strategies for improvement and a district policy of “no excuses.”

- School choice has not been widely used in Colorado Springs, especially among middle school students. District officials speculate that this is because students at that age want to stay in school with their friends and because attending another school would entail long bus rides.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Colorado Springs District 11 has made notable improvement in student achievement in recent years. Twelve schools did not make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act two years ago. Now only three schools are in improvement status, two in Year 1 and one in Year 2.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Colorado uses the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) for all students in grades 3-10 in reading and grades 5-10 in math. Beginning in 2005, math tests will be given in grades 3-10, so districts will have to adjust to more grades being tested. Science testing will take place in 2006 for students in grade 5 and 8.

In 2004-05, three Colorado Springs schools are in school improvement. One school, an elementary school, is in Year 3 of improvement, so choice and supplemental services are both offered to students. The other two schools, both middle schools, are in Year 2—one is already offering choice, and the other will begin offering choice in January 2005 because the improvement status of the school was not finalized until well into the school year. Both schools are also Title I schools, one a schoolwide project and the other a targeted assistance school.
Most schools in the district that have had difficulty making adequate yearly progress have missed achievement targets for the subgroups of students with disabilities and English language learners. The other indicator for Colorado elementary and middle schools, the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level, has also been a factor in some schools. At the middle schools, the subgroup of low-income students has sometimes missed the mark. And at the high schools, the graduation rate is another factor in schools not making AYP. Holly Hudson, the district’s Title I coordinator, noted that schools also must meet state accreditation criteria under the state’s own accountability system. At the start of the 2004-05 year, three schools were on the state alert list for accreditation.

TESTING ISSUES
The testing timelines for Colorado’s state accountability system and NCLB do not match well, according to Hudson. The preliminary test score report that the district received from the state in August 2004 designated some schools for school improvement, but district staff felt the report was in error. However, the district needed to know for sure in order to notify parents about the availability of school choice in schools identified for improvement. If any of the designations were to be reversed, as district staff thought they surely would be, it would be difficult to explain to parents and the community. “We did not want to tell parents that they could send their children to another school and we would pay for the transportation, and then have to tell them later that it was a mistake and it was not going to happen,” said Hudson. The district’s Integrated Technology department sorted out the data and found the errors. The correct information was sent to the state, and finally in mid-October, it was clear which schools had met AYP and which ones had not. However, it was too late at that point to have students change schools, so choice will be offered in January 2005 for the middle school that is now in Year 3 of school improvement. By mid-December, 27 transfer requests had been received. Eight were denied because the students did not live in the eligible attendance area, one parent decided to keep home-schooling the student, and 18 were approved.

TEST PARTICIPATION ISSUES
The test participation rate was a factor at only one school, an English as a Second Language magnet school at the elementary level. When the data were sorted out, it was found that the school did not make AYP because a very small number of ELL students had not been tested. Some families go to Mexico in the spring, and when they were gone, the children missed the testing time. Efforts will be made in the future to help parents understand the importance of school attendance for their children.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED AND WATCH LIST SCHOOLS
The Colorado Springs district has adopted a “no excuses” approach as one way to raise student achievement. All buildings focus on continuous quality improvement based on solid, scientific research, Hudson explained, and teachers are encouraged to use programs that make the most impact. School principals and leaders build cohesive teams and focus their efforts on professional development to reach all children, including the homeless, the transient, low-income children, English language learners, and children with disabilities. “Principals compare their schools to other schools in the state that have similar demographics,” Hudson said, “and when they find top-performing schools, they are encouraged to visit those schools so they can see what is working for them.”

The schools that were in improvement in the past were able to make AYP in all areas because they took to heart the district theme of “no excuses,” district staff said. Each school site was encouraged to find the curriculum that would work best for the students at the school and select the kind of professional development that was needed.
For example, Hudson explained, one school decided to use a direct instruction reading program, Open Court. “They have had fabulous results, but that doesn’t mean that this program would work at all schools,” Hudson said. “The most important thing with any program is to have all staff on board and ensure that teachers are implementing the program as it was designed to be implemented.” This individualized approach is valued in the Colorado Springs district, and it has produced the results in both improvement schools and other schools, according to district officials.

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

Each school site in Colorado Springs makes its own curriculum decisions as part of the district’s belief that what works in one situation may not work in another, but the main goal of all schools is to maintain and improve student performance. Even though each school selects its own curriculum, the intent of the district is to have strong and well-focused programs that are aligned with each other, grade level to grade level, and tied closely to the content standards. Quarterly assessments inform the staff about how students are progressing, which areas should be addressed, and where more attention should be focused.

District staff is reexamining the elementary math programs at schools to make sure students are being prepared for the rigor of math in the upper grades. Students take algebra in grade 8, and this affects the entire range of math that precedes and follows.

**SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Although the percentage of English language learners in Colorado Springs is only 6%, that still amounts to more than 1,300 students. With 40 different languages, the education of these students can pose challenges for the schools. Although the district has 21 magnet schools for ELL students (17 elementary, 1 middle school, 3 high schools), parents decide whether to have their children attend the magnet school or stay at their neighborhood school. All instruction is in English at the magnet schools and other schools. Specially trained teachers work with students in small groups, pulling them out from their regular classroom. Some staff members at both the district and school levels are concerned about the best ways to teach English language learners and how long these students should stay in the subgroup for testing purposes. District research indicates that three years of English language development is not enough time to reach proficient levels of oral and written language.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

**SCHOOL CHOICE**

School choice has not been widely used among middle school students and their parents in Colorado Springs, although this has been an option at some schools for the past two years. The numbers of students who have gone to another school have been very small each year, ranging from 65 to 89 students, even though more than 7,000 students were eligible in some years. Holly Hudson describes the issue this way: “Middle school students are content to stay with their friends. Their input is valued by their parents, who tend to have loyalty to their local community schools.” Another factor, according to Hudson, is the long bus rides to the choice schools. “Students would have to leave home at 7:15 in the morning, so being able to sleep a little later is also desirable for middle school students,” she said.

Even though parents were able to select from as many as seven choice schools with strong or excellent academic ratings, most parents chose the neighborhood school. As noted above, for the school that entered school improvement late based on 2004 testing, parents will be given the opportunity to change schools in January 2005.
SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Only one Colorado Springs school is required to offer supplemental education services in 2004-05. Although two schools had to offer these services last year, only a small number of students participated. The district is an approved provider and offers before-and after-school tutoring for students. Most parents preferred the after-school option, but only 14 students participated during the two-year period of 2002-03 and 2003-04.

The numbers for 2004-05 are larger, with 40 students participating in a program provided by one vendor that offers two hours of instruction twice a week. The after-school time includes skill instruction to small groups of three students. One reason that parents of English language learners have not used supplemental services, according to Hudson, is because they have not understood how beneficial the assistance would be for their children. Hudson is finding ways to help parents understand what is being offered and how it will help their children improve their reading and math skills.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

Colorado Springs District 11 has found that the great majority (91%) of the district’s nearly 2,000 teachers meet the highly qualified requirement of NCLB. Most teachers who do not yet meet the requirement are teachers of special education, ELL teachers, and some content teachers in the middle schools.

Although many of the district’s paraprofessionals do not work at Title I schools, Colorado Springs still hopes to have all paraprofessionals pass the state test for NCLB qualifications. As the school year for 2004-05 began, more than half the paraprofessionals who worked in instructional programs, 475 people or 54%, had met the requirements of NCLB.

Data File — Colorado Springs District 11

Location: Southeastern Colorado
Type: Urban

Number of Schools

Total: 65
Elementary: 39 (K-5)
Middle/junior high: 9 (6-8)
High schools: 5 (9-12)
Other: 12

Number of Title I Schools: 19

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total number of students: 31,421
White: 64%
Hispanic: 21%
African American: 11%
Asian: 3%
American Indian: 2%

Low-income students: 41% (individual school range from 10-92%)
Students with disabilities: 9%
English language learners: 6% (40 languages)
Teachers
Total number: 2,096
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 91% (94% in Title I schools)

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 185 Title I, 354 non-Title I
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 63% of Title I paraprofessionals and 23% of non-Title I

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

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Colorado

Fort Lupton Weld-R-8 School District
Superintendent: Mark Payler
Contacts: Mark Payler, Superintendent
           Kathi Van Soest, Director of State and Federal Programs
           Dr. Ranelle Lang, Executive Director of Learning Services
           Jeanette Aragon, Principal, Tombly Elementary School
           Cindy Kusuno, Principal, Butler Elementary School
2,468 students, preK-12, rural

District Description

The Fort Lupton Weld-R-8 School District serves the small Colorado city of Fort Lupton and its surrounding rural area of about four square miles. A small town and country atmosphere prevails in the district, and the surrounding fields are filled with vegetables, cattle, and horse ranches, but they are also the source of oil, natural gas, and minerals. Immigrant families, mostly from Mexico, continue to find employment in the area as they did with agriculture in the past, and they increase the cultural diversity of the community and its schools. About two-thirds of the district’s students are Hispanic, and about 40% are English language learners.

The district has four well-designed and attractive school facilities that serve as a great enhancement for the town. The schools are also linked to the community library, park, and swimming pool that are located nearby and, in some situations, on the school grounds.

Key Findings

Fort Lupton reconfigured the grade levels in its schools last year as one strategy to improve academic achievement. For purposes of accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act, these schools are considered new schools, and therefore have a “clean slate” for making adequate yearly progress. The testing cycles of 2004 and 2005 testing could identify a school for improvement if AYP is not met in both years.

To improve reading achievement, the district has implemented a universal preschool program, individual literacy plans for fourth grade students who are performing below grade level in reading, and required reading instruction in middle and high schools for students who are not reading at grade level. To make time for reading classes for these students in middle and high schools, the district had to eliminate a regular social studies class.

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, especially at the middle and high school levels, continues to be difficult for this small rural district, which is close to other districts that can pay teachers higher salaries. But the district is providing its teachers with extensive professional development to help them make better use of student assessment data and apply more effective strategies for teaching reading.

Fort Lupton has implemented a major change in teaching methods for English language learners, moving from extended bilingual instruction to grade 6, to transitional bilingual instruction with transition by grade 3. These changes were made to improve the achievement of its large and growing population of students at all grade levels who are learning English.
Overall Impact of NCLB

The low academic performance of students in the district is of great concern to the new superintendent, Mark Payler, who took over in July 2004. The district has been placed on the state accreditation watch list because schools have had difficulty making adequate yearly progress targets. This designation may spur parents of higher-performing students to enroll their children in nearby districts—a situation which the district already sees as a problem. Major restructuring efforts designed to raise achievement included changing the grade levels of schools, a reorganization that is now in place. The district also increased time for reading instruction, as explained below.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
Prior to 2003-04, Fort Lupton schools were divided by grade levels, with one school serving prekindergarten-2, one serving grades 3-4, a middle school serving grades 5-8, and a high school for grades 9-12. All four schools were Title I schools and all were in school improvement status.

In 2003-04, both elementary schools were changed to pre-K-5, and the middle school now includes students in grades 6-8. The high school covers grades 9-12. Title I funds were reserved for the two elementary schools so that students could get a firm academic start in reading, math and other content areas, a change designed to improve academic achievement overall. Although the first year of the new structure showed some gains, the schools are still at a low academic performance level. The two Title I elementary schools have poverty rates of around 65% and high enrollments of English language learners.

General achievement trends at the Fort Lupton schools are low, according to Colorado state accountability reports, but the report indicates stable improvement for the high school and Butler Elementary and improvement for the middle school. Twombly Elementary has not yet entered the state rating system due to the restructuring of its grade configuration last year. The restructuring changes in grade levels resulted in a two-year hold on school improvement status, with a new cycle beginning with the testing of 2004.

Between 2003 and 2004, the greatest gains for the district on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) were in math, but none of the schools made adequate yearly progress. For example, in reading (grades 3 through 10), between 61% and 74% of the students in the state scored at the proficient and advanced levels, but in Fort Lupton the range was between 36% and 47%. The gap is wide between the two major ethnic groups (Hispanic and white), although district officials note this is largely because there are many English language learners in the Hispanic subgroup. The subgroups of English language learners, students with disabilities, Hispanic students, and low-income students did not make AYP in any subject. The percentage of students reaching proficient levels differs significantly between the two elementary schools: 64% for Butler Elementary and 36% for Twombly Elementary.

Dr. Ranelle Lang, director of learning services in Fort Lupton, is responsible for analyzing assessment results, among other things. “Too many students come to school with significant language issues,” she said, referring to the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students. “That makes it hard to get them caught up.”

TESTING ISSUES
Colorado tested students in grades 3 through 10 in reading and writing in 2004, but in math, testing took place only in grades 5 through 10. Math testing will be done in
grades 3 and 4 in 2005. Students in grade 8 were tested in science in 2004, and science testing will take place in 2006 for students in grades 5 and 10. All these grade levels are part of the AYP calculations.

Lupton exceeded federal requirements for test participation. All tests in 2002-03 and 2003-04 had participation rates of at least 97%, and for some tests, participation was 100%.

**TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Colorado uses a version of the CSAP for students with severe cognitive disabilities, but only a very small number of students, about five last year, qualified under the strict criteria established for identifying which students could take this alternative assessment. All other students with individual education plans (IEPs) take the regular CSAP with accommodations.

**TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

The Fort Lupton district has a high number of English language learners, all of whom are Spanish-speaking students. Students who have been in Colorado for less than three years may test in Spanish if instructed in Spanish. However, the district tests the majority of the students in English in grades 3 and 4, the only grades where Spanish state tests are an option. English language proficiency can be determined by three assessment tools in Colorado, and Fort Lupton uses the Woodcock Munoz test. The district piloted a new assessment from the Mid-west Consortium, but the change to the new assessment will not take place until 2006. English language learners are exited from ELL status when they have demonstrated proficiency on the language assessment and academic success.

**Strategies for Improving Schools**

**GENERAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

Fort Lupton has taken several steps to improve achievement across the district. As Kathi Van Soest, the director of state and federal programs, explained, “These changes aren’t going to happen overnight, but we need to take a proactive position, so that is what we are doing. Our schools do not want to be on the ‘watch list’ and we don’t want them there either.”

Staffing ratios in the schools are quite good. Elementary classes are kept at 19:1, and when support teachers are counted, the ratio drops to 14:1. The four Fort Lupton principals and their staffs prepare specific plans each year that detail how they intend to use their resources to meet student learning needs and improve overall student performance. A district advisory committee of parents and community members approves the plans. District officials recognize that much professional development is needed, especially for all the new teachers that come to the district each year.

Prior to NCLB, Colorado adopted a state literacy act to raise student achievement. Schools must provide students who are not reading on grade level when they enter grade 4 with an individual literacy plan that addresses how the student will be brought to grade level. “There are no additional funds to support this program,” Van Soest explained, “but the intent is very specific in that students must not leave grade 4 without being proficient in reading and math. She added, “So it is our responsibility with the school and district working together to make it happen.” Ninety-three of the 185 students in grade 4 have individual literacy plans.

An emphasis on early learning and literacy is one way that the Fort Lupton district is trying to make sure that children are reading at grade level long before they reach grade 4. The district believes strongly in its preschool investment and finds the program particularly effective for the many children who come to school without English language skills. The preschool program is a half day program that is free and available to all, Van Soest explained. The district uses its general funds to support preschool, along with
state preschool and Head Start funds. Preschool teachers must have at least a two-year early childhood degree. “Not all four-year-olds attend our preschool, and kindergarten is also only a half day,” Van Soest said, “but we wish we could fund a full day, every day delivery program for both preschool and kindergarten.”

The district has also made changes to place greater emphasis on reading instruction in middle and high schools. All middle and high school students who were not reading at grade level were placed in separate reading classes for the 2004-05 school year. Reading is a required class for high school students who have not reached proficiency, and at the middle school, reading instruction takes place in a two-period block with language arts. A regular period for social studies was eliminated to allow the selected students more time with basic skills. Some teachers who did not meet the NCLB content requirements in reading still had to be assigned to teach these classes. These teachers are enrolled in coursework to become properly qualified.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Fort Lupton uses the Colorado Reading First curriculum at both elementary schools, and a new intervention practice is being used to assist students with disabilities. Another program, known as Language!, is used for special education students in grades 6-8; this program targets skills that students may have missed along the way. A special education literacy training is held monthly, and staff members are being trained in assessment-driven intervention programming.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
Some of the district’s English language learners are from new immigrant families and others are from families that have lived in the region for some time. But when the language of the home and neighborhood is Spanish, as it is for many Fort Lupton families, even children who are not immigrants often become learners of English for the first time when they come to school.

Spanish is the main language of Fort Lupton’s English language learners. Instruction was previously provided in Spanish for the younger ELL children, but now transitional bilingual is the method of instruction in Fort Lupton. Bilingual instruction in a child’s home language is provided for children until they are able to transition to English literacy, usually during second grade. In previous years, ELL students were served with a complete bilingual program that functioned almost as a segregated track within a school. This is no longer how students are taught in the district’s bilingual program. English language learners participate in a three-hour literacy block each day, and their transition to English is gradual. By grade 2, all students are taught in English only.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
In past years, Fort Lupton teachers received a great amount of training and technical assistance in data analysis and the use of student assessment results to improve instruction. This effort continues, because there are new teachers and new data sources to review each year. To implement the aforementioned literacy focus at the middle and high schools, teachers are receiving specialized training in 2004-05 to help them become more effective in teaching reading skills. One day a week, a trainer/coach participates in classroom instruction to model the strategies. Teachers also participated in literacy training for 10 days, and the trainers were taught how to coach effectively. Teachers learn to use intervention strategies to help students get the most from their lessons.

Teachers are paid for the extra time needed for professional development, but often the training greatly extends their work day. According to district staff, there is a morale issue among many teachers because they work hard but do not see student
achievement increasing. As a staff member noted, “It is tempting to look at better-paying jobs in neighboring districts, especially those that have high test scores along with good salaries. You don’t have to work as hard, but the challenge is here, and this is where I want to stay.”

IMPROVEMENT AT TWOMBLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Jeanette Aragon, principal of Twombly Elementary School, has been with the Fort Lupton district for many years and has been principal at this school for four years. About two-thirds (66%) of the school’s students are low-income. “I believe that the grade level changes and reorganization have been good for the school,” said Aragon, noting that math achievement is improving even though this was the first year that students in grade 5 were tested. “Teachers are very familiar with the state standards,” she said, “and when I visit classrooms, I can see that the standards are being addressed in classroom instruction.”

Twombly School has a very high transiency rate of 30% each year. Some of the student movement is because families move out of the district, but some is because white students leave the district to go to neighboring districts with higher achievement. Most of the Hispanic families are from Mexico, and they move frequently because of employment.

The school plan for improvement at Twombly Elementary includes curriculum mapping, a process that helps teachers assure that all the grade level standards are addressed within the curriculum and their daily instruction. Teachers have also been trained to analyze student assessment data and use it in their instruction. Four early release days helped teachers implement the changes planned for the 2004-05 school year. Teachers meet in teams regularly, and they also participate in both formal and informal professional development. Paraprofessionals have had literacy training which, according to Ms. Aragon, has made a big difference in their ability to assist students who are learning English and those learning to read.

Twombly had one Head Start class last year. Now it has a blended program that combines funds from Head Start, the state, and the district. Children with special needs and those identified for special education are given an opportunity for early education. Most four-year-olds receive a year of learning before kindergarten, and special education children are in the preschool program for two years. English language learners get an opportunity to improve their speaking and listening skills prior to kindergarten.

“This school is close to moving up academically,” said Aragon who set this as a personal goal. “Accountability has to be addressed. We have to study and we have to push.”

IMPROVEMENT AT BUTLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Cindy Kusuno, the principal of Butler Elementary School, has had a variety of experiences, including teaching migrant education, teaching second grade, and serving as a bilingual/ELL teacher and literacy coach. The teacher–student ratio at Butler Elementary, which enrolls 64% low-income children, is 20:1 (15:1 in some classes). This gives Kusuno many opportunities to keep closely connected to the teachers, children, and families.

Kusuno describes her role in improving student performance in this way: “My job is to run interference and keep the distractions away from the classroom, as this is a shared responsibility.” To improve the academic program, the school has made schedule changes to accommodate a literacy block for children who are learning English. The school also has extra teachers to cover unified arts, music, and physical education. “This arrangement gives the teachers a common planning time,” Kusano said, “and that is very important for effective instruction.”
Choice and Supplemental Services

In the past, all four Fort Lupton schools were in school improvement. District students were eligible to choose another school in 2002-03, but there were no other schools available in the district. The district was willing to transport students to a neighboring district, but no families selected this option. Because of the reconfiguration of grade levels, school choice was not required in 2003-04 or 2004-05. The district is striving to avoid entering that status again.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
A total of 70 Fort Lupton teachers were on emergency credentials in 2003-04 and therefore did not meet NCLB requirements. The district intended to decrease that number by half each year to assure that all teachers were fully qualified. This school year (2004-05), 165 of the 184 teachers (90%) are now qualified so the goal was surpassed.

New teachers, some of whom come from out of state, need to have 24 hours of coursework to meet licensing requirements in Colorado. In 2003-04, all new positions were filled with teachers who met NCLB requirements, but in 2004-05, there were 52 new teachers. Ten of them, mostly special education staff on temporary licenses, are still taking the required coursework to become highly qualified. “We have made a good dent in our progress because we had 38% of our teachers that were not highly qualified last year,” said Van Soest. “This year it is only 13%.”

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Last year only 6 of the 52 paraprofessionals in the Fort Lupton district met the NCLB requirements. The situation is very different in 2004-05. Of the 29 paraprofessionals at the two Title I schools, 21 (72%) now meet the requirements. The paraprofessionals had two ways to reach the NCLB requirements—they needed 24 credit hours or they had to pass the ACT Work Keys test, which the district has selected as its test for paraprofessional competency. Butler Elementary has 11 paraprofessionals, of whom 7 are highly qualified (64%). Tombly Elementary has 18 paraprofessionals, of whom 14 are highly qualified (78%). The paraprofessionals who have not yet completed the requirements have been made aware that they have until the end of the 2004-05 school year to do so. Most are expected to take the test in the coming months.

Funding and Capacity

Fort Lupton has been very aggressive in applying for additional funding from a variety of sources to meet student needs and professional development needs. Some of the additional funding sources are Colorado Reading First, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which funds an intervention program and after-school tutoring at the middle and high school, an Advanced Placement grant to increase student participation of minority students in honors and AP classes, and the old ESEA Title VII program (in its last year), which funds additional second language services at the middle school.

Other Issues

The community and school district support an active parent outreach program, especially for families in which no one speaks English. Spanish GED classes are available for parents, with women often taking class during the daytime and men at night. Academic
ESL is part of the district’s adult education program. The community also has Parent Community Action Teams that meet once a month and an advisory committee on parent involvement.

Data File — Fort Lupton Weld-R-8 School District

Location: North Central Colorado  
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:  
  Total: 4  
  Elementary: 2 (Pre-K-5)  
  Middle/junior high: 1 (6-8)  
  High schools: 1

Number of Title I Schools: 2 (elementary)

Student Enrollment and Demographics  
Total number of students: 2,656 (includes 188 preK students)  
Hispanic: 63.7%  
White: 34.3%  
Other: 2%  
Low-income students: 56.7%  
English language learners: 38.6%  
Students with disabilities: 11%

Teachers  
Total number: 184  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 86.7%

Paraprofessionals  
Total number: 29  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 72%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools in Year 1 of improvement  
(Did not make AYP for two consecutive years): 0 0

Schools in Year 2 of improvement  
(Did not make AYP for three consecutive years): 0 0

Schools in corrective action  
(Did not make AYP for four consecutive years): 0 0

Schools in restructuring  
(Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years): 0 0

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools offering choice only: 0 0

Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice: 0 0

Schools offering SES and choice: 0 0
Florida

Collier County Public Schools
Superintendent: Raymond Baker
Contact: Dr. Kimball Thomas, Director of Federal and State Grants
40,145 students, K-12, suburban / rural

District Description
Collier County includes both Naples, an upscale beach and retirement community, and Immokalee, an impoverished agriculture community inhabited by many migrant workers.

Key Findings
- The No Child Left Behind Act has spurred positive changes in the Collier County Public Schools, including an increased focus on meeting the needs of all students. The district believes, however, that NCLB funding is insufficient for meeting all the law’s requirements.
- The percentage of students in the district who are proficient in math and reading has increased slightly since 2002. Nonetheless, the district did not demonstrate adequate yearly progress in 2004.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The No Child Left Behind Act has motivated the Collier County Public Schools to review the district’s teaching and learning practices for all children. NCLB has spurred the district and its schools to focus teaching strategies and develop district and school objectives for subgroups of students. On the negative side, the district has insufficient funding to implement all the requirements of NCLB, according to Kimball Thomas, the director of federal and state grants.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress
The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is a relatively new student achievement test administered to students in Florida’s public schools. The test is designed to measure state standards in reading and mathematics for grades 3 through 10.

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
In general, the percentage of Collier County students scoring at the proficient level or above has remained steady or increased slightly between 2002 and 2004. For example, the percentage of proficient third graders has increased from 56% to 62% in reading and 56% to 60% in math over that time period. In grade 6, the percentage of proficient students has remained steady at 54% in reading and increased slightly, from 46% to 48%, in math. The percentage of proficient ninth graders has increased from 28% to 29% in reading and from 53% to 56% in math.

Two schools did not demonstrate adequate yearly progress for the first time based on 2002-03 test results because African American students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities failed to meet state standards in both reading and math.
Based on the state test administered during the 2003-04 school year, 12 schools did not demonstrate AYP, and two of these schools failed to do so for the second straight year, so they were identified for improvement during the 2004-05 school year. As in the previous year, the schools did not demonstrate AYP because African American students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities failed to meet state standards in both reading and math.

The district also did not make AYP for 2004 because it did not increase its graduation rate sufficiently. Also, African American, limited English proficient, and disabled students did not demonstrate AYP in reading or math.

Strategies for Improving Schools

All schools in Collier County receive support from the central office. Schools that do not make AYP for one year receive additional technical assistance from the district. Schools that do not make AYP for two straight years are assigned district-level personnel who comprise the NCLB school support team.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

In school year 2003-04, two schools offered public school choice, even though both had missed AYP targets for just one year and therefore were not required to offer NCLB choice. Approximately one-quarter (23%) of the schools’ students took advantage of the option to change schools.

In school year 2004-05, 14 schools offered public school choice. Twelve of these schools had failed to make AYP for just one year and were not required to offer NCLB choice, but two schools had failed to make AYP for two straight years and were required to offer it. Again, one-quarter (25%) of students from the schools took advantage of the opportunity to select a different school. Data showing whether achievement increased among students who changed schools are not yet available.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In school year 2003-04, no schools offered supplemental education services to low-income students. In school year 2004-05, two schools—both of which failed to demonstrate AYP for two straight years and were in their first year in school improvement—offered supplemental services even though they were not required to by NCLB. Services included internet-based tutoring and home tutoring. Data showing whether achievement increased among students who participated in the supplemental education services are not yet available.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Of the 2,771 teachers in Collier County, 95% are highly qualified. The district requires that all Title I schools have highly qualified teachers, and it offers a bonus to highly qualified teachers who teach in high-poverty schools. The district also offers professional development for teachers who are not highly qualified. The state’s Housse provisions are under review at the state level to determine whether they comply with NCLB.
PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of Collier County’s 233 paraprofessionals, 45% are highly qualified as defined by NCLB. The district, according to Thomas, is losing paraprofessionals due to NCLB’s requirements.

To help those who are not yet highly qualified, the district offers classes to paraprofessionals to help prepare them to pass the ParaPro test. In addition, the district reimburses the cost of tuition and books for paraprofessionals who enroll in a community college program.

Data File — Collier County Public Schools

Location: Southwestern Florida
Type: Suburban and rural

Number of Schools
Total: 56
Elementary: 24
Middle/junior high: 7
High schools: 6
Other: 19

Number of Title I Schools: 14

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 40,145
White: 50%
Hispanic: 36%
African American: 11%
Asian: 1%
Low-income students: 21%
Students with disabilities: 19%
English language learners: 14%

Teachers
Total number: 2,771
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 95%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 233
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 45%
**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**

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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**

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Idaho

Independent School District #2 - Meridian
Superintendent: Dr. Linda Clark
Contact: Dr. Linda Clark
Additional contacts: Cathy Thornton, Director of Special Programs
Dr. Mandy Saras, Director of Elementary Education
Linda Christensen, Title I/ELL Coordinator
Byron Yankey, Principal, Meridian Elementary School
Susan McInerey, Principal, Frontier Elementary School

27,960 students, K-12, suburban

District Description

Independent School District #2 is located in the city of Meridian and comprises most of Ada County, including the towns of Star and Eagle and much of the suburban area of Boise. The district also includes a portion of adjoining Canyon County. This fast-growing suburban and rural area covers 384 square miles west of Boise, the capital city of Idaho. Meridian and Boise are home to technology industries that are bringing new residents to the area from other states and countries. In addition, some new arrivals are refugees sponsored for resettlement by local churches—Bosnians arrived a few years ago and in 2004, refugees from Somalia are coming to Meridian.

Ten years ago School District #2 served only 15,000 students, but this year it expects to enroll more than 28,000, an increase of 2,000 from last year. Nine schools were opened in the past four years, and projections estimate 24% growth in the next decade. More schools will be added to the present 38 if future bond funds can be secured, and several schools have five-track, year-round schedules that allow them to house more students.

Parents in the Meridian district can choose from a variety of school and program offerings designed to meet the special needs of students. The district has two charter high schools—one focused on information technology and another on providing pathways to medical arts careers. The Christine Donnell School of the Arts, a new elementary magnet school, opened in 2004.

Two Meridian schools, Meridian Elementary School and Frontier Elementary School, are included in this case study.

Key Findings

- Three of the four Meridian schools that had been in school improvement exited that status in 2003-04 after two consecutive years of meeting AYP. Meridian Elementary School, the remaining school improvement school, exited that status in 2004 and credits its success to major changes made in the school’s approach to curriculum and instruction.

- The increasing number of English language learners continues to create challenges for Meridian, particularly since many are refugees who have not had much formal education. Various instructional approaches have been used, including a new program to assist refugee children who have never attended school. The district has found that this program helps families to adjust to a new way of living, and the community has adjusted to the new arrivals as well.
As schools prepared to implement major changes in instruction to improve student performance, leaders of the teachers’ association were invited by principals and district staff to be part of the planning process. This collaboration resulted in a smooth implementation of the new approaches to improve student learning.

Overall Impact of NCLB

At the same time the Meridian district has dealt with the challenges of educating increasing numbers of students, it has also made major changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all grades. These changes have helped improve student achievement, although accountability measures continue to identify areas where more attention is needed. Dr. Linda Clark has been superintendent of District # 2, Meridian, since July 2004. Prior to that, she was the director of instruction for the district. In her new position she has intensified the district’s focus on academic achievement. Clark said she provides a strong research-based approach to improving instruction.

“We use a skills continuum that connects student performance indicators to the state standards,” Clark said, explaining that the district uses various ways to differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs, starting in kindergarten with reading and math. The skills are listed by complexity, which allows teachers to know exactly what each student needs to master to move ahead. “We are committed to annual academic growth for every student, not just the students who are not doing well,” Clark noted.

“We want academic growth for all, including our students who will be going to college or going to work after high school. They all need technical skills along with reading and writing and algebra, so that is what we need to have for them.”

Meridian examines each student’s achievement level using a process staff members call “data mining.” They compare each student’s achievement level to national norms and to the scores of other students in the state of Idaho. District staff also examines each student’s achievement level in relation to the state’s definition of proficiency, which is important for NCLB purposes. Finally, district staff reviews student achievement levels to determine individual growth, which is a very important indicator of student performance, according to Clark, especially for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Two years ago, Meridian had four Title I schools in improvement status, and all were required to offer both choice and supplemental education services. Three schools exited improvement status after making AYP for two years. In 2004, Meridian Elementary made AYP in math as well as all other areas. The 2004-05 school year opened with no Meridian schools in school improvement for the first time in four years.

Superintendent Clark credited the overall gains for the schools to the many changes made to curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment at the schools. Major changes were made to the reading curriculum across all grade levels, and teachers learned how to use assessment data to improve student skill mastery. Clark also pointed to strong site-level leadership in carry out the district’s expectations. “We didn’t want excuses,” she said. “We knew we could do what had to be done, and we did it. And we will continue to do it.”

TESTING ISSUES

The Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is taken in an electronic form by students. This means that testing takes place in computer labs at the schools, but even the
younger students adjust quickly to the format, according to district officials. The computerized ISAT adjusts the test to meet the student’s level in three areas—proficiency, growth, and achievement. Until 2004, Idaho statewide testing with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) had been done only at grades 4, 8, and 10. Now ISAT testing takes place in grades 2 through 10. ISAT scores for students in grades 3 through 8 and 10 count toward AYP. Other assessments—including the Idaho Reading Proficiency Indicator, the Direct Math Assessment, and the Direct Writing Assessment—are given to Meridian students, and the results are used to assist in classroom planning and to identify the individual needs of students.

The reading indicator tests are required by the state, and they have brought about major changes in instructional practices at the early elementary grades. Children are tested in the fall, again in January, and a third time at the end of the year. All testing is done one-on-one by what one district staff member described as “an army of testers” that includes district parents and part-time employees who have become very effective at their testing tasks. Students are regrouped into appropriate reading levels after testing to make sure they are continually advancing in their skill acquisition.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
The testing of English language learners includes accommodations for the students. The test can be read to them, and they are not timed, which also helps, according to Linda Christensen, the ELL coordinator. Students who score at levels 1, 2, or 3 on the language assessment scales (LAS) have individual learning plans and can use testing accommodations.

Strategies for Improving Schools

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AT MERIDIAN ELEMENTARY
Meridian Elementary School was the district’s lowest-performing school and would have entered its third year of school improvement in 2004–05 had it not made AYP. Because the instructional program was totally redefined and new teaching strategies were instituted, the students made good progress in the 2004 tests, and the school made AYP for the second consecutive year.

The school, with 511 students in grades K-5, is one of the oldest in the district and is located in Meridian’s downtown. It has the highest percentage of low-income students in the district and a mix of English language learners and children with disabilities. Rental properties in the school’s attendance area are increasing, and low-incomes families can use housing credits to rent the available places. The school also serves some families who are transient for periods because of unemployment and the need to search for jobs.

There was great concern in the district about the lack of student progress at Meridian Elementary, but then Byron Yankey came to the school as principal four years ago and took on the responsibility of turning around the low-performing school. The school had been jokingly referred to as being in “Title I jail,” but Yankey said he was determined to reverse the school’s direction. The school’s academic improvement did not happen overnight; testing in 2003 had shown some improvement, and in 2004, Meridian Elementary met its goal and moved away from sanctions and corrective action.

“The year of 2000–01 was our ‘fertilizer year,’” said Yankey. School staff visited other schools and attended conferences with funding from the Albertson Foundation. “I was one of them,” Yankey said, “and three days after 9-11, I was on my way to Charlotte, N.C. for a conference on instructional practices that was based on all students’ learning.” Yankey decided that the strategies he had learned at the conference would work at Meridian Elementary. He took a team of staff members to St. Paul for the same
conference. On the plane on the way home, he said, the group figured out how they could make the new plan, which was based on the "No Excuses" philosophy of Pat Davenport, work at their school.

"We could not move as fast we wanted to," said Yankey, "because the change in how we taught reading as well as other content needed a high amount of control, so we gave ourselves two years." Yankey continued: "It was the year of civil war at our school in a way because we did not have all staff in agreement that changes in curriculum and instruction needed to occur. We called it the year of tears, but I told the staff that our hands were tied and we needed to improve and in order to do so, we had to change what we were doing."

Yankey explained that the changes the school went through were not easy, but he was determined that having all children reading at grade level was worth the efforts. He knew that the teachers needed help, and he saw to it that they received assistance. First, teachers attended half-day professional development sessions while substitutes oversaw their classes. Staff members found that they learned from their mistakes, Yankey said, and they were able to remove the barriers that had prevented children from learning, especially the barrier of low expectations, which were held not only by some teachers, but also by some students themselves. Teachers and support staff developed student groupings, set up the hours for reading, and completely reorganized the school day. The decision was made to start with grades 4 and 5, a total of nine classes—a decision Yankey described as "a watershed moment" because it marked the start of the change process.

Knowing that the school's traditional Title I pullout programs had not produced high enough results, Yankey moved the staff in a different direction for teaching reading. He recognized that two types of instruction were needed, so with block scheduling, the staff set up two reading classes for every student. In one class, the students were grouped by their skill levels, and in the other they were taught the grade-level requirements. A student in grade 3, for example, might be in a flexible group for in-depth instruction in letter-sound recognition with other students who needed those skills but might also be in a class that focused on general standards-based reading at the third grade level. This redesign represented a huge change in reading instruction for the entire school. Instead of the pullout reading programs of the previous Title I program, each grade level scheduled time blocks for flexible reading groups that students could move into and out of as they acquired skills. The school ended up with 13 reading groups at each grade level, using teachers and support staff.

Yankey credited NCLB with making the redesign work. "Our big payoff was the IRI (Idaho Reading Indicator)," he said. "The data we got back was very helpful, and because we tested three times during the year, we could move students into higher level reading groups when they mastered certain skills." The state standards and the district curriculum and training were other key elements to making the changes work. "People had deep-rooted beliefs about what kids could do at various ages," said Yankey, "and we had to change the thinking. If all the kids learn is how to tie their shoes instead of their ABC's and the sounds of words, they never get caught up."

The principal and support staff found that they had to help teachers rethink how children learned by looking at the testing results, and they had to help them use more effective ways to teach reading. ELL Coordinator Linda Christensen summed it up: "We had to look at all the teaching and learning in the school, and we had to make sure that all parts of both were very closely connected."

One issue the staff had to deal with was teacher planning time, but because it had not been clearly defined in the teacher contract, questions of whether this time could be used for group planning had to be resolved. Leaders of the teachers' association were invited to work with the school staff, and they came up with a solution that avoided a potential problem. Now in the third year of implementation of the new plan and gains
in student achievement, school and district leaders claim they would never go back to the old way of doing things. “Why would anyone want to derail this system when we can see that it is working and children are learning?” asked Linda Christensen rhetorically. “We had lots of things to resolve, and one of them was the whole business of reading fluency,” she explained. “Some teachers just did not believe that fluency was that important for children to be successful readers. Everyone felt safe in expressing their thoughts, though, and the differences in opinions were resolved.”

The key, in Yankey’s view, remains the data. “Let the data speak,” he said, “and that guides us to where we need to go.”

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AT FRONTIER ELEMENTARY**

Meridian places great value on the use of data to identify where students are and where they need to go. Teachers have complete profiles of their classes in an electronic format, and they can concentrate on low-performing students as well as those at the middle and higher achievement levels. Every teacher's desktop computer has all student assessment data for math, reading, writing, and science, as well as from end-of-course assessments, and it is easily accessible to the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Susan McInerey is in her first year as principal of Frontier Elementary School, which has gone through huge changes since it opened in 1980 as a separate, innovative school to serve students with disabilities. Now most of the students with disabilities have been moved to their neighborhood schools. Many current Frontier students are immigrants and refugees who are not proficient in English. The school enrolls 640 students, of whom almost 18% are English language learners. Recent enrollees in fall 2004 include 18 refugee children from Somalia whose families have been resettled in apartment buildings in the suburban neighborhood of Frontier. More relocated families are expected. Just as the school and neighborhood adjusted to refugees from Bosnia several years ago, they are doing so again with a different group of new arrivals. The children from Somalia speak a language that was not familiar to school staff, and teachers had to figure out the best way to teach these students, McInerey said. Because most of the children had never been in school, they had to learn what school was all about.

“We have challenges,” said Principal McInerey, “but we don’t give up. The staff looks closely at student performance data and its connection with teaching strategies and teacher-student interactions, McInerey said. The staff also looks at behavior and discipline. “The key factor is how well we use our instructional time,” she added. “We changed a lot of things—we have fewer assemblies and parties because we are concentrating on learning.”

McInerey recognizes the principal’s role in student learning, especially for those learning English. There are concerns about this subgroup of students making AYP, but through the NCLB safe harbor provision, the ELL subgroup made AYP in 2004.

**PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS AS AN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

Both Frontier and Meridian Elementary educate preschool children. Although the programs are funded from different sources, such as special education and the YMCA, efforts are made to prepare the children for kindergarten learning. A special session is held in June for children who will enter kindergarten in the fall, and parents are provided with information that will help them get their children ready for school and learning. Meridian Principal Byron Yankey would like to see an expansion of the preschool program at his school and would use Title I to cover the cost if he had additional money to do so. One preschool at the school serves physically disabled children and a second one for community children is only a half-day program four days a week. Parents are charged $30 per week for their children to attend.
SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Meridian district has changed its program for students with disabilities and moved large numbers of students from a magnet school to their neighborhood schools. This was done so the students would be in age-appropriate classes and could be mainstreamed and provided with specialized help where they needed it.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Students in Meridian speak 54 languages and come from many different countries. Like Frontier Elementary, Lewis and Clark Middle School also enrolls many students from other countries who speak various languages—more than 100 ELL students among its 1,010 students in grades 6–8. These students come mainly from Eastern Europe and Mexico and include new students from Somalia. Students at the lowest levels of English acquisition are given intensive English instruction in double and triple session classes. They are taught by teachers who have had specialized training in English acquisition.

Students can also obtain additional assistance in study skills from a teacher such as Sam Perez, who works with students who are not quite ready to transition to regular classes. When a student is ready to make the change, primary language help in such areas as mathematics, science and history is available from bilingual paraprofessionals. “The students work hard,” said Perez, “and they want to do well, but the older they are when they come here, the harder it is to learn English. And then they have to learn all the other subjects as well.”

NCLB School Choice

Although 2,000 students from three schools were eligible to transfer to another school in 2002, only the children from two families transferred. In 2003–04, one of these schools, Meridian Elementary, was still in improvement status, but again, parents did not choose to send their children to a different school. According to district officials, the parents seemed to be satisfied with their neighborhood school and its teachers, and student performance in Meridian Elementary was rising. Some parents may not have wanted to put their children on buses for a long bus ride to another school.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Meridian has an extensive teacher training program available to all teachers, including the 34 teachers with letters of authorization from the state to teach in their assigned content areas. Many of these teachers are certified to teach regular education but are working on their special education certification. Partial tuition scholarships are provided to all teachers by the district, and an additional $65 per credit is being provided for teachers to obtain training required to meet NCLB qualifications. With three universities and colleges in the area and a large pool of student teachers who receive some of their training in the district, the district has a large pool of teachers available. But in some content areas, such as math, there is much competition for teachers, including competition from area high-tech industries. Three university students who were student teaching in Meridian schools and finishing their math certification in December of 2004 were hired by the district when they completed their requirements.

Support for new teachers includes observations and demonstrations of model lessons from academic coaches assigned to the schools. Teachers also receive help from instructional support staff in content areas and from district curriculum specialists. Meridian also has business partners and a foundation that funds classroom projects for teachers.
The district does aggressive recruiting and takes steps to retain teachers. Because the salary schedule in the district is relatively low, retention is a bit of a challenge, but the big selling points for Meridian are its quality of life, affordability, and proximity to year-round family activities like camping and skiing.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
Meridian Title I schools are targeted assistance programs, and only two paraprofessionals are funded with Title I funds and therefore subject to NCLB requirements. One paraprofessional meets the new requirements. An extensive training program helps all paraprofessionals learn how to work closely with teachers to instruct students in the classroom. This program includes paraprofessionals who work with English language learners and students with disabilities.

**Funding and Capacity**
The Meridian district received a 40% cut in Title I funds in 2004-05, but according to Superintendent Linda Clark, the district managed by using carryover funds from Title I and using general fund money for the salary of one employee who had been funded from Title I. The superintendent is concerned about further decreases and the district’s ability to sustain its Title I program. Still, she said, “I am confident that we will find ways to continue the efforts we are making to improve student achievement. Nothing is more important than that.”

**Data File — Independent School District #2, Meridian**

**Location:** Central Idaho, west of Boise  
**Type:** Suburban

**Number of Schools**
- Total: 38  
  - Elementary: 25  
  - Middle/junior high: 7  
  - High schools: 6

**Number of Title I Schools:** 6

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**
- Total number of students: 27,960  
  - White: 93%  
  - Hispanic: 4%  
  - Asian: 2%  
  - African American: 1%

  - Low-income students: 18% (range from 8% to 64%)
  - Students with disabilities: 11%
  - English language learners: 4% (54 languages)

**Teachers**
- Total number: 1,536  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 98%

**Paraprofessionals**
- Total number: 2  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 50% (1 yes, 1 no)
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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Illinois

Chicago Public Schools
CEO: Arne Duncan
Contacts: Xavier Botana, Director NCLB Accountability Office
   Elizabeth Whitehorn, Coordinator, NCLB Accountability Office
   Armando Almendarez, Deputy Chief Education Officer
   Albert Bertani, Chief Professional Development Officer
   Patricia McKenzie-Jackson, Assistant to the Deputy of School Support
426,040 students, K-12, urban

District Description
Chicago Public Schools (CPS), one of the largest urban districts in the country, began implementing novel school reforms designed to increase equity and student achievement in the mid-1980s. For example, in 1989 state law required the district to create local school councils to oversee the daily operations of each school, and in 1995 the mayor took control of the district, appointing a chief executive officer in place of the former superintendent. District-initiated reforms have frequently preceded similar reforms required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

This case study also includes separate reports on two Chicago public schools: Rachel Carson Elementary and Walsh Elementary. These school reports follow the main district report.

Key Findings
- District officials reported that their reform focus has been on continuing and building on successful initiatives begun prior to NCLB. As a result, NCLB mandates have been incorporated as much as possible into existing initiatives in order not to disrupt these efforts. These complex, and at times overlapping, reform efforts have helped the district make progress in academic achievement.

- The Chicago Public Schools continue to have difficulty providing choice because the district does not have enough slots in successful schools for all the students who are interested in transferring. In 2004-05, only 428 spots were available for the approximately 175,000 students eligible. The state approved Chicago’s plan to hold a lottery for these spots. At the beginning of the school year, the district offered supplemental services for the rest of the eligible students. These services may need to be discontinued, because the district has been placed in improvement status and technically cannot be a supplemental service provider. Decisions on what will happen to the district’s supplemental services were pending as of December 2004.

- The state was slow in finalizing its list of schools in need of improvement. As a result, this year Chicago district officials estimated which schools will offer choice and supplemental services and informed parents before the end of the 2003-04 school year, so that families could make plans. However, the state’s initial list of districts in need of improvement included Chicago, and under NCLB regulations a district in improvement status cannot be a provider of supplemental services. The district is disputing the state results. In addition, the state asked the federal government for permission to allow Chicago to continue serving the approximately 70,000 students using its after-school tutoring program. This permission was denied, and at the urging of the U.S. Department of Education, the state is making plans to end or phase out district tutoring.
Changing state requirements for highly qualified teachers have made it difficult for CPS to meet the requirements. In addition, the district generally has difficulty finding enough special education, bilingual, math, and science teachers. Recruiting teachers to high-poverty schools, where neighborhoods are perceived to be dangerous, has also proved challenging.

Chicago plans to use its Renaissance 2010 program to make major changes in schools targeted for restructuring under NCLB. This controversial program will temporarily close schools designated as low-performing based on Chicago’s own accountability system and reopen these schools a year later with significant changes devised with input from the local community. Closures will include some schools in restructuring based on NCLB, but officials predict it will not be able to handle all the schools in restructuring in the coming years.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
Based on 2002-03 testing, 350 Chicago public schools, or about 58% of those in the district, were identified as in need of improvement. Xavier Botana, director of Chicago’s NCLB accountability office, reported that reasons for not making adequate yearly progress ran the gamut from lack of participation to lack of improvement within one or more subgroups. He added that over 300 schools missed multiple AYP targets; however, when a single factor caused a school to miss AYP, that factor was the performance of English language learners. Based on 2003-04 testing, 360 Chicago schools were designated as in need of improvement, and 22 of these schools had failed to meet AYP goals for five or more consecutive years. Again, district records show that reasons for not meeting goals vary by school.

The 2003-04 test results also placed Chicago as a district in improvement status, due to the performance and participation rate of subgroups. However, this designation was not final until December 2004. “We did not consider the state numbers to be correct,” Botana said. Data collection, especially for English language learners and low-income students in Chicago, was not always accurate and was not always processed accurately by the state. Now that the district and state have completed their joint data cleaning effort, Botana said, the district believes the numbers to be substantively correct.

TESTING ISSUES
As a district, Chicago has been measuring school improvement since a major reform initiative in the mid-1980s, well before NCLB went into effect. “We actually have our own accountability system that has substantial overlap [with NCLB],” said Botana. However, he noted that “our accountability system is more sophisticated” because it tracks year to year improvement as well as whether or not a school met the goals of NCLB. Of the 350 schools identified for NCLB improvement based on 2002-03 testing, he pointed out that “75% had made gains and about 100 schools made significant gains” compared with the prior year. Because of its tracking system, Chicago has considerably more information about academic achievement than districts just using the state’s measures, making it possible to tailor interventions to schools. For example, Botana noted that a school making vast improvement but not yet meeting AYP might simply ramp up the current initiatives that seem to be working well, while a school that is not improving at all might need to shift gears entirely.

Despite multiple and overlapping measures of school improvement, Chicago, like many Illinois districts with diverse student populations, faced major problems calculating participation rates and the performance of subgroups. “There was a major problem with demographic data collection,” Botana admitted. For example, he reported, “We
had close to 50 schools that had met overall participation [AYP goals], but had a sub-group that didn’t. In many cases, this was mathematically impossible.” A school, he said, could have reported 100% test participation of all students, but only 84% participation for low-income students. This often was due to data collection and coding errors. The state allows districts to make corrections in the data, but this caused a great deal of confusion and extra work, Botana explained.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES FOR WATCH LIST SCHOOLS AND IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

District officials reported that efforts to improve schools not making AYP have been folded into existing initiatives designed for schools not meeting the district’s own accountability standards. Schools on the list have “priority access” to professional development, for example. All elementary schools also have a “literacy leader” for grades K-3 and another for grades 4-8. These staff members provide professional development for teachers, said Albert Bertani, the district’s chief professional development officer. In addition, in CPS each school is assigned an area instructional officer, who provides instructional leadership to schools. Schools on the list are given extra attention by their area instructional officer, district officials said.

Schools not making AYP and identified as in need of improvement also met with their area instructional officers to refine their plans for the year, said Bertani. “There was really a push to look at the school resource allocation,” he explained, noting that this often lead to requests for more professional development from his office.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING

Some of the district’s schools identified for restructuring may be closed due to poor performance under the district’s school closing policy. These schools would then be re-opened after a year under the district’s recently announced Renaissance 2010 program. The district’s plan calls for the temporary closing of low-performing schools while community committees help the district reconfigure the schools. Students will be re-located to other schools, and school staff will have to reapply for their jobs, district officials said. When the schools reopen a year later, they may have one or more of the following: new teachers, new administrators, new curriculum, or new intervention programs. Some may become charter schools, some may operate under contracts, and some may remain district-operated schools. District officials note that this shift of students is possible due to overall declines in student enrollment in the district. These declines have especially impacted low-performing schools, because students in these schools often transfer to Chicago’s higher performing and often crowded magnet schools.

This type of school restructuring was piloted in 2003-04, with the closing of two district schools, said Deputy Chief Education Office Armando Almendarez. While the schools were not identified for restructuring by NCLB, both were doing poorly by the district’s standards. The plan, Almendarez said, was two-fold: “Let’s blow this up. And let’s put this back together.”

At first, Almendarez noted, “There was an outcry from the community in the two schools that were closed. But the message from the district was, ‘Work with us. We hear your concerns; we want a better program for your children.” At the end of the year, Almendarez reported hearing parents say, “This was the right thing to do.” As a district, he explained, “It was a very challenging, difficult thing, but it turned out quite well. Everything that we learned in this Renaissance program will be used in restructuring.”

However, as more schools are slated for closure, opposition has been reported in local media. Opposing voices come from parents and teachers in the closing schools and
from others in the community. The Chicago teachers union in particular has published articles against the program in its state newsletter. The union opposes the program because the reopened schools may not have to honor union contracts. This amounts to union busting, union officials wrote, and could leave the new schools with less community support.

Renaissance 2010 may affect more schools than just those identified for restructuring by NCLB, according to some district officials. The goal is “transforming schools that may have flat-lined or are not making any progress,” Almendarez said, indicting that four years of not making AYP may be too long to wait. “That’s four years out of the lives of children. We can’t just sit back and say let’s give it some time.”

However, others predicted that Renaissance 2010 will not have the capacity to reach even all the schools in restructuring. Based on the numbers of schools currently in improvement status, as many as 179 schools could be identified for corrective action or restructuring in school year 2004-05. Those not making AYP based on 2004-05 testing will be identified for restructuring. Although Chicago’s enrollment is declining somewhat, Botana said closing all these schools in the same year would not be possible or desirable. Therefore, the district will have to develop other strategies for schools in restructuring in the future.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
In Chicago, NCLB is part of “a more clear focus on the use of data to meet instructional needs of students,” said Almendarez, who, as chief education officer, oversees curriculum and instruction. In general, data gathered for NCLB and for the district’s own accountability system is informing decision making at the district level, from the decisions of area instructional officers, who act as supervisors to a number of schools, to those of instructional specialists, who provide professional development at a single school.

In order to further refine Chicago’s curriculum, this year six publishing companies will work to provide professional development on their materials in 10 underperforming schools. While part of the goal is to improve these schools, Almendarez said the district also hopes to gain information about which materials work best in which schools. This may help the district narrow down its choices of materials. “Maybe we can get it down from six to three,” Almendarez said. However, he noted that for successful schools, no curricular changes would be forced by the district. “Those schools that are doing very well, let them do what they’re doing.”

Similarly, underperforming elementary schools will be piloting a new screening and diagnostic tool in kindergarten through third grade, Almendarez said. The tool will help teachers identify the needs of individual students as well as make decisions about how to group students for instruction, he explained. High-performing schools, however, will not be required to use the new tool, said Almendarez, noting that many already use similar diagnostic tests.

This year the district will also work on curriculum alignment across subject areas, Almendarez said. For example, if a school has a large English as a second language program, the principal and staff should be asking, “What are the connections to social studies?” Almendarez observed. Making these connections will reinforce standards-based learning in the district, he explained.

STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
While the percentage of students with disabilities who reach proficiency on state tests in Chicago has not been a major concern, the performance of students with disabilities lags behind that of non-disabled students, said Patricia McKenzie-Jackson, who works in the district’s special education department. Therefore, additional supports
for these students have been sought by schools and districts. In particular, the district has attempted to increase services for students with disabilities through supplemental education services.

In 2003-04, when vendors felt they were not able to provide supplemental services to students with special needs, the Chicago district stepped in as the “fail safe vendor,” McKenzie-Jackson reported. For 2004-05, the district’s office of special education is providing enough after-school tutoring specially designed for students with disabilities to accommodate the entire district. Sometimes the tutoring complements the tutoring received by general education students, and sometimes it focuses exclusively on the very particular needs of the student with a disability, McKenzie-Jackson said. These services for students with disabilities could be in jeopardy because final state test results indicate that the Chicago district failed to make AYP and can no longer provide supplemental education services.

While supplemental services have been helpful to students, McKenzie-Jackson noted that “it does become a major impediment when you have to keep students after school.” Some students with disabilities cannot ride public transportation home after a tutoring session as general education students would be able to do. In 2003-04, Chicago provided transportation stipends for parents of students with disabilities in after-school tutoring, but McKenzie-Jackson said the district would like to find a better solution.

**STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Chicago began reframing its bilingual program around 1997, said Almendarez, who headed up the department during that time. “Part of our plan was to make sure there was an accountability plan in place,” he explained. Prior to the changes, he said, “Certain kids would remain in bilingual education from kindergarten to twelfth grade.” Improving curriculum and instruction as well as bilingual policies in the district resulted in English language learners acquiring English more rapidly and moving more quickly into general education, Almendarez said. In terms of NCLB, “We were ahead of the curve,” he said, noting that getting English language learners to participate in and meet the goals of state testing has not been a major problem in the last few years.

The majority of Chicago’s English language learners speak Spanish as a first language. Many others speak Polish, Serbian, Urdu, Chinese, and Arabic. The district translates its materials, including its NCLB parents’ guide, into these six languages, Almendarez said, adding that its NCLB parent guide translations have been adopted by other urban districts.

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT**

As in all districts, Chicago schools identified as in need of improvement by NCLB must spend 10% of Title I funds on professional development. Still, in Chicago NCLB is not the driving force behind professional development. “I’m not sure it has impacted professional development in very many ways,” said Bertani, who directs the district’s professional development activities. “We are much more impacted by our local policies.” These district policies include a general focus on “rich and sustained content area professional development,” he explained, emphasizing that Chicago has “very little drive-by professional development.” This ongoing approach to professional development is consistent with NCLB in that it is supported by research.

In addition, Chicago has focused professional development activities on low-performing schools. While this met the requirement of NCLB, Bertani said the schools were identified based on the district’s own accountability system. In particular, over the past three years these low-performing schools have been assigned “literacy leaders”—staff who provide on-site professional development for teachers. In the past year, some of these schools have also been assigned “math leaders,” while others are using
new math materials supplied by the district. In terms of providing targeted, ongoing, research-based professional development to low-performing schools, Bertani said, “Very honestly, I think we were ahead of NCLB.”

In 2004-05, professional development is likely to increase in Chicago, Bertani anticipated. The new district contract with the teachers union has a “restructured” school schedule. Every fifteenth or sixteenth day of school is a half-day for students, and teachers attend professional development in the afternoon, Bertani explained.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

In school year 2003-04, about 350 Chicago schools were required to offer school choice. However, district officials said there simply weren’t enough schools for students to transfer into. “By state law, we’re restricted from overcrowding schools and from changing selection criteria [at selective enrollment schools],” Botana explained. As a result, he said, only 35 schools were able to accept new students. This gave the district just 1,100 transfer slots for the approximately 270,000 students eligible for NCLB choice. The state approved the district’s plan to offer these slots by lottery. Of these eligible students, about 19,000 applied for the 1,100 slots. Roughly 500 students, or 48%, accepted transfer assignments and attended new schools, Botana said district records showed.

For the 2004-05 school year, Chicago again offered choice by lottery. Of the approximately 175,000 students eligible, 5,933 applied for transfers. Chicago awarded 438 transfers; however, only 200 students enrolled in their new schools. Of these 200, about 14 had returned to their home schools by the end of the first semester.

While the district has not done an official survey examining why about half of families did not follow through with the transfers, officials did hear from some families. For example, Botana said that typical reasons given by parents for not accepting the transfer included wanting all the children in a family to go to the same school, finding out that the bus ride to the new school would be further than anticipated, or simply deciding that the original school was better than the family had previously thought.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In the 2003-04 school year, 231 schools offered supplemental education services to low-income students. District officials say that supplemental services offered under NCLB are one of the most important ways the law could help students. In fact, Botana reported that “we believe supplemental services should come before school choice.” As a result, the district has made an effort to get as many students involved in after-school tutoring as possible.

The Chicago school district was itself one of the 52 state-approved providers of supplemental education services in Illinois. Of outside vendors, Sylvan and Educational Solutions were most often chosen by Chicago parents in 2003-04. About 11% of eligible students signed up for supplemental services based on initial information sent to parents from the district. “After most providers reached their capacity, CPS still had funds available from its 20% set-aside,” said Botana. “CPS developed a proposal to serve eligible students who needed the most help and were not already being served through the SES program or CPS’s own after-school program.” The state approved this plan. The plan modified the existing after-school programs in order to bring them into compliance with state and federal requirements.

“The state authorized us to develop a new After School Academic Program in accordance with NCLB Title I guidelines as a set-aside program from unused SES funds,” Botana said. The district provided supplemental services to about 21,000 more students this way. An additional 29,000 students were being served in the existing CPS after-
school program at eligible schools, Botana explained, and these students were transferred into the new academic after-school program.

Botana noted that not all these students who participate in after-school tutoring met the deadline to be officially counted as participating in supplemental services. However, he emphasized that the district could have asked the state to use the extra funding for other things, but chose tutoring as the highest priority. In his view, this priority was consistent with past district strategies.

Despite the success of these efforts, roughly 51% of eligible students did not take advantage of supplemental services. “It takes an effort for parents to look at the form and fill it out,” explained Elizabeth Whitehorn, coordinator in the district’s office of NCLB accountability.

“Our original communication [to parents] was a little muddy,” Botana admitted but added, “anything you send home you only get a fraction of participants. Not everybody opens every piece of mail they get.” He speculated that parents who did read the mailing may not have understood why their children were being offered tutoring in the first place. In addition, because the communication came from the district, not all principals fully understood how to communicate the options to parents, Whitehorn said.

For 2004-05, the district was more aggressive about marketing supplemental services. Principals were more involved in communicating the options to parents, and the forms were redesigned to be more user-friendly, district officials said. The district also chose to communicate with parents about supplemental services at the end of the 2003-04 school year, even though the “official” state list of schools offering services was not final. The district said it has honored all parent requests even if a child’s school was removed from the state list of schools in need of improvement.

Preliminary test results from 2003-04, however, have put a wrinkle in the district’s plans to serve more students. These results show that Chicago as a district has not made AYP for two years and therefore cannot provide supplemental services. The district is disputing the test results. In addition, the state asked the federal government for permission to let Chicago and other Illinois districts in the same predicament continue to serve students. This permission was denied, and the federal government has asked the state to come up with a plan to end or phase out CPS’s supplemental services.

While CPS waits for this plan, it will continue to offer tutoring to students. “We’re serving 70,000 students right now, and we’re not going to just stop,” Botana said. “The cost of the for-profit providers is higher than the district cost.” He explained that the district doesn’t have enough Title I funds to serve the approximately 70,000 students with outside providers. If only outside providers were used, the district by law would have to determine which students had the greatest need. “About 25,000 students would get no service,” Botana predicted.

In addition, Botana questioned whether there would be space for all the students in outside tutoring services. “Our experience suggests that they would be taxed beyond capacity,” he said.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

Based on 2002-03 data, 90.5% of Chicago teachers are highly qualified when the state’s HOUSSE was applied. However, Illinois’ definition of a highly qualified teacher is likely to change next year. Botana said the district is not explicitly offering training or coursework to teachers who don’t meet the standard. “It’s their responsibility,” he said. In addition, he noted that the union contract would not allow the district to require special training of these individuals.
Due to the state’s audit last year, Botana said the district found that many teachers in middle and high school were teaching out of field—that is, they were certified to teach but not in the subject they were teaching. As a result, Botana said, “We’re aggressively looking at assignment issues.”

However, not all the gaps can be filled with reassignment. Chicago continues to have difficulty finding enough highly qualified special education, bilingual, math and science teachers. These shortages hit some schools harder than others. Botana noted, “We have no problem in schools located in affluent neighborhoods. We have more difficulty on the west side of Chicago in places that are perceived as dangerous.” While Botana said the district informally tries to encourage teachers to take these jobs, union contracts keep the district from offering formal incentives such as cash bonuses.

New teachers in hard-to-staff schools do get increased mentoring, Bertani noted. While all new teachers are assigned mentors at the school level, Bertani said the mentors at hard-to-staff schools are retired Chicago teachers who have no other teaching responsibilities and therefore can spend more time helping new teachers.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Among the district’s paraprofessionals, 33.2% meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” The district has partnered with the union to provide test prep courses, Botana said, adding that the district would pay for testing but only if the paraprofessionals passed. Botana said the district may reassign paraprofessionals who are unqualified to non-academic jobs in the future. Since the requirement for all paraprofessionals to be highly qualified will not go into effect until the end of the year, no changes currently have been made.

**Funding and Capacity**

Chicago’s Title I funding has increased by about 17% or $40 million. Botana called this “a significant increase” but noted, “We’ve been very clear that this increase is not enough. We consider [NCLB] to be an unfunded mandate.”

**Other Issues**

Another significant effect of NCLB is “the focus it has brought to the state assessment,” Botana said. He saw this as a positive change. Because the state tests are aligned to the state standards, he said, this focus may help more students improve academically.

On the downside, Botana said NCLB has created “a massive data analysis project.” While such analysis is exciting to people in his position, he said principals and other school staff do not see it that way. For example, he said in correcting the data this year, “Principals spent a lot of time trying to answer the question: ‘Is Johnny black?’” Although this information was essential for determining which schools did or didn’t make AYP, Botana said it took time away from other instructional issues.
### Data File — Chicago Public Schools

**Location:** Chicago, Illinois  
**Type:** Urban

**Number of Schools**  
- Total: 599  
  - Elementary: 481  
  - Middle/junior high: 16  
  - High schools: 93  
  - Other: 9  

**Number of Title I Schools:** 443

**Student Enrollment and Demographics (2003)**  
- Total: 426,040  
  - African American: 50.8%  
  - Hispanic: 36.1%  
  - White: 9.6%  
  - Asian: 3.3%  
  - American Indian: 0.2%  
  - Low-income students: 85.3%  
  - English language learners: 14.3%  
  - Students with disabilities: 12.7%

**Teachers**  
- Total number: 24,552  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 90.5%

**Paraprofessionals**  
- Total number: 5,081  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirement: 33.2%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**  
- Based on 2002-03 testing  
- Based on 2003-04 testing

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<td>(Did not make AYP for four consecutive years):</td>
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* 2003-04 data was still being corrected at the time of publication

**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**  
- Based on 2002-03 testing  
- Based on 2003-04 testing

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<td>Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice:</td>
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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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* Based on preliminary state data for 2002-03
Chicago Public Schools

Rachel Carson Elementary School
Principal: Kathleen Mayer
Additional contacts: Ann Tysiak, Assistant Principal
Rosa Alvarez, Bilingual Lead Teacher

School Description
Rachel Carson Elementary School opened in 1991 to take pressure off two nearby elementary schools. The Gage Park neighborhood, where the school is located, is still growing rapidly and is predominately Hispanic. Today Carson too has reached its limits. Local kindergarten students are guaranteed admission, but there are waiting lists for upper grades. Principal Kathleen Mayer has been at the school since its inception.

Key Findings
■ Under the rules of the No Child Left Behind Act, Carson missed making adequate yearly progress based on 2002-03 testing, but this determination conflicts with other evidence that the school’s students excel academically. School test scores are higher than the district average in all areas. The problem, according to school officials, was that students were moved too quickly out of the English language learner subgroup, and the subgroup failed to make AYP. New NCLB regulations allowing ELL students to be counted as part of the subgroup for a longer time have eliminated the problem.

■ Carson administrators say that NCLB unnecessarily limits their ability to hire effective bilingual teachers, paraprofessionals, and parent volunteers. Sometimes in a bilingual school it is more important to have teaching and language skills than to simply look good on paper, administrators said.

■ A Reading First grant is helping Carson bring the latest reading research to bear on language instruction in both English and Spanish. The grant also facilitates collaboration among teachers.

Overall Impact of NCLB
No Child Left Behind has had a mixed impact on Carson Elementary. “I definitely agree with the ideal of NCLB,” Principal Kathleen Mayer said of NCLB’s high expectations for all students. “That’s been part of our success here.” Despite this basic agreement, Mayer does not concur with all aspects of NCLB policies, especially those governing English language learners, special education, and staff hiring.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress
Carson has a reputation for excellence, Mayer said. In 2003, the school was featured in a study analyzing the improvement strategies of low-income Chicago elementary schools with excellent student achievement. The study was conducted by Designs for Change, a Chicago nonprofit group. The school has also gained national attention. It is included in “Portraits of Success,” a national database of successful bilingual programs compiled by the National Association for Bilingual Education, Boston College, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. Such a celebrated
school would not seem likely to fail to make the adequate yearly progress goals of NCLB. However, based on 2002-03 testing, Carson’s English language learners failed to make adequate progress.

Although the academic performance of Carson’s students exceeded that of the district, English language learners at Carson did not meet the improvement target in reading. In fact, this subgroup felt short of the law’s “safe harbor” provision by 0.5%. (Safe harbor allows schools or subgroups to make AYP for sufficient improvement even if they fall short of the fixed AYP target.) Paradoxically, Mayer noted that if the state had not moved Spanish-speaking students as quickly as possible into mainstream status, the school no doubt would have had higher reading scores for English language learners. “We were penalized for doing a really good job,” Mayer said. For 2003-04 and beyond, revised federal guidelines allow students to be included in the subgroup of English language learners for two years after they have officially exited a language acquisition program. Therefore, Carson met all AYP goals for 2003-04 testing. However, this change will not be retroactive, so the 2002-03 reports will still show Carson missing AYP.

While Carson officials are pleased with the new NCLB regulation, they say it does not do enough. “Research says you need seven years to learn a new language,” pointed out Assistant Principal Ann Tysiak. Furthermore, Mayer noted, “If English is your second language, it’s always your second language.” Both administrators would like to see students who have learned English well remain in the English language learner subgroup just for NCLB data tracking purposes until they complete school.

**Strategies for Improvement**

To improve, Carson will continue to focus on its bilingual and dual language programs. In kindergarten through eighth grades, the school offers a bilingual program, which transitions Spanish speakers to academic instruction in English and to classrooms in which English is the primary language of instruction. Even in the primarily English-speaking classrooms, however, most students are not native English speakers: 93% of the school’s students are Hispanic and have Spanish as their first language, although only about 36% are classified as English language learners.

In grades K-7, the school also offers a world language program in which students learn in both English and Spanish. This program aims to help students achieve a high level of proficiency in both languages. For example, teachers in the dual language program alternate teaching in English and Spanish. Students are responsible for learning all vocabulary, even science and math words, in both languages. If funds were available, Mayer said the dual language program would continue into eighth grade.

In addition, the 2004-05 school year is the staff’s third year of participation in Reading First, through a partnership with National–Louis University. Eight core teachers, one per grade level, attend a monthly, all-day Saturday workshop at National–Louis and then bring their learning back to the staff at Carson. The eight core teachers will earn a master’s degree in reading for their efforts. While National–Louis at first had not designed the program to work with English language learners, the program soon reached out to all students and teachers at Carson. “The university has grown by working with us,” Mayer said. “At first, they just wanted to work with our ‘regular’ kids, but we said, ‘We don’t have any regular kids.’”

Other staff confirmed that Reading First is helping English language learners and teachers. “Good reading strategies are good reading strategies, whether it’s English or Spanish,” Tysiak said.

“There’s a lot of sharing of ideas,” added Rosa Alvarez, a teacher who participates in the program. “I think that’s one of the best ways to learn.”
Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
While Carson is not required to provide school choice, the option would not be viable. “The whole city has a problem [with choice], because they have nowhere to send students,” Mayer said, noting that while English language learners did not improve as quickly as required, the average reading and math scores at Carson are higher than in the rest of the district. “Why would a parent want to switch?” she asked. In addition, she noted that Carson has a waiting list, so students transferring due to NCLB would be unlikely to impact enrollment.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
Mayer said she saw supplemental education services as more helpful and more feasible than choice. However, there would be little room to add supplemental services at Carson. The school provides extended-day learning from Monday through Thursday. A two and a half hour Saturday school is also offered. Finally, before-school homework help is provided.

Students enroll in the extra sessions based on academic needs. Of these extra tutoring sessions, Mayer said, “We can’t make it mandatory. But we make it close to mandatory.” Student attendance in these programs is high, Mayer said, noting that usually more parents want the extra tutoring hours for their children than the school can serve.

Staff members are paid to tutor in the programs, but their participation is voluntary. “They’re pretty good about volunteering,” Mayer said. “They see the progress.” In fact, Mayer said, for the Saturday program implemented just last year, “I had too many people volunteer.”

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of the 66 teachers at Carson, 95% meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” Mayer noted that the teachers not meeting this definition had temporary bilingual certificates. “They have to complete coursework and pass basic skills,” she explained. Often, Mayer said she recruits teachers from among bilingual people she knows working in related fields.

For example, teacher Rosa Alvarez once worked at a nonprofit organization assisting Spanish-speaking parents. Alvarez reported that after Mayer saw her working well with Carson parents, “she really encouraged me to go back to school.” Once Alvarez became highly qualified she was thrilled when Mayer offered her a job at Carson. What attracted her was the environment. “Just walking into the building was so positive,” she observed.

While Mayer said that she sees the importance of having highly qualified teachers in all classrooms and that she works hard to attract these teachers, Mayer questioned the state’s policy of not allowing temporary bilingual certificates to count as highly qualified. “The problem is—would someone with a regular certificate be more qualified?” Mayer asked. “Absolutely not,” she concluded. “NCLB doesn’t tell the whole story.” In schools like Carson where the majority of students speak English as a second language, bilingual teachers are very important, Mayer said.

As an example, Mayer points to one of her kindergarten teachers. Born in Mexico, this teacher taught in his home country before immigrating to the United States. “He’s had good results, but English is a problem for him,” Mayer said, noting that because he has run up against the deadline for completing his requirements, she will probably have to replace him. Fortunately due to Carson’s positive reputation, Mayer said, “I have lots
of resumes.” However, she added that many of Chicago’s predominately Latino schools don’t have this luxury. In some schools, she said, NCLB had forced principals to let go of people with temporary bilingual certificates and replace them with non-Spanish speaking teachers, or even substitutes. “The reality is—people who don’t have it on paper may be more qualified,” Mayer said.

While parents have not been upset that not all teachers at Carson meet the state’s definition, they have had questions, Mayer said. “They were worried we were going to lose some teachers,” Mayer explained.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

Currently all 11 paraprofessionals at Carson meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” Still, Mayer said she is not completely satisfied with her ability to staff Carson with paraprofessionals. “I keep having to replace people,” she said. As paraprofessionals study to become teachers, they leave Carson for more lucrative work, she explained, noting that bilingual teachers with paraprofessional experience are in high demand.

In the past, Carson had a policy of hiring parent volunteers to help out in classrooms. “The purpose,” Mayer explained, “was to improve the parents’ English while also helping students.” In addition, Mayer said the school’s policy got more parents involved in the school and helped win the respect of the community.

NCLB regulations bar schools from hiring anyone who doesn’t have at least a GED to assist with instructing children in classrooms. This regulation hurts Carson, Mayer said. Parents who do have a GED speak English well and usually have jobs that conflict with working in classrooms, while those without GED’s generally aren’t working and could benefit from sitting in on instruction, Mayer explained.

**Funding and Capacity**

Carson’s Reading First grant for 2004-05 is $50,000. Mayer noted, “It doesn’t cover the amount that teachers spend on assessment. But every little bit helps.” The school as a whole has been aggressive about writing grant proposals to cover the initiatives the staff wants that aren’t part of the general operating fund or part of Title I, Mayer and Tysiak said.
Data File — Rachel Carson Elementary School

Location: Chicago, Illinois
Type: Urban

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 1,250
Hispanic: 93%
African American: 6%
White: 1%

Low-income students: 99%
English language learners: 36%
Students with disabilities: 9%

Teachers
Total number: 66
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 95%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 11
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Did the School Make AYP?
2002-03 testing: No
2003-04 testing: Yes
Chicago Public Schools
Walsh Elementary
Principal: Stephen Flisk
Contact: Victoria Jackson, Science Specialist
          Susan Zapiain, Parent Volunteer
600 students, PreK-8, urban

School Description
Walsh Elementary is one of the oldest schools in Chicago and yet has one of the
newer buildings. Located just south of downtown, the school is predominately Hispanic
(93.2%) and low income (90.6%), although some neighborhood gentrification is in
process.

Key Findings
■ Due to irregularities in data, Walsh went from receiving transfer students under the
  No Child Left Behind Act to offering school choice in just one year. The confusion
  caused by this change made maintaining good teacher and parent morale difficult,
  school officials said.

■ While school officials said they believed students coming to Walsh under NCLB re-
  ceived a better education at Walsh, the students did take some time to adjust to their
  new school, partially because Walsh is predominately Hispanic and students transfer-
  ring to Walsh came from predominately African American schools.

■ Explaining NCLB to the community has been difficult, school officials said. This was
  because of the data errors involved and because the school was identified for improve-
  ment due to test participation rates rather than test scores. In addition, most parents do
  not speak English as a first language and are unfamiliar with U.S. education policies.

■ Although Walsh is not required to offer supplemental education services, the school
  does offer after-school tutoring. School staff members attribute many students’ aca-
  demic success to this tutoring.

Overall Impact of NCLB
“Anything that causes us to take a harder look at what we do is positive,” said Walsh
Principal Stephen Flisk, who explained that NCLB has spurred staff to look more
closely at curriculum and instruction; however, Flisk added that the school has also ex-
perienced some negative effects. Due to inadequate test participation rates, the school
has been placed in school improvement status. This has made some people view Walsh
as a “failing” school, despite test scores that mostly meet or exceed district averages, Flisk
said. This false characterization has been tough on teacher and parent morale, he said.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Due to high test scores in 2001-02, Walsh was chosen to pilot Chicago’s limited school choice program. This program provided a lottery to decide which of the many eligible students would receive NCLB transfers to the few spots available in successful schools. Then 2002-03 testing showed that Walsh did not meet adequate yearly progress goals due to participation rates. In both reading and math, records showed that only 92.3% of students had been tested, just 2.7% shy of the 95% required by NCLB. Furthermore, a reanalysis of the 2001-02 data, to which participation rates were added, showed that Walsh had also failed to meet participation rates the previous year. These two consecutive years of failure to meet AYP participation goals placed Walsh in need of improvement. In the fall of 2003, Flisk recalled, “I’m gearing up to receive another group [of NCLB transfers], and I find out I’m a sending school.”

When asked why participation rates were below the target, Flisk said, “We’re not exactly sure to be honest with you. We assume maybe there were a few students who didn’t complete the test, or there might have been a mistake [in the data].” For 2004 testing, the school and district paid much closer attention to the demographic and attendance counts for Walsh. As a result participation was above 95% and test scores were still strong; therefore, Walsh met all AYP goals on 2004 tests. The school, however, is still in school improvement pending the results of 2005 testing.

For teachers, the needs improvement designation was “a slap in the face,” Flisk said. “They give their all.” As a result of these strong reactions, Flisk has had to work on teacher and community morale. “I’m the one who had to calm people’s fears,” he said. He emphasized to teachers and parents that “we’re still the same school. We’re still the same faculty.” He also reminded them that test scores at Walsh actually meet NCLB goals and are above district averages.

Flisk also said he had to work to make sure the community and teachers understood NCLB and its effect on the school. The community reacted strongly to the school being placed in needs improvement status. “It caused a lot of concern,” Flisk said. “When you’re dealing with a community that’s largely Spanish speaking and you don’t understand the results yourself, it’s hard.”

School officials at Walsh would like to see changes in NCLB policy so that schools failing to meet AYP goals for low participation rates are listed separately from those failing to meet academic AYP goals. “We’ve been painted with the same brush as an underachieving school,” Flisk said, noting that this is an unfair way to represent a school with relatively high test scores. In terms of NCLB policy, Flisk said, “They really need to look at different approaches to the way they characterize schools.”

Strategies for Improving Schools

Walsh is using a number of strategies to improve instruction. The principal and teachers have taken a closer look at the standards and shifted the focus of instruction to be better aligned with the state assessment, Flisk said. In addition, he has been working to increase collaboration among teachers so that good ideas and strategies can be shared.

“We’re really trying to change our learning community so that it’s not competitive and is more collaborative,” Science Specialist Victoria Jackson said. Jackson provides professional development, curricular materials, and model lessons for teachers at Walsh. Her position is funded through a National Science Foundation grant.

Also, as part of another district initiative, Walsh teachers are relieved by a substitute one day per quarter. They use this day for professional development, which Jackson coordinates. “For the first time, everybody’s doing the same thing,” Jackson noted.
Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
In 2002-03, Walsh received students who were transferring under NCLB from other district schools. The 13 transferring students did experience some initial difficulties in adjusting to Walsh, Flisk said. “Because we’re a local school, we only dealt with transportation for special education students,” he said, explaining that as a result, the most financially efficient way to get the new transfers to Walsh was to add them to the special education buses. In addition, the 13 new students were all African Americans who had previously attended majority African American schools. Walsh, in contrast, is a majority Hispanic school. These factors contributed to problems of social stigma until Walsh students understood and accepted the new transfers, Flisk said.

The adjustment was also difficult academically for the 13 students. “We absorbed these kids, but it was hard,” Jackson said. “They had not experienced schools like ours,” she added, explaining that the students’ previous schools had not required as much school work. “They were so far behind academically.”

By the end of the first year, however, school officials said the transfer students were thriving. “I do believe that those students who came to us are in a better situation,” Flisk said. Although Walsh is no longer accepting transfers, the students have been allowed to stay at Walsh.

“I can understand why parents wanted their students here,” added parent Susan Zapiain, who took her three boys out of Catholic schools when she moved to the neighborhood. She noted that initially she and other parents were concerned about overcrowding due to the transfers, but this did not seem to be a problem. “It seemed that some of the classrooms were awfully crowded, but the teachers here are great,” she said. “They all seemed to handle it fine.”

Fears of overcrowding were squelched in 2003-04 when Walsh became a sending school. That year, three students applied for transfers out of Walsh, Flisk said, but due to limited space only one transfer was granted. The transferring student was one of the 13 who had used NCLB to transfer into Walsh the previous year. After two weeks, this student opted to return to Walsh, Flisk reported. In 2004-05 although Walsh remains on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement, no students applied for transfers.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
Walsh is not required to offer supplemental services under NCLB. School staff, however, said they believed tutoring has helped increase academic achievement at the school; therefore, the school will offer these services anyway. Walsh teachers are the tutors for the after-school programs. “We feel our teachers know best our students and their needs,” Jackson said. The after-school programs serve all levels of students in a variety of subject areas. Parents have requested tutoring programs for all students and, Jackson said, “We’re trying to provide something for all of our students.”

The after-school tutoring was part of what attracted Zapiain to the school. “They offer more here,” she said. “We’re lucky that it was right there in the neighborhood.” Each of her three boys participates in after-school programs. She noted that she particularly appreciates that the tutoring is on-site at Walsh, while many Chicago students must travel to neighboring schools for tutoring under NCLB.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of Walsh’s 29 teachers, the state reported in 2003-04 that 95.7% were highly qualified. The teacher rated as “not highly qualified” by the state was actually qualified, but ac-
cording to Flisk “there was a six month backlog in the state for granting certification.” The school was forced to send out the letter notifying parents of the teacher’s status, but Flisk said the parents understood the situation. This year, 2004-05, all teachers meet the state definition.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Walsh has five paraprofessionals. They work “overwhelmingly in the classroom,” Flisk said. As a result, all have had to meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. Some have gone back to school to do so, and all now meet the state’s definition, Flisk reported.

Funding and Capacity
Flisk said he had not felt a great difference in the funding climate due to NCLB. “We netted several thousand extra dollars for parental involvement and that’s about it,” he said. Funds were used for parent events and education. Under NCLB, districts must reserve 1% of their Title I allocation for parental involvement activities, and 95% of this amount must be distributed to Title I schools.

Data File — Walsh Elementary School

Location: Chicago, Illinois
Type: Urban

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 600
Hispanic: 93.2%
African American: 5.0%
White: 1.8%
Low-income students: 90.6%
English language learners: 23.0%
Students with disabilities: 12.0%

Teachers
Total number: 29
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 95.7%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 5
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Did the School Make AYP?
2001-02: No (due to participation)
2002-03: No (due to participation)
2003-04: Yes
Kansas

Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
Superintendent: Ray Daniels
Contact: Jim Clevenger, Director of Federal Programs
20,162 students, K-12, urban

District Description
On the border of Missouri and Kansas, and smaller than the neighboring district of Kansas City, Missouri, the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) started implementing First Things First, a districtwide reform in 1997. Since that time, the district, in which more than three-fourths of the students are poor and minority children, has become a model of urban school reform, raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap between Hispanic and white students.

Key Findings
- Since 2002, KCKPS has increased student achievement significantly and reduced by two-thirds the number of schools that have not demonstrated adequate yearly progress as defined by No Child Left Behind.
- KCKPS attributes its success in raising student achievement to outstanding leadership from the school board and superintendent and the implementation of First Things First, a comprehensive school reform model being implemented districtwide.
- Despite its success, the district was identified as in need of improvement for 2004-05 after failing to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for the second straight year. Among other consequences, the district can no longer serve as a supplemental service provider even though it claims to be the most qualified provider available.
- As a result of the district’s disqualification as a supplemental service provider and the absence of another high-quality provider, schools have offered parents supplemental service through outside providers—mostly online providers—but these services have not been widely used. All these schools, however, have used other Title I funds to offer after-school tutoring for students who are not meeting standards.
- Although KCKPS schools in their first year of improvement are offering school choice, participation rates are very low. Reasons given for the low participation rates are the perceived quality of the identified schools and the efforts by principals to keep students in the schools.
- Although teachers, principals, and district administrators express confidence that they will continue to raise student achievement, NCLB sanctions, large cuts in spending on education by the state, and the retirement of the superintendent could slow district progress.

Overall Impact of NCLB
At first glance, NCLB appears to be having relatively little impact on KCKPS. Upon closer inspection, however, the legislation could be seen as having a negative effect on
the district's successful reforms started in 1997. Thanks to the district's implementation of First Things First—a comprehensive school reform model—in 1997, KCKPS had already begun to disaggregate student achievement data, use the data to improve and focus curriculum and instruction, and provide support services for students who were not meeting standards before President Bush signed NCLB in 2002. Furthermore, the reforms have worked, changing the culture in the district and schools and raising student achievement. Consequently, NCLB had relatively little impact on KCKPS, according to Jim Clevenger, director of federal programs; Steve Gering, executive director of middle schools and high schools; and Ray Daniels, superintendent.

“NCLB did focus us a little more,” said Gering, by causing the district to “push a little harder.” The district, however, remains more concerned about continuing the gains in student achievement across all schools than with schools demonstrating adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB. “If a school is improving and fails to demonstrate adequate yearly progress in one or two of 40 indicators, we don’t get bent out of shape,” Gering said. The premise of NCLB, added Daniels, is consistent with what the district is trying to do and “right on target” in requiring districts and schools to focus on all students. “We don’t know whether we can get to 100% proficiency,” he said. “But we’re going to try our hardest.”

Indeed, the district has made remarkable gains and yet feels punished by NCLB, perhaps the law’s greatest weakness when applied to KCKPS. Daniels said that the district tries to remain positive even as NCLB labels the district and some schools as needing improvement and acknowledged that this labeling is neither helpful nor equitable. “We demonstrated AYP for 50 out of 54 subgroups,” he said. “That’s good. We’re pleased but not satisfied. We know we need to keep improving but that doesn’t mean we should be stuck with a label.” He noted that surrounding districts have fewer subgroups, meaning that diverse urban districts like KCKPS “get hit first” by NCLB sanctions. “It seems like we get punished for being a Title I school,” agreed one elementary school principal. She added that Daniels is very encouraging and supportive but that the media “beats you down” for being a school identified as in need of improvement.

The superintendent also expressed concern that as a result of some schools and the district not making AYP, stereotypes of low achievement among certain subgroups are reinforced. For this reason, Daniels tries to avoid publicly citing the subgroups that have not made AYP, although he acknowledged that anyone can find out if they look on the district or state website.

One elementary school that is in its fourth year of school improvement illustrates some of the problems with NCLB. Over the past two years, the school has increased student achievement remarkably, from 19% at or above proficient in reading to 60%, and from 18% at or above proficient in math to 51.4%. Although the school demonstrated AYP for 2004-05, it will face potential restructuring (fifth year of improvement) if it does not do so again for 2005-06. At the same time, the school, which currently serves a predominantly low-income African American student population, is likely to receive an influx of low-income Hispanic and English language learner students over the next two years, forcing the school to make adjustments to its increasingly successful instructional program, said Jayson Strickland, the school’s principal. He added that despite the school’s success in raising student achievement, his biggest challenge has been and continues to be keeping staff morale high in the face of being identified as a school in need of improvement for four years.

Overall, teachers, principals, and district administrators support the ideas underlying NCLB, but feel that certain aspects of the law must be improved. “We don’t want NCLB gutted,” said Daniels. “We just want the law to be made smarter about key elements.”
First Things First

Beginning in 1996, the KCKPS board urged the district to overhaul its schools and raise student achievement. That year, district officials attended a presentation about First Things First, a comprehensive school reform model created by the New Jersey-based Institute for Research and Reform in Education, or IRRE. The district initiated community meetings and received a grant to implement the model from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. In 1997, a federal court approved a KCKPS desegregation plan that included implementation of First Things First. Implementation of the program began in 1998 in a cluster of schools and continued through 2000, by which time all schools were implementing the model. In 1998, Ray Daniels was hired as the superintendent after he agreed to focus district efforts on implementing First Things First. By 2002, all the hard work had begun to pay off with the first significant gains in student achievement, which have continued through 2004 (see section on achievement below).

First Things First, now implemented and strongly supported by teachers and administrators districtwide, is built upon seven critical features that guide the planning and implementation for students and their families, teachers, and administrators:

1. Provide continuity of care for students across the school day, across multiple years, and between school and home through small learning communities
2. Set high, clear, and fair standards for academics and conduct
3. Lower the student-to-adult ratios to 15 to 1 or fewer, and increase instructional time in language arts and math
4. Provide enriched and diverse opportunities for students to learn, perform, and be recognized
5. Equip, empower, and expect all teaching staff to implement standards-based instruction that actively engages all students in learning
6. Give small learning communities and schools the flexibility to redirect resources (time, money, people, and space) quickly to meet emerging needs
7. Assure collective responsibility for student outcomes

Teachers, principals, and district administrators give the implementation of First Things First a great deal of credit for the district’s increasing test scores. These educators cite not only the gains in student achievement but also the improved school culture and relationships between teachers and students and their families. For example, Jim Antos, principal of a middle school that is currently on corrective action, spoke glowingly of the district-mandated family advocacy program, which is paid for in part with ESEA Title II funds and in part with foundation funding. Piloted in some schools for three years and implemented districtwide for the first time in 2004-05, the First Things First advocacy program seeks to help teachers create stronger relationships with students and their families. The program features a 45-minute per week homeroom class in which teachers check in with their students and focus on such issues as anger management, stress, family problems, one-on-one conferences between teacher and student, and at least two conferences with parents. As a result, according to the principal, student suspensions have decreased while attendance and test scores have increased.

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Student achievement across KCKPS has been increasing steadily in reading since 2002, and the gap in reading achievement between Hispanic and white students has closed. The percentage of students in the district scoring at or above proficiency on the state reading assessment has increased 20 points, from 32% in 2002 to 52% in 2004, when 65% of white students and 62% of Hispanic students scored at or above proficiency. The gains in math achievement have been steady, although not as impressive as those for reading. Overall, the percentage of KCKPS students scoring at or above proficiency on the state math assessment has increased 15 points, from 23% in 2002 to 38% in 2004, with the gap in achievement remaining large between white and minority students (a 16 percentage point difference between white and Hispanic students, for example).

The increase in student achievement has led to a steady decline in the number of schools that have not demonstrated AYP since 2001, from 24 schools in 2000-01, to 10 in 2001-02, to 7 in 2002-03, to 8 in 2003-04. Most schools that did not make AYP in 2003-04 failed to do so because of math. Of the eight schools that did not make AYP, six did not make AYP in math, and only three of these seven also failed to demonstrate AYP in reading. Despite the increases in achievement across KCKPS, the district also failed to demonstrate AYP based on 2003-04 data in both reading (African Americans) and math (low-income, English language learners, and “multi-ethnic and undeclared” students) for the second year and has thus been identified as in need of improvement.

For 2004-05 (based on 2003-04 data), seven schools have been identified as in need of improvement. Four of the seven schools are in the first year of improvement and must offer school choice. One school is in its third year of improvement and thus must offer school choice and supplemental services and face district sanctions. Two of the seven schools are in their fourth year of improvement and must plan for governance changes (the district and state have agreed to allow First Things First to serve as the schools’ plan for governance). One of these two schools demonstrated AYP in both math and reading based on 2003-04 data and is “on hold”; if it demonstrates AYP again in 2004-05, it will be taken off the list of schools identified for improvement.

Four schools that were on the list of schools identified as in need of improvement demonstrated AYP for the second straight year in 2003-04 and were taken off the list.

TESTING ISSUES
Currently, the Kansas State Assessment tests students in grades 4, 7, and 10 in math and in grades 5, 8, and 11 in reading. For the 2005-06 school year, the assessment will be expanded to test students in grades 3-8 and high school.

To help chart its progress and collect data to improve instruction, the district administers an additional reading test to all students. Students in grades K-3 take the Individual Reading Inventory, and students in grades 4-12 take the Scholastic Reading Inventory. For the 2004-05 school year, the district will be administering a local math assessment.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
No KCKPS school failed to demonstrate AYP due to students with disabilities. To some extent, this apparent success may be a result of the low number of students in special education: no school that failed to demonstrate AYP in 2003-04 had enough students

2 Across all schools, there is no one subgroup that consistently fails to make AYP.
with disabilities to be counted for accountability purposes. At the same time, the district has had success increasing the achievement of students with disabilities. Across the district, students with disabilities demonstrated AYP for 2004-05, and achievement has been increasing impressively. In 2002, 12% of students with disabilities were at or above proficiency in reading and 19% were at or above proficiency in math. These percentages increased to 46% and 38% in reading and math, respectively, in 2004.

KCKPS has not had difficulty assessing its students with disabilities, according to Cynthia Lane, the district’s director of special education. Less than 1% of special education students are taking the alternative assessment, which is a portfolio of student work, and as a group, students with disabilities are making significant gains. Lane did express dissatisfaction with the regular assessment (with accommodations) that most special education students take because it is not a good measure since “it is above their level of functioning.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Of the eight schools that did not demonstrate AYP for 2004-05, only one failed to demonstrate AYP for English language learners (in math). As with students with disabilities, some of this apparent success could be attributed to the fact that most schools do not have enough ELLs to be counted for accountability purposes. But the achievement of ELLs has also been increasing markedly in both math (from 14% at or above proficiency in 2002 to 23% in 2004) and especially reading (from 38% at or above proficiency in 2002 to 71% in 2004, which is higher than the district average).

Unlike students with disabilities, however, ELLs did not demonstrate AYP in math across the district in 2003-04. According to a principal of a school in corrective action and the district administrator for ELL services, the problem is that the district has focused on literacy, and ELL students have responded in this area, increasing reading achievement significantly, but have not had comparable gains in math.

The district is thrilled by the success it has had in raising the reading achievement of ELLs and now plans to focus its efforts on increasing math achievement at similar rates.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

According to Clevenger, schools identified for improvement must “really focus and think about what they’re doing.” The level of accountability to administration is intense. Principals of schools on improvement are evaluated annually until their school goes off improvement. Budget authority is scrutinized by one of three district-level executive directors, with all purchases requiring the director’s approval.

Being on improvement brings additional resources, both financial and human, to a school. All schools in need of improvement write a proposal to the district to apply for $40,000 from the district’s Title I carryover funds. Although the schools can propose anything they want, a district leadership team helps the schools write their proposals and then evaluates them. Most schools asked for and received funds to offer tutoring separate from the supplemental services required by NCLB. The principal of one elementary school that has been identified for improvement called the extra funding for tutoring a central part of her strategy to increase student achievement. Thanks to the additional $40,000, she was able to increase the number of students participating in after-school tutoring from 30 students in 2003-04 to 71 students in 2004-05. She acknowledged that, for tutoring, her focus is on students just below the standard in reading and in math, pointing out that the lowest performing students receive a great deal of academic support throughout the school day.
One middle school has used its Title I technical assistance grant to tutor 100 students who are below standards in math four days a week. The program is administered by a teacher and taught by three teachers, including one ELL teacher, with the assistance of paraprofessionals. The district’s math coordinator helped the teachers select the curriculum, which complements the school’s regular math curriculum. The tutoring focuses on students who are close to being proficient in math, but remains open to all students who want to attend. Using pre-tests, the teachers determined that students were having the most trouble with “number sense,” so they are focusing on building knowledge and skills in that area. Although still early in the year, the principal says that the tutoring has been going “really well.”

The middle school also received a federal Comprehensive School Reform grant, which is being used to implement two programs, Connected Math and Writers’ Workshop. For Connected Math, the school is receiving training from Kansas State University. This training is intended to help teachers use inquiry-based teaching and cooperative learning and to provide better support for ELL students. For Writers’ Workshop, teachers are receiving training from an independent consultant to increase the amount of structured teaching of writing across the curriculum.

The district also conducts instructional audits of the schools identified for improvement, using literacy and math specialists, curriculum specialists, and at least one of the three district executive directors of schools. During the audit, the visiting team has conversations with teachers, instructional coaches, and principals; observes classes and school culture; and makes recommendations to be incorporated into the school’s Title I plan.

Although every school in the district has an instructional coach, schools that have been identified for improvement (and any school that requests assistance) receive additional assistance from coaches with expertise in the particular area in which the school has failed to demonstrate AYP. The instructional coach’s job is to work with the principal to plan and implement professional development, support teachers, analyze student achievement data, and develop strategies that address student weaknesses.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

KCKPS revised its curriculum in 1996, when the district implemented First Things First, and has made no changes as a result of NCLB, according to Clevenger and Gering, who has served as the district’s executive director of instruction. Gering added that if NCLB were to have any impact on the curriculum in the future, it would be to divert the district away from its standards-based curriculum by forcing teachers to focus only on the basics, especially in math, and “dumbing down” the district’s rigorous curriculum, which is endorsed by both the National Science Foundation and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Due to smaller achievement gains in math than in reading, the district is beginning to emphasize math more and, as a result, is starting to see gains in student achievement.

Three schools have received a Reading First grant, but these schools are using their resources to support work that had already been in place and to increase professional development for teachers, according to Gering. The district has a strong “balanced literacy” reading program developed by the district, said Gering. One school, which had implemented the Success for All model for three years, ended its relationship with this school reform and reading program in 2003 when it became apparent that it was not achieving the same results as other schools in the district.

Jayson Strickland, the principal of one elementary school with a Reading First grant, said that the grant is providing a great deal of resources in the early grades, including books at all levels of ability for children, funds to hire substitute teachers to release teachers for professional development, the professional development itself, and a full-time reading coach. He added that the school continues to implement the dis-
strict curriculum but does so at a much higher level since staff development has been “intense and consistent.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Although driven by First Things First and not NCLB, the entire district is “grounded” in professional development, according to Gering, who added that KCKPS has a strong reputation in the region for providing its teachers with outstanding professional development.

KCKPS is in its sixth year of releasing students early every Wednesday to give teachers and administrators time to work together to improve student achievement and to support implementation and monitoring of school improvement plans. Although there are some district in-services during the release time, the professional development is almost always based at each school, where teachers and principals work together with instructional coaches. Occasionally, schools or the district will bring in an outside consultant to provide some specialized training, but school staffs have grown to realize that they know more than most of the hired consultants, according to Gering.

One elementary school is using its Wednesday afternoons to introduce a rubric that will be used to assess teachers’ use of standards-based instruction and active engagement of their students.

One middle school that is in corrective action because it has not made AYP for math focuses much of its professional development time in improving math instruction across the curriculum. “We’ve got great teachers trying to become great math teachers,” said Jim Antos, the school’s principal. “But we’ve got a long way to go.” Nonetheless, Antos is optimistic because of the staff’s hard work. “In 7 to 10 years, everyone will be saying ‘look at what [the school] is doing in math.’”

To ensure students do not lose instructional time, the district increased the length of the regular school day by 5 minutes in the elementary and middle schools and 10 minutes in the high school. Also, community-based organizations offer after-school programs, including tutoring and enrichment activities, during this time to help students meet standards and provide a safe environment for them in the afternoon.

Although the weekly early-release day was difficult to sell politically, it is now widely supported by all stakeholders. “It is a community gift,” said Gering, and a clear signal from the board that teaching and learning is the district’s highest priority.

There are other important components to the district’s approach to professional development. For example, the district operates a comprehensive mentoring program for all new teachers, paid in part with Title II funds. New certified teachers receive one year of mentoring, and new teachers with an alternative certification receive three years. In addition, KCKPS uses the summer months to train all teachers in a high-priority area. For example, during the summer of 2004, the district trained teachers and principals to use the new math curriculum.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
District administrators voiced significant displeasure with NCLB’s school-choice requirements. For 2004–05, seven KCKPS schools were required to offer students school choice since they failed to demonstrate AYP for two consecutive years. According to Clevenger, only about 45 students from the seven identified schools are taking advantage of the option to choose another school.

One elementary school principal said that 15% of her students are not attending the school this year, because they chose to attend another school in the district. She insisted,
however, that most students do not leave for academic reasons but because they have had behavior problems and are looking for a fresh start in a different school, and she predicted that they would ultimately return to the school. Student choice, she added, has hurt the school because as student enrollment declines the school loses teaching positions.

One middle school principal said that 11 out of 730 students last year and 5 out of 700 this year took advantage of the choice option “mostly out of convenience” to be closer to working parents or after-school caregivers. Although the school has been identified for improvement, the principal insists that his students receive an outstanding education and that students ultimately want to return to its family-like atmosphere.

One reason for the low participation rate might be the effort made by principals in schools identified for improvement to keep their students from leaving. After the district sent out its letter informing parents of students in schools in need of improvement of their right to choose a different school, the principals of the schools in need of improvement sent out letters explaining why the students should stay.

District and school administrators said that neither students nor parents want to leave their neighborhood schools, which, for the most part, are viewed as offering a high-quality education. “Even schools identified for improvement are good schools,” said Clevenger, who added that parents would be “crazy” to pull their students out of these schools. Those students who do leave their neighborhood schools, said school and district administrators, do so for different reasons, including being closer to where a parent works or a caregiver lives, avoiding personality conflicts with a teacher or principal, or trying to address student behavior problems. Many of these students, added the administrators, ultimately return back to the neighborhood school.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

District administrators also voiced significant displeasure with the way in which NCLB’s requirements for providing supplemental education services are being implemented. For 2004-05, three KCKPS schools were required to offer students supplemental education services since they failed to demonstrate AYP for three consecutive years. Only approximately 50 students out of roughly 1,500 eligible students are participating in the NCLB-required supplemental services. Most of these students will use one of four providers of services, all of which use the Internet to help students develop basic skills in reading in math. No teacher, principal, or district administrator interviewed believes that these services will help struggling students improve their skills in any measurable way. The district is also trying to recruit the regional service center, which is a state-qualified service provider, to provide services in the district.

According to district and school administrators, the biggest problem is that the district is prevented from providing services in 2004-05 after doing so in 2002-03 (for about 180 students in 10 schools) and in 2003-04 (for about 200 students in 7 schools) because it did not make AYP for the second year in a row. Under NCLB, schools required to offer supplemental education services because they are in their second year of improvement (third year of failing to make AYP) must choose a provider from a list of eligible providers created by the state. Although districts can qualify to be on the state’s list, they are disqualified if they do not make AYP two years in a row. KCKPS was on the state list of qualified supplemental services until the 2004-05 school year when it did not demonstrate AYP for the second straight year. Some critics of the way the requirements have been crafted and interpreted, including KCKPS administrators, assert correctly that districts are held to a higher standard as service providers because they must demonstrate AYP while other providers do not. Moreover, add the critics, districts are often uniquely positioned to provide the specific services that are aligned with school curriculum and instructional strategies and most likely to help struggling students meet state standards.
KCKPS administrators insist that the supplemental services the district provided over two years helped students to meet standards and that the options available this year are of low quality. In fact, all schools who participated in the district’s supplemental services program demonstrated AYP for 2004-05, according to the superintendent.

The state has a list of approximately 30 qualified providers, but no more than 12—almost all of them providing services online—work in the KCKPS area. The district worked with these providers and helped them recruit students, which “was a lot of work.” For 2004-05, the district had approximately 700 eligible students. Only 50 students sent back applications, most choosing either Education Station (Sylvan) or Newton, both of which provide services online. Both providers, however, have informed the district that it did not meet their student enrollment minimum.

Greenbush, a regional technical assistance center qualified by the state to provide services, ultimately stepped in and enrolled 47 out of the 50 students into its tutoring program. As of October 2004, however, it was still not clear how these students (or the other 650 students who are eligible but did not submit an application) would be served. The district is extremely frustrated, believing that it could provide high-quality tutoring support to all eligible students.

The district even worked with a local nonprofit, School Linked Services, to submit a service-provider application to the state. The nonprofit would have used the model developed by the district to provide similar services as last year, but its application was denied by the state.

Due to the problem with providers, the district has been unable to use approximately $1 million (10%) of its Title I funds that NCLB requires be set aside for school choice and supplemental services. According to Clevenger, after demonstrating to the state that the district has limited access to qualified service providers, the district can tap the funds to develop its own tutoring program. He expects the district to do so in late fall or early winter of the 2004-05 school year, but administrators are concerned about the late start of the program.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Of the 1,650 teachers in KCKPS, 85.2% are highly qualified as defined by NCLB. The percentage, however, will soon increase, said Tom Petz, the district’s director of secondary personnel, who noted that the 7.2% of teachers who are currently “provisionally” qualified will soon be considered highly qualified due to a change in state policy, raising the district’s percentage of highly qualified teachers to 92.4%.

Like many districts, KCKPS has had the greatest difficulty with NCLB’s highly qualified provisions at the secondary level. One of the reasons that KCKPS has had difficulty in this area is somewhat unique for an urban district. Unlike many urban districts, KCKPS also has trouble with the highly qualified requirements at the high school level due to its use of “looping” teachers. Part of the First Things First model, looping entails having teachers continue to teach the same group of students as they progress from grade to grade, with the goal of creating and sustaining strong relationships with their students. The problem is that the NCLB provisions require teachers to have a major in or to have passed a test in all the content areas they teach, preventing most teachers from teaching, for example, biology, chemistry, and physics unless they pass a test in each of those subject areas. To date, KCKPS has tried to comply with the requirements by having teachers “team teach,” according to Gering.

KCKPS also has problems similar to other urban districts. For example, like many districts, many middle school teachers were certified as K-8 teachers, which is not sufficient under NCLB because that certification does not provide the necessary content...
focus. Virtually all (98%) KCKPS teachers who received this certification and are now teaching in middle school have become highly qualified using the state’s HOUSSE, a rubric that gives consideration to teachers’ experience, qualifications, and training to determine whether they are highly qualified under NCLB. In addition, KCKPS is very concerned about the lack of highly qualified secondary math and science teachers and special education and ELL teachers, according to Daniels. Currently, the district does not have serious problems, but it expects to have problems in the future as more highly qualified teachers begin to retire.

Daniels believes that one of NCLB’s biggest weaknesses is that it lacks positive incentives for highly qualified teachers. “Some of our best teachers have been here for less than five years,” he noted. The district, according to Daniels, has no flexibility in teacher salaries or bonuses because the union has blocked changes to teachers’ contracts.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

Overall, there are 285 paraprofessionals in the district who work with special education students. In addition, there are 30 teachers’ aides, who work with English language learners, migrant students, and Title I students in general. The number of aides working with the general Title I population, however, has been declining. KCKPS schools have reduced the number of Title I paraprofessionals from approximately 75 four years ago to approximately 17 in 2004-05.

The problem has been that a majority of the current special education paraprofessionals, all of whom teach in a Title I schoolwide program and are thus subject to NCLB’s highly qualified paraprofessional provisions, are not highly qualified as defined by NCLB and do not want to go back to school or prepare for the ParaPro test. Paraprofessionals who do not pass the ParaPro test this year will not be offered a job for next year, but the district is offering tuition assistance, tutoring, practice tests, and free administration of the test.

**Funding and Capacity**

All elementary and middle schools in KCKPS receive Title I funding. In most cases, schools use their Title I funds to hire staff to reduce class size, and allocate leftover funds to purchase materials and help pay for professional development. The district focuses its Title I funds on facilitating and supporting school improvement planning and implementation and, combined with Title II funds and local grants, to pay the salaries (a total of approximately $3 million per year) of instructional coaches working in all the district’s schools.

In 2004-05, KCKPS received an increase in Title I funding, but with greater restrictions attached. In particular, NCLB’s choice and supplemental education services provisions—which require districts with schools in need of improvement to set aside 20% of the Title I allocations—have prevented KCKPS from using $1 million due to low participation rates and a lack of supplemental service providers.

Moreover, in June 2004, the board had to trim $8 million from the school district’s budget, forcing the possible elimination of its entire 2005 summer school program. The board had already slashed $13 million from the district’s budget since 2002. The budget cuts will mean the elimination of four instructional coaching positions, higher student to teacher ratios, the loss of funds for textbooks and technology, and more meager teacher raises. Board members also fear the cuts could jeopardize the progress of First Things First and implementation of important programs, according to a publication put out by the Partnership for Children, which works to improve the quality of life for all of Greater Kansas City’s children and youth. To make matters worse, Ray Daniels, the tremendously popular superintendent who oversaw implementation of First Things
First, has announced his retirement following the 2004–05 school year. As of October 2004, the board was searching for a replacement who is committed to sustaining the First Things First reforms.

This can-do attitude is generally shared by teachers and principals in the schools, but there are real concerns about their ability to continue improvement in the face of declining budgets, changing demographics, and NCLB-imposed sanctions. Jayson Strickland, the principal of an elementary school that has been identified for improvement, notes that he currently has plenty of resources due to a Reading First grant and extra funds from the district for school improvement. He is concerned, however, that funding will evaporate just as his low-income community and student population transitions from mostly African American to Hispanic with a significant ELL population. At the same time, although achievement in the school has increased significantly over the last few years and the school demonstrated AYP in 2003–04, the school is “this close,” said Strickland, from not demonstrating AYP for 2004–05 and facing the possibility of reconstitution next year.

Data File — Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Location: Kansas
Type: Urban

Number of Schools
- Total: 48
- PreK: 3
- Elementary: 30
- Middle/junior high: 8
- High schools: 4
- Other: 3 (magnet for grades 8-12, alternative school program, and area technical school)

Number of Title I Schools: 38 (all elementary and middle schools)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 20,162
- African American: 48.2%
- Hispanic: 27.7%
- White: 20.3%
- Asian: 3.3%
- American Indian: 0.5%
- Low-income students: 77.0%
- Students with disabilities: 12.4%
- English language learners: 12.0%

Teachers
- Total number: 1,650
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 85.2%

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 315
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 72.4%
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

Based on 2002-03 testing | Based on 2003-04 testing
---|---
Schools in Year 1 of improvement *(Did not make AYP for two consecutive years)*: | 0 | 4
Schools in Year 2 of improvement *(Did not make AYP for three consecutive years)*: | 1 | 0
Schools in corrective action *(Did not make AYP for four consecutive years)*: | 3 | 1
Schools in restructuring *(Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years)*: | 3 | 2

### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

Based on 2002-03 testing | Based on 2003-04 testing
---|---
Schools offering choice *only*: | 0 | 4
Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES *instead of choice*: | 0 | 0
Schools offering SES *and* choice: | 7 | 3
Louisiana

St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools
Superintendent: Michael Coburn
Contacts: Michael Coburn, Superintendent
          Annette Jennings, Title I Curriculum Coordinator
          Ann LaBorde, Executive Director of Legal Services and Personnel
          Patricia Triche, Principal, Garyville-Mt. Airy Elementary School
          Debra Schum, Principal, East St. John High School

6,373 students, K-12, suburban

District Description

St. John the Baptist Parish is located halfway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge; running through the middle of the school district is the Mississippi River. Along the river are the little towns of LaPlace, Lucy, Edgard, Wallace, Garyville, Mt. Airy, and Reserve. An old settlement, St. John was established in the early 1720s when this part of the Mississippi River was known as the German Coast. Half of the children in the area attend church-related schools. St. John Parish is a public school district, and the majority of the students who go to its 10 schools are African American. Most of the families have low incomes, all schools receive Title I funds, and at some schools the poverty level is 90%.

Key Findings

■ Six of the ten St. John Parish schools received good overall performance scores on the Louisiana accountability system, and the other four are in need of academic improvement because they did not meet the state accountability targets for growth. No schools, however, are in school improvement status under the No Child Left Behind Act.

■ Improving reading is the major district goal across all grade levels in St. John Parish. By raising reading achievement through improved curriculum, instruction, and professional development, the district expects to see greater gains in overall student performance.

■ Creating small learning academies at the high school is a strategy being used to increase academic achievement, improve passing rates on state exit exams, and boost enrollments in the public schools, according to district officials.

Overall Impact of NCLB

From the superintendent’s office to the school level, several people in the St. John Parish school district expressed the view that NCLB has helped to spur significant improvements in student performance across the district. The staff also recognizes, according to Superintendent Michael Coburn, that academic improvement is a continuous process. As each year's assessment results become known, there are reasons to be pleased, but also a realization that additional changes must be made.

The superintendent points to the increase in district enrollment of 243 students in the past two years as an indication that parents in the area have reversed a trend and are choosing to keep their children enrolled in public schools. “The numbers show that
we are retaining more of our students, and that’s great news for our school system and for our communities,” said Coburn. “We’re making great progress since we started our turn-around efforts three years ago. We might have done it on our own, but NCLB helped us get there.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Two years ago, St. John Parish restructured most of its schools in an effort designed by the new superintendent and board of education to reverse a 10-year decline in student performance. Middle schools were eliminated, and all the elementary schools were changed to K-8 schools. Because the reconfigured schools were new schools for purposes of measuring adequate yearly progress, they started with a fresh baseline in 2003. Louisiana’s two-year cycle for performance reporting for the state accountability plan and AYP resulted in a new way to look at the performance of district schools in 2004. Some St. John schools did very well in 2004, but others did not do as well as they had anticipated, so the district began a closer look at all instructional areas.

St. John Parish students take two assessments that are used to determine AYP in Louisiana. The LEAP test (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) is taken by students in grades 4 and 8 in English/language arts and math. Students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 are tested in English and math on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). The LEAP scores count for 60% of AYP and the ITBS counts for 30%. The other 10% is attendance and the dropout rate.

Students take exams in grade 10 (language arts and math) and grade 11 (science and social studies) that they must pass to graduate from high school, and these scores also count for AYP. The parish has begun testing students in grade 2 with the ITBS in order to have better baseline information for skill acquisition in reading and math.

The past three years have shown some improvements in student performance, according to Annette Jennings, Title I curriculum coordinator. In 2004, students in grade 4 did better in both English and math on the state exams than they did in 2003. Students in grade 8 had a slight drop in math compared with 2003 but showed improvement in English. In 2004, every tested grade level improved on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the first time in five years, and the high school students improved as well.

The only school that did not make AYP in 2004 was Garyville-Mt. Airy Elementary School, which serves K-8. Students in grade 8 fell short of the overall proficiency target in math. The school was given a rating of “academic warning” under the Louisiana state accountability system; this was not what school officials had expected because the school was implementing a major reform program to improve student learning.

Strategies for Improving Schools

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

St. John schools thoroughly analyze student assessment data each year to identify where changes may need to be made in curriculum and instruction. One curricular modification that has been implemented throughout the district for the past year is the Renaissance Learning program for both reading and math. The reading goal is for the students to read 250,000 books, or almost 40 books per student, during the school year—a goal that was met in 2004. To make this possible, thousands of books were added to school libraries at all the schools. Daily classroom schedules include 50 minutes of reading time for students at the elementary level, and the Accelerated Reader books include comprehension quizzes for the students.
Improvement Strategies at Garyville-Mt. Airy Elementary School

Patricia Triche is in her second year as principal of the K-8 Garyville-Mt. Airy Elementary School. Triche expressed disappointment in the way AYP was determined for her school. The students in eighth grade in 2004 did better than they had in seventh grade but not well enough to meet AYP targets. In addition, Triche said, “our teachers and our students had to make a big adjustment from a junior high to an elementary, but we are past that this year.”

Triche seemed confident that changes underway in instructional strategies and higher expectations for students at all grade levels will bring about higher achievement, but that it might take longer than she initially expected. “Our school is changing, and we are turning things around,” she emphasized, adding that everyone on the staff has a good attitude about the reforms underway. “This school had six principals in ten years, but we have a different vision now,” she noted.

After reviewing test scores, the principal and teachers knew that performance was weak in math, so the school is working on that, according to Triche. Tutoring is a major part of this effort at Garyville-Mt. Airy. Students give up half of their physical education time for small group instruction, and two retired teachers have been employed to assist the students in math and reading. The Renaissance program was enthusiastically adopted by the school and will continue, Triche said. “Practice is critical to acquiring reading skills, and our students must practice at the appropriate level,” she explained. The program gives students a motivation to improve their reading and opportunities for student success. Everyone in the program sets goals, and students also receive frequent and objective feedback.

Visitors to the school can readily see a high level of excitement about reading from children, staff, and parent volunteers and a general atmosphere that values reading for all. The principal is pursued through the halls by students who are anxious to tell her what they have read and demonstrate their improved reading skills. “This program is designed to accelerate instruction for every student,” Triche noted. “We say that students must be read to, they must be read with, and they must also read independently.”

The teaching and learning process at Garyville-Mt. Airy Elementary School includes ongoing teacher-student feedback and monitoring. According to Annette Jennings, the parish schools use a variety of indicators of student progress, including portfolios, state assessment results, student reading logs, literacy skills tests, diagnostic reports, and standards advisory reports.

Improvement Strategies at East St. John High School

Debra Schum is the principal of East St. John High School, which is located in Reserve on the east side of the Mississippi River. The school has 1,470 students in 2004-05, an increase of 145 from last year. Schum has been at the school for nine years and has seen major changes take place in curriculum, instruction, student expectations, and overall student performance. The school made AYP in 2004 in all areas.

Schum credits the small learning communities that were created for students entering the ninth grade with making a positive impact on student achievement. This year’s seniors were the first to take part in the new design, which clustered groups of ninth graders with a teaching team that stayed with them for the entire year. The teachers have a common planning period, and classes are scheduled for 90-minute blocks. Teachers get to know the students very well, and teacher-student counseling becomes a part of instruction. During their freshman year, students select one of three career pathways: fine arts and technology, health and science, and business, engineering, and finance. For grades 10, 11, and 12, they are part of an “academy” focused on one of these pathways, and they stay with the teaching team for that academy for the three-year period.
“We studied this very carefully before we started the new plan,” said Schum. The school used a design from Johns Hopkins University and then modified it to fit the school’s needs. Teachers could choose which pathway they wanted to be in, and the school provided staff development where it was needed. Faculty study groups helped to develop an action plan to carry out the design. “The big change for teachers was that they had to be flexible—even with changing rooms, as it required us to move a lot of things around,” Schum said. “The main thing is that our students are learning better, and we are very pleased with where this has taken us.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Teachers in St. John Parish are provided with several technology-based professional development activities. They also have the opportunity to complete the 56-hour Louisiana INTECH program, which teaches them how to integrate technology into their classes. Teachers can also use technology to access professional development activities related to the Renaissance Learning programs, such as Accelerated Reader, STAR Reader, STAR Early Literacy, Accelerated Math, and STAR Math.

Other Issues
St. John Parish has a continual emphasis on parent involvement that includes breakfast clubs, the Parent Reading Extravaganza, a technology-based program for parent literacy, and a partnership with a local baseball team, the New Orleans Zephyrs. After-school tutoring takes place at some churches, and there are many support activities that connect the schools with the community.

Data File — St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools

Location: Southern Louisiana
Type: Suburban

Number of Schools
Total: 10
Elementary: 8 (K-8)
High schools: 2 (9-12)
Other: 1 (Child Development Center)

Number of Title I Schools: 10

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 6,373
African American: 75%
White: 27%
Hispanic: 1%
Asian: 1%
Low-income students: 75% (some schools as high as 90%)
Students with disabilities: 18%
English language learners: 2%
**Teachers**

Total number: 332  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 61%

**Paraprofessionals**

Total number: 64  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 52%

### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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<th>Based on 2003-04 testing</th>
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<td>Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years):</td>
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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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<td>Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice:</td>
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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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Massachusetts

Avon Public School District
Superintendent: Dr. Margaret Frieswyk
Contact: Paul Zinni, Director, Pupil Services
730 students, preK-12, suburban

District Description
The Avon Public School District is a small district that covers four square miles of the metropolitan area south of Boston. The district has two schools—an elementary school for pre-kindergarten through grade 6 and a secondary school with two divisions of grades 7-8 and 9-12. The district places a high value on small class sizes and makes great efforts to keep all classes at a student-teacher ratio of about 22:1, with some grades as low as 16:1.

Key Findings
- The Avon Public School District uses the No Child Left Behind requirements as a lever to improve student performance. The staff looks at trends in assessment results and identifies patterns of success and weakness for students at all levels of proficiency. Teachers work in teams to develop strategies to remedy the problems highlighted by the assessment analysis.
- New teachers in Avon are mentored by their peers to help them learn how to address students’ academic needs and hold high expectations for learning for all students.
- A 12% reduction in Avon’s Title I allocation in the wake of two years of state budget cuts has left Avon with the unenviable choice of increasing student-teacher ratios or cutting Title I services to students.

Overall Impact of NCLB
“The greatest impact of NCLB,” said Dr. Margaret Frieswyk, superintendent of the Avon Public School District, “is how we look at data and how we make decisions after reviewing the data. When we make a change, we know exactly why we are doing it, and we have the data to support it.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress
In 2004, Massachusetts state testing took place in English/language arts in grades 4, 7, and 10; in reading in grade 3; in math in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10; and in science in grades 5 and 8. Testing will take place in 2005 in grade 10.

Avon students consistently perform well on assessments, although there are variations among the subgroups and across grade levels. Both of the district’s two schools made adequate yearly progress again in 2004. Avon is also one of nine school districts in the state that can claim that all high school graduates consistently pass the state high school assessment, which is required for graduation. District officials attribute the strong academic achievement of students to consistent instruction from one grade level to the next and to a highly motivated school staff that works as a team in expecting high performance from all students.
Avon students with disabilities take the regular state tests for their grade level, but if a special education student needs accommodations in his or her instructional program, such as the use of a scribe, the accommodations can be used in testing as well. Students with severe disabilities take portfolio assessments that comply with NCLB testing requirements. The portfolio demonstrates how well students have learned knowledge and skills from the state’s curriculum. The portfolio assessments are scored at the state level. According to Paul Zinni, director of pupil services, the data is extremely valuable for the staff in determining the next steps for each student’s academic progress.

Strategies for Improving Schools

Avon’s curricular frameworks are being reviewed and revised to assure better alignment with state assessments. These curriculum changes are expected to bring about changes in instruction. Teachers are being taught how to use assessment data effectively to improve instruction for all students. As Paul Zinni explained, “Teachers need to look at data in a thoughtful way.” Toward this end, the district has established a series of after-school focus groups designed to show teachers “how to find the trouble spots that point to lack of knowledge and skills related to the standard,” Zinni said. In the workshops, teachers learn how to create a hypothesis and use the data to design a better way to teach to the standard.

Most teachers in the Avon schools are involved in improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment or in building a better sense of community and better learning climate in their school. With 10 new teachers in 2004-05, district officials wanted to make sure that classroom instruction would continue to be strong and that teachers would hold high academic expectations for all students. The new teachers were each provided with a peer mentor to help improve their understanding of the content standards for their grade, classroom expectations for student behavior, effective approaches for parent involvement, and specific instructional strategies. Observations are a part of this training for new teachers—the mentor offers suggestions for delivering instruction and provides feedback to the new teacher, and the new teacher also observes the classroom of the mentor. Mentors receive small stipends for the additional time they spend with the new teachers.

Preschool in Avon is part of the primary program and is housed in the same building as kindergarten and the primary grades. The pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs are both half a day. Head Start and state funds cover the costs for families that qualify, but for others, tuition is charged.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

All Avon teachers are considered highly qualified under the requirements of NCLB. At times, however, a teacher is needed to teach a class at the secondary level, and the district cannot find someone who meets the requirements. In those cases, the intent of district staff is to use the Massachusetts HOUSSE process to help these teachers become qualified in all the content areas they teach.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

Avon’s two paraprofessionals paid with Title I funds are highly qualified under NCLB, since both have bachelor’s degrees. The special education paraprofessionals in Avon do not need to meet NCLB requirements because they are not funded from Title I. Even
so, the district is preparing these employees to reach the NCLB expectations through the use of recently developed HOUSSE procedures for paraprofessionals. Specialized training will be part of the plan to assist the paraprofessionals.

Funding and Capacity

Avon’s Title I allocation decreased by 12% in 2004-05 due to the use of new census data in the Title I formula. Because of the district’s small enrollment, any reduction in funds results in fiscal disruption, according to Zinni, and it is not just a matter of “tightening the belt” and keeping a careful eye on all expenditures. One of two things has to happen—either staffing has to be cut, thus increasing teacher-student ratios, or specific services for students have to be discontinued. “We have had fiscal difficulties for the past two years because of a reduction in state funds, and now this decrease in federal funds has created more problems for us.” Zinni said. “But we will do the best that we can. The important thing is to keep the focus on the students.”

Data File — Avon Public School District

Location: South Boston metropolitan area
Type: Suburban

Number of Schools
Total: 2
Elementary: 1 (preK-6)
Junior/senior high school: 1 (with two divisions, grades 7-8 and 9-12)

Number of Title I Schools: 1 (the elementary school is a targeted assistance school)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 730
White: 82%
African American: 14%
Hispanic: 3%
Asian: 1%

Low-income students: 16%
Students with disabilities: 14%
English language learners: 0

Teachers
Total number: 78
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 2
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%
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<tr>
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<td>(Did not make AYP for three consecutive years)</td>
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<td>Schools in Year 1 of school improvement</td>
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<td>offering SES instead of choice</td>
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<td>Schools offering SES and choice</td>
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Massachusetts

Boston Public Schools
Superintendent: Thomas Payzant
Contact: Maryellen Donahue, Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation
60,164 students, K-12, urban

District Description
In 2004, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) district was, for the third straight year, one of five finalists for the Broad Prize for Urban Education, given each year by the Broad Foundation. Additionally, in October 2004, the Council of the Great City Schools awarded BPS Superintendent Thomas Payzant its award for urban excellence for his leadership and for the progress demonstrated by BPS students. The district is large and diverse, serving over 60,000 students, half of whom are African American and three-quarters of whom are low income.

Key Findings
- Although concerns about elements of the No Child Left Behind Act remain among teachers, principals, and district administrators, NCLB is having a relatively small impact on curriculum, instruction, school choice, and school improvement strategies in BPS because the district has been engaged in NCLB-like reforms since 1996.
- In 2004-05, all teachers in every Boston public school are expected to implement the district’s “collaborative coaching and learning” cycles, a professional development model for teachers that fosters reflection, the use of research to improve instruction, collaborative lesson planning, and the modeling and supportive critiquing of lessons.
- Despite gains in student achievement and national recognition as an outstanding urban district, BPS did not make adequate yearly progress in 2004 for the second straight year. Although the finding was under review by the state as of December 2004, BPS was almost certainly going to be found in need of improvement.
- BPS has been a key provider of supplemental education services for schools in their second year of improvement. Since the district itself failed to demonstrate AYP for the second straight year, it is no longer qualified to serve as a provider under NCLB. The state, however, has granted the district permission to continue serving as a provider for the 2004-05 school year since its “needs improvement status” was officially under review as of December 2004.
- In 2004, Massachusetts increased from 20 to 40 the minimum number of students that must be in a subgroup before the group is held accountable for making adequate yearly progress. Although the change should make it easier for schools and the district to demonstrate AYP, the true impact of the change is not yet clear.

Overall Impact of NCLB
According to district and school staff, No Child Left Behind is having a relatively small impact in the Boston Public Schools for two main reasons. First, the district began implementing many of the features embedded in NCLB in 1996, when Superintendent Payzant was hired, and has continued doing so ever since.
Second, Massachusetts used BPS as the model for its statewide accountability system, meaning that the district could continue its reform efforts without interruption and remain in alignment and compliance with the state. According to Maryellen Donahue, BPS director of research, assessment, and evaluation, NCLB is partly modeled after the system in Massachusetts, reaffirming the alignment of the accountability system in BPS and minimizing the impact of NCLB on the district and its schools. Donahue said that with the exception of “the issue of failure”—by which she meant that NCLB applies the same sanctions to schools that did not make adequate yearly progress for very different reasons—NCLB is a positive force in the district and statewide.

That said, NCLB will ultimately have an impact on the district. Based on 2003-04 data, BPS did not demonstrate AYP for the second year in a row. Although the finding is under review by the state, Donahue acknowledged that BPS will be ultimately identified for improvement (see below).

Further, although many educators from the three schools visited did voice support for NCLB, one principal and several teachers expressed serious concerns. These concerns about the impact of NCLB included increased paperwork and reduction in the joy of teaching, the belief that all public schools will ultimately be labeled failures, and the mistreatment and possible segregation of students with disabilities (see below). Michael Fung, the principal of Charlestown High School, had the strongest misgivings about NCLB. Even though his school has increased student achievement significantly during his tenure, he indicated that his frustration with NCLB is so great that he is considering early retirement.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Currently, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests students in English language arts (grades 3, 4, 7, 10) and math (grades 4, 6, 8, 10). Starting in 2005-06, MCAS will test students in English language arts (ELA) and math in grades 3-8 and 10. The MCAS, according to Donahue, is a good test that releases forms every year so teachers and administrators can see what is being tested and that uses a lot of open-ended questions requiring students to write answers or show their work. The problem, added Donahue, is that the test takes a long time to score because of the open-ended component. As a result, the district did not receive its test data and AYP determination until late October 2004 (the district’s appeal was still in progress as of December 1, 2004).

MCAS is also used as an exit exam for high school students. In addition to completing the local course requirements, students must pass both the ELA and math sections of the MCAS in order to graduate from high school. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests and receive extra tutoring before graduation.

Overall, student achievement in the district has been increasing since 1998. On the 2003 exams, results for the BPS improved in almost every grade and subject. The percentage of student passing the grade 10 exams (a requirement for high school graduation) on their first attempt has increased from 43% in 1998 to 77% in 2004. More important, the percentage of students scoring in the top two performance categories has continued to increase each year. This year, the rate of African American and Latino students progressing into the Advanced and Proficient levels of performance was far greater than that of white and Asian students across the board.

BPS students are also doing better on the SAT tests: the district’s average scores increased from 421 to 434 on the verbal section and from 432 to 453 on the math section between 1999 and 2003, a combined improvement that far outpaces the gains at both the state and national levels.

Despite these gains, BPS failed in 2003-04 to demonstrate AYP for the second year in a row. According to the state, BPS did not demonstrate AYP in either attendance (for
all students) or achievement of students with disabilities in ELA and math. The previous year, BPS did not demonstrate AYP due to attendance (all students) and achievement of students with disabilities in both ELA and math.

The district is appealing to the state the finding that it did not make AYP due to attendance since the state has combined attendance data from elementary, middle, and high schools. Had the state focused only on the attendance of elementary and middle schools as described in its accountability plan—the plan uses high school Competency Determination (passing MCAS in both ELA and math), not attendance, as the second indicator for high schools—the district would have demonstrated AYP in attendance. Donahue acknowledged, however, that even if the appeal is successful, BPS would still fail to demonstrate AYP due to the achievement of its special education students.

For 2004, a majority of the district’s 136 schools demonstrated AYP for the total school population. Specifically, 66% of schools made AYP in ELA, 71% made AYP in math, and 55% demonstrated AYP in both subjects. As would be expected, these percentages decrease when subgroups are included in the AYP determination. When the total population and subgroups are considered, 54% of schools met AYP in ELA, 59% made AYP in math, and 43% demonstrated AYP in both subjects. Table 1 shows the percentage of schools with sufficient sample sizes (40 or more students in the subgroup) that made 2004 AYP in ELA and math, based on either aggregated achievement only or subgroup achievement.

**TABLE 1 PERCENTAGE OF BPS SCHOOLS MAKING AYP IN 2004 BY SUBJECT AND SUBGROUP***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>ELA</th>
<th>Math</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aggregate Achievement</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<td>Aggregate and All Subgroups</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subgroups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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*Only schools with subgroup sizes of 40 or more are included in calculations.


As shown in Table 1, the limited English proficient (LEP) student groups at more than three-fourths of schools demonstrated AYP in ELA and/or math. The district notes in its *Report on Adequate Yearly Progress* (November 2004) that the relatively high number of schools meeting AYP for this subgroup could be partially due to the inclusion of former LEP students and the exclusion of LEP students enrolled for the first year in U.S. schools, as allowed by recent guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education.
Overall in 2004, about two-fifths of BPS schools (57 schools) were identified for improvement, meaning that they have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years. Of these 57 schools, 35 are in Year 1 of improvement, 4 are in Year 3 of improvement, and 4 are in Year 4 of improvement. Due to a required alignment of federal and state accountability systems, no school in the 2004–05 school year is “identified for improvement Year 2.” Seven schools have been identified for corrective action (four years of not making AYP), and 7 schools have been identified for restructuring (five or more years of not making AYP). Fourteen BPS schools exited improvement status in 2004 because they made AYP in both 2003 and 2004 after failing to do so in 2001 and 2002.

It is unclear how or to what degree two important rule changes at the state level affected or will affect the ability of Boston schools to demonstrate AYP. First, for 2004, the rules in Massachusetts for determining what constitutes a student subgroup changed. In 2003, the minimum number of students for a subgroup was 20. In 2004, that number increased to 40. With this increased group size, the number of schools in the district with subgroups large enough to count has decreased for all subgroups, ranging from a 7% decrease for the low-income subgroup to a 63% decrease for the white student subgroup. The LEP and low-income subgroups were affected the least, while the special education and white subgroups were affected the most (see Table 2). While this change will likely help more schools demonstrate AYP, since they will be responsible for demonstrating progress for fewer subgroups, Donahue warned that this change lets schools off the hook and in effect results in a loss of data.

In addition, an extra category for demonstrating AYP was added for the 2003–04 school year. For the first time, schools with grades 1–8 had to demonstrate AYP for attendance, and high schools had to demonstrate AYP for Competency Determination (passing MCAS in both ELA and math). It is currently unclear, said Donahue, what impact this change has had on schools.

### Table 2: Number of Schools with Qualifying Subgroups* for AYP Determination 2003 vs. 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroups</th>
<th>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</th>
<th>MATH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The sample size requirement for a subgroup in 2003 was 20 or more; in 2004, the qualifying subgroup size is 40 or more per year and is at least 5% of students included in the aggregate calculation or the subgroup size is 200 or more. The number of schools with qualifying subgroups is different for English language arts and math because these subjects are tested in different grades.

Strategies for Improving Schools

In 1996, BPS developed a five-year education reform plan called Focus on Children and updated the plan in 2002 through Focus on Children II. This plan has greatly shaped the approach that Boston public schools take to student learning, according to the Boston Plan for Excellence, a nonprofit group that works closely with the district. The focus of the work is on aligning district goals to state and federal curriculum standards and expectations. Each school now develops and maintains a Whole School Improvement Plan that sets clear goals and allows for the measurement of progress toward those goals. The plans are available to families and the community to help build a better understanding of the reforms taking place.

The district structured its core planning and school support functions to improve achievement in all schools, according to Charlotte Harris, the district’s Title I director. The district’s reasoning was that despite best efforts, over time all or most schools will be identified for improvement due to one or more subgroups, if not aggregate performance. All schools are required to develop and adhere to a three-year school improvement plan. Data analysis, a required and structured activity, is supported by an online system that allows every teacher and administrator to call up achievement data for his or her students and manipulate the data to identify needs by NCLB subgroups and by test item.

The district’s 136 schools are organized into three K-12 groups of schools, called triads, and by clusters of schools within triads. Cluster principals meet regularly to share information and practices. Triads are staffed by a deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, and school support specialist to ensure regular and frequent on-site observation and support. Cluster leaders, deputies, and heads of major departments form the superintendent’s leadership team to ensure bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom communication of needs, initiatives, best practices, and implementation issues.

Harris added that the district implements a literacy initiative using the Readers and Writers Workshop methods from Columbia University and a math initiative using materials and methods developed by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Both initiatives are supported by a variety of funds, including local funds; Titles I, II, and III of ESEA; NSF grants; and private grants. Coaching is the district’s primary method for professional development: all schools have both literacy and math coaching time in proportion to staff size.

In addition, beginning in April 2004, BPS developed an action plan for the district’s efforts to close the achievement gap among racial and ethnic groups, a central goal of the district and NCLB. According to a November 22, 2004 memo from Superintendent Payzant to the Boston School Committee, “BPS has made major strides to make the closing of the achievement gap the primary focus of our work in every school and in the district as a whole.” Activities have focused on communication, recruitment, and professional development of teachers and administrators, data analysis, targeted support for low-performing schools, curriculum and instruction, and strategies for English language learners and students with disabilities.

At the center of the professional development efforts is a commitment to regular, ongoing, school-based, educator-designed teacher training that is based on students’ instructional needs. External funds (and increasingly, district monies) provide part-time staff developers—“coaches”—in every school to help teachers collectively identify what they need to learn in order to teach what their students need to know. The district calls this process the collaborative coaching and learning (CCL) cycle. As described by an elementary school principal, each cycle lasts seven weeks, during which teachers work with a coach to plan curriculum, discuss research on best practices in instruction, develop lesson plans, model and observe the lessons being taught, discuss the strengths
and weaknesses as a group, and, finally, use the lessons with their own students. The idea, said the principal, is that the CCL cycle helps teachers to reflect on teaching in a systematic way and work together to improve their craft. It is, added the principal, a “great model” for improving the teaching and learning process. Although tested by teachers across the district, the 2004-05 school year will be the first in which all teachers are expected to participate in the CCL cycles.

To support low-performing schools, the district has created six support positions to assist schools in corrective action and restructuring: three school support specialists funded by Title I school support funds and three assistant superintendents funded with local funds. These six help the schools plan, monitor work in progress, and focus existing district resources. In addition, the district earmarked $600,000 for FY 2005 for extra support for the schools and increased the amount to $700,000 to fully meet the needs identified by the schools under the direction of the deputy superintendents and the six support positions. Schools used the money for additional literacy and math coaches (six positions), teachers (two positions), an assistant principal, and a variety of part-time support services (parent outreach, guidance, tutoring, Saturday school).

Schools identified as in need of improvement, however, may not be receiving sufficient support from the central office. Although one school’s principal noted that the central-office support had improved during the 2004-05 school year and that identified schools receive additional financial resources, she said that more support was needed if her school was to serve effectively all students in the school.

This claim was supported by a team sent by the state department of education, which conducted needs assessments of 16 underperforming schools across the state. For the BPS school cited above, the state team made three relevant findings. First, the school’s whole school improvement plan—which was modeled on a district template—was found to be lacking. Second, the state team found that the school is not receiving adequate guidance and support from district leadership. Finally, the state team concluded that the school has “inadequate personnel resources to meet the magnitude of the needs of the school’s large distribution of students with significant social, emotional, and academic deficits.” The team noted that staff reductions or realignments in recent years have resulted in a loss of needed discipline staff, attendance officers, a probation officer, an evaluation team facilitator, instructional support teachers, transition specialists, and a director of instruction.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BPS schools are adopting new instructional programs that address their students’ particular learning needs. At the elementary level, 12 Boston schools are participating in NCLB’s Reading First program to promote primary literacy. A number of elementary and middle schools also have adopted Making Meaning, a reading comprehension curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade 6.

Despite these changes, teachers and principals interviewed for this report believe that NCLB has had little impact on curriculum and instruction. Five years ago, before President Bush signed NCLB, the district adopted curriculum in math (Connected Math) and ELA (Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop) that all schools are expected to implement. Over the last two years, the district and school principals have been “tightening the reins,” according to one principal, ensuring that teachers are “implementing the curriculum with fidelity.” The benefit, said the principal, is clear—test scores are rising and school quality is improving across the district.

One principal of a high school that has raised student achievement significantly but nonetheless has been identified for improvement agreed that the law is having minimal impact on curriculum and instruction. This principal noted that the school has made several changes in curriculum and instruction over the last few years—including divid-
ing the school into six small schools, requiring all students to complete algebra II and geometry, offering a variety of advanced placement courses, and providing extensive support services through college and business partnerships. But these changes were made because the school recognized it needed to prepare students better for college, he said, not due to NCLB. The principal did acknowledge, however, that NCLB has helped to focus his staff on improving instruction for all students.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

BPS has been in ongoing discussions with the Massachusetts Department of Education about implementing a systemwide strategy for educating English language learners. An interdepartmental work group in the district’s central office has been meeting regularly to strengthen the systems for identifying, assessing, and supporting ELLs. As part of that work, the district office is conducting a school-by-school inventory of services for ELL students to develop a continuum of instructional strategies for educating these students more effectively.

Similarly, the district has begun to discuss a model for increasing student achievement by improving the quality and focus of professional development for students with disabilities. For example, one school with a large number of special education students has received a full-time coach to train teachers of students with disabilities. This school has also begun to experiment with teaming teachers of “substantially separate” special education classes to allow one teacher to specialize in English language arts and social studies and the other to specialize in math and science. This approach will not only enable the teachers to focus their planning, but it will also help them more quickly become highly qualified as defined by NCLB by using their professional development time to master content in fewer subject areas.

Despite these approaches, there seems to be some skepticism among educators that all students with disabilities can meet state standards by 2014. One highly regarded high school principal, for example, said that although the school would do the best it could, there was “no way” that its 120 “severely handicapped kids” could meet proficiency standards. Other principals and teachers expressed similar misgivings.

Choice and Supplemental Services

SCHOOL CHOICE

BPS elementary and middle schools are organized into three geographic zones. Students are assigned to schools in their zone of residence, based on choice and availability of seats. All high schools are citywide, meaning that students can choose to attend any high school in the district as long as space exists. In 1999, the Boston School Committee voted to drop race-based assignments, a policy that had been in place since 1974. The new plan sets aside 50% of a school’s seats for students living in the neighborhood. Remaining seats are open to all applicants, with priority given to applicants who do not live in the neighborhood of the school.

In December 2003, the school committee and superintendent launched a process and appointed a task force to seek input from the public on how families choose schools, what they like about the current plan, and what they would change. Following the BPS analysis of data and public comment, the task force will present options for new plans for further public feedback. The plan, still not finalized as of December 1, 2004, will take effect no sooner than the 2005-06 school year.
Perhaps as a result of this history, NCLB’s school choice requirements have had little impact in BPS, according to three principals of schools identified for improvement. In addition, added Margaret Hanscom, one of the principals, schools considered to be of the highest quality already have long waiting lists of students—mostly high-performing students with involved parents—who wish to attend. As a result, although letters go out to parents of students in schools in need of improvement, very few students take advantage of the opportunity to change schools.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
NCLB requires schools in their second year of improvement (third year of not making AYP) to provide eligible students with supplemental education services such as tutoring. The provider of these services must be approved by the state. Although eligible under NCLB to serve as providers, school districts are not eligible if they are identified for improvement.

Until the 2004-05 school year, BPS had been a state-approved supplemental service provider. In the fall of 2004, however, BPS failed to demonstrate AYP for the second straight year, making it ineligible under NCLB to provide supplemental services. As noted above, BPS has appealed the finding that it did not demonstrate AYP based on attendance, while acknowledging that it missed AYP targets in other areas as well. Since its status was under review as of December 2004, the state has allowed the district to continue serving as a provider for the remainder of this school year.

In one middle school identified for its second year of improvement, BPS offers after-school tutoring, using trained teachers from the school, to help low-income students prepare for the MCAS. Hanscom, the school principal, described the program as moderately effective. Although she believes the quality of the instruction to be high, only about 90 of 375 eligible students participate. Hanscom noted that the low participation rate is not atypical in schools that serve high percentages of very needy students. She also said that the teachers are beginning to reach out to more eligible students and their parents to encourage them to attend the after-school program.

In addition to the tutoring provided by BPS, students in this middle school use other supplemental service providers. Several students attend Sylvan Learning Centers or the Citizen School, a nonprofit organization that offers homework assistance to eligible students. Hanscom believes these programs to be of lesser quality than the services provided at the school, since their instruction is not well aligned with the school’s curriculum or led by well-trained teachers.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of the 4,385 teachers in BPS, 85.1% are highly qualified under NCLB criteria. All district teachers, even those who are already highly qualified, must create a professional development plan. This plan can help teachers meet the criteria of Massachusetts’ HOUSSSE process, which the state developed to determine the qualifications of veteran teachers who do not have a major in the subject they teach and who have not passed a competency test. According to Donahue, veteran teachers who need to become highly qualified through HOUSSSE should be able to do so by 2005-06 merely by completing the professional development required by the teachers’ union in its contract with the district and spelled out in the teachers’ professional development plan.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
The district employs 991 paraprofessionals who provide instructional support in Title I schools, but it is uncertain how many of these paraprofessionals are highly qualified as
defined by NCLB. One middle school principal who employs 14 Title I paraprofessionals estimated that only one paraprofessional is highly qualified. She admitted that the low qualifications of her paraprofessionals—some of whom may not be able to read beyond a sixth-grade level, in her opinion—is a huge problem that is appropriately being addressed by NCLB.

The district and the union representing paraprofessionals sponsor ParaPro testing to help paraprofessionals meet NCLB qualifications (one round of testing has occurred to date). The district reimburses individuals for taking courses through the structure of the salary schedule.

**Funding and Capacity**

According to Harris, the BPS central office allocates 83% of its Title I funding to schools to support their school improvement/Title I schoolwide project plan. Of this amount, 60% is budgeted by the schools and 40% is budgeted centrally for school-based expenditures, including supplemental education services, teacher coaches, and alternative education. The central office budgets 12.5% of its Title I funding for districtwide initiatives, and 4.5% of its funding to support family engagement through family resource centers. Although BPS received an increase in Title I funding for the 2004-05 year, the full amount of the increase was consumed by the new set-asides for supplemental education services and teacher professional development, said Harris.

The district, according to Harris, is implementing NCLB requirements with the funding it receives “so, at one level, funds are sufficient to meet the letter of the law and related regulations and guidance.” Harris added, however, that funds “are not sufficient to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified, all students are proficient, and all parents are engaged in the education of their children.” In particular, Harris noted that areas requiring additional funding include:

- **Student support to meet annually rising achievement targets.** The school day should be extended for all students (which would increase costs by one-third) to permit time and professional staffing for extended learning time, small-class tutoring, mentoring, nutrition, health, and social and emotional support services for students and families.

- **Teacher quality upgrades to meet content specific training requirements.** The majority of the district’s teachers meet NCLB standards because in Massachusetts, teachers who have an approved plan for meeting the standards are considered qualified. The cost of carrying out the plans is unknown, but if one assumed that each teacher took an average of 36 graduate credits (the standard for a master’s degree) at a cost of $371.50 per credit (the cost at the local state university) and multiplied this by 4,300 teachers, the result would be a cost of $57.5 million, assuming no teacher turnover.

- **Infrastructure for notifications, test administration, data collection, reporting, supplemental services administration, and school support.** Schools and the district shoulder new burdens in all these areas, but NCLB assumes that federal funds will not cover most of these expenses.

- **Parent engagement in the education of their children.** Approximately one-third of the district’s families do not speak English as a first language, and most are poor. Adult ESL classes are insufficient to meet the need. NCLB funding does not begin to address the needs of the students’ families.

School principals agree that NCLB funding is insufficient. As noted above, a state team found that at least one BPS school identified for improvement does not have the resources to address the needs of its students, many of whom are poor, very low
achieving, involved in the foster care or legal systems, or have a disability. One middle school teacher concurred, saying simply that the “resources don’t address the needs of the students.”

A first-year principal of an elementary school identified for improvement said she believes that NCLB helps ensure that the curriculum is taught and helps teachers plan lessons and assess student learning more effectively. But she also admitted that she could use more resources to meet the needs of her students. In particular, she would like to add one more literacy coach to work with all teachers on improving literacy instruction, after-school programs for students who are not meeting standards, and programs and staff to reach out to and educate parents to help their children learn more effectively.

A high school identified for improvement has seen its general fund budget cut by $1.3 million between school years 2003-04 and 2004-05, even though the school has lost no students.

Data File — Boston Public Schools

Location: Massachusetts
Type: Urban

Number of Schools
Total: 136
- Early learning centers (K-1): 5
- Elementary: 66
- K-8: 11
- Middle: 18
- High schools: 25
- Exam schools: 3
- Special education schools (K-12): 6
- Alternative (at-risk) programs: 2

Number of Title I Schools: 135

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 60,164
- African American: 46.4%
- Hispanic: 30.4%
- White: 14.0%
- Asian: 8.8%
- American Indian: 0.4%

  - Low-income students: 73.4%
  - Students with disabilities: 19.5%
  - English language learners: 19.0%

Teachers
Total number: 4,385
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 85.1%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 991
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not available
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2002-03 Testing</th>
<th>2003-04 Testing</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years)</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 3 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years)</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 4 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years)</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years)</td>
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<td>7</td>
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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2002-03 Testing</th>
<th>2003-04 Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools offering choice only:</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Due to a realignment with NCLB’s requirements, Massachusetts and BPS have temporarily changed the school improvement categories. Currently, Years 3 and 4 of improvement categories both include schools that have not demonstrated AYP for 3 years, and Year 2 has been dropped.
Michigan

Flint Community School District
Superintendent: Felix Chow
Contacts: David Solis, Director of State, Federal and Local Programs
Ana Maria Hufston, Steward in Academics Central
Linda Thompson, Chief of Schools
Yvonne Caamal Canul, Director of the Office of School Improvement for the Michigan Department of Education.
Ben Perez, ABCS Consultant
Lucy Smith, Principal, Brownell Elementary
Marcia Sauvie, Coach at Brownell Elementary
Rita Langworthy, Coach at Brownell Elementary
Fred White, Principal, Civic Park Elementary

21,443 students, K-12, urban

District Description
Located in the southeastern part of Michigan, Flint is the fourth largest urban school district in the state. A former center for heavy industry, the city has been losing population since the decline of automobile manufacturing in the U.S. Addressing the challenges of poverty and declining enrollment are paramount in the city’s schools, where 68% of students receive free lunch and all schools but four are eligible for Title I funding.

Key Findings

- Flint schools in need of improvement have been identified based on a general failure to meet math and reading goals, rather than on just the specific failure of particular subgroups.

- In a district that has closed 10 schools in the last two years, school choice has not been popular with parents. Many children already face longer commutes to school due to closures. Not a single family in any of the eligible schools requested a transfer.

- No Child Left Behind has significantly affected professional development in Flint. In addition to increasing the amount of Title I money spent on professional development in schools in need of improvement, district officials said professional development is now more goal oriented. Because the district and schools know their budgets at the beginning of the year, staff is able to plan well ahead for workshops and other professional activities and can coordinate professional development so that school and district goals are all well supported.

- Flint has invested in instructional specialists and literacy support teachers. These retired educators assist schools identified as in need of improvement with any and all educational issues. For example, instructional specialists review all material purchases and professional development contracts, ensuring that these funds are now more closely targeted to implementing the schools’ improvement plan. Literacy coaches have leveraged instructional change through demonstrations, modeling, and coaching in the classroom.
In keeping with the strategy of using instructional specialists, Flint schools in the restructuring phase of NCLB have chosen to restructure using a “coaching” model, designed by Michigan educators. The model will place a state-trained “coach” on-site for 100 days at each school implementing restructuring. The coach will address all areas of improvement at the schools.

Overall Impact of NCLB

NCLB has had a large impact on Flint, where about half of the district’s Title I schools have been identified as in need of improvement for the last two years. During this time, additional support staff has been hired specifically to help these identified schools improve. This year more support is on the way in the form of state-trained coaches for schools in restructuring. District and school officials said they were hopeful that these coaches would finally turn around under-performing schools.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

In the last two years, Flint schools have struggled to make adequate yearly progress. In 2002-03 testing, a total of 22 schools out of the district’s 39 schools failed to make AYP. Of these 22, only four failed due to the performance of subgroups alone, while only one failed due to participation rates. The rest failed due to the overall low scores of their students on state reading and/or math tests. In 2003-04 testing, a total of 15 schools failed to make AYP. Again, the vast majority failed due to low academic performance on math and reading state tests in the general student population.

In 2002-03, a total of 14 schools were identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring because they had failed to make AYP for at least two consecutive years. In 2003-04, a total of 15 schools were so identified. In both years, schools were identified for these sanctions due to low test scores overall, not due to the performance of subgroups alone or inadequate participation rates.

“For the vast majority [of schools], it wasn’t a technical issue but an academic one,” said David Solis, who oversees NCLB issues for the district. As a result, Flint has focused its energy on improving instruction. This included hiring four instructional specialists for the 2002-03 school year and 14 literacy support teachers for 2003-04, revamping the curriculum, and reinvesting in professional development, district officials said.

TESTING ISSUES

At the school level, NCLB testing has run smoothly in Flint, district officials said. However, the district did have difficulty “getting our data back [from the state] in a reasonable form and in a reasonable time,” said Chief of Schools Linda Thompson. In Michigan each student has a unique identification number, and three databases are merged to provide NCLB results. As a result of merging databases, Thompson said, “We have to spend an inordinate amount of time cleaning up the data.” Much of the problem came from duplicate records for students, Thompson explained. Data cleaning stressed an already overburdened administrative staff, Thompson said. Due to continued merging of the databases, data cleaning may be a yearly chore for the district.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

While state testing for the majority of students with disabilities was new to Flint, as it was throughout Michigan, district officials say Flint adapted quickly. “As difficult as
some of the implementation of NCLB is, we’ve embraced it wholeheartedly. We test everyone,” said Thompson, emphasizing that the district has sought to avoid being penalized for not testing enough students with disabilities. About 12.5% of Flint students qualify for special education services.

Michigan does have an alternative assessment for students with disabilities, which Thompson said works fairly well in Flint. She noted, however, that often students with disabilities who are not seriously disabled enough to take the alternative tests under NCLB regulations nevertheless aren’t ready for the state tests. “You don’t like it,” she said of the testing of these students. “But, it’s the law.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

District officials said testing of English language learners has been positive in that it has drawn attention to the needs of these students. Only about 1.3% of students in Flint are learning English as a second language. In the past, throughout the country, the majority of ELL and migrant students were ignored and seen as somebody else’s responsibility, said Ana Maria Hufton who oversees the district’s programs for English language learners. She added that sometimes this lack of attention to ELL students occurred because educators did not speak the original language or, in the case of Flint’s migrant students, educators did not speak Spanish. In addition, she noted that sometimes these students faced special immigration and social health problems, which educators were not prepared to deal with.

While NCLB has increased the district’s awareness of English language learners, Hufton says that state and federal level funds are not sufficient to support the new requirements for testing, data analysis, and recordkeeping related to these students. “These populations still have to fight for the increasingly reduced funds available,” she explained.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

In 2002-03, the district provided some extra assistance to the 14 schools in need of improvement, Solis said, but it wasn’t enough. For 2002-03, the district hired four instructional specialists to assist schools in need of improvement. One focused on reading, one on math, one on science and one on social studies. “Four people to cover a district this large is inadequate,” Solis pointed out.

In 2003-04, with the hiring of 14 additional literacy support teachers, who also specialized in reading, more assistance was given. Each was assigned to two buildings for the purpose of reviewing academic data and modeling lessons as well as coaching. These instructional specialists and literacy support teachers are highly effective, Thompson said. Although they are specialists in one area, they are free to work on all aspects of the school. Their most appropriate title, she said, should be “successful jack-of-all trades.”

Over the last two years many other policies and procedures designed to help schools in need of improvement were ironed out, Solis said. For example in 2002-03, schools did not get as much guidance in writing about their plans for corrective action. “The ones that were in corrective action went through a peer review committee,” Solis said. “We believe this was very beneficial.” However, he added that in 2002-03, even though there was a process in place to create plans for corrective action, the district did not provide a template that would guide districts and schools and ensure that all the essential elements of improvement were included in the document. The addition of a rubric for school improvement plans in 2003-04, made these plans more effective, Solis said.

In addition, professional development has increased in schools identified as in need of improvement, Thompson said. This professional development has been honed to address the particular needs of the district, she noted.
STRATEGIES FOR RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS

In 2003-04, six Flint schools did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years and therefore must restructure, the final sanction under NCLB. These schools have selected the option offered by the state to bring in expert coaches. “We’re not replacing staff,” said Solis, “and we’re not hiring an outside entity.”

Based on the theories of Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Edgar Schein, the Michigan coaching model was created by Michigan’s own educators. The model does not bring in “experts” to “fix” schools, but instead brings in trained educators whose facilitation can help schools fix themselves, state officials said. As a result, each school’s restructuring activities will be tailored to that school’s community. “It’s not an, ‘I’ve got a hammer, so everything looks like a nail’ model,” explained Yvonne Caamal Canul, director of the Office of School Improvement for the Michigan Department of Education.

To design and implement the model, the state of Michigan awarded a competitive grant to Alliance of Building Capacity in Schools (ABCS), a collaboration of 13 different organizations including higher education institutions, teachers unions, parent groups, public schools, and professional organizations. ABCS has a core faculty of Michigan educators, who designed the training curriculum and currently oversee the program.

In the fall of 2003, ABCS selected its first 83 coaching candidates from a pool of 160 applicants. Selection was based on a review of the candidates' resumes and their responses to three essay questions about their experiences and school improvement initiatives. From February to May of 2004, these candidates participated in more than eight days of training in the following areas:

- Understanding “process consultation,” Schein’s method for facilitating rather than dictating change
- Using data to improve instruction
- Implementing math and literacy standards
- Assessing and improving school climate
- Increasing parental involvement
- Working with the community
- Helping schools meet the demands of NCLB

At the end of their training, coaching candidates completed a reflection journal based on the training and gave it to an independent evaluation team. The team then interviewed each candidate for 90 minutes, asking questions about coaching as well as role playing coaching scenarios.

In evaluating the interviews, ABCS consultant Ben Perez said that the team asked, “How well does this person create a helpful relationship, not an ‘expert’ relationship?” The entire process resulted in 78 acceptable coaching candidates. Of these, 75 have thrown their hats in the ring to be matched with schools. Coaches are actually chosen by individual schools, based on the background of the coach and the needs of the school. “This is a free market,” Perez emphasized.

Coaching was an appealing option for Flint because it focused on making real changes at the school, Solis said. “We’ve had experience with reconstitution,” another state program that replaced staff at schools that were having difficulties, Solis explained. “There’s no guarantee when you bring in new people. You can replace people, but if they do the same thing, you’re going to get the same results.” With coaching, Solis said,
“We’re trying to change the culture in the building.”

Despite the challenge of total school transformation, Solis said he thinks Flint may have some advantages over other districts in using the coaches. Several of the instructional specialists hired by the district have already been trained by the state to act as coaches. In addition to looking at academic aspects of these restructuring schools, improvement efforts will address all factors that affect how students learn, such as school climate and attendance, Thompson said.

For example, Brownell Elementary, a predominately African American and low-income school located in the center of Flint, will have two coaches contracted jointly for 100 days of service. Currently, coach Marcia Sauvie will focus on schoolwide writing, manage new software, and work primarily with third to sixth grade teachers in the classroom. Coach Rita Langworthy will focus on schoolwide literacy and will work primarily with kindergarten to second grade teachers in the classroom. Langworthy will also set up the “leveled library,” which will bring more than 50,000 books to the school and rate their difficulty so that teachers can easily assign books that are appropriate to students’ reading levels. Both coaches will provide professional development and assist the principal and staff as needed. Despite their many responsibilities, the coaches at Brownell said they do not expect to “be the boss” at the school. Instead, they said they will help the school community identify problems and work together to solve them.

This approach fits with the coaching model vision, said Barbara Markle of Michigan State University, who designed and coordinated much of the training for coaches.

“They’re creating a new kind of culture in the school,” she explained. “It’s like therapy. In the end the school has to solve its own problems. We’re not saying we deny expertise, but it isn’t going to be the driving force.”

Thompson added that one of the schools in restructuring this year, Civic Park, also got a new principal, Fred White. Although changing administrators was not part of the “official” restructuring plan at the school, Thompson said, “We’re looking for new leadership to change the building.”

In the case of Civic Park, changes in leadership have brought about changes in other areas. By the beginning of the school year, White said he instituted school uniforms, started a strict behavior management plan, changed the curriculum, and cleaned up the campus. “I looked at the test scores and I made a plan of action,” White said, noting that he took many of his ideas from Lorraine Monroe’s book, Nothing’s Impossible: Lessons from Inside and Outside the Classroom.

STRATEGIES FOR WATCH LIST SCHOOLS
Schools on a watch list because they had not made AYP for the first time last year were not necessarily targeted for extra assistance, said Solis. “We provided assistance on an as-needed basis.” Districtwide improvement efforts, of course, affect all district schools, Thompson added.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
While Flint had begun working to improve curriculum and instruction before the passage of NCLB, Chief of Schools Linda Thompson commented, “Did NCLB kind of up the stakes? Yes.” In particular she said, “We’ve had a literacy focus in our district for the past three years.” This focus, she explained, emphasizes literacy across the content areas and involves intensive professional development for teachers and principals.

Efforts to improve curriculum and instruction at schools in need of improvement are perhaps more urgent than at schools not on the state list, Thompson said. These efforts include aligning curricula to state tests and making sure reading strategies are taught within all content areas. However, she emphasized that curriculum and instruction improvement efforts include all district schools. “The bar is being raised this year,”
she said, explaining that Michigan will increase the percentage of students who must pass state tests in order for a school to meet AYP goals. For example in 2005, 49% of elementary school students will have to pass state tests for a Michigan school to meet AYP. Last year in 2004, the percentage was only 38%. “All schools are on alert,” Thompson said.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
NCLB has significantly affected professional development in Flint, district officials said. The main reason is because NCLB requires schools identified for improvement to set aside 10% of their Title I funds for professional development. Thompson said, “I would imagine that these buildings are doing more. That’s more money for professional development then they’ve seen ever.” Of the required set-aside, Thompson added, “It has made us more deliberate in pre-planning professional development for the entire year at the building level.” At the district level, she said planning for professional development has increased from a yearly plan to a three-to-five-year plan.

Professional development activities for schools in need of improvement have included both principals and teachers, Thompson reported. Principals, for example, are being trained in classroom observation. “This is not an evaluation for the teachers,” Thompson emphasized. Instead, she said principals are being trained to observe whether or not students are learning and to discuss their observations with teachers regardless of the teachers’ teaching style.

Teachers, in turn, are learning about teaching content using “literacy strategies,” Thompson said. Schools are also being encouraged to use professional development dollars to hire substitutes, so that teachers can meet for extensive grade-level meetings, Thompson said. Finally, Thompson explained, the district is providing more guidance on appropriate professional development now that NCLB mandates are in place.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
Not a single family has requested a transfer under NCLB in Flint, even though letters were sent to all parents at the 14 schools offering transfers in 2002-03 and the 15 schools in 2003-04. While Solis said the district has not formally explored why parents do not request transfers, he said he suspects that parents prefer to have their children at schools close to home where they have already developed relationships with teachers. “Why would they want to have their child bussed across town?” Solis speculated, noting that increasing the length of bus rides may be unpopular with parents. District officials also noted that Flint already has a magnet program that may serve parents’ needs for school choice.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
In 2003-04, Flint surveyed parents and established that Catapult Learning (formerly Sylvan, a national tutoring company) and Reading and Language Arts Center Inc., a local private tutoring company program, were the most popular tutoring providers with parents. Because it took so long for the district to survey parents, get state approval of specific tutoring programs, and arrange contracts with the two programs, tutoring didn’t start until March 2003, Solis said. However, Solis reported that 32% of eligible students in the 12 schools offering supplemental services participated in the tutoring programs.

For 2004-05, Flint had received parents’ decisions about tutoring by the end of August, Solis said. With tutoring requests in place, the district will start tutoring much earlier in the fall, Solis added. Increased numbers of students are expected, all district officials said.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
Neither the state of Michigan nor the Flint Community School District currently has all the data needed to determine exactly how many teachers meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” The state has a form for teachers to fill out reporting their qualifications, and teachers have until 2006 to meet the NCLB requirements, Solis explained. “It’s kind of an honor system.”

Once forms are submitted, some have concerns about how soon they will be processed. “This is just my opinion, but I think the state is understaffed,” Solis said. “Even if you were to submit all the items, they wouldn’t have the staff to enter it. They’re trying to meet the requirements of the law, but they don’t have the funds and staff to do it.”

Although NCLB requires districts to inform parents when their child is taught by a teacher who is not highly qualified by the state’s definition, the district has been unable to inform parents because they do not have enough information about their teachers’ qualifications. Officials did send a letter informing parents of their right to request information about their child’s teacher. “We’ve not received any calls,” Solis said.

Despite lacking complete data on teacher qualifications, Flint has been proactive about offering teachers opportunities to increase their credentials, Solis said. For example, the state is offering subject area tests for teachers who may be teaching in a field they are technically unqualified for. “We will be providing reimbursement for teachers to take the tests,” Solis confirmed.

Hiring new teachers who are highly qualified has not been a pressing issue for Flint, Solis said. He explained that the district has been closing schools due to decreasing student population. About 100 teachers from a staff of approximately 1,550 were laid off at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year; therefore, very few new hires are expected, Solis said.

The district, however, does face some problems attracting particular kinds of teachers. Highly qualified special education and bilingual teachers have been in short supply for several years now, and these shortages continue despite cutbacks in staff, Thompson added.

Professional development chosen by schools must be high in quality and must fit the district’s overall plan for improvement, Thompson explained.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
The district and state have not yet gathered the data needed to determine how many paraprofessionals meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified,” Solis said. However, as with teachers, the district is offering opportunities for paraprofessionals to meet the requirements. Flint is partnering with local universities to provide workshops for paraprofessionals to increase their skills before taking the state test to determine their qualifications. “We did not limit the number of times they could take the test,” noted Solis.

In addition, Solis said, “The union requested that all paraprofessionals be able to take the test,” even those who are not currently in academic positions requiring them to be highly qualified, such as acting as a tutor. Because the district is downsizing, Solis explained, paraprofessional positions are likely to be eliminated along with teaching and administrative positions. Giving all paraprofessionals the same opportunity to become highly qualified was only fair in this time of scarce job opportunities, Solis said.

Funding and Capacity
Flint’s Title I funding increased less than 1% last year, from $15.5 million to $15.75 million, Solis said, noting that, “That’s not going to cover current staff at current levels.”
This year, 2004-05, Solis said reallocation of resources will cover the shortfall needed to retain all current Title I staff. Next year, he said he anticipates cuts in services. “We’re a cash-strapped district,” Solis explained. “We’re a former G.M. [General Motors] town. We’re still losing jobs.” Solis said, noting that because of this continuing economic decline in the community, there is no possibility of raising local funds to cover Title I reductions.

Tight financial times are having an impact on schools as well, principals said. The principal and coaches at Brownell Elementary, for example, fear that Brownell’s efforts at reform will be stymied by lack of funds. Classrooms tend to become overcrowded at Brownell with 30 or more students per class, Principal Smith explained. Last year, two classrooms had to mix grade levels due to overcrowding. “Can you imagine one teacher trying to prepare both fourth and fifth graders for testing?” Smith asked. Due to budget constraints, Brownell could not split the rooms into smaller classes. Smith said she fears the same thing will happen this year as enrollment grows due to students moving into the neighborhood and students returning from magnet schools.

When coach Sauvie talked of the many limitations Brownell faces due to lack of funds—from the overcrowding to the antiquated ditto machine used to make copies—she said, “My heart breaks.”

Data File — Flint Community School District

**Location:** Flint, Michigan

**Type:** Urban

**Number of Schools**

- Total: 39
- Elementary: 27
- Middle/junior high: 4
- High schools: 5
- Middle/high school combined: 2
- Other: 1

**Number of Title I Schools:** 30

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**

- Total: 21,443
- African American: 77%
- White: 20%
- Hispanic: 3%
- American Indian: 0.4%
- Asian: 0.3%

  - Low-income students: 68%
  - Students with disabilities: 12.5%
  - English language learners: 1.3%

**Teachers**

- Total number: 1,322
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not available

**Paraprofessionals**

- Total number: 319
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirement: Not available
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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Michigan

Harrison Community School District
Superintendent: Christopher Rundle
Contacts: Michele Sandro, Director of State and Federal Programs and Principal, Hillside Lower Elementary
Russell Fimbinger, Principal, Hillside Upper Elementary
Julie Rosekrans, Principal, Larson Elementary
Bob Balwinski, Field Services Consultant, Office of School Improvement, Michigan Department of Education

2,153 students, K-12, rural

District Description
Harrison is a rural school district serving 2,153 students in central Michigan. Due to declining enrollment and fiscal difficulties, the district recently had to close its most rural elementary school building. While more than 96% of the students in the district are white, Harrison does have significant subgroups for NCLB purposes: 57% of students receive free or reduced price lunch, an indicator of poverty, and 20% of students participate in special education services.

Key Findings

- Although required by federal law, school choice under NCLB has not been possible in Harrison. As of 2003, the district only has two elementary schools. Both are identified as in need of improvement, so the district is unable to offer students the option of choosing a more successful elementary school within the district. Instead, in 2004-05 the district will use all 20% of the Title I funds set aside for choice and supplemental education services for supplemental services. Funds left over from 2003-04 were used to hire additional kindergarten teachers, so that all elementary schools now offer full-day kindergarten.

- Supplemental services in Harrison have been limited because of Harrison’s rural setting. Only one supplemental service provider has been willing to provide tutoring at convenient sites in district schools. Only 3% of eligible students participated consistently in 2003-04. However, interest in the services is increasing. More than 10% of students are participating in 2004-05.

- Restructuring under NCLB may help provide useful changes in Harrison. For the 2004-05 school year, Harrison will adopt a governance board made up of state and local educators to oversee schools in restructuring.

- In an attempt to improve instruction and student achievement, Harrison is using its Title I professional development funds to increase teacher collaboration within the schools in restructuring. Teachers will work in new grade-level teams. Special and regular education teachers will also work together to move toward a more inclusive model of special education. Before its schools were identified for improvement, district officials said there was not much time or money devoted to this type of collaborative professional development.
Overall Impact of NCLB

While Harrison has always complied with the demands of NCLB, the law had a limited impact on the Harrison district until two schools were placed in restructuring, district officials said. “I do not want to say it [NCLB] was ignored,” said Michele Sandro, director of state and federal programs in Harrison. “But we did not take any of it very seriously until the hammer came” in the form of restructuring. Before restructuring, both district elementary schools were identified as in need of improvement, so the district was unable to offer school choice under NCLB and offered supplemental education services instead. Due to restructuring, however, Sandro said, “The whole system is working hard.” The district has appointed a new governance board, changed the elementary school’s grade-level configuration, and increased professional development. Principals at the elementary schools said they were hopeful that changes would improve student achievement this year.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Based on 2002-03 testing, the Larson and Hillside schools were identified for restructuring. Both schools had a spotty history of academic achievement. In 1999-2000, neither school met AYP goals in reading or math on the basis of overall student performance. In 2000-01, Hillside improved and made AYP in reading but not math, while Larson made AYP in neither. In 2002-03, both schools made AYP. However, progress was not sustained. Larson failed to make AYP in math based on the performance of all students, and Hillside failed to make AYP in math due to the performance of economically disadvantaged students, according to state records. At this point, based on 2002-03 scores, both schools were placed in restructuring.

Meanwhile, the district had to close its third elementary school at the end of the 2002-03 school year due to declining enrollment. This school had been successfully making AYP, but it was located far from the majority of students’ homes. This closure was highly unpopular with some parents and teachers, district officials reported. Although the school had been doing better than the district’s two more centrally located buildings, the district decided to close this more rural building because of declining student numbers in the school’s attendance area, increased transportation costs, other financial considerations, and a desire to enhance collaboration among the district’s teachers and reduce competition among buildings.

Larson’s 2003-04 test scores showed improvement, and all AYP goals were met. Hillside, on the other hand, failed to make AYP based on the math scores of economically disadvantaged students. While Larson technically does not have to implement restructuring in 2004-05, Sandro said both schools will go ahead with their restructuring plans, especially since plans include rearranging both schools’ grade-level configurations. “We are just continuing as though we need to implement,” Sandro said, noting that the important thing is to improve student achievement. “Larson will be out of improvement status next year,” she predicted. “It will be nice not to have this hanging over us.”

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING
To improve elementary school instruction, district officials said they knew they had to regain the trust of parents and teachers and face potentially difficult issues such as addressing teacher performance and changing the structure of the school day. To accomplish these goals, Harrison chose to restructure the governance of both elementary
buildings, one of several state-approved options for restructuring. The superintendent, Christopher Rundle, appointed a governing board consisting of state and local education leaders to make major decisions about the schools’ operations. “The role [of the new board] will be to convene as necessary in support of the educational goals of the school district and of the principals,” Rundle said.

Members of the new governing board include Rundle, Harrison’s field services consultant in the Office of School Improvement at the Michigan Department of Education, the director of the Michigan Department of Education’s Office of School Improvement, the superintendent of the district’s Regional Education Service District, and the president of the district’s teachers union. Rundle said he intentionally kept the board small so that it could make decisions more easily.

Board members will act as “an administrator at the school rather than having just a principal,” said Robert Balwinski, the field services consultant in the state Office of School Improvement. As a board member, Balwinski said he saw his role as “an overseer, monitor, and supplier of ideas and resources.”

In addition, Rundle said he wanted the board to be made up of people whose authority was respected. “We wanted it to be people who can say, ‘This is the way it’s going to be,’” he explained. He did not, however, want the board members to be people who would have to work closely with schools on a regular basis, because he anticipates that the board will be called on to resolve difficult issues. “The board will be in situations where our school teams and principals haven’t been able to resolve the issues,” he explained. “Its role is to be ‘the bite.’”

Rundle and school principals anticipated that the new governing board might be called in to address personnel issues, teacher quality issues, and/or contractual issues. All of these educators, however, emphasized that they did not know exactly what issues the school year would bring. “We don’t have any guidelines, because this is the first year,” Rundle explained.

While the district’s official strategy for restructuring is establishing a new governance board for the schools, district officials and school principals said this was not the primary change for elementary schools during the 2004-05 school year. The district also reconfigured the elementary schools’ grade levels. Instead of two schools serving all elementary grades, in 2004-05 the district has created three schools within two buildings. Larson is serving kindergarten and first grade. Hillside has been divided into two separate schools with two separate principals, the lower school serving second and third grades and the upper school serving fourth and fifth. The schools may also hire a state-trained coach to assist in their transformation.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
In the 2004-05 school year, the district’s restructuring plan calls for administrators and key staff to analyze state testing data for the elementary schools and make recommendations for changing curriculum and instruction. In addition, two curricular teams were formed: the Mathematics Curriculum Leadership Team and the Writing Curriculum Leadership team. The two teams will use the data-based recommendations from this analysis to align curriculum and instruction to assessment goals. The restructuring plan indicates that special attention will be given to economically disadvantaged students and male students who in the past have not done as well as expected in math and writing.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
In Harrison about 20% of students are identified as having disabilities. This hefty percentage concerns district officials. The districts’ restructuring plan outlines efforts to raise the achievement of students with disabilities by moving toward a more inclusive model for classroom instruction. Over the summer of 2004, elementary-level special
education teachers met with regular education teachers to develop strategies for team teaching. They also created lesson plans that included students with disabilities in regular classroom instruction. During the 2004-05 school year, each special education teacher in the elementary schools will team-teach with at least one regular education teacher. A team of regular and special education teachers will receive five days of training to support this new collaboration.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

In addition to the professional development to support inclusion, Harrison’s restructuring plan calls for teachers to be trained to work in grade-level teams. During the 2003-04 school year, teacher collaboration in the elementary schools was not ideal, said Hillside Upper Elementary Principal Russell Fimbinger. He explained that due to the closing of the rural elementary school the year before, “some staff members came here unwillingly.”

To improve collaboration during the 2004-05 school year, nine staff members will attend three days of training in leadership for improving school climate and increasing student achievement. They will pass on what they have learned to grade-level teams. Collaboration among staff will also be supported by nine staff members who will participate in two and a half years of sustained professional development in “Smart Schools/Smart Teams/Smart Goals,” a collaborative, research-based model of continuous school improvement and building shared responsibility for student learning.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

The Harrison school district wasn’t able to offer choice because both its elementary school buildings were identified for improvement. The district offered supplemental educational services instead. Sandro noted that the district may work with neighboring districts to see if Harrison could offer transportation to another district’s schools. However, Sandro is not sure this step would be necessary because the districts in the region around Harrison already offer interdistrict choice, if parents fill out transfer forms; the option has not been particularly popular with parents.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Although Harrison is required to offer supplemental services, Sandro explained that few supplemental service providers were interested in working in the rural district in past years. In 2003-04, the district’s Regional Education Service District did offer on-site tutoring services at Harrison schools. Kumon Math had a program about 35 miles from the schools, Sylvan had a program about 70 miles from the schools, and various providers offered online services, but few students have daily access to the Internet.

NCLB requires districts to set aside 20% of their Title I allocations for supplemental services and transportation under school choice. Of choice and supplemental services in Harrison in 2003-04, Sandro said, “At the end of the year, I was sitting on $198,000. I just think it’s a bad plan.” Of the 589 eligible students, no students used supplemental educational services at Larson last year, and only 13 at Hillside used the services consistently. Sandro noted that she got a waiver from the state to allow her to use the leftover funds for other Title I expenses. In 2004-05, the leftover funds are being used to hire teachers to expand Larson’s half-day kindergarten to an all-day kindergarten.

The services offered by the district’s Regional Education Service District, however, have proved more popular in 2004-05. More than 40 students are receiving tutoring this fall, and more are slated to begin in January when sports and other after-school activities have ended, Sandro reported.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
Of the 125 teachers in Harrison, about 26% do not meet the state definition of highly qualified. The majority of these teachers who have not met the state’s definition are in the middle school, said Sandro. Michigan’s certification for middle schools does not require or record subject area coursework; therefore, Sandro noted that many of Harrison’s middle school teachers are fully state certified but don’t yet meet the state’s definition of highly qualified under NCLB. Some of these teachers may have taken courses that meet the requirements and just need to provide official documentation. Others may be planning to take additional courses or subject area tests to meet the requirements by the federal deadline of 2006.

In the districts’ elementary schools, which have had the most academic difficulty, all teachers meet the state’s definition of highly qualified.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
None of Harrison’s 26 paraprofessionals is paid through Title I. Instead, all are paid through general district funds.

Funding and Capacity

Prior to the 2004-05 school year, district officials noted that Harrison did not have the capacity to implement some of the requirements of NCLB and that funds were tied up in choice and supplemental services, even though these NCLB mandates did not work well in Harrison. Much of the difficulty, district officials said, seemed to be that NCLB was not written with isolated, rural districts in mind.

This year’s changes in the elementary schools and the $45,000 in Title I funds set aside by the state for restructuring have more potential to impact students, principals said. Both Larson Principal Julie Rosekrans and Sandro anticipated that the new governance board had the potential to help solve workplace issues and possible union issues. “If there are contractual issues that keep us from being successful with kids, we can take it to the governance board,” Sandro explained. As examples of these issues she cited personnel matters and the length of the school day.

Sandro did, however, express some skepticism about the new governance board. “I suspect we also did it because it was a compliance issue,” she said. “It was the least harmful choice on the page,” she added, noting that grade level reconfiguration alone would not have met the state’s requirements for restructuring.

All three principals, Rosekrans at Larson, Sandro at Hillside Lower Elementary, and Fimbinger at Hillside Upper Elementary, said they believe, however, that the grade level reconfiguration would be a substantial change. Principals could “narrow their focus” by supervising a smaller number of teachers who taught fewer grade levels, Sandro said. And the three principals could work very closely together to make sure the curriculum is coordinated throughout the elementary school grades. This consistency, coupled with the fact that all students now will attend all buildings, removes some of the competitiveness that existed between buildings in the past, Sandro said.

“Teachers can work together, collaborate on lessons, and look at the data,” Rosekrans added. To describe how the data will be analyzed, Rosekrans gave this example: “Say we have a class where reading levels are getting higher. Then, we ask what are they doing differently?” Unfortunately, principals said that due to the current contract there is no time set aside for teacher collaboration. This lack of time may be one thing brought to the attention of the new governing board, they anticipated.
While district officials said they have faced difficult and unpopular decisions over the past two years, those difficulties are lessening. “As the year took off, things ran very smoothly,” Rundle noted. Of parent and teacher responses to the start of the new year, Rosekrans said, “It’s been pretty positive. Any type of change is hard for teachers and parents. It wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be.”

District officials and principals were all cautiously hopeful that their restructuring efforts would mean higher test scores. “We need to make this new climate and restructuring efforts work,” said Principal Fimbinger, noting that students’ academic futures and staff jobs were at stake. “I have a sincere vested interest in making sure that this happens in the next few years and that we turn around this sinking ship,” he said.

Data File — Harrison Community School District

Location: Harrison, Michigan
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
- Total: 5
  - Elementary: 2
  - Middle/junior high: 1
  - High schools: 1
  - Other: 1

Number of Title I Schools: 5

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 2,153
  - White: 96.7%
  - American Indian: 1.2%
  - Hispanic: 1.0%
  - Asian: 0.6%
  - African American: 0.5%
- Low-income students: 57%
- Students with disabilities: 20%
- English language learners: 0%

Teachers
- Total number: 125
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 74%

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 26 (none Title I)
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not applicable
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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Michigan

Willow Run Community Schools
Superintendent: Douglas Benit
Contacts: Regina Williams, Curriculum Coordinator
Betty Hopkins, Teacher at Willow Run Middle School
Deanne Wright, Teacher at Willow Run Middle School
Fawn Martin, Parent at Willow Run Middle School

2,621 students, K-12, suburban

District Description
Willow Run is a suburban district with more than 2,600 students located near interstate 94. It serves as a home base for people who work in Ypsilanti as well as some who work in Ann Arbor and Detroit. Due to its easy access to these larger cities, Willow Run has a very transient population, and its enrollment and revenues have fluctuated. About 55% of its students are African American, and 43% are white. The district faces some challenges related to poverty; about 63% of students are from low-income families.

Key Findings
- NCLB, particularly rules governing restructuring of schools failing to make AYP for five or more years, added the leverage needed to restaff and refocus an unsuccessful middle school in Willow Run.
- Layoffs in neighboring districts and slight increases in enrollment in Willow Run have helped the district attract highly qualified teachers.
- Title I funds have not proved adequate to cover all the costs of restructuring the middle school, including replacing staff and revamping curriculum. However, general operating funds in this district have been sufficient to cover the remaining costs of restructuring, as well as the costs of opening a new middle school building.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Prior to the 2003-04 school year, NCLB did not have a major effect in Willow Run. The one school that was identified as in need of improvement, Edmonson Middle School, did offer choice and supplemental services, but few parents took advantage of these opportunities. In 2003-04, however, Edmonson entered restructuring, due to failing to meet adequate yearly progress goals for five years. Restructuring has lead to major changes for the district, from replacing the majority of staff at the school to totally revamping the school’s curriculum.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress
Since the advent of NCLB, Willow Run has had only one school consistently failing to make AYP: Edmonson Middle School. Edmonson was not particularly different from the district as a whole: about 51% of its students were African American and about 47% were white; about 70% of students were low-income. Edmonson was the only middle school in the district, so the only other option for middle-grade students who wanted to transfer under the NCLB choice provisions was Cheney, the district’s academically...
successful K-8 Math/Science Academy. At Cheney, about 82% of students were African American and 17% were white, but poverty rates were slightly lower at about 47%.

When Douglas Benit came on board as superintendent in August 2003, he said he did an academic review of all district schools. “As I looked back we saw that [Edmonson] had made AYP just once in the past five years,” he recalled. In addition, he said he had received multiple complaints from parents about the school. “They just didn’t feel it was meeting the needs of their kids,” Benit said, admitting that he agreed with these parents. When he examined the school’s academic record, Benit found it “alarming.” He did not attribute the school’s failure to the demographics of the school but to a lack of consistent support and various staffing needs.

**Strategies for Improving Schools**

**STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING**

In the summer of 2003, the district was slated to build a new, state-of-the-art middle school as part of its $53 million building program. The new school would replace Edmonson, and filling it with staff that had experienced consistent failure was not appealing, Benit said. In addition, the results of 2002-03 testing placed Edmonson in restructuring.

In October 2003, Benit began working to restructure the middle school. As one of the changes, he opted to place a new principal at the school and appoint the current principal to the position of curriculum coordinator for grades 5-9. He also took steps to replace some of the teaching staff. By February, Benit reported, he had negotiated a teacher retirement package with the union. About a third of the teachers at Edmonson took the package. About 12 newer teachers chose to stay at Edmonson, while the rest chose to transfer to other district schools. At the same time, the district announced it would remove the middle school grades from its successful but overcrowded K-8 building. All of the middle school teachers from the building agreed to move to the new middle school. Open positions were filled with transfers and new hires.

Several said one impetus for their move was that the district also planned to relocate the school to a new building a few blocks away. This building boasts such enhancements as an Olympic-size pool, a new media center and gym, a state-of-the-art computer lab, and wireless laptops for every student.

However, Benit stressed that restaffing the building was one of the keys to his improvement plan for the school. “You can build a new building,” he said, “but if you don’t address the real issues, you’re just doing window dressing.”

While even without NCLB it would have been easy to see that Edmonson was in trouble, Benit said the law’s mandate for restructuring gave him the opportunity to replace the principal and most of the existing staff. Such a move is typically unpopular with many people, from unions to school boards. In addition, he said it was helpful that many teachers were nearing retirement and that the district had the means to offer a very attractive retirement package. “I don’t look at any of this stuff as negative,” Benit concluded. “We used NCLB as a kind of lever.”

While Benit and Willow Run’s school board stand firmly behind the district’s restructuring plan, Benit added that the restructuring has been expensive due to the teacher buyout, the increased training for the new staff, and the time needed for meetings to plan the research-based reforms for the new school. He noted that despite Title I funds earmarked for restructuring, an effort similar to Willow Run’s might not be possible in all districts. Of Title I funding for restructuring, Benit said, “It isn’t enough. We’ll have to pick that up with our general funds.” Fortunately for Willow Run, Benit said he was certain that general funds would be able to supplement Edmonson’s restructuring and that the school board would support the expenses.
IMPACT OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

While parents and incoming Willow Run staff were well aware of the replacement of staff for the 2004-05 school year, they also looked to research-based reforms and a new school building to transform the middle school. In fact, many teachers who elected to teach at the new middle school in 2004-05 said they joined the staff because they found the research-based reforms inspiring.

These research-based reforms were agreed upon by a design team made up of teachers, parents, and district administrators. The team met regularly for a year to explore possible reform models and come up with a specific plan that would work for the new school. The reforms chosen were based on proven strategies identified by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, effective middle schools research from the National Middle School Association, and Turning Points research by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In addition, district staff said several of these approaches to learning had been successful in the district’s K-8 elementary school, while Edmonson’s past focus on memorizing facts for tests had been unproductive.

Research-based reforms for the new middle school included the following:

■ Dividing the school into four small learning communities
■ Providing time for teachers to work in teams within the small learning communities
■ Creating flexible, block schedules that allow students to study a subject for longer chunks of time than the typical middle school class period
■ Developing a new curriculum focused on learning rather than memorizing facts and based on four essential questions
  - How do students construct knowledge of the world?
  - How do students communicate in the world?
  - How do students consider their place in the world?
  - How do students contribute to their world?
■ Adding more exploratory courses, such as choir, digital imaging, keyboarding, and swimming
■ Adding a three-year-long “advisory” class, which allows teachers and students to develop long-term relationships
■ Creating a handbook and code of conduct agreed on by students, teachers, and parents

Many reforms, such as the small learning communities and new exploratory courses, were also made possible by the physical structure of the new building, which has four separate classroom wings and many technological enhancements.

The new staff attracted by the redesign is quite different from the original staff, district officials said. For example, in the mid 1990s, the administration at Edmonson tried to introduce an advisory period similar to the one scheduled for the new school, but the old staff refused.

Parents who have been involved in the middle school redesign also have high hopes for the new curriculum. “We’ve been looking to see changes for quite some time,” said parent Fawn Martin, who served on the design committee. “The curriculum is more centered on children learning versus children remembering. I expect great things to come out of this development,” she commented.

Due to the perceived success of the middle school revision, the district plans to have all schools revise their curricula using similar design teams. While not mandated by NCLB, this year’s curriculum review will help schools continue to make AYP goals by “making
sure that all classrooms are on task and aligned to goals,” Benit said. Teachers, parents, community members, and even students will be involved in the review, Benit added.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
At Edmonson, Benit said, “We’ve been doing professional development over the summer. It will be ongoing up to the day school starts.” Professional development has focused on school climate issues as well as academics and the continuing curriculum redesign. Administrators and even office staff have been involved in professional development. For school secretaries the training has focused on public relations, so that parents and community members will know on first contact with a polite, kind staff at the new school that the climate has truly changed. To complete this and other professional development in the district, Willow Run has partnered with Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
School choice under NCLB was offered at Edmonson for the last two years. The district had only one other school serving middle grades, a K-8 elementary. District officials reported, however, that no parents chose to transfer their children to this K-8 elementary, perhaps because the building was relatively full. No other district buildings were required to provide school choice.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
Supplemental education services in the form of after-school tutoring have been somewhat more popular with parents than school choice. Edmonson offered supplemental services last year. About 25% of students participated.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
The state of Michigan has not yet officially determined exactly which teachers in the state meet the NCLB definition of “highly qualified.” Information about teachers’ subject matter qualifications is still being gathered statewide. District officials at Willow Run said, however, that the district has not had difficulty maintaining a staff of state-certified teachers and that they believe all Willow Run’s teachers currently meet the state’s definition. Furthermore, they said the teachers they are currently hiring meet the state’s definition. The increased need for teachers came partially from a slight increase in student enrollment. In addition, the district needed to replace teachers who took advantage of the district’s retirement package as part of district efforts to replace the staff of Edmonson Middle School.

In part Willow Run has benefited from declining enrollment throughout Michigan. “We’re the only district in the area that’s hiring,” Benit noted. Also, Benit said the positive attributes of the district, such as rising test scores and the innovative middle school restructuring, have attracted candidates who were already employed elsewhere. “We’ve had people come from as far away as Kansas City,” Benit said.

Current teachers confirm their attraction to the middle school restructuring. “I believe in the goals that were established,” said Betty Hopkins, who transferred from the district’s K-8 elementary to teach science in the new middle school. “I like to be involved in creating change to improve student learning” she added.

Some of the current teachers also participated on the design team and became committed to the new school through their work. “I enjoyed what was happening. The
meetings were very stimulating intellectually,” commented Deanna Wright, who will teach math at the new school.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
Willow Run has 58 Title I paraprofessionals. In Michigan, paraprofessionals can meet the definition of “highly qualified” through coursework or state tests. Currently all Title I paraprofessionals meet the state’s definition.

Funding and Capacity
Title I funds decreased in Willow Run this year, due both to updated census counts of low-income children and to economic growth in the community. Benit noted that there were more than 1,500 new homes built in the area in the last year. He said he expected this growth in the suburb to increase. He added that he believed offering quality public schooling has attracted and would continue to attract home buyers to the area.

Of Title I funding, Benit said, “It isn’t enough.” Fortunately for Willow Run, Benit was certain that general funds would be able to supplement Edmonson’s restructuring as well as other Title I expenses.

Data File — Willow Run Community Schools

Location: Ypsilanti, Michigan
Type: Suburban

Number of Schools
Total: 8
Elementary: 6
Middle/junior high: 1
High schools: 1
Number of Title I Schools: 7

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total: 2,621
African American: 55.0%
White: 43.0%
Hispanic: 4.2%
Asian: 0.5%
American Indian: 0.5%

Low-income students: 63.2%
Students with disabilities: 20.3%
English language learners: 0.5%

Teachers
Total number: 190
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100% (estimated)

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 58
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%
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Minnesota

Cloquet Independent School District #94
Interim Superintendent: Russell Smith
Contacts: Randy Thudin, Principal and Coordinator of Federal Programs
Karen McKenna, Director of Elementary Curriculum

2,246 students, K-12, rural

District Description
The small city of Cloquet is located in northern Minnesota, just south of the Lake Superior port city of Duluth. The paper mill industry in the city is doing well, and Cloquet has not had to endure the economic problems that have affected much of northern Minnesota. The Ojibwa Reservation, a sovereign Indian nation that is an independent unit of governance, is located within the city limits. The Ojibwa nation has its own school on the reservation that enrolls over 200 students, but another 200 Ojibwa students attend the Cloquet schools. There are close working relationships between the two school systems, and sometimes students go back and forth.

Key Findings
- Although the achievement gap between white and American Indian students narrowed in the Cloquet school district in 2003, grade 7 test scores for the Indian subgroup went down in 2004. To address this situation, teachers are analyzing test results for individual students and working on specific skills that need to be strengthened. The district has also reduced pull-out programs for low-performing middle school students, instead providing extra help in a learning center at the end of class time.

- Cloquet, like other districts in Minnesota, is adjusting to recent changes in state standards and new tests for accountability. Views within the district are mixed about whether future testing of students at more grade levels will have a positive or negative effect.

- Cloquet’s Title I allocation dropped by $50,000 in 2004-05, mainly due to enrollment declines and the use of new census data. To cope with this loss, the district has cut some paraprofessional positions, parent involvement activities, and field trips.

Overall Impact of NCLB
A major change in state standards took place in Minnesota in 2003 and 2004, when the commissioner of education decided to change the long-established Profiles of Learning to better address academic content. New standards were developed, but not without some controversy, according the Randy Thudin, coordinator of federal programs for Cloquet, and the change resulted in some confusion for schools and communities.

Thudin, who is also the principal of Washington School, says that some people thought the No Child Left Behind Act would just go away, but he does not believe that it is going to happen. “In testing,” he says, “the screws were tightened, and we may require more than some states, but we are finding better ways to teach as a result of looking at the data.” He added that NCLB has also nudged the district to look at accountability for all students, including the various subgroups.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
Cloquet’s middle school did not reach a high enough level of proficiency for the subgroup of American Indian students to make adequate yearly progress in 2004. Previous years’ testing of students in grades 2, 5, and 7 had shown good gains, and the district was pleased with the narrowing achievement gap between white and Indian students. “We need to do more staff development,” said Karen McKenna, elementary curriculum director. “We thought we were addressing math quite well, but for this group of students who are now in grade 7, we must have missed something.” McKenna noted that the district’s teachers work very well together and that the district has improved support for them, so she was optimistic that the district’s instructional changes just needed more time to show results. “We know that there is going to be some fluctuation with the scores, but over time, they will improve,” she said.

TESTING ISSUES
At the elementary and middle schools, testing for reading and math takes place only in grades 3, 5, and 7. Students in grade 5 also take a writing test that counts for AYP. At the high school level, reading is tested in grade 10 and math in grade 11. In 2005, Minnesota schools will pilot new tests in grades 4, 6, and 8, and these new tests and a new science test will be used in 2006 for AYP.

The new policy of testing more grades is a topic of discussion in Cloquet; some people support the change that requires testing in all grades, and others do not. “Testing at only certain grade levels focuses attention on the teachers who teach at those grades,” said McKenna, “and it really shows up when the student numbers at each grade level are small. There can be huge pressure on grade 3 and 5 teachers,” she added. “They feel the accountability and they really want their students to perform well. But that is what we are used to, and it will be hard to adjust to testing at every grade.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Although the subgroup of students with disabilities met AYP at the district’s four schools, making AYP for this subgroup for the entire district may be a problem in the future. Cloquet serves special education students from other school districts, so the district has requested a waiver from the state to address the issue of being held accountable for the AYP of special education students from other districts.

Strategies for Improving Schools
The middle school principal and staff are focusing more attention on overall math achievement by reviewing individual student assessment data and making sure that what is being taught at the middle school is aligned to state standards. They want to make sure that all the students in grades 6, 7, and 8—both higher-performing and lower-performing students—will be able to meet proficiency levels. District officials anticipate that as a result of changes made during the past few years in math curriculum and instruction at the elementary level, more students entering middle school will have mastered the content requirements of grade 5.

Math changes made at the middle school include adding stations of SuccessMaker math software so that all students in grades 7 and 8 can use the program during study hall until they “top out” of the K-8 skills. At that point, sixth grade students will begin to use the software. The math teachers from grades 6, 7, and 8 have met to align instruction
and make sure the state math standards are embedded in the math curriculum. State test scores have been analyzed and broken down by subgroup and math skill areas in order to understand which areas need more focus or instructional modifications. In addition, a learning center was established and staffed by a certified instructor, a non-certified instructor, and adult tutors from the Fond Du Lac College and the high school. Students who are struggling with math, including the American Indian students who did not make AYP, are able to receive specific tutoring in mathematics through this center.

To provide more help to low-performing students, middle school support personnel now work with these students in the learning center at the end of class time instead of pulling them out during class. The goal is to assure that students do not miss important instruction when they receive extra help. The district also provides after-school tutoring at the middle school for students in elementary school, as well as for those in grades 7, 8, and 9. It is common for all children in a family to attend. The program attracts 60-80 students each night and is held four nights a week.

To address the decrease in math scores among American Indian students in 2004, teachers are looking closely at the progress of individual students and identifying specific skills that need attention.

The district is also examining mathematics curriculum and instruction across all elementary grades to make sure that curriculum is aligned from one grade level to the next, that state standards are fully incorporated into instruction, and that expectations for students are more rigorous. The district has also put in place a new science curriculum in grades 3-6.

Other changes made at the elementary schools to improve math achievement include providing teachers with professional development in how to consistently implement the new standards-based math series and purchasing a complete lab of SuccessMaker math software to balance the innovative math series with traditional math instruction and add more practice items to classroom instruction. Teachers from Brainerd, Minnesota, a district that has successfully used this series for 12 years, will come to Cloquet to provide inservice training on how to take the math implementation to the next level. “The teachers will be able to address assessment more fully,” Thudin said, “and they will answer our many questions about instructional issues at each grade level.”

Cloquet has also focused on literacy as well as math. Literacy-building begins in preschool with the Fond du Lac Head Start and Even Start programs at the Ojibwa Indian reservation. The district curriculum director meets with Head Start and Even Start personnel, as well as with child care providers and church preschool staff, to coordinate their efforts with those of the school district so children will be ready to learn when they enter elementary school.

Reading fluency and comprehension are continually addressed throughout the grades. Writing is a major focus, and the schools are proud of how well the students write, according to Thudin. “We try very hard to keep our class sizes at 19:1 in the primary grades,” said Thudin. “That’s one way to make sure that all our students become proficient, and it really shows up in writing.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

The district is continuing to provide professional development to teachers to improve instructional practices in math at all grades. Teachers receive assistance to help them better understand the assessment results for individual students in math and other tested areas. Teachers revamp their lessons to address students’ specific skill deficiencies and provide lessons that focus on students’ weak areas.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

Only one high school teacher does not yet meet the NCLB qualifications. The six paraprofessionals paid with Title I funds in the district have met the NCLB requirements by passing the ParaPro test.

Funding and Capacity

Cloquet received significantly fewer Title I dollars in 2004-05 as a result of the revised federal allocation formula that used updated census data. The $50,000 drop in funds meant that the district had to eliminate some paraprofessional positions, its extensive parent involvement program, and annual field trips to Duluth, which allowed students and their parents to visit the aquarium and the history and railroad museums.

Data File — Cloquet Independent School District #94

Location: Northern Minnesota
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
- Total: 4
  - Elementary: 2 (K-5)
  - Middle/junior high: 1 (6-8)
  - High schools: 1 (9-12)

Number of Title I Schools: 2 elementary

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total: 2,246
  - White: 95%
  - American Indian: 5%
  - Low-income students: 32%
  - Students with disabilities: 11%

Teachers
- Total number: 174
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 99.4%
  - (1 teacher does not meet)

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 6
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%
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Mississippi

Pascagoula School District
Superintendent: Dr. Hank Bounds
Contacts: Dr. Susan McLaurin, Director, Federal Programs
        Shirley Hunter, Principal, Beach School
        Dr. Andy Parker, Principal, Gautier Middle School
        Wayne Rodolfich, Principal, Gautier High School

7,541, K-12, suburban

District Description

Pascagoula, a small city in Jackson County, Mississippi, on the Gulf coast, is a suburban and residential area for two cities—to the west is Biloxi in Mississippi, and to the east is Mobile across the state line in Alabama. Shipbuilding is a major employer in Pascagoula, and the availability of employment in the industry brings families from countries around the world. Jackson County is the most industrialized region of the Gulf. During a 2004 hurricane, schools were closed, and Pascagoula expected the worst, but only one school sustained major damage.

Three of the 19 Pascagoula schools participated in this study: Gautier High School, Gautier Middle School, and Beach Elementary School.

Key Findings

- Although the Pascagoula schools have high levels of poverty, the schools have strong ratings compared to other schools in the state, and there are no schools in school improvement. District officials attribute the strong academic performance to its efforts, encouraged by the No Child Left Behind Act, to address the individual learning needs of every student.

- Two middle schools in Pascagoula did not make adequate yearly progress for the first time in 2004, in both cases due to the performance of students with disabilities. To improve instruction for this subgroup, the district is moving more toward inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms and away from pullout programs. The director of special education is also visiting classes daily and systematically reviewing the teaching strategies used by all special education teachers.

- Pascagoula enrolls similar numbers of white and African American students. There is no achievement gap between the two groups. District officials attribute this accomplishment to the high expectations set by district staff for all students and the leadership efforts of the district and its schools to involve staff, students, and parents in improving academic performance.

- As part of a district effort to improve instruction and academic performance, a district team led by the superintendent makes monthly visits to the three middle schools and visits all the classrooms. The team members discuss their findings with the principal as part of a major review of curriculum, instruction, and assessments.
Overall Impact of NCLB

NCLB has had a large impact in the Pascagoula School District. Under Superintendent Hank Bounds, who has been in the district for four years, the mission of the district is to attain high rankings on both state and federal accountability measures. Toward this end, additional time has been added to the school day, teachers have access to online professional development created by the district, study groups for teachers have been put in place, and the progress of every student is closely followed. “Superior—Expect It!” is the district’s slogan, and according to Superintendent Bounds, that is where the district is heading for all students.

The strong leadership from the superintendent and principals has brought about a highly focused academic program that includes teachers, parents, and students. “All our efforts are on the students,” said Susan McLaurin, director of federal programs. “NCLB has focused us on academic achievement for every student, and we will not allow any child to fail.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

All Pascagoula schools made AYP in 2003. Although all elementary schools and high schools and one middle school did so again in 2004, two middle schools did not. In both schools the subgroup of students with disabilities did not meet AYP targets for reading-language arts. When the test results from the 2004 testing were received, Pascagoula teachers met in groups to analyze the assessment data. They determined which content and skill areas, grade levels, and students needed more attention in 2004-05. In addition to the AYP status under NCLB, they examined the school ratings of the Mississippi accountability system. Every school wants the desired ranking of 5, and six Pascagoula schools have that ranking.

The district’s two high schools, Pascagoula High School and Gautier High School, are both state finalists for the NCLB national Blue Ribbon School awards.

TESTING ISSUES

Pascagoula students have been tested in grades 2 through 8 for reading-language arts and mathematics for the past three years. Science will be added to the assessment list in 2005. At the high school level, students take end-of-course examinations in algebra, biology, English (and writing), and U. S. history. These all count for AYP and are also required for high school graduation. In 2005, the accountability bar goes higher, and Pascagoula students will be expected to have higher levels of achievement to be considered proficient.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Pascagoula has some testing issues related to students with disabilities. These students were previously tested at their instructional level rather than at their grade level, and because of this, they were rated as not proficient. This process will change in 2005 when all students with disabilities will be tested with grade-level tests.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

There are 210 English language learners in Pascagoula, and they were tested for NCLB accountability for the first time in 2004. Because individual schools did not have enough ELL students in their subgroups, AYP was not an issue, but the subgroup will be part of the determination of district school improvement.
STRATEGIES FOR WATCH LIST SCHOOLS
Superintendent Bounds placed the major focus for NCLB improvement on the district’s three middle schools because of an academic decline in grades 6 through 8. If the high schools were to continue to meet AYP requirements, their entering students needed to have higher performance levels. To provide a district focus for improvement, the superintendent established a school monitoring team made up of district staff. The teams included the supervisors, managers, and assistant superintendents whose responsibilities cover curriculum (reading and math), instruction, research and assessment, professional development, special education, and student services, plus business and technology. The superintendent-led team visits each middle school once a month. When the team comes to the school, the principal joins in the classroom visits.

Each classroom in the middle schools is visited by a team member in a process called a Reflective Walkthrough Teacher Observation. Although this name suggests a brief visit, the district visitor actually spends an entire period in the classroom. Team members use a formal checklist that covers effective teaching strategies and items such as evidence of standards-based instruction, classroom management, and organization. In particular, the visiting teams review the teacher’s lesson plan and look at such issues as how the teacher sets the stage for learning, interacts with students, manages instruction and the classroom overall, and assesses student learning. When the school day is over, the team members meet with the principal to review what they observed.

Dr. Andy Parker, principal of Gautier Middle School, is very pleased with the visits by the superintendent’s team. “We just started these this year,” he said, “but they are great. The feedback reinforces my perception of what is taking place in classrooms. My teachers were anxious to get the feedback so they can use it as a tool for improvement.”

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION ACROSS THE DISTRICT
In addition to the team visits to middle schools, the district has made a number of other changes to improve instruction. These changes resulted from the superintendent’s directions to staff that expectations must be raised for all students and that individual support for students must be provided. Math was determined to be the lowest performing area districtwide, but in all content areas, curriculum committees were established to evaluate how well the curriculum is aligned to the state standards. Representatives from all grade levels serve on the committees that meet monthly, and each teacher receives a stipend of $1,000 for the additional time. The groups also meet for a week in the summer. Part of their charge is to look at both vertical and horizontal alignment and to make recommendations for changes where needed.

The district has made an effort to reach class size goals of 15:1 for elementary schools and 24:1 for secondary schools. Title I funds pay for counselors at elementary schools who work with students and their families. The counselors keep track of student achievement, and they do home visits and attend parent conferences. In general, they serve as a bridge between the home and the school and look out for the best interests of the student by following the individual’s learning path.

To promote wide-scale reading improvement, the district has involved the community in supporting activities that focus on reading. At a “reading rally,” for example, 600 bicycles were given away to top readers, and Scholar Athletes were recognized. The event took place in the stadium with 10,000 in attendance, and there were representatives from NASA, the space shuttle, local hospitals, Chevron, and the state superintendent of schools. During the school year a special “reading bus” goes to shopping areas and grocery stores—the bus driver serves as the reading teacher, and the children read while the parents shop. During the summer, a variety of programs extend the learning
of the regular school year. Students have opportunities to explore new areas and broaden existing knowledge through summer camp and creative courses focused on skills and standards in reading, math, and science.

EFFECTS ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AT BEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Beach Elementary School is a Title I school and has made AYP every year. The school is rated on state accreditation as a Level 5 school, the highest state rating. The school has 118 students in grades K-5. The school building survived the 2004 hurricane, although the building was evacuated and there were concerns that there would be more damage than actually occurred, according to Shirley Hunter, who has been principal of Beach School for 17 years. Hunter said she has seen many changes at the school, including the shift from what had been a mostly white population of “doctors and lawyers who lived in beach houses” to an enrollment today in which 50% of the students are from low-income families and almost half are Hispanic, Asian, or African American. NCLB has had a major impact on the instructional program of the school. Beach School has always had a record of good achievement, but now, according to Hunter and Dr. Susan McLaurin, director of federal programs, the emphasis is on the academic achievement of every child—not just the average and gifted students.

Hunter expressed pride in her school, its focus on learning, and its strong parent-teacher organization. “We started the PTO back when moms did not work,” she said. “They do now but our group is still very active, and we have a lot of dads that participate.” With support from this organization, she explained, “Parents read to the kids all the time, and dads do special activities with the children such as making spiders as part science lesson and part Halloween. We take the children on field trips to places like the naval base and even to the beach, and they learn so much.”

The school is also “blessed,” in Hunter’s view, to be located next to a senior center. The senior citizens come to the school to read to children and listen to them read. “They are so loving and caring, and they teach children to be good citizens,” she observed. “We are like a little village here, we are a family, and everyone helps the children learn,” said Hunter. “Our cafeteria manager tutors and so does the custodian, and they do this as volunteers. When our children leave us and go to Trent Lott Middle School, we want them to be as prepared as they can be.”

EFFECTS ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AT GAUTIER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Gautier Middle School serves 785 students in grades 6-8. The school made AYP in 2004 and is rated as a Level 4 school in the state accreditation system. The majority of the students, 65%, are from low-income families. Dr. Andy Parker has been principal of Gautier Middle School for four years. He was previously a high school assistant principal, and he finds that to have been a good experience for his present role in preparing middle school students for the academic expectations of high school.

According to Parker, the key factor that has led his school to earn a good academic rating is differentiating instruction for individual students throughout the school. “We look at three parts of differentiation, and we start with the easiest part, which is content,” said Parker. “We accelerate some students and we remediate others—whatever they need. Then there is product differentiation where we look at different learning styles.” Parker noted that some students take tests better orally than in writing, and though they have to learn to conform, differentiating what is best for each student helps them learn. The last part, Parker said, the differentiation of the delivery of instruction, is the most difficult because it means teachers have to do something different. “We have to change our way of teaching to what will help students learn,” he explained. “We can’t just expect the students to change. We have to change.”
Parker expects to see the results of differentiation as he visits classrooms, but he believes that the adjustment to middle school is hard for students who enter grade 6. They leave a one-teacher situation and suddenly find they have eight teachers. Even though they only have four classes each day because they are on a double-block schedule, the change is difficult for many students. The classes meet for 95 minutes every other day on an odd and even schedule, and students start out their day with an advisory period, but the schedule still represents a big change for young students. The principal would like to have the grade 6 students stay with one teacher the entire day during the first weeks of the school year, but the NCLB teacher qualifications for core academic subjects makes that difficult, if not impossible, to implement.

One way that Parker monitors instruction, in addition to regular classroom visits, is to participate with Gautier Middle School teachers in a lesson plan review every two weeks. All teachers who have their planning period at the same time meet with Parker, and together they look at their 10-day plans for instruction. In each group, 15 or so teachers share their plans and explain how they are doing what needs to be done in their classes.

“This is not an option,” said Parker, “and I can get pretty aggressive about how important it is that we work together.” The school chose differentiation as a staff study topic for a year and planned it step by step. As a result, Parker explained, the staff recognizes that the whole school has to work on math and must address the needs of special education students, and that is what everyone is doing. “Our teachers understand that when we sing, everybody sings—and we all have to be on the same page,” he concluded.

EFFECTS ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AT GAUTIER HIGH SCHOOL

Gautier High School is one of two high schools in the Pascagoula School District. The school has 833 students in grades 9-12, is considered a Level 5 school under the state’s accreditation system, and made AYP in 2004.

Wayne Rodolfich, the principal, has been at the school for the past three years, and during that time he has implemented a variety of ways to improve student learning through better instruction. He has also put into place a strong program of remediation for students who fall behind. The after-school study hall is an integral part of what happens at Gautier High School. “I started it when I came here,” said Rodolfich “We had a problem with students failing the math test. We had 29 of them, so I went on the school bus and took them off and put them in a study hall so they could learn their math. The kids called it hostage math,” he recalled, “but it worked, and they pass the math test now.’ Students continue to call this tutoring program “hostage math,” but nonetheless, they attend and take advantage of the extra help with their studies.

When a student does not come to class with completed homework, Rodolfich explained, the teacher e-mails him, and he calls the parents to let them know the student will be staying after school. The study hall is mandatory, and parents sign a letter to acknowledge that they know that is what is going to happen if homework is not done.

“We made 20,000 parent contacts last year,” Rodolfich said.

The structured and closely monitored program at Gautier High School appears to work for all students; there is no achievement gap among subgroups. The school has 92 students in special education, and they take the same tests as other students. There are no discipline issues at the school, according to the principal, because “we make it clear to parents that school is not babysitting.”

Gautier High School wants to improve its dropout rate, and now, according to state policy, students who take the GED will be calculated into the graduation rate and that will help raise the percentage of graduates. To determine where students are weak in achievement, vertical teams of teachers from the high school and its feeder middle schools analyze assessment data, according to Rodolfich. “We understand why we are
testing and we are not going to concern ourselves with the validity and reliability of the tests,” he said. Rodolfich also noted that school administrators sometimes “get a bad rap, and that bothers me, but it is strong school leadership that makes the difference. If we train our administrators properly, instruction improves, and students learn what they are supposed to learn.”

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
To determine if students with disabilities can work at higher instructional levels, Pascagoula staff is looking closely at test data to see if changes should be made for identified students. Some schools are using more inclusive methods of instruction rather than traditional pullout programs for special education students. The director of the special education program is visiting classes daily and evaluating the planning, teaching, and learning strategies used by special education teachers.

The most severely disabled students are served in what is called The Exceptional School; this program began 40 years ago as a way to better serve the children in the entire county that needed more specialized services. The four school districts in the county contribute to the operating cost of the school, and the site is in Pascagoula School District and operated by Pascagoula staff. Services include physical therapy, speech, occupational/vocational training, and academic services. Many of the students attend the center from the time they are three years old until they reach age 21. The most able students then move to a training facility for disabled adults.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
Newcomer students who speak a language other than English and their families are welcomed at the district office by a paraprofessional whose role is to help them learn about and adjust to the schools and the district. This district representative assists with entry assessment regarding English language needs, enrolls the student in the appropriate school, and then accompanies the family to the school and to the assigned classroom. In addition to serving in this receptionist/welcoming role, the paraprofessional works with second language families and also assists teachers with instruction.

Pascagoula has a fluctuating enrollment of English language learners due to the employment practices of the local shipbuilding industry, which relies greatly on workers from other countries. Students represent nine languages, with Spanish and Vietnamese the most common. However, according to Susan McLaurin, some students speak languages such as Malayam, which is an East Indian dialect, and in these cases, both school and district staff members do their best to assist the student and the family. “All our instruction is in English,” said McLaurin, “and we have found that English immersion, especially at the lower grades, is the most successful way to bring students to mastery levels.” Many English language learners do not stay in the district very long, but they are replaced by new families, often from a different country.

Beach Elementary School has a large number of English language learners. A part-time assistant teacher works with the children who are learning English, and they get extra help in an after-school tutoring program. Because the U. S. Navy has adopted Beach School, the master chief (who speaks Spanish) and other volunteers from the naval station tutor the children at the school. Some Beach students are from Mexico, and others are from Vietnam and India.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Pascagoula requires all teachers new to the district—whether they are new to teaching or have taught somewhere else—to participate in a New Teacher Academy that meets for monthly 2-3 hour sessions. The first class, on the topic of classroom management, is taught by Superintendent Bounds. This introduction to the district’s expectations is
designed to make it clear to new teachers how important it is that they hold high expectations for all students, as exemplified by “Superior—Expect It.” The district also has a mentor program for the new teachers. Volunteer teachers who have taught for a few years or more are responsible for mentoring one new staff member. This system is in place for all the 65 new hires for school year 2004-05.

Because the district is reluctant to take teachers out of the classroom for training, Pascagoula has instituted a program whereby teachers can receive up to 10 hours of training through an online program. Created and provided by the district’s own technology staff, the program allows teachers to participate in coursework that allows them to renew their licenses or take classes for college credit. The classes are easily accessible from home or work—in early morning or evening, on weekends, and during the summer. A total of 30 teachers took advantage of this flexible program to upgrade their skills last year.

Another innovation designed to further professional learning is the widespread use of study groups for teachers. “Teachers participate as they choose,” said McLaurin. “They can form their own group and invite others from their school or other schools to be part of it.” The district has several study groups at present, and the superintendent encourages them. “He believes that this is an excellent way for teachers and other district staff to solve problems, and some really creative ideas come forth,” McLaurin observed. Some groups study researched topics, such as successful practices in schools and effective school and classroom leadership. Others focus on a problem related to student behavior or on a content area such as algebra for students in eighth grade. “We have lots of variety, and the study groups keep us thinking,” she said.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
About 95% of the teachers in Pascagoula have met the highly qualified requirements of NCLB. Only 19 of the 389 teachers who teach core academic subjects have not met the requirements. These are teachers of special education and middle school teachers who have elementary training and licenses but do not have subject area endorsements. Through the Mississippi HOUSSE procedures, these teachers participate in a 30-hour institute that covers the content they need. When they complete the HOUSSE process, they receive the additional endorsement. Parents of students whose teachers are still completing their requirements have been notified of the teacher’s status.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
In the past year, almost all of the Pascagoula paraprofessionals met the NCLB qualifications by passing the ACT Work Keys test or by finishing up the hours they needed for two years of college. A few even have four years of college. Tutoring and preparatory classes were provided for the paraprofessionals, and for 2004-05, all but 7 of the 177 paraprofessionals have completed the requirements.

Funding and Capacity

FUNDING AND COSTS
Funding is a problem in Pascagoula because even though the number and percentage of low-income families increased, the district received $40,000 less in Title I funds for 2004-05 than for 2003-04. With an overall poverty level of 63% and no school lower than 45%, the reduction in funds is making it difficult to keep up the level of services that have brought about the strong academic performance of the students. The elementary and middle schools are schoolwide Title I programs, but the high schools are both
targeted assistance schools, although their poverty rates are high enough that they could operate a schoolwide program.

The Pascagoula school district has been experiencing a decline in enrollment. Currently the enrollment is 7,541, but not long ago, the district had as many as 9,000 students. Fewer students mean fewer dollars. In addition, the Mississippi legislature mandated salary increases of 8% for both teachers and paraprofessionals for the 2004 and 2005 school years. Although these increases have taken place over a five-year period, when they are added to the extra costs of health benefits, which are immediate, the available funds to improve student achievement are greatly reduced.

**CAPACITY ISSUES**
The district does not have the funds to provide the kinds of technical assistance and help needed to bring all schools to the level desired. Major changes have been made, including increasing teacher expectations for student performance, reviewing the curriculum in all content areas, and providing teacher support in a multitude of ways, but the dollars are stretched as far as they can go, and still more needs to be done.

**Data File — Pascagoula School District**

**Location:** Mississippi Gulf between Biloxi, Mississippi, and Mobile, Alabama  
**Type:** Suburban

**Number of Schools:**
- Total: 19  
  - Elementary: 11 (K-5)  
  - Middle schools: 3 (6-8)  
  - High schools: 2 (9-12)  
  - Other: 3 (alternative, technology center, exceptional needs)

**Number of Title I Schools:** 16

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**
- Total number of students: 7,541  
  - White: 50%  
  - African American: 45%  
  - Hispanic: 3%  
  - Asian: 1%  
  - Other: 1%  
  - Low-income students: 63% (individual school range from 45% to 88%)  
  - Students with disabilities: 17%  
  - English language learners: 3%

**Teachers**
- Total number: 567 (389 are considered core curriculum teachers)  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 95%

**Paraprofessionals**
- Total number: 177  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 96%
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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Missouri

Hermitage School District
Superintendent: Shelly Aubuchon
Contact: Shelly Aubuchon
334 students, K-12, rural

District Description

Hermitage School District is one of four small school districts in rural Hickory County in south central Missouri. Although there is still some small-scale farming and cattle raising, the area is undergoing a change from its agricultural past and is becoming a rural residential area for families that find employment in nearby towns.

Key Findings

- Elementary students in the Hermitage School District continue to demonstrate levels of academic achievement that are among the highest in the state, even though 71% of the students are from low-income families. Students in the middle and high schools do not do as well as the elementary students, a situation that staff attributes partly to the difficulty of the statewide tests at those grade levels. However, both the middle and high schools made AYP.

- Previously, testing for NCLB purposes in Missouri took place at grades 3, 7, and 11 in communication arts and grades 4, 8, and 10 in math, but that will change in 2005 when all of the grades 3-9 and grade 11 will be tested in both content areas. This change could make a difference for Hermitage in future AYP calculations. It has also raised concerns among some staff about additional testing taking valuable time away from instruction.

- Hermitage is strengthening the emphasis on reading and literacy in all grades and subjects as a means to maintain high student achievement. Reading is the main emphasis of the district’s professional development efforts, and a roving reading teacher visits all classrooms to help students enjoy reading.

Overall Impact of NCLB

The impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on Hermitage has been positive, according to the superintendent, Shelly Aubuchon, because it has highlighted the things the district is doing right to maintain high achievement at the elementary grades. But at the secondary level, the high performance expectations are creating anxiety among the staff, according to Aubuchon, and the time needed for testing in additional grades is taking away from student instructional time. “This is a situation that will require adjustment by the teachers,” she said, “and there is concern about it.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

All three Hermitage schools and the district as a whole made adequate yearly progress in 2004, as they had in previous years. Superintendent Aubuchon attributes the strong academic performance of Hermitage elementary students to teamwork among
teachers. Teachers work closely together and carefully monitor students’ progress as they move from one grade level to the next. Aubuchon believes this practice keeps students progressing and on target with performance expectations.

TESTING ISSUES
Missouri issues an annual performance report, which rates schools on a point system that takes into account achievement on the two state tests of communication arts and math. Some districts, including Hermitage, have continued to test in social studies and science. Although these two content areas were not required by the state, science will be added to the state testing schedule.

Through 2004, Missouri schools tested in communication arts at grades 3, 7, and 11 and in math at grades 4, 8, and 10. In 2005, testing for NCLB accountability in Missouri will change from testing only one content area per grade level to testing both communication arts and math at all grade levels from 3-9 and 11. This change is causing teachers to make adjustments in both curriculum and instruction. “The staff considers the high school tests to be extremely difficult,” said Superintendent Aubuchon, “and there is a feeling by some that the expectations of the federal government on NCLB and the state of Missouri are not realistic.”

Effects of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction
NCLB has spurred Hermitage to promote strong reading and literacy programs throughout the district. Along with the development of vocabulary and comprehension, the appreciation and enjoyment of reading are emphasized across all subjects and grade levels, including high school. The superintendent recognizes that teachers play the lead role in creating and maintaining a school-family connection that supports reading and academic growth. To improve reading skills in all schools, the district funds the cost of a “roving reading teacher.” This teacher regularly visits every classroom in all grades, from preschool to high school, spending 15 minutes in each classroom reading to the students. This reading time allows students to listen to someone read without the pressure of assignments, questions, or discussion. “Nobody fails, and students listen and put their imaginations to use, experiencing the joy of being read to which reinforces the pleasure of reading,” said Aubuchon. “The program works just as well with high school juniors as it does with children in grade 3.” The emphasis on reading throughout the day and in every class is intended to create a warm, welcoming environment for learning and to help connect the school with the home and community. Reading is also the main emphasis for the district’s professional development efforts, which include training for teachers in how to reach out to parents.

Although Hermitage High School continues to make AYP, it faces a challenge to ensure that students continue to meet high expectations. The graduation rate is 96.6%, but some students drop out because they have to work. To keep these students in school, the district established alternative education programs for students who are over age 16 and working. One high school alternative program is held in the daytime, and another is open during the evening year round to make it easier for students to attend. The total hours of attendance are shorter than the regular school day, and the program appeals to students who would have dropped out of school if these classes were not available.

Hermitage includes two preschool classes, one for three-year-olds and one for four-year-olds, as part of its elementary program—up to entrance in kindergarten. The two classes are staffed by certificated teachers and strongly linked to the kindergarten program. Funding comes partly from the Missouri Preschool Project, and parents provide a share of the cost according to their income through a fee-based system. The district also has an Even Start literacy program for families with children from birth through grade 2.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

Two new teachers in Hermitage are from out of state and are in the process of acquiring Missouri certification. However, all teachers meet the NCLB criteria for being highly qualified. The district has seven paraprofessionals, and all have associate degrees. “This is not because of NCLB,” explained Aubuchon, “but the result of a decision we made eight years ago.”

Funding and Capacity

Superintendent Aubuchon would like to hire more communication arts and reading teachers so that classes can be smaller and more individualized. The district’s Title I allocation is small, although adequate for additional support at the elementary level. But there are no additional funds available to hire extra staff.

Data File — Hermitage School District

Location: South central Missouri
Type: Rural
Number of Schools
Total: 3
Elementary: 1 (preK-6)
Middle: 1 (7-8)
High school: 1 (9-12)
Number of Title I Schools: 1 (elementary only)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 334
White: 98%
Other: 2%

Low-income students: 71%
Students with disabilities: 8%
English language learners: 0

Teachers
Total number: 32
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 1 (Title I)
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%
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Nebraska

Heartland Community Schools
Superintendent: Dr. Norm Yoder
Contact: Dr. Norm Yoder
332 students, K-12, rural

District Description

The Heartland School District covers more than 150 square miles of southeastern Nebraska farmland filled with wheat, corn, and bean fields. The district was created in 1998 as the result of a merger of two rural school districts, Henderson and Bradshaw, that had declining numbers of students. When the new district was formed, each of the two communities kept its own elementary school. The middle school was in one community and the high school in the other.

The new district continues to see smaller enrollments each year, as the graduating classes outnumber the new children enrolled in kindergarten. The district has already closed one elementary school. Now the children attend grades K-4 in one town, then go to grades 5-8 in the other town, then attend grades 9-12 in the first town.

Key Findings

■ Academic performance of Heartland students is quite good, but district officials are concerned that additional testing will affect the availability of opportunities for students in music, art, and drama.

■ As a result of declining enrollments, federal, state, and local dollars going to Heartland are decreasing at the same time demands for higher student performance are increasing.

■ In Nebraska, school districts determine their own tests for accountability under No Child Left Behind, using state guidelines and a state assessment rating system. Heartland and 19 other districts have tried to make this test development process efficient and effective by working through a regional collaborative and closely involving teachers.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Heartland district officials expressed concern that NCLB’s strong emphasis on mastery of basic skills in academic content areas is taking attention away from music and art. Vocal and instrumental instruction has been part of the traditional offerings for students in Heartland, and these programs have strong support from the community and school staff. Even kindergarten children participate in the school music program, and formal music and instrumental instruction begins in grade 5, with the majority of students in the intermediate and upper grades playing in the school band. The art program is in place all through the grades, and students also participate in drama activities such as play production. Superintendent Norm Yoder is worried that these strong and beneficial programs will be hurt, as more time during the school day becomes focused on academic subjects tested for NCLB.

Most students are bused to school, so extending the school day for the extra activities is not an option. The students who can stay after school are already involved in a
wide variety of sports. “These opportunities make kids feel good,” said Yoder, “and the community supports them. We would not want to eliminate any of them.”

Overall, however, the superintendent believes that NCLB has not had much of an impact on the district’s educational program. “There are more tests, of course, and we have had to adjust to that, and there are concerns that teacher contacts with students are being reduced because of the increased testing,” Yoder said. “The good thing, though, is that we have become more focused and our staff development has had good results.”

**Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress**

Nebraska allows districts to create their own tests for accountability, and Heartland does this by working with a regional cooperative that covers 20 districts serving 22,000 students in six counties. The state rates the tests developed by the districts, and Heartland consistently receives an exemplary rating on its tests.

In Heartland, teachers were involved in developing the math and reading tests that are now being used in the district for NCLB accountability. Teachers were also involved in the development of a statewide writing assessment, which is a state test. Teachers from the six school districts in the regional collaborative work together to assure that the assessments are aligned with state standards and that the cut scores for determining proficiency represent student mastery of the standards. The state provides training that includes guidelines for the school assessment groups to use in developing high-quality assessments. This group assessment preparation process is now taking place in science.

The Heartland superintendent and staff are pleased with the results of the 2004 testing. Once again, students met adequate yearly progress targets in all areas. The staff is particularly pleased with the performance of students with disabilities, which Yoder attributes to a hard-working staff that is dedicated to these students. “We have a group home in the district that accounts for our large number of disabled students,” said Yoder. “The home has 20 students who are there because they have been in and out of foster homes due to family neglect, and most of them are learning disabled. The students get some tutoring in the group home, but our teachers really work hard with them to make sure they do well.”

Testing in Heartland covers all grade levels from 3 through 8 and grade 11, but the only grades that have counted for AYP are 4, 8, and 11. This will change in 2005, when the scores of students in all the tested grades will be counted toward AYP. Tests are given in reading and math, and science tests are being developed through the collaborative.

**Funding and Capacity**

Heartland’s Title I allocation increased in 2003-04 but dropped to $51,000 in 2004-05, a reduction of nearly 8%. There was no disruption to the Title I program, however, because district funds were used to fill in for the loss of Title I funds.

Enrollment in the Heartland Community Schools is down by 18 students in 2004-05 compared with the previous year. Although a second merger with other districts might be fiscally beneficial and would make it easier for the district to carry out NCLB requirements, it would not be politically popular. Many community issues would also have to be considered.
**Data File — Heartland Community Schools**

**Location:** Southeastern Nebraska  
**Type:** Rural

**Number of Schools**  
Total: 3  
Elementary: 1  
Middle/junior high: 1  
High schools: 1  

**Number of Title I Schools:** 3

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**  
Total number of students: 332  
White: 99%  
Other: 1%  
Low-income students: 30%  
Students with disabilities: 20%  
English language learners: 0

**Teachers**  
Total number: 41  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

**Paraprofessionals**  
Total number: 5 (none paid with Title I funds)  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

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<th>Type of School</th>
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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

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<td>Schools offering SES and choice</td>
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Nevada

Clark County Schools
Superintendent: Carlos Garcia
Contacts: Susan Wright, Title I Director
Mark Lange, Director of Title I Compliance and Technical Services
267,858 students, prek-12, urban

District Description
The Clark County School District covers a large portion of the state of Nevada, including the city of Las Vegas. The area’s population exceeds 1 million and includes more than half the inhabitants of Nevada. Clustered around rapidly growing Las Vegas, the school district is expanding at a rate of 6,000 to 10,000 additional students per year.

Key Findings
- In the 2003-04 school year, due to late notification, just 2.4% students applied for transfers under the school choice provision of NCLB. For the 2004-05 school year, the number of students requesting transfers more than doubled. District officials said that while this year they were able to accommodate all transfers, if more students change schools in the future long commuting times may be a problem because the district covers about 7,000 square miles.
- In the 2004-05 school year, with students in 18 Clark County schools eligible for supplemental services, competition among outside providers has been intense. District officials reported that providers are going door-to-door and onto school grounds to recruit students. One provider had to be told by police to leave a school where the provider was soliciting parents.
- The Clark County district can no longer be a provider of supplemental services because the district failed to meet AYP goals and is on the state’s list of districts in need of improvement. The law states that schools in need of improvement cannot use their teachers to tutor, yet Clark County teachers at the failing schools are the primary source of tutors for the outside providers. As a result, district officials question the efficiency of paying the additional overhead for the administration of outside providers when the services could be handled by the district with more accountability.
- Clark County is growing so rapidly that the district must hire about 2,000 teachers each year, many of whom move to the county from out of state. Even when these new hires are experienced and highly qualified in the state they come from, it may take them several months to complete the paperwork and have their status recognized in Nevada; therefore, they often do not count as being highly qualified. District officials noted that this problem inflates the number of teachers in the district who are deemed “not highly qualified” by the state.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
Based on 2002-03 testing, 28 Clark County Title I schools were identified as in need of improvement. In 2003-04, that number grew to 30. An additional 55 non-Title I schools
were also identified; however, they will not be held to NCLB sanctions. The district as a whole was identified as in need of improvement based on 2003-04 test scores, due primarily to the performance of English language learners and students with disabilities.

While the reasons schools missed their adequate yearly progress goals varied by school, the majority had difficulty meeting goals for English language learners and students with disabilities. As a result, much of the 10% of federal funds set aside for professional development in those schools will be used to help teachers improve instruction for those student subgroups, district officials reported.

TESTING ISSUES

In 2003, Clark County had difficulty planning for the beginning of the school year because some state test results were not back until late August. Due to rapid growth in enrollment, several Clark County schools run year round on staggered schedules. Test scores for students whose schedules ran into the summer were not available in a timely fashion, said Mark Lange, director of Title I compliance and technical services. For the 2004-05 school year, however, Lange said this problem was corrected.

Lange anticipates difficulties with funding testing in the future. In Nevada, the cost of testing is borne by districts. NCLB increases the amount of testing required each year. For example, in the past Clark County only tested in select elementary grades and only tested English language learners every other year. NCLB will require testing of all students every year in grades 3-8. "When they say there are no unfunded mandates [in NCLB], there really are," Lange said, explaining that Clark County will soon have to devote more of its resources to testing required by NCLB.

Strategies for Improving Schools

All schools identified as in need of improvement will use Title I funds and NCLB sanctions to help improve student achievement. All will offer school choice. The 18 schools in Year 2 of school improvement will also offer supplemental education services in the form of after-school and/or Saturday tutoring. All 30 schools will also set aside 10% of Title I funds for professional development.

NCLB has placed more emphasis on teaching to state and district standards. In Clark County, schools are allowed to adopt individual programs, such as Success for All or Accelerated Reader. All adopted programs, however, must address state and district standards and must be "scientifically research-based," explained Susan Wright, Title I director.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

In the 2003-04 school year, 12,408 Clark County students were eligible for transfers. Of those eligible, just 301 (2.4%) applied for transfers. The majority, 296, followed through with transferring. District officials said that one reason for the small percentage of students applying for transfers was that the state was late in identifying schools as in need of improvement, and some parents may not have wanted their children to change schools on short notice. For the 2004-05 school year, the number of students requesting transfers more than doubled. About 725 students changed schools.

Clark County offered students two choices of transfer schools. Schools accepting students had to be successful academically. District officials said they also tried to offer choices in the same geographic location, but were not always able to do so. "In one case,
we were considering a school over 60 miles away,” Lange noted, but added that this year the district found a closer option. In the future, officials predict that it will be difficult to offer middle school choices within reasonable commuting range. Because Clark County covers roughly 7,000 square miles, Lange said commuting time could become extensive and might discourage parents from exercising choice.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
In the 2003-04 school year, four Clark County schools were required to provide supplemental education services under NCLB. About 2,700 students were eligible for these services. Of those eligible, 226, or 11%, participated. During this school year, both the district and Club Z, a private provider, offered tutoring. “The district program provided for pre- and post-testing, and students, on average, gained academically,” said Wright. “However, the outside provider was not as successful.”

In 2004-05, because the Clark County district was identified for improvement, it was no longer allowed to provide supplemental education services. Other providers have stepped in to fill the void. The Clark County teachers union formed a foundation which is providing tutoring. Other large private providers include Club Z, Sylvan, Education Station, and Newton Learning.

Wright called the providers’ mad dash to sign up parents a problem. The district provided three fairs to introduce the providers to the parents; however, some providers were not satisfied with the turnout. These providers started going door-to-door signing up students for tutoring whether or not the students were actually eligible, Wright said. At one point, the district had to ask police to escort uninvited providers from a school where they were soliciting parents, Wright reported. “It’s become a nightmare for us because we’ve found that providers have signed the same students two or three times and, in some cases, parents signed with two or three providers,” she said. This has created additional work for district staff members, who must again match letters of intent to contracts. Only two groups have begun offering tutoring, and the rest are focusing on signing up students. So far, she said, 1,700 students are registered, and the number is likely to grow. For some of these providers, Wright speculated, “This has become a very profitable business.”

Even though the district can no longer offer supplemental education services, the majority of the providers are using Clark County teachers as tutors, Wright said. At the classroom level, the services may be very similar to what the district offered last year. She reported, however, that the cost of outside providers is greater than the cost of last year’s district services, due to the administrative overhead. “Why don’t we just give the money to the schools and hold them more accountable for the progress of students?” she asked, saying that this might be a more efficient use of funding.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
Of Clark County’s 11,593 teachers, 73% meet the state’s definition for being highly qualified. Special education teachers are not included in these numbers because the state of Nevada has not yet given districts the definition for highly qualified special education teachers.

In terms of staffing schools, Lange said, “Our problem is that we hire 2,000 new teachers every year. Almost all of them come from out of state.” Even when these experienced teachers are highly qualified in the state they come from, it may take them several months to complete the paperwork to have their status recognized in Nevada; therefore, they count as not being highly qualified.
Two recent changes in Nevada’s requirements for teachers have also hurt Clark County, Lange said. In the past, certified high school teachers were highly qualified to teach any subject in which they had a major or a minor. Now, according to NCLB, all teachers must have a major in their subject to be considered highly qualified. Middle school teachers have also been affected. In the past, elementary teachers certified to teach grades K–8 could teach middle school. Now they are only considered highly qualified to teach grades K–6. “So, we’ve had to move teachers around,” Lange said, but added that some necessary transfers are still taking place.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
Clark County is still in the process of ensuring that all Title I paraprofessionals meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. To help paraprofessionals become highly qualified, the district is paying for them to take the state test and is providing tuition reimbursement as needed, Wright said. Currently, 77% of the 412 Title I paraprofessionals in the district meet the state’s definition. Those paraprofessionals not complying by the federal deadline are likely to be transferred to non-Title I schools, Wright explained, adding that some paraprofessionals may retire.

Funding and Costs
Clark County’s allocation of Title I funds increased from $37,383,217 in 2003-04 to $45,874,184 in 2004-05. The reason for the increase was the rising number of low-income students enrolled in this fast-growing district. The number of schools using Title I funds, however, has decreased from 51 in 2003-04 to 48 in 2004-05. This decrease was due to the district decision for 2004-05 to use Title I and Title II funds to provide full-day kindergarten. As a result, per pupil allocations rose from $350 to $500 per low-income student. In addition, 20% of funds were set aside for school choice transportation and supplemental education services, 10% for professional development, 5% to develop highly qualified teachers, and 1% for parental involvement, as required by NCLB. In addition, two new schools became eligible for Title I funds, while six schools fell out of the rank order, Lange reported.

Data File — Clark County Schools

Location: Nevada
Type: Urban

Number of Schools:
- Total: 289
- Elementary: 179
- Middle/junior high: 57
- High schools: 53

Number of Title I Schools: 48

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 267,858
- White: 43.9%
- Hispanic: 33.4%
- African American: 14.0%
- Asian: 7.9%
- American Indian: 0.9%
Low-income students: 35.6%
English language learners: 19.5%
Students with disabilities: 10.1%

**Teachers**
Total number: 11,593*
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 73%*

*Does not include special education teachers. Nevada had not given districts the definition for highly qualified teachers at the time of publication.

**Paraprofessionals**
Total number: 412
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 77%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**

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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**

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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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New Jersey

Bayonne City School District
Superintendent: Dr. Patricia L. McGeehan
Contact: Dr. Ellen O’Connor, Assistant Superintendent
8,663 students, preK-12, urban

District Description
Bayonne, a city of 62,000 people, is located at the southern end of Hudson County in the industrialized area of northern New Jersey. Many district students come from blue-collar, middle-income families; slightly over half are white, and about 30% are Hispanic.

Key Findings
- Bayonne City received from the state in stages between June and October 2004 preliminary lists of schools that had failed to demonstrate adequate yearly progress and schools in need of improvement based on test results from 2003-04. As a result of this delay, the district offered public school choice and supplemental services in more schools than necessary under NCLB to ensure that it complied with the law and had adequate time to plan the programs.
- From school years 2003-04 to 2004-05, the district reduced from seven to four the number of schools that failed to demonstrate AYP. District officials attribute this improvement in part to effective supplemental services: in 2003-04, the district provided on-site, after-school math courses twice a week for middle school students.
- The district’s most significant forms of assistance to its one preK-8 school in improvement has been to reduce class size from approximately 25 to 15 students and to offer a full-day preK program, using an early childhood program grant from the state.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Dr. Ellen O’Connor, assistant superintendent of Bayonne City, believes that NCLB has generally had a positive impact on the district by forcing the district and schools to examine the achievement of subgroups and address their needs. “It’s been a wakeup call,” she admitted. At the same time, O’Connor, who has worked in the district for 38 years, indicated that under NCLB, testing “has become so pervasive that it’s taken away the fun in education.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress
Currently, the Bayonne district tests students with state-mandated tests only in grades 4 (the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, or NJASK4), 8 (the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, or GEPA), and 11 (the High School Proficiency Assessment, or HSPA). In 2002-03, the district field tested an assessment for third graders and plans to administer the actual assessment in the spring of 2005. The district also tests students in grades 2, 5, 6, and 7 with a commercial standardized test (NJ Pass).

Based on test data from 2002-03, seven schools in the district did not make adequate yearly progress, and one of these seven schools fell short for the third straight
year. The district improved significantly in 2003-04 testing, when only four schools did not make AYP. Of these four schools, only one—Bayonne City’s high school—failed to demonstrate AYP for the second year in a row and thus entered school improvement.

Four schools that had not made AYP based on 2002-03 test scores did make it in 2003-04. According to O’Connor their improvement was the result of a lot of hard work by teachers and principals, extensive professional development for teachers, and tutoring for students at risk of not meeting standards. One of these four schools had previously failed to demonstrate AYP for three years in a row, so, as required by NCLB, it must continue to offer supplemental services during this school year. If the school makes AYP again this year, it will be taken off the school improvement list. In addition, one preK-8 school—which had won awards from the state for its student achievement—tested out of school improvement in 2003-04 by making AYP for the second straight year after two years of falling short.

The four schools that failed to make AYP for 2004-05 (based on 2003-04 testing) did so for a variety of reasons. Two schools, both serving students in preK-8, fell short of state AYP targets for the overall school population. One of these two schools missed the overall target in both reading and math and also missed the AYP targets for white students in reading and for economically disadvantaged students in reading and math. The second school missed the overall AYP target in reading only, but also missed the mark for Hispanic students in both reading and math.

A third preK-8 school failed to make AYP for 2004-05 due to the performance of the economically disadvantaged subgroup in reading only. The fourth school that did not make AYP this year was the high school, which missed the AYP targets for African American students in reading and math. (The subgroup of students with disabilities in this school also failed to meet AYP benchmarks but made enough progress to qualify under the law’s ”safe harbor” provision, which gives credit for significant reductions in the percentage scoring below the proficient level and making progress on other academic indicators). Since this was the second year in a row that the school did not make AYP, it has been identified for improvement. Although not required by law since the high school receives no Title I funds, the district has offered school choice to students in the high school. No students, however, are participating in choice.

### Strategies for Improving Schools

**STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS**

For 2004-05, Bayonne City School District has one school—the high school—in its first year of school improvement and another school (preK-8) “on hold” after being in its second year of improvement in 2003-04. For the most part, said O’Connor, the district provides the same assistance to all schools as to its two schools in need of improvement, believing that all schools need support to help them make AYP. Indeed, three-fourths (9 of 12) of the district’s schools either failed to demonstrate AYP in 2003-04 or made AYP after failing to do so in 2002-03 and are thus on hold.

In particular, all teachers in all schools receive extensive amounts of professional development, according to O’Connor. The district sends teachers to conferences and training, brings in consultants, and organizes mentoring for new teachers out of the district. She added that the district “couldn’t do any more” and that the professional development is very effective, although she acknowledged that the district would like to have the resources to hire coaches who could “follow up” the professional development in each teacher’s classroom. “This,” she said, “would seal it.”

Similarly, a majority of the district’s schools, including the preK-8 school in need of improvement, have received a great deal of technology from the district in 2004-05 thanks to a large grant from the state. Schools are using the technology in a variety of
ways. For example, the preK–8 school in need of improvement has created a computer lab to provide supplemental services, provided by Leapfrog, in reading and math for students in the primary grades.

Aside from offering public school choice and supplemental services (see below), the district’s most significant forms of assistance to its preK–8 school in improvement (on hold) has been to reduce class size from approximately 25 to 15 students and to offer a full-day preK program, using an early childhood program grant from the state. The district has also prevented any new students from enrolling into the school’s grades K–8 by removing the school’s boundary lines and closing enrollment. Students of families new to the neighborhood are enrolled in three neighboring schools. The district has, however, encouraged white families to enroll in the school’s preK program, hoping to integrate a school that has seen a disproportionate increase in enrollment of African American and Hispanic students given the relative racial balance of the surrounding neighborhood.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The district has cut back on the number and availability of art and music programs in order to increase the amount of school time devoted to academic subjects in general and to math and reading in particular. This was done partly due to NCLB’s pressure to increase achievement and partly due to the district’s recognition that two programs—choir and “Talented Art”—were overly disruptive to the school schedule. In addition to art and music, which all elementary students continue to receive one period per week, Bayonne City elementary schools used to offer choir one period a week and Talented Art two periods per week for selected students. These classes were problematic, according to O’Connor, because students were pulled out of their regular classes and taken away from regular class instruction. For this year, the district has made choir and Talented Art into clubs that meet before and after school.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Based on 2003-04 data, no school failed to demonstrate AYP due to its English language learner (ELL) students, although this may be because few schools had sufficient numbers of ELL students to be counted for accountability purposes (ELL students comprise 2.7% of total enrollment across the district). Hispanic students, some of whom may have English language weaknesses, comprise 30% of the district’s total enrollment; this group failed to demonstrate AYP in both math and reading in one preK–8 school. Only the high school had enough students with disabilities to be counted for accountability purposes. This group failed to meet achievement targets in both reading and math, although it made AYP under the law’s safe harbor provision, with huge gains in achievement (39.1 percentage points in math and 54.8 percentage points in reading) between 2002-03 and 2003-04. O’Connor attributes these gains in achievement to several factors, including “extensive” professional development for teachers and a change in the testing setting from the high school, with all its distractions, to a separate building where students were placed in small groups. Perhaps most importantly, however, was that a bomb scare during testing in 2002-03 kept the scores of special education students artificially low according to O’Connor.

O’Connor noted that the district has an excellent ELL program with several outstanding ESL teachers, especially at the high school, and a good transition program that eases ELL students into the regular high school program. The district is also working to improve its services for students with disabilities, she said. Two hundred of the district’s 225 paraprofessionals work with special education students, while only teachers work with Title I students.
Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
For 2004-05, Bayonne City offered public school choice to families in three schools. Only one of these three schools, excluding the high school and one school that was on hold in Year 2 of improvement, was ultimately identified as being in need of improvement. But the district decided to offer choice in one of its three schools that had failed to make AYP in 2002-03 because the state did not send the district its AYP information until October 1, 2004, well after planning for choice needed to occur. (The school ultimately made AYP based on 2003-04 test-score data.)

Regardless, few students (43 out of approximately 2,000 eligible, or 1.5%) took advantage of school choice in 2004-05. O’Connor attributed the low participation to two factors. First, the district only has one high school, so secondary students wishing to leave the high school have very few options. Second, O’Connor noted that the community believes that, regardless of their status under NCLB, the schools are high quality and places a great deal of emphasis on neighborhood schools.

Although participation in school choice has been low, the district has had success with public school choice before. In 2001-02, the district offered choice to students and reconstituted the staff in a low-performing school. Many higher achieving students took advantage of the choice option to switch to another school in the district. Despite the loss of some higher performing students, performance in the school increased dramatically (from 10% proficiency in reading to 90% in four years) and now enjoys tremendous demand from students and parents in the district, has been identified as a “best practice” school, and has been designated by the state as a Governor’s School of Excellence. O’Connor attributes the gains in achievement to several factors, including a new principal and teachers, “tremendous” professional development, and tutoring for at-risk students before and after school.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
In 2003-04, Bayonne City offered supplemental education services to middle school students in three preK-8 schools, even though only one school was on hold in the second year of improvement status (third year of failing to make AYP). After applying to and receiving permission from the state, the district provided on-site, after-school math courses twice a week for seventh and eighth grade students. O’Connor said this remediation has been very effective, pointing to increased math test scores among participating students.

Only 32% of eligible students, however, received supplemental services last school year. O’Connor said that possible reasons for low participation rates include students’ inability to stay after school (the district does not offer transportation), lack of support from families, and competition with the district’s tutoring program, which, unlike the supplemental services, are provided by teachers from the students’ school. Despite the low level of participation with the supplemental services, O’Connor believes that the supplemental services and district tutoring “have definitely paid off,” helping schools that did not meet AYP the previous year to come off the watch list and raising optimism that the school in need of improvement will demonstrate AYP again this year. In 2004-05, one school is extending the supplemental services to third and fourth graders as well.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
The district reports that 92% of its teachers were highly qualified in 2003-04, and Dr. O’Connor asserted that there is “no question” all teachers would be highly qualified
She said that the district’s veteran teachers have taken advantage of New Jersey’s very flexible HOUSSE provisions. Teachers who are not yet considered highly qualified are encouraged to take college courses and courses offered by the district that help them meet the HOUSSE criteria. In addition, the district provides teachers with information about Praxis (a standardized proficiency test for teachers) and courses that need to be taken, but does not pay for the test or test preparation courses.

O’Connor acknowledged that the district would have probably offered more assistance to teachers if the need for more highly qualified teachers was greater. Bayonne City has not had to develop any specific policies, such as offering incentives, for ensuring that highly qualified teachers are equitably distributed among schools of differing poverty levels, although the district does send letters to parents of children being taught by teachers who are not highly qualified. Also, the district has not had to change its recruiting practices in order to hire teachers who meet the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

According to the O’Connor, Bayonne has never used Title I funds to pay paraprofessionals. The district’s 225 paraprofessionals work only with special education students and students in regular pre-K and kindergarten programs, and therefore the NCLB requirements are not applicable.

**Funding and Capacity**

The district is receiving slightly more Title I dollars this year than last. Bayonne City is surrounded by “Abbott” districts, a group of 30 New Jersey districts that sued the state over inadequate funding for education beginning in 1981. As a result of their legal victory, the districts, among other remedies, receive a great deal of resources from the state. By comparison, Bayonne City feels relatively impoverished, said O’Connor. Nonetheless, even though she believes that the district could “always use more” resources (especially Title I teachers), she feels that the district has enough resources and capacity to implement NCLB requirements.

Dr. O’Connor also expressed her belief that the district currently has sufficient staffing, expertise, and resources to provide assistance to its identified schools, since there is only one such school (along with one school on hold) and the type of assistance offered requires relatively little staff time from the central office.
Data File — Bayonne City School District

Location: New Jersey
Type: Urban

Number of Schools:
- Total: 12
- PreK-8: 10
- 4-8: 1
- High schools: 1

Number of Title I Schools: 9

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 8,663
- White: 56%
- Hispanic: 30.1%
- African American: 8.6%
- Asian: 4.9%
- Low-income students: 36.1%
- Students with disabilities: 8.9%
- English language learners: 2.7%

Teachers
- Total number: 709
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 92%

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 225
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not applicable

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES based on 2003-04 testing:

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New Mexico

Bloomfield School District
Superintendent: Harry Hayes
Contacts: Lena Benally-Smith, Director of Federal Programs
LaVerne Brown, Director of Personnel
Linelle Sharrard, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

3,178 students K-12, rural

District Description
Located in the remote northwest corner of New Mexico near the Navajo Nation, Bloomfield is a small rural district with seven schools. The student population is an almost even mix of white (35.1%), Navajo (35%), and Hispanic (29.4%). About 16% of the students are English language learners. Navajo and Spanish are both spoken in the community.

Key Findings
- The impact of NCLB was fully realized in New Mexico in 2004-05 with the implementation of the New Mexico Public Education Department’s standards-based testing in grades 4, 8, and 11 and its plan for calculating AYP. Bloomfield was notified in October 2004 that three of the district’s seven schools had failed to meet AYP goals for two years, placing them on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement.

- State policy has placed three Bloomfield schools on the list of schools in need of improvement, even though only one school failed to meet AYP goals for student achievement. Because New Mexico currently does not test for NCLB in first through third grades, the two lower elementary schools, which feed the upper elementary school serving tested grades, were also placed on the list based on the upper elementary school’s scores.

- Numerous retirements in the district have enabled the district to hire new teachers whose state licenses more easily meet the state definition of highly qualified under the alternative licensing plan; however, district officials say the downside is that the new staff will need time to become master-level teachers.

- Bloomfield holds quarterly management review meetings at each school to monitor student progress and ascertain what interventions and adjustments are being planned for the next quarter. District officials say this has helped teachers stay on track. Progress in aligning the curriculum with new state standards has been a slow process and has been further hindered by the state’s adoption timetable for textbooks.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The 2004-05 school year is the first time Bloomfield has had schools identified for improvement. Even before 2004-05, however, district officials said they were working on improving schools by focusing on curriculum and instruction and on teacher training.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Based on 2002-03 testing, four of the seven schools in Bloomfield were placed on the state’s watch list. Only two of these schools—Naaba Ani Elementary and Charlie Y. Brown Alternative School—missed AYP based on the testing of students attending their school. New Mexico hasn’t yet developed a test for NCLB for the grades before fourth; therefore, lower elementary schools serving students younger than fourth grade are judged based on the test scores of the schools they feed into.

Testing in 2003-04 showed that Charlie Y. Brown met all AYP goals, but Naaba Ani missed AYP a second time. In 2002-03, Naaba Ani students with disabilities failed to meet both reading and math achievement targets by more than 10 percentage points. In 2004-05, Native American students at Naaba Ani failed to meet reading goals by a fraction of a percentage point. This placed Naaba Ani and its two feeder schools on the state list of schools in need of improvement. Bloomfield officials were disappointed in the decision to place all three schools on the state list of schools in need of improvement. “Really, we have only one school [in need of improvement], if they did it fairly,” said Linelle Sharrard, director of curriculum and instruction, adding that all Bloomfield schools are nevertheless working hard to improve student achievement.

Testing in 2003-04 also showed that the high school failed to meet AYP in reading for both English language learners and students with disabilities. The high school did, however, meet all AYP goals on 2002-03 testing, so it has not been designated as needing improvement.

TESTING ISSUES

Between 2002-03 and 2003-04 testing, New Mexico changed its method of determining whether or not a school met its AYP goals. In 2002-03 testing, schools were able to draw on data from both the state’s norm-referenced test and the state’s standards-based assessment. For 2003-04 testing, the norm-referenced testing data was no longer used. This change caused some confusion statewide. In the summer of 2004, Bloomfield thought that all its schools had met AYP goals, except the high school. Indeed, the state website reported that Naaba Ani had made AYP under the law’s safe harbor provision. In mid-October, data corrections showed that Naaba Ani had failed to meet the safe harbor criteria, and the school was identified for improvement, along with the two lower elementary schools that send their students to Naaba Ani.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

Naaba Ani has a new principal for 2004-05. District officials said new leadership was changing the school for the better. “She’s in the classrooms every day monitoring instruction and modeling lessons,” reported Sharrard. “The most important factor to school success is her constant vigilance.” The school has also developed committees to document testing and review effective instruction.

All schools identified for improvement are working to improve instruction. “Teacher classroom delivery of instruction is our critical area now,” Sharrard said. She noted that due to retirements, about 20% of the staff in Bloomfield is new. “A lot of new teachers struggle. It just takes time to learn the very complex art of teaching,” Sharrard said.

All identified schools are also relying on quarterly reports on student achievement and curriculum pacing to make sure teaching is on track. In these quarterly meetings, the district’s superintendent, curriculum director, and the principal review the quarter’s
progress and plan for the future, Sharrard explained. This process has been going on for the last five years and has assisted the district improve student achievement, she said.

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**
Bloomfield has been working to align curriculum and instruction with the state standards; however, there have been some barriers to the process. New Mexico adopts textbooks at the state level. Sharrard said the current textbooks do not address all the standards tested. As a result, schools and districts have to supplement the textbooks themselves. “Teachers have had to scrounge,” Sharrard said. “We’re frustrated.” Year by year, however, Sharrard said, teachers are accumulating more resources.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**
NCLB has corresponded with an increase in professional development in Bloomfield, district officials said. “There are tremendously more opportunities for teachers than five years ago,” Sharrard noted. For example, for the past three years the district has sponsored a summer institute where teachers can earn college credit both to improve instruction and to help meet the state’s definition for highly qualified teachers. In addition, Bloomfield schools have three days before fall classes start and two days during the year for professional development.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

**NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE**
All three schools in need of improvement in Bloomfield offered school choice in 2004-05. Due to late corrections in testing data, however, parents did not know that choice was an option until after the school year started in mid-October. The choice these parents were offered was to send their children to Blanco Elementary, the only Bloomfield elementary not on the state list. Blanco is at least nine miles from the other elementary schools. “At this time, no student has transferred to Blanco as a result of their school’s rating,” Sharrard said, explaining the longer bus ride and contentment with the current schools may have influenced parents to keep their children in their home schools.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
Currently about 98% of teachers in Bloomfield meet the state’s definition for highly qualified teachers. “A lot of them are lacking coursework, maybe just a course or two,” said personnel director LaVerne Brown. While the district encourages teachers to work to meet the state definition, Brown reported, “They’re pretty much doing it on their own. We get information from local universities, and we forward it to them.” Because the majority of teachers do meet the state definition, district officials said they weren’t too concerned about meeting the state deadline in 2006.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
About 92% of Bloomfield’s paraprofessionals meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. Most assist teachers in classrooms. For paraprofessionals who wanted to improve their qualifications, the district initially help pay for all classes, said Lena Benally-Smith, director of federal programs. Currently, some of the district’s burden for paying for classes has been shifted to a grant received by a local college, Benally-Smith added.
Funding and Capacity

For 2004–05, the state of New Mexico received an increase in Title I funding of about $8 million. As a result of this increase and rising numbers of low-income students, Bloomfield’s Title I allocation also increased. The district received $794,883 in 2003-04 and $877,583 for 2004-05, a 9% increase in Title I.

Even so, “money is always a problem,” according to Sharrard. Bloomfield faces particular difficulties because it must supplement the older state-adopted textbooks in order to teach the newer state-adopted standards.

Data File — Bloomfield School District

Location: Northwestern New Mexico
Type: Rural

Number of Schools
Total: 7
Elementary: 4
Middle/junior high: 1
High schools: 1
Other: 1 (alternative high school)

Number of Title I Schools: 4

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 3,178
White: 35.1%
American Indian: 35.0%
Hispanic: 29.4%
African American: 0.3%
Asian: 0.2%

Low-income students: 66%
Students with disabilities: 20%
English language learners: 16%

Teachers
Total number: 218
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 98%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 69
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 92%
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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New York

Romulus Central School District
Superintendent: Casey Barduhn
Contact: Casey Barduhn
585 students, preK-12, rural

District Description
The small, rural district of Romulus Central Schools is located in upstate New York near Syracuse and Rochester. Farmland and vacation land cover the 150 square mile area, and students are bused long distances to school. Although all students are at one site, the building has divisions of preschool, elementary, middle, and high school.

Key Findings
- Romulus schools met all state targets for adequate yearly progress in 2004, including those for the only two subgroups in the district, students with disabilities and low-income students. The superintendent attributes this strong academic performance to good teaching and careful tracking of every student’s progress.
- Romulus district officials are concerned about time and costs that will be associated with the testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2005, when New York State begins to require testing of all students in grades 3 through 8. Presently, only grades 4 and 8 are tested, plus high school students take the Regents tests.
- All teachers and paraprofessionals in Romulus meet the highly qualified requirements of NCLB; all teachers either have a master’s degree or are working on one.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
The Romulus Central School District continues to demonstrate high levels of achievement and has had no difficulty making adequate yearly progress at both the elementary and secondary schools. The students with disabilities subgroup is too small to count for AYP at both schools, but with 63 students in the group, it does count for the district, and the group made AYP. The low-income subgroup is too small to count at the high school, but it made AYP at the elementary school and at the district level.

Of the district’s academic achievement, Superintendent Casey Barduhn said, “I wish I could give you a silver bullet as to why we have to date been successful, but I believe it results from a dedicated staff who put their all into instruction. Eventually it comes down to good teaching by good teachers,” he added. “We are fortunate to have both.” Barduhn and district staff expressed confidence that achievement will continue to rise even when new grade levels are added to the testing cycle.

Testing Issues
The greatest impact of No Child Left Behind on the Romulus district so far is the shift toward testing all students in grades 3 through 8 that will occur in 2005. In 2004, testing for NCLB accountability was done only in grades 4, 8, and 11. Tests will continue to be given in both English/language arts and mathematics. In the superintendent’s view, this
testing expansion will disrupt the Romulus student accountability system that has been working very well. He fears that considerably more time will be needed to administer tests in the four new grade levels, and this will take time away from student instruction. Also, it is not yet clear who will pay for the additional testing.

District officials seemed comfortable with the Regents tests that have been part of New York state accountability for many years and are now a requirement for high school graduation. The Regents tests, which are given in high school, include biology, chemistry, earth science, English, U. S. history, global history and two versions of the math tests. Although these tests have changed over the years, the expectations are clearly known, according to district officials.

**TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

There are 63 students with disabilities in the Romulus schools. The numbers are too low to count as a subgroup at the school level because 40 is the minimum subgroup size for NCLB accountability in New York. For the district as a whole, the subgroup of students with disabilities made gains in AYP in 2004 with only the severely disabled students, less than 1%, receiving alternate assessments.

Although the district has had success with this special needs population, district officials are concerned about whether these students will continue to meet rising accountability targets over the long term. “This subgroup can be a very transient group,” Barduhn said. “While we have been successful to date, we are likely to struggle to keep our testing measurements above the water line long term.”

**Strategies for Improving Schools**

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

Romulus teachers are involved in districtwide decisions related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment and how these three areas interrelate, according to Barduhn. For example, a team of teachers from grades 5 through 12 worked during the summer of 2004 to better align the math curriculum with state standards. One concern was how well instruction in grades 7-9 was connected with the preparation of students for the high school Regents tests in math. Teachers are doing similar curriculum work in science to prepare for the new science tests, which will be administered in 2006.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

The Romulus district provides teachers with professional development in how to link instruction with curriculum and assessment and in standards-based teaching. Various teacher support systems cover areas such as curriculum planning and alignment of instruction with standards. Some professional development activities are local and tied to needs of specific grade levels, while others are provided through the regional BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), a statewide system that assists local school districts with a wide range of offerings that include teacher training.

Romulus assists its new teachers by having staff members and some retired teachers serve as mentors to new staff. Although this program has been in existence for some time, it was recently formalized and expanded to adequately and efficiently help new teachers master the grade-level requirements for instruction and curriculum.

**Funding and Capacity**

Romulus receives only a small amount of Title I funds, slightly more than $100,000, and this is a reduction from previous years. All the funds go for additional staffing in the elementary grades.
Data File — Romulus Central School District

Location: North central New York
Type: Rural

Number of Schools: 2 schools (preK-6 and 7-12)
Number of Title I Schools: 1 elementary

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 585 (includes preK)
White: 97%
Other: 3%

Low-income students: 25%
Students with disabilities: 11%
English language learners: 0

Teachers
Total number: 50
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 5
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring

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North Carolina

Wake County Public School System
Superintendent: William McNeal
Contact: Karen Banks, Assistant Superintendent of Evaluation and Research
114,068 students, K-12, urban/suburban

District Description
Created through the merger of the former Wake County and Raleigh Public School Systems in July 1976, the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) currently serves the entire county, including the towns and cities of Apex, Cary, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Holly Springs, Knightdale, Morrisville, Raleigh, Rolesville, Wake Forest, Wendell, and Zebulon. WCPSS is now the 27th largest district in the nation and one of the fastest growing ones.

Key Findings
- North Carolina’s highly regarded accountability system, the ABCs, has been in place since 1996. It differs enough from NCLB’s requirements that one school in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) was identified as a School of Excellence by the state and as a school in need of improvement under No Child Left Behind.
- Some educators and administrators in WCPSS believe that NCLB detracts from the positive reforms taking place in the state and district by restricting the use of funds, bureaucratizing the school improvement process, and requiring unneeded work for administrators, according to one person interviewed.
- Two WCPSS schools were identified as in need of improvement based on 2003-04 data and were required to offer school choice. Less than 5% of eligible students, however, took advantage of this opportunity, perhaps due to the perceived quality of the schools. Students that took advantage of school choice were not members of the groups failing to demonstrate AYP.
- Schools are less willing to accept special education students from other schools’ attendance zones out of fear that they will prevent the schools from demonstrating adequate yearly progress, according to one district administrator interviewed.
- WCPSS struggles to keep pace with its rapid growth in student enrollment, annually recruiting teachers from across the country. The district also struggles to maintain an equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers in low-income schools. This problem may be exacerbated by a state policy that pays teachers a performance bonus for increasing student achievement. Many highly qualified teachers appear to believe incorrectly that they are less likely to increase achievement and receive the bonus if they work in low-income schools.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The district’s initial reaction to the No Child Left Behind Act was extremely positive, according to Karen Banks, assistant superintendent of evaluation and research for the Wake County Public School System. The district had already used test scores and other data
extensively to improve instruction and hold schools accountable for student achievement, and NCLB’s intent was deemed compatible. Indeed, Banks added, NCLB has had a positive impact by making the district and its schools “even more data oriented.”

Many teachers and school and district administrators, however, have become so frustrated with the perceived flaws of NCLB, said Banks, that they have generally stopped acknowledging the law’s benefits. In particular, the district views the way in which English language learners and students with disabilities are included in the accountability system as unreasonable. The district also believes that sanctioning a school that fails to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for one out of many subgroups is unfair. Further, although Banks acknowledges the district’s increase in Title I funding, she insists that the net effect of the funding is negligible because of the mandatory set-asides for activities like transportation for school choice and professional development for teachers.

Finally, Banks said that implementing NCLB has been “extremely burdensome” and has consumed a great deal of district resources and energy, which has prevented devoting energy to actually addressing student needs.

**Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress**

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS**

The School-Based Management and Accountability Program, commonly referred to as the “ABCs,” is a comprehensive plan to reorganize public schools in North Carolina around three goals: strong accountability, an emphasis on the basics and high educational standards, and providing schools and school districts with as much local control over their work as possible. The plan has been in place since 1996.

For the 2003-04 school year, the ABCs accountability system and NCLB used different tests for high schools, and all grades used different ways of looking at test results, which may have led to seemingly contradictory results. Reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests in grades 3-8 were and are used for both ABCs and for adequate yearly progress calculations under NCLB. At the high school level, however, AYP was based on the High School Comprehensive Tests of Reading and Mathematics for grade 10, while high schools’ composite ABCs scores were based on end-of-course test results, a comparison of percentages of students completing college/university prep or college tech prep courses of study, and gains in the passing rate on high school competency tests from the end of eighth grade to the end of tenth grade. For the 2004-05 school year, the state plans to use the same high school test for both NCLB and state accountability purposes.

The ABCs system focuses on school and individual student progress and performance, looking at the school as a whole and at the growth of the same students over time. Growth is calculated using prediction formulas that factor in past performance to predict students’ future performance. Schools receive recognition and certified staff and teacher assistants receive incentive awards based on the percentage of students who score at or above grade level and who make or exceed expected growth. Certain low-performing schools and districts receive help from state assistance teams.

NCLB focuses on groups of students meeting set achievement and other targets and makes comparisons between group performance in one grade (say, for example, third graders in 2003) to group performance in the same grade the following year (which obviously includes a different set of students). Except for the law’s safe harbor provision, NCLB does not recognize growth or progress in student achievement, only performance. AYP, in other words, does not measure students against their own previous performance and does not distinguish between schools that miss student proficiency goals by a little (one student group, for example) or by a lot.
Achievement and Adequate Yearly Progress

In 2004, average reading scale scores in WCPSS showed slight declines at all grade levels except grade 5, while average math scale scores rose slightly in grades 4, 5, 6, and 7 and fell slightly in grades 3 and 8. Disaggregation of scores by race/ethnicity showed a small decline of about two percentage points in the percentage of Hispanic students scoring at the proficient level in both reading and math, a small rise (less than one point) for Asian and African American students in both reading and math, and mixed results for white and multi-ethnic students. Children from low-income families and students with disabilities showed small improvements in both reading and math.

For the first time, more than half (64) of WCPSS schools were designated as Honor Schools of Excellence or Schools of Excellence and another 35 were designated as Schools of Distinction under the state’s ABCs program. The 79% of WCPSS schools receiving one of these designations was much higher than the 56% of schools statewide.

Based on data from 2002-03, 70 Wake County schools failed to demonstrate AYP, although no schools were identified as in need of improvement. In 2003-04, 34 schools did not make AYP, and two schools were identified as in need of improvement. Students with disabilities were and continue to be the subgroup that most often fails to demonstrate AYP in both reading and math, although students receiving free and reduced-priced lunch also struggle to demonstrate AYP as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Schools in Which Subgroups Missed AYP
Reading and Math Proficiency Targets: 2003 and 2004

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<td>Math</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

According to Banks, the decline in the number of schools failing to demonstrate AYP between 2003 and 2004 had little to do with academic improvements. She said that virtually the entire reduction in this number can be attributed to changes in the way in which the state applied AYP requirements. In particular, between the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years, the state began applying a confidence interval to the percentage of students meeting proficiency and started focusing only on students in schools served directly by Title I programs. The state also changed the way it identified schools in need of improvement, from those that failed to demonstrate AYP in either math or reading two years in a row to those that failed to demonstrate AYP in the same subject two years in a row.

The district has, in the past, struggled to ensure that at least 95% of all high school students participate in testing, as required by NCLB. To address this problem, the district has created incentives for high school students to take the test. For the 2003-04 school year, students received up to two points on a classroom test just for participating in the NCLB required test (which has no impact on whether students graduate) and up to four points for scoring at the proficient level or higher. This incentive worked, according to Banks, as no school in the district failed to demonstrate AYP in 2004 for testing too few students. As of January 2005, it was unclear whether the district would use this incentive for testing in the spring of 2005.
Strategies for Improving Schools

According to Banks, WCPSS was providing assistance to schools with large numbers of students at risk of failure before NCLB took effect. The district continues to target these schools, said Banks, whether or not they have demonstrated AYP. In particular, such schools receive additional teaching positions (especially to serve English language learners) and on-site technical assistance from the WCPSS central office, including teacher and curriculum coaches, with a particular focus on students with disabilities. This support is more critical now than ever, said Banks, since students with disabilities from outside schools’ attendance zones may be less welcome by some schools, which believe that this group is likely to prevent them from demonstrating AYP.

In addition to the support received by all schools serving large percentages of at-risk students, schools identified as in need of improvement receive extra Title I dollars for teachers’ professional development. The state, according to Banks, has been unnecessarily restrictive in how schools and the district can spend Title I dollars. She does not believe that the NCLB requirements to develop a school plan and offer choice and supplemental services (the district has no schools required to offer supplemental services yet) has helped the academic achievement of children in schools identified as needing improvement. She insists that even before NCLB, the district and state had ambitious goals, a sound accountability and school improvement system, and remediation programs in place to improve the quality of schools, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
Two WCPSS schools were identified as in need of improvement based on 2003-04 data and offered school choice for the 2004-05 school year. According to Banks, only about 20 students (less than 5%) in each school took advantage of the opportunity to attend another school.

More students did not take advantage of choice, said Banks, because students and parents believe that virtually all schools in the district are doing a good job educating most of their students. One of the schools identified for improvement under AYP was even identified by the state as a School of Excellence under the ABCs program.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
No WCPSS schools are in the second year of improvement and, therefore, none is required to offer supplemental education services. Nevertheless, all WCPSS schools offer before- and after-school tutoring, partially paid for with Title I funds, for students who have not met state standards. The district provides all students with transportation to and from before- and after-school programs.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Approximately 71% of the district’s 7,774 teachers are highly qualified as defined by NCLB. Teachers who are not highly qualified receive training and support from the district to prepare for passing the Praxis exam or meeting the state’s HOUSSE process.

Although the district has no data about the distribution of highly qualified teachers, Banks said that highly qualified teachers are less likely to work in low-income schools than in wealthier schools. This inequitable distribution is caused by at least two factors, she said. First, as is the case nationally, teachers prefer to work in schools serving fewer
low-income children, and teachers in WCPSS have the right to choose the schools in which they work. As a result, experienced and highly trained teachers, who get to select their schools first, tend to shy away from low-income schools. Second, the state offers teachers a performance bonus for gains in student achievement. Although Banks insists it is not true, teachers believe that they are more likely to increase achievement and receive the performance bonus if they work in schools with fewer low-income students.

In addition to the inequitable distribution of teachers, WCPSS struggles to recruit enough teachers to keep up with the rapid growth in student enrollment, which averages about 4,000 students per year. To do so, Banks said that the district recruits teachers from states producing more teachers than they need, including Oregon, Washington, California, New York, and Pennsylvania.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
WCPSS, according to Banks, does not yet have a system for tracking the qualifications of Title I paraprofessionals. She estimates, however, that the district employs only about 30 Title I paraprofessionals and that all of them are highly qualified as defined by NCLB.

Funding and Capacity
WCPSS has received increased funding under NCLB and has sufficient capacity to carry out its requirements, according to Banks. That said, Banks added that the state has placed unnecessary restrictions, not required by NCLB, on how schools and district can use their Title I funding. For example, schools and the district have been prevented from using their Title I funds to pay for program evaluations and a pre-kindergarten coordinator and from carrying over funds from one year to the next to help cover the costs of offering school choice. As a result, said Banks, approximately 30% of Title I funds have gone unused in the district.

At the same time, WCPSS has unsuccessfully requested additional funding from the state and county to pay for alternative schools and a high school coordinator of special education services. Banks noted that the district would have been able to pay for these items had NCLB not diverted funds unnecessarily.

Data File — Wake County Public School System

Location: Central North Carolina
Type: Urban and suburban

Number of Schools:
- Total: 131
  - Elementary: 83
  - Middle/junior high: 28
  - High schools: 17
  - Other: 3
- Number of Title I Schools: 38

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 114,068
  - White: 57%
  - African American: 27%
  - Hispanic: 8%
  - Asian: 4%
  - American Indian: 0.27%
Low-income students: 27%
Students with disabilities: 15%
English language learners: 4%

**Teachers**
Total number: 7,774
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 71%

**Paraprofessionals**
Total number: 30 or fewer in Title I schools
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

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<th>Category</th>
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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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North Dakota

Napoleon School District
Superintendent: Jon Starkey
Contact: Jon Starkey
246 students, K-12, rural

District Description
The Napoleon School District in south central North Dakota serves a farming community that centers on small grains and ranching. Family farms have large acreages, and some have been in the same family for several generations. One of the most popular groups at the high school is the local chapter of the Future Farmers of America, which is highly recognized in the state. The district’s small enrollment increased in 2004-05 by 10 students over the previous year—a good indicator of stability in the population and possible future growth.

Key Findings
- Students in the Napoleon district do well on state assessments, and the schools have consistently made adequate yearly progress; however, state testing is not yet in place at all the required grade levels and content areas, and that could make a difference in the coming year.
- The Napoleon district has only two subgroups that count for AYP purposes at both the school and district level: white students (98%) and low-income students (33%). Although 4% of the students have disabilities and 2% are non-white, the subgroups are too small (10 students and 5 students) to count for AYP. This makes it easier for the schools and the district to make AYP.
- As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Napoleon district is making a greater effort to ensure students are properly identified for special education and are taught with the most effective methods to help them progress through school.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Napoleon Superintendent Jon Starkey made some changes in both curriculum and instructional practices two years ago when the requirements of NCLB became known in the small district. He said that he recognized that the educational environment was changing and that the district had to deal with it. “There is going to be more testing, so instead of crying about it, we have to build our bridge and get over that river of tears,” he explained. “I expect to see changes in how kids are taught—if they aren’t learning, we have to do something different.”

Starkey asserted that changes in instruction can raise student achievement, but for this to occur, changes also have to be made in the preparation of teachers. “If I have liver pain, I don’t want a doctor that has had only two classes in that area,” Starkey explained. “I want a highly trained specialist to take care of me. But the problem with our colleges is that they think you can teach reading and writing by taking maybe three classes and that’s it.” Starkey noted that teachers need more preparation in diagnosing and prescribing reading instruction to meet the needs of individual children, and he added that the
Napoleon staff has been very good about taking additional coursework and staff development to improve their knowledge in this critical area.

Another positive effect of stronger accountability, according to Starkey, is the leadership that teachers can provide for students. “Teachers make it happen,” he said, “and often a teacher is the last bastion for a kid.” In Starkey’s view, adequately fulfilling this role takes continual training, learning to make professional decisions, and “finding solutions even when we don’t think there are any.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

In the 2004 state testing, Napoleon schools made adequate yearly progress in all areas. Unlike larger districts, Napoleon has only two subgroups large enough to count for AYP purposes at the school and the district level—white students and low-income students—so the schools and the district have fewer hurdles to surmount to make AYP than more diverse districts do.

Recently North Dakota changed its state testing cycle from spring to fall, in order to assure that assessment results would be back to districts in a timely manner. Although there were some concerns about the shift to fall testing in Napoleon and other districts, Napoleon staff has adjusted to the new schedule, according to Starkey, and it is working well. Testing in 2004 was completed in early November. North Dakota students were previously tested only in grades 4, 8, and 12, but in 2004, they were tested in every grade from 3 through 8 plus grade 10 at the high school.

There were no problems with test participation among Napoleon students. Students and staff take testing seriously, and the participation rate is 100%.

Strategies for Improving Student Achievement

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The major change the district has made in curriculum and instruction as a result of NCLB is to pay greater attention to the academic progress of every student from kindergarten through high school. District officials had some concerns about achievement being lower at the high school level than at the elementary level. Instruction at all levels, especially high school, is being aligned more closely with state standards, and alignment is a focus for professional development.

Some Napoleon children receive preschool through a Head Start program. The district had been considering expanding programs for preschool children, but a reduction in Title I funds in 2004-05 eliminated any thoughts of this option. However, the district’s primary program is well-focused on reading proficiency and language skills, according to district officials, and provides a strong literacy foundation for students.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Napoleon has only a small number of students with disabilities—10 students, or 4% of enrollment in 2004-05. Efforts are made in the primary grades to help these students become proficient in reading, writing, and math. “In the past,” said Starkey, “we found that we sometimes misidentified students, so we do everything we can in the early years to make sure they are learning.” When multiple attempts are made to improve learning through efforts such as guided reading and multi-sensory learning and the student is not progressing, then the district’s specialist reviews the student’s situation, Starkey said. “It takes a lot of individualization, but that is what we have to do,” he observed.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Napoleon had reserved time for professional development for teachers by scheduling a longer student day on certain days, then “banking” the additional hours for staff development. This is no longer possible, however, since the state now requires 173 student contact days, and hours can no longer be "banked" for teacher training.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

In 2003, three of Napoleon’s 30 teachers had not met NCLB requirements for being highly qualified. One teacher left the district, and the other two are completing their requirements. One is a science teacher who has a minor in that content area and is working to bring it to the level of a major equivalency. “I have sometimes seen teachers who teach in their minor area do as well as teachers with a major,” said Starkey. “In our small rural setting, teachers work together and help each other all the time, and they are very dedicated and committed to doing the best that they can for the kids.”

Retention of highly qualified teachers, which is a challenge in many rural areas, has not been a problem in Napoleon, according to Starkey. “It is less expensive to live here,” he said, “and there are many benefits even though the salaries are not high.” He has found that Napoleon teachers develop good working relationships with each other and like to use a strong team approach. “When we go to job fairs, we look for teachers who are strong in their preparation,” Starkey said. “We want teachers who value being part of a teaching team where everybody knows every student. We also want them to stay with us for a long time,” he added.

FUNDING AND CAPACITY

A small district is greatly impacted by declining funds because there is not much flexibility for making adjustments. Napoleon’s Title I budget was reduced by $8,000 in 2004-05, a small amount in a larger district, but a cut of nearly 10% for Napoleon. Title I funds are used to support additional instructional assistance for students in math and reading.

Poverty fluctuates greatly in the Napoleon district because of the highs and lows of the agricultural economy. A drought, for example, results in many families having little or no income. This makes the children eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. But the next year may be a good crop year, and incomes rise considerably. In the past two years, the low-income percentages in Napoleon ranged from a high of 48% to the present 33%. With annual updating of census counts under the Title I formula, these shifts significantly affect Napoleon’s Title I allocations.
Data File — Napoleon School District

Location: South central North Dakota
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
Total: 2
Elementary: 1
High school: 1
Number of Title I Schools: 1

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 246
White: 98%
Other: 2%
Low-income students: 33%
Students with disabilities: 4%

Teachers
Total number: 30
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 93%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 3
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: None

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
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Ohio

Cleveland Municipal School District
Chief Executive Officer: Barbara Byrd-Bennett
Contacts: Clifford Andrews, Director of Funded Programs
Debra Burke, Manager, Employee Services Certification, Compensation, HR
Data and Records Retention
Joyce Hicks, Director of Data Quality
Kathleen Hughes, Director of Equal Employment Opportunity
Rebecca Lowry, Chief Academic Officer
Leslie Myrick, Director of Student Assignments
Paulette Poncelet, Director of Program Research and Evaluation
Theresa Yeldell, Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement

66,532 students, PreK-12, urban

District Description
Like many large city school districts, Cleveland has a shrinking population with many middle-class residents of all races moving to the suburbs, leaving the city schools predominately low income. Since a chief executive officer appointed by the mayor took office in fall 1998, the district has focused on improving academic achievement, starting with improving literacy at the elementary school level. Recent reforms appear to be paying off, and test scores in the district are improving across the board; however, the district has consistently failed to meet adequate yearly progress goals.

This case study also includes separate reports on three schools in the Cleveland district: J.D. Rockefeller Elementary, Mary B. Martin Elementary, and Wade Park Elementary. These school reports follow the main district report.

Key Findings
- Ensuring that all teachers are “highly qualified” under the No Child Left Behind Act became less problematic this year, as the district was forced to lay off about 17% of the teaching staff due to state budget shortfalls. Teachers not meeting the state’s definition of highly qualified were among the first to go in most schools, although some teachers not meeting the definition remain in hard-to-staff areas like special education.
- Changing state and federal regulations regarding the participation of and test administration requirements for special education students and English language learners continues to make the testing of these students difficult and the results questionable.
- The school choice option remains unpopular with parents. District officials say school choice conflicts with districtwide efforts to return to neighborhood schools, after the end of busing under federal desegregation orders.
- Supplemental education services are becoming a more popular choice for parents and are strongly supported by district staff. However, not all providers have followed through with promised services.
- While Title I funding in Cleveland has remained stable, the district has experienced extreme budget shortfalls and the failure of the most recent school levy. As a result, the district has laid off about 17% of the teaching staff, increased class size, and cut back or eliminated purchases of materials and supplies. These changes may make it very difficult to maintain student achievement increases.
Overall Impact of NCLB

While district officials agreed with the goal of the No Child Left Behind Act to raise the achievement of all students, at times implementation has been difficult and results discouraging. Although test scores in Cleveland have risen steadily over the past two years and exceeded state increases, improvement has not been sufficient to meet adequate yearly progress goals for the district as a whole and in many schools. District officials said they were hopeful that increases in supplemental education services and professional development would continue to increase student performance and that the district and more schools would meet AYP goals. In 2004-05, however, district officials predict they will struggle to maintain progress due to the failure of a recent school levy that has resulted in staff layoffs and other cutbacks.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

In the 2002-03 school year, the district did not make AYP due to inadequate test participation rates. In addition, achievement in many individual schools was low in 2002-03. While the district is committed to making sure students participate in testing, some of the problems in 2002-03 were simply due to district and state methods of counting students, said Joyce Hicks, who tracks AYP for the district. For example, two schools did not make AYP for participation in 2002-03 because students who had been promoted mid-year were not accurately credited to the grade in which they were tested.

In addition, there was confusion about which English language learners had to take the test in 2002-03. Staff received conflicting information from U. S. Department of Education officials, who advised that students in the U. S. for less than one year did not have to take the tests, and from state officials, who stated that all students should be tested, Hicks explained. Overall, state records showed that only 87% of eligible ELL students were tested in math and only 88% in reading in 2002-03. For 2003-04, the rules have changed. Students who have been in the country for less than a year are still required to be tested, but their results are not included in the schools’ passing rates. “Unfortunately for those schools,” Hicks said, “the change in the federal law was not retroactive.” Individual schools had a variety of reasons for not making AYP, Hicks noted, but many, like the district, were penalized due to test participation.

In the 2003-04 school year, the district did not make AYP primarily due to lack of progress of special education students and English language learners, said Hicks. While last year Ohio allowed many special education students to be assessed based on the goals in their individualized education programs (IEPs), rather than the standards for their grade level, this year in Ohio only 1.3% of the scores from these out-of-level assessments can be counted as proficient in district accountability. Those who did not take the test had to take a new alternative assessment based on a portfolio process.

TESTING ISSUES

The increased testing and the accountability of NCLB wasn’t as much of a shock to Cleveland as it may have been to other districts, because it augmented systems the district already had in place. The district had been identifying schools for extra administrative attention before NCLB. While district officials all said close tracking of student progress is very helpful to schools, there have been technical difficulties with the NCLB testing itself. These difficulties have led district officials to question some of the testing results.

In 2002-03, district officials reported several problems with calculating participation rates, especially in cases of English language learners and students who changed grade levels mid-year. There were also some problems with the counting in general, according to Joyce Hicks. She noted that short state deadlines for making corrections to 2002-03
data led to some undercounting of participation rates in Cleveland. This year, she explained, the state decided to take an enrollment count the week of testing and used that count to determine participation rates. For Cleveland, Hicks said, “That’s going to ease things considerably.”

In 2003-04, the state has also begun phasing in “achievement” and “diagnostic” tests and phasing out “proficiency” tests. While all these tests are standards-based, achievement and diagnostic tests were specifically designed to test the new state standards and will cover a broader range of ability levels than the old proficiency tests. While district officials welcomed the switch to tests aligned to the new standards, switching from proficiency tests to diagnostic and achievement tests has been difficult for some parents to understand, said Theresa Yeldell, the district’s liaison to families and the community.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
With approximately 16.3% of students using IEPs, the district has faced significant challenges to meeting AYP goals for students in special education. Changing rules on testing policies have added to the district’s difficulties. In 2002-03, the state allowed many students in special education to be assessed based on IEP goals instead of grade level standards. Perhaps as a result, state records show that in many Cleveland schools, special education students actually boosted school performance. In 2003-04, federal regulations were changed to place a cap of 1% on the scores that can be counted as proficient based on out-of-level assessments—in other words, assessments geared to students’ instructional level instead of their grade level. The state enforced the 1% cap on out-of-level assessments for Cleveland and also instituted a portfolio as the alternative assessment for special education students. Perhaps as a result in 2003-04, special education students in most schools did much more poorly on AYP goals than they did the preceding year. District officials noted that the portfolio assessments were not always successfully compiled. “Part of it was that the state process was so cumbersome in 2003-04,” Hicks noted.

Because state special education policies have fluctuated so much over the last three years, parents are not always clear about who gets alternative assessments or about whether they should push to have their child tested using the alternative assessment, noted Yeldell. While some parents she talks to want alternative assessments for their children, others do not. “There are parents who want their children to be seen and treated in very normal ways,” she noted, but said the state’s new alternative assessments may also be appealing. “We need a lot more information and guidance about what the opportunities are.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
The passage rates of English language learners continue to be a problem in Cleveland, where about 4.6% of students are just learning English. In 2002-03, district officials reported that many students who were required to be tested were not because staff thought they weren’t ready for the tests. “We did what was right for the kids,” said Hicks. This year, federal policy changed. Therefore, students who had been in the country less than one year were not tested. In addition, in 2003-04 Ohio changed its testing rules and allowed some ELL students to use translators. Confusion over who would translate for Cleveland students proved difficult, Hicks recalled. “The state was supposed to provide translators, but we ended up having to scramble to get our own translators.” This “last minute” approach, Hicks said, may not have been “conducive to good test administration.”

Parents of students just learning English have also had a difficult time understanding why their children must be tested, with or without translators, added Yeldell. She said district staff is trying to help parents become comfortable with their children being tested even though they do not speak the language and to assure parents that their child “will not be blamed” if he or she does not do well.
Strategies for Improving Schools

SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS
All Cleveland schools identified as in need of improvement participate in the standards-based, literacy-focused reforms within the district. All devote 10% of Title I funds to professional development related to these reforms. In addition, this year (2004-05), all schools identified as in need of improvement will have part-time coaches. These retired teachers will provide guidance to teachers and principals in all aspects of school improvement, as well as assist in after-school activities for students, parents, and teachers, Lowry explained. The coaches are overseen by a state coordinator of Title I funds, housed in the district’s main administrative offices.

STRATEGIES FOR RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS
Based on 2003-04 testing, five of the district’s traditional middle schools have been identified for restructuring. All will restructure by transforming themselves into kindergarten through eighth grade elementary schools, Lowry explained. These schools had been slated to change their grade configurations for some time. While NCLB hasn’t changed the plan for these schools, it has speeded it up, she explained.

Well before NCLB, Cleveland began phasing out its large middle schools by switching to K-8 elementary schools. The change was made after district data showed that sixth grade students in middle schools had lower test scores than their peers in elementary schools, Lowry said. “In the mid ’70s, middle schools were the up and coming thing, but they didn’t work,” she noted. The phaseout, however, was slow. Of the district’s 25 traditional middle schools, 15 still remained in the 2003-04 school year. Many continued to be troubled, Lowry said.

District officials are hopeful that the grade-level configuration will make a significant difference in these five schools, as it has in other district schools that have moved to K-8. “While it may take a few years to see academic gains,” Lowry said, “we’re usually able to see things like fewer suspensions and improved attendance right away.”

STRATEGIES FOR WATCH LIST SCHOOLS
Special administrative attention is given to schools on a watch list for failing to make AYP for the first time, said Kathleen Hughes, who oversees the legal aspects of NCLB for the Cleveland district. Schools in Cleveland are overseen by a number of supervising superintendents who are aware of which schools are on the list. However, as Hicks and other district officials pointed out, some schools on the watch list may be there due to flukes in testing, so not all are in need of intensive intervention.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Even before the passage of NCLB, district officials say they had moved toward a standards-based approach to curriculum and instruction. District officials all agreed this approach has been strengthened by the need to meet the goals of NCLB. The district has even replaced its traditional student report cards with standards-based report cards. Each item on the report card matches state objectives for that grade level. Parents have also welcomed the change. “They are very positive about the standards-based report cards. Parents are really understanding it,” says Theresa Yeldell, adding that it is now very clear to parents and students what they should be studying and what they will be tested on.

In terms of subjects within the standards, literacy has been a particular focus in the district, said Rebecca Lowry, the district’s chief academic officer. Elementary grades are now providing English language arts in 90-minute blocks, an increase for most schools. This longer teaching time allows teachers to use small group instruction more frequently and to individualize instruction, Lowry explained, adding that in the past, “the focus used to be to teach to the middle student.”
This year, 2004-05, Cleveland is also adding an English Language Arts Standards Matrix to its toolbox, Lowry said. Using the matrix will help ensure that in all schools, grades, and subjects, teachers are covering the standards effectively, she explained. Before NCLB, she said, “There was just a variety of materials and practices.” She explained that not all of these practices were bad, but they were “disconnected” and thus less effective.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

The district provides free professional development opportunities for teachers and alerts them about events to help them meet the highly qualified teacher requirements. “We have a great professional development department,” Burke explained. “They actually put out a large catalogue.” In addition, Burke said, “math and science departments are going to great lengths to offer courses,” which include grants to enroll in master’s programs.

Also in accordance with NCLB, schools in school improvement set aside 10% of their Title I funds for professional development. This set-aside, unlike the one for choice and supplemental services, is always spent, reported Cliff Andrews, who manages Title I funds for the district. These funds may go toward professional development already prepared by the district or an outside entity because schools can choose any training that supports their school improvement plan, Andrews said. In a district in which all but two schools have schoolwide Title I plans, Andrews explained that it wasn’t unusual for schools to spend Title I funds on professional development to support overall school goals, whether these goals are part of an NCLB school improvement plan or not.

Budget shortfalls have had an adverse impact on some professional development in the district, officials reported. In the past, each district elementary school had two professional developers—teachers who were released from most teaching duties to provide professional development workshops, model effective lessons, and offer in-classroom coaching. One professional developer was an expert in math, the other in reading. In 2004-04, due to funding cuts, most elementary schools can have only one professional developer and must choose between reading and math.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

All schools required to offer school choice in 2003-04 were able to offer choice in Cleveland, said Leslie Myrick, who directs student assignment for the district. Parents from each transferring school were offered two possible schools to transfer to. Choices were limited because the district wanted the choices to be within the students’ community, in keeping with the neighborhood schools policy in the district. This policy is designed to encourage parents and students to be more involved in school and after-school activities, Myrick explained. So far in Cleveland, school choice “has not been a major problem, primarily because the numbers have been so small,” Myrick said.

District records show that although 16,830 students were eligible for transfer in 2003-04, only 43 parents applied for transfers and only 33 students actually changed schools. District officials noted that school choice goes against the district’s previously established goal of moving toward neighborhood schools after many years of busing under federal desegregation orders.

The neighborhood school concept has been popular with parents, said Yeldell. She recalled several typical reasons parents said they weren’t going to use school choice. First, familiarity was an issue; parents want to keep their child in a school where they knew people. Second, neighborhood schools were more convenient, and changing schools could disrupt the family if siblings went to different schools. Lastly, Yeldell said that the concept of choosing a school is simply foreign to parents. “There are still quite a few parents who are not quite understanding,” she said, “even the parents we’ve had in-depth conversations with.” Yeldell noted that in addition to notifying parents as required about
choice, supplemental services, and teacher quality, this year the district has distributed three explanations of the law, one from the Ohio Department of Education, one from the nonprofit Council of the Great City Schools, and one from the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

The use of school choice may also be limited because Cleveland already offers students the option of attending private, mostly Catholic schools through a voucher program. In 2003-04, Cleveland students using vouchers numbered 5,887. Historically, the majority of students using vouchers never attended public schools. Instead most began attending the private school in kindergarten or as soon as they moved to Cleveland. According to a report by the nonprofit group Policy Matters Ohio, as of 2001 only 1 in 5 students using vouchers left a Cleveland public school. More recent data were not available. Still, if these numbers remain similar today, far more students use vouchers to leave Cleveland public schools than use NCLB to transfer.

In 2003-04 a small number of parents (33) did use NCLB’s school choice option in Cleveland to send their children to what they perceived was a better or more popular school, said Myrick. However, she also noted that some parents used NCLB to transfer their students for personal reasons, such as wanting their child to be closer to after-school day care or a custodial grandparent. Cleveland already had a “special transfer” policy designed to handle these cases, and Myrick said she saw some crossover in the two groups of parents.

This year may be a less appealing year for parents to transfer because the district is cutting back on transportation to help deal with budget shortfalls, Myrick explained. In the past, elementary school students who lived more than one mile from schools got bus service. This year, in 2004-05, only students living more than two miles from school will be offered a bus ride.

Although Myrick said she doesn’t predict a huge swell in NCLB transfer applications this year, she admitted, “There’s no way we could accommodate it if every student wanted to transfer. We really don’t know what we would do,” she added. “We would really be in a bind. It’s something that’s always in the back of your mind.”

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The number of students using supplemental services in Cleveland is increasing. Only 104 students used the services in 2002-03, while in 2003-04 that number more than doubled, bringing the total number of students using services to 294. The district anticipates that use of the services in 2004-05 will also increase. Several district officials agreed that these services have the potential to increase student achievement and hoped to continue to increase student participation.

In order to increase participation, Yeldell said the district sent out mailings and held individual meetings with parents at each eligible school. Parents, she recalled, were very receptive.

She admitted, however, that there have been some “snafus” with private providers of supplemental services. Some providers offered services to parents, but then withdrew the offer when too few students signed up. This year the district asked parents to list a first and second choice of vendor so that most children still participated. Last year, she reported that parents just signed up for one vendor and if that vendor withdrew, the parents were often angry and did not get their child into tutoring.

Hughes also observed that some providers told her it was easier to get approved in Ohio than in other states. “I had spoken with one provider,” she recalled, “and the provider informed me they weren’t approved in any other state.” Hughes speculated that working with less experienced providers may be why Cleveland has had difficulty with providers actually being able to provide services. “Some providers are approved by the state, but due to their lack of experience, they’re just more difficult to deal with,” she added.
In addition to problems with providers, some Cleveland schools may lack funds to keep buildings open late in the afternoons to accommodate supplemental service providers, Lowry noted.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

During 2003-04, due to lack of state and district data, Cleveland officials said they were unable to determine exactly which teachers were “highly qualified” based on state definitions developed for NCLB. Over the past year, Cleveland has taken a proactive approach to determining which teachers meet the requirements. “We actually looked at each individual teacher, what they teach, and what their records show,” explained Debra Burke, the employee services manager at the district who handles NCLB. “If they don’t meet the definition of highly qualified by standard methods, we contact them.” At this point in the process, Burke said her staff asked teachers to provide proof of professional development and/or coursework that met the definition of highly qualified under Ohio’s HOUSSE rules. If the teacher still didn’t meet the requirement, the teacher was asked to submit a plan for how he or she would become highly qualified by July 2006.

State officials have calculated the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers. The state’s report card showed that in the 2003-04 school year, 84.5% of these core classes in Cleveland were taught by teachers who met the state’s definition of highly qualified, although 93.6% of Cleveland teachers were properly certified or licensed by the state. The difference between these two percentages reflects in part the fact that Ohio’s original K-8 certification did not require a major or minor in a subject area, which is now required in middle and high school classes due to NCLB. Cleveland percentages are slightly lower than state percentages, with 93.1% of the state’s core classes taught by teachers meeting the definition and 97% of the state’s core classes taught by properly certified or licensed teachers.

Cleveland continued to collect teacher information over the summer of 2004. By early fall 2004, more than 92% of teachers for 2004-05 met the state’s definition of highly qualified regardless of the classes they taught, Burke said. As the year progresses, Burke hopes this number will increase as more teachers provide proof of professional development and coursework.

Hiring new teachers who are highly qualified has not been a major problem in the last few years Burke said. “Most of the people we hire are directly out of a university,” she explained, and have just become licensed to teach. Also, in hard-to-staff areas like math, science, and special education, the district has had to take a “grow your own” approach. “We are partnering with local universities to offer coursework toward alternative licensure for teachers committed to working in Cleveland,” Burke explained. The universities and the district obtained federal grant funding for scholarships toward the cost of the coursework.

With these new hires, Burke added that simply meeting the state definition of highly qualified has not been the only criteria for hiring. The district has also been using the Gallup Teacher Insight and the Haberman interview process. These screening tools helped identify teachers who would do well in urban settings like Cleveland, Burke explained.

This year, 2004-05, the hiring picture in Cleveland has changed dramatically due to budget shortfalls. “We’re not doing any hiring this year,” Burke said, adding that the district will lay off about 950 teachers, or 17% of its 5,700 person teaching force. “Things are not good here,” Burke said. “It’s hitting us hard.”

Layoffs are governed by union contract and are determined by seniority within subject area, Burke explained. However, the layoffs have not adversely affected the percentage
of highly qualified teachers in the district, Burke said. “It’s standard policy that if someone
has a license [to teach] and someone else doesn’t, the person who doesn’t goes.”

While the majority of teachers in Cleveland have met the state definition for “highly qualified,” not all of them do, so the district did send letters, as required by NCLB, to inform some parents that their child’s teacher was not highly qualified. After talking with some of these parents, Yeldell said, “Most didn’t have a problem with it because they said they understood the reasons.” For example, some teachers were just finishing graduate school and would soon be highly qualified, while others were replacements for teachers on maternity leave.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Of the 752 paraprofessionals in the district, 34% are currently highly qualified. The district is taking steps to increase that percentage, Burke said. In Cleveland, Burke explained, “Individuals can become highly qualified by taking the paraprofessional assessment test at the district’s Adult Education site. The cost of the test is $40 and reimbursement is $40 upon passing the test.” The district also provides study groups paraprofessionals can attend to prepare for the test. The study groups are sponsored by employee services, the department of professional development, and the teachers union.

**Funding and Capacity**

Cleveland faced entering the 2004-05 school year with a deficit of approximately $100 million, resulting from a variety of causes: a reduction in property tax revenue due to a severe drop in personal property valuation and a loss of valuation in commercial property stemming from poor economic conditions; a reduction in state funding due to students transferring to charter schools and continued erosion in average daily membership; and increased employee health care costs. The districts’ last school operating levy passed in 1996, so the impending deficit was also due to expected increases in the cost of doing business. Consequently, the district was forced to cut back on staff and services prior to the start of the school year. While these staff and services are not directly federally funded, they may affect how well the district is able to meet NCLB goals for increasing student achievement.

With the failure of the district’s $68 million dollar levy in November, the district faces a new deficit. Therefore, not only will these cuts remain but additional cuts will be required until a levy is passed. Title I funds do not compensate for the losses in the district’s general operating budget.

Between school years 2002-03 and 2003-04, Title I funding to the district increased by approximately 20%, reported Andrews. However, for 2004-05, Andrews noted that the funding has remained flat, due to federal budget levels, an increased state set-aside for school improvement, and an increase in the funds taken “off the top” for charter school students.

“I think the increased funding [in the first years of NCLB] was definitely helpful,” Andrews said. Additionally, he anticipated that the flat funding for 2004-05 would not yet cut into the district’s ability to provided mandated NCLB services. “At this point we haven’t had to utilize set-asides for choice to the maximum amount,” he explained. However, spending on supplemental education services will go up as awareness and eligibility increase, he said.

During the 2003-04 school year, Yeldell said there was sufficient funding to communicate well with parents. However, with current budget cuts, she anticipated, “This year’s going to be a challenge.” She said she will rely on groups of volunteer parents who are well informed about NCLB to help get the word out.
Data File — Cleveland Municipal School District

Location: Cleveland, Ohio
Type: Urban

Number of Schools
Total: 122
- Elementary: 90
- Middle/junior high: 10
- High schools: 17
- Other: 5

Number of Title I Schools: 120

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total: 66,532
- African American: 70.6%
- White: 17.7%
- Hispanic: 9.5%
- Asian: 0.7%
- American Indian: 0.3%

- Low-income students: 80%
- Students with disabilities: 16.3%
- English language learners: 4.6%

Teachers
Total number: 5,700
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not available
(The district is still determining qualifications using HOUSSE rules)

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 752
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 34%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

- Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years): 12  26
- Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years): 6  7
- Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years): 9  3
- Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years): 0  5
Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES based on 2003-04 testing:

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<td>Schools offering SES <em>and</em> choice</td>
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Cleveland Municipal School District

J. D. Rockefeller Elementary School

Contacts: Edna D. Connally, Principal
Helen Robinson, Special Education Teacher
Jane Kysela, English Language Arts Professional Development

502 students, K-8, urban

School Description

Located in the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio, J. D. Rockefeller Elementary School serves a student population that is predominately African American (97%) and economically disadvantaged (94%). In the past two years, the school has added grades to become a K-8 building. Despite a history of low performance on state tests for the past four years, the school has recently raised student achievement and come off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement.

Key Findings

■ Initially, the school’s designation as in need of improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act led to uncertainty and a certain amount of demoralization at J. D. Rockefeller. This was exacerbated in 2002-03 when inaccurate calculations by the Ohio Department of Education regarding economically disadvantaged students initially placed the school in Year 4 of school improvement, the restructuring phase of NCLB. The school’s status, as a school in restructuring, was publicized to parents and the community. Corrected data late in the summer showed that J. D. Rockefeller had actually made adequate yearly progress due to the safe harbor provision of NCLB and was only in Year 3 of school improvement, the corrective action phase.

■ School choice was not popular with parents. Only two or three students changed schools using choice during the last two years, the principal recalled. She noted that changing schools may require too much effort on the part of parents, in terms of investigating choices and filling out forms.

■ Only the supplemental services provided by the district were used by students at J. D. Rockefeller. In 2002-03, some companies backed out of their offers to provide supplemental services for the district. J.D. Rockefeller students who had signed up for tutoring with these outside providers were able to switch to tutoring provided by the school’s teachers. Perhaps as a result of dissatisfaction with the private tutoring companies, no parents signed up their children for supplemental education services from private providers in 2003-04; instead, many signed up their children for school tutoring through district-provided supplemental services and/or the district’s extended day option, which is not a supplemental service.

■ Extended day tutoring was a key to helping improve academic achievement at J. D. Rockefeller, teachers said. In addition, although not mandated by NCLB, the school worked to increase in-school tutoring through various local volunteers. This tutoring also resulted in smaller groups for students who remained in the classroom during tutoring time, because many of their classmates left the room to be tutored by volunteers.

■ Supplemental services are not being offered in 2004-05 because the school has come off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement and the funding for these services is no longer available. The school will, however, keep its volunteer tutoring services and extended day.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Based on 2001-02 testing and previous years’ test scores, state calculations placed J. D. Rockefeller in Year 3 of school improvement, or the corrective action phase of No Child Left Behind. The designation came as a shock to the school, said Principal Edna Connally. Staff tended to disagree with the designation, she added. “We were in the third year, and we had just been told,” Connally noted. “Everybody in the world was told we were poor [academically]. We didn’t think we were poor.”

After a year of NCLB interventions, 2002-03 testing initially showed that even though J. D. Rockefeller’s test scores had gone up in both reading and math at all grade levels, the state initially reported that the school had again failed to make adequate yearly progress due to the achievement of economically disadvantaged students. But it turned out that this designation was the result of a miscalculation of the economically disadvantaged cohort. While Connally said academic achievement had not improved as much as she would have liked that year, she did think the school was showing positive changes. The district appealed the state analysis of the test scores for J. D. Rockefeller and four additional schools. After correcting the counts for economically disadvantaged students, the state found that all five schools, including J. D. Rockefeller, had made AYP. So J. D. Rockefeller was still in Year 3 of school improvement.

Test scores in 2003-04 showed that J. D. Rockefeller improved dramatically in fourth grade math, from 17.3% passing to 56.8% passing, and also in fourth grade reading, from 46.1% passing to 54.7% passing. Scores in sixth grade, the only other grade tested in Ohio in both 2002-03 and 2003-04, declined by 0.3 percentage points in math and 22.9 percentage points in reading. Despite this somewhat precipitous drop in sixth grade reading, J. D. Rockefeller again met all AYP goals. Because the school made AYP for two consecutive years, this achievement took the school off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

J. D. Rockefeller chose a variety of strategies to improve the school, based on NCLB’s menu of mandates for corrective action. The school day was extended, so that teachers could provide additional tutoring for students who needed it. In keeping with district initiatives, the school also instituted a data-based approach to lesson planning and teaching. Finally, two coaches from the state department of education were assigned to the school in order to help with professional development and the school’s improvement plan.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

In 2002-03, the school started using a data-based approach to curriculum and instruction. For example, by analyzing pre-test scores, many teachers were surprised to find that their students were pretty good at making inferences. “So, we don’t keep teaching inference when they know inference,” Connally said. Staff also used the pre-tests to divide the students into small groups that needed to work on similar skills.

The new data-based approach to instruction did not catch on immediately, Connally said. Due perhaps to the newness of NCLB, district and state resources came to teachers late in the year, she explained, noting that “we didn’t have enough professional development.” In addition, she observed that staff did not yet fully understand NCLB. No longer would the emphasis be just on the individual grades tested; instead, the school as a whole was held responsible, and soon all grades would be tested.

The following year, NCLB-driven changes to curriculum and instruction were implemented more completely. Professional development on data-based instruction started
right away, and weekly professional development meetings were held. Teachers realized, “If we swim, we swim together; if we sink, we sink together,” Connally said.

Others confirmed Connally’s observation that the staff has pulled together. “We’re not isolated,” said Jane Kysela, who provides professional development, coaching, and model lessons for teachers. “Everybody has received ideas from everybody else,” she added. “The school’s more open to new ideas than ever before.”

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

Under NCLB, J. D. Rockefeller had to spend 10% of Title I funding on professional development. This professional development focused on teaching teachers to use the new data-based approach to lesson planning and instruction. It also increased collaboration among teachers. The weekly meetings lasted about two hours and were led at times by a state administrator, the school’s professional developer, the principal, and teachers. The fact that everyone in the school was welcome to lead the sessions was an important morale booster, Connally said. “We learned that we can learn from anyone,” she explained.

While focusing on data-based techniques, the professional development incorporated a broad range of approaches to engage students. Special education teacher Helen Robinson recalled sessions on creating rubrics as a way to evaluate and track the progress of student work, on using learning centers to introduce new concepts, and on placing students in small cooperative groups based on pre-tests. “Some of these were strategies that a lot of us had heard of but hadn’t had time to implement,” she noted.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

**NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE**

Few students left J. D. Rockefeller to take advantage of school choice under NCLB. Connally recalled only two or three students leaving the first year. “It’s a leap to go,” Connally noted. “You’re starting all over with a new school culture.” Instead, Connally said that several parents who were concerned about the school’s performance became school volunteers.

**SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

In 2002-03, the first year supplemental education services could be offered at J. D. Rockefeller, four companies and the district indicated they were interested in providing services. None of the private companies followed through with providing services, however. Fortunately for the students who had wanted tutoring, the school was also offering tutoring during an extended school day, another NCLB option for corrective action. J. D. Rockefeller teachers and other volunteers provided these services.

When the time came to sign up for supplemental services through private providers in the 2003-04 school year, “the parents didn’t want to fool with it,” Connally said. Instead, about 55 students, or about 11% of all J. D. Rockefeller students, consistently received tutoring through the district’s supplemental services and extended day program. In addition, one of the school’s teachers coordinated the school’s Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) tutoring program. The program provided one-on-one tutoring during the school day for about 40 more students.

In the 2004-05 school year, this teacher is now assigned to a classroom due to staff reductions throughout the district, so HOSTS also fell by the wayside. Connally said she hopes to make up for the loss of resources through other in-school tutoring programs. Employees from Dominion East Ohio, a local gas company, and the Ohio Lottery are tutoring students. High school-age tutors also assist the school, some from the district’s alternative schools as part of a community service project and one from a private girls’
school. Finally, a retired teacher from a nearby suburb has tutored consistently at the school part-time for the past three years.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
Due to state budget shortfalls and district layoffs, 17 teaching positions at J. D. Rockefeller have been eliminated. The school now has just 22 classroom teachers, all of whom meet the state’s definition of highly qualified, Connally said. Last year several teachers were not highly qualified according to state records.

Connally pointed out that class sizes have risen dramatically. Overall most classes at J.D. Rockefeller have just under 30 students. This year, first grade is of particular concern to Connally. The school has 71 first-grade students and just two first-grade teachers. First grade is a critical year for children, Connally said. “If you don’t get it in the first grade, often you just don’t get it.”

Connally does, however, praise her staff for continuing to work hard this year to meet students’ needs, despite the large classes. “They do the best they can with what they have,” Connally said. “They see themselves as a family.”

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
J. D. Rockefeller has three paraprofessionals. Two work in the school’s classroom for students with disabilities. One is the school’s liaison to families. One meets the state’s definition of highly qualified, but the others do not.

**Funding and Capacity**
Overall district Title I funding was flat for 2004-05. This stagnation in funding came at the same time as a state funding crisis and just as J. D. Rockefeller lost funding for supplemental services and lost support from the state administrator because it tested out of school improvement. Staff members said that they are nervous about student achievement now that the school has fewer resources, a smaller teaching force, and more students; however, they said they aren’t giving up. “We still have high expectations for all students,” Robinson affirmed.

As a staff committed to student learning, Kysela added, “We’re relentless.”
Data File — J. D. Rockefeller Elementary School

Location: Cleveland, Ohio  
Type: Urban

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 502
  - African American: 97.0%
  - White: 3.0%
  - Low-income students: 94%
  - Students with disabilities: 19.1%
  - English language learners: 0%

Teachers
- Total number: 22
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 3
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 33.3%

Did the School Make AYP?
- 2001-02: No (Year 3 of school improvement status)
- 2002-03: Yes (Year 3 delay)
- 2003-04: Yes

Did the School Offer Choice and Supplemental Services?

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Cleveland Municipal School District
Mary B. Martin Elementary School
Contacts: Lawrence Swoope, Principal
Mary Flahive, Professional Developer
347 students, K-8, urban

School Description
Predominately African American (96%) and low income (90%), Mary B. Martin is a small K-8 school serving just 347 students in the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. Some grades have only one classroom. The school also has a significant population of students with disabilities (25.2%), several of whom take alternative assessments rather than the state exam.

Key Findings
- Working to get off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement helped pull staff together, according to the principal and school staff. Teachers opened their doors and began working across grade levels to align curriculum and make school policies, such as discipline procedures, consistent throughout the school. Increased professional development caused teachers to realize that achievement wasn’t just the responsibility of teachers who taught grades that were tested, but of the entire staff.

- School choice was not popular with parents. No student transferred using this NCLB option. Staff speculated that for some parents, transferring might have been too much of an effort, while others may have wanted to stay at Mary B. Martin to take advantage of the new tutoring options.

- Tutoring helped to raise student academic achievement and provide funding to keep the building open later in the afternoon, giving teachers more time for professional development. Mary B. Martin did well enough in 2004 testing to exit school improvement, which means that it will no longer have funds to offer after-school tutoring or keep the building open. Staff members fear that academic achievement may suffer.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Staff at Mary B. Martin said that NCLB mandates, particularly extra tutoring, helped improve student achievement. In addition, with leadership from a new principal, teachers responded to the challenges of NCLB by working more collaboratively. This collaboration accounts for better instruction and better achievement on the part of students, staff said.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
In 2001-02, the first year of NCLB mandates, only 10% of Mary B. Martin sixth graders passed state math tests and only 4% passed in reading. Fourth graders did better: 69% passed in math and 50% in reading. A series of previous low scores in both grades placed Mary B. Martin in the second year of school improvement for school year 2002-03.

While not mandated by NCLB, the district hired a new principal for the 2002-03 school year. When he arrived at Mary B. Martin, Swoope recollected, “They had all the
pieces, but there were some union issues going on. There were some staff issues. Sometimes [student] discipline did get in the way.”

Swoope said he was able to resolve union and staff issues with an open and cooperative style of leadership. In addition, he addressed discipline problems at the school by setting a new tone of respect and high expectations. “Kids don’t scare me,” he explained. “I don’t care if they’re two feet tall or ten feet tall. I give respect and I demand respect.” Although staff members now confirm that the climate change at the school has been positive, Swoope admitted, “My first year was really rough.”

In 2002-03, test scores rose across the board, and Mary B. Martin met its AYP goals for the first time. While test scores then dipped across the board based on 2004 testing, these fluctuations were not dramatic. Again, the school met its AYP goals and was removed from the state’s list of schools in need of improvement.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
As at most schools, at Mary B. Martin test scores for students with disabilities lag behind those of their peers. “Initially, it hurt,” said Swoope, recollecting his reaction to special education test scores in 2003; however, he added that while special education students often still struggle, their scores have been improving at Mary B. Martin. In addition, the number of students identified for special education is declining at the school. These declines may be due in part to a districtwide move toward neighborhood schools for special education students as well as fewer students newly identified by staff. Instead of centralizing students with disabilities in schools like Mary B. Martin, the district is gradually returning these students to their neighborhood schools.

While the majority of students with disabilities take state tests at Mary B. Martin, a few use alternative assessments. In Ohio these portfolio assessments were introduced in the 2003-04 school year. Swoope said his teachers didn’t have trouble with compiling the portfolios last year and were satisfied with the results. Disagreements between state evaluators and local staff in many districts about what level of performance should be considered a passing score, however, has led the state to rethink the portfolios. This fall, Mary B. Martin teachers are participating in retraining on compiling portfolios.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS
Before Mary B. Martin started meeting AYP goals, Swoope said many good things were going on, but efforts weren’t coordinated. “I don’t think anything we’re doing now is earth-shaking,” Swoope noted, but added that now staff is communicating and working together for the benefit of students. This communication, he said, was supported and modeled by the central office of the district. Instead of being blamed for lack of student progress, he said, “We got great support from the district. Barbara Byrd-Bennett [the CEO] does an excellent job of saying ‘Cleveland is about educating kids.’” Swoope explained that this helped his staff learn to put aside their personal differences and put children first.

In making plans for improvement, staff found that the school had strengths that weren’t being realized. For example, “We had a computer lab, and it was just computers in a room; they weren’t plugged in and they weren’t connected [to the Internet],” said Mary Flahive, a former teacher who provides professional development for the school. In addition, teachers began to share lessons and teaching strategies that worked well in their own classrooms, thereby increasing the number of successful lessons and strategies each teachers had to choose from.

This year, in 2004-05, the school faces new challenges. With a smaller staff, larger classes, and shorter hours for keeping the building open, teachers will be pressed to find
time to collaborate. Also, due to staff cuts there is no longer a music teacher, guidance
counselor, or teacher to run the new computer lab. “I’m really scared this year because
of the amount of services we’ve lost,” Flahive said.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Prior to 2001-02, teachers at Mary B. Martin worked mostly independently because
there was only one or two teachers per grade. Now teachers have aligned the curricu-


ulum across grade levels. This was accomplished through new team meetings of grade
level clusters. Teachers in kindergarten through third grade meet together weekly, as do
teachers in fourth through sixth grades, and seventh and eighth grades. “We’re all rowing
in the same direction,” Swoope noted.

Teachers now also share instructional techniques, Swoope said. When he came to
Mary B. Martin, he said teachers commonly said to him, “I’m going to close my door
and teach.” His response was, “If you’re doing something great with your door closed,
why don’t you open it and help someone else.” Under the pressure of NCLB he said
teachers did open their doors.

“This is now a great building for teaming,” confirmed Flahive, the school’s math
professional developer. A 20-year classroom veteran, Flahive now provides professional
development, teaches model lessons, and assists teachers with instruction.

As a result of collaboration, the school began to teach more to the state standards.
In 2003-04 in math the school also adopted short cycle assessments. Developed by a
district committee on which Flahive served, these assessments provide 9 to 10 test items
for each math standard. Items include at least one multiple choice, one short answer and
one extended response. Flahive said that these assessments have been helpful in guiding
math instruction at the school and noted that similar short cycle assessments in English
language arts are currently being developed by the district.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
The NCLB mandate to use 10% of Title I funding for professional development at
schools in need of improvement increased professional development for teachers at Mary
B. Martin. Under NCLB, teachers received professional development twice a month for
one to two hours after school. At one monthly session, teachers brought student work
and/or assessments, analyzed errors, and planned instruction based on their analyses.
The other monthly session focused on math and was lead by Flahive. In both meetings,
teachers shared ideas, lesson plans, and teaching strategies freely, Flahive said.

This year, in 2004-05, Title I funds are no longer designated for professional develop-
ment. In addition, the school is not open as long in the afternoon because the extra
funding for supplemental services is no longer available. While Flahive said she was
planning some professional development for 2004-05, she said, “This year we won’t be
able to have as much.” Fortunately, Flahive noted, the teachers who got the professional
development last year are still at the school, although Mary B. Martin lost seven posi-
tions to district staff reductions.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
No students transferred using the school choice option under NCLB. Staff speculated
that for some parents, transferring might have been too much of an effort, while others
may have wanted to stay at Mary B. Martin to take advantage of the new tutoring op-
tions under supplemental education services.
SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
Starting in 2002-03, Mary B. Martin offered supplemental education services through Sylvan and the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Program (CSTP). By 2003-04, Sylvan served about 75 students and CSTP about 25. Although this represented only about 29% of the total student body, Mary B. Martin staff said that these services were key to helping these students improve academically.

In 2004-05, now that Mary B. Martin is off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement, supplemental services under NCLB will be discontinued. “It’s going to hurt us a little this year,” said Swoope. Other tutoring services, however, may help fill in the gap, he said. Last year, in 2003-04, employees at a local law firm volunteered to tutor a selection of fourth and sixth graders. This year the firm is devoting more hours to tutoring. Each third grader, even those doing well academically, receives 40 minutes of tutoring per week. Teachers prepare folders of individual work for the tutors to do with the students.

Swoope noted that one good thing about his declining enrollment and reduction in staff is that he has a few extra rooms in the school. One of these rooms is now devoted full time to in-school tutoring.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
In 2003-04, with a staff of 33, only about two or three teachers did not meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” Part of the problem, Swoope said, was that the paperwork from the state was slow. Teachers who had turned in information about coursework or professional development did not always find that the information was promptly and accurately recorded. Therefore, at times, it was unclear which teachers actually met the state definition.

For 2004-05, staff has been reduced to 26, and all are highly qualified. Reductions occurred both due to declining enrollment and district layoffs. Swoope said most classes remain at about 22 to 23 students, but one class has reached 28 students. In the past, this class might have been split into two classes, but this year there is no funding for an additional teacher, Swoope said.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Mary B. Martin has four paraprofessionals. Three work in special education classrooms and one is the family liaison. All but one meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” This paraprofessional will take a state test to meet the requirements this year.

Funding and Capacity
While overall funding for Title I in Cleveland was flat for 2004-05, Flahive noted that she seems to have less money for materials. Some of this reduction may be due to slight enrollment declines. In addition, the funding for supplemental services will no longer be available. As a result, the building hours will be shortened. “Instead of being rewarded for doing a good job, you’re almost penalized,” Swoope said.
Data File — Mary B. Martin Elementary School

Location: Cleveland, Ohio
Type: Urban

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total number of students: 347
  - African American: 96.1%
  - White: 3.9%
- Low-income students: 90%
- Students with disabilities: 25.2%
- English language learners: 0%

Teachers
- Total number: 26
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
- Total number: 4
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 75%

Did the School Make AYP?
- 2001-02: No (Year 2 of school improvement status)
- 2002-03: Yes (on hold Year 2)
- 2003-04: Yes

Did the School Offer Choice and Supplemental Services?

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Cleveland Municipal School District

Wade Park Elementary School

Contacts: Janice Moultrie, Principal
Kristie Karlowicz, English Language Arts Professional Developer
Barb Nichols, Third Grade Teacher

470 students, K-5, urban

School Description

Wade Park is a predominately African American (97.3%), economically disadvantaged (85%) school in the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. Despite a history of low academic achievement, the school has recently transformed itself. This year, Wade Park came off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement. Math and reading scores have risen dramatically in the past three years. The principal and teachers attribute student gains to standards-based lessons, data analysis to determine the pace of instruction, and teamwork.

Key Findings

■ After being identified as in need of improvement, Wade Park focused on changing instruction in order to improve achievement. This focus included focusing on state standards, tailoring instruction to students’ needs, and teaching general learning strategies as well as some test taking skills. While not specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, these changes were supported by NCLB’s mandates for professional development, supplemental services, and corrective action.

■ After Wade Park’s first year on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement, about half the teaching staff applied for transfers because they did not want to participate in the required professional development and other changes at the school. While this allowed the principal to hire new teachers committed to the school’s new agenda, the move hurt the school later when district layoffs meant that these newly hired teachers were among the first to go.

■ NCLB’s mandate requiring schools in need of improvement to use 10% of Title I funds for professional development has been key to rising test scores in Wade Park. School officials fear that the loss of this funding now that the school is no longer on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement. In addition, staff turnover due to districtwide layoffs will threaten Wade Park’s capacity to continue to provide high-quality instruction. Due to district budget problems, staff has been cut by more than one-third and class sizes have increased by about 10 students.

■ Tutoring opportunities for students through NCLB’s supplemental education services and extended day provisions were very popular with students. Staff attributed increases in the percentage of students passing state tests in part to this tutoring. While some tutoring opportunities will still be offered at Wade Park, supplemental services, extended day, and Saturday school will no longer be funded.

Overall Impact of NCLB

NCLB appears to have had a very positive impact on Wade Park Elementary. Principal Janice Moultrie attributes Wade Park students’ success to changes made in response to the No Child Left Behind Act, particularly to increases in professional development for
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
At the end of the 2001-02 school year, Wade Park found itself in the fourth year of failing to meet state goals. Even though 2001-02 was the first year of NCLB, Ohio counted schools’ past performances under the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) when determining the number of years schools missed adequate yearly progress goals. Wade Park had a history of low student performance. In fact, based on 2002 testing, only 26.1% of students were proficient in math and only 9.1% in reading. Failure was due to the general school population rather than the scores of subgroups. Because of the demographic makeup of the school, the scores of the general population are practically identical to the scores of the African American and economically disadvantaged students.

Based on 2003 testing, after a year of interventions under NCLB, the school made AYP for the first time. Student achievement has continued to go up. Last year’s testing found 60.5% of students proficient in math and 54.9% in reading, an increase of a more than 30% in both areas compared with 2002.

The past failures of Wade Park were not due to lack of hard work on the part of teachers, said Kristie Karlowicz, who is in her sixth year on the staff of Wade Park. Instead they were due to a lack of direction. “It was sort of like we were shooting from the hip,” Karlowicz explained, noting that she and other teachers tried many reforms briefly, but abandoned them when they didn’t see immediate progress. “There were too many activities,” she concluded. “It was a hodge-podge.”

Moultrie agreed that the school may have lacked direction in the past, although she was reluctant to speculate on past failures because she only joined the school in 2002-03 as part of its plan for corrective action under NCLB. In 2002-03, test scores rose dramatically. She did note, however, that at the beginning of the year in 2002 she found the staff unaccustomed, and in some cases hostile, to principal observation and weekly professional development. She said several teachers filed union complaints against her because of her insistence on observing classrooms, sitting in on teacher team meetings, and requiring teachers to attend professional development workshops.

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS
As a school in the third year of school improvement, Wade Park received a great deal of support from the district and state. For example, both a state administrator and a district regional superintendent provided consultation and professional development for staff. “It helped for teachers to see other people in favor of change, other than just the [school] administration,” said Karlowicz, who served as the school’s English language arts professional developer, a non-teaching position designed to provide professional development, teach model lessons, and generally enhance reading instruction.

The newly appointed principal also rearranged the school day so that teachers had more team planning time and extended reading instruction from 90 to 120 minutes per day. In general, the changes in the school day supported the school’s new instructional strategies, including standards-based lessons, the teaching of learning strategies, and flexible grouping.
Some of the support for these strategies will no longer be available to Wade Park because the school is no longer identified as in need of improvement. Specifically, professional development will be less well funded, and the state administrator will no longer be available because this position focuses only on schools in need of improvement. Wade Park staff said they wished they could still have some extended contact with the state consultant. “After you’ve done well, they shouldn’t just drop you,” Moultrie asserted.

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

After the school was identified as in need of improvement and was assigned a new principal, teachers at Wade Park began to revise their lessons at least weekly. These changes helped them meet both the demands of the state standards and the individual needs of their students.

All lessons were aimed at specific state standards. These standards were stated at the beginning of the lesson so that children knew the overall purpose of their work. In reading, an area in which Wade Park students were particularly weak, students were given an additional schoolwide reading selection in third and fourth grade every day, a schoolwide homework assignment every night, and a schoolwide short cycle assessment every Friday. These assignments were based on specific skills that most students needed to work on, such as identifying cause and effect or summarizing. In each assignment or assessment, the students read a short selection and answered three to four questions, including at least one multiple choice and one written response.

Besides focusing on standards, teachers also taught general learning strategies, which helped students learn how to glean information from texts and graphics as well as how to take tests efficiently. For example, when reading to learn new information, students were taught to state the main idea of each paragraph, highlight supporting details, reread when necessary, and check their understanding by retelling the selection in their own words. In responding to essay questions, students were taught to analyze parts of the question and restate the question to make sure they understood it and were paying attention. Other skills focusing on test-taking included looking back in the text to spell key words and eliminating some answers to narrow choices in multiple choice questions.

While teaching state standards and specific learning strategies were key goals, teachers also focused on modifying instruction to address individual students’ needs. “When our children don’t show progress on weekly tests, they have to be given the opportunity to relearn,” Moultrie explained. Teachers gave weekly tests to determine what students learned. Students with similar learning needs were then grouped together. These groups could change as frequently as once a week and could involve groupings across classrooms. In reading, in addition to classroom teachers, the principal, assistant principal, language arts professional developer, and regional superintendent all taught groups of students, so that there were often only about 10 students per group.

Explaining this frequent assessment and regrouping, Moultrie said, “If students don’t pass, you reteach. And you don’t reteach the same way. The goal is for children to be successful, not to catch them being bad.”

In addition, the principal and assistant principal individually reviewed the October pretest of the state exam with every child in third and fourth grade (the state testing grades). The administrators asked each child questions to determine why the child had made mistakes and whether the child needed to work on the skills involved or whether the child simply filled in the wrong bubble or misunderstood the question. Teachers then used this information to shape instruction for that child.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

When Wade Park was identified as in need of improvement, the school was required to use 10% of its Title I funding on professional development. As a result, teachers had weekly workshops. The sessions were led by a variety of people, including the school’s
regional superintendent, the state coach, the English language arts professional developer, and the principal. In 2003-04, Moultrie said teachers garnered more than 180 hours of professional development.

Teachers said it was important that the professional development was given by people who knew the school well and could provide school-specific suggestions. For example, the regional superintendent noticed that teachers were giving closed book tests in reading, while the state tests focused on a students’ ability to look back at a reading selection to inform their answers. When the regional superintendent gave teachers professional development about looking back to find answers in reading selections, Karlowicz said, “We had a giant light bulb go on over our heads.”

Teachers initially complained about the increases in professional development, Moultrie said, “but when they started seeing the strategies work, they got on board.”

Moultrie’s focus on children and high expectations helped convince teachers to incorporate into their instruction what they had learned in professional development. “It’s not about you. It’s not about me,” she said she would tell teachers. “It’s all about the children. They’re bright, but they won’t be bright if you don’t challenge them. You have to screw in that light bulb to make it shine.”

Teachers who were at the school last year confirm Moultrie’s focus on using professional development to help kids. “The person at the head of the ship is wonderful. She cares about the children,” said third grade teacher Barb Nicholl.

This year, however, the majority of the teachers are new to Wade Park. Not all of them have mastered Wade Park’s standards-based lessons, flexible grouping, and uncompromising high expectations. “They haven’t had the professional development,” explained Moultrie.

With less money this year for professional development, Moultrie now gives up staff meetings for professional development. “You have to be creative,” she explained but added that this solution is inadequate because there’s currently only enough time and money in the union contract for one staff meeting per month and for 12 hours of additional professional development for the year.

Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE

While Wade Park was on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement, only a handful of students transferred to other schools using choice under NCLB. Speculating on the reason few opted to change schools, Moultrie said, “I’m not sure, because when I came we were certainly a struggling school. Maybe they wanted to see what I would do,” she added. “Or maybe it was convenient.” After Moultrie’s first year, dramatic increases in test scores may also have kept students at Wade Park.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In 2002-03, Wade Park offered tutoring both through supplemental education services and through extended day, one of the options for schools in corrective action, which allows for longer school hours. Parents chose Sylvan as their supplemental service provider; however, Sylvan decided not to provide services because they said too few students signed up for the service. Fortunately, she was able to shift these students to the extended day program.

Extended day tutoring was coordinated by the district. Additional after-school tutoring was provided by the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Program, a local nonprofit organization. CSTP paired tutors with students to work at the school in the afternoons. Fifteen Wade Park staff members and parents agreed to tutor. CSTP also provided training for additional tutors who were not licensed to teach, such as parents and teaching assistants.
Extended day and CSTP proved popular with parents, Moultrie said. For 2003–04, all parents who opted for tutoring chose the extended day or Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Program rather than the other supplemental services providers offered. About 51 students participated regularly. In 2003–04, Wade Park also offered a few sessions of school on Saturday. The sessions were taught by the regional superintendent, principal, assistant principal, professional developer, and four teachers. All 105 of Wade Park’s fourth graders attended these sessions.

Tutoring in the 2004–05 school year will continue but on a limited basis due to lack of funding. No supplemental services will be offered. Saturday sessions will not be offered. CSTP will continue to provide tutoring but only for about an hour after school because there is no funding to keep the building open later.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

In the 2002–03 school year, about 15 teachers who were unhappy with the added professional development and collaboration at Wade Park applied for and received transfers to other district schools. As a result, the district was able to fill all these slots with teachers who met the state’s definition of highly qualified. In 2003–04, all but two teachers in the school, the media specialist, and one special education teacher were highly qualified. These teachers are working on their certification and are slated to meet the federal deadline, Moultrie said.

In addition to being able to hire new highly qualified teachers for 2003–04, Moultrie explained that the union and district agreed to let her go outside the district transfer list to make her hires. This special hiring process allowed Moultrie to hire teachers who truly wanted the extra professional development and tutoring opportunities at the school, which NCLB required. “I had a lot of committed teachers,” Moultrie said.

The special hiring arrangement, however, came back to hurt Wade Park. In the 2004–05 school year, budget shortfalls and a delay on placing a school levy on the ballot made it necessary to lay off staff throughout the district. About 950 teachers, or 17% of Cleveland’s 5,700 person teaching force, got pink slips. Wade Park had just hired teachers from outside the district and had a young staff in general. These teachers, therefore, had little seniority and under the union contract were the first to go.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

Wade Park has three Title I paraprofessionals, who assisted with instruction. Of these, none currently meets the state definition of highly qualified. All were hired before the NCLB mandate. One will retire at the end of the year, while the other plans to leave the state, Moultrie said, explaining that she intends to hire paraprofessionals who do meet the state’s definition after this school year.

**Funding and Capacity**

Teachers and the principal at Wade Park agreed that being placed on the state’s list of schools in need of improvement increased capacity, in the form of state attention and professional development, and also increased funding, particularly to provide after-school tutoring and extend the school day. While coming off the state’s list of schools in need of improvement is a cause for celebration, the staff at Wade Park is fearful that reduction in support and funding will hurt student achievement, particularly because the district as a whole faces significant budget problems.
Due to district budget shortfalls and the failure of the most recent school levy, Wade Park’s 2003-04 staff of 41 shrank to 26 in 2004-05. In 2003-04, class sizes ranged from about 20 to 25 students at Wade Park. For 2004-05, classes have about 30 to 35 students. So, while Wade Park implemented NCLB well and increased student achievement, the staff is now dealing with larger classes and less professional development.

Moultrie suggested that providing transitional assistance for schools coming off the state list might help ensure that achievement gains are maintained. Moultrie does, however, see Wade Park’s situation as unique because of staff layoffs. “If we had the same staff, we would be fine,” she noted. Still, she and returning teachers said they are working to bring the new staff up to speed and keep students on target to pass this year’s state tests. “We worked too hard to get here. I’m not going back,” Moultrie said. “If our scores drop, it won’t be because we didn’t try.”

**Data File — Wade Park Elementary School**

**Location:** Cleveland, Ohio  
**Type:** Urban

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**

- Total number of students: 470  
- African American: 97.3%  
- White: 2.7%  
- Low-income students: 85%  
- Students with disabilities: 10.8%

**Teachers**

- Total number: 26  
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 92%

**Paraprofessionals**

- Total number: 3  
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 0%

**Did the School Make AYP?**

- 2001-02: No (Year 3 of school improvement status)  
- 2002-03: Yes (on hold Year 3)  
- 2003-04: Yes

**Did the School Offer Choice and Supplemental Services?**

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Oregon

Tigard-Tualatin School District
Superintendent: Steve Lowder
Contact: Susan Stark Haydon, Director of Community Relations
11,909 students, K-12, suburban

District Description
Located in a suburb of Portland, Oregon, the Tigard-Tualatin school district serves an increasingly diverse population and faces challenges due to state budget difficulties. While the schools’ students are predominately white, the district has a growing number of Hispanic students, many of whom are learning English as a second language. The district’s schools also vary in terms of students’ economic backgrounds. For example, poverty rates at the district’s nine elementary schools range from 8% to 53%.

Key Findings

- While the majority of Tigard-Tualatin’s students consistently meet adequate yearly progress goals, the district’s middle schools and high schools have failed to make AYP, mostly due to the performance of English language learners, students with disabilities, and poor students.

- Because the proportion of low-income students is much higher in several of the district’s elementary schools than in its middle and high schools and because the district has chosen to serve schools regardless of grade level, these elementary schools use all of the district’s Title I funds. Even if the district did target middle and high schools, only one school would qualify because the proportion of low-income students in the other schools in need of improvement is below the districtwide average poverty rate. While this means that the district currently faces no sanctions under NCLB, the district also doesn’t have Title I funds for its schools which have failed to meet NCLB goals.

- New professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals targets those who work with English language learners. The goal is to better prepare teachers to teach subject matter content and English language skills at the same time to improve student achievement.

- District officials say efforts to meet AYP goals are made more difficult by large class sizes, which the district had to adopt to compensate for state budget shortfalls. Title I funds can be used only for students who attend low-income schools, which in the case of Tigard-Tualatin are concentrated at the elementary school level. They cannot be used to reduce class sizes throughout the district.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Because the schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress goals in Tigard-Tualatin are not Title I schools, the district does not face sanctions under NCLB. Still, the disquieting knowledge that some schools are not achieving and the embarrassment of having these school’s names published in the local newspapers helps keep the district motivated to improve, said Susan Stark Haydon, director of communications.
District efforts to improve schools, however, have been constrained by state budget shortfalls, a cap on local property taxes, and an inability to use targeted Title I funds to address pressing issues like overcrowded classrooms. “What would help the most would be adequate funding so we could have reasonable class sizes and enough instructional resources for students,” Stark Haydon said.

While officials at Tigard-Tualatin feel that funding to meet NCLB goals is inadequate, Stark Haydon said they do see the importance of the law: “The value of NCLB is the data. It lets you see whether or not you’re making progress. What gets measured gets done.”

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Based on 2002-03 testing, both of the district’s two high schools and two of its three middle schools failed to meet AYP goals. The primary reason for this failure was the performance of subgroups, Stark Haydon said, particularly English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. Although the performance of these students had improved since the previous year, it was not up to state targets for AYP.

In the 2003-04 testing cycle, these same four schools failed to make AYP for a second year and were identified as in need of improvement. State records show that these schools were identified because the performance of English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students continued to fall below state targets. In three of the four schools, Hispanic students also failed to meet AYP goals. In addition in 2003-04, the district’s third middle school failed to make AYP due to the performance of just one subgroup, students with disabilities.

Only five elementary schools in the district are eligible for Title I funds, and all four schools identified as in need of improvement were middle or high schools. Three of these schools are not eligible because their proportions of low-income students fell below the districtwide average poverty rate. The fourth school is not eligible because the district chose to focus its Title I dollars at the elementary level based on the research that teaching students skills in the early grades is more effective than providing remediation at the middle school level. Because Title I dollars are focused at the elementary level, no school in Tigard-Tualatin was subject to Title I sanctions such as offering school choice or supplemental educational services.

Strategies for Improving Schools

Despite Oregon’s difficulties with school funding over the past two years, Tigard-Tualatin has been investing in both computers and professional development as a means to raise test scores.

In 2003-04, the district provided additional money for all schools to buy computers. One of the main uses for the new computers was administration of the state test, explained Stark Haydon. In Oregon, if a school uses the web-based version of the state test, the school may give the test multiple times during the year, as opposed to just once for the written version of the test. Because each student logs on to the web test using a unique identification number, the test items are never repeated. The test also molds itself to the test-taker’s level of knowledge. If a student gives a correct answer, the next question will be more difficult. If a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier. Only the highest score for each student counts as the final score, and districts are allowed to give the test at any time during the year before the final deadline. Tests for
grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 can be administered up to three times a year, and tests for grades 4, 6, and 7 twice a year. An additional testing option for grades 4, 6, and 7 will be implemented once the test-question bank for those grades is increased.

Using computerized testing has helped Tigard-Tualatin, said Susan Stark Haydon, director of community relations. She explained that district schools used the first test as a pre-test to evaluate student needs. Schools could then use this test information to shape instruction and intervention for students who needed it. While this did not ensure that more Tigard-Tualatin schools made AYP the following year, schools found it very useful in helping individual students, Stark Haydon said. The district has purchased more computers for testing in 2004-05. The district hopes to keep purchasing computers until the ratio of students to computers is 5:1 in all district schools, which will allow for convenient test administration, Stark Haydon said.

Some initial efforts to move to smaller learning communities are underway in the middle and high schools. For example, Tualatin High School piloted a “freshman house” last school year. In this model, part of the freshman class worked with the same team of four teachers throughout the school year. This year, all ninth grade teachers have a common planning time to make it easier for teachers to work together to focus instructional interventions for individual students. At Tigard High School, staff members are piloting a ninth grade math-science “house” where a team of math and science teachers work with the same group of students. “We have some irons in the fire, but we don’t have anything state-of-the art yet,” Stark Haydon explained.

Over the past two years, Tigard-Tualatin has also done additional training with teachers and paraprofessionals who work with English language learners and students with disabilities, as explained below.

**EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

In addition to providing targeted intervention to students who do not pass state pretests and continuing its focus on aligning curriculum to state standards, Tigard-Tualatin will bring some of its successful elementary school efforts to middle and high schools. For example, the district’s “Community of Writers” program will spread from elementary schools to the three middle schools. This program brings published writers into the district to teach teachers how to teach writing, provides a writer-in-residence in each classroom, and gives the school materials to teach writing. The district elementary school test scores in writing have risen and surpassed state averages due in part to this program, Stark Haydon said. This year middle schools will also work with a Literacy Specialist to improve reading instruction. In general, the district will focus more on adolescent literacy, whereas in the past literacy has primarily been the concern of elementary schools, district records show.

To help English language learners meet AYP goals, Tigard-Tualatin is revising its approach so that teachers will teach content and language skills within the same lesson. The population of English language learners in the district is growing and is primarily Spanish-speaking. State testing also shows that English language learners in the district are currently behind in both reading and math. “We’ve done a lot of additional training for teachers and paraprofessionals who work with non-English speakers,” Stark Haydon noted. By using activities that involve both languages at the same time, students maximize their learning time. Some math and science instruction will also be offered in the students’ native languages. The district hopes that this will improve the performance of English language learners across the board, Stark Haydon said.

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT**

Because Tigard-Tualatin’s schools in need of improvement are not Title I schools, they do not have to use 10% of Title I funds for professional development. Currently about $30,000 of the district’s general funds are devoted to training staff at the five schools not
making AYP. Professional development has been targeted to helping teachers and paraprofessionals work with English language learners and training teachers to individualize instruction, district records show. In addition, the district has provided funding for staff to attend conferences on reading, offered training specific to its curricula, and brought in trainers on particular topics, such as best practices for teaching phonics and reaching low-income students.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

For school year 2003-04, state records show that 88.4% of teachers in Tigard-Tualatin met the state’s definition of highly qualified. Most teachers not meeting the definition were in the district’s three middle schools and were teachers who were not licensed in the subject areas they were teaching. Oregon’s K-8 license does not require or record subject area expertise; therefore, middle grade teachers teaching particular subjects may or may not have the subject area background required by NCLB.

To address this issue, the district is working with teachers to go over their coursework and identify classes they have taken in their subject areas that will help meet the requirements of NCLB. Based on this work, Stark Haydon said, “I think next year our percentage will be better.”

Parents were notified when teachers didn’t meet the state’s definition of highly qualified last year. The letter did not result in any complaints from parents, Stark Haydon said, adding that, “I think most of those parents knew that their students’ teachers were good teachers.”

For the 2004-05 school year, the district hired 60 new teachers to replace teachers who either retired or resigned as well as to address increases in student enrollment. As a suburb of Portland, the district has been expanding over the last 25 years. Although enrollment was flat last year, enrollment in 2004-05 was up by about 155 students. Most of the newly hired teachers meet the state’s definition, Stark Haydon said; however, several middle school teachers hired have K-8 state certification and, therefore, still have to prove their subject matter competence in order to meet Oregon’s NCLB definitions.

**PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**

The district’s paraprofessionals are most commonly used to help with small group instruction or with students with disabilities, Stark Haydon said. Of the district’s 152 paraprofessionals, 39 were paid at least in part with Title I funds, district records show. At the beginning of 2003-04, 12 of these 39 did not meet Oregon’s definition of highly qualified.

Using Title I funding the district paid two teachers to develop and train paraprofessionals to pass the district’s own “Rigorous Test of Competence” for paraprofessionals. The test consisted of two elements: a “demonstration of instructional competence through direct observation of work with students” and a “demonstration of basic skills through passing scores on the test of Adult Basic Education.” Paraprofessionals were each allotted $375 to pay for training and testing, or they could take college courses to fulfill the state’s requirements. Unused funds went back to the district and were used to pay for paraprofessionals whose training costs exceeded $375.

By the end of the 2003-04 school year, five paraprofessionals passed the district’s tests, and one fulfilled the state requirement through coursework. District officials said they expected more of their currently employed paraprofessionals to meet state definitions for “highly qualified” this year. By the federal deadline in December 2005, the district will stop employing any current paraprofessionals who do not meet the definition. As of the federal deadline of January 1, 2002, all newly hired paraprofessionals met the state’s definition.
Funding and Capacity

In financing education, Tigard-Tualatin is hindered by a state funding policy that is highly dependent on income and property taxes and includes no state sales tax, Stark Haydon said.

A sluggish economy has resulted in the highest unemployment rate in the nation and a drop in Oregon’s income tax revenue. This loss in tax revenue has produced a statewide budget shortfall for the past three years. In addition, since the early 1990s, state law has capped property taxes for schools at $5 per $1,000 market value. With the cap on property taxes and dependence on income taxes, the responsibility for funding schools moved from local communities to the state legislature. To address the funding disparity among school districts, the legislature developed an “equalization” formula. “Rather than bring all school districts up to the higher funding level, the legislature decreased funding for historically better-funded districts, like Tigard-Tualatin,” Stark Haydon said.

As a result of the state budget shortfall in 2002-03, Tigard-Tualatin lost three days of school. In 2003-04 staff was cut, and class sizes rose by about four students per class. For 2004-05, class sizes remain large, with kindergarten through second grade enrollment capped at 24 students per class, third grade at 26 students per class, and fourth through twelfth grades at 29 students per class. Teachers have difficulty with these large classes, Stark Haydon said. “The more students you have, the harder it is to give individual attention to students who need extra help.”

The district has had a slight increase in Title I funds this year, but these funds fall far short of making up for state budget shortfalls, Stark Haydon said. While the district’s proportion of low-income students remained stable this year, the district received more Title I funding overall, due to increases in the state’s Title I allocation. Despite this slight increase districtwide, one district school no longer qualified for Title I funds in 2004-05, because its percentage of low-income students decreased. Previously, this school had been just on the edge of qualifying, Stark Haydon said. With NCLB, Stark Haydon noted, “Expectations are up, but the resources haven’t been there.”

Data File — Tigard-Tualatin School District

**District name:** Tigard-Tualatin  
**Location:** Tigard, Oregon  
**Type:** Suburban

**Number of Schools**
- Total: 15
  - Elementary: 9
  - Middle/junior high: 3
  - High schools: 2
  - Other: 1

**Number of Title I Schools:** 6
**Student Enrollment and Demographics**

Total number of students: 11,909  
White: 75.0%  
Hispanic: 13.3%  
Asian: 4.3%  
African American: 3.0%  
American Indian: 2.3%  

Low-income students: 24.1%  
English language learners: 13.2%  
Students with disabilities: 9.6%

**Teachers**

Total number: 628  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 88.4%

**Paraprofessionals**

Total number: 152 (39 Title I)  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 84.6%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**

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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES Based on 2003-04 testing:**

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South Carolina

Berkeley County School District
Superintendent: Dr. J. Chester Floyd
Contact: Sheldon Etheridge, Executive Director, Federal Programs
27,106 students, K-12, rural and urban

District Description
Berkeley County is a large school district that covers an area of 1,229 square miles. Every day 17,000 students are transported to school by bus. The district is in the southern part of the state and includes the Charleston Navy Base. The 36 schools are diverse in size, cultures, and family income, and growth in student enrollments is causing overcrowding in the district. A recent bond resulted in the opening of a new middle school in 2004-05, and more schools are scheduled to be renovated or built in coming years.

Key Findings
- With 26 schools in improvement status in 2004-05, the Berkeley County School District provides its own program of after-school instruction and other services for students who score below the basic level. The district has also changed its reading curriculum as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, adopting a balanced literacy program to replace the strong phonics approach used after the district abandoned the whole language strategy several years ago.
- Berkeley County’s efforts in professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals over the past two years have allowed the district to meet the highly qualified requirements for almost all of the employees.
- A relatively small share of eligible students, 170 of 18,000, has taken advantage of NCLB choice in Berkeley County, a situation that district officials attribute to parents’ reluctance to have their children bused for a longer time and their desire to keep their children in their own neighborhoods.
- Participation in supplemental education services has also been low. Most of the approved providers offered Internet tutoring, but many families did not have home computers. Arranging for students to participate in Internet tutoring at their schools created logistical problems for the district, which had to arrange for buildings to be open and students to be supervised.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Berkeley County administrators and teachers have taken a proactive approach to meeting No Child Left Behind requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals, and they believe they have reached their goals in this area. District efforts are now taking place to bring all students to the expected levels of proficiency. Most of the schools that are in school improvement have been designated as such because one or more subgroups fell slightly short of making adequate yearly progress. A districtwide accountability effort has been put into place to meet AYP requirements for all students, and the importance of reaching that goal is recognized throughout the district, according to Sheldon Etheridge, director of federal programs. Etheridge noted that this is a challenge because
the district’s percentage of low-income students averages 52%, with ranges in individual schools from 14% to 99%. All but 5 of the district’s 34 schools receive Title I funds, and all of these are schoolwide project schools.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

Achievement and Adequate Yearly Progress

The adequate yearly progress requirements in South Carolina schools include an extensive list of 641 objectives that schools must meet. Berkeley County schools met 587 of them. For most of the schools that did not make AYP, it was the students with disabilities subgroup that did not reach the proficiency targets. Ten schools did not reach a high enough proficiency level in mathematics, and in some schools, the low-income subgroup did not score high enough. In two schools, the African American subgroup did not make AYP, and in one school the Hispanic subgroup fell short.

In 2003-04, the final determination of AYP for Berkeley County was delayed by the state, and the district was notified too late for some schools to make choice transfers. The state and district agreed to move those schools into their second year of improvement in 2004-05 and offer both choice and SES at the same time, which they are now doing. The number of schools in school improvement is 25. Twenty-two schools are offering choice, and three offer both choice and SES. One school that is now in its third year of school improvement has moved into corrective action.

At the same time, district officials point to indications of strong student performance in the Berkeley schools, including large numbers of students who excel in programs such as Junior Scholar and the continual improvement of SAT scores for college-bound seniors.

Testing Issues

South Carolina tests all students in grades 3-8 for English/language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics. Science and social studies were added to the testing list in 2004, but the scores were not counted for AYP that year. A high school exit exam has been in place in South Carolina for many years. The exam originally tested students’ acquisition of basic skills, but changes have been made to make the test more rigorous and closely connected to the state standards. Most students pass the test, but they may take them more than once, and until the exit exam is passed, the student cannot graduate from high school.

The configurations of many Berkeley County elementary schools were changed in 2004-05, but it is unclear how this will affect the AYP of individual schools in 2005 and beyond. Some of these changes were made because of growth in enrollment and others because of building renovations. One school was closed, a new school was opened, and changes were made in grade levels for two of the 20 elementary schools. The district had 20 elementary schools last year, and now there are two K-2 schools, two K-3, three K-4, seven K-5, one K-6, one K-8, three 3-5, and one 4-5. Many students in grade 4 this year are in schools with different grade level arrangements than they had in grade 3. Even more changes may be made next year because of growth and facility changes.

Testing Issues for English Language Learners

Only 2% of Berkeley County students are English language learners, but these 527 students are not equally distributed among the district schools. The minimum size for the subgroup to count for AYP is 50. Overall, the performance of ELL students is good. This is partly because students are allowed to stay in the group until they reach Level 4 on a test of English proficiency.
TEST PARTICIPATION ISSUES
Some Berkeley County high schools did not make AYP in part because their test participation was too low. Part of the problem resulted from differences in terminology used to describe students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 who are referred to as year 1, 2, 3, and 4 of high school. As Etheridge stated, “A student who is year 3 is not necessarily in grade 11. The student may have only enough course credits to be considered in grade 9 or 10.”

Strategies for Improving Schools

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS
One of the ways that Berkeley County district staff provides support for schools that do not make AYP is to review the funding patterns at the school and analyze which programs or services are improving student achievement. This process is led by a district staff member who meets with the principal and a school team. According to Etheridge, all funding sources are closely examined to determine their effectiveness. Funds are re-distributed according to where they will be best used to improve student achievement.

After-school programs were found to have a positive impact on student learning at most schools, especially for students who were below the basic level of performance in English and/or math. These students at Title I schools can receive additional instruction through after-school programs, including the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Students can participate in tutoring and academic enrichment activities that help them meet state standards. Other youth activities, such as drug and violence prevention programs, computer education, art and music programs, recreational activities, and character education, are also available after school.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Berkeley County made a major change in reading curriculum and teaching strategies for the 2004-05 school year by implementing a new program that provides a balanced approach to literacy. In the past the district used a whole language model for reading instruction, but about five years ago it shifted to a strong and intensive phonics-based program because it felt the whole language program was not getting results. The phonetic approach showed great gains, but student performance appeared to reach a plateau last year. To incorporate the best of both programs, district staff members developed what they call a balanced literacy program. Several years ago, all teachers from kindergarten through grade 8 participated in a two-day, in-depth training session on the new program, and each teacher received supplementary reading books for the classroom.

Berkeley County students have one of the state’s highest rates of access to current technology, with over 12,000 internet-capable classroom computers, according to district staff.

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS IN CORRECTIVE ACTION OR RestrUCTURING
The one school in corrective action, an elementary school with grades K-5, has undergone administrative changes including a new principal. This school made AYP in 2004, and if it does so again in 2005, it will no longer be in school improvement or corrective action. The district initiated and participated in a review of all the resources available to this school and how they were used to assist students who were not achieving as they should. This process revealed a number of practices that were not yielding the intended results. Consequently, counseling services and a teacher training program were discontinued and the funds redirected to hiring more teachers to lower class size.
SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
The percentage of students with disabilities in Berkeley County increased from 13% in 2003-04 to 14% in 2004-05, an increase of 200 students. This increase is a concern, according to Etheridge, because for most schools that did not make AYP, it was the performance of students with disabilities that fell short.

Students with disabilities are tested at grade level, except for those with severe cognitive disabilities, who are tested with alternative assessments.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
An analysis of assessment results for English language learners showed that their performance is often higher than that of other students in the district. Because nearly 50 languages are spoken among the 527 ELL students, the district uses English immersion programs that appear to be helping students rapidly acquire English. The main primary languages of the students are Spanish, Vietnamese, and several Pacific Islander languages.

The English language learner population in Berkeley is continuously changing as families move and as new immigrants are employed in the naval shipyard. A ship repair crew may be brought in from China, for example, and overnight 25 children who speak no English are enrolled in the schools. The children may stay there for six months or two years. Although it is often difficult to measure the progress of these students, they are still part of the school’s ELL subgroup when they are enrolled.

A variety of programs address the needs of English language learners, including in-class intervention to improve and accelerate language development, in-class interpreters, homework assistance, Spanish parenting programs and the provision of translated information to parents.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Berkeley County’s program of professional development is extensive and has been in operation for several years to meet the training needs of both teachers and paraprofessionals. “We have caught the interest of school districts across the nation,” said Etheridge, “and we frequently get requests from people who have questions and those who want to borrow our ideas. We are always happy to oblige.” The district’s TASSEL program (Teacher Advancement for Student Success Through Enhanced Learning) was created to assist seven Title I schools that had difficulty retaining teachers. Turnover rates at some schools were as high as 72%, and 40% of the teachers had less than five years of classroom experience. The goal of the program is to improve the professionalism of instructional staff by helping them obtain an advanced degree in an educational field from an accredited university or college. The intent is to retain the teachers at hard-to-fill schools and provide higher quality instruction for students in high-poverty schools.

Under the TASSEL program, a teacher must agree to stay at a Title I school in the district for at least six years after entering the program. Support for the enrolled teachers includes tuition costs of up to $200 per graduate hour, a mileage allowance of $150, and up to $100 per course for texts and supplies related to course requirements.

A second part was added to the training later— an incentive for National Board Certified teachers to teach at Title I schools. Each teacher who obtains National Board Certification in Berkeley County receives a $5,000 incentive per contract year.

More than 20 graduate-level courses are offered to Berkeley County teachers during a school year, and numerous workshops and other staff development activities are also available.
Choice and Supplemental Services

NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE
At the four schools required to offer choice in 2003-04, only 112 of the 3,200 eligible students transferred to other schools. Bussing costs were kept at a minimum due to the well-designed transportation plans, but the total cost was still $20,000, or just under $200 per student.

Participation in choice was considerably less than the district had expected, Etheridge said, citing two reasons for the low numbers. First, he noted, parents simply did not want to send their children out of their neighborhoods. Second, often going to a higher performing school meant a longer bus ride for children who lived in rural areas. “Parents felt that their children already spent many hours per week riding buses to and from school,” said Etheridge.

In 2004-05, the number of students opting to change is not much different; although more than 10,000 students from 12 schools are eligible for choice, only 170 students are attending another school.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES
One school in Berkeley County was required to offer SES in 2003-04, and parents chose from the nine outside providers identified by the state. Most were out-of-state providers who offered Internet instruction and tutoring. The problem, however, was that families did not have computers at home. When providers had to use the school computers to deliver services, this meant that the district had to arrange for facility use and student supervision during the times of computer use. Although 480 students from the one school were eligible for SES in 2003-04, none took part in the supplemental educational programs.

In 2004-05, the supplemental services component is somewhat larger for Berkeley County, with three schools offering these services to students. Letters informing parents of the types of services available for their children were sent to 2,148 families, and information was also provided that described which students could participate—those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The families were invited to attend an informational meeting to learn more about the services and select the provider that would be best for their children. Of the nearly 2,000 students eligible for SES in 2004-05, only 14 had requested information about participating as of mid-December.

Although Berkeley County Public Schools was approved as a provider by the state of South Carolina, the district will not be able to provide services because it has been identified as a district in need of improvement.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Of the 1,604 Berkeley County teachers, 91% have met all the NCLB requirements to be highly qualified in their teaching assignments. Of those who did not, 115 are having their status evaluated through the South Carolina HOUSE. The remaining 33 are enrolled in the district’s TASSEL program. Etheridge expects this combination of efforts to move all teachers to the highly qualified list in the coming months.

The two main groups that will need additional attention are special education teachers and middle school teachers, especially those who teach more than one content area.
PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT

The TASSEL program provides professional development for paraprofessionals, but most do not need further training to stay in their positions. A total of 164 of the 297 paraprofessionals already have four-year college degrees. Starting salaries for paraprofessionals are not high, approximately $12,000. Although some move on to become teachers, many are content to stay in support positions. Bilingual support staff members for English language learners are part of the paraprofessional support team.

The ParaPro test was administered to all paraprofessionals who needed to meet the NCLB requirements, and 47 passed the test prior to the start of the 2004-05 school year. Another 28 paraprofessionals met the requirement to have 60 hours of college credit, the equivalent of two years of college. The remaining 58 (19%) are able to take adult education remedial or refresher classes and can retake the ParaPro test until they pass it. They are reimbursed by the district for the cost of taking the test any number of times.

Funding and Capacity

Even though poverty has increased in Berkeley County, the Title I allocation for the district in 2004-05 was 3% less than the previous year. The district receives 21st Century Community Learning Center funds for after-school programs at all six middle schools, but this is the last year of funding from that grant, and it is highly unlikely that district or Title I funds will be able to cover the cost of those programs. To deal with the decreases in Title I funds each year, the district has eliminated some instructional services in anticipation of having to use Title I funds for choice-related transportation and outside providers of supplemental education services. These costs were not as great as anticipated last year because most parents chose to keep their children where they were; and the pattern is similar for 2004-05. With three schools offering SES, however, at a designated amount of $1,347 per student, this will impact the Title I budget.

According to Sheldon Etheridge, in the future, some schools may no longer receive Title I funds, even though half their students are from low-income families. To date, the district has been able to serve all eligible schools (those above 40%), but that will not continue with lower federal allocations. “This is unfortunate,” said Etheridge, “but if we don’t have the money, that is what we will have to do.”
Data File — Berkeley County School District

**Location:** South central South Carolina  
**Type:** Urban and rural

**Number of Schools:**  
Total: 36  
Elementary: 16 (various combinations)  
Intermediate: 3  
Elementary-middle: 1  
Middle/junior high: 9  
High schools: 6 (9-12)  
Other: 1 (alternative school)

**Number of Title I Schools:** 27 (all schoolwide projects)

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**  
Total number of students: 27,106  
- White: 58%  
- African American: 35%  
- Hispanic: 4%  
- Other: 3%  
- Low-income students: 52%  
- Students with disabilities: 14%  
- English language learners: 2%

**Teachers**  
Total number: 1,604  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 91%

**Paraprofessionals**  
Total number: 297  
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 81%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

| Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years) | 3 | 22 |
| Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years) | 1 | 2 |
| Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years) | 0 | 1 |
| Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years) | 0 | 0 |

**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**  
Based on 2002-03 testing  
Based on 2003-04 testing

| Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice | 20 | 22 |
| Schools offering SES and choice | 1 | 3 |
Texas

Cuero Independent School District
Superintendent: Henry Lind
Contacts: Henry Lind, Superintendent
            Debra Baros, Assistant Superintendent, Community Relations and Development
            James Rabe, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction
            Michelle Frank, Principal, John C. French Elementary School
            Pam Longbotham, Principal, Hunt Elementary School
            Cheri Hart, Principal, Cuero Junior High School
            Wes Wyatt, Principal, Cuero High School

2,006 students, preK-12, rural

District Description

Cuero Independent School District in Dewitt County serves the small city of Cuero and its surrounding rural area in the north central part of Texas. The town is located on the Guadalupe River, which serves as an everyday reminder of the 1998 flood that devastated Cuero. The district has opened a new high school academic building this year. A new superintendent joined Cuero in July 2004, and as a result of his school reorganization, three of the four schools now have new principals—all drawn from within the district.

Key Findings

- The Cuero Independent School District continues to be ranked as a high-performing school district in the state of Texas. There is little or no achievement gap at the elementary level, even though the school population includes 58% low-income students and significant percentages of Hispanic and African American students. The achievement gap does persist at the high school level, but the district is taking steps to improve achievement at both the middle and high school levels, with a particular focus on low-achieving groups in all subjects.

- To raise student achievement, Cuero’s middle school has implemented special courses for students having difficulty mastering reading and math skills. In addition, an after-school tutoring bus visits neighborhoods regularly to provide students with homework help and educational materials. To keep at-risk students in school, the district is working closely with community agencies to provide a range of services, and also offers community education programs for students that emphasize technology and business partnerships.

- A decision was made in Cuero to have the same expectations for all paraprofessionals whether they worked at Title I schools or non-Title I schools. Training was provided to help them pass the assessment required to demonstrate they were highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act. In two years, all 63 paraprofessionals either have passed the test or now have the required two years of college credit.

- The NCLB requirement to test the vast majority of students with disabilities with assessments geared to grade-level standards is a concern in Cuero. The state has allowed the district to test these students based on their needs, as laid out in the student’s individual education plan, which for some students does not involve grade-
level testing. In addition, Cuero is a provider of special educational services for a region that extends beyond the district. Consequently, some Cuero schools enroll enough students with disabilities to meet the state’s minimum subgroup size requirements for accountability purposes. This could affect the school improvement status of the district.

**Overall Impact of NCLB**

The overall impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on Cuero has been positive because Cuero students achieve at high levels compared with other students in the state and elsewhere. There is strong community support for student achievement, and all of the schools set academic performance as their major goal, according to the new superintendent, Dr. Henry Lind. “The challenges of NCLB are many,” he explained, “and I have made a commitment to continue the strong academic progress by setting even higher expectations.” In 2004-05, however, there are concerns within the district about the requirements for testing students with disabilities.

**Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress**

**ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS**

In 2003, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) replaced the previous test known as the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The new test is more rigorous and better aligned with state standards, according to Cuero district officials. TAKS currently tests all students in grades 3 through 11 in reading, writing, math, social studies, and science.

Students in grade 3 must pass the TAKS to be promoted to grade 4, but they have three chances to pass and receive extra help when they do not pass. In 2005, students in grade 5 will have to pass TAKS in reading to be promoted to grade 6. In 2008, the same will be true for students in grade 8 to be promoted to the grade 9. The graduating class of 2004 was the first group that had to pass the exit TAKS to graduate from high school. No seniors in Cuero were prevented from graduation due to not passing the test.

Elementary and junior high students in Cuero consistently surpassed state averages on the TAAS and did so again in 2004 on the TAKS. Most impressive for the district is the absence of an achievement gap among subgroups of students at the elementary level—passing rates tend to be very close. For example, on the third grade reading test, 91% of the Hispanic and 99% of the African American students reached proficiency, compared with 95% of the white students. On the fourth grade math test, the percentages reaching proficiency ranged from 94% for Hispanic students to 99% for African American students. The virtually non-existent achievement gap among racial subgroups is the result of the careful attention paid to continual academic achievement of every student beginning in preschool, according to Debra Baros, the assistant superintendent of the district. “This has taken on an even greater importance with NCLB,” she said, “and we need to make sure that this continues through junior high and into the high school.”

The high school scores, though not as high as those at the elementary level, continue to be higher than state averages. In grade 10 math, for example, 73% of Cuero students scored at proficient levels, compared with a state average of 64%. In grade 9 reading, 89% of Cuero students reached proficiency, compared with a state average of 85%.

At the high school, however, racial-ethnic achievement gaps do exist in the performance of Cuero students. In grade 9 math, for example, 52% of the Hispanic students scored at the proficient level compared with 77% of the white students, and in grade 10 math, 40% of African American students scored at proficient levels, compared with 84%
of white students. Baros suggested that the gaps are greater in high school because the curriculum and many interventions now in place at the elementary level were not available when the current group of high school students was in elementary school.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
In the 2003 test administration, Cuero students with disabilities exceeded state average achievement: 60% of the Cuero students in this subgroup passed the English/language arts test, compared with a state average of 47% for this subgroup. In math, the percentages were 46% passing for Cuero versus a state average of 33%. Alternative assessments were used in 2004 for certain students with disabilities in grades 3–10. The data was disaggregated and adjustments made in instruction and teaching strategies to help these students achieve and meet grade-level expectations.

However, according to Debra Baros, the NCLB requirement to test the vast majority of students with disabilities using tests geared to grade-level standards is of great concern in Cuero, because students have been tested at their identified appropriate level according to standards set by the state. “At most,” she said, “only 5% of our identified special education students will ever meet the target of testing on grade level.”

Effects of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

CHANGES ACROSS THE DISTRICT
Cuero schools demonstrate strong levels of academic performance levels, but to improve this record, the new superintendent has made changes at all schools, according to district staff. “The purpose of the restructured management and changes in site leadership was to better align the elementary curriculum and instructional program from pre–kindergarten through grade 8,” said Debra Baros. “We also needed to place a greater emphasis on learning in all curricular areas at the junior high school.”

The district targeted student discipline at the middle school as an area for improvement and modified the instructional program for grades 6, 7, and 8 to make sure that academic and other needs were appropriately addressed. The elementary, middle, and high school principals work together as a team, and all have plans in place to bring about even higher levels of academic achievement.

The dropout rate in the Cuero district is somewhat of a concern, even though it is a low 2.9%. Counselors at each school site work with students and parents to help prevent students from dropping out, addressing problems when they first arise. Gang activity, violence, and drug problems are almost non-existent, district officials said, and they want to keep it that way. The district has close working relationships with the local family outreach program, juvenile probation, and the local ministerial alliance to work together with at-risk students. Community education programs also help keep students in school by emphasizing technology and business partnerships. The junior high and high schools have specially designed reading and math courses for students who need to master those skills, and an after-school tutoring bus visits neighborhoods regularly to provide students with educational materials and homework help. All secondary students who have not mastered certain portions of the TAKS are required to attend noon tutorial sessions offered daily in grades 9–12.

The Cuero district embarked on a thorough analysis of student performance data, school by school and grade level by grade level. “The success or failure of students is directly related to the instruction that is delivered in classrooms,” said Baros. “We adjusted instruction to meet student needs—that was our goal.” District staff helped principals and teachers to align curriculum and instruction based on assessment results. For example, Cuero teachers analyze student responses on the TAKS, and any questions with
less than 80% correct responses are noted and discussed. Then, teachers develop specific teaching strategies to address the standard that was the focus of the question.

Questions used for planning at each school site include these:

1. What student needs have you identified?
2. How can we address those needs?
3. What have you learned from this process?
4. What do you need from your campus administration to help you?
5. What assistance do you need from the central office?

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES AT JOHN C. FRENCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Michelle Frank is the new principal at John C. French Elementary School, a Title I school that serves children in preschool and kindergarten only. Previously, Frank was an assistant principal at Cuero High School, but she now uses her skills to work with children who are beginning their formal education instead of ending their education. The entire program at French School is aligned to the state standards for the primary grades and is focused on literacy and numeracy to prepare children for learning in first grade. Through this preparatory approach, Cuero staff intends to have all children ready to master reading and math skills and meet the NCLB requirements for academic achievement.

“Our job is to get children ready for learning,” said Frank, “and we want them to be successful students all the way through high school. This is where they get their start, and we want them ready to read when they leave here.”

Head Start is included with the district-funded preschool program, and the district intent is to eventually add Early Head Start to reach more children, since only two-thirds of the children are served now. The ratio in the classrooms is 21:2 or 10.5:1—a teacher and a paraprofessional. Children with disabilities, English language learners, and children whose parents are low-income are assured space in the early learning program. Principal Frank emphasizes the role of parents in helping their children become successful learners, and she hopes that they will continue to stay involved with the educational program. “We make sure that the beginnings of learning for children are strengthened by the parents,” she said, “so we need to keep them connected to the classroom.” Some Cuero parents are teen parents, Frank said, adding, “We encourage them to finish their education at the same time that their children are starting theirs.”

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES AT HUNT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pam Longbotham is the principal of Hunt Elementary School, assigned there in 2004-05. Previously she served as principal of French School, the feeder school to Hunt, so she knows her students who are now in grades 2 through 5 and their families. In a reassignment of Cuero principals for 2004-05, Longbotham replaced Cheri Hart, who moved to Cuero Junior High School. These administrative changes were put into place to assure a continuum of learning from preschool through high school. Reading is one of Longbotham’s commitments, and her goal is to have every student reading fluently and comprehending what is read all through the grades. Benchmarks are in place at all grade levels. They are used every 4-5 weeks to make sure that students are progressing as they should in all aspects of vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension.

Reading is integrated with many components of parent involvement to make sure the link between home and school is strong and secure. Report cards have been changed to better communicate student progress to parents. The school day includes a full 90
minutes of reading instruction every day. “If children can read,” said Longbotham, “they can do whatever they are expected to do in other content areas. Of course we emphasize writing, math, and other content areas, but reading comes first.” The principal does frequent classroom walk-throughs and provides feedback to teachers on what she observes. “Perhaps more probing needs to be done,” she said, “and sometimes it’s just kids talking when they should not be. Some teachers need to use higher order thinking, and maybe we need to provide brain-based training,” she added. “It is so important to model the behavior.”

One big challenge, according to Longbotham, is staying in contact with parents. Many families do not have phones and some do not speak English, so sometimes home visits need to be made by the social worker/counselor. “Family problems interfere with the learning of children and their attendance, so we do what we can to help them,” said Longbotham. Many grandparents and great grandparents are care providers for young children, she noted, adding that “sometimes this helps to create better stability in the family, but at other times it doesn’t if the children are shifted around too much.” A full-scale learning support program in the district encourages parental involvement and provides support for behavior modification, teen parents, and adult education. The Even Start program and a home visitor program are important parts of parent outreach.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Increasing the academic performance of students with disabilities continues to be a challenge in Cuero. The district’s own percentage of students with disabilities has stayed at about 12%, but Cuero takes referrals of disabled students from neighboring districts under a cooperative agreement. This raises the percentage to 15%, or an additional 50 students—making the subgroup large enough to count for NCLB accountability purposes in each school. The students with special needs may require additional instructional time, but they are bused long distances to school, so after- or before-school assistance or tutoring is not possible. Many Cuero students with disabilities benefit from an improvement process that examines their abilities and their rate of achievement and puts in place specialized strategies for them. Students who qualify for this process can take alternative assessments in grades 3-8 and high school.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
Cuero has 29 English language learners districtwide, and they are taught in small English learning groups where they get much individual attention. Software programs in use are Edustar and Rosetta Stone. Title III funds are available to Cuero through a coordinated program that serves several districts with small numbers of ELL students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
Professional development for teachers in Cuero addresses a wide range of topics, such as alignment of report cards with state standards, curricular mapping, brain-based learning, and effective strategies for working with parents. Annual teacher evaluations help to identify the specific training teachers need to improve their knowledge of curriculum and acquire better and more effective ways to instruct students. In past years, Cuero had a mini-master’s program for teachers; the tuition costs for this program were shared among the district, the University of Houston, Victoria, and the teacher. Although the program helped teachers improve their teaching, it was discontinued in 2004 due to lack of state and local funds. Teachers also used to receive small stipends each year that they could use for classes, including those provided by the regional center, but the stipends were also eliminated in 2004. According to Debra Baros, “We have fewer funds this year, but we make every effort to make sure that teachers can attend the training they need. We do it on a case to case basis.”
Choice and Supplemental Services

None of the Cuero schools is in school improvement, so NCLB choice and supplemental services are not an issue. If the elementary school with grades 2-5 that receives Title I funds were to be identified for improvement, there would be no other school in the district that serves those grade levels. Schools in other districts are far away and not likely to accept students from another district. Cuero’s strategy is to keep the district and school efforts aimed on raising student achievement, so its schools do not enter into improvement.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Seven Cuero teachers did not meet the highly qualified requirement of NCLB in 2003-04. Of these, three taught special education, three were at the secondary level, and one was an elementary teacher. These seven teachers all worked on internships and/or certification during the year, and five will receive their certification based on the work they completed. Two teachers continue on emergency certificates in 2004-05—one at the elementary level and one who teaches secondary Spanish.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Only a small number of Cuero paraprofessionals met the NCLB requirements when the law came into effect. The district has 63 paraprofessionals districtwide. Although only the 25 paraprofessionals who work at the elementary Title I schoolwide schools had to meet NCLB requirements, Cuero offered additional training for all paraprofessionals. The district set a goal of providing 100 hours of training for each paraprofessional through a Para Academy during the summers of 2003 and 2004. College credit was not provided; the training was designed to help the paraprofessionals pass the NCLB assessment. All the paraprofessionals are now highly qualified as a result of passing this assessment or because they have an associate’s degree or two years of college credits.

Data File — Cuero Independent School District

Location: North central Texas
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
Total: 4
  Elementary: 2 (one PreK-1, the other grades 2-5)
  Middle/junior high: 1 (6-8)
  High schools: 1 (9-12)

Number of Title I Schools: 2 (elementary)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 2,006
  White: 48%
  Hispanic: 38%
  African American: 14%

  Low-income students: 58%
  Students with disabilities: 12%
  English language learners: 1%
**Teachers**
- Total number: 150
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 97%

**Paraprofessionals**
- Total number: 63 (25 at Title I schoolwide schools)
- Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**

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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**

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Vermont

Marlboro Elementary School
Superintendent: Cheryl Ruth
Contact: Lauren Poster, school board member
70 students, K-8, rural

District Description
Marlboro is located in Windham County in southeast Vermont. The district consists of just one school that serves students in kindergarten through grade 8. It is part of a supervisory union that includes eight other small single-school districts, each with its own school board.

Key Findings
- Marlboro, a one-school district, does not receive federal Title I funds and therefore is not subject to the sanctions of the No Child Left Behind Act. However, the school’s leadership objects strongly to the Act’s testing requirements, which apply to all public schools, even those that don’t receive Title I, and has said the school will refuse to administer the state’s new required assessment unless the principal and her teachers agree that the test is “educationally appropriate.”
- In response, the state has threatened to revoke the licenses of the school principal and superintendent of the supervisory union if the school fails to administer the state test, which is scheduled to be piloted in October 2004 and administered in October 2005.

Overall Impact of NCLB
Marlboro Elementary has not received Title I for several years, and is refusing to implement NCLB on those grounds, as well as philosophical ones. The law has met with bitter resistance in Marlboro, despite the fact that the school appears to remain relatively unaffected by it. In April 2004, the school board passed a resolution stating that NCLB is “inherently flawed” and “fails students and schools.” The resolution notes that the “administrative and testing requirements are time consuming and expensive and do not serve the needs of students.” Further, the resolution states that “the tests are not designed to challenge or engage students and they do not aid in their learning. NCLB is a vehicle to remove control of our children’s education from local communities and school districts and place that control with the federal government.” The resolution goes further, predicting that as a result of AYP, “eventually all schools will find themselves ‘failing.’”

As a result of these concerns, the board resolution proclaims that the Marlboro Elementary School District “will not participate in AYP as determined by the No Child Left Behind Act”; “will not forward information we deem sensitive to the Windham Central Supervisory Union that can be connected in any way to a specific student by name”; “will not administer any tests that the principal does not deem to have useful educational value”; and “will not incur any extra expenses to administer any part of the NCLB Act.”
Testing and Accountability

TESTING ISSUES
Until the 2004-05 school year, Vermont used the New Standards Reference Exam to test students in grades 4, 8, and 10 only. Marlboro Elementary School administered the test in grades 4 and 8. Along with New Hampshire and Rhode Island, Vermont is piloting a new assessment for grades 3 through 8, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), in October 2004 with plans to administer it in October 2005. According to Lauren Poster, a Marlboro school board member, Vermont's Commissioner of Education in September 2004 notified the school and the supervisory union that he would “pull the license” of the school principal and superintendent of the supervisory union if the school refused to participate. Gail Taylor, Vermont's director for standards and assessment, however, said that the commissioner has had “good conversations” with the school and has assured them that the test, which was developed with the help of teachers from across three states, is “instructionally relevant.” He remains, according to Taylor, “optimistic” that the school will comply with the requirement to administer the test. In the meantime, Marlboro Elementary School will continue to use student portfolios for assessment and school-level accountability purposes.

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
Vermont’s method for determining whether schools and districts are demonstrating adequate yearly progress (AYP) is “evolving,” according to Taylor. The issue is that many schools in the state, including Marlboro Elementary, are small and thus do not have more than the 80 students required by the state to count for accountability purposes, and many districts are composed of only one such school.

Starting in 2003-04 and ending in 2004-05, the state made AYP decisions using three methods, depending on the size of the school. Schools such as Marlboro Elementary with 30 to 79 assessed students undergo Small School Review B. Under this review, the state can make a determination that a school has either demonstrated or failed to demonstrate AYP based on one year of data as long as its finding falls within a statistical confidence interval, which gets smaller with fewer numbers of students. If the state’s finding does not fall within the confidence interval, the state combines test score data from previous years until the sample size is large enough.

Beginning in 2005-06, the state will change the way it determines whether a school has demonstrated AYP to account for the change in its assessment system, from one that tests in grades 2, 4, 8, and high school to one that tests in grades 3 through 8 and high school. According to Dr. Taylor, this system is still in the development stages.

The way in which the state holds districts accountable for demonstrating AYP under NCLB is undergoing change as well. Through the 2002-03 school year, the state considered the supervisory union accountable as the district. Beginning in 2003-04, the state shifted its focus from the supervisory union to the town, even if the town includes only one school as in Marlboro, meaning that a school can serve as both the school and district for accountability purposes under NCLB.

The implications for Marlboro Elementary School of the state’s evolving accountability system are not completely clear. Marlboro Elementary School has demonstrated AYP and received a number of awards for its strong student achievement and academic program. The school/district, however, has stated that, even if it chooses to participate in the NECAP, it would not apply Title I sanctions if the school failed to demonstrate AYP. Under federal law, Marlboro has the right to make that choice since the school does not receive Title I. According to Taylor, however, the school/district could be sanctioned by the state under State Laws 60 and 68.

For the most part, the school provides its own support for teachers, although it also purchases services (e.g., some professional development and music and physical educa-
tion teachers and materials) from the supervisory union. The school believes that it already provides an outstanding education.

Poster, the Marlboro school board member, said that no changes have been made to the school’s curriculum in response to NCLB. The school has made some recent curriculum changes for other reasons. Spanish was added to the curriculum beginning in 2003-04. Also, the school has started to provide after-school programs and summer programs, including a homework club, a climbing club, and girls’ track.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

Even though Marlboro does not receive Title I, the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers apply to teachers of core academic subjects in all schools. Neither Poster nor Francie Marbury, school principal, knows the percentage of the school’s 13 teachers who are highly qualified according to the NCLB definition. According to Ms. Marbury, “Teachers have received this information from the state but it has not been sent to administrators.” Consequently, the school has not notified parents of students taught by teachers who are not highly qualified. The school has made no changes to the way it develops or supports its teachers as a result of NCLB. Poster did note that the school has been forced to reduce the number of teachers due to declining school enrollments and resulting cuts in state funding.

Since Marlboro Elementary is not a Title I school, its four paraprofessionals need not be highly qualified as defined by NCLB. Consequently, the school does not systematically track their qualifications or provide assistance to the paraprofessionals to help them meet NCLB requirements.

Data File — Marlboro Elementary School

Location: Vermont
Type: Rural

Number of Schools:
Total: 1 elementary/middle

Number of Title I Schools: 0

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 70
White: 92%
African American: 3%
Hispanic: 3%
Asian: 2%

Low-income students: 30%
Students with disabilities: 13%
English language learners: 6%
Teachers
Total number: 13
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not available

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 4
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: Not available (not a Title I school)

Number of Title I Schools in School Improvement, Restructuring, or Corrective Action: 0

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES: 0
Vermont

Orleans Central Supervisory Union
Superintendent: Dr. Ron Paquette
Contact: Dr. Ron Paquette
1,161 students, K-12, rural

District Description

Orleans Central Supervisory Union (OCSU) is the coordinating body for seven one-school districts in scenic northeastern Vermont, each of which will be held accountable for demonstrating adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act as both a school and a district. The districts/schools, each with its own school board, include Albany (K–8), Barton (K–8), Brownington (K–6), Glover (K–8), Irasburg (K–8), Orleans (K–8), and Lake Region (9–12). The enrollment of 1,161 includes 34 students from a neighboring town who pay tuition to attend an OCSU school.

Key Findings

■ There is a general perception in the Orleans Central Supervisory Union that achieving NCLB’s primary goal—all students proficient—is not feasible.

■ Vermont’s systems of assessment and accountability are changing, leading to uncertainty among the supervisory union and its schools over how they will be held accountable under NCLB.

■ Vermont’s State Laws 60 and 68, which predate NCLB, appear to be driving curricular and instructional change to a greater extent than NCLB.

■ NCLB has led to greater inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms in Orleans and an increased reliance on teachers rather than paraprofessionals to provide instructional services to these students.

Overall Impact of NCLB

The general impression of No Child Left Behind in Orleans Central is that, although the premise of NCLB is good, the actual impact on districts in general and rural ones in particular is burdensome and harmful. On the one hand, local administrators and staff said that NCLB has appropriately focused instruction on Vermont’s grade-level expectations and forced teachers and administrators to address the needs of all students. Moreover, according to one supervisory union administrator, NCLB did not have as big of an impact in OCSU and Vermont as it might in other states because of Vermont Act 60, which went into effect in 1998, and Vermont Act 68, which reauthorized Act 60 in 2003. Although NCLB has required an expansion in state testing, the state laws addressed a broad range of issues—including funding, standards and curriculum alignment, and accountability—that prepared schools and supervisory unions well for NCLB, according to the administrator.

On the other hand, most school and supervisory union administrators and teachers agreed with one elementary school principal who said that “NCLB is a nice goal, but it’s an impossible feat.” Several people interviewed noted that NCLB does not
acknowledge the real challenges of achieving 100% proficiency, especially for special education students, some of whom have disabilities that prevent them from meeting grade-level standards in all subjects. In addition, teachers and principals expressed their concern that “testing is out of control” and that higher performing students are being harmed by NCLB’s emphasis on getting all students to perform proficiently.

Some teachers and administrators interviewed actually go further, suggesting that some of the crafters of NCLB hope to undermine public education or at least that they fail to understand the challenges faced by public schools. One fourth grade teacher said that “they want us to fail.” The high school’s first-year principal, who has also served as a district superintendent and principal in other communities, agreed, suggesting that the law “demonstrates no understanding of how kids learn” and provides insufficient resources.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

TESTING ISSUES

The state of Vermont is currently in the process of changing its assessment system for reading and mathematics, from the New Standards Reference Exam (which tested only in grades 4, 8, and high school) and the Vermont Development Reading Assessment (grade 2 only) to the New England Common Assessment Program or NECAP, which tests in grades 3-8. The NECAP, which is being developed and administered by Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, was scheduled to be pilot tested in the district in October 26–28, 2004 and administered in the fall of 2005. Some district and school people expressed uncertainty about testing, including whether NECAP will include a high school test (the state has not yet made this determination) and whether the supervisory union will continue to use the locally administered Terra Nova test.

The superintendent, principals, and teachers interviewed expressed concern about the amount of testing required by NCLB and the implications for special education students.

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Achievement in the supervisory union is comparable to the state average achievement in fourth grade math and eighth grade language arts. It is a little below the state average in fourth grade language arts and eighth grade math. No schools in OCSU failed to demonstrate adequate yearly progress in 2002-03, and results from testing for 2003-04 were not expected to be released until November 2004. No schools in OCSU have been identified for improvement.

Vermont’s method for determining whether schools and districts are demonstrating AYP is “evolving,” according to Gail Taylor, director for standards and assessment with the Vermont Department of Education. The issue is that many schools in the state are small and do not have more than the 80 students required by the state to count for accountability purposes, and many districts are composed of only one such school.

Starting in 2003-04 and ending in 2004-05, the state is making AYP decisions using three methods, depending on the size of the school. For every school that has 80 or more students, the state is using the standard method of comparing this year’s test results in reading and math with those from last year and determining whether sufficient gains have been made. Under this method, only OCSU’s high school, which has 400 students in grades 9-12, has enough students to be held accountable, and it demonstrated AYP based on 2002-03 test results. No other school in OCSU has enough students to be held accountable under this method, as there are no more than 15 students in any school’s second grade, 24 students in any fourth grade, and 19 students in any eighth grade.
To account for schools with less than 30 students in a tested group, the state uses a method it calls Small School Review A. Under this review, the state can combine the test results from previous years, going back as far as 1999 if necessary, until the scores of 80 students can be averaged. No subgroups are examined under Small School Review A.

A school with 30 to 79 assessed students will undergo Small School Review B. Under this review, the state can make a determination that a school has either demonstrated or failed to demonstrate AYP based on one year of data as long as its finding remains within a statistical confidence interval, which gets smaller with fewer students. If the finding does not fall into the confidence interval, the state follows the Small School Review A procedures.

Beginning in 2005-06, the state will change the way it determines whether a school has demonstrated AYP to account for the change in its assessment system, from one that tests in grades 2, 4, 8, and high school to one that tests in grades 3 through 8 and high school. According to Taylor, this system is still in the development stages, but she noted that the use of longitudinal data under Small School Review A will not be possible since the test will be new and there will be no data from previous years.

The way the state holds districts accountable for demonstrating AYP is undergoing change as well. Through the 2002-03 school year, the state considered the supervisory union accountable as the district. Under NCLB, states are to hold districts accountable for demonstrating adequate yearly progress. Under this framework, OCSU did not demonstrate AYP in 2002-03 due to the performance of special education students in reading and was therefore placed on the state’s watch list for 2003-04. Beginning in 2004-05, however, the state stopped considering the supervisory union as the district and started using the town as the entity held accountable. Many towns in Vermont have only one school, in which case the state does not distinguish between the school and the district. This is the case for all seven towns in OCSU.

The complicated and evolving methods of determining whether a school and district have demonstrated AYP have understandably confused educators in OCSU. It may also be one reason why the district and school administrators believe that NCLB, although appropriate for urban schools, is not relevant for small rural schools. Nonetheless, the superintendent, as well as principals and teachers interviewed, agreed that NCLB has increased the sense of urgency among teachers for raising student achievement. And, although all agreed that this sense of urgency was positive from the standpoint of student achievement, most also agreed that the pressure made schooling less enjoyable, that referrals to special education were increasing, and that high-performing students were not being challenged as much, since teachers were focusing on raising the achievement of low-performing students.

A counselor in one elementary school and teachers in two elementary schools suggested that students were also beginning to feel increased stress.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

OVERALL CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The supervisory union applied for and received a federal Reading First grant to improve reading achievement in the elementary schools. Four of the six schools received the grant, and the supervisory union used Title I funds to purchase the Reading First materials and training for the two schools that did not receive the Reading First grant.

There appeared to be some ambivalence about the Reading First grant. On the one hand, teachers and principals interviewed expressed appreciation for the materials and “excellent” training being provided and the intense focus on reading instruction. On the other hand, some of the educators expressed dismay that they were having to take “three
steps backward” due to the federal program’s emphasis on basic skills and decoding at the expense of literature. They also noted that the reading assessments required were of low quality and not aligned with the district’s grade-level expectations or the state assessment. Teachers and principals also indicated that they were required to spend more time on reading and significantly less time on non-assessed subjects such as science, social studies, music, and art. They attribute this to Reading First, which requires 90 minutes of reading a day, a new math program that requires 90 minutes a day, and the general increase in testing. Moreover, because the Reading First grant was used to purchase a “scripted” program (Houghton-Mifflin) and does not allow for teacher flexibility, at least one elementary school is no longer embedding science and social studies into reading.

Although staff in at least one elementary-middle school expressed concern that social studies will be “pushed out” of the curriculum because it is not tested under NCLB, the federal law does not appear to be having a significant effect on OCSU schools’ curriculum and instruction other than to reinforce the changes spurred by Vermont Act 60 and 68. These laws, according to teachers and principals, have focused curriculum and instruction on Vermont’s Grade Level Expectancies or standards.

The laws, along with a growing understanding by teachers and administrators of the need to use student achievement data to guide instruction and student support services, have changed practices in other ways. For example, the high school, under the leadership of a new principal, began in 2004-05 to use students’ eighth-grade scores from NSRE and their ninth-grade scores from the locally administered Terra Nova test to identify students who are struggling with reading. The high school then administers the Gates McGinnity reading assessment to these students to finalize a list of students who need significant support in reading. The high school uses a range of strategies with these students, including individual and group tutoring during study hall and additional reading classes during foreign language class. The principal said that he expects these strategies to help immensely and that the support for struggling readers will be even better next year, after a year of experience. He also noted that sixth grade teachers and their administrators have spoken to him about implementing a similar program in the middle school.

### CHANGES AFFECTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The superintendent, teachers, and principals interviewed noted some differences in the way special education students are being served in the supervisory union as a result of NCLB. These students comprise 16% of enrollment in the supervisory union and 25% in the high school. First, according to the superintendent, NCLB has encouraged schools to reduce the amount of responsibility that paraprofessionals have for teaching special education students and that teachers have for case management and to increase the amount of teaching, especially for reading, actually led by teachers.

Second, NCLB has resulted in a complete restructuring of the high school’s special education program. Prior to the implementation of NCLB, the high school provided a self-contained special education class for severely disabled students and students with severe behavior problems. Through this class, special education teachers were also able to provide or arrange for social services for their students. As a result of NCLB, special education teachers in the high school are no longer deemed qualified to teach the core academic subjects, so the self-contained class—which was not considered effective even by special education teachers—has been discontinued. Most of the students have been mainstreamed, with in-class and resource-room support from special education teachers as necessary. For the few students who could not be mainstreamed, the supervisory union contracts with a private school for services. The problem is that this school will not accept students with severe behavior problems. As a result, according to a high school special education teacher, one student has dropped out and two students are tutored by a special education teacher at home but do not attend school. Nonetheless,
this teacher believes that the impact of NCLB has been positive for students with disabilities. It requires the school to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of its services for these students and make improvements. She believes that, as a result, all teachers have become more organized, focused, and effective.

Another special education teacher in the high school, however, believes that NCLB provides too little flexibility to teachers of students with disabilities, resulting in inadequate services. The teacher also said that special education teachers require professional development on how to balance NCLB’s requirements with the needs of their students.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

**NCLB SCHOOL CHOICE**
No school was in its first year of school improvement and required to offer choice to its students.

Currently, however, OCSU serves 34 students from a neighboring town who pay tuition to attend one of OCSU’s schools. Moreover, under state law, high schools are required to offer a limited version of school choice. Under this law, OCSU’s high school may allow up to 15 students to choose another school and may accept 15 students from a neighboring district. According to the superintendent, 15 students from the high school did choose to enroll in a neighboring town’s vocational high school. He also indicated that the state of Vermont is moving toward allowing all students to choose the public school they attend, but the implication for OCSU is not clear due to the distance between elementary and middle schools and the presence of only one high school.

**SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES**
No school was in its second year of school improvement and required to offer supplemental education services. Moreover, schools in OCSU and other rural areas, according to the superintendent, face a special challenge in providing services after school due to the high cost of providing transportation to students.

Nonetheless, schools have tried to offer after-school programs for interested students. From 2001-02 until 2003-04, the supervisory union had a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant under NCLB that paid for after-school programs in all schools. The impact of these programs on student achievement is not known, but there was general agreement among teachers, principals, and supervisory union administrators that they helped students improve their grades, stay out of trouble, and enjoy themselves after school.

The schools had to cancel their after-school programs for the 2004-05 school year because the grant ended, but the schools and the supervisory union are applying for other grants to offer services after school. In addition, beginning in 2004-05, three elementary schools began having their Title I paraprofessionals work from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. rather than 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. so they can tutor students after school. As of early fall 2004, it was too soon to determine the impact of this effort.

**Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues**

**TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT**
According to OCSU Superintendent Ron Paquette, tracking the qualifications of veteran teachers has cost the supervisory union “a great deal of money.” Across OCSU, 96.5% of teachers are highly qualified. Despite the high percentage of highly qualified teachers, the supervisory union has trouble recruiting and retaining teachers, according to
Paquette, mostly because of low salaries and the isolation of the communities and schools. In particular, the supervisory union is most concerned about shortages in the areas of math and science at the middle school level and, most urgently, special education.

Most special education teachers in the supervisory union are certified for grades K–12. Although this certification qualifies teachers in grades K–6 under NCLB, the certification is no longer sufficient for teachers in grades 7–12, according to Paquette. One option the supervisory union is exploring is to have special education teachers in middle and high schools team teach with teachers who are highly qualified in the academic subject being taught.

Schools use Title I and Title II funds to reimburse teachers for some of the costs they incur for college courses to help them become highly qualified, according to Paquette. Resources, however, are limited. The high school, for example, receives only $2,036 in federal money to support teachers, and this money must be used to help pay for professional development of all teachers. The professional development planned for the high school teachers is focused on aligning instruction to the state’s grade-level expectations, using test score data to improve instruction in general, and providing support to low-performing students.

Although each school is responsible for organizing its own professional development, the supervisory union helps by contracting out for some support services. It pays on an “as needed” basis for support from the Northeast Kingdom School Development Center, managed by Lyndon State College, and Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, a nonprofit organization. It also pays $3,000 to receive literacy support in grades 3 through 12 from the Northeast Kingdom Staff Development Consortium, which is also managed by Lyndon State College.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
According to Paquette, approximately 55% of the supervisory union’s 75 paraprofessionals have associate degrees and are thus highly qualified under NCLB. The supervisory union is working with the remaining paraprofessionals to develop a portfolio that demonstrates their qualifications by next school year. Paquette expressed concern about those paraprofessionals who are not yet highly qualified, pointing out that there were few other qualified individuals in the rural community to serve as replacements.

The state has neither developed nor adopted a standardized test that, if passed, would make paraprofessionals highly qualified.

Funding and Capacity
Title I funds are primarily used by OCSU schools to reduce class sizes, which is “very helpful” according to Paquette. He noted, however, that the impact of NCLB funds is limited in OCSU because the supervisory union “cannot target limited funds”; each school needs a share of the money and has the authority to spend the money as it wants. For example, OCSU received approximately $605,000 in Title I funds for 2004–05, which is up slightly from 2003–04. OCSU withholds “a negligible amount,” and the largest elementary school receives approximately $67,000, “enough for about two Title I teachers,” according to Paquette. Paquette and the three principals interviewed agreed that the resources provided by NCLB do not offset the requirements the law places on the supervisory union or schools.
Data File — Orleans Central Supervisory Union

Location: Vermont
Type: Rural

**Number of Schools**
Total: 7
K-6: 1
K-8: 5
High schools: 1
**Number of Title I Schools:** 7

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**
Total number of students: 1,161
White: 98%
African American: 1%
Low-income students: 63%
Students with disabilities: 16%

**Teachers**
Total number: 144
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 96.5%

**Paraprofessionals**
Total number: 75
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 55%

**Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring**

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**Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES**

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Virginia

Waynesboro Public Schools
Superintendent: Dr. T. Lowell Lemons
Contacts: Betsy Mierzwa, Coordinator of Federal Programs
India M. Harris, Coordinator of Testing and Program Planning
2,873 students, K-12, small city/rural

District Description

Nestled at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains close to Shenandoah National Park, the small city of Waynesboro (population 20,388) retains a rural feel. As one of Virginia’s independent cities, Waynesboro has its own local government separate from the surrounding county and operates its own school system for children within the city’s 15 square mile area. The six schools of the Waynesboro Public Schools form a system small enough that district and building staff work closely together to analyze test data and revise instruction to target student needs.

Key Findings

■ Virginia’s mature state accountability system drives policies and practices in the Waynesboro Public Schools at least as much as the No Child Left Behind Act does. But the state and federal systems don’t always mesh. For example, some of the state’s own student achievement targets are higher than its AYP targets, but the state system gives schools credit for proficient scores earned by students who retake a state test, while NCLB does not. Waynesboro officials would like to see federal guidelines changed to allow scores from “retakes” to count toward adequate yearly progress, at least at the high school level.

■ The district’s one middle school did not make adequate yearly progress in English for the past two years, but it is not subject to NCLB sanctions because it is not a Title I school. The school nevertheless has an improvement plan that calls for more instructional time in English, better alignment to ensure state curriculum is actually taught, periodic classroom testing to track students’ progress, and professional development on differentiating instruction to meet individual students’ needs.

■ The Waynesboro district as a whole did not make AYP for two years and is in Year 1 of district improvement. To boost overall achievement, district staff, principals, and teachers have been analyzing test data, pinpointing content areas and subgroups with the greatest needs, and setting up staff development attuned to each school’s needs.

Overall Impact of NCLB

When the No Child Left Behind Act took effect in 2002, Virginia school districts were already well accustomed to test-based accountability. Since 1998, the state has had a system of content standards, called the Standards of Learning (SOLs), and aligned tests. A school’s accreditation status is based largely on student performance on SOL tests. The state also has its own set of sanctions for schools and school districts (called “school divisions” in Virginia) that fall short of state accreditation benchmarks. No Child Left Behind added another set of requirements that are less demanding than the state requirements in some ways but more demanding in others.
The state accountability system continues to operate alongside NCLB and to strongly influence policies and practices in the Waynesboro Public Schools—perhaps more so than NCLB. In 2003-04, Virginia’s achievement benchmarks for state accreditation were higher than its targets for federal adequate yearly progress. For a school to be fully accredited by the state, 75% of elementary students had to score at proficient levels in English, 70% had to reach proficiency in math, and varying percentages had to reach proficiency on science and history tests. The AYP targets for the same year were lower—61% proficient in English and 59% proficient in math, and science and history did not count. In 2004-05, the AYP targets will rise to 70% in both subjects but will still be lower than the state accreditation benchmark of 75% in English.

In addition, Virginia high school students must pass several end-of-course exams before they can graduate. Although scores from the English and math exams are used to calculate AYP for high schools, making AYP is a far less urgent concern for students than getting a diploma. So with the higher state targets and the pressure of exit exams, it’s not surprising that Waynesboro teachers and students have been more focused to date on reaching state goals than federal ones.

Unlike the state system, however, NCLB also looks at the achievement of student subgroups, and this is where NCLB has had the greatest effect in Waynesboro. “It’s making us focus on subgroups and not let children fall through the cracks,” said Betsy Mierzwa, coordinator of federal programs, citing this as a positive impact. Another positive effect of NCLB in Mierzwa’s view is the heightened public attention it has brought to education in Waynesboro and elsewhere. “Education is talked about everywhere—you can’t go to the dentist or to a restaurant without people mentioning No Child Left Behind,” she said.

The greatest challenge of NCLB in Waynesboro is meeting rising benchmarks and reaching 100% proficiency, division staff said. Most Waynesboro teachers feel the goals of NCLB are admirable, but how to reach them is “the million dollar question,” according to India Harris, coordinator of testing and program planning. “For a lot of subgroups we’re not close to 70%, and how on earth can we get to 80%?” asked Harris. “We can’t work any harder,” she said, “so we have to work smarter.” But with the pressure of both state and federal accountability, she noted, it’s difficult for teachers to keep a positive attitude.

Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

**STATUS OF AYP FOR SCHOOLS AND THE DISTRICT**

In 2002-03 testing, all four Waynesboro elementary schools, including its two Title I schools, made adequate yearly progress. Two schools—Kate Collins Middle School and Waynesboro High School—did not make AYP. In addition, the entire Waynesboro school division did not make AYP for the black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged subgroups. The subgroup of students with disabilities made AYP at the division level under the federal law’s safe harbor provision, which gives credit for sufficient improvement over the previous year.

The individual schools in Waynesboro do not have any subgroups large enough to count for AYP other than white students (the state minimum subgroup size is 50 students). Currently, elementary students in Virginia are tested in grades 3 and 5. When testing commences in grade 4 in spring 2006 and fourth grade scores are added to those from other grades, some subgroups may be large enough to count. Similarly, when grades 6 and 7 are added to the current grade 8 testing, some subgroups may be large enough to count at the middle school. At the division level, several subgroups are large enough to count: white, black, and Hispanic students; economically disadvantaged students; and students with disabilities.
In 2003–04 testing, all four elementary schools again made AYP. Waynesboro High School also made AYP under the safe harbor provision. According to district staff, the high school improved because staff made a concerted effort to ensure the curriculum was aligned with state standards and was actually being taught. Teachers did frequent classroom testing throughout the year to monitor how well students were learning the specific skills and knowledge likely to be covered by SOL tests.

In 2003–04 testing, Kate Collins Middle School did not make AYP for the second year, missing the targets in English for overall achievement and the economically disadvantaged subgroup. The school also missed the target for student attendance, which Virginia uses as its additional AYP indicator for middle schools. Initially, the state AYP report showed that the middle school had also missed the test participation target, but this was a coding error in the state’s computerized data system that was eventually corrected after several conversations between Waynesboro and state staff.

Kate Collins will not be subject to NCLB school improvement sanctions, however, because it is not a Title I school in 2004–05. For one year, 2003–04, it was a Title I targeted assistance school and used Title I funds to pay part of the salary of a math remediation teacher. But this year, the division—after reviewing its programs and consulting with its parent advisory group—decided to go back to the policy of concentrating Title I funds at the elementary level and used the freed-up funds to hire another elementary reading specialist.

In 2003–04 testing, the Waynesboro school division did not make AYP for the second year based on subgroup performance. This year, 2004–05, it is in Year 1 of district improvement and is developing a division improvement plan. The responsibility for designing and carrying out this plan will rest primarily at the local level. Since state funding and staff are stretched thin, the state is focusing its technical assistance efforts on divisions that have not met state accreditation standards or are in the later stages of NCLB school improvement or corrective action.

TESTING ISSUES
Virginia students currently take SOL tests in grades 3, 5, and 8, as well as SOL end-of-course exams in high school. The end-of-course exams are taken in different grades, depending on when students complete a particular course. In English, the grade 11 test is the one that counts for high school AYP, but in math, scores are counted from students in different grades, depending on when they have taken Algebra I and II or geometry.

A major difference between Virginia’s state accountability system and the federal one is that NCLB does not allow proficient scores from “retakes” of a test to count in AYP determinations. This is a particular concern at the high school level, because state policy allows students to retake end-of-course exams multiple times (using different versions of the same test); this gives them more opportunities to pass. In grade 8 and beyond, the SOL tests are given in both spring and fall. Often students who do not achieve a passing score in the spring—especially on a test required for graduation—participate in remediation during the summer and retake a test in the fall. But for AYP purposes, only the first administration counts.

The state accountability system also gives credit for scores from retakes in elementary school. For example, if a third grader doesn’t pass the SOL math test in the spring, he or she can participate in remediation in the summer or the fall of fourth grade and can retake the third grade test in the spring of fourth grade. If the student passes on the second try, the state counts this score for accreditation purposes. “The state has set it up this way to encourage remediation and reward schools for doing that,” Harris explained.

Waynesboro district officials would like to see federal policy changed to allow students’ scores from retakes to count for AYP, particularly at grades 8 and above where testing occurs in fall and spring. According to Harris, the Virginia Department of Education
had asked the U.S. Department of Education to let the state adopt this policy, but the request was denied. Although this approach would currently be more feasible in the higher grades, where SOL testing occurs twice a year, the state eventually plans to offer fall and spring testing in the lower grades as well, Harris said.

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
When the U.S. Department of Education issued revised regulations on testing students with disabilities in December 2003, Waynesboro staff members were initially confused about whether the 1% cap on out-of-level assessments referred to 1% of special education students or 1% of all students in the district. (Out-of-level assessments are geared to students’ learning level rather than their grade level.) Waynesboro district staff felt strongly that it was necessary and appropriate to give out-of-level assessments to some children with disabilities, Harris stressed. If the limit was 1% of special education students, then the district was prepared to exceed it if necessary. “Ethically, we felt we had to take a hit,” said Harris. But once it became clear that the cap referred to 1% of total enrollment, Waynesboro was within the limit. Harris cautioned, however, that this could change if the district has an increase in its severely disabled population in the future.

In Virginia, the alternative assessment for students with disabilities is a state-developed portfolio assessment composed of students’ work samples. The content is drawn from the Standards of Learning but is tailored to students’ individual needs. Students who take out-of-level versions of this alternative assessment are primarily those with developmental disabilities or mental retardation. At the secondary level, these students are usually easier to identify because they are not working toward a regular diploma. At the elementary level, there’s a “finer line” in determining when students should take an alternative assessment, said Harris. Generally, all Waynesboro elementary students except the severely disabled take the regular SOL test.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
About 3% of Waynesboro students are English language learners. Most are Spanish speakers but some are Chinese or Eastern European immigrants. Several have been in the country for less than a year. All ELL students in Waynesboro take the Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) test soon after they arrive in the district to determine their English proficiency. ELL students also take this test each year to gauge their progress in learning English, said Harris. Some ELL students take the SELP instead of the English SOL test, depending on their individual needs. When an English language learner is not tested, it is usually because the child is a recent arrival to the country.

Strategies for Improving Schools
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES
Although Kate Collins Middle School is not a Title I school this year, it still has an improvement plan. Last year, the school added more time for English instruction, but this didn’t produce higher test scores as the staff had hoped. This year, the Kate Collins improvement plan includes several actions to raise student achievement, especially in English:

■ Align curriculum more closely with standards, particularly in English

■ Increase teaching time for English—which may entail cutting time for electives, according to Betsy Mierzwa, because there is so little unobligated time in the school schedule

■ Emphasize reading and writing across the curriculum, including electives
Encourage teachers and administrators to participate in state-sponsored professional development in differentiating instruction for subgroups and for students with different learning styles.

Like the high school teachers, middle school teachers are also giving frequent classroom tests to see whether students have grasped important content in English and history.

To improve the AYP status of the division as a whole, Waynesboro division staff members are focusing on helping individual schools and subgroups meet achievement targets. “If the schools make it, we make it,” said Mierzwa. As the district coordinator of testing, India Harris has been working with building administrators and teachers to analyze test data and determine which content areas and subgroups to target. Every Waynesboro school has a school improvement plan, and Harris is working with individual schools to set up staff development based on the plans. The division is also arranging to contract with a consultant who has expertise in effective teaching strategies for different subgroups and who would work with the Waynesboro schools for an entire year.

**SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Waynesboro has limited staff capacity to teach English language learners. Classroom teachers generally do not have expertise in teaching students who speak other languages, and many would like to take classes in this area, according to Mierzwa. Last year, the division arranged for all English language learners to go to one building for a half day of intensive ESL instruction, then go to their regular buildings for the rest of the day. But in the middle of the year, the teacher who was teaching this intensive ESL class left, and the district had no replacement, so all schools were served by the one remaining ESL teacher for the rest of the year. This year, three teachers—one more than last year—provide ESL services to all six Waynesboro schools, but meeting the needs of ELLs is still a challenge, especially for newly arrived high school students.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

Professional development in the Waynesboro Public Schools is much more focused as a result of NCLB, said Mierzwa. This year, the division is setting aside 10% of its Title I budget for staff development, which will benefit middle and high school teachers as well as elementary teachers. Schools are basing some professional development decisions on their school improvement plans, and teachers are being trained to use best practices for teaching English and reading and to align instruction with standards and assessments, among other topics.

A few years ago, several Waynesboro elementary teachers were trained to implement guided reading instruction, an approach that entails explicit teaching of comprehension and phonics and close tracking of a child’s sight vocabulary. After the training, the district reading specialist developed benchmarks for reading in each grade, and this year, the division revised its report cards to match the benchmarks. The division plans to develop similar benchmarks in math.

**Choice and Supplemental Services**

No Waynesboro school is required to offer choice or supplemental education services. Supplemental services would be difficult to offer, according to district officials, because there are no outside providers of tutoring services in the Waynesboro area.

At the high school, teachers are assigned to provide students with after-school tutoring and other kinds of help certain afternoons of the week, but turnout has been disappointing, said Mierzwa. Getting students to participate in remediation has been a challenge, even for the mandatory exit exams.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Waynesboro teachers have always been highly qualified, Mierzwa said, because of the district’s good hiring practices. In general, teachers teach only the subjects for which they have content endorsement and certification. In addition, the division has long paid for coursework to help teachers obtain the necessary credentials. Teachers receive stipends of $450 per year for a course needed for certification or recertification; teachers in degree programs receive $200 per course.

The state does not yet have data on the numbers of teachers who are highly qualified according to the NCLB definition. The state has asked school divisions to supply them with these numbers so it can create a database. Waynesboro’s own figures show that 98% of its 378 teachers are highly qualified. The 2% who are not are mostly high school teachers hired to teach math with a provisional certificate or elementary special education teachers.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Waynesboro requires all of its paraprofessionals to be highly qualified, whether or not they are Title I aides. In school year 2003-04, Waynesboro began offering training for paraprofessionals who were not highly qualified according to the NCLB definition, focusing first on the Title I paraprofessionals. A retired teacher provided training to Title I assistants to help prepare them to pass the ParaPro test. This training took place after school twice a week for about six weeks. Eighteen paraprofessionals took the training, and the district gave them release time to take the ParaPro test online. All but one passed it. A second round of training was offered last year to paraprofessionals from non-Title I schools, and this year, another group is being trained. The district pays for the test; if the paraprofessionals pass, they receive a $200 stipend and are presented with a certificate at a ceremony. The district has not adjusted its paraprofessional pay scale, however, and this remains a problem. “The expectations for qualifications are high in light of what the pay is,” remarked Mierzwa.

Funding and Capacity

FUNDING AND COSTS
The Title I allocation for the Waynesboro Public Schools has increased annually for the past few years by as much as $40,000 per year. For the present, Title I funds are sufficient, Mierzwa said, because no schools are subject to sanctions and the division has no NCLB-related costs that are not covered by federal funds. But if any schools had to offer choice and supplemental services, Waynesboro would have to look carefully at its Title I obligations, because most of its grant now goes toward hiring staff. Waynesboro receives funds from several other programs under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including Titles II, III, IV, and V.

CAPACITY ISSUES
Currently Waynesboro has enough staff and expertise to carry out NCLB, although the schools could use more special education and ESL staff. The district has a pupil-teacher ratio of about 18:1 in grades K-2, supplemented by instructional aides in every elementary classroom for at least part of the day. The class size at the upper elementary grades is about 22:1.
Data File — Waynesboro Public Schools

Location: Shenandoah Valley of Virginia
Type: Small city and rural

Number of Schools
Total: 6
Elementary: 4
Middle: 1
High school: 1
Number of Title I Schools: 2

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 2,873
White: 79%
African American: 17%
Other: 5%

Low-income students: 41% (range in individual schools from 26% to 67%)
Students with disabilities: 10%
English language learners: 3%

Teachers
Total number: 378
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 98%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 46 Title I paraprofessionals
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 96% (all but 2 people)

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

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Note: The entire district of the Waynesboro Public Schools did not make AYP for two consecutive years and is in Year 1 of district improvement.
Wisconsin

Sheboygan Area School District
Co-superintendents: Dr. Joseph Sheehan, Jeanne Bitkers
Contacts: John A. Pfaff, Coordinator, ESEA
        Cathy Isa, Elementary Curriculum Specialist, English Language Learners

10,171 students, K-12, urban

District Description
The Sheboygan Area School District covers the city of Sheboygan and portions of surrounding townships, located on the shores of Lake Michigan in southeastern Wisconsin. With a population of approximately 50,000, Sheboygan continues to experience change in its demographics, most recently increases in Hispanic and Asian families. Students in the district speak 20-plus languages, with Spanish and Hmong the most prevalent.

Key Findings
- The Sheboygan district is making major efforts to improve student achievement and keep schools out of improvement status by helping teachers implement effective instructional methods for lower-performing groups of students and providing these students and their teachers with additional support.
- Although all Sheboygan teachers meet the NCLB requirements and are considered highly qualified, the district has placed a priority on professional development to improve instructional practices in ways that will raise academic achievement. Each Title I school site receives specific funds designated for teacher training and support; schools have used these funds for such activities as training highly skilled teachers to serve as language arts coaches for all teachers in a grade.
- A district team has been put into place to support schools in raising achievement and to coordinate various funding sources and school assistance efforts from the district level.
- Even with revised federal guidelines for testing English language learners, the superintendent and others in the Sheboygan district remain concerned that the testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act are not fair or flexible enough to ensure appropriate testing and success in testing for some ELL students.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The two major areas in which NCLB has made an impact on the Sheboygan district are the district’s focused program of professional development, which reaches all schools and teachers, and its efforts to bring every child to academic proficiency. Although the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act are being implemented during a time of difficult fiscal restraints and budget cutbacks, Dr. Joseph Sheehan, the district’s co-superintendent, has maintained efforts to focus the energies of everyone in the district on student performance. Several district staff positions were eliminated in the past two years, which meant that principals were given additional responsibilities, but to some extent this restructuring of administrative duties helped build a team effort that focuses on NCLB.
Testing and Adequate Yearly Progress

ACHIEVEMENT AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
All Sheboygan schools except one high school made adequate yearly progress in 2004. That school is not a Title I school, so it does not have to provide school choice and supplemental services. The subgroup of students with disabilities did not reach the AYP target, so the district is focusing on the needs of these students and re-examining procedures for testing them.

TESTING ISSUES
Wisconsin students have been tested in grades 4, 8, and 10 in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. A reading test was also given to students in grade 3. This will change in 2005-06, when testing begins in grades 3, 5, 6, and 9 in addition to the currently-tested grades. John Pfaff, ESEA coordinator for the district, said that some staff members have voiced concerns about the total amount of testing time for students. “Teachers would prefer to use that time for instruction rather than testing,” he said, “but we will get used to it just as we have adjusted to the other requirements of NCLB.”

Sheboygan participated in a validation pilot test for English language learners in 2004. Statewide implementation of that test is taking place in 2005. Several years ago, Wisconsin attempted to use an exit examination to determine high school graduation, but the proposal was withdrawn, Pfaff said, due to widespread concerns and parental objections. He doubts that a graduation test will be brought forward again.

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
English language learners at the Sheboygan schools fared well on AYP as a result of the testing policies for ELL students in Wisconsin. Students in the ELL subgroup who are at levels 1 and 2 in English acquisition are allowed to take alternative assessments based on grade-level standards for a three-year period; after that, it is assumed that their English level is such that they can take the regular grade-level assessments. For the alternative assessments, each district develops its own “student products”—examples of student work that show mastery of the standards. Cathy Isa, the elementary ELL curriculum specialist, explained an example of a student product: “The student could be given a map of the United States and asked to fill it in with the physical features. The student is also asked to write a comparison of one part of the country with another. In this way it could be determined if the student understood the standard upon which the product was based.”

According to Isa, the district is developing new product tests that will be used in 2006 for grades 3-8 and 10.

The NCLB policies for testing ELLs are an ongoing concern to Sheboygan school officials. In November 2004, Superintendent Sheehan sent a letter to Rod Paige, U.S. Secretary of Education, expressing concern about the law’s lack of flexibility for testing ELLs. Dr. Sheehan noted that the district, which has an ELL program that is recognized statewide, has found that it takes an average of 5.5 years for ELL students to reach proficiency. His immediate concern was with the new students from the many Hmong refugee families that are moving into the district.

Sheehan wrote, “We do not believe we should put these students through the required testing per NCLB, either regular testing or the alternate test.” He also stated that the current options for testing these students “do not address basic issues of fairness and testing students for success rather than for failure,” adding that, “it seems a forgone conclusion that testing these students has no chance of success against the test and proficiency levels and therefore, serves no instructional or accountability purposes.” For the Sheboygan district, Sheehan wrote, “the options appear to be rearranging pieces on a game board but not addressing the underlying problem for this very unusual situation. As educators, we want to test for success, not for failure.”
Although the students who have recently arrived in the U.S. will not be tested in 2005 under the revised federal guidelines for ELL testing, Sheboygan has asked the state to consider adjustments to the testing requirements for ELL refugee students.

Strategies for Improving Schools

DISTRICTWIDE STRATEGIES
Superintendent Sheehan met with the staff of each school at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year and shared with them his vision for improving academic performance. “Here is the expectation,” he said. “Now tell me what kind of support you need.”

Teachers responded—and the prevailing need was found to be professional development. Teachers felt they needed assistance with ongoing assessments in various content areas and strategies that would maximize student learning.

Sheboygan schools are developing their own site plans for improving instruction to increase student learning, and the district is helping them carry out their plans. An example of a specific plan to meet an identified need was the plan of Washington Elementary, the school with the third highest poverty level in the district and one that also has a large number of English language learners. The principal and staff became interested in a coaching model that would place highly skilled teachers as coaches to work with grade-level teams on literacy, reading, and language arts. The team, made up of the principal and a group of teachers, spent 10 days at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock during the summer of 2004, where team members took part in the Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model Program. With funding from Title I to cover the training and the hiring of coaches, the coaching program was implemented in the fall of 2004-05. The district supported this plan because this particular model was based on scientific research showing that this form of teacher training was effecting in improving student performance and likely to work at a school like Washington. In addition to the summer training, the teacher coaches will receive eight additional days of training during the year.

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR WATCH LIST SCHOOLS
The two Sheboygan high schools and three middle schools are implementing tutoring programs this year for students who scored below proficient levels in English or math. According to ESEA Coordinator John Pfaff, the district wants to make sure that all students progress this year and that all district schools make AYP in 2005. The additional instruction takes place after school and during daytime periods when students would normally be in study hall or electives. Teachers are paid to serve as tutors after school, and if they assist students during the day, they are relieved of other assignments during the tutoring time.

EFFECTS OF NCLB ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
A district-level committee made up of the superintendent, managers, coordinators, and supervisors meets monthly to coordinate and align the district’s overall educational program with NCLB requirements. The group examines efforts of the departments of curriculum and instruction (particularly math and reading), professional development, research/evaluation, student services, programs for English learners and students with disabilities, technology, and business and personnel services, and makes recommendations for improvement as needed.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
No specific strategies, programs, or interventions were implemented in Sheboygan for students with disabilities, as the general academic progress of these students is satisfactory.
Although one high school did not meet AYP targets for this subgroup, the district believes that the appropriate use of alternative assessments will correct the AYP situation.

**SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**
Sheboygan has nearly 2,200 English language learners. About 65% of them are Hmong speakers, and new refugees are arriving weekly to the district from camps in Thailand. The district enrolled 80 Hmong students in the fall of 2004, but another 50 students are anticipated. These students enter school with minimal or no English skills, and although some have had schooling, others have not. Some of the older students can read and write Hmong, but most are not literate in Hmong.

The next largest ELL group in Sheboygan is Spanish speakers, but the district also has 23 other languages, such as Bosnian and Albanian. Recently, the first refugee children from Somalia were enrolled. The diversity in the cultures of the students, their prior experiences, and their languages pose many challenges to their academic progress, but, according to district staff, Sheboygan continually finds ways to adjust to the needs of the newcomers.

There are several programs for ELL students in Sheboygan, and they are quite different from school to school, grade to grade, and language group to language group. The differences are there to accommodate parental decisions about the type of program in which they want their children enrolled and, to some extent, variations in staff determinations of the most effective ways to teach English language learners. The choices of instructional methods are: 1) English language development with bilingual support; 2) dual language instruction (half of the students are native Spanish speakers and half native English speakers); 3) bilingual instruction in Spanish (up to grade 5); 4) English immersion; and 5) placement in one of the district’s newcomer centers for a period of time, followed by transition to the student’s home school.

At the newcomer centers, according to curriculum specialist Cathy Isa, students focus on literacy and math through an intensive English program for most of the day. Then, once they are ready, these students are mainstreamed in classrooms with other students. “Some of these kids learn English pretty fast,” said Isa, “especially if they are in kindergarten or first grade, but the older ones take much, much longer.” The district has been tracking the progress of ELL students, according to Isa, and they are finding that it takes about five years for students to become fully proficient in English. “One trend I am seeing that concerns me is an increase in the number of ELL students who have disabilities,” she said. “We try everything to help them learn, and our last step is to turn to special education, but we are seeing more and more of this.”

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**
Each Sheboygan Title I school receives an established amount per teacher for professional development. This amount was $600 per teacher in 2004-05, but schools could add more from their site funds if they chose to do so. For a school with 20 teachers, for example, this would come to $12,000, and in the case of Washington Elementary, the staff added additional funds to cover the costs of the Arkansas training.

Some Title I schools used their funds to purchase professional books on topics related to the school’s main emphasis for the year, such as student learning, character education, guided reading, classroom assessments, dual language, the teaching of persuasive and descriptive writing, and strategies for upper-level learners. The district also provided staff development opportunities for district teachers that included training on analyzing and understanding assessments, working with mentors, and differentiating instruction for individual students based on their known strengths and weaknesses.
Teacher and Paraprofessional Issues

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
Because Wisconsin's licensure requirements cover all aspects of NCLB requirements, there were no issues in Sheboygan with teachers who did not meet the federal expectations. All district teachers, including those who teach special education and English language learners, have met the requirements for NCLB and are considered to be highly qualified.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT
A total of 43 paraprofessionals, including those who provide bilingual support to English language learners, are either employed at schoolwide Title I schools or paid for with Title I funds at targeted assistance schools. A portfolio assessment was established to determine whether paraprofessionals were qualified to cover the main instructional areas in which they would be assisting teachers, and workshops were provided to cover the main areas of instruction. The paraprofessionals could attend the workshops during release time or after their work day. All but three paraprofessionals have met the level of performance required by the portfolio assessment.

Funding and Capacity

FUNDING AND COSTS
Sheboygan’s share of the state’s Title I allocation has remained about the same, $1.2 million, even though district poverty is greater and numbers of students who need to learn English are increasing. The continual challenge in the district is to do more with fewer funds. One of the ways that the district has chosen to do this is through direct site allocations of funds. The district reserves only about $90,000 for districtwide administrative costs, such as partial funding of a coordinator, clerical assistance, supplies and materials, inservice training, and district parent involvement. The rest of the funds are distributed to schools on a per pupil allocation that ranges from $760 to $812 dollars per student. Individual school allocations range from $156,000 to $256,000, depending on the number of poor children in the school. This pays for the salaries and benefits of additional staff, as well as additional books and instructional materials. Additional dollars are given to each site for parent involvement activities.

CAPACITY ISSUES
The greatest capacity challenge in Sheboygan relates to the district’s growing population of English language learners. Most of the large numbers of Hmong refugee students coming to the district in 2004-05 do not have any English skills. “Coming from refugee camps, these families have had many changes in their lives in the past months, and now they find themselves living in a new country,” said John Pfaff. “We are welcoming them, but we realize that the adjustment is going to be difficult for the children.” The district is using Title III funds to add staff to work with these students, Pfaff said, and has also created a new Center School to provide services to these students and their families. “It’s a challenge,” he said, “but our staff will do the best they can to help the students become successful.”
Data File — Sheboygan Area School District

Location: Southeastern Wisconsin on Lake Michigan
Type: Urban

Number of Schools
Total: 18
Elementary: 12 (K-5)
Middle/junior high: 3 (6-8)
High schools: 2 (9-12)
Other: 1 (Early Learning Center)

Number of Title I Schools: 5

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total number of students: 10,171
White: 68%
Asian: 17%
Hispanic: 11%
Other: 4%

Low-income students: 27% (individual school range from 6% to 71%)
English language learners: 22%
Students with disabilities: 17%

Teachers
Total number: 828
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
Total number: 43
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 93%

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools in Year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years): 0 0
Schools in Year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years): 0 0
Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years): 0 0
Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years): 0 0

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES
Based on 2002-03 testing  Based on 2003-04 testing

Schools offering choice only: 0 0
Schools in Year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice: 0 0
Schools offering SES and choice: 0 0