

23. New York

Romulus Central Schools

Superintendent: Casey Barduhn

Contact: Casey Barduhn

Students: 580, Pre-K-12 – rural

Key Findings

- The Romulus Central School District has been able to maintain good achievement levels for students because the teaching staff remains quite stable from year to year, and retired teachers return to the district to mentor the new teachers.
- Because students in Romulus are bussed long distances to and from school, opportunities are limited for providing students who need extra help with additional instruction before or after the regular school day or on weekends.
- The New York state requirement for teachers to obtain a master's degree within five years of entering the classroom has helped to create a well-qualified cadre of teachers in Romulus who all meet the NCLB teacher requirements.

Background

The Romulus Central School District, located in upstate New York, serves what is basically a “bedroom community” for families whose breadwinners commute to work in Rochester and Syracuse. Affordable living in attractive locations, such as the area’s 20 miles of desirable lake frontage, balances out the disadvantages of a daily commute that can become especially difficult during the long winter months. Between the area’s two major lakes lies farmland, including several vineyards, and a large Mennonite-Amish community that has its own schools. The student population is scattered across 150 square miles, and with just one school building, many students have long bus rides.

The school building is divided into two divisions—one for elementary that includes an extensive preschool, and the other for secondary, grades 7-12. Each division has its own principal.

The Romulus district experienced significant change in the late 1990s when the Army depot that had been a part of the community for many years closed, and many families had to relocate. The school district lost 30% of its enrollment, more than 250 students in all, and also lost some state and federal funds, including a significant amount of federal Impact Aid for districts that serve children of federal employees.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Staff Development and Highly Qualified Teachers

All teachers in the Romulus schools presently meet the NCLB criteria for being highly qualified because the state of New York requires teachers to obtain master's degrees within five years from when they begin teaching. As a result, teachers who are new to the profession are working toward their final certification. The teaching staffs in both the elementary and secondary divisions are fairly stable, and teachers with more than 30 years of service are not uncommon.

The district has taken steps to not only recruit well-qualified teachers for any vacancies that arise, but also retain them. Romulus has established an extensive mentoring program that taps the expertise of retired teachers by matching them in mentor relationships with new teachers. The retirees are paid stipends for their work, and district staff members consider their work to be invaluable. Turnover is not high, but the district hired six teachers for 2003-04, and each was assigned to an experienced mentor. Mentoring continues for more than one year. This pairing is working very well, according to Superintendent Casey Barduhn, who initiated the program along with the administrative team.

The district has a three-pronged approach to professional development for its teachers. First, the district pays for a portion of the coursework toward the required master's degree for its teachers. Second, teachers receive extensive training in test analysis and the use of assessment data to connect instruction to specific student needs. This training is carried out through the regional Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), which serves 25 districts. Third, in-house "experts," teachers with expertise in various areas, such as reading, math, technology, and differentiation of instruction, are utilized to work with their peers in meeting the academic needs of students.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Based on previous measures of student achievement, Romulus students perform at high levels compared to other districts in the region and the state. The passing rate is very high on the Regents test, which is subject-specific and required for high school graduation, and the district dropout rate is low. There is not much transience in the student population, and most students stay in the district for their entire education. Class size is about 20:1, and teachers know all the students. To smooth the transition from one grade level to the next, teachers work together to make sure that students meet the expectations for all content areas.

Romulus did make AYP in 2003, and there are many indications, according to the superintendent, that this good academic progress will continue. With a strong structure

and effective instructional efforts in place, one may wonder why district staff has concerns about NCLB accountability requirements, but a number of issues could cause AYP problems for Romulus. First, New York currently tests students only in grades 4 and 8. When the state implements tests for grades 3-8, plus a high school test, and applies additional measures of school performance, the list of schools or districts that do not make AYP may look different than it does now.

Second, the subgroup requirements could cause problems for AYP in the future. Although the district has no ethnic subgroups of any size and no English language learners, it will still be responsible for making AYP for two subgroups: low-income students (25% of the district's enrollment) and students with disabilities (11% of enrollment). If the elementary and secondary school divisions are counted separately for AYP purposes, the subgroups may not be large enough to count, but in total, the subgroups will count for district AYP.

Third, a concern may surface about student achievement in mathematics. The district is examining the connection between the state math assessments and standards and the district math curriculum. The integrated math curriculum that the district uses through 8th grade is under review to make sure that it prepares students to reach higher expectations for achievement in math.

Other Implementation Issues

The other challenge for NCLB implementation, according to the superintendent, is how to fit extra academic assistance into a student's schedule without forcing that student out of other classes or elective courses, such as art or music.

The 580 Romulus students live within a geographic area that covers 150 square miles, and most of the students are bussed to school. Because of the complex bussing schedules, most students do not have opportunities to stay after school for extra instructional assistance. Nor can the students come to school before the start of the regular school day or attend Saturday sessions. Students who do stay after school for help and/or tutoring are limited to those times when bus runs are available. If more after-school time is needed, funding for transportation as well as teacher help will be an issue.

Data File — Romulus School District

Location: North Central New York

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

1 school with two divisions: elementary, PreK-6; secondary, 7-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 580

White: 97%

Other: 3%

English Language Learners: 0
 Students with Disabilities: 11%
 Low-Income Students: 25%

Number of Teachers

Total: 50
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 5
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Title I Schools:

1 school

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer only school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

24. North Carolina

Wake County Public School System

Superintendent: Bill McNeal

Contact: Karen Banks, Assistant Superintendent for Evaluation and Research

Students: 108,400, K-12 - urban, suburban, and rural

Key Findings

- Wake County began its efforts to improve the academic achievement of all students more than a decade ago. Then, in 1998, the district set a goal of having 95% of its elementary and middle school students become proficient in reading and math by 2003; this goal fits nicely with the new expectations of NCLB, and a new goal applies the same standard to the high schools.
- A “no excuses” policy for Wake County has helped make the achievement of students in high-poverty schools more consistent with that of students in other schools, particularly in the elementary grades.
- Students with disabilities and English language learners are the two subgroups in Wake County that did not make AYP in 2003, and the district is examining how to better address the needs of these students.

- The district believes the state criteria for determining which teachers are highly qualified are overly strict in requiring resource teachers, such as art teachers that serve many classrooms, to meet the same requirements as classroom teachers.

Background

The Wake County Public School System came into existence in the early 1970s. As the urban families of the area surrounding the city of Raleigh began to move to the suburbs, several downtown schools were closed. To better address the educational and economic challenges that the region faced, the city and county school systems were merged—a move not widely supported at the time. Thirty years later, the Wake County Public School System enrolls more than 108,000 students—making it one of the nation’s largest school districts—and covers a geographical area of 850 square miles that includes urban, rural and suburban regions. The district staff is committed to enhancing the system’s tradition of superior performance by continually working to improve student performance and eliminate achievement gaps and by benchmarking its performance against not only other districts in the state but also districts across the nation.

Today Wake County is highly diverse in terms of population density, ethnicity, geography, culture, family income, and employment. More than 80 languages are spoken by the students who attend the schools. The school system continues to grow, with an increase of 4,000 students this year. Families come to Wake County because it is a vital growth area where jobs of all kinds are available, including jobs in the construction industry building new schools, highways, and businesses. With an urban core, as well as suburban and rural areas, Wake County Public School System is likely to continue growing because of its appeal to a wide range of families.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Accountability

In 1990, the Wake County School System began a large-scale effort to improve the academic performance of all students. Prior to 1990, the district had implemented other improvements, such as magnet schools to provide more options for students and multi-track year-round schedules at some schools to allow for more efficient use of facilities for the growing district. Families and teachers at these schools are there by choice, and they are very loyal to this type of calendar.

The school system began focusing on improving the academic achievement of various groups of students, disaggregating data whenever possible. The district established procedures to follow the academic progress of minority students to assure they had equality in opportunity, and made efforts to reduce achievement gaps among groups of students.

The district also reviewed and expanded its programs for the increasing numbers of students who were coming to the district from other countries and needed English language instruction. Programs for the instruction of students with disabilities were also reviewed and modified, where necessary, to meet the changing needs of the students and to serve more of these students in their “base” schools and in mainstream settings whenever possible.

The Board of Education supported preschool programs in some instances, and instituted full-day kindergarten programs to help young children, especially those from low-income families, get a good start in school. Pre-kindergarten programs have recently expanded in the district, helped by funding increases in Title I.

The general approach of the district was to focus on the continuous improvement of the entire educational system. The district staff also took steps to educate the community—including parents, educators, business leaders, churches, and cultural groups—about the importance of having a high-quality educational system to attract businesses and residents to the area.

A key feature of the reforms was a district-wide accountability system, established in 1990, which used multiple indicators to measure student progress. In 1998, the district set a goal of having 95% of its students, including those in the high-poverty schools, become proficient in reading, writing, and mathematics by 2003. To accomplish this, the district looked closely at the factors that created optimal learning conditions for children and sought to align all staff, funding, and other resources toward reaching the goal.

Looking back, staff members are amazed that they had such an ambitious goal long before the No Child Left Behind Act was written. The changes did not happen without controversy, but the direction was set and key leaders continued the focus. Alignment became the key practice as schools worked to change their practices. They eliminated programs and strategies that were not showing gains and replaced them with effective interventions. A huge change in school culture and attitudes began to occur, with elementary schools taking the lead, and is still taking place now to meet the demands of NCLB.

In this district with poverty levels as high as 65% in some schools, Wake County schools met the state’s AYP requirements for overall student performance and had no schools in school improvement. But the district is concerned because two subgroups—students with disabilities and English language learners—did not meet AYP at all schools in the 2003 testing cycle. The district is also concerned about performance at the secondary level, which is a target for improvement in 2003-04, with a goal of 95% proficiency for high school students by 2008.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Most teachers in Wake County Title I schools and other schools meet the NCLB highly qualified requirements. High schools have some trouble finding foreign language

teachers, and special education teachers are always needed, but the district has had more success recruiting than most other districts in the state. The district began to improve its level of teacher support several years ago in an effort to create the system as a good place for people to work. Salaries are competitive, and this has enabled the staff to focus on hiring teachers that have the qualifications that are needed. A record-setting 189 teachers from the Wake County Public School System earned certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in 2003. This brought Wake County's total to 665 teachers, one of the largest numbers of teachers in the nation who have earned National Board certification.

However, the method used in North Carolina to determine whether teachers are highly qualified according to the NCLB definition shows that only 77% of the classes in Wake County are taught by fully certified teachers. Karen Banks, the district's assistant superintendent, explains it like this: "In an elementary school with 40 classrooms and one art teacher without full certification touching 20 of those classrooms, it counts that 20 of the 40 classrooms are not being taught by a highly qualified teacher. It's the same issue with two-person teams at middle schools."

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

With the new requirements for subgroup performance, Wake County is reviewing the progress of two groups—English language learners and students with disabilities. A total of 19 Title I schools did not meet AYP targets in 2003, typically because of the performance of one or both of these groups. Some district officials are concerned that the schools may miss the mark again in 2004, which will result in their being identified for improvement and having to offer school choice. A huge amount of bussing already takes place in the Wake County Public School System to transport students to magnet and year-round schools, and the district is concerned that adding other choice options could disrupt the demographic balance in the schools. In addition, complaints are surfacing at the school level about serving special education students. In spite of decisions to serve special education students in their home or "base" school whenever possible, some students are grouped in self-contained classes that better meet their needs, and district officials fear that because of their low average achievement these students will be increasingly unwelcome in schools that used to welcome them with open arms.

As for English language learners, district officials are concerned that this subgroup will never make AYP because of the nature of the group. Students leave the subgroup as soon as they become proficient, so their improvement does not show up in the group. A similar concern exists for the subgroup of disabled students, which includes students with a wide range of needs, from those with mental retardation or other cognitive disabilities, to gifted students with physical disabilities, to students with emotional problems. Wake County has a large percentage of students in this subgroup (18% at grade levels tested for

AYP), and district officials are reviewing programs, strategies, inclusion practices, and the academic progress of disabled students to see where changes need to be made.

Many county schools are overcrowded, and district officials are concerned about how the large numbers affect the quality of education. At many schools, students go to lunch at 10:00 a.m. because the school serves several hundred more students than the building's capacity. Some schools added as many as 14 additional mobile classrooms to house the overload of students. The district is concerned about how this situation affects student achievement and how it could be further complicated by the NCLB school choice requirements.

Adequate Yearly Progress for Secondary Students

Efforts to improve the achievement of elementary and middle school students have paid off for the Wake County Public School System, but the focus is now turning to the high schools because they have not shown the same improvements and have received few additional resources in recent years. Although end-of-course exams have been in place for some time, overall academic achievement at high schools does not meet the 95% goal the district recently set for itself at high schools. Several strategies to boost achievement are being examined, including establishing alternative settings and small learning communities, adding more counselors (especially at the 9th grade), studying the dropout situation, and improving the data analysis system and teacher use of assessment data.

Other Implementation Issues

The Wake County school system has used a research-based model to consistently examine student achievement results from its educational programs and activities. Staff members report no hesitation in eliminating programs, even if they are popular and well liked, if they do not produce the results that are needed. The district frequently implements new programs on a pilot basis or conducts a rigorous evaluation of programs. For example, when a commercially produced summer school program proved no better at improving achievement than the preceding program, it was dropped.

Data File — Wake County Public School System

Location: North Carolina, including the state capital of Raleigh

Type: Urban, suburban, and rural

Number of Schools:

126 total

80 elementary, K-5

28 middle schools, 7-8

18 high schools, 9-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 108,400

White: 60%

African American: 27%
 Hispanic: 6%
 Asian: 4%
 Other: 3%
 English Language Learners: 3.5% (Spanish, Hmong, and 70 other languages)
 Students with Disabilities: 18%
 Low-Income Students: 30% (range is from 4% to 65% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

Total: 6,370
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 77%, using the state's criteria

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 0
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Title I Schools:

40 – all elementary

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

25. North Dakota

Napoleon School District

Superintendent: Jon Starkey

Contact: Jon Starkey

Students: K-12, 236 – rural

Key Findings

- Napoleon School District has high levels of academic achievement in the elementary grades, but this achievement level tends to decline in the secondary grades.
- District officials have concerns about the clarity of directions they have received about NCLB from the state department of education on such issues as how proficiency levels are determined, the provision of assistance and direction to districts, and the development of effective curriculum. This has made it difficult for the small district to move ahead smoothly with implementation of the law.

- Educators in Napoleon are concerned about a switch in the state's testing policies whereby students are tested in the fall instead of the spring—a test schedule that educators fear will not assess how well students have learned the standards for a particular grade as effectively as spring testing would.

Background

The Napoleon School District is a small K-12 district located in south central North Dakota between Bismarck, the state capital, and Jamestown. Although a major highway passes through Napoleon, the town and surrounding area have an agricultural focus that has remained quite stable. The children enrolled in the schools are from families that own farms or ranches and families that work for landowners or agribusinesses in the community. Grain and cattle are the major products, and some work is seasonal. Some residents commute to Bismarck or Jamestown for employment.

Napoleon is a closely knit community. Many local people leave the area to find jobs in the city or out of state, but often they return in later years to make their permanent home in the area. One such individual is Superintendent of Schools Jon Starkey, a graduate of local schools who returned to become involved in education in Napoleon.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

The state of North Dakota is changing its assessment system, and as a result, there has been confusion in the Napoleon School District over what some local officials perceive to be a piecemeal system. In school year 2001-02, the North Dakota test for 12th graders was given in spring 2002, near the end of the senior year. Then beginning in 2002-03, the test was moved to the fall of 2002. The test was also administered to this year's senior class in the fall of 2003. However, in the fall of 2004, seniors will no longer be tested, but a test is being developed to give to 11th grade students. Beginning in the fall of 2004, all state assessments at grade levels 3-11 will be given in the fall of the year, and these will be used to determine AYP. This change has caused quite a stir in the educational community, according to district staff, because the tests are designed to measure grade level exit standards instead of entrance expectations. Many staff members also believe that the tests are not as closely aligned to state and district standards as they should be. The state has issued an RFP for the next round of assessments, as the current contract year expires this year. District officials report that there is consternation regarding the lack of input from various educational organizations in the development of the proposal.

The academic achievement of Napoleon elementary students is strong, but district educators are concerned about achievement declines in the later grades. For the first time, subgroup reporting was done in 2003, but the district has only one subgroup, that of low-

income students, and this subgroup met AYP expectations. The district has just nine students with disabilities—not enough to count as a subgroup.

Staff Development

Napoleon School District began looking at the professional development needs of its teachers several years ago and prior to NCLB, by examining teacher credentials and determining how many hours of coursework teachers had in the teaching of reading and other core subjects. According to district staff, most elementary teachers had two or three courses in reading and mathematics during their undergraduate preparation, not enough to prepare them to diagnose and remediate the problems of students who have difficulties in those subjects. Teachers were somewhat like general practitioners (to borrow a medical analogy) because they lacked the specialized mastery of core subject matter.

In recent years, the district has emphasized professional development. All of the elementary staff have taken numerous college courses, attended a variety of workshops, and received ongoing training to improve their knowledge and skills in reading, math, and other core areas. In addition, the elementary school has provided training for a Reading Recovery teacher to help improve the literacy skills of lower elementary students. The district has also expanded Title I services in reading and math to meet the needs of higher-aged students through the 8th grade.

Junior and senior high school teachers face similar problems in their undergraduate preparation. The district has been trying to move toward addressing more sophisticated issues in staff development, but it has faced challenges, primarily related to money and time. State regulations make it difficult to provide staff development during the school year, so most training happens during the summer or before or after school. The costs of college course work and in-service training for teachers quickly add up, and a small district has little, if any, flexibility in its budget to provide such resources. State funds are very limited, and federal funds from Title II are stretched thinly, but the district is still making an effort to improve professional development.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Highly Qualified Teachers

Only three teachers in Napoleon do not meet the requirements of NCLB, and the major issue for them appears to be what is commonly referred to as a “composite degree.” For example, a teacher might have a joint college degree in history and geography, but because such a degree lacks a major subject focus, it does not meet the NCLB definition of “highly qualified.” This situation is currently being reviewed by state and university officials to see what needs to be done to help such teachers meet the requirements of NCLB.

Districts in North Dakota can use a portfolio system to determine the “highly qualified” status of existing teachers, and the Napoleon district is encouraging veteran teachers to explore the portfolio option. This system of determining teacher qualifications will only be available to teachers who have taught successfully for a long time and are not likely to go back to school to meet the requirements.

The teaching staff in Napoleon is quite stable, with only one vacancy in the past year, and that was because a teacher moved out of state. One of the goals of the Napoleon district is to “grow its own” teachers, and to this end, efforts are made to encourage young people to come back to the community after they receive their education. The big problem is trying to match salaries of other states and larger cities to attract local talent back to the community.

Other Implementation Issues

Parent and Community Involvement

The Napoleon School District is undertaking efforts to help teachers, parents, community members, and the Board of Education understand the requirements of NCLB. The goal, according to the superintendent, is to be proactive and find out what needs to be done, and then move to make it happen. More funding would solve a lot of problems, as it would be used to provide specialists in math, literacy, and reading who would train teachers and work with students. Since that is not a likely possibility, the district will need to find other avenues to continue meeting the goals of high academic achievement for all students.

Data File — Napoleon School District

Location: South Central North Dakota

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

1 school with three divisions – elementary, junior high, and high school

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 236

White: 98%

Other: 2%

English Language Learners: 0

Students with Disabilities: 4%

Low-Income Students: 33%

Number of Teachers

Total: 30

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 10% (3 teachers)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 0

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Title I Schools:

1 school – targeted assistance

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

26. Ohio

Cleveland Municipal School District

Chief Executive Officer: Barbara Byrd-Bennett

Contacts: Myrna Elliot-Lewis, Chief Academic Officer

Carol Hauser, Executive Director of Employee Services

Erbert Johnson, Chief Financial Officer

Peter Robertson, Chief Information Officer

Nina Turner, Director of Government Affairs

Theresa Yeldell, Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement

Students: 69,534, K-12 – urban

Key Findings

- In general, implementation of NCLB in the Cleveland Municipal School District has been hampered by a lack of consistent and timely information about the requirements of NCLB from both the state and the U.S. departments of education.
- Because Cleveland is an urban, high-minority, high-poverty district, it must pass all 82 benchmarks every year to meet state criteria for adequate yearly progress—far more than its suburban counterparts. District officials say this may put the district at a disadvantage within the state’s accountability system.
- At present, few Cleveland students have taken advantage of school choice under NCLB. However, parents have had little time to make decisions about choice, because in both 2002 and 2003, the state did not release the final list of schools in need of improvement until August. If the number of students transferring schools increases in the future, the NCLB school choice provisions may conflict with the district’s efforts to return to neighborhood schools after extensive busing for desegregation and may disrupt the district’s new facilities plans, which are based on neighborhood demographics.

- Although the district officials say they want students to use supplemental services, very few students have taken advantage of these opportunities. Connecting parents to providers and arranging logistics have proved to be barriers to using supplemental services to date.

Background

Cleveland is a city of about 480,000 people, located on Lake Erie. The population is 51% African American, 42% white, and 7% Latino. The median household income is \$26,000. Public schools are majority African American (70.6%) and overwhelming low-income (98.8%). Cleveland has a shrinking population with many middle-class residents of all races moving to the suburbs.

Like many large city school districts, Cleveland has made major efforts to reform its schools. Since the mayoral appointed Chief Executive Office took office in the fall of 1998, the district has focused on improving academic achievement, starting with literacy at the elementary school level. A newly appointed administrator will oversee high school reforms, including a move to small learning communities within the district's large comprehensive high schools.

Based on Ohio's system for rating district quality, recent reforms appear to be paying off. Under the state's pre-NCLB accountability system, the state issued report cards that rated districts and schools on the basis of test scores, graduation rates, and student attendance. Schools and districts were grouped into five performance categories based on the number of state targets met, and those with ratings below "effective" had to create formal plans to improve by a specified time, although no sanctions were clearly defined for schools that failed to improve. From the time the state began rating districts in 1996 until 2002, the Cleveland district was in "academic emergency," the state's lowest category. In 2003, increases in test scores and student attendance pulled Cleveland up into the "academic watch" category.

Citizens of Cleveland appear to support the school system. In May 2001, Clevelanders approved a \$335 million capital bond issue to build new schools. In November 2003, Clevelanders voted to keep the schools under the mayoral appointed board and Chief Executive Officer. Although the state offers students in the city of Cleveland vouchers to attend local private schools, a limited percentage of parents use these. According to a report by the non-profit Policy Matters Ohio, about 4,000 Clevelanders—or some 6% of the district's enrollment—use vouchers, and of these the majority never attended a Cleveland public school, but instead were always in private schools or started using vouchers in kindergarten.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Evolving Information

In general, district officials in Cleveland applaud the spirit of NCLB and agree that schools should be held accountable and should work toward improvement. However, the implementation has been rocky due to unclear, changeable, and/or late information from the state and federal governments. Erbert Johnson, the district's chief financial officer, summed up district thinking when he said, "The biggest challenge is the fact that the law is evolving. The advantage is that we have the opportunity to create the best solutions to the challenges."

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress

As a district, Cleveland improved its academic performance in 2003. Passing 6 of the 22 state indicators used for accountability, Cleveland moved out of the "academic emergency" category for the first time since report cards were given. However, the district did not make AYP, due to low participation by Asian students, Hispanic students, and English language learners.

Cleveland's chief information officer, Peter Robertson, said that larger, urban districts are at a disadvantage with the state's new accountability system, developed to comply with NCLB. To determine whether each major subgroup in a school or district has made AYP, Ohio looks at a grade-level-weighted average of students in the school or district taking the tests. This calculation is compared to state averages and to a state trajectory of the improvement needed to bring the state to 100% proficient by 2014. Robertson noted that because AYP is based on state averages, districts like Cleveland that have performed poorly in the past are coming from behind now.

In addition, many suburban and rural districts have fewer subgroups of students who must be counted for AYP. "The only schools that are going to have trouble are schools with high diversity and high poverty," Robertson said. He explained that under the state's AYP criteria, the Cleveland district and most of its schools must make AYP on 82 different benchmarks each year—taking into account all the subgroups, grade levels, and progress indicators counted—while many suburban schools must meet only a few AYP benchmarks. All 82 must be passed each year if Cleveland is to make AYP.

Although Ohio disaggregated data from the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT) by race for the past two years, 2003 was the first time the state included test results for English language learners and students with disabilities. Previously, the majority of these students had been exempt from the OPT. For the state of Ohio as a whole, English language learners did not pass any AYP goals, except attendance; students with disabilities did not pass math or reading; and neither white nor black students passed math.

The subgroups of English language learners and students with disabilities also posed particular challenges for the Cleveland school district in 2002-03. Robertson said that the

district originally thought that ELL students could take an alternative assessment, so many teachers and principals went ahead and tested these students using an alternative assessment. “Our people were convinced they were doing the right thing,” he said.

However, in February 2003, the state notified the district that all ELL students must take the OPT, regardless of their language proficiency. Many of these students, especially those who spoke very little English, were not given the OPT, because teachers and principals falsely assumed that these students had already met the requirement by taking the alternative assessment. Robertson said he hopes this problem will not occur again, because by 2003-04 the state plans to make available an official alternative assessment for ELL students.

More students with disabilities also took the OPT this year. In many cases, however, their testing turned out to be unnecessary, according to Robertson. In March, the district understood that it was to test the majority of special education students. Obviously, Robertson said, “We can’t just say, ‘We’re going to test all kids,’” noting that this subgroup includes a number of autistic and/or non-verbal students who attend Cleveland schools. However, the district tested as many special education students as possible using the OPT.

Then in July, after school was out, Robertson said the state removed the requirement that the majority of special education students must take the OPT; instead, these students could “pass” if they met the goals of their Individual Education Programs (IEPs). When students who met the goals of their IEPs were included, Cleveland actually did better on 10 of the state’s 22 indicators of improvement.

Despite its rough edges, Robertson called the state’s new accountability system “much more nuanced” but added that it is also more complicated. He also observed that the system “still hasn’t changed the fundamental approach from pass rates to ‘value added’ or improvement.” The notion of creating a value-added approach to school improvement—which takes into account how much progress a school has made, regardless of where it stands in terms of raw averages—is under consideration by the Ohio Department of Education and would be a more accurate measure of Cleveland schools, Robertson said.

Although Robertson favors assessment and accountability, he said he worries that with NCLB mandates, Ohio will be “dismantling urban schools just about the time suburbs wake up and say, ‘Wait, we don’t like this.’” At the end of the 2001-02 school year, Ohio initially identified about 900 schools as in need of improvement under NCLB, but eventually the label only stuck with 212 schools. The majority that came off the list were suburban schools, he said.

Based on 2003 performance, 27 individual Cleveland schools have been identified for school improvement or corrective action for school year 2003-04. Twelve are in year one of improvement and will offer choice. Six are in year two and will offer choice and

supplemental services. Nine are in year three and will craft a specific improvement plan, in addition to offering choice and supplemental services.

Choice

Not many parents took advantage of school choice in 2002-03. Of the approximately 1,200 students eligible for choice, the parents of only 38 applied for choice transfers, according to Nina Turner, the district's director of government affairs. Of those who applied, only 27 students actually transferred schools. For 2003-04, only 44 students applied to transfer. Turner attributed this lack of interest in transferring to two possible causes: "Maybe parents weren't aware [of choice]. Or maybe they wanted to stay in the schools they were familiar with." She said she believes from talking to parents that the second reason is more probable.

Of school choice under NCLB, Robertson said, "In theory it's a good thing," but in practice it's not. Theresa Yeldell, the district's executive director of family and community engagement, agreed, explaining that after years of busing for desegregation purposes, the district is now moving to neighborhood schools, a philosophy that parents support. Yeldell observed that parents may not support choice because they know "it takes a long time for a child to feel comfortable in a new school."

Yeldell also said that because the state announced its list of schools in need of improvement in late August 2002, parents didn't really have much time to consider choice. For parents using choice this year, the district will provide transportation and a choice of two schools with similar grade configurations that are not among the schools identified for school improvement.

However, late notification continues to be a variable this year. Ohio finalized its list of schools in need of improvement in August 2003. So, most parents received their notification of choice by mail only a week or so before school started. However, this year Cleveland bypassed the need for a separate mailing by including information about choice and supplemental services in the district's "school profile," a fact sheet about each school sent to parents annually.

Supplemental Services

Supplemental services were also underutilized in 2002-03. Turner reported that only 104 students received supplemental services. District officials would like to see more eligible students take advantage of supplemental services. "This year we are being much more aggressive about promoting [supplemental services]," Turner said.

However, as with choice, communicating opportunities to parents is difficult, according to Yeldell, and the logistics are not always easy for parents to arrange. "It's hard for the average parent to understand," she said, noting that using supplemental service often means bringing your child to school early or having the child stay late.

In addition, Yeldell said the state's list of organizations authorized to provide supplemental services is not consistent. "That list of providers changes every single day. You get it out, and the very next day there are new providers." Yeldell also said she worries about the quality of some of the supplemental service providers.

The Cleveland district is itself an authorized provider of supplemental services, and the services it offers are well known to Yeldell. But she said she doesn't always get enough information about other providers, explaining that when she has asked these providers for information, some contacted her, some just sent brochures, and some didn't respond. Once she received information about providers, she found that "some had no sites in Cleveland." Also, she said, "One program was so loosely configured that it had a fly-by-night feeling to it." In another instance, parents chose a provider, but then the provider decided not to serve Cleveland because not enough students were interested.

Yeldell expressed concern that parents will blame the district if things go wrong with outside providers. To date, however, the providers that signed a formal contract to provide services to Cleveland all honored their contracts, according to chief academic officer Myrna Elliot-Lewis.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Ohio's definition of highly qualified teachers essentially matches the federal definition. As of fall 2003, however, state officials reported that they only have data available to determine whether about 80% of Ohio teachers are "highly qualified" under NCLB. The status of the remaining 20% is unknown. Ohio has only collected the necessary information about teachers consistently since it changed its teacher licensure requirements in 1998; therefore, many veteran teachers may or may not have met these higher standards. In particular, the state has little information about the content area course work of middle school teachers.

Cleveland's information about highly qualified teachers is no different from the state's, because the district had not been previously required to collect the information needed for NCLB. The district is aware, however, that out of its total force of about 5,000 teachers, 192 were teaching out-of-field at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, according to Carol Hauser, executive director of employee services. Another 104 classrooms were headed by substitutes at the beginning of the year.

Despite the difficulties with collecting data, Hauser said she is in favor of the highly qualified teacher requirement of NCLB. "I certainly support high standards for teachers," she said, adding that, "it's possible that this will assist teachers in their quest to be seen as professionals." However, Hauser explained that in hiring decisions, she considers more than just the requirements of NCLB: "Having a certificate doesn't necessarily mean that you'll do an excellent job in the classroom." She also looks at past experience and teaching performance.

The greatest challenge the district faces with the NCLB requirements is in special education—a challenge that Hauser said may not be solvable “without growing our own, and growing our own is going to take money.” The district currently has a partnership with Cleveland State University to prepare and provide alternative certification for special education teachers, many of whom start working for the district as substitutes or teaching assistants.

The district is also taking steps to collect more information about veteran teachers. The state is currently disseminating a state-created rubric to determine the qualifications of some veteran and uncertified teachers. Hauser said Cleveland principals will use this rubric with their staff by November 2003.

Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals

Under NCLB, paraprofessionals who are paid through Title I funds must be “highly qualified.” In keeping with the federal requirements, Ohio has defined highly qualified as passing a standardized test, having two years of college, or holding an associate’s degree. Of the roughly 800 paraprofessionals in the district, about 130 are funded through Title I. Of these, 102 are “community aides” who work with parents and families and are therefore exempt from the NCLB mandate. This leaves about 28 positions that must be filled by highly qualified paraprofessionals.

Cleveland has long been involved in helping paraprofessionals increase their job skills and further their education. Since 1991, the district has had a partnership with Cuyahoga Community College to help paraprofessionals continue their education and/or earn associate’s degrees.

Currently, 64 of Cleveland’s 800 paraprofessionals have associate’s degrees, and this summer at least 55 passed a standardized test to certify their qualifications, another option under NCLB. The problem, Hauser said, is not finding highly qualified paraprofessionals, but making sure the paraprofessionals the district currently has are in the right positions. Ultimately, however, all paraprofessionals should be highly qualified so that the district can be flexible in assigning positions, in the view of Paula R. Buckner-Lilly, who coordinates training of paraprofessionals under Hauser.

While Hauser doesn’t anticipate that filling Title I paraprofessional positions with highly qualified people will be a problem for Cleveland, she does think it may have larger repercussions. “Generally people who go through associate’s degrees do not want a job that pays as little as a paraprofessional,” she said. “It’s going to force districts to look at pay scales.”

Budget Cuts and Funding Issues

NCLB is being implemented at a time when the state is experiencing budget difficulties. For fiscal years 2003-05, the state has allocated \$14.5 billion for education, a 5% increase over the previous biennium budget. But this is several million dollars less than what the

Ohio Department of Education said was needed for Ohio's schools. Some districts will face actual budget cuts. Cleveland, for example, will have \$33 million less to spend over the next two years. State budget troubles have already affected the implementation of NCLB. For instance, 2003 was the first year state report cards were not mailed to all parents and are instead only available online.

While several district officials questioned whether NCLB had adequate funding, chief financial officer Erbert Johnson said he is focused not on a lack of money, but on the need to rearrange existing money. NCLB, he said, provides, "More guidance for directing resources more intensely... targeting schools specifically based on test scores."

"Schools have always had test scores," Johnson explained, but what's new is "the formalization of a school's status" and the rearrangement of funds accordingly. When asked how much NCLB costs Cleveland, he said that if he ran a widget factory, he could answer the question more clearly. As it is, he said it's very difficult to account for all the human time used to implement NCLB and help students learn. He also said that knowing the price tag ultimately isn't worth the trouble right now. "I wouldn't want to take the time to figure it out," he said, "unless someone were going to reimburse me."

Johnson noted that theoretically, the biggest funding change made by NCLB is its requirement that districts set aside 20% of their Title I allocations to carry out choice and supplemental services. This change did not, however, come to fruition last year, because few students took advantage of choice and supplemental services. Fortunately, Johnson said, the federal government has allowed districts to carry over Title I funds for choice and supplemental services this year.

Johnson said he welcomed the NCLB provisions that gave districts more flexibility in using federal funds. Although the rules for Title I are more rigid under NCLB, in Johnson's view, funding under the law's other titles, such as Title II, has become more flexible. "You can use the others towards your big plans of reaching AYP," he explained.

Despite his optimism about the funding available for NCLB, Johnson cautioned that the district must take care to implement NCLB in ways that are consistent with other district initiatives. In particular, he says the district has a \$1.5 billion initiative to refurbish neighborhood school facilities. The initiative, he said, is based on "the demographics of where people live" and is designed to make all schools better and more responsive to their surrounding communities. If not implemented carefully, school choice under NCLB could undermine this district initiative, in Johnson's view.

Other Implementation Issues

Reading First

In July 2003, Cleveland was awarded a grant under NCLB's Reading First program. Awards were made on the basis of application and student poverty. In Cleveland, 20 schools will receive funding.

Cleveland will use the funding in a variety of ways. As an initial step, the schools will upgrade their reading series to Harcourt Trophies from Harcourt Signatures, said chief academic officer Myrna Elliot-Lewis. The 20 schools will also share five data analysis coaches, who will help them use data such as test scores and classroom work to make instructional decisions. The Reading First schools will also have a 90-minute literacy block, so that students can focus in depth on reading. Funds will also be used to hire a central office administrator to coordinate the activities at the 20 schools.

What will happen at Reading First schools "isn't so terribly different from what goes on at other elementary schools," said Elliot-Lewis, except that the work will be more intense and will involve more time and more staff.

Data File — Cleveland Municipal School District

Location: Northern Ohio

Type: Urban, city of 480,000

Number of Schools:

125 total

63 elementary schools (K-5)

23 elementary schools (K-8)

16 middle schools

3 alternative middle schools

15 high schools

5 alternative high schools

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 69,534

African American: 70.6%

White: 18.3%

Hispanic: 9.1%

Multi-Racial: 1.0%

Asian: 0.7%

American Indian: 0.3%

English Language Learners: 4.2%

Students with Disabilities: 14.8%

Low-Income Students: 98.8%

Number of Teachers

Total: 5,064

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 23

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 17 (74%)

Number of Title I Schools: 110

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 12

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 6

In corrective action: 9

27. Oregon**Tigard-Tualatin School District**

Superintendent: Dr. Steve Lowder

Contact: Susan Carlile, Director, Curriculum and Instruction

Students: 11,826, K-12 – suburban

Key Findings

- Students in Tigard-Tualatin consistently show high performance levels on state tests, but elementary students do better than secondary students. To address this disparity, the district is implementing smaller, more personalized learning communities in the high schools, intensifying math instruction and reading across all curriculum areas, as well as offering after-school classes to help students meet state standards.
- The Tigard-Tualatin district was beginning to implement NCLB when it had to deal with dramatic budget cuts by the state of Oregon. The district had to shorten the school year, increase class size, lay off 40 teachers, and cut back on other services—all of which are likely to create challenges for the district in meeting NCLB academic goals.

Background

A pioneer named Wilson Tigard built a log school in what was known as the Oregon Territory in 1853. The little school stood at what is now Main Street in the town of Tigard, Oregon. Several years later, the residents of the neighboring town of Tualatin built their own school. From these two country schools, symbols of the western frontier spirit, a school district grew—and is still growing—that combines the names of the two places, the Tigard-Tualatin School District.

With a student enrollment of 11,826, Tigard-Tualatin has been growing for the past 20 years as part of the suburban fringe of the city of Portland. Members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803, the trip that is now celebrating its bicentennial, came through this region on their way to the Pacific Ocean. Portland and its surrounding area have been growing ever since, and two centuries later, the growth continues.

The Tigard-Tualatin School District serves three distinct populations: highly educated, high-income families who live in expensive hillside homes, middle class families, and low-income families, many of whom do not speak English and who work in the food service and the nursery industry. This disparity in family income is reflected in the range of poverty in the district schools. One of the nine elementary schools has a 52% poverty rate, while another counts only 8% of its children as poor. This poses a potential problem for the district when all the NCLB requirements come into play.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Tigard-Tualatin School District has made a major investment in literacy and reading in the early grades, in an effort to assure adequate yearly progress for all children at all grade levels and all schools. With a grant from the U. S. Department of Education and the University of Oregon, the district is putting in place a long-range training program for all elementary teachers that focuses on literacy skill identification and individualized interventions for students below grade level. Major areas of focus include teaching teachers how to use the student assessment/instruction data base, aligning curriculum with assessments and instruction across grade levels, and tracking the progress of low-achieving students through the grade levels.

Consistent with NCLB goals, Oregon's plan for NCLB calls on schools to make steady progress each year until 100% of students meet the state proficiency targets by 2014. A major focus of the district is on preventing reading problems for children through early intervention and close teacher monitoring of student progress. The goal is for teachers to quickly correct any deficits children have so they will be able to catch up with their peers. Assessment teams in the Tigard-Tualatin district provide intensive progress checks for all students three times a year, in the fall, mid-winter, and spring. These teams, led by an early literacy specialist, analyze the assessment data and make recommendations for immediate interventions that classroom teachers can provide in the classroom or an after-school setting.

On state tests for reading/language arts and mathematics, Tigard-Tualatin students have performed very well, particularly at the elementary level. Academic achievement generally exceeds state averages, although the performance of elementary students is consistently stronger than that of secondary students. In the 2003 test administration, 88% of the district's 3rd grade students met or exceeded state performance targets in reading/language arts and 85% did so in math. Among the district's 10th grade students, only 64% met the targets in English/language arts and only 62% did so in math.

All Title I schools in the district met AYP in the 2003 test administration. However, both of the district's high schools and two of the middle schools did not meet AYP, but these are not Title I schools.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Teachers in Tigard-Tualatin meet Oregon’s NCLB expectations for teachers. The Title I schools that serve the poorest children have additional teachers that assist with reading and mathematics, and the teachers and principals at these schools are just as highly qualified as those at the schools serving higher-income families. The district has had no difficulty finding qualified teachers, but recent budget cuts have necessitated reductions in the entire teaching staff.

With regard to the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers, there are five teachers in the district’s Title I elementary schools that do not currently meet the requirements. These teachers have transitional licenses and are working towards being “highly qualified.” In addition, 71 of the district’s middle school teachers do not meet the requirements because they have a general endorsement, not specific subject-matter certification. District officials are working with these teachers as well to ensure that they are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year as required under NCLB.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Fiscal Problems

Just as Oregon was starting to implement NCLB, along came devastating state budget cuts for schools in the spring of 2003. Newspaper headlines across the nation trumpeted one of the solutions to the financial crisis that faced public schools in Oregon—reducing the number of school days in the year. Some districts did cut days from the 2002-03 school year. Tigard-Tualatin cut five days in 2002-03, and the district also increased class size in all classrooms by as many as five students, from 20 to 25 at the elementary level and from 25 to 29 at the secondary level. To make these reductions, the district laid off 40 teachers. Many excellent teachers were lost to the district, including veteran teachers who retired in the face of changes to their retirement system, and more recent hires who had limited teaching experience. The impact of these fiscal moves will be seen in the next school year.

Reductions were also made in other budgets, from professional development to textbooks and supplies. In light of the known and the not-yet-known decreases in district budgets, Tigard-Tualatin is likely to face challenges in continuing to meet NCLB academic goals. The present state of affairs requires school and district personnel to do far more with fewer dollars. Whether this is possible remains to be seen.

Adequate Yearly Progress for Subgroups

The state of Oregon had previously tested students in grades 3, 5 and 8 only, with no separate reporting of subgroup performance. Under the previous state method, Tigard-Tualatin students performed better than the state average. On the widely distributed state reporting system, five of the nine elementary schools in the district are shown as having

“strong student performance.” The other four have “satisfactory student performance.” The two middle schools are rated as having strong student performance, but the third middle school, the one with the highest poverty, has only satisfactory student performance. The same pattern is apparent in the two high schools—the higher-poverty school is rated as satisfactory, and the other one is rated as strong.

With test scores in Oregon now disaggregated by poverty and racial-ethnic groups, this high achieving district has seen great differences among the achievement of poor children, students with disabilities, English language learners, and some racial/ethnic groups. English Language Learners and students with disabilities were the subgroups that failed to make adequate yearly progress in the two middle schools and two high schools. The district’s enrollment of English language learners numbers slightly over 1,400, and their primary languages are Spanish (1,097 speak Spanish), Marshallese, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese.

Other Implementation Issues

Accountability for Secondary Students

To help secondary students meet NCLB’s rigorous academic requirements, the Tigard-Tualatin district is planning to create “small learning communities” in its secondary schools. This program is aimed at making the schools more personal for 9th grade students with “houses,” mentoring programs, quick responses to behavior issues, and ongoing monitoring of academic progress.

Data File — Tigard-Tualatin School District

Location: North Western Oregon

Type: Suburban – Portland area

Number of Schools:

15 total

9 elementary schools, K-5

3 middle schools, grades 6-8

2 high schools, grades 9-12

1 alternative school, grades 9 – 12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total enrollment: 11,826

White: 78%

Hispanic: 12%

Asian: 7%

African American: 2%

American Indian: 1%

English Language Learners: 12%

Students with Disabilities: N/A

Low-Income Students: N/A

Number of Teachers

Total: 648

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 12% (5 elementary school teachers in Title I schools; 71 middle school teachers)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 39

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 31% (12)

Number of Title I Schools: 5 elementary**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer only school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

28. South Carolina

Berkeley County School District

Superintendent: Dr. J. Chester Floyd

Contact: Sheldon Etheridge, Executive Director, Federal Programs

*Students: 26,375, K-12 – rural and urban***Key Findings**

- Berkeley County School District is finding that its well-structured and extensive training programs for teachers and paraprofessionals meets and surpasses many of the requirements of NCLB. As part of this effort, the district covers many of the costs of obtaining advanced degrees and National Board certification for its Title I teachers, and teachers who become nationally certified are given a \$5,000 annual stipend if they teach in a Title I school.
- Berkeley County may have difficulty meeting the NCLB qualifications requirements for its middle school and special education teachers. In addition, many of the district's primary grade teachers (grades 1-3) have not yet met a state requirement to have certain coursework in early childhood education.

Background

Berkeley County covers a large area of 1,229 square miles in south central South Carolina. Students often live a long distance from their schools, and more than half of the

district's 26,375 students ride buses to school. There are lakes and a national forest within the county, and these create vast differences among the localities of the schools. The town of Moncks Corner, the county seat for Berkeley County, is in the central part of the school district. Thirty-four schools are under the governance of the district, and they represent a wide variety of both rural and urban settings, ethnicity, and economic status. Stratford High School, for example, serves 2,600 students in grades 9-12 in an urban area and has a poverty rate of 20%, while Cross High School serves only 484 students in grades 7-12 in a rural area and has a poverty rate of 80%.

The districtwide percentage of English language learners is relatively low, 2% or 526 students, but these students speak 47 different languages, with Spanish, Vietnamese, and Pacific Islander languages as the main ones. The diversity in languages is unusual, given the relatively small number of students. Charleston Navy Base, which draws families with a variety of language backgrounds, lies within Berkeley County. Three schools are located on the base.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Professional Development

Berkeley County has embarked on an extensive program of professional development with three purposes: 1) to improve the instructional skills of teachers and paraprofessionals; 2) to assist teachers and paraprofessionals in meeting NCLB requirements; and 3) to provide incentives for teachers to keep them teaching at the highest-poverty schools in the district. Using a variety of district, state, and federal funds, the training program reached more than 60 teachers in 2002-03 and was so successful that district staff members were invited to share information about the program with other districts, including some in other states. Berkeley County staff have identified ten leadership components that result in program accountability and that form the foundation of the district's professional development program for teachers and paraprofessionals at Title I schools.

In addition to improving general teaching skills related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, Berkeley teachers who teach in Title I schools are encouraged and assisted in obtaining advanced degrees and National Board Certification. Tuition costs, textbooks, supplies, mileage reimbursements, and testing fees are covered. A teacher who is nationally certified is provided a yearly stipend of \$5,000 as a further incentive for teaching in a rural Title I school.

Paraprofessionals receive similar reimbursements to help them obtain the two years of college required by NCLB.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Teacher Qualifications

Berkeley County has launched an extensive program of professional development that is reaching many teachers, but the state requirements for highly qualified teachers may be difficult to meet for three groups of teachers: primary teachers, special education teachers at middle and high school, and middle school teachers in content areas.

NCLB requires elementary school teachers to have a substantial base of literacy and the ability to teach reading, writing, and mathematics, but an issue that seems to be unique to South Carolina is a state requirement for teachers of five-year-old kindergarten to hold early childhood certification. District staff members expect this to change to a requirement for early childhood certification for teachers in grade 1 as well. Questions arise as to whether this will have much effect on the ability of these teachers to provide effective basic skills and literacy instruction for students.

Special education teachers at the middle and high school levels comprise another group that is expected to have difficulty meeting NCLB standards. These teachers are often responsible for more than one content area.

Middle school teachers are also a concern because of the content mastery requirement. District leaders believe that students in the 5th and 6th grades in the middle school might benefit more from teachers who have elementary training rather than specific content expertise.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Under the South Carolina AYP model, a school must meet as many as 28 separate measures, including testing participation rates and subgroup performance, in order to make AYP. Of the 610 objectives required of Berkeley County's 34 schools, 479 were met in 2003 for a district determined compliance rate of 78.5%. Six schools (17.6%) met every standard measured at their site.

Three of the district schools are in the first year of school improvement, and one is in the second year. A total of 28 schools did not make AYP in 2003, but for most schools, the reason they did not make AYP was because of the students with disabilities subgroup. Secondary school performance was lower than that of the other schools; only one of six high schools made AYP.

School Choice and Supplemental Services

In 2003-04 three schools are offering choice with 2,456 students eligible for transfer. However, only 112 students elected to go to another school. District officials are finding that parents want to keep their children in their home school.

At the school where students could participate in supplemental education services in 2003-04, 209 students were determined to be eligible. No students chose to participate in

programs provided by outside providers because of the distances involved. Berkeley County was also a provider, and students do attend the comprehensive after-school program that also provides transportation for them.

Other Implementation Issues

Fiscal Issues

State and district budget cuts are creating problems for Berkeley County, and staff members anticipate that negative effects on programs will increase. The district absorbed a 12.6% cut in state funds in 2002-03 (nearly \$6 million) and another 4.7% cut in October of 2003. Expectations have been set for another 10% in January of 2004. A total of 147 teachers were laid off, but with special funds from federal and state sources, many of these were rehired.

A major issue in the district is the cost of new facilities because of the immense growth in the county. Berkeley County is involved in a progressive \$165 million building program, but enrollment continues to exceed expectations and is projected to double within ten years. If more schools are required to offer school choice because they did not make adequate yearly progress, capacity will be a great concern in the district.

Data File — Berkeley County School District

Location: South central part of South Carolina; county has population of 128,776

Type: Rural and urban

Number of Schools:

34 total

21 elementary schools, K-4

8 middle schools, grades 5-8

5 high schools, grades 9-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 26,375

White 59%

African American: 36%

Other: 5%

English Language Learners: 2%

Students with Disabilities: 23%

Low-Income Students: 52% (ranging from 20% to 98% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

Total: 1,707

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 185 (11%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 312

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 125 (40%)

Number of Title I Schools: 27 – all schoolwide

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer only school choice:	1	3
Required to offer both supplemental services and choice:	0	1
In corrective action:	0	0

29. Texas**Cuero Independent School District**

Superintendent: Dr. John Hall

Contact: Debra Baros, Assistant Superintendent

Students: 1,993, K-12 – rural

Key Findings

- The academic achievement of Cuero students, including its racial/ethnic and low-income subgroups, exceeds the state average in almost every subject and all grades. In some subjects and grades, 100% of African American, Hispanic, and low-income subgroups achieved at the proficient levels on state tests. As factors underlying this success, Cuero staff point to the district's extensive professional development, its strong emphasis on reading and math, and its policy of scheduling all third grade students and their parents for in-depth conferences with a counselor to make sure every child is progressing on track and appropriately challenged.
- Cuero, a rural district, faces special challenges with NCLB because it is miles away from neighboring towns and cannot share resources and training.
- Cuero provides specialized services for students with disabilities from neighboring districts. Because some of special education students have significant disabilities that make it difficult for them to master the content likely to appear on state tests, the district may have difficulty making AYP for this subgroup.

Background

Cuero schools celebrate their 110th birthday in 2003. In 1893, the small city passed a school tax, a woman named Sarah French donated land for the school, and the John C. French School, one of the first educational institutions in south Texas, was established for children in grades 1-10. The school is still in existence, serving grades Pre-K through 1.

The Cuero Independent School District also has a school for grades 2-5, a junior high, and a high school—four schools altogether.

The Guadalupe River that flows through Cuero provides a refreshing coolness to the region, but it can also bring disaster, as it did in 1998 when a devastating flood damaged the special education campus. A recent bond election is allowing the district to construct a new junior high school and high school to replace aged buildings.

Ranching is a major business in the area. A cotton mill is also a major employer, but three large wood-product manufacturers closed their doors recently due to bankruptcy. The poverty rate in the Cuero district averages 55%, with higher rates at some schools. Many children have academic needs, and the student transiency rate is 18.5%. Cuero families move frequently due to lack of employment, changes in the cattle industry, and a static business climate. Nearly half of the district's students are Hispanic and African American, and there are small numbers of American Indian and Asian students as well. About 1% of the students are English language learners, and 245 students, or about 12% of the district's enrollment, have disabilities, a percentage higher than most districts. Cuero is part of a cooperative special district so it provides services for students with disabilities from other neighboring districts.

District staff members believe that the local communities will continue to change in coming years. Retirees are settling on ranches, and telecommuters are coming to live in Cuero's open spaces along the Highway 35 corridor.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

The overall academic performance of Cuero students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exceeded the state average in 2003, as shown in the following table.

Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient Levels on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Grades Tested</i>	<i>State average % proficient</i>	<i>Cuero ISD % proficient</i>
Reading	3-9	84.6%	89.7%
Math	3-11	76.2	84.2
Writing	4 & 7	84.9	89.7
English	10 & 11	70.1	80.0
Science	5, 10, 11	70.4	80.4
Social Studies	8, 10, 11	89.4	97.9

Most reassuring to district staff was the achievement of student subgroups, which also performed at high levels. Few significant achievement gaps exist among the major subgroups. Of particular note is the performance of African American students, who scored exceptionally high on the assessment. In math (grades 3 and 4), writing (grade 4), and social studies (grades 8, 10 and 11), 100% of African American students reached proficiency. Hispanic students reached the 100% level in math for grade 3 and social studies for grade 11. White students reached 100% in social studies for grade 10, and 10th grade students who were considered to be Economically Disadvantaged reached 100% in social studies-grade 10.

The district is consistently rated at a high level—an achievement that district staff attributes to extensive, structured professional development for teachers and staff. The district also strongly emphasizes reading and math across the grades. The curriculum is aligned to state standards and the state accountability system. In addition, all students in grades 1, 3, and 5, as well as grades 8 through 12, are scheduled for in-depth conferences with a counselor and their parents to make sure that academic learning is on track and that every student is appropriately challenged. If needed, a plan is designed to help the student “catch up” in any weak areas. Teachers and counselors focus on improvement goals and needed follow-up for every student.

The district also operates a preschool program, funded partly through Title I, which includes early literacy learning and an extensive Even Start program. Activities for parents include training in how to help their children learn. A tutoring bus filled with laptop computers serves parents and children who live in low-income housing areas in distant neighborhoods.

Professional Development

All but seven teachers meet the state’s criteria for being highly qualified, as required by NCLB. Of these, three are teachers of special education, one is at a Title I schoolwide school, and the others are secondary teachers. Most of them are working on internship or certification.

According to district officials, staff development in Cuero is extensive and reaches across all grade levels. Teacher training includes topics such as curricular mapping, brain-based learning, report card alignment with standards, and strategies for working with parents on the Parent Compact and conferences. Teachers receive \$325 per year to improve their skills by taking classes at the regional center or elsewhere. Annual teacher evaluations help to identify the specific training teachers need to improve their knowledge of curriculum and delivery of instruction to students. Although special education teachers meet Texas expectations at this time, some may need to upgrade their credentials in the specific content areas they teach.

Cuero also has a “mini-master’s” program, whereby the district pays one-third of a teacher’s tuition for additional coursework. The University of Houston, Victoria, pays a third, and the teacher pays the remaining third. This gives teachers an incentive to grow professionally and become better teachers, which is a good investment for the district.

Plans are in place to provide training for all the instructional paraprofessionals. A Para Academy, scheduled for the summer of 2003, was designed to improve reading, math, and writing skills, so that paraprofessionals can assist teachers more effectively in those areas. The goal is for each paraprofessional to participate in 100 hours of training over time. Although college credit is not provided, the training will help paraprofessionals do well on the competency assessment that offers an alternative way of meeting NCLB requirements. Arrangements are being made with the University of Houston, Victoria, to offer a six-hour writing course for credit.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for Students with Disabilities

Cuero Independent School District expects to face a challenge raising the academic performance of students with disabilities to meet AYP criteria. The number of these students in the district is high, because Cuero provides special education services for children in neighboring districts. The 213 Cuero children with disabilities make up about 12% of the district’s enrollment, but another 78 students with disabilities from other districts are enrolled in Cuero schools under cooperative district agreements. Some of these students have been referred to special education precisely because they have significant learning or other disabilities that make it difficult for them to master material on their grade level.

In the 2003 test results, Cuero exceeded AYP expectations for this subgroup: 60% of these students met the performance criteria in Reading-Language Arts, while the state average was 47%. Due to one missing student, however, the subgroup did not meet the NCLB requirements that 95% participate in testing; the actual participation rate was 94.4%. The state does not allow for makeup tests, so in the future, Cuero must make sure that all students are present for testing. In math 46% of Cuero’s disabled students met the state AYP benchmark, compared with a state average of 33%, and the participation rate of 95% was met.

District staff member recognize that some special education students may need additional attention in the future, but because many of these children are bussed long distances to school, it is difficult for them to attend additional classes after school. Some students live as far as 50 miles away from their school, which is a long bus ride twice a day. The curriculum for students with disabilities must be continually aligned with standards to assure that learning goes beyond test-taking. Alternative assessments are given in grades 3-8 for students who qualify, and high school students have a district improvement process that reviews their abilities and achievement.

Other Implementation Issues

Readiness for Kindergarten and Parent Involvement

Parents in Cuero are involved with early literacy learning when their children enter preschool, and this involvement continues through the grades. The district's preschool program is funded partly through Title I. A home visitor program supplements the instruction, and parents learn how to be their child's teacher. An extensive Even Start program focuses on cognitive development from birth to age three.

Parents continue to have access to a wide range of parent involvement activities as their children move through the grades. Training is available in such topics as general parenting, nutrition, how to help children learn, and even money management. A tutoring bus filled with laptop computers takes school instruction into hard to reach neighborhoods with low-income housing. Parents and their children learn together in this technological version of school.

School Choice

If school choice were to become necessary for Cuero, it would be very difficult for this rural district to implement it, because it has only one school for each grade-level configuration. It is unlikely that arrangements could be made with neighboring districts because they are so far away, so the district would have to provide supplemental services instead of choice. Encouraging children to participate in supplemental services could also be a problem because so many live long distances from their schools.

Data File — Cuero Independent School District

Location: Southeastern Texas

Type: Small city of 6,700

Number of Schools:

- 4 total
- 1 PreK-1
- 1 elementary school (2-5)
- 1 junior high (6-8)
- 1 high school (9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

- Total Enrollment: 1,993
- White: 52%
- Hispanic: 35%
- African American: 13%
- English Language Learners: 1%
- Students with Disabilities: 12%
- Low-Income Students: 55%

Number of Teachers

Total: 150

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 7 (5%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 25

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 92%

Number of Title I Schools: 2 elementary schools**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

	2002-03	003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

30. Vermont**Marlboro School District**

School Board Member: Lauren Poster

Contacts: Francie Marbury, Principal; Lauren Poster, Board Member; Cheryl Ruth, Superintendent, Windham Central Supervisory Union.

*Students: 78 in K-8, 47 in grades 9-12, 9 in early education program – rural***Key Findings**

- Because of dramatic reductions in local school funds brought about by recent tax adjustments and a declining enrollment, Marlboro is facing a difficult fiscal situation that is likely to result in program and/or staffing cuts. These budget issues are taking place as the district is implementing the new requirements of NCLB.
- Even though some of the NCLB requirements do not affect Marlboro because the school/district does not receive Title I funds, the members of the local school board are opposed to the new testing requirements because they believe that the additional time needed to test will decrease instructional time. The school board members are also concerned about the cost of the tests, the loss of local control, and the requirement for 100% achievement by 2014 that they believe set up schools and students for failure.

Background

Marlboro School District is an independent, one-school district in rural Vermont. The district serves 78 students in kindergarten through grade 8. The district also pays tuition for 47 high school students to attend the school of their choice in neighboring districts. Students can also attend private schools with their tuition funds if that is their choice. The state average for high-school tuition is available to families to take to any accredited high school, provided it isn't a religious school. For the surrounding public schools, including the nearby Brattleboro district, the tuition for that school is paid in full, whether it is higher or lower than the state average. Most of Marlboro's high school students go to Brattleboro for high school, and Marlboro provides the bus that takes them there. Marlboro also has an early education collaborative that supports preschool education in the town and is funded through a state block grant.

The Marlboro district is governed by a locally elected school board of three members and managed by the superintendent of the Windham Central Supervisory Union (WCSU). The supervisory union covers 365 square miles and serves ten towns with a total of nine schools? seven elementary, one middle school, and one high school. The total student population for the supervisory union is approximately 1,100 students. The supervisory union provides consolidated services and management assistance to all districts, funded through local tax assessments. Independent school districts, such as Marlboro, can contract for additional services. Under this arrangement, the school district pays an assessment to the WCSU for services like special education and management assistance and contracts for additional services like curriculum and technology. The districts vary, with some having poverty levels as high as 62% and others as low as 31%, as in Marlboro's case. Because so many districts do not offer the federal school lunch program, the supervisory union uses Medicaid eligibility as the determiner of poverty.

Some Vermont educators have indicated strong opposition to NCLB. Marlboro leaders do not support the law's additional testing requirements and are finding these changes difficult to implement, especially because they are occurring at the same time the district is experiencing a decline in its financial situation. The school enrollment is decreasing as the number of families with school-age children is dwindling and the number of retirees purchasing second homes is going up.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Accountability

The principal, staff, and board members of Marlboro believe that the district's well established accountability system has served its students well. The district has invested much time and energy in implementing a state math and writing portfolio assessment, which these officials believe is instructionally sound. Students in grades 4 and 8 take the new state standard-based tests in math and reading. In addition, all 2nd graders take a developmental reading assessment, and 5th graders take a state science assessment. These indicators have provided valuable feedback to staff about student skills and capabilities.

It is not yet clear how the testing issue will play out. Although most districts in the Windham Central Supervisory Union test at all grade levels, Marlboro has not yet made all the grade-level testing changes. The academic performance of students throughout Windham is high related to others in the state, and according to the superintendent of the Union, Marlboro students typically score in the upper ranges of union students. No schools in the supervisory union are in school improvement.

According to David Ahern, a member of the Marlboro school board, one of the community concerns with NCLB is the erosion of local control:

The idea that one test, one text fits all goes against Vermont's basic nature. The tests and penalties wielded from above (Washington) would be unresponsive and out of touch with the special issues of a small school. For example, how do you get an accurate test sample from a class of eight 4th graders with two or three special needs children in the room? The curriculum needs to fit the special circumstances that each small school has to adapt to. This can be served best by local decision makers.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Highly Qualified Teachers

All seven of Marlboro's teachers meet the requirements of licensure in Vermont, but the district was unable to find a certified ELL teacher for the school. District officials are concerned about how they will be able to meet the NCLB qualifications for teachers who provide English language instruction to the few English language learners in the school. The number of ELL students is small (four students), and they are at various grade levels, which makes it difficult to assure that the teachers of all these students meet the requirements.

Other Implementation Issues

Adequate Yearly Progress

Even though the Marlboro school does not receive Title I funds, the school must still comply with the testing and AYP provisions of NCLB—although it will not be held to the same requirements and sanctions as Title I schools. The principal credits the strong achievement levels of the students to good teaching and learning. The staff does not spend time teaching students how to take tests, which Marlboro educators and the school board believe should not be the focus of classroom time.

Now, however, with the requirements of NCLB, a state test is being developed, and district officials are concerned about how this will fit with Marlboro's present assessments. With the expansion of testing to more grade levels, the district is concerned

about the time that will have to be spent administering the tests to more students. The cost of scoring the written portions of the test is also being discussed and reviewed, especially at this time when budget cuts are imminent.

English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Although there are only four English language learners in the school, the needs of these students are very different. They vary in their countries of origin, the languages they speak, their cultural background, the time they have been in the U.S., and their grade levels, which range from grades 1 to 7. Some assistance is available for these students through tutors, but essentially, instruction is provided through an inclusion model.

An inclusion model is also used for students with disabilities, a larger group than ELLs, consisting of 11 students (15% of the enrollment). It is not clear yet whether this group is large enough to constitute a subgroup under the state system. The students in this group also have very diverse needs, in terms of the type of their disability, intellectual capacity, need for individualized instruction, and age. For these reasons, district staff is finding it very difficult to have the same expectations for all the students.

Data File — Marlboro School District

Location: Southeastern Vermont

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

1 – K-8

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 78 (K-8)

White: 92%

Other: 8%

English Language Learners: 4 students (5%)

Students with Disabilities: 15%

Low-Income Students: 31%

Number of Teachers

Total: 7

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: N/A

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Title I Schools:

None

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

31. Vermont

Orleans Central Supervisory Union

Superintendent: Dr. Ron Paquette

Contact: Dr. Ron Paquette

Students: 1,217, Pre-K-12– rural

Key Findings

- New federal requirements without the additional funding to meet those requirements pose great challenges for the small rural districts of Vermont, which are stretching every local dollar as far as they can just to meet daily needs.
- Keeping highly qualified teachers is a continuous issue in the Orleans district, partly because of its small size and remote location but also because it cannot match the salaries of large cities and towns.

Background

Located in an area often referred to as the Northeast Kingdom, the Orleans Central Supervisory Union serves students in the farthest reaches of the state of Vermont, only 13 miles from Canada. This remoteness brings blessings as well as challenges; people come to the region because of the quiet and beauty of the environment, but sometimes move away because of the lack of employment.

Trout fishing in April and deer hunting in the fall are almost two additional seasons in Orleans and its sister communities, and in the fall months, tourists come in large numbers in search of the best in fall colors. But logging is on the decline, and the health of the paper industry fluctuates, resulting in an unstable job situation. The Ethan Allen furniture company, a major employer in Orleans, recently reduced its work force, causing a major impact on the area and its schools.

Unlike states with countywide or unified school districts, Vermont’s educational structure is based on confederations and supervisory unions. Orleans Central Supervisory Union has seven towns within its jurisdiction, and the members of the governing board are drawn from these units. This results in a 34-member board for Orleans Central Supervisory Union and seven separate School District boards. One town has chosen to be a “no school” town, and its residents pay tuition to the towns where its students attend

school. Choice has been such a strong and consistent component of education in this part of Vermont that students can even choose to use their tuition subsidy to attend a school in Canada if they wish.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Staff Development

The Orleans district has plans in place to assist the 28 teachers in the district who do not meet the NCLB requirements of “highly qualified.” These teachers all have college degrees but are presently on waiver certification because of their assignment to classes such as special education. The Praxis test is being used to address their licensing needs, and the district has established a formal relationship with the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative for Professional Development based at Lyndon State College.

A sizable amount of funds has been set aside from Title I to provide adequate professional development for teachers in several areas. Literacy and reading in all content areas is one focus, and others are writing conventions, math, and science. New teachers work with collaborative teachers who are assigned to help them with direct instruction at various grade levels.

Paraprofessionals are also included in the staff development. They are encouraged to submit portfolios for assessment or take the state-recognized test if they do not have two years of college. Many are native to the area, and they provide a necessary link to the community.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Retention of Highly Qualified Teachers

The tranquil beauty of the Orleans region makes this a desirable place for young teachers. There are two ski areas for winter and many lakes for the summer, and even though teacher salaries are low, the cost of living is also very affordable. Teaching conditions are good, with an average class size in the supervisory union of 12:1. All this considered, however, the Orleans superintendent must continually recruit for teachers—not only because it is difficult to find teachers, but also because the district has difficulty keeping the teachers it does recruit. The isolation and long distances from urban areas can quickly change a new teacher’s attitude from one of delight in country living to one of boredom and longing for city life (and a higher urban paycheck).

There are no easy answers to this dilemma, which seems to be prevalent in remote regions that lack basic economic development resources.

Adequate Yearly Progress

All the required grade levels in Vermont schools will be assessed in 2005, but at the present time, testing only occurs in grades 2, 4, 8, and 10 in reading/language arts and math, and in grades 7 and 9 in science and social studies.

Students in the Orleans Supervisory Union schools have done well on state testing, but district officials have concerns about the appropriateness of testing students with disabilities using grade-level tests. Autistic students, for example, are educated in regular classrooms where possible, but have special needs very different from those of the other students in the room. Yet as district officials understand NCLB requirements, the achievement of autistic students cannot be assessed with alternative assessments, and this is a concern to Orleans staff.

The Orleans union staff is concerned about the achievement of the large number of students at risk, and with a decline in state and local funds due to the decrease in overall student enrollment, options to help these students are limited. Higher student teacher ratios are anticipated, according to district staff, and there are concerns that the enrollment decline will continue because the population of the region is changing and there are fewer families with children.

In 2002 and 2003, Orleans students made good academic gains, but 2004 may show different results, especially with the subgroup of students with disabilities. If so, school administrators state that they are prepared to follow through with whatever needs to be done to improve achievement.

Federal Requirements and Funding

As a supervisory union made up of seven small schools, Orleans is particularly sensitive to the burden of additional federal requirements without the funding that is needed to implement NCLB. Local dollars are already being stretched just to meet daily needs, and the NCLB requirements come at a time when the supervisory union faces declining revenues from state and local sources. This leaves the small schools in the union with a fiscal dilemma; they have many needs but no extra money to fix their problems. Additional teacher training, for example, might be needed or new curricula and student tutoring, but there is no flexibility in a bare bones budget to move in those directions. Unfunded mandates, which NCLB could become, put more cost burden on the local communities that cannot raise additional funding, even for the laudable goal of raising student performance and teacher qualifications.

Although some districts in Vermont have indicated that they will decline federal funding from NCLB because of their dislike for the requirements that are part of the federal law, the Orleans Supervisory Union has not chosen that option. Nor is it likely that the union will do so in the future, according to Orleans superintendent Ron Paquette.

Other Implementation Issues

Family and Preschool Services

Through the Rural Economic Action Partnership (REAP) and the Northeast Kingdom Enterprise Collaborative, Orleans Central Supervisory Union No. 34 is developing what it hopes will be a model child care and family center, intended to provide “wrap around” services in one building. The Central Orleans Family Education Center (COFEC) will bring together, under one roof, school and community groups that provide early childhood education, child care, family literacy initiatives, adolescent career development, adult education, wellness, and family support services.

Currently, the district serves 35 children in its preschool program that helps prepare them for kindergarten. The COFEC project, when completed, will serve 90 preschool children.

Funded from state legislation, private foundation grants, and federal programs, and supported by community partners, the center includes programs such as Nellie May, 21st Century Learning Centers, Success by Six, Northeast Kingdom Even Start/Head Start Program, IBM, and USDA, Rural Development. According to school Superintendent Ron Paquette, the project is not expected to entail any tax increases in the local communities served by the Orleans Central Supervisory Unit. By combining resources, the project will maximize the benefits for students through efforts to address out-of-school factors that impinge on achievement.

Data File — Orleans Central Supervisory Unit

Location: Northern Vermont, 13 miles from Canadian border

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

1 pre-K

7 elementary, K-8

1 high school, 7-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 1,217

White: 96%

Other: 4%

English Language Learners: 0

Students with Disabilities: 15%

Low-Income Students: 65% - range is from 40% to 82%

Number of Teachers

Total: 144

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 28 (19%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 140 (60 of these are special education)

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 42 (30%)

Number of Title I Schools:

9 schools

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer only school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

32. Virginia

Waynesboro School District

Superintendent: Dr. T. Lowell Lemons

Contact: Betsy Mierzwa, Coordinator, Federal Programs and Testing

Students: 2,980 - rural

Key Findings

- By emphasizing early learning and readiness for school, Waynesboro expects to assure that all students in all subgroups and content areas will achieve AYP. However, when students of all grade levels are tested and the AYP of subgroups is included, there could be a difference in the performance.
- District staff members believe that the combination of preschools connected to primary grades and a full day kindergarten are significant success factors for the ongoing achievement of Waynesboro students.

Background

The Waynesboro Public School District stands somewhat near the crossroads of two major interstates that cut across the state of Virginia; the district is located on Interstate 64 and is about ten miles from Interstate 81. Although a fast-paced world surrounds it, the area stays rural in nature and true to its roots that go back to the beginning of the American nation. The district is small, with only a high school, middle school and four elementary schools to serve a student population of less than 3,000. But in many respects, this smallness has helped Waynesboro make good progress toward meeting the academic requirements for the state of Virginia.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

School Improvement Teams are a Waynesboro innovation designed to focus on helping every child learn. An individual student becomes the focus of a child study team when the student enters the first level of risk. This could be because of academic, behavior, or attendance problems. The team identifies reasons for the problem and possible solutions and interventions. Next the team sets up counseling and parent involvement and makes arrangements for tutoring and academic assistance for the student. The student's progress is monitored on a regular basis until the student is no longer at risk.

In the past, Waynesboro has emphasized the two content areas of history and science at all grade levels, and these have been identified by staff as achievement strengths, especially in the secondary schools. However, district staff has recognized the need for higher math achievement in the middle and high school to meet NCLB academic goals. The district has assigned a full-time staff person to oversee an intensive program of algebra readiness in the middle school; the program includes staff training and online assessments for students.

The district is also undertaking extensive teacher training to improve reading and writing instruction across the grades. As part of a renewed emphasis on reading through grade 5, the district has developed a schoolwide reading project that includes literacy benchmarks at all grade levels and helps make teachers aware of reading practices that get results. Reading specialists observe teachers in classrooms and help them to implement effective practices. The specialists also share their observation indicators with staff, so that everyone is working together to raise student achievement. With the addition of disaggregated student assessment data, teachers will be able to focus their efforts on specific areas of need at various grade levels and for certain groups of students.

Title I funds are used to support a math teacher at the middle school and three full-time reading specialists in the Title I schoolwide schools.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for Subgroups

At the present time, the state of Virginia tests students in grades 3, 5 and 8 and administers end-of-course tests in high school. Under the current test system, Waynesboro students appear to be progressing sufficiently from grade to grade. The testing of students in three more grades (4, 6, and 7) could make a major difference in determining adequate yearly progress of all students.

Looking at AYP by subgroups may bring out some differences that were not previously apparent. The Title I schools will see their poor students noted as subgroups, and some schools may also have enough English language learners to constitute a subgroup. Since most of the English language learners are speakers of Spanish, a subgroup of Hispanic students may also be counted toward AYP. These changes to how AYP is calculated

could make big differences in the determination of the academic progress of Waynesboro students.

Preliminary 2003 data shows that all four elementary schools have met AYP requirements. However, the middle and high school, as well as the district as a whole, did not meet AYP for all subgroups. At this point, however, the district has no schools in school improvement.

Other Implementation Issues

Preschool Readiness for Kindergarten

Waynesboro Public Schools pay a lot of attention to the early readiness of children for learning. Preschool programs have been part of the district focus since 1978, and the district has taken several other steps to help ensure that children become capable and competent readers by the end of the primary grades. One such step is the requirement that preschool teachers be highly trained and extremely well qualified. Preschool teachers in Waynesboro have college degrees, unlike many preschool teachers elsewhere who are only required to have two years of college. Because they have these qualifications, preschool teachers are paid on the same salary schedule as other teachers in Waynesboro, and this, too, assures a high quality of instruction in the pre-kindergarten years. In its preschool instruction, the district also emphasizes phonological awareness and readiness for formal reading, again not the typical fare for preschool programs.

All children who turn four before September 30 are invited to enroll in the preschool program. Assessment screenings determine which children have the greatest needs, in terms of academic readiness and social and emotional development. Children are placed in the program based on these needs. About half of entering kindergartners participated in this preschool program, which is supported with district and Title I funds.

Kindergarten in Waynesboro is a full-day program, designed to prepare children for the acquisition of reading and other skills in grade 1. District staff members strongly support this combination of a full-day kindergarten with preschool in the preceding year. They believe that this contributes significantly to the strong learning base of Waynesboro students that leads to their ongoing academic success.

Parent Involvement

In addition to parents coming to school, the school comes to the parents in the Waynesboro district, through a new program to improve parent involvement and prepare children for academic success. Under this program, a Parent Resource Van makes regular visits to various neighborhoods and apartment complexes two to three times a week in the afternoons and evenings. Parent resources, such as books, instructional materials, and handy homework hints, are distributed to parents to use in the van or check out. Monthly meetings are also held to provide parents with specific information on how they can help

their children succeed in school. These meetings are held at different times of day to better meet family needs. When the Virginia lieutenant governor came to Waynesboro to speak at the district's high school graduation in spring 2002, he took a ride on the van to dramatize the importance of reaching out to parents.

Data File — Waynesboro School District

Location: Central Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

7 total

4 elementary schools K-5

2 middle schools, grades 6-8

1 high school, grades 9-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 2,980

White: 82%

African American: 14%

Other: 4 %

English Language Learners: 3 %

Students with Disabilities: 11%

Low-Income Students: 39% (ranging from 19% to 69% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

Total: 130

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 21

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 13 (62%)

Number of Title I Schools: 2 elementary and 1 middle

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0

33. Wisconsin

Sheboygan Area School District

Co-superintendents: Jeanne Bitkers, Joseph Sheehan

Contact: John A. Pfaff, Principal and Federal Programs Coordinator

Students: 10,315, K-12 – urban

Key Findings

- The Sheboygan Area School District disseminated information and held community meetings to prepare its staff and the community for NCLB changes. As a result, staff members feel confident about the district's ability to bring all students to expected levels of academic performance.
- Sheboygan has relatively high achievement for most students but is still aware it may have difficulty making adequate yearly progress for all subgroups.

Background

Located halfway between Wisconsin's largest city, Milwaukee, and the state's most famous city, Green Bay, the Sheboygan Area School District has had much experience with educational change. The district enrolls 10,315 students in grades K-12, as well as 480 four-year-olds in an early childhood program. The city of Sheboygan (population 50,000) has seen many changes in past years, particularly in the growth of its English language learner population. These students speak 20 different languages and represent many cultures. The two main languages are Spanish and Hmong.

District officials believe they adjust quickly to change, whether the change is due to the changing diversity, demographics and cultures of local residents or the new state and federal requirements associated with NCLB. For the past two decades, district staff members have dealt with ethnic and racial changes within the educational community. They continue to hold all students to high expectations for academic achievement.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Parent Involvement

The Sheboygan Area School District took active steps to prepare its staff and the community for implementation of NCLB. The district sends a brochure to parents of children enrolled in its schools that clearly spells out the student learning expectations. Signed by the district co-superintendents, Jeanne Bitkers and Joseph Sheehan, the brochure tells parents that the Sheboygan Area School District will continue to make sure that "no child is left behind." The brochure explains to parents the main elements of NCLB, including more choices for parents; more opportunities for the state and local school districts to decide how to use federal money for schools; more testing for students to make sure schools are doing a good job; and additional requirements affecting qualifications of school staff. To reach families who speak languages other than English, the brochure lists names and phone numbers of key personnel for each of the main languages. The district also annually provides parents with a brochure that explains the

standards for each elementary grade level, with versions in Spanish, Hmong, Albanian, Bosnian, and other languages. Similar information is being developed for middle and high school courses.

Parent and community involvement continues to be at the core of Sheboygan's educational efforts. The district held five NCLB community information sessions during the 2002-03 school year, one at each school site. These sessions were intended to give parents, students, and community members opportunities to express their thoughts and concerns about the new requirements to a distinguished listening panel made up of members of the state legislature. Participants at these sessions raised concerns about the new testing requirements for all grade levels, especially the testing of students with disabilities and English language learners, and about the challenge of bringing all students to proficiency by 2013. Participants also discussed the price tag of meeting the additional testing requirements and other demands and wondered whether the district would have to create more classrooms for students who transfer from one school to the law's choice provisions. Although none of the district schools face school improvement in 2003-04, the district recognize that choice and supplemental service requirements could become a reality in future years, especially if English language learners and students with disabilities do not make adequate yearly progress. The *Sheboygan Press* also ran a series of four articles about NCLB.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners

Testing at grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 is new for Sheboygan, since previously the state tested only in grades 4, 8, and 10. The requirements to make AYP for each major subgroup have posed new challenges, especially for English language learners. The district understands it must mount specific efforts to address the academic needs of subgroups that are not meeting grade-level expectations. However, school choice should not be a problem to implement because Wisconsin already allows parents to choose the school their child will attend.

NCLB sets high expectations for students who are learning English. The district has a program funded under NCLB Title III specifically designed to assist English language learners at two sites, an elementary school and a middle school. Testing procedures are in place to determine both the English proficiency and the academic achievement of all language minority students.

Sheboygan's ELL population continues to increase; 19% of the district's students, or about 2,000 children, are not yet proficient in English. The diversity of this group is dramatic and reflects the changing demographics of the city. This population includes children of Spanish-speaking families who were migrant in the 1970s but later settled into jobs in small industry; children of Hmong refugee families from Southeast Asia,

brought to the Midwest by local churches; and families from Bosnia, Albania, and other countries.

Students in Sheboygan speak 20 different languages, and most of the programs for English language learners are of the English immersion type. According to Wisconsin state law, parents must be offered the opportunity to have their children enrolled in a bilingual program, but Sheboygan parents overwhelmingly opt for immersion. The district continues to increase its level of support and resources to schools that have large numbers of English language learners. This support includes after-school programs funded by the district and Title I and additional assistance for English language learners from Title III of NCLB. Sheboygan's English language learners outperform ELL students in comparable districts.

Qualifications for Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Meeting the NCLB provisions for teacher qualifications may pose a challenge for the Sheboygan Area School District. Although elementary teachers meet the state requirements, two groups of teachers that may need additional coursework or credentials are some teachers in specific content areas at the middle school level and special education teachers. In both cases, these positions are hard to fill because of a general shortage of qualified teachers who meet state certification. Plans are in place for additional staff development and recruitment.

Sheboygan is also focusing on the testing and training of paraprofessionals. The district has developed and implemented its own training and testing program to assure that these employees meet NCLB requirements. Of the 47 paraprofessionals in the district, 23 work at Title I schools, and none of them have two years of college. New hires are expected to have two years of college.

Other Implementation Issues

Sheboygan's support for equal opportunities for all students includes a widespread pre-kindergarten program that reaches 600 three- and four-year-olds in the district, many of whom are English language learners. The Early Learning Center (ELC) helps prepare children for kindergarten with readiness for learning, literacy, and appropriate child development practices. The children attend half-day sessions four days a week, and the program is supplemented by home visits. Because of current and potential budget cuts, the future of this program is in jeopardy. Finding funds to sustain the ELC programs will be a challenge.

Data File — Sheboygan Area School District

Location: Southern Wisconsin on Lake Michigan

Type: City of 50,000

Number of Schools:

17 total
 12 elementary schools (K-5)
 3 middle schools (6-8)
 2 high schools (9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 10,315
 White: 71%
 Asian: 17%
 Hispanic: 10%
 Other: 2%
 English Language Learners: 19%
 Students with Disabilities: 16%
 Low-Income Students: 27%, ranging from 6% to 71% in individual schools

Number of Teachers

Total: 764
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 23
 Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 23 (100%)

Number of Title I Schools: 6

Number of Schools in School Improvement and Corrective Action

	2002-03	2003-04
Required to offer school choice:	0	0
Required to offer supplemental services and choice:	0	0
In corrective action:	0	0