Bloomfield School District

New Mexico

Superintendent: Harry Hayes
Primary contact: Lena Benally-Smith, director of federal programs*

3,250 students, K-12, rural

District Description

Located in the remote northwest corner of New Mexico near the Navajo Nation, the Bloomfield School District is a small rural district with just seven schools. The student population is an almost even mix of white (33.8%), Navajo (34.7%), and Latino (30.7%). About 14.5% of the students are English language learners. Navajo and Spanish are both spoken in the community.

Key Findings

- For school year 2004-05, the state of New Mexico instituted a new test for No Child Left Behind, which has made tracking student achievement difficult in Bloomfield. While district officials seemed pleased that the new tests would focus on New Mexico Standards, they also said that the 2004-05 tests provide only baseline information on achievement because they cannot be compared to the results from 2003-04 testing.

- Public school choice under NCLB has not had a large effect on the district, since no students have changed schools.

- Online providers have offered supplemental educational services to the one elementary school where students are eligible in 2005-06. District officials predicted, however, that participation might be limited. While the providers offer students computers, some Bloomfield students in remote areas cannot be reached by land lines and instead rely on cell phones.

- English language learners and students with disabilities continue to have difficulty meeting state achievement targets in Bloomfield. The district is responding by focusing on “sheltered instruction” for English language learners, which involves teaching content in English with special attention to vocabulary, and inclusion for students with disabilities.

- While Title I funding increased in Bloomfield, students did not receive any extra services. Instead, the increase went toward state-mandated salary increases for Title I paraprofessionals and teachers.

*Other contacts for this case study include LaVerne Brown, director of personnel; and Linelle Sharrard, director of curriculum and instruction.
Overall Impact of NCLB

School year 2005-06 is the second year Bloomfield has had schools identified for improvement. Testing changes due to NCLB have had more effect on the district than choice, which has had minimal impact. Officials said they are doing several new things to raise student achievement, especially because NCLB has required the state to adopt new tests that involve more writing and higher-order thinking skills.

NCLB and Student Achievement

New state tests administered in 2004-05 and tests at more grade levels have made it difficult for Bloomfield to track changes in student achievement from 2003-04 to 2004-05. “I don’t think comparisons between 2003-04 and 2004-05 are valid,” said Linelle Sharrard, director of curriculum and instruction. “This will be our baseline year to monitor progress in future years.” In reports to parents and the press, the state superintendent has also cautioned that these new tests are more difficult than previous tests and should not be compared directly with tests from prior years.

In addition, Sharrard emphasized, “The state test is just a snapshot of a student. It should never be used alone for individual planning.” In past years Bloomfield used the Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress assessments to measure individual student progress. This year the district has changed to Compass Learning, an educational technology company, to develop short-cycle assessments based on New Mexico Standards and provide instructional support for teachers. The program will be used to track student progress and plan instruction in four schools, focusing on grades 3-8. Overall, district officials said student achievement seemed to be improving in Bloomfield, based on school management reviews of learning data and New Mexico Standards Based Assessments, although they also said some grade levels and schools have gone up while others have gone down.

Adequate Yearly Progress and School Improvement

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL AYP STATUS

The Bloomfield district failed to meet adequate yearly progress targets in 2004-05 for the second year in a row. As a result, the district has been identified for improvement. In 2003-04, the district missed AYP in reading due to the performance of Native American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The district missed AYP in math due to the performance of English language learners.

In 2004-05, district AYP in New Mexico was reported by grade level as well as by subgroup. At the elementary level, the district missed AYP targets in reading due to the performance of Native American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The district missed AYP targets in math at the elementary level due to the performance of students with disabilities. At the middle school level, the district made AYP in math, but missed targets in reading due to the performance of English language learners and students with disabilities. At the high school level, the district missed AYP targets in reading due to the performance of Native American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The district missed AYP targets in math at the high school level due to the performance of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Three schools made AYP, and four did not. Those missing AYP targets included Bloomfield High School, Charlie Y. Brown Alternative High School, Mesa Alta Junior High School, and Naaba Ani Elementary School. Because Charlie Y. Brown Alternative High School is very small, subgroup scores are not reported. At the other three schools, English language learners and students with disabilities were the subgroups missing AYP targets. In addition, at Bloomfield High
School, Native American students did not meet AYP targets in reading, and the graduation rate was not high enough to meet state standards. District officials noted that at the high school level, students from surrounding Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools enter the Bloomfield system in the 9th grade because BIA schools typically only go through 8th grade. These students, they said, were not as prepared as those who had been in Bloomfield in elementary and middle school.

Two of the elementary schools that failed to make AYP based on 2003-04 test scores made it based on 2004-05 scores. These two schools will continue to be in year 1 of school improvement in delayed status, but will come off the list if they make AYP in 2005-06. Naaba Ani Elementary, however, has moved on to year 2 of school improvement. The junior high and high school will not face NCLB sanctions because they do not receive Title I funding.

DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES
For 2005-06, Bloomfield will continue to implement its new English/language arts curriculum, described below. English language learners will receive sheltered instruction to help them understand the vocabulary used in their lessons in content areas like science and social studies, and teachers will use frequent assessments to plan instruction. This year, Sharrard said the district will also work to provide more instructional leadership in schools to make sure that past professional development efforts in English/language arts, sheltered instruction, and the use of data to inform instruction pay off. Sometimes in the past, Sharrard said, “teachers attended training and then they closed their doors and did whatever they wanted.” In 2005-06, the district will ask principals to do walkthroughs, observing and assisting elementary school teachers frequently. Principals will also be reviewing lesson plans to make sure teachers are following through with the new curriculum.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

GENERAL CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
During the 2004-05 school year, Bloomfield adopted a new K-6 English/language arts curriculum. This curriculum is aligned with state standards and with the materials and short-cycle assessments provided by Compass Learning. Schools in improvement will use the short-cycle assessments to plan instruction and predict how students will score on the state assessment, Sharrard said.

“We had pieces of Compass Learning in the district before, but this year we have purchased a new version that is Web-based and more user friendly,” said Lena Benally-Smith, director of federal programs. She explained that the success of the program in the past accounted for the upgrade and the switch from NWEA to Compass Learning for assessment. In addition, Scholastic’s reading intervention program, “Read 180,” will expand to increase the number of students served at the elementary and middle schools, where some students have more difficulty meeting state standards.

As part of the focus on English/language arts, Bloomfield will tackle writing more directly this year. “We’ll be concentrating on writing, because this is a large part of the new state test,” Sharrard explained. She estimated that about 49% of each student’s score is based on writing ability. While Sharrard praised the test’s focus on writing and higher-level thinking skills, she said that Bloomfield students needed help in this area.

CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION FOR SUBGROUPS
For the approximately 17% of Bloomfield students with disabilities, the district is moving toward an inclusion model. Bloomfield has traditionally had some inclusion classrooms in each school. Now almost all special education teachers rotate between two or three general education classrooms, Benally-Smith reported.
Finding experienced special education teachers who can make inclusion work, however, is a challenge in Bloomfield. “We have a lot of special education teachers on alternative licenses,” Sharrard said. Although these teachers are highly qualified by state standards, Sharrard noted, “It doesn’t necessarily mean they have the teaching experience to draw on.”

**English Language Learners**

English language learners in Bloomfield have historically not done as well as their peers on state tests. Most of these students speak either Spanish or Navajo at home, and both languages are heard frequently in the community. To help reach these students, Bloomfield teachers use sheltered instruction, an approach that focuses on teaching content in English while paying close attention to vocabulary so that English language learners can understand the content of the lessons. The district has hired a consultant to provide professional development and to observe in classrooms.

In addition to sheltered instruction, Bloomfield is focusing on buying instructional materials for English language learners, Benally-Smith said. These include books with engaging, age-appropriate content but lower reading levels as well as culturally relevant materials for Navajo and Latino students.

**NCLB School Choice**

At the beginning of 2004-05, the state informed Bloomfield that none of its schools had to offer school choice under NCLB. Corrections to state data made after the beginning of the school year, however, showed that one school had failed to meet AYP targets. That school and its four feeder elementary schools had to offer choice. Parents were informed in the fall, but none took advantage of the choice option, district officials reported. They explained that in addition to the late notification, the longer bus ride and contentment with the current schools may have influenced parents to keep their children in their home schools. Unspent funds were rolled over into supplemental educational services for 2005-06.

For 2005-06, three schools still have to offer choice. Unlike 2004-05, parents were informed over the summer. Despite the earlier notification, by mid-October no child had switched schools. “No parents have moved children, perhaps because they know the schools are good,” Benally-Smith said.

**Supplemental Educational Services**

In 2004-05, supplemental educational services were not offered. In 2005-06, Naaba Ani Elementary is the only school offering services. In mid-fall, parents were in the process of picking a first and second choice from among 15 providers interested in working with Bloomfield. “Most of the providers are offering online services in the homes of the students,” Benally-Smith said, explaining that this could be a problem for some students, even though providers were offering computers.

Students must have a telephone line in order to access the Internet. “But some homes have only cell phones,” Benally-Smith said, explaining that some Native American families live in areas with no existing land lines and that the Navajo Nation has entered a partnership with a cell phone company to provide cell phones instead of land lines. As a result, Benally-Smith predicted, “Some providers will have minimal participation.” She noted that some parents had returned the tutoring forms saying they wanted the school to provide the tutoring rather than an outside provider. The district, however, will not be able to provide these services, because it has been identified for improvement.
Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS
Of the 209 teachers in Bloomfield, 98% are “highly qualified” based on state definitions for NCLB. District officials noted that for 2005-06, they have a slightly higher than usual turnover of teachers. This was due primarily to teachers who retired or moved out of the area for personal reasons, reported Laverne Brown, personnel assistant. “Just a couple of positions were difficult to fill,” Brown said, but explained that the district was somewhat late in advertising for these positions, which were in high school wood shop and science. Based on the district’s experience this year, Brown anticipated that meeting NCLB’s deadline for highly qualified teachers would not be difficult in Bloomfield.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Professional development has increased in Bloomfield due to NCLB, district officials said. For 2005-06, teachers attended five days of professional development before school started. Another two days are scheduled during the year. In addition, Sharrard said, “A lot of professional development is ongoing at grade-level meetings and department meetings.” The district will focus particularly on professional development for sheltered instruction for ELL students at the elementary level.

Paraprofessional Qualifications and Support
Bloomfield employs 70 Title I paraprofessionals for the 2005-06 school year, and all meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. In 2004-05, only 92% met that definition. In New Mexico, paraprofessionals can improve their qualifications by either taking classes or passing a state test. Over the past few years, Bloomfield used Title II funds and collaborated with a local college to provide classes and test preparation. “Some paraprofessionals took the required classes, and we had a lot that tested out,” Benally-Smith reported.

Funding and Costs
Title I funding in Bloomfield increased somewhat from 2004-05 to 2005-06. But district officials said the increase did not mean increased services, because the extra money was used for salary increases for paraprofessionals and teachers mandated by the state legislature. For example, the district reported that part-time paraprofessional salaries in Bloomfield increased from $12,000 in 2004-05 to $14,000 in 2005-06. “That number jumps way up if you include benefits,” Benally-Smith said, noting that the district is now paying about $23,000 per paraprofessional with benefits. “The legislators are passing all of this, but they’re not putting the funding behind it,” Benally-Smith said. “This year we were able to cover salaries. I don’t know what will happen next year.”

Data File—Bloomfield School District

Location: Northwestern New Mexico
Type: Rural

Number of Schools
Total: 7
  Elementary: 4
  Middle/junior high: 1
  High schools: 1
  Other: 1 (alternative high school)

Number of Title I schools: 4
Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total enrollment: 3,250
American Indian: 34.7%
White: 33.8%
Latino: 30.7%
African American: 0.4%
Asian: 0.1%
Low-income students: 62.5%
Students with disabilities: 16.6%
English language learners: 14.5%

Teachers
Total number of teachers: 209
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 98%

Paraprofessionals
Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 70
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Total Number That Did Not Make AYP Based on 2004-05 Testing
Title I and non-Title schools that did not make AYP, including those in improvement, restructuring, or corrective action: 4

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

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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* Both schools made AYP based on 2004-05 testing but are still in year 1 of school improvement.