Napoleon School District
North Dakota

Superintendent: Jon Starkey
Primary contact: Jon Starkey
230 students, K-12, rural

District Description
The Napoleon School District serves students from kindergarten through grade 12 who live in the rural farmlands of south-central North Dakota. The town of Napoleon has a population of 850 and is the county seat of Logan County. More than 60% of the district students are bussed to and from school, a 50-mile round trip for some students. Bismarck, the state capital, and Jamestown, both about 80 miles from Napoleon, are the two major cities in the area.

Key Findings
- No Child Left Behind has had very little impact in the small, rural Napoleon district, which has only two subgroups large enough to count for AYP purposes—white students and low-income students. Even with changes in the state testing schedule in 2004-05 and the testing of more grade levels, Napoleon made adequate yearly progress in all areas, as it has done in past years.

- Low-income students, the largest subgroup in Napoleon schools, performed better than the district average on state reading and math tests in 2005. District staff members attribute this to the high expectations for all students and teacher attention to individual needs, particularly at the elementary level.

- Although North Dakota changed from spring to fall testing in 2004, the results were not available to the Napoleon district until just before the start of the 2005-06 school year. The district was informed by the state department of education that this was only a first-year delay and that test results from 2005 fall testing will be available to districts in February 2006.

Overall Impact of NCLB
The impact of NCLB on the two schools in the Napoleon district is not very noticeable, since both schools have made adequate yearly progress every year and most of the district’s teachers are considered highly qualified. The district has only three subgroups: white students (225 of the 230 students enrolled, or 98%), low-income students (87 students, or 38%), and a very small number of students with disabilities (9 students, or 4%). The disabilities subgroup is too small to count for AYP purposes at the school level, since there are fewer than 10 students per grade level, but it is large enough to count at the district level.

NCLB has not created any significant challenges for the district, and none are anticipated by district administrators. Efforts are being made to improve the academic achievement of secondary students to avoid future problems with AYP.
NCLB and Student Achievement

In 2004-05, North Dakota’s determination of adequate yearly progress for the Napoleon schools was based on test results for grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading and math. Napoleon elementary students consistently show higher levels of performance than do middle and high school students. In both subjects, the percentage of students meeting state proficiency targets was highest in grade 4. In reading, 74% of 4th graders scored at the proficient level, compared with 71% of 8th graders and 57% of 11th graders—a difference of 17 percentage points between the elementary and high school students. In math, 59% of 4th graders reached the proficient level, compared with 50% of 8th graders and 42% of 11th graders—again, a 17 percentage point difference.

Over the past three years the Napoleon students have scored above the state AYP targets. In 2004 the composite reading score for Napoleon was 16 percentage points higher than the state target, but in 2005, when that target increased by 11 percentage points, the Napoleon score decreased but was still above the target. In math, Napoleon’s composite score was 18 percentage points higher than the state targets in 2002 and 2003 (33.29% and 33.19%). In 2005, when the target went up to 50.99% (an increase of 18 percentage points), 56.66% of Napoleon’s students met the target.

Each grade level in Napoleon has approximately 18 students, which is a very small number for comparing one grade level to another. However, the decline from grade 4 to grade 11 concerns the Napoleon staff because it shows up on all the assessments. District officials, teachers, and principals are looking closely at all the test results to determine the specific areas of weakness. They will have more grade levels to review from the state tests, and the district assessments will be given to grades 2-10.

Low-income students in Napoleon scored above the district average in 2004-05 testing. In reading, 84% of low-income 4th graders scored at or above the proficient level; in math, the comparable percentage was 74%. The composite scores for grades 7-12 include the tested students in the 8th and 11th grades. The percentage of low-income students in those grades who met the state goal was 60% and for all students it was 59%. Over the past three years there has been no achievement gap in reading for Napoleon’s low-income students, but in math there is a difference in the scores of the secondary students. District officials attribute the high scores in reading to strong basic instruction in the elementary school that helps students do well when they reach the higher grades.

In math there are much higher expectations in the upper grades, and the older students are having more difficulty. This appears to be true across the state, as evidenced by the lower targets the state has set for math than for reading, and for upper grades compared to lower grades. In 2004-05, the target for 4th grade reading was 73.8% of students scoring proficient, but for 4th grade math it was 59.3%. In 8th grade reading it was 71.1% and in 8th grade math it was 50.0%. In 11th grade reading it was 57.2%, and in 11th grade math it was 42.1%. The target for 11th grade students in reading, 57.2%, is also considerably lower than that for 4th graders (73.8%).

Adequate Yearly Progress and School Improvement

Neither of the two Napoleon schools has been in school improvement. The high school graduation rate is usually 100%, although occasionally a student leaves early and takes the GED. The superintendent is confident that the district will make AYP next year because the state’s proficiency targets, which are on a three-year cycle, will stay the same for one more year. The elementary school will continue the course it has been on, but changes may be made at the middle/high school, depending on what district and school staff members learn about the reasons for lower performance in the upper grades.
Testing Issues

North Dakota changed its testing schedule in 2004-05 from spring to fall testing. Tests were administered in October 2004, but the Napoleon school district did not receive its results until August 2005. The reason for the delay, according to the superintendent, was that establishing the cut scores for adequate yearly progress for all grade levels was a lengthy process. New goals were set for all grade levels, and they are higher than those of previous years. The state department of education used a committee of teacher volunteers to do the work, and they spent many months deciding how high or low the expectations should be. “Some people on the committee wanted higher cut scores,” said Starkey, “and some wanted them lower. It took them a while to get it together.” When the Napoleon district received its results and found that both schools had made AYP, the district was just weeks away from the start of school. At that late date, the superintendent was relieved that AYP had been made and that changes would not be necessary.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

Napoleon teachers, especially those in the elementary grades, have learned how to align their classroom instruction to state standards, according to Starkey, but they have still found ways to link some of their favorite thematic units to the standards. The superintendent supervises and evaluates the teachers, and he supports teachers being able to make most of the instructional decisions for their classrooms. “If someone wants to teach a thematic unit, say, on presidents, that’s okay, as long as they figure out how to work the standards for the grade level into the unit—which they do,” said Starkey.

Because of this approach to decisions about what to teach and how to teach it, Napoleon teachers accept ownership of what happens in their classrooms. The changes may be there because of NCLB and accountability, but teachers decide on many of the changes that take place in their classrooms.

In addition to giving the state tests, Napoleon administers district assessments to students in grades 2-10 three times a year, in fall, winter, and spring. These are very specific assessments that were selected by teachers and district staff through a private company, Northwest Evaluation. The assessments show students’ progress, strengths, and weaknesses, allowing teachers to make specific, ongoing adjustments to their teaching.

Students take the district tests in reading and math, and the results are returned to the teachers very quickly. Teachers can then adjust their instruction to better address the weaknesses that show up on the assessments. These assessments also make it easier to monitor growth over time for individual students and for grade levels. “Our district assessments are far more valuable to us than the state tests,” Starkey said, “and our teachers really make use of them.”

Starkey attributes the small number of students identified for special education to teacher monitoring and individualized instruction for struggling students. Teachers provide a great amount of individual attention for children who are having difficulty learning to read, write, and do math. “When all else fails,” says Starkey, “we identify the student for Title I help, and if that does not make the difference, we move toward special education identification. That seems to work for us, and I have to give all the credit to our teachers because they always seem to figure out what is going to work for each child.” Students with severe disabilities, however, are immediately identified so that they can receive special education services.

Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

Two years ago, out of Napoleon’s 30 teachers, 3 did not meet the NCLB requirements for being highly qualified. Two of the teachers have now met the requirements. The third teacher will do so this year.
Considerable training has taken place in Napoleon in the past two years to help teachers improve achievement in reading, writing, and math and to recognize the value of standards-based instruction. Superintendent Starkey set several goals for the professional development of all teachers, based on findings from test results about areas of students’ weakness in various grade levels. Vocabulary was one area that was found to be a potential weakness, so this was addressed at all grade levels and in all classes. Another area was reading in the early grades. To improve reading instruction, the district hired a reading consultant, who helped teachers select books of appropriate levels for guided reading, and a literacy coach, who also worked with teachers. This year, all teachers are receiving training on ways to improve student writing.

In addition, the district implemented a new math program that includes specific skill instruction and remediation for low-performing math students in the secondary school. District and school staff members are looking for ways to improve the achievement of secondary students, including how to provide additional instructional time for middle and high school students who are not working at grade level. Options discussed include enrolling these students in additional reading and math classes, adding extra hours to the school day, or requiring students who are falling behind to attend summer school.

**Funding and Costs**

Just as the poverty rate of the Napoleon district fluctuates according to crop yields and prices, Title I funds, which are based on family income, go up and down as well. The district’s poverty rate increased slightly from 33% to 38% in 2005, but no additional funds are expected. The state formula for making allocations of federal funds is based on poverty levels across the state, and this slight increase did not make a sizable difference compared with other districts in the state.

**Data File—Napoleon School District**

**Location:** South-central North Dakota  
**Type:** Rural

**Number of Schools**
- Total: 2  
  - Elementary: 1  
  - Middle/high school: 1

**Number of Title I Schools:** 1

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**
- Total enrollment: 230  
  - White: 98%  
  - Other: 2%

- Low-income students: 38%  
- Students with disabilities: 4%

**Teachers**
- Total number of teachers: 30  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 97% (one teacher)

**Paraprofessionals**
- Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 0  
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: NA
### Total Number That Did Not Make AYP Based on 2004-05 Testing

Title I and non-Title I schools that did not make AYP, including those in improvement, restructuring, or corrective action: 0

### 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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