14. Massachusetts

Avon Public School District
Superintendent: Margaret Frieswyk
Contact: Paul Zinni, Director, Pupil Services
Students: 730, K-12 - suburban

Key Findings

- State and local budget cuts have affected education in the small Avon school district. With these fiscal problems occurring at the same time that the new federal requirements are taking effect, the district faces a considerable challenge in meeting all the NCLB demands.

- As a result of Massachusetts’ open enrollment policy, Avon receives a large number of transfer students from other districts, a trend that could intensify with the NCLB choice requirements. Choice has benefited Avon, because the transfer students have made up for the district’s declining enrollments.

Background

The Avon Public School District is a small district that serves a suburban, mostly blue-collar population. Named for the Avon River in England (Stratford-upon-Avon), the town seal has a bust of Shakespeare prominently displayed on it. The district is located in Norfolk County, 20 miles south of Boston, and consists of two school buildings that house a total of 730 students. One building is the elementary school, with 300 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through 6. The other is the secondary school, where 7th and 8th graders are housed on one floor and 9th through 12th graders on another. Each school has its own principal, and the district has two administrators—the superintendent and the director of pupil services.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Avon students have done well on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), which took effect across the state as a graduation requirement for the class of 2003. Avon is one of only nine communities in the state where all students who had met the district’s graduation requirements, including those with special needs, also earned a passing score on the test. Both of Avon’s schools also have good performance records on the state’s accountability system; they surpass the state averages in reading/language arts and mathematics and exceed the state’s AYP expectations.
To help ensure student success, Avon has attempted to keep class size at all grade levels to a maximum of 22, although there is some fluctuation in these numbers. Because of budget cuts, 1st grade started the 2003-04 year with two teachers, when one teacher retired and was not replaced. This decision was made even though there were 39 students anticipated for that grade level. The 1st grade classes were at or under 22 at the start of the school year, but additional enrollments brought that number to 24. The inclusion classroom already had a full-time aide and the support of the special education teacher. This was not the case in the other 1st grade classroom; therefore, a teaching assistant, who is also certified as an elementary teacher, was hired to work in the non-inclusion classroom to accommodate the larger number of students.

Professional Development

Avon has a major program of professional development that district officials say helps teachers understand and use data as they make decisions about curriculum and instruction. Funded from NCLB and district funds, the program also helps teachers use their newly acquired expertise to improve student instruction in writing and mathematics. This is one of the ways that district teachers combine content and curriculum to improve overall student performance. The district’s limits on class size also allow teachers to differentiate instruction across the curriculum and across the grades.

Although poverty is not extensive in Avon, the elementary school receives a small amount of Title I funds, as well as funding from other NCLB programs. Avon has also had a major professional development effort supported with funds from Titles I and II of NCLB and the district’s general funds. Recently, the district chose to be part of the first cohort of Massachusetts schools to participate in a coordination of NCLB funds. The application was time-consuming, especially for such a small district with only two district administrators, but school officials believe the added flexibility in the use of funds will work to their advantage.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Qualifications of Paraprofessionals

Although all Avon teachers meet NCLB requirements for complete certification, this is not the case for paraprofessionals, most of whom do not have two years of college. Massachusetts has chosen two assessments for determining the competency of paraprofessionals, and Avon will make them both available to paraprofessionals. As an alternative to an assessment, Avon staff members are working with a local special education collaborative and with Bridgewater State College to design a two-year course to help paraprofessionals meet the NCLB requirements. In spring 2003, ten paraprofessionals from Avon and neighboring districts took their first class as part of this program. The district is also providing classes to help paraprofessionals succeed on
competency tests, focusing on such areas as improving test-taking skills and mastering some of the more difficult content of the exams, such as higher-level mathematics.

Other Implementation Issues

Fiscal Problems

A major problem Avon faces is the dramatic reduction in state funding for education programs. In 2003-04, the district will have to make programmatic reductions as a result of a decision by the Avon town board to cut the district budget by 10%. The district has adjusted its plans and made some changes in staffing and programs. Avon’s schools all have site-level decision-making groups that consist of parents and school staff members. These groups will make decisions related to this lower level of funding—decisions that may affect the opportunities available for students.

School Choice

About half of the students who attend Avon High School live outside the Avon district but have transferred into the school under the state’s open enrollment policy. Avon is fairly close to several school districts in the greater Boston area, and many of the transfer students commute to Avon High School on public transportation. Some students transfer because of the greater opportunities to excel in athletics in a small high school, but others go to Avon because of the small class sizes and attention to academics. It is not unusual for these students to stay in Avon for their entire high school career. Choice students are also accepted at the elementary school. The cap on class size helps the district determine which grade levels have room for more students. Avon eagerly welcomes the high school transfer students, because without them, enrollments would likely be too low to justify keeping the high school open. Many of the high school transfer students are minority students, which brings diversity to the district.

Data File — Avon Public School District

Location: Norfolk County, south of Boston
Type: Suburban
Number of Schools:
- 2 total
- 1 elementary school (PreK-6)
- 1 middle/high school (7-8 and 9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
- Total Enrollment: 730, plus 14 out-of-district special needs students
- White: 82%
- African American: 14%
- Hispanic: 3%
- Asian: 1%
- English Language Learners: 2 students
Students with Disabilities: 14%
Low-Income Students: 16% (13% at elementary school, 19% at secondary school)

**Number of Teachers**
Total: 78
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

**Number of Paraprofessionals**
Total: 14
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 10 (71%)

**Number of Title I Schools:** 1 elementary

**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

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<td>Required to offer supplemental services and choice:</td>
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15. Massachusetts

**Boston Public Schools**
Superintendent: Dr. Thomas Payzant
Contact: Charlotte Harris, Development Director

*Students: 62,400, K-12 - urban*

**Key Findings**

- The Boston Public Schools have lost more in state and local funds due to the state’s fiscal crisis than they have gained in federal funds for NCLB, and these cuts have led to layoffs of 600 teachers and notable increases in class size. The cuts have not affected the district’s implementation of NCLB requirements, however, according to district officials.

- With a student enrollment that is 85% minority, 77% low income, 18% special needs, and 15% English language learners, Boston faces challenges in meeting the adequate yearly progress requirements of NCLB.

- In 2003, one Boston school that had been positively recognized for its reading progress under a local recognition program did not make adequate yearly progress in math under the state’s NCLB criteria. This situation was confusing to the public and, in the view of district officials, highlighted the weaknesses and misleading aspects of the NCLB accountability requirements, which judge schools based on a less complete picture than the local criteria.
The Boston Public school district became a state-approved provider of supplemental educational services for its students so that it can assure that its students receive high-quality services that are closely related to their specific needs.

Background

Boston, Massachusetts, can rightfully claim to have the oldest school in the nation—Boston Latin, a name familiar to many people. This school has been in existence since 1645 and is still in operation. What people may not know about Boston, however, is that although one foot is firmly rooted in the past, district leaders believe the other foot is planted just as firmly in the future. The Boston school district is implementing districtwide reform aimed at higher academic achievement for all students.

With an enrollment of 62,400 students in 153 schools, this urban district faces many of the same academic challenges as other large city school districts. Boston has a high poverty level—77% overall—but in some schools, the poverty rate is as high as 99%. The district serves large numbers of English language learners, who comprise 15% of the school population and speak 80 different languages; until the current school year, the district taught in 9 languages; following a change in state law, the district now enrolls English language learners in structured English immersion classes. Minority students, mainly Hispanic and African American, make up 85% of the enrollment, and there are high numbers of students with disabilities, 18% of students.

School reform started in Boston well before NCLB. Many of the district’s reforms, such as professional development, predominantly through coaching, fit with the requirements of the new federal law. On the district’s website, Superintendent Thomas Payzant emphasizes the goal of ensuring that all of the district’s schools are schools of excellence, adding that “all of us associated with Boston Public schools are enthusiastic about our progress and are aware that much work remains to be done.”

Superintendent Payzant is very familiar with federal law because he served as Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U. S. Department of Education when Congress enacted the Improving America’s School Act, the predecessor to NCLB. It is no surprise then, that the Boston Public Schools are well into the implementation of NCLB and that many of the reform measures required by the new law are already being put into practice.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress and School Choice

The academic improvement plan for Boston Public Schools includes high expectations for proficiency in reading, writing, and math, although many students have not yet
reached the expected levels of performance. Before NCLB, the district’s goal was to move everyone out of academic failure using a continuous progress model. As a result of NCLB, the new goal is to have all students reach proficiency using a quantified benchmark model imposed by the state. The change in methods of calculation has produced some improvement in the number and percentages of students passing the state’s tests—in other words, the percentage reaching proficiency. Nevertheless, in 2002, 18 schools were identified for school improvement for the first time, and 25 were in school improvement for two years or more. Relatively few Boston parents took advantage of the opportunity to send their children to another school. From the 44 schools where 18,768 students were eligible for school choice, only 45 students transferred to another school. District officials felt this was largely because of parents’ commitment to their current schools, but also because a zone and citywide choice program has been in place in Boston since 1987, so parents had already had a chance to choose their children’s school. Overall, according to district staff, very few parents indicate dissatisfaction with their children’s schools.

A total of 1,200 students participated in supplemental services in 2002-03, out of the 10,577 that were eligible; parents seemed more willing to accept those services than to send their children to other schools. The Boston Public Schools was one of the providers approved by the state and was the provider most often selected by parents. Students received the additional services in before- and after-school programs organized and taught by site coordinators and regular daytime teachers recruited throughout the district.

Boston closed two school improvement schools in 2003-04, lowering the number to 42 schools in need of improvement. Of these, however, 25 schools entered a second year in need of improvement and, in the third year of NCLB, 12 schools have been identified for corrective action. The number of students who transferred to another school increased to 70, and 5,139 of the 15,572 eligible students are participating in supplemental services.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners*

One of the challenges facing the Boston district is continued achievement gains for the 15% of the district’s students who are still learning English. The Boston schools serve a changing population of language minority families, and the number of English language learners has increased significantly in the past few years. Boston students speak more than 80 languages, with Spanish being the most common language.

A 2002 change in Massachusetts state law, effective as of school year 2002-03, required school districts to teach English to English language learners using structured immersion programs or mainstream classrooms, rather than transitional bilingual classes, with very few exceptions. Severely limiting bilingual instruction could affect whether ELLs make adequate yearly progress when they are counted as a subgroup for NCLB. District staff also notes that the change will affect instruction for regular education students because
teachers will have to meet the needs of both the regular and ELL students in the same classes.

**Fiscal Problems**

Revenue shortfalls at the state level caused reductions in state funding for 2003-04 that resulted in notification of possible layoff to 1,200 teachers in the Boston City Schools, and 600 teachers were laid off. Underfunded in relation to suburban districts before the recent recession, the city’s schools are falling further behind now, according to district staff. Class sizes have increased slightly, especially at the secondary level, undoing the work of many years to bring class size down from 33 pupils per teacher to 28 at the secondary level and from 25 to 22 and 20 at the elementary and primary levels. Planned adoptions and replacements of texts have been delayed, instructional materials are in short supply, and student support services and extracurricular activities have been reduced. The state anticipates another cutback for school year 2004-05. These state and local cutbacks have far exceeded the increases in federal revenue from NCLB.

Moreover, the additional responsibilities of carrying out the requirements of NCLB have greatly increased the workload of existing staff, both at the district level and at school sites. Principals have to learn the new terminology and accountability system and teach it to their staffs, and they also must adhere to NCLB requirements for parental notifications and supplemental services programs.

**Other Implementation Issues**

*Preschool Readiness for Kindergarten*

Boston’s early learning reform movement begins in pre-kindergarten: approximately 70% of the children in the city attend some form of organized preschool education prior to kindergarten. Head Start serves 1,100 four-year-olds, and the state funds a contracted services preschool program for approximately 1,200 students. The school district is the lead agent for the state program, and wide scale efforts are taking place to improve the coordination of the various funding sources that deal with children from birth to age 8. Full-day kindergarten is already in place in elementary schools throughout the district. The district will begin NCLB outreach to preschools in its 86 elementary schools, all of which are Title I schoolwide project schools in 2003-04.

*Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals*

Massachusetts teacher certification requirements have allowed secondary school teachers to teach outside of their certificate area for 20% of their regularly assigned time. As a result of this provision and a shortage of certified special needs and math and science teachers, 12.5% of Boston’s teachers do not meet the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers. The district is implementing a data collection system to monitor and report progress toward meeting NCLB requirements and is training principals to use the
evaluation tool required by NCLB (the Massachusetts High Objective Uniform Standards of Evaluation – MAHOUSE) to move its teachers into full compliance.

The district has never made extensive use of paraprofessionals other than in its special needs education program, so although the district must implement a testing and training program for its 221 instructional paraprofessionals, the problem is less acute among this group of employees.

**Conflicting Information on School Performance**

One of the practices in the Boston district has been to identify schools that have made good progress for two years, a label that is referred to as “Effective-Practices.” However, one school that received this recognition for its reading progress did not make adequate yearly progress in 2003 because of its math performance. This sends a confusing message to the public. Boston staff members have expressed their concern about this confusing message and its effect on students, staff, parents and the community.

Charlotte Harris, Boston’s Development Director, had this to say about this issue: “The school principal honed right in on a huge NCLB problem. The state is labeling schools as failures based on test scores from very few grades within the school. The district and its partners, in this case the Boston Plan for Excellence, have a more thoughtful and complete method for evaluating and labeling schools and the principal is right, the public is confused by the discrepant labels. The misleading labeling system established by NCLB is one of its worst aspects, aside from underfunding, and one likely to be changed on reauthorization.”

**Data File — Boston Public Schools**

**Location:** Massachusetts, city of 575,000  
**Type:** Urban  
**Number of Schools:**  
153 total  
6 PreK-1  
67 elementary schools, K-5  
10 grades, K-8  
19 middle schools, grades 6-9  
25 high school, grades 9-12  
3 high schools, grades 7-12  
12 special schools and programs  
11 affiliated alternative schools, 2 middle and 9 high schools  

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**  
**Total Enrollment:** 62,400  
**African American:** 48%  
**Hispanic:** 28%  
**White:** 15%  
**Asian:** 9%  
**English Language Learners:** 15% (80 languages)  
**Students with Disabilities:** 18%
Low-Income Students: 77% (ranging from 29% to 99% in individual schools)

**Number of Teachers**
- Total: 4,789
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 576 (12%)

**Number of Paraprofessionals**
- Total: 221
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: (only special education)

**Number of Title I Schools**: 132

**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

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16. **Minnesota**

**Cloquet Independent School District # 94**
- Superintendent: John Langenbrunner
- Contact: Randy Thudin, Principal
- *Students*: 2,278, K-12 – rural

**Key Findings**

- Cloquet, a rural district with high average levels of academic attainment, has made considerable progress in closing the achievement gap between its White and American Indian students. Not only has the district made a strong overall commitment to school reform, but it also has focused professional development on meeting the needs of American Indian students and has encouraged staff to reach out to parents of students who were not performing well.

- The district has no schools in school improvement, and attributes its academic success to such efforts as staff development in reading instruction and an extended day learning program (funded through a grant from the NCLB 21st Century After School Learning program) which provides homework help and enrichment for four afternoons a week.

- Although Cloquet has no schools required to offer choice, district officials feel their experience with choice under Minnesota’s state choice policy will make it easier for them to comply with this requirement.
Background

Located in Minnesota’s north country, not far from Lake Superior, Cloquet is a small city of 10,885 with roots going back to the French fur-trading era. Cloquet Independent School District # 94 enrolls a total of 2,351 K-12 students. The city of Cloquet also has in its midst a sovereign Indian nation, the Ojibwa Reservation. An independent unit of governance, the reservation operates its own school for families of the Ojibwa nation. The reservation school enrolls 230 students, but half of the Ojibwa children attend Cloquet’s schools.

Cloquet’s Title I program serves about one third of the district’s elementary students and 9% of its middle school students. Like many districts, Cloquet focuses its Title I funds on the lower grade levels to give children an adequate foundation in basic skills. All of the district’s Title I programs are targeted assistance programs because the poverty level in the poorest schools (35%) falls below the 40% threshold for operating a schoolwide program.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Overall, students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in Cloquet perform quite well compared with other students in the state, and the district has no schools in school improvement. All of Cloquet’s teachers also meet the state criteria for being highly qualified. District officials feel that what they are doing to implement NCLB greatly exceeds what is expected by the state—even with new regulations that have been put into place.

Several factors play a part in Cloquet’s academic stability. First, district leaders have known about the anticipated changes to Title I and other federal education programs since amendments to Title I were being considered by the U.S. Congress. Second, Cloquet, a paper mill town, has not suffered unduly from the economic downturn that has hurt much of northern Minnesota, and despite some struggles, the local economy is holding its own.

Third, the district has undertaken several efforts to improve academic achievement. Cloquet has implemented a districtwide curriculum and set districtwide goals, such as improving the graduation rate, implementing a school performance database, instituting a new science curriculum in grades 3-6, strengthening special education support, and improving elementary mathematics. District goals for staff development emphasize continued improvement in reading fluency and comprehension, the use of data for making decisions, and the use of state scoring criteria for grading student work. Cloquet staff also point to the district’s extended day learning program, held in both of its elementary schools, as a contributor to high performance. This program provides
homework assistance and enrichment to many as 200 children for two or three extra hours, four afternoons each week. The program is funded from the 21st Century After School Learning program that is now part of NCLB.

Finally, the district has a strong level of parent and community involvement, according to district officials, including a process of shared decision-making with advisory committees consisting of diverse community representatives.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress for Ethnic Subgroups*

Cloquet staff was concerned about how to address the academic needs of its American Indian students. These students lagged behind other children in the district, and staff feared this gap could become an issue with the NCLB requirement to track AYP for specific ethnic subgroups. The district focused professional development on meeting the needs of these students and reaching out to the parents of students who were not performing well.

The results of 2003 testing showed a significant improvement in the academic performance of American Indian students, as displayed in the table below. In 2000, American Indian students scored 19% lower than the districtwide average for all students in reading. In 2001, this subgroup scored 26% lower, and in 2002, it scored 24% lower. In 2003, however, the achievement gap for American Indians was narrowed to a difference of only 8%. In 2002, 80% of all students scored at the proficient level in reading, compared with 56% of American Indian students. In 2003, the comparable figures were 89% proficient for all students and 81% for American Indian students.

The average math scores for American Indians showed even more improvement. This subgroup scored 27% lower than the district average in math in 2000, 25% lower in 2001, and 33% lower in 2002. In 2003, the average math scores for American Indian students improved significantly, lowering the gap to eleven percentage points.

*Average State 2003 Test Results for Students in Cloquet Independent School District #94*

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<td>80%</td>
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<td>89%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>8</td>
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Qualifications of Paraprofessionals

Most of the paraprofessionals who work in Cloquet’s Title I schools do not meet the NCLB requirements because they do not have two years of college education. Although a state test is being planned, the Cloquet district is also working with Fond Du Lac Community College to develop 48 units of college courses for paraprofessionals, the equivalent of two years of college.

Other Implementation Issues

School Choice

Cloquet does not have any schools that are required to offer choice because of NCLB, but the district is not concerned about implementing choice if this should happen because Minnesota parents already have the right to choose schools for their children under a statewide policy enacted in 1992. Parents have the flexibility to send their children to any school in their local area or any school in the state, and many take advantage of that opportunity. Cloquet has had much experience with transfers into and out of the district, including children from the Ojibwa Reservation whose families choose to send them to Cloquet schools. In 2002-03, a total of 140 children transferred out of the Cloquet district, and 190 transferred in from neighboring districts—a net gain of 50 students for Cloquet.

Data File — Cloquet Independent School District #94

Location: Northern Minnesota
Type: Rural
Number of Schools:
4 total
2 elementary schools (K-5)
1 middle school
1 high school

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total Enrollment: 2,278
White: 85%
American Indian: 15%
English Language Learners: 4 students
Students with Disabilities: 11%
Low-Income Students: 31%, ranging from 25% to 35% in individual schools

Number of Teachers
Total: 174
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals
Total: 12 Title I
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 10 (83%)

**Number of Title I Schools:** 3 (2 elementary, 1 middle)

**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

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17. Mississippi

**Pascagoula School District**
Superintendent: Dr. Hank Bounds
Contact: Dr. Susan McLaurin
*Students: 7,480, K-12 – suburban*

**Key Findings**

- To prepare for the higher expectations of NCLB, the Pascagoula School District has made significant changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment at all grade levels—for example, encouraging principals and teachers to make instructional decisions based on analyses of test data and giving teachers additional support from district curriculum specialists.

- To help raise achievement, the local school board has dedicated additional funds to reduce class size in grades K-3 and to mount extended day and extended year programs for students who scored at the minimal or basic levels on state tests.

- Pascagoula has learned to make overnight shifts in services for English language learners because local shipyards and other industries bring large numbers of families from various countries for short periods of employment; the children from these families attend local schools and learn English while they are in the U. S.

- To help prepare its Title I paraprofessionals for the competency tests they must take under NCLB in lieu of earning a degree, the district uses Title I funds to pay for tutors, who provide intensive instruction for paraprofessionals who plan to take the tests. The classes take place three afternoons each week for two months prior to the test administration.
Background

The Pascagoula School District is considered a suburban district because it serves the growing populations of two cities along the gulf coast: Biloxi, Mississippi, to the west and Mobile, Alabama, to the east. Although the economic situation in the area is better than in many parts of Mississippi, the district’s poverty level averages 61%, with a range in individual schools from 42% to 83%. Most of the families are blue collar, and many work for two major industries—the shipbuilding giant Northrop Grumman and Chevron—and there is also a naval station in Pascagoula.

In addition to Northrop Grumman, the area also supports several smaller shipbuilding companies that frequently build ships for other countries and often bring in workers from those countries. This arrangement results in unexpected increases in students who need to learn English. During the past ten years, the school district has welcomed students from Korea, Norway, and Venezuela. Typically, the district’s population of English language learners did not exceed 25 students and was fairly stable. Three years ago, however, Pascagoula experienced its first surprise increase in English language learners when, the week after school started, Spanish-speaking children began to enroll, until the total of English language learners eventually reached 110 students that year. This increase has continued, with students coming from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and other Latin American countries. Many families come to the area because of the availability of work in the shipyard and other local industries. In 2003-04, the enrollment includes 203 English language learners in the Pascagoula schools.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

According to district officials, the staff members of the Pascagoula School District have a good understanding of NCLB requirements, largely because numerous professional development sessions and parent meetings were scheduled on the Act. The superintendent presented NCLB sessions at civic club meetings, churches, and school board meetings, and the district developed an informational brochure about NCLB for parents and community members. An article about NCLB appears in the district newsletter each quarter, and the superintendent has met with the education reporters from the two local newspapers to explain state and federal accountability.

Highly Qualified Teachers

In midsummer of 2003, the Mississippi state department of education notified Pascagoula School District about the district teachers who did not meet the NCLB definition of “highly qualified.” The list, according to district officials, contained numerous errors, but even after several phone calls to the office of licensure, the district was still without an updated list in late fall. The department of education also posted school and district report cards on its website. Along with state accreditation ratings, the report cards listed detailed AYP information, graduation rates, and teacher quality percentages. This information, however, was posted without the revisions, corrections, or clarification from local school
districts. This is an example of the complexity that states and districts face in assembling accurate data about teacher qualifications and other issues.

According to the district report card on the state department of education website, 97.6% of the 360 core academic teachers in the Pascagoula School District are highly qualified. The number who are not is small (13 of 600 total teachers), and these appear to be special education and middle school teachers who teach in content areas but hold elementary licenses.

Requirements for Paraprofessionals

As with the district teaching staff, the number of paraprofessionals in Pascagoula who do not meet NCLB requirements is low. Of the 180 employees, only 32 do not meet the requirements, and most of these are either pursuing an associate’s degree or planning to take the Work Keys tests. The Mississippi Department of Education adopted the ACT Work Keys tests in Reading for Information, Math Applications, and Writing to assess the competency of paraprofessionals. Title I funds are used to pay for tutors who provide intensive instruction for the paraprofessionals who plan to take the tests. The classes are provided three afternoons each week for two months prior to test administration, which takes place four times a year. However, there are paraprofessionals who are nearing retirement, and although they are highly effective employees, according to district staff, they were not interested in taking college classes and they were terrified of taking a test. Their experience and expertise was needed, so staff decided to help them with intensive tutoring provided by teachers. Both test-taking skills and higher levels of math and writing skills were addressed. This strategy has worked well, and it has given the paraprofessionals the confidence they need to proceed with meeting the requirements.

Improving Student Performance

In anticipation of the requirements of NCLB, the Pascagoula district has focused on improving student achievement for the past two years. In 2002-03, the district began the “Superior Expect It!” campaign. The Mississippi state accreditation system rates schools at levels of performance from 5 to 1: superior, exemplary, successful, under-performing, and low-performing, and all schools are expected to become superior schools. The pressure is on everyone to make sure that all students succeed, and with this academic focus on every learner, the results are beginning to look good in Pascagoula. Five of the schools are rated at Level 5 which is the superior rating, six are rated at Level 4, and five are at Level 3. Each of the schools studies the assessment data; school staff members develop a plan to improve student achievement on a child-by-child basis, and address any deficits with specific subgroups. The instructional decisions of both teachers and principals are becoming more data-driven.

Teachers concentrate on student mastery of the state curriculum and standards, and principals monitor classroom instruction in regard to content and teaching strategies. The four district curriculum specialists conduct “walk-through” visits in classrooms, and the observations are discussed with teachers and principals. Recommendations are made for
professional development activities for teachers who are having a difficult time with content or teaching techniques. Follow-up visits are held as necessary, and the curriculum specialists also conduct quarterly grade or subject area meetings so that teachers can discuss their challenges and successes.

The Pascagoula school board recently dedicated $500,000 for extended day and extended year programs at schools. Students who scored at the minimal or basic levels on the Mississippi curriculum tests or the subject area tests required for graduation have been placed in after-school tutoring programs and recommended for the extended year program.

Class sizes in grades K-1 have been reduced, and district monies have been set aside to build additional classrooms to reduce class sizes in grades 2 and 3. The district goal is to have a pupil-teacher ratio of 15:1 in all classes in grades K-3 within three years.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress*

Although all Pascagoula schools made AYP for 2003-04, three schools did not show academic growth for the state accreditation model, but the state dropped this indicator as a measure of AYP because of data collection problems at the state level. Instead, attendance was used as the other AYP indicator. All subgroups made AYP also, but special education students were tested at their instructional level rather than their grade level. District staff is aware that when the special education students are tested on grade level and ELLs are tested using the same instrument as English-speaking students, it is very likely that AYP targets will not be met for those two subgroups. Special education students and ELL students are not achieving at the same rate as their peers, and this is an area that will receive a new focus.

Pascagoula’s 203 English language learners speak a variety of languages. Some 67% speak Spanish, and 20% speak Vietnamese. Other languages include Thai, Bulgarian, Gujarati, Romanian, Tagalog, Cantonese, Navajo, and German. All these students must be tested in English with appropriate accommodations. However, the logistics of providing certified test administrators and proctors for students at all 18 school sites, testing within the timelines, and requiring that even beginners in English take a test in English are expected to be very difficult, according to Dr. Susan McLaurin. And as soon as ELL students become proficient, they are moved out of the ELL subgroup, so growth will never be seen.

The challenge of teaching English language learners in Pascagoula is two-fold: helping the students attain English proficiency while assisting them to maintain age-appropriate subject area skills. Pascagoula staff members believe that they do a good job in teaching English, but they have concerns about assuring that all ELL students are on grade level in content areas. Two English teachers were hired to work with secondary ELL students,
and three tutors were hired to work with elementary ELL students. Each new ELL student is tested for English proficiency and a schedule for individual or small group sessions is arranged. Teachers and tutors work closely with regular classroom teachers to address the specific learning needs of ELL students, but there is recognition from staff that more needs to be done for all students to be successful.

The situation for special education students is similar, McLaurin noted. These students are taught on an educationally appropriate level, but now they must be tested on grade level, which adds more stress to the testing stress for students, parents, and teachers. Furthermore, teachers know that some of their students with disabilities are unlikely to meet the expectations of the assessments.

In order to overcome these challenges, Pascagoula staff members are working with the ELL and special education students to make sure they master the state curriculum. They are also providing information sessions for parents and the community about these issues.

Other Implementation Issues

Scientifically Based Programs and Approaches

Pascagoula School District recognizes that NCLB calls on districts to use programs and curricula that are based on scientific research and documented as being effective in raising student achievement. Examples of programs that are extensively used in the district are Accelerated Reading, Math, and Writing. District staff members looked at the results of these programs in other schools as well evidence from the program vendor before they made their decisions. Their own frequent assessment of student progress as they tried out the programs indicated that the programs should bring them the results they want.

Fiscal Issues

The costs of education have gone up in Pascagoula in recent years. Staff received pay increases in 2003, and the cost of most products—including instructional supplies, equipment, textbooks, and furniture—also rose. The costs of construction of new schools and maintenance of existing facilities also increased significantly. Without additional funds for NCLB, Pascagoula staff does not know how the district will maintain its present programs and fully implement both NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. There is so much to do, and very few funds to support what must be done to ensure that all students are performing proficiently by 2014.

Data File — Pascagoula School District

Location: Mississippi coast, east of Biloxi
Type: Suburban
Number of Schools:
19 schools
11 elementary, K-5
3 middle schools, 6-8
2 high schools, 9-12
1 alternative school, 1-12
1 exceptional school (students from entire county attend)
1 Applied Technology Center

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total Enrollment: 7,480
White: 51%
Black: 44%
Hispanic: 3%
Other: 2%
English Language Learners: 2.7%
Students with Disabilities: 15%
Low-Income Students: 61% (range is 42% to 83%)

Number of Teachers
Total: 600
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 2%

Number of Paraprofessionals
Total: 180
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 18%

Number of Title I Schools:
All – elementary and middle schools are schoolwide; high schools are targeted assistance

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

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18. Missouri

Hermitage School District
Superintendent: Shelly Aubuchon
Contact: Shelly Aubuchon
Students: 320, K-12 – rural

Key Findings
• District officials in Hermitage, a small, rural school district, are finding that the requirements of NCLB are consistent with the district’s previous goals for improving student achievement.

• Despite the district’s 71% poverty rate, Hermitage test scores exceed state averages in reading and math. District officials attribute this successful performance to the district’s small school settings, which make it easier for teachers to work as a team; its accountability plan; its summer academic enrichment program; and its strong parent involvement efforts.

**Background**

The Hermitage School District is located in Hickory County, Missouri, in the south central part of the state. Hermitage is one of four small, rural school districts in the county. Although the county was once an agricultural area, most families in the Hermitage district commute to nearby towns for employment, and some raise cattle as a part-time occupation.

To serve its enrollment of 320 K-12 students, Hermitage has two schools: an elementary school serving grades K-6, and a secondary school that includes a middle school for grades 7-8 and a high school for grades 9-12. Most of the families in the district are low income; 71% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunches.

Despite its poverty level, Hermitage is one of the higher performing school districts in the state, with student scores that consistently exceed state averages. Staff members credit the smallness of the elementary school, which is a Title I school, as a factor in its achievement success. With one class at each grade level, everyone in the school knows all the students, and the staff members work well as a team.

**Progress in Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress*

In 2003 state test results, Hermitage continues to exceed state averages in both reading and math. The district has no English language learners, and students with disabilities are not considered a subgroup for NCLB accountability purposes because the number is smaller than the state’s minimum size for a subgroup.

The following table shows the percentage of elementary students who scored at the proficient or advanced levels on state tests in reading and math, compared to state averages.

**2003 Scores on State Tests for Hermitage Students and All Students in the State**
### Student group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hermitage students</th>
<th>Reading, Grade 3</th>
<th>Math, Grade 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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Hermitage officials credit these high performance levels to the district’s accountability plan and its emphasis on teachers. For 2003-04, Hermitage has made a major change in the grade level structure of its schools. The 6th graders, considered part of the middle school in previous years, are now included in the elementary school, which means they will be taught in self-contained classes rather than in the departmentalized structure of the middle school.

In 2003, the district offered a summer camp for students in all grades to provide academic enrichment for those who were falling behind in particular areas. The program was funded through the NCLB 21st Century Community Learning Program.

The staff also considers the district’s preschool program for three- and four-year-olds to be important to student success. The program for four-year-olds is funded by the state of Missouri, and the program for three-year-olds is funded by the federal Even Start program, now a part of NCLB. These preschool programs, attended by about half of the children of those ages, are closely connected to the district kindergarten program.

Parent involvement continues to be a major goal for Hermitage, from preschool through high school. Teachers make frequent calls to parents, not just to report problems but also to report positive growth and work with parents on interventions that will lead to academic improvement. Parents are invited to participate in learning activities, such as the Family Fun Nights scheduled every month or so.

Although the Hermitage School District has done well thus far in meeting the goals of NCLB, staff is aware that the district’s status could change in the future. If some of the highly qualified teachers were to leave, for example, it might be difficult to find replacements that are as well qualified.

### Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

**Teacher Qualifications**

At the start of the 2003-04 school year, Hermitage reported no problems with continuing its full implementation of NCLB. Future concerns may arise in relation to teacher qualifications, but if this occurs, the superintendent plans to assist any teachers with taking the state-approved test for complete certification. The test is given periodically in a neighboring county, and the district will provide whatever support teachers need, including reimbursements for mileage to and from the test-taking site.
Other Implementation Issues

Student Enrichment

Hermitage School District uses some of its 21st Century funds to provide enrichment activities for students. One such program is a travel club called the Voyagers. Students from kindergarten through 12th grade take part in Saturday educational adventures that involve travel away from home. Trips will be made this year to the Kansas City Science Center, the Truman Library, Fort Scott, and the Steamboat Museum, as well as to a college football game and a rodeo.

Data File — Hermitage School District

Location: South Central Missouri
Type: Rural
Number of Schools:
  2 total
  1 elementary school (K-6)
  1 secondary school (7-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics
  Total Enrollment: 320
  White: 98%
  Other: 2%
  English Language Learners: None
  Students with Disabilities: 8%
  Low-Income Students: 71%

Number of Teachers
  Total: 32
  Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals
  Total: 1
  Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Title I Schools: 1 elementary school

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

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19. Nebraska
Heartland School District
Superintendent: Dr. Norm Yoder
Contact: Dr. Norm Yoder
Students: 350, K-12 – rural

Key Findings

- Students with disabilities in Heartland met the state targets for adequate yearly progress in mathematics in grades 4 and 8, with large percentages of students scoring at proficient levels, a situation that district staff attributes to the wide range of skill level among the students.

- All of Heartland’s 42 teachers and five paraprofessionals meet the requirements of NCLB.

- District leaders have always worn several hats in small districts like Heartland, but with the enactment of NCLB, meeting the law’s accountability requirements has become a large responsibility for the superintendent.

Background

The Heartland School District in rural, southeastern Nebraska has existed for only five years. The district was created when two small districts, Henderson and Bradshaw, merged because their enrollments were declining. Consolidation was looked on as the most effective way to better utilize their combined resources.

In the new Heartland district, however, enrollments have continued to decline each year. This is partly due to lower birth rates but also because families have moved out of the area in search of more stable employment. Although the area has some of the best farmland in the state, widespread irrigation of corn and bean fields has reduced the need for farm workers.

Some families commute daily to their jobs in Grand Island and Lincoln, but for the school district to survive, the community must attract more jobs and residents—and soon. To this end, local leaders are seeking to boost tourism by actively preserving and promoting the rural heritage of the area.

If that plan works, the school district will survive. The district’s fallback plan is to invite neighboring districts to join forces and consolidate further. Discussions have been initiated with two neighboring districts, but a third district does not appear to be interested. With the high accountability and administrative demands of NCLB, such a consolidation could work to the benefit of everyone. The only downside is the loss of identity that some districts fear. Other local leaders believe, however, that if advocates of
consolidation emphasize the potential benefits for students and their education, the negative aspects will be minimized. In the past, state funds were available to assist with consolidation, and this type of funding, if it becomes available, could facilitate the process in the future.

The town of Henderson, where the Heartland district is headquartered, is home to a large Mennonite community with a strong religious culture; this community has existed since 1874, when it was founded by immigrants from Russia. All the Mennonite students attend the Heartland public school.

**Progress in Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress*

Academic performance of Heartland students is quite good, with district students scoring among the highest in the state on 2003 assessments. For NCLB purposes, the district administers tests in grades 4, 8 and 11. These include locally developed tests in reading and math and a state test in writing. Even the subgroup of students with disabilities performed quite well in 2003 at the elementary level.

On the 4th grade math test, 89% of students overall reached the proficient level, and AYP was met in all areas. District staff members were also pleased that 67% of students with disabilities scored at the proficient level. In 8th grade math, the percentages of students scoring at the proficient level were 84% for all students and 100% for the disabled subgroup. District officials are encouraged to see that the disabled subgroup, which represents 20% of the district’s enrollment, can meet the expected achievement levels. The small numbers of students as well as the wide range of disabilities and the variance in intellectual and learning capacity in the grade levels contribute to these results.

At the 11th grade level, the picture was different. Although 80% of all students at this grade scored at the proficient level in math, only 25% of disabled students achieved a proficient score.

On the reading and writing tests, both the 4th and 8th grade students scored at the 90% level, which the state of Nebraska considers to be exemplary.

The Heartland district has only two subgroups to consider for AYP, low-income students and students with disabilities. The state requires subgroups to number at least 40 to be counted for AYP.

Some Heartland educators have expressed concern that the amount of testing required for NCLB takes away from teaching time. Teachers report that they do not have enough time to teach important concepts because so much has to be covered in each time period.
The town of Henderson is the site of a large group home for young people who are wards of the court. These students, who come mostly from large Nebraska cities and towns, are welcomed in the Heartland district. The academic performance of these students improves in the small school setting, and there is no danger that they will become school dropouts because the students are under court order to attend school as part of the state’s procedures for juvenile placements in the group home.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

*Highly Qualified Teachers*

The Heartland teaching staff is quite stable, and turnover is relatively low—in fact, the district has not had to hire any elementary teachers during its five-year existence. Most of the teachers live within 25 miles of the school and are active members of their communities.

The district received considerable recognition in 2003 when one of its 4th grade teachers was named Nebraska’s Teacher of the Year. More than half the district’s 42 teachers have master’s degrees, and all of the teachers meet NCLB requirements. These high standards for teacher quality may be difficult to maintain, however, if enrollment continues to decline and it becomes more difficult to fill vacancies created from retirements or layoffs. Distance learning is already in place for students who want to take calculus, so this may be a way to cover areas of small interest that require a high level of teacher specialization.

**Other Implementation Issues**

District leaders wear several hats in districts like Heartland, and the implementation of state and federal legal requirements is a big responsibility. In a small district the superintendent is often the sole manager/leader of facilities, finance, and instruction, and now with the enactment of NCLB, the superintendent of a small rural district has new accountability requirements for student achievement. These responsibilities can be very time consuming, but with assistance from principals and a part-time person who works with curriculum, the superintendent of Heartland finds that NCLB jobs get done. He stated, however, that “the time factor is way out of proportion to the value to students and the district.”

**Data File — Heartland School District**

**Location:** Southeastern Nebraska  
**Type:** Rural  
**Number of Schools:**  
1 school - elementary division and secondary division
**Student Enrollment and Demographics**

Total Enrollment: 350, K-12  
White: 99%  
Other: 1%  
English Language Learners: 0  
Students with Disabilities: 20%  
Low-Income Students: 30%

**Number of Teachers**

Total: 42  
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

**Number of Paraprofessionals**

Total: 5  
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

**Number of Title I Schools:**

1 school - targeted assistance

**Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action**

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**20. Nevada**

**Clark County School District**

Superintendent: Dr. Carlos Garcia  
Contact: Dr. Susan Wright, Title I Director  
*Students: 268,357, K-12 – urban*

**Key Findings**

- Clark County School District is refocusing its efforts on teacher training and retention to meet the requirements of NCLB at the same time it is meeting the huge range of needs of its increasingly diverse student population and continually building new schools to house a population that increases by as many as 10,000 students a year.

- This district has found that an extensive prekindergarten program that is funded with Title I and closely connected to kindergarten and primary programs improves children’s readiness for learning.
• More than 200 paraprofessionals in Clark County have passed the Praxis test as a way of meeting NCLB requirements, due to a massive district effort to support and assist them in this endeavor.

Background

The Clark County School District covers a large portion of the state of Nevada, including the city of Las Vegas. The area population exceeds 1 million and includes more than half the inhabitants of Nevada. Clustered around rapidly growing Las Vegas, the school district is growing at the amazing rate of 6,000 to 10,000 additional students per year. This growth means a never-ending program of school construction, with new schools opening every month of the year.

Many of the district’s 283 schools are on multi-track, year-round schedules to expand their capacity. To make the most of classroom space, some schools have five groups of students with staggered schedules and different vacation times during the year. When one group of students returns to school from vacation, they use the classrooms of the group that went on vacation.

The school district is divided into five regions, two of which cover the highest poverty areas of Clark County. The poverty rates at district schools range from 90% to zero. Regardless of poverty, Superintendent Carlos Garcia has the same high expectations for all the schools. The district has instituted a plan it calls A+ in Action to reduce achievement gaps by improving curriculum and instruction and strengthening school-home relations.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Paraprofessional Requirements

The 52 Title I schools in Clark County, which include both schoolwide and targeted assistance programs, employ 432 paraprofessionals in various job descriptions, such as teacher family aides, instructional assistants, library aides, physical education aides, and special program aides (special education). More than half of these paraprofessionals meet the NCLB requirements. Many have two years of college or an associate’s degree, and many more have passed the paraprofessional test chosen by the state of Nevada (the Praxis exam). Others are preparing to take the test. The district pays for the cost of taking the test, but employees who do not pass will have to pay for further test taking sessions. For those paraprofessionals who choose to take classes at the local community college, the district pays the cost of tuition and books. Some of the paraprofessionals intend to become teachers, and the district wants to support them in that endeavor.

Highly Qualified Teachers
The Clark County School District employs 14,592 teachers, of which 995—less than 7%—do not meet the NCLB requirements for being highly qualified. The main concern is with teachers of math and science in middle and high schools.

Professional development decisions are made by individual schools. Schools frequently select their areas of training, and the district provides technical assistance as needed.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

*Adequate Yearly Progress*

Most of Clark County’s 52 Title I schools are having difficulty with meeting the requirements for adequate yearly progress. Four schools are in the second year of school improvement and 14 are in their first year. The other 30, although they have made progress, did not meet AYP in 2003 – most often because of the subgroups, the English language learner group and students with disabilities.

Clark County students speak 57 different languages, but most of the district’s English language learners are Spanish-speaking. Many of these students are in bilingual programs in the early grades, but after 2nd grade, they are transitioned to English instruction, with the goal of bringing them to English proficiency and raising achievement in reading, writing, math, and science. A new proficiency test is being developed by the state to replace the present language assessments in order to provide a measure of subject area proficiency as required by NCLB. About one-fourth of the elementary schools have bilingual programs in the primary grades, a situation that may change in the future as the achievement of ELL students is reviewed.

Each Title I school has a team that is reviewing where are they now, where they have to go, and how are they going to get there. The district is working with the Nevada state education department and the Pulliam group in this task. District officials believe that effective leadership at school sites, including the principal and support personnel, is critical in bringing about high achievement. The goal is for principals and teachers to understand the importance of using programs and structured curriculum that are grounded in strong research and to focus their resources, fiscal and other, in a coordinated effort to improve student achievement.

The district is looking closely at each school and working with the team to improve the academic achievement of students with each region responsible for the improvement. They are looking at the use of scientific researched-based programs that have been proven to raise student achievement.

*Choice and Supplemental Services*

School choice was offered in the 2002-03 school year at the four schools that were identified, and parents were notified prior to the beginning of school that their students
could attend another school. A total of 130 of 6,000 students transferred. For the 2003-04 year, the district did not have the information from the state department regarding schools that did not make AYP. There were problems with the testing company, and the first set of test scores were determined to be invalid which meant that another run had to be made. This put the district behind schedule on parent notification. Schools were identified in September of 2003, and the parents at the 14 schools were notified of their choice options. Staff members do not expect to see many requests for transfer because of their experience in 2002-03 when most parents chose to keep their children in their neighborhoods.

In 2003-04, four elementary schools are in their second year of school improvement and are offering supplemental services. Most of the providers in the area provide online tutoring and instruction via the Internet, but the Clark County School District has also been approved as a provider. The district will offer a Saturday program for elementary students.

Other Implementation Issues

Preschool Readiness for Kindergarten

Title I funds are used to support 47 preschool programs for Clark County youngsters. Four-year-olds are served at 24 elementary schools, and 12 of these schools also have programs for three-year-olds. Preschool teachers are required to have four-year degrees and an early childhood endorsement. Jump Start, a state funded nonprofit program, also provides support for preschool. In addition, there is an active Head Start program in the county. This combination of programs has been in operation in Clark County for many years and has taken on new importance as an NCLB-supported early intervention program through Title I. The preschool program helps many non-English-speaking preschoolers to enter kindergarten with a strong base of verbal English proficiency.

Data File — Clark County Schools

Location: Southern Nevada – includes city of Las Vegas
Type: Urban
Number of Schools:
   283 total
   179 elementary schools K-5
   46 middle schools, grades 6-8
   35 high schools, grades 9-12
   23 alternative schools
   6 special schools

Student Enrollment and Demographics
   Total Enrollment: 268,357
   White: 43.7%
   Hispanic: 33.4%
African American: 14.2%
Asian: 7.9%
American Indian: 0.8%
English Language Learners: 16% - 57 languages, Spanish is largest language
Students with Disabilities: 11%
Low-Income Students: 36% (ranging from 0 to 90% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers
Total: 14,592
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 6.8%

Number of Paraprofessionals
Total: 432
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 50%

Number of Title I Schools:
52 schools – 43 are schoolwide

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

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21. New Jersey

Bayonne School District
Superintendent: Dr. Patricia L. McGeehan
Contact: Dr. Ellen M. O’Connor, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum/Instruction
Students: 8,400, Pre-K-12 – urban

Key Findings

- Bayonne has no concerns about meeting NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals because the district does not hire Title I paraprofessionals, as most districts do. Instead, Bayonne has used Title I funds to hire additional teachers, who work in teaching teams to help targeted students.

- Out of 2,200 students who were eligible for school choice in 2002-03, only 50 students actually changed to another school. District staff members see this as an indication that parents in this neighborhood-oriented city prefer their neighborhood schools and want their children to stay close to home.

- The Bayonne school district was the only approved provider of supplemental services within the district’s boundaries for students in the three schools eligible
for these services in 2002-03. The district offered these services through an after-
school program at a public school.

Background

The Bayonne school district serves Bayonne, New Jersey, a city of 62,000 that covers a
peninsula at the southern end of Hudson County. Because the city encompasses an area
just three miles long and one mile wide, it has many features of a smaller town, even
though it is entirely urban. The school system includes 11 schools serving grades PreK
through 8 and one high school. The Bayonne schools also offer a half-day preschool
program for four-year-olds and a full-day kindergarten, which parents and district staff
believe are crucial to developing literacy.

The city residents are primarily blue-collar, middle-class families. About 12% of the
students are English language learners from 28 different language groups. Spanish-
speaking families are the largest group, but the diversity in the city is changing with
increasing numbers of Polish and Arabic speakers.

Bayonne was recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as one of the top
25 technologically advanced districts in the state.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Teacher Qualifications

All of Bayonne’s 642 teachers meet the state requirements for being highly qualified
under NCLB. Title I funds are used to hire additional teachers who assist in regular
classrooms by providing additional instruction to selected students. These teachers also
meet the qualifications. The district does not use any Title I funds for paraprofessionals,
so it has no reason to be concerned about NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals.

Professional Development

The Bayonne district has taken steps to improve the skills of its teachers through after-
school professional development academies. These are five-week programs of two-hour
weekly classes, which are taught by district teachers and address such areas as
technology, mathematics, differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, and Spanish
language. About 200 teachers participate in this training each year. Titles II and V of
NCLB are used to support the program. District officials attribute Bayonne’s recent
improvements in math performance to the effectiveness of its professional development.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB
**School Improvement**

New Jersey is changing its testing program, which had tested only grades 3, 4, and 8, to conform to the NCLB requirements to test more grades in 2003-04. The state will target schools for improvement based on the performance of subgroups as well. Bayonne school leaders recognize that the district may need to devote more attention to its special education and English language learner subgroups.

Bayonne had four schools in school improvement in 2002-03, because the schools did not meet the New Jersey expectations for AYP. One of the schools improved enough to exit school improvement status in 2003, leaving three schools in this category for 2003-04. In the three remaining schools, the 8th grade math scores rose between 20% and 25%, a gain that district officials attribute to the district’s curricular and instructional changes.

Technical assistance focused on enhancing professional development for teachers in the four schools, especially through the after-school academies. The instructional support provided to teachers by the Title I team was also part of the technical assistance, as was a large-scale summer school program with a major focus on literacy for parents that took place in 2003.

**School Choice and Supplemental Services**

Four Bayonne schools were required to offer school choice for school year 2002-03, but few parents took advantage of this option. About 2,200 students were eligible to change schools. Although parents were notified by mail of their options, only 56 families applied for transfer, and only 50 students actually changed to another school. District staff members see this as an indication that parents in this closely knit, neighborhood-oriented city prefer their neighborhood schools and want their children to stay close to home. The district does not expect many more students to transfer in 2003-04. Because the transfer schools were within walking distance, no costs were needed for transportation.

One of the four schools is no longer in school improvement, so in 2003-04, only three schools are required to offer choice and supplemental services for students. The Bayonne School District was the only provider of supplemental services within district boundaries at the three schools where these additional services are required, and this was a major factor in parents choosing the district as the provider. The targeted students attended an after-school program designed and implemented by the district.

**Other Implementation Issues**

About 19% of Bayonne students have been identified as having disabilities, which district officials recognize is a much a larger percentage than most districts. In light of the NCLB requirements for subgroup performance, the district is examining the consistency
of its procedures for identifying students for special education. Staff members believe
the district has good programs for children with disabilities, and this may be attracting
families with special needs children to live in the district.

**Data File — Bayonne School District**

**Location:** Northern New Jersey  
**Type:** Urban; city of 62,000  
**Number of Schools:**  
  - 12 total  
  - 11 elementary schools (PreK-8)  
  - 1 high school  

**Student Enrollment and Demographics**  
- Total: 8,400  
- White: 60%  
- Hispanic: 30%  
- African American: 8%  
- Other: 2%  
- English Language Learners: 12% (28 languages)  
- Students with Disabilities: 19%  
- Low-Income Students: 31%  

**Number of Teachers**  
- Total: 642  
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0  

**Number of Paraprofessionals**  
- Total: 0  
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0  

**Number of Title I Schools:** 9 elementary schools  

**Number of Schools in Improvement or Corrective Action**  
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**22. New Mexico**

**Bloomfield School District**  
Superintendent: Dr. Harry Hayes  
Contact: Lena Natoni, Director of Federal Programs  
*Students: 3,190, K-12 (including PreK) — rural*  

**Key Findings**
• The Bloomfield School District has supported professional development in technology for the last ten years. As a result, teachers and students have “state of the art” equipment and software for instruction in classroom labs. Teachers have access to student assessment data through electronic student files to develop data-driven instruction, and in this way can assist students who need to improve their skills.

• Approximately 60% of students entering kindergarten have participated in at least one year of preschool experience through combined funding from Headstart, Title I, and district funds. The district is committed to provide early intervention for economically disadvantaged students and English language learners to prepare them to read in first grade.

• The Bloomfield School District has witnessed a steady decline in student population over the last five years. This decline has also been observed in many neighboring school districts as well as in the state. The district is in the process of reorganizing the grade level structure of the schools and closing one school to continue to operate efficiently and to better serve the academic needs of students.

• The achievement of secondary school students is a particular concern in the Bloomfield district, but gains are being seen as a result of a sustained focus on individual student intervention and remediation and increased teacher proficiency in instruction (especially reading, writing, and math).

• The district continues to assist teachers and paraprofessional in meeting the NCLB requirement to become “highly qualified.” Approximately 10% of the district’s teachers and 84% of the paraprofessionals are not highly qualified according to the NCLB criteria.

Background

Surrounded by mountain ranges, the Bloomfield School District is located in the “Four Corners” region of the Southwest, where New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona meet at a common point. The school district covers a huge geographical area of 1,500 square miles, which entails a great amount of transportation to get students to and from school. To help with transportation, parents are paid to pick up groups of children along “feeder routes” and bring them to major bus stops.

All Bloomfield schools are close in proximity with the exception of one elementary school. The expansion of technology in the district, however, has significantly reduced problems associated with distance.

Bloomfield’s student population is ethnically diverse, with white (Anglo), Hispanic, and Native American (mostly Navajo) students each comprising roughly one-third of the
district’s enrollment. The residents of the Bloomfield community share many common values, including a desire for excellence in education. District officials are concerned about the dropout rate and the lack of long-range prospects for students who do not graduate from high school. They are looking at ways to keep students in school by offering classes that can help them, especially in the summer, and courses that can be accessed online. They are also concerned about the district’s declining enrollment, a trend that has continued for several years and is attributable in part to economic factors and fewer jobs in the oil, gas, and mining industries. Increasingly, the people moving into the Bloomfield district are families without children.

**Progress in Implementing NCLB**

**Staff Development**

The Bloomfield School District has undertaken a multi-year professional development effort for teachers and other staff that fits well with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Title II funds have been used to provide extended professional development for teachers and support staff in writing, brain development, language development, ESL, and reading and math intervention strategies, as well as in the widespread use of technology. Some of the training has taken place on non-student days built into teachers’ contracts and in the summer, and the teachers receive college credit for their training. Substitutes are provided for teachers who attend training sessions during the regular school day.

Bloomfield teachers of all grade levels are well versed in technology and have equipment and software in their classrooms. This investment by the district benefits students in many ways, from improving their writing skills to enabling them to gather information and do research for classroom projects.

The district makes extensive use of mentoring to assist the 20 to 30 new teachers hired each year. New teachers are paired with experienced teachers, who assist them with curriculum, instruction, and assessment and help them adjust to the professional demands of their new teaching assignment. Focus groups provide opportunities for teachers to share successful techniques and lessons.

Staff development in Bloomfield includes training for administrators, many of whom have come from the Bloomfield teaching ranks. This professional development now includes leadership training for principals so they can assist teachers in improving academic achievement.

Currently, about 10% of teachers of the district’s teachers and 84% of the district’s paraprofessionals do not meet the NCLB requirements for qualifications. The district is reimbursing teachers and paraprofessionals for the costs of coursework needed to meet NCLB requirements. Classes are offered in the district and at the nearby community
college. This reimbursement applies to all staff hired before NCLB went into effect. New staff members must meet NCLB requirements as a condition of hire.

**Major Issues of Implementing NCLB**

**Accountability**

Various aspects of NCLB accountability are presenting problems for Bloomfield schools, including the state’s change from a norm-referenced test to a standards-based test. District staff members are concerned about the state’s rating of schools, and they feel that directions from the state and federal level have not been as clear as they would have liked. One example is the situation regarding students with disabilities, one of the Bloomfield subgroups that did not meet AYP.

Some staff members believe that test bias continues to be an issue for their students in this remote and rugged part of the country. An example one district person cited was the use of the term “boat” in one of the tests. Students in this dry land of northern New Mexico know a boat only as something pulled behind a car or truck heading somewhere else and may not understand a boat’s connection with water. Another example cited involves the term “subway”—which these rural students would more likely think of as a place to eat a sandwich than a city transit system.

District officials are concerned about how they will be able to bring all students to the expected levels of achievement. All of the district’s schools had difficulty meeting AYP targets in 2003 for the students with disabilities and ELL subgroups. None of the Bloomfield schools is currently in school improvement, but district officials recognize that in order for the schools to stay out of school improvement, changes have to be made. Two elementary schools are on probationary status in 2003-04, and therefore will need to meet AYP in 2004. If one of the schools enters school improvement next year, the district will have great difficulty offering school choice because there will be only one school per grade span, except for the elementary school that is in a remote area. Neighboring districts are too far away, so supplemental services would have to be provided. However, with so many students being bussed many miles to their homes, this too, would present many challenges for the district.

To better meet the needs of students and raise achievement, the Bloomfield district is undertaking a major reorganization and consolidation of its schools and grade spans for next school year. The district’s 6th graders will become part of the elementary structure, and 9th graders will join the high school. Grades PreK and kindergarten will be housed at one site, grades 1-3 at another, grades 4-6 at a third site, and all 7th and 8th graders will be at fourth site. One school will be closed, one remote school will serve grades K-6, and the high school will serve all students in grades 9-12. Although these are not easy changes to make in a culturally and geographically diverse school district, the Bloomfield staff is committed to doing this to improve student achievement.
Other Implementation Issues

Early Childhood Programs

The Bloomfield School District recognizes that early intervention, through a well-rounded preschool program, greatly benefits disadvantaged children, and the district provides programs for both three- and four-year-olds. Some programs are funded by Head Start, others by Title I, and others by combined funds, including programs for children with disabilities. In addition, the district has recently changed its kindergarten program to a full day rather than half day.

Data File — Bloomfield Public Schools

Location: Northwest New Mexico
Type: Rural – 1,500 square miles

Number of Schools: (The numbers and grade configurations of schools will change for 2004-05.)
8 total:
1 Early Childhood Center – PreK - 2
1 elementary - K, 1, 2
1 elementary - 3, 4, 5
1 elementary - PreK-7
1 middle school – 6, 7
1 junior high school - 8, 9
1 high school – 10-12
1 alternative school – 8-12

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total Enrollment: 3,190 - PreK-12
White: 35%
Hispanic: 31%
American Indian: 34%
English Language Learners: 23%
Students with Disabilities: 23%
Low-Income Students: 61% (ranging from 39% to 79% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers
Total: 262
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 10%

Number of Paraprofessionals
Total: 67
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 84%

Number of Title I Schools:
4 schools – all are schoolwide

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

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