Sheboygan Area Schools
Wisconsin

Superintendent: Dr. Joseph Sheehan
Primary contact: John Pfaff, principal, Lincoln Erdman Elementary School, and NCLB coordinator*

Schools studied:
Sheboygan Early Learning Center
Washington Elementary School (K-5)
Sheridan Elementary School (K-5 Bilingual and Dual Language)

10,180 students, K-12, suburban

District and School Descriptions
The Sheboygan Area School District is located in southeastern Wisconsin on the shore of Lake Michigan, an hour’s drive from the metropolitan area of Milwaukee. The district includes the city of Sheboygan and parts of nearby townships. Student enrollment is impacted by increasing numbers of families moving into Sheboygan to live and work. Significant growth continues to take place among the Latino and Hmong populations, with Spanish and Hmong prevailing among the 20 languages spoken by students in the district. The University of Wisconsin has a campus in Sheboygan, and the district and university collaborate in many areas.

Sheboygan Early Learning Center has several programs aimed at helping students and their families assimilate into the district and the community, including Early Education for Children with Disabilities, Family School Resource Center, and the Even Start Family Literacy and Parenting Lab Program. Sheridan Elementary School, for K-5, has a dual-language program (Spanish and English) as well as a range of other programs for English language learners. Washington Elementary School has a diverse student enrollment and offers assistance for students and parents in a number of languages including Hmong, Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, and Spanish.

Key Findings

- In fall 2005, Wisconsin administered state tests for the first time in all grades as required by No Child Left Behind. The state tests five subjects, and district officials are concerned about the time this testing takes away from instruction during the crucial months of October and November. Sheboygan officials estimate that a school could use portions of up to 13 days to complete the required testing for all students. One elementary school completed the testing in 10 days by scheduling more than one part of a test on some days.

* Other contacts for this case study include Dave Shoemaker, principal, Early Learning Center; Don Meggers, parent; Sandra Huenink, Even Start coordinator; Lisa Krause, ELL coordinator and assessment specialist; Jack Westfall, coordinator of assessments; Maeve Quinn, school board member; Diane Wilcenski, assistant superintendent; Wayne Blessing, principal, Washington Elementary School; Judy Kapellen, principal, Sheridan Elementary School; Rosaria Thiel, dual-language teacher; Adel Keaton, dual-language teacher; Sara Levandoski, parent and Title I district advisory committee member; and Diona Coldren, parent.
Sheboygan schools continue to enroll large numbers of English language learners. In the past two years more than 300 ELLs entered district schools, arriving from many countries and representing many cultures and languages. Some are refugees who have never been in school. District staff and teachers have developed several types of programs for the students, and parents can choose the type of English instruction they want for their children: English immersion, mainstream, or dual-language instruction.

The opportunities for parental involvement in the Sheboygan schools were expanded with implementation of NCLB, and they continue to be strongly emphasized throughout the district schools. In addition to traditional ways that parents take part in their children’s schools, the district is launching new methods to make sure that all parents feel welcome at school and participate in their children’s education. One new pilot program that may eventually be implemented in Title I schools recruits parents to serve as key spokespersons and parent contacts for their school.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Sheboygan has made a major effort in the past two years to educate the community about NCLB and prepare staff members for the changes that would be taking place with the new law. “We got started early,” said John Pfaff, the federal programs coordinator, “and we made a point of staying on top of what the law required. We did community workshops and teacher training, and our principals started looking closely at areas that needed to be boosted in understanding the test results, curriculum, and teaching.”

The groundwork seems to have paid off for Sheboygan schools, in that all schools have made AYP so far. Testing at more grade levels may make a difference, and so might the growing subgroup of English language learners (18%), which includes recent refugee children. Many of these children speak Hmong and were not previously enrolled in school.

District leaders expressed support for the intent of the law, although some feel its goals are overly ambitious. Maeve Quinn, a member of the Sheboygan Board of Education and a parent in the district, noted, “I believe in the intent of the law, because we can’t leave kids behind. It is our goal to get 100%, and we will try, even though it may be mathematically impossible. It is good for districts to have some flexibility, but we would like some more than we have now.” Quinn would particularly like more flexibility in the testing requirements for English language learners and students with disabilities.

NCLB and Student Achievement

The full effect of NCLB on student achievement has not yet been felt in Wisconsin schools because testing at all the required grade levels did not begin until fall 2005. In 2004-05 testing, the overall percentage of Sheboygan students scoring at the proficient level was higher than the state AYP targets in all three grades tested, as shown in table 1. The overall Sheboygan results were also higher than the state average performance in grades 4 and 10, but lower in grade 8. As the table also illustrates, some subgroups of students are performing below the AYP targets, and achievement gaps exist between some subgroups in both math and reading. These gaps tend to widen in grade 8 and get even wider in grade 10, especially for the subgroup of students with disabilities.
In 2004-05, all Sheboygan schools and the district as a whole made adequate yearly progress. No school is in school improvement. Although district officials and principals were concerned about the performance of students with disabilities and English language learners, both subgroups made AYP in 2004-05 at all schools and across the district. One high school that had not made AYP the previous year due to the performance of students with disabilities did make AYP in 2004-05 after the state changed its policies for testing these students. Consistent with new flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Wisconsin districts may assess a limited number of students with disabilities using modified achievement standards and tests, in addition to the small number of seriously disabled students it already assesses using alternate standards and tests.

The district was also helped when Wisconsin received permission from ED in 2005 to apply a confidence interval to its safe harbor determination for school year 2004-05 only. A confidence interval is a statistical technique, similar to a margin of error in an opinion poll, that makes allowances for natural fluctuations in test scores. When a state applies a confidence interval to

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**Table 1. Percentage of Sheboygan Students Scoring at the Proficient Level on State Tests, 2004-05**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading State target is 67.5% proficient</th>
<th>Math State target is 47.5% proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sheboygan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income students</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, [www2.dpi.state.wi.us/wsas/districtWkce.asp](http://www2.dpi.state.wi.us/wsas/districtWkce.asp)
safe harbor determinations, it creates a “window” around the growth target necessary to qualify for safe harbor. A subgroup that misses the growth target but scores within this window will still be considered to have qualified for safe harbor.

Testing Issues

Wisconsin previously administered the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination in grades 4, 8, and 10 in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. A change took place in fall 2005 when all students in grades 3 through 8 plus grade 10 took all five tests. The number of students tested now is more than double what it was in the past—seven grade levels instead of three. “The changes are huge,” said Jack Westfall, coordinator of assessments in the district, “and where it hits the hardest is in the fiercely independent classrooms. You can’t teach in isolation any more. Teachers may have to give up some practices that they have become accustomed to, but we will show them how to slice the data, and they will be better able to focus on the learning needs of all their students.”

Sheboygan officials expressed concern about this additional testing taking time away from instruction during the October-November testing window. By the state estimate, a school could use portions of 13 days to complete the testing for all students. John Pfaff, principal of Lincoln Erdman Elementary School, finished the testing in 10 days at his school by scheduling more than one part of a test on some days. Each Sheboygan school set up its own testing schedule for the first weeks of November 2005. As a rule, tests were administered first thing in the morning and sometimes right after lunch, but a major part of the day was still available for regular instruction. The district expects to have the test results and the subsequent status of the schools and their subgroups known by June 2006.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

The Sheboygan district has not made major changes in curriculum and instruction, but the assessment results have led individual schools to make some changes. Test results indicated that changes needed to be made at the middle school level because that is where student performance begins to lag. Over the past few years, most Sheboygan teachers have revised their lesson instruction to address the weaknesses shown on student test results. District officials are confident that the process of using data to differentiate instruction for individual students and small groups is well established at the schools, though it may be done differently from school to school.

Superintendent Sheehan explained his approach: “I tell the principals to tell me what they need to improve student achievement. I expect them to tell their staffs the same thing. That is why we have assessments—to find out what we need to change so we can do better. Some of what we are doing is what we were doing before NCLB, but we have to always pay attention to the research.”

Diane Wilcenski, assistant superintendent, recognizes the need to keep district curriculum and instruction focused. “I can truly say that more accountability keeps us focused on our delivery model,” she said. “We know now that we have to make some changes at the middle school, and that is what we are going to do.” District staff members are reviewing the connections between middle schools, their feeder elementary schools, and the high school to ensure that a smooth transition exists from one level to the next. District officials are also examining curriculum in specific subjects to make sure that it addresses standards for all students; instruction for English language learners, especially those who have recently come to the U.S.; and strategies for providing additional learning time for students who have fallen behind.
### English Language Learners

To address the district’s large enrollment of English language learners and the constant arrival of more immigrant families, district staff members continuously discuss and review the best ways to teach English to children of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although Sheboygan’s English language learner subgroup has made adequate yearly progress, district officials plan to review all student assessment data to see which instructional methods are most effective in helping students acquire English.

In the 2005-06 school year, Sheboygan has 2,200 students who have not reached proficiency in English, according to the reading, writing, speaking, and listening assessments that are administered annually. The students speak 20 languages. Although the main languages are Hmong (1,397 students) and Spanish (535), a sizable number of students speak other languages, such as Lao (39), Serbo-Croatian (30), and Albanian (21). Smaller numbers of students speak Arabic, Mandarin, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and 11 other languages. The greatest growth in the district—an increase of more than 100 students in two years—has been among speakers of Hmong from southeast Asia, many of whom have come from refugee camps in Thailand.

Every school in Sheboygan, including the Early Learning Center, has students who are English language learners, and many of them have enough students to count as a subgroup for NCLB. The greatest numbers of ELL students are at Washington Elementary School, where 198 English language learners make up more than half of the school’s enrollment. Most of these students are Hmong speakers, and they are enrolled in English inclusion programs. According to the principal and teachers, the students adjust quickly to their new homes, their school, and the learning routine.

Sheridan Elementary School has a unique dual-language instructional program for Spanish-speaking children whose parents have chosen to enroll them in this program. Children in the program receive instruction in both Spanish and English. “Parents decide that this is the kind of program they want for their children, and the children can come to our school from any part of the district,” explained Judy Kepellen, Sheridan’s principal. “We provide transportation, we have excellent teachers, and we are all dedicated to our children and our families.”

Of the 260 students enrolled in Sheridan, over 40% are English language learners. Dual-language teachers Rosaria Thiel and Adel Keaton are pleased with the progress their students are making. The two teachers are committed to this form of dual-language instruction and they believe that this is the best way to teach English to young children.

The three middle schools in Sheboygan each have about 150 English language learners, and South High School has more than 300. Depending upon their English proficiency levels, students can be scheduled into partial-day intensive English instruction, or they can take a variety of mainstream classes. Support is provided by bilingual paraprofessionals and teachers who are certified to teach English language learners.

Sheboygan provides a variety of choices for parents of English language learners. Students can participate in English immersion programs or dual-language instruction, or they can be mainstreamed into regular classes. They can attend their neighborhood school or be bussed to a school with the program the parents choose. Sheboygan’s Title III allocation has increased in the past four years ($134,671 in 2002-03 to $267,712 in 2005-06) due to the large increase in English language learners. The funds are used for additional teachers and bilingual support staff at the schools where the English language learners are enrolled.

### Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

All of Sheboygan’s teachers are considered highly qualified, including those in the Early Learning Center.

Each school in Sheboygan designs its own professional development plan; the plans vary among the schools depending on the needs identified.
Washington Elementary School embarked on an ambitious plan of teacher training two years ago. Principal Wayne Blessing recognized the need for a comprehensive training program several years ago, and teachers volunteered for the training. Blessing and 15 teachers spent ten days at the University of Arkansas to learn about a guided reading and literacy model, which they then implemented at Washington. The funding for the program was from district and state funds as well as Title I.

Blessing said the school’s new literacy direction was the result of a site-based decision-making process. The school decision-making team is made up of grade-level representatives, a specialist, four parents, and support staff. “We were able to make a seamless transition to a very different kind of program, and it looks like it is working out quite well,” he said.

Reading is the major focus for the professional development program. The staff started the training with 1st grade teachers and added other grades later. Two reading coaches trained as reading specialists work with the teachers and help them improve classroom instruction. “Reading is what we do,” said Blessing. “We spend a ton of money on books. Kids need books at school, and they need their own books, too. We give kids books for their birthdays and for special events.”

Paraprofessional Qualifications and Support
Sheboygan has 43 paraprofessionals at the Title I schools. All of them have met the NCLB qualifications.

Funding Issues
Funding from federal education programs has gone up and down in Sheboygan. For 2005-06 all program allocations are less than they were the previous year, with the exception of Title III funds, which have increased.

Other Issues
Sheboygan School District has long emphasized parental involvement, especially at the Title I schools, but Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) coordinator John Pfaff has recently taken the parent role in a new direction. He has developed a pilot parent involvement program at his school that will be available for all district schools, including Title I schools. The committee Pfaff created is made up of 15 parents, two community members, and four staff members. The group plans to meet monthly to implement a new concept of a parent-to-parent approach to school involvement. “Schools will be strongly encouraged to use the program,” said Pfaff.

With this approach, one key parent in each school neighborhood will act as the “go to” parent for information about the school and its programs. Each of these parents will serve as spokesperson, contact, and promoter for the school. According to Pfaff, the parents agreed to do the following tasks in their neighborhoods: 1) contact new parents in their neighborhood, 2) let the school know when a new family moves into their area, 3) help parents set up an initial visit and tour of the school, 4) serve as a mentor for the new family, 5) invite next year’s kindergarten children and parents to attend programs at the school, 6) help promote the school by sending out literature developed by the parent involvement group, and 7) be the personal contact for the two main newspapers to promote school events and programs.

As Principal Pfaff said, “My goal is to make ‘no child left behind’ a reality at my school and in the Sheboygan district. We have to start by making sure that no parent is left behind.”
Data File—Sheboygan Area Public Schools

Location: Southeastern Wisconsin
Type: Small city

Number of Schools
Total: 18
Elementary: 12 (K-5)
Middle/junior high: 3 (6-8)
High schools: 2 (9-12)
Other: 1 (Early Learning Center)

Number of Title I schools: 5

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total enrollment: 10,180

- White: 66%
- Asian: 18%
- Latino: 12%
- Other: 4%

- Low-income students: 33%
- English language learners: 22%
- Students with disabilities: 15%

Teachers
Total number of teachers: 834 (includes Early Childhood Education teachers)
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals
Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 43
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

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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<th>Year 2 2003-04</th>
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<td>Schools in year 2 of improvement</td>
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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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<th>Year 2 2003-04</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Schools in year 1 of school improvement offering SES instead of choice:</td>
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<td>Schools offering SES and choice:</td>
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