

Case Studies of Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act

October 2003

As part of its multi-year national study of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Center on Education Policy commissioned consultants to do case studies of local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in several school districts throughout the country. The case study districts were selected to be geographically diverse and to reflect the approximate distribution of urban, suburban, and rural districts in the nation. As of October 2003, 15 case studies have been completed, and they are included here. By the end of 2003, the Center plans to complete 30 case studies.

Elizabeth Pinkerton, a consultant to the Center, conducted 13 of the 15 case studies published here. Consultant Barbara Buell did the case study of the Chicago Public Schools, and consultant Caitlin Scott did the case study of the Cleveland Municipal School District. Nancy Kober, also a consultant to the Center, edited the case studies and wrote a summary of findings across case studies. This summary, *Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: A First Look Inside 15 School Districts in 2002-03*, is available on the Center's website (www.cep-dc.org).

Pinkerton, Buell, and Scott collected information for these case studies through telephone and personal interviews with key contact people in the school districts and through other research. The interviews and research were done between May and September 2003. Consequently, the findings reported here reflect the status of NCLB implementation at the end of school year 2002-03 and the beginning of school year 2003-04. Because important decisions about NCLB were being made in late summer and fall, some districts may have taken actions too recent to be included here.

More information about the specific provisions of NCLB, such as the stages of the school improvement process and the requirements for the qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals, can be found in the Center's 2001 publication, *A New Federal Role in Education*, also posted on the Center's website.

The following abbreviations are used throughout the case studies:

NCLB – No Child Left Behind

AYP – Adequate yearly progress

ELL – English language learner

ELA – English/language arts

USED – U.S. Department of Education

Alabama

Calhoun County School District

H. Jacky Sparks, Superintendent of Schools
Contact: Bobby Burns, Deputy Superintendent
Students, K-12: 9,480 – rural

Key Findings

- The implementation of NCLB requirements is very difficult in a district such as Calhoun County that is facing huge reductions in state and local education funds.
- Because Calhoun County has had experience dealing with the changing demographics of its families, staff members feel prepared to continue making the changes necessary to assure that all students achieve at high academic levels.
- In Calhoun County, as in many other districts, the achievement of elementary students surpasses that of secondary students.

Background

Calhoun County School District covers a large portion of the northeastern part of Alabama. The district serves nearly 10,000 students from the rural areas surrounding the cities of Oxford, Piedmont, Jacksonville, and Anniston, the Calhoun county seat and center of educational services.

Anniston is also the home of a major chemical storage site—a reminder of the chemical training school once located at the Anniston Army Depot and the other military activities once headquartered at Fort McClellan. The fort was closed in 1999, striking a devastating financial blow to the community and the school district. Not only did the local economy suffer from the loss of several thousand jobs in the military and related industries, but the Calhoun County school district also lost thousands of dollars in federal Impact Aid (a program that reimburses school districts for tax revenues lost due to the presence of federal lands or federal employees, now authorized as Title VIII of NCLB). The Army has built an incinerator in Anniston that began burning chemical weapons in August 2003, a process scheduled to last at least 10 years and one that may have a negative effect on the community.

The loss of the military facilities was just one of several changes affecting the school district in recent years. In 2002, the city of Oxford annexed a portion of Calhoun County, which meant that several hundred Calhoun County students were transferred into the Oxford school district. Teachers had the choice of staying in Calhoun or transferring to Oxford, and most of them left Calhoun, as did other staff and a principal. District staff had to handle a host of complex logistical issues related to teacher assignments, funding, facilities, and other areas. State and federal funding followed the students to the new district, which meant a loss of funds for

Calhoun. Oxford needed a school, though, so Calhoun sold Oxford the school building the students had been attending, which solved Calhoun's problem of a vacant school building.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Professional Development

Several Calhoun County schools are continuing to implement a new training program for teachers and other staff that was designed to improve the teaching of reading at all grade levels. Called the *Alabama Reading Initiative*, the program is based on research-validated strategies for teaching reading. Teachers and paraprofessionals were paid \$50 a day to attend programs where they were trained to be trainers, spending two weeks in research, study, and learning. The costs of the program were covered by a combination of state, local, and federal funds, including Title I funds. Several of Calhoun's Title I schools implemented this program as part of their NCLB efforts, and results were quickly apparent in classrooms, as teachers put into place a variety of reading interventions. Fundraisers were held to purchase more books for students, and reading was given the highest priority in the schools. The total emphasis was on assuring that every child was learning to read. One of the Calhoun County's successful graduates, Patty Hobbs, Director of Internal Communications for Secretary of Education Rod Paige, visited the reading program in 2003 and commended the staff for their efforts to improve student achievement.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Fiscal Problems

The biggest challenge facing Calhoun County is that in the midst of seriously working to implement NCLB, the district has been faced with state budget cuts. As a result of these cuts, Calhoun County initially took steps to eliminate 123 staff positions for the 2003-04 school year. This would have reduced the teaching staff by 10% and would have made severe reductions in administrator, counselor, paraprofessional, and clerical positions. The turmoil created by this huge number of staffing changes took precedence over what should have been a stimulating and exciting time for making changes needed to improve student performance. However, the state legislature passed a bill that would fund lost teaching units only if the school system replaced the teacher units prior to the beginning of the 2003-04 school year. Calhoun County therefore restored most of the teacher positions it had eliminated, but the cuts remained in place for some support positions, and the central office administrative staff that was cut by 60%. These budget reductions mean that changes to improve the schools will have to be with fewer dollars and fewer staff to support and work with the children who need the most help.

As insurmountable as this fiscal crisis was and continues to be, this is not the first time that Calhoun has been hit with devastating reductions in funds. When the military bases vanished from the county, so too did Calhoun's federal allocations for Impact Aid, which supports districts with large numbers of federally employed parents. Calhoun survived that experience, but in 2003 the district faced a new round of budget cuts and the dismissal of employees, as well as the

reality of much heavier cuts for 2004-05.

Adequate Yearly Progress for Secondary Students

Calhoun County schools met Alabama's criteria for making adequate yearly progress for 2003, a critical step under the accountability provisions of NCLB. All subgroups of students tracked for accountability purposes made AYP this year, although the subgroup of students with disabilities has been placed on the priority list for future accountability. Although gains are being made in the academic achievement levels of primary and intermediate students, the biggest challenge faced by Calhoun County School District is the performance of middle and high school students. In 2003, secondary schools made AYP, but the district is concerned about the achievement decline in the transition years between 6th and 9th grades. Staff members at all schools are looking at curriculum and professional development to determine what technical assistance is needed to reverse this trend.

Recognizing that secondary schools are more difficult to change in terms of content delivery and learning expectations, the district implemented a new program of Student Advocates for 2002-03. Student Advocates were staff members with some social work background who worked with teachers, students, and parents. The goal of the program was to reduce behavior problems and apathy among secondary students at risk of dropping out of school and replace their negative influences with goal-oriented strategies. The Advocates provided guidance and encouragement to individual students, helping them to develop positive behaviors that would improve learning and to address attendance and discipline issues that affect achievement. Staff members identified students in danger of dropping out and enrolled them in small group instructional settings. This effort was designed to assist students with getting their high school diplomas by helping them develop realistic plans for finishing high school. This program had to be dropped for the 2003-04 school year due to lack of funding.

Other Implementation Issues

In light of Calhoun County's ample experience in dealing with change, district staff members believe they will find ways to implement the requirements of NCLB, even if it seems very difficult right now. Calhoun found creative solutions to complex problems many times in the past, and staff members are confident they will do so again. District staff point to what they call a local commitment to improve academic achievement for all students as one of the district's strengths. For example, when the agricultural community diminished, the school district found ways to meet the needs of the military families that were moving in. The career tech center developed a program with the Army Depot that includes a two-year training program with on-the-job experience. Students within a 40-mile radius are eligible to attend, and while they get their high school education, they also become skilled in technology and other career-related skills. NCLB brings more change to Calhoun County, but plans are in place to do what needs to be done.

Data File 2002-03 — Calhoun County School District

Location: Northeastern Alabama

Type: Rural (Anniston is the county seat)

Number of Schools:

- 19 total
- 9 elementary schools (K-3, K-4, K-6)
- 1 elementary/junior high school (K-9)
- 1 middle school (5-7)
- 7 high schools
- 1 career tech center

Student Enrollment and Demographics

- Total Enrollment: 9,480
- White: 85%
- African American: 13%
- Other: 2%
- English Language Learners: 5% (9 languages)
- Students with Disabilities: 14%
- Low-Income Students: 49% (ranges from 32% to 69% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

- Total: 570
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 190 (33%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

- Total: 149
- Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 143 (96%)

Number of Title I Schools: 10 elementary

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

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

Alaska

Kodiak Island Borough School District

Superintendent: Betty Walters

Contacts: Brian O'Leary, Director of Educational Support Services

Marilyn Davidson, Principal

Students, K-12: 2,750 – rural

Key Findings

- Fluctuations in funding in Alaska have weakened or eliminated programs for districts like Kodiak Island Borough at the very time that districts are trying to comply with the major new demands of NCLB.
- Because of its rural nature, Kodiak has difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers who are able and willing to adapt to the rigors of life in remote Alaska. With some island schools that serve 20 students of all grade levels with just one teacher and one paraprofessional, the district faces particular challenges in meeting the NCLB requirements for subject matter expertise among high school teachers, but is looking to technology to provide the courses to fill the need.
- Because of high teacher turnover, paraprofessionals are a vital source of continuity and cultural connections for Kodiak students. Meeting the NCLB paraprofessional requirements will require some creative scheduling, because many paraprofessionals must spend the summer hunting, fishing, and cutting wood to prepare their families for the winter and do not have time for training classes.

Background

Kodiak Island Borough School District serves nearly 3,000 students on Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. Schools are located both in the town of Kodiak and in native villages situated around the island.

The names of the Kodiak Island Borough schools (Danger Bay, Port Lions, Larsen Bay, Akhiok, Old Harbor, Chiniak, Ouzinkie, East, Main, North Star, Peterson, Kodiak Middle School, and Kodiak High School) provide clues to the history and culture of this unique school district in a very distinctive state.

Although half of Kodiak's students are White, the rest are mainly Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander, with a few Hispanic, African American, and American Indian students. A total of 371 students (14%) are considered English language learners, and these students claim a variety of primary languages: Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, Aklanon, Cebuano, Chinese, Ilocano, Malay, Pangasinian, Panpango, Visayan and Yupik. The diversity of languages, along with the variety of dialects within a language, provides challenges

for Kodiak staff, but instructional services to all students are focused on helping them become proficient in English as quickly and effectively as possible.

Many aspects of schooling that are taken for granted in the Lower 48 states create incredible challenges in Kodiak Island Borough. For example, the district must constantly recruit replacement teachers in the rural village schools because the average stay of a teacher is short, with a turnover of 30-50% each year. Although the allure of experiencing life in Alaska draws some fine teachers, the cultural change is tremendous even for the adventurous. New teachers must learn to live in simple, subsidized housing, order groceries to last an entire semester, watch out for bear when they go outside, and combat loneliness and isolation. After one or two long, cold winters, most new teachers have usually had enough and head eagerly toward a more familiar type of life, while Kodiak again looks for new teachers.

Because teachers are difficult to retain, paraprofessionals are essential. The district relies on these employees to provide continuity of instruction in the village schools and to maintain cultural and language connections with the students. Yet upgrading the skills and credentials of paraprofessionals presents its own unique challenges: for example, paraprofessionals cannot go to school in the summer because they must use that short time to obtain the deer and fish needed to feed their families during the long, harsh winter. Despite the challenges, the staff members of Kodiak Island Borough seem determined to improve the education of their students and make NCLB work in their district.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Professional Development for Paraprofessionals

Almost three-fourths of Kodiak's paraprofessionals do not meet the NCLB definition of "highly qualified." The Kodiak district is currently developing a program, in partnership with Kodiak College, a branch campus of the University of Alaska, to help Title I paraprofessionals meet the NCLB requirement of two years of college. The program is also designed to provide training to enable paraprofessionals to first obtain an associate's degree and then complete a four-year degree and become teachers. Topics covered in a six-credit course taught in the summer of 2003 by a district staff person included classroom management, children as readers, and how to work with special education children. Fifteen paraprofessionals took the class last summer.

The district recognizes, however, that even with some courses being available through distance learning, completing a teaching degree involves a very long time commitment for paraprofessionals who have many family and community demands on their time. For paraprofessionals who cannot spend their summer taking classes, the district is looking at the option of requiring these staff members to pass an examination that demonstrates knowledge equivalent to two years of college.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Kodiak is experimenting with distance learning as a means of improving student performance and meeting other NCLB requirements. The district runs a learning center in cooperation with four other school districts that provides cyber courses for the eight village schools. Students with the lowest test scores at these schools (below the 40th percentile in reading, for example) are targeted for enrollment in the cyber school, which gives them extra instruction in reading skills and other areas on top of their regular class work.

One of the Kodiak Island schools did not make AYP in 2002. Throughout 2002-03, the district focused resources and technical assistance on that school, and the school improved enough to make AYP in 2003, so it was not targeted for school improvement in 2003-04. Because a school's average test scores may be less reliable, in a statistical sense, when there are small numbers of students in a school, grade, or subgroup, Alaska applies a process called "confidence interval" reporting to determine AYP. Under this measure, the school that did not make AYP in 2002 scored 44% proficient in language arts and 22% proficient in math for its 13 students. These scores were above the state expectation, and no subgroup fell below the target, so the school met AYP requirements.

Five other Kodiak schools, however, did not make AYP in 2003. At one school, the percentages of students overall scoring at proficient levels were 81% in language arts and 73% in math, but the subgroups of English language learners and students with disabilities at the school did not meet state benchmarks, so the school fell short of making AYP. In three other schools, the same two subgroups of English language learner and students with disabilities did not make AYP. District officials are concerned that these two groups will continue to have difficulty making AYP. In the case of English language learners, these students leave the subgroup once they become proficient in English. In the case of students with disabilities, many were referred to special education precisely because they have significant learning or cognitive disabilities that make it difficult for them to master the content likely to appear on state tests.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Fiscal Problems

Kodiak Island Borough has had significant budget cuts in the past two years due to declining enrollment. In addition, state budget cuts have forced the reduction and elimination of many programs at a time when resources are needed to meet all aspects of NCLB. The borough contribution to local education is at its maximum, and cuts in the state budget have affected resources for the district. Since the state has no state income or sales tax, there are no alternatives to fill the gap other than to reduce spending and seek additional sources of funds, such as applying for grants.

Kodiak has also been affected by economic slumps in the logging, fishing, and salmon canning industries. Many workers have been laid off, exacerbating poverty in the district. Poverty is high throughout the Kodiak area, with some schools enrolling 90% of children from low-income families. The learning needs of students at risk are intensified amid economic chaos. For example, subsistence activities like hunting, fishing, and woodcutting take on even greater

importance in tough times, leaving less time for homework and school activities. According to Kodiak staff, economic factors can also have a dramatic effect on young people's dignity, placing them at even greater risk for school failure.

Qualifications for Teachers

District officials in Kodiak say their greatest challenge is to find and retain teachers who meet the NCLB requirements for being highly qualified. Of the 178 teachers in the district, 74% do not meet these requirements. Not only must these teachers meet these certification requirements, but to be successful in Kodiak, they must also be able to address the diverse cultural and learning needs of students.

In the town schools, many teachers have not met all the NCLB requirements for specific content areas, especially math. Many endorsements are not available at higher education institutions in the state, so in order to acquire majors and/or credentials in content areas, teachers will have to go out of state or utilize distance learning. Meeting the NCLB requirements is even more difficult in the village schools, where enrollments range from 10-60 students and the staff consists of a small number of teachers. Sometimes a village school may have just one teacher and one paraprofessional for all K-12 students. At these schools, it is virtually impossible for one teacher to meet NCLB requirements for all content areas for the high school students. It is also unlikely that the district will find teachers for these schools who have both elementary and secondary certificates in multiple disciplines. The district makes a concerted effort to find teachers who are certificated in language arts and/or mathematics, but even that is not always possible.

As a solution to the challenge of meeting the NCLB teacher criteria for high school subjects, Kodiak is developing a broadband interactive learning program to provide students with highly qualified teachers in subjects for which their regular teacher does not meet certification. Kodiak has upgraded its computers, and the plan is being implemented in 2003-04. Under the plan, a content-qualified math teacher in one school, for example, will teach a geometry class for her or his students, and at the same time, the lesson will be transmitted to other schools for the students who need the class. The district is in the process of submitting grant applications to fund this program.

Other Implementation Issues

School Choice

The school choice provisions of NCLB would be extremely difficult to carry out in a district like Kodiak. If a Title I village school were required to offer choice, this would not mean busing children to another school, but rather putting the children on an airplane to get to another school. These special circumstances in the rural areas of Alaska have been recognized by the U. S. Department of Education, and schools in the Alaska will be able to offer supplemental services in their first year if school choice is not an option.

According to Kodiak district officials, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development works closely with its local districts, and technical assistance is provided on an ongoing basis. The district recognizes the difficulty faced by state officials in providing such services because of the vast distances that exist from district to district. The geography of the state poses immense challenges for people getting together, but communication continues in other forms.

Data File 2002-03 — Kodiak Island Borough School District

Location: Southern Alaska

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

13 total

7 village schools and 6 town schools (K-10, K-12, K-6, 7-8, 9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 2,750

White: 47%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 23%

Alaska Native: 21%

Other: 9%

English Language Learners: 14% (16 languages)

Students with Disabilities: 15%

Low-Income Students: 37%

Number of Teachers

Total: 178

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 74%

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 7

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 5 (71%)

Number of Title I Schools: 6

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action:

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

Arkansas

Fayetteville Public Schools

Superintendent: Dr. Bobby C. New

Contact: Michelle Boles, Federal Programs and Assessment Administrator

Students, K-12: 8,000 – city

Key Findings

- Believing that teacher professional development is a key strategy for meeting NCLB's student achievement goals, the Fayetteville School District has hired literacy and math specialists to help teachers use disaggregated achievement data to improve instruction. The district is also assembling teams of teachers to share effective teaching techniques and strategies for eliminating achievement gaps among subgroups of students.
- Although all but one of Fayetteville's schools made adequate yearly progress for 2003, the district is taking active steps to raise student achievement in its high-poverty schools, which have consistently performed lower than its low-poverty schools. For example, the district is analyzing reasons for success in high-poverty schools that do perform well, adopting a computer-based instructional program to help students probe or review key concepts, and training teachers to analyze student assessment data to inform their instruction.

Background

The city of Fayetteville in northwestern Arkansas is the home of the University of Arkansas. It is also the center of a large-scale poultry industry. This double focus brings families to Fayetteville School District with a diverse range of cultures, languages, and academic needs.

In recent years, the district has seen a large increase in English language learners, who now total 763 students, nearly 10% of the district's enrollment. The majority of these students are Spanish speakers—primarily from Mexico, but also from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Central America. Their families were attracted to Fayetteville by the poultry industry. The situation is different for the significant numbers of English language learners who speak other languages, such as Arabic, Cantonese, and Korean. These families have come to Fayetteville because of the university, where their parents are employed or enrolled as students. This dual aspect of Fayetteville's English language learner program presents challenges, but it also provides a cultural enrichment that benefits everyone.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Professional Development

Fayetteville district leaders have kept themselves informed about the new NCLB requirements, and they prepared the staff for the changes. District officials held several meetings with teachers during the 2002-03 school year and addressed the definition of highly qualified teachers with the entire district faculty via access television before school opened in 2003-04.

The district emphasizes the importance of involving teachers in academic improvement, especially through teachers analyzing student performance data. The district hired a literacy specialist and a math specialist to work directly with teachers and administrators in 2003-04. These individuals will focus on helping teachers to disaggregate student achievement data and to further align curriculum with state standards and frameworks, as determined by thorough assessments of individual school needs.

The district plans to provide multiple opportunities throughout the 2003-04 school year for teachers in various content areas to use "vertical teaming" as they examine the alignment of curriculum within a school and across grade levels among feeder schools. Three elementary schools are placed into a vertical team, which will meet at least three times a year to share assessment information and effective teaching techniques. The district will provide substitutes for these teacher teams, so they can work together on strategies to improve students' specific academic skills in the areas of greatest need. The teams will also develop strategies to eliminate achievement gaps among subgroups of students.

For several years, Fayetteville schools have used a state-approved staff development model called Restructuring Days. For three to five days in the year, teachers come to school without the students to work together on curricular issues and develop effective instructional strategies expected to improve academic achievement. To make this process even more effective, the district has made refinements in the model for 2003-04. Instead of having the same restructuring days for all teachers, each of the district's 15 schools will have its own restructuring days. This approach will allow the central office curriculum staff to be part of the school teams and to provide teams with the technical assistance they need. The professional development program is supported through a combination of federal funds from NCLB Titles I, II, and III and state and district sources. Peer assistance is encouraged at all schools, and various levels of support, including mentoring, are available for teachers.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Teacher Qualifications

Because of its high salary schedule and proximity to the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville does not anticipate difficulties in continuing to find highly qualified teachers in most areas. The exceptions are teachers of special education, math, and science. The district anticipates possible problems meeting the NCLB requirements for content expertise among special education teachers in junior high and high school. These teachers usually teach more than one content area to students with disabilities. Teachers who are fully qualified in special education and also qualified to teach algebra, for example, are difficult to find.

Although teachers qualified in English as a Second Language/English Language Development have been in short supply in the past, the district is now experiencing an increase in that teacher pool. Training for teachers who need to meet the requirements is being provided through NCLB Title II funds. A district committee reviews requests submitted by teachers for assistance in taking and passing the state approved examination and purchasing study books to prepare for the exam.

Adequate Yearly Progress for Economically Disadvantaged Students

Fayetteville has placed a high priority on improving the academic performance of students in its high-poverty schools. Although the average poverty rate in the district is 30%, four schools have as many as 50% of their students from low-income families. One of these schools has an 84% poverty rate and is the lowest performing school in the district.

In 2003, all but one of the district's schools, including its low-income schools, met state AYP criteria, and none is in school improvement status. District officials are particularly pleased that in Asbell Elementary School, where 58% of the students come from low-income families, 94% of the school's students scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the state's Grade 4 literacy exam for 2003. Only one school scored higher, and that school enrolls only 7% low-income children. On the state's Grade 4 math exam, Asbell topped all the schools in the district, with 92% of its students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels.

But even with this good news, the district recognizes that more needs to be done. As noted by Michelle Boles, Fayetteville's federal programs and assessment administrator, "We certainly are not resting on our accomplishments. We have initiated our own self-imposed school improvement plans with high expectations for *all* students." Closing the achievement gap between low-poverty and high-poverty schools is a major part of this initiative. With few exceptions, the percentage of students achieving at the proficient or advanced levels is consistently lower in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools. The district is taking steps to determine the reasons behind the success of the Asbell school and identify factors that can be incorporated into a district model for improving student performance.

The district has undertaken a variety of efforts to raise student achievement in high-poverty schools. One high-poverty school with low achievement is moving forward with a technology-based program that will provide a computer for every student. Instead of traditional classroom desks, students in kindergarten through grade 5 will work at glass-topped computer units. According to district staff, the decision to move ahead with this model was made after considerable research on programs that have good success records for high-poverty students. Fayetteville's technology program will have extensive teacher training to assure the integration of technology into all curriculum areas. If this technology program helps high-poverty schools make the academic gains required by NCLB, Fayetteville plans to expand it to all of the elementary schools.

In addition to providing teachers with opportunities to systematically review student mastery of standards and key concepts related to instruction, the technology-based lessons are expected to benefit students in a variety of ways. They will be able to probe lessons in greater depth and breadth, pursue supplementary learning, review what they did not understand the first time, and

correct their misconceptions and misunderstandings. Teachers will have greater opportunities to use student feedback as a guide to future teaching. In addition, families will benefit by being able to use the computers after school.

The Arkansas Department of Education rates school districts according to their academic and/or fiscal need, and accountability is an integral part of statewide efforts to improve public schools for all students. Fayetteville has never been on the state failure list. District officials believe that their strong approach to academic improvement and their focusing of district resources on the academic needs of students will keep them moving toward AYP for all students.

Paraprofessional Qualifications

Fayetteville makes extensive use of paraprofessionals in various capacities. The overwhelming majority of the district's paraprofessionals, about 72%, do meet the NCLB requirements. Efforts are taking place to help the remaining paraprofessionals, including those who provide bilingual assistance to students, reach the NCLB requirements. In fact, the district has made a commitment to hold all of its paraprofessionals, not just those in Title I schools, to the same high requirements. The district includes paraprofessionals in all district professional development opportunities. They are provided with test-prep materials designed to prepare them for the state-adopted paraprofessional test, and they are sent to conferences designed specifically for the student populations with which they work. For example, in the fall of 2003, all paraprofessionals working with migrant children are invited, at district expense, to attend an out-of-town, two-day workshop dealing with multicultural education, teaching strategies, and health issues.

Data File 2002-03 — Fayetteville Public Schools

Location: Northwestern Arkansas

Type: City of 60,000 people

Number of Schools:

Total: 59

9 elementary schools (K-5)

2 middle schools (6-7)

2 junior high schools (8-9)

2 high schools (10-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 8,164

White 80%

African American: 9%

Hispanic: 7%

Asian: 3%

American Indian: 1%

English Language Learners: 10% (major languages include Spanish, Chinese, Arabic)

Students with Disabilities: 13%

Low-Income Students: 30% (ranging from 7% to 84% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

Total: 619

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 61 (10%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 158

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 45 (28%)

Number of Title I Schools: 7

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

California

Grant Joint Union High School District

Superintendent: Dr. Larry Buchanan

Contact: Rick Carder, Director, Categorical Programs

Students, 7-12: 12,682- urban

Key Findings

- In preparation for NCLB, Grant Joint Union High School District has aligned its curriculum with state standards, trained teachers in how to use student test data to improve instruction, and expanded its remedial, summer, and after-school programs, among other efforts.
- School choice has been difficult to implement in Grant. At the high school level, there was only one available receiving school that was not in school improvement. Most of the district's schools were low-performing, and neighboring districts were unwilling to enter into a cooperative agreement to accept choice transfer students.
- As a district with considerable ethnic and language diversity, high poverty, and large numbers of homeless students, Grant Joint Union is concerned about its ability to meet NCLB requirements for adequate yearly progress.
- Implementing supplemental services has been a complicated and time-consuming process in Grant. The district negotiated with approved providers about the specific services available for students and made information available to parents, among other tasks.

Background

Grant Joint Union High School District serves changing urban communities that include a large part of the capital city of Sacramento. The name of the district stems from the 1840s when these acres were part of a huge Mexican Land Grant. The district has served grades 7-12 in five comprehensive high schools, five junior high schools, three alternative schools, and one special education school. The elementary children of the area attend four separate elementary districts. Over the years, there has been continuing discussion to create a different structure of governance for the districts. In August 2003, one of Grant's feeder K-6 districts, Del Paso, voted to join Grant in a two-year partnership. This means that Grant will now be changing its structure and organization to serve a K-12 population.

The establishment of McClellan Air Force Base during World War II brought thousands of families to the area, the first of many changes, but Grant has continued to be a very ethnically and racially diverse district (64% minority). Poverty has increased over the years, and in 2003, more than half (58%) of the district's students came from low-income families. In two of the

district's schools, nearly all students are poor: the poverty rates are 99% in Grant Union High School and 91% in Martin Luther King, Jr., High School.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

District staff and teachers at Grant are familiar with the disaggregation of student performance data on the basis of poverty and major ethnic subgroups because of California's previous accountability requirements. The 2003 changes to the state accountability system, consistent with NCLB, included the addition of two new subgroups whose achievement must be tracked: English language learners and students with disabilities. Also consistent with NCLB, the state now requires 95% of students to participate in state testing and requires high schools to show improvements in their graduation rate. Although all subgroups of students made gains in achievement in 2003 compared with their performance in 2002, the district still did not make AYP in 2003 in English/language arts or math. As shown in the table below, the specific subgroups that did not make AYP were Hispanic students (math), students with disabilities (math and ELA), and English language learners (ELA). The district also fell somewhat short in the percentage of students participating in testing.

Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient Level or Above on California Standards Test Grant Joint Union High School District

NOTE: To make adequate yearly progress for 2003, California requires 12% of students to score at the proficient levels in English/language arts and 12.8% to score at this level in math. NCLB also requires 95% of students to participate in testing in ELA and math.

Scores marked with an asterisk * shows areas for which students did not make AYP.

Student Subgroup	ELA 2002	ELA 2003	Math 2002	Math 2003
All students	16.6%	21.9%	11.8%	16.6%
Participation rate	94.7%	93.3%*	94.0%	93.7%*
African-American	10.1%	16.4%	3.7%	8%*
American Indian	20.2%	23.4%	15.1%	15.1%
Asian	9.8%	14.8%	13.3%	18.9%
Hispanic	11.2%	17.6%	8.7%	11.2%*
Pacific Islander	14.1%	17.0%	11.9%	24.3%
White	24%	30.1%	16.6%	23.0%
Low-income	11.8%	17.4%	9.2%	14.9%
Students with disabilities	6.0%	8.8%*	1.9%	6.9%*
English language learners	2.6%	10.2%*	7.6%	13.3%

District leaders and staff recognize that academic performance needs to be improved. Grant

Joint Union has already been subject to the school improvement requirements of NCLB and the similar accountability provisions of prior federal and state law. Five Grant schools were in school improvement status in 2002-03 because they did not make AYP for two consecutive years. Four of these schools are now in their third year of school improvement based on testing from 2003, but one school tested out of school improvement this year.

During its first year of implementing NCLB, Grant Joint Union aligned its curriculum with state content standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The district conducted a thorough analysis of student performance data and emphasized the need to differentiate instruction for various groups of students throughout the district. Professional development was focused on helping teachers use student achievement data to improve instruction and develop strategies to teach the state content standards. The district also focused on improving student performance on the state high school exit examination. Remedial instruction was provided for juniors who did not pass the exam as sophomores, and the district established an intensive intervention program in reading/language arts for low-performing students in junior high school. Opportunities were greatly expanded for students to obtain additional assistance in after-school, summer school, and tutoring programs.

Major Issues in Implementing NCLB

School Choice and Supplementary Services

Four of the five schools in improvement status in 2002-03, and were required to offer school choice. Grant found it difficult to implement the NCLB choice requirement because most of the schools in the district needed improvement, leaving few transfer opportunities within the district. Letters were sent to the districts bordering Grant asking them if they would be willing to accept inter-district transfers at their schools, but these districts either did not have space for more students or chose not to accept out-of-district transfers. Other factors affecting school choice were the desire of families, especially recent immigrants, to keep their youth close to home in safe and familiar neighborhoods and the resistance of teenagers to move to schools that were away from their friends. Parents basically supported their home schools and the districts' school improvement efforts.

In the end, although large numbers of students were eligible for transfer, no students chose that option. Grant therefore moved ahead to offer supplemental services for students. Setting up these services was a time-consuming and complicated process because little information was available about the specific services that providers were offering.

Eleven supplemental providers, from the California Department of Education list of more than 120 approved providers, agreed to participate in the Grant District. The types of services they offered ranged from online instruction to one-on-one home tutoring. Only nine Grant students took advantage of these supplemental services, and most of these students received assistance in reading/language arts. One of the technical clinicians provided help in building phonemic awareness, and the others assisted students with tutoring. The director of categorical programs for the Grant district negotiated directly with the service providers in order to present parents

with a clear understanding of what each provider would be able to do for their children.

The district had concerns about some of the tutors who were employed by the providers because they had little or no knowledge of the neighborhoods or cultures of the families they would be serving or of the high crime reputations of some neighborhoods. Whether a school district would be legally liable if any incidents happened to tutors employed by an outside NCLB supplemental service provider is an issue that has not been put to the test, but Grant officials said they do not want their district to be the test case, so they are taking as many precautions as they can. Another district concern is that NCLB provides no additional funds to cover a district's costs of managing and overseeing school choice and supplemental services. At a time when fiscal resources are stretched to their limits, this created additional responsibilities for the school district. Rick Carder, Grant's director of categorical programs calculated that he and his staff spent more than 300 hours making the choice arrangements for the district and another 500 hours on supplementary services.

Technical assistance to schools throughout the district consisted of professional development, including training to help teachers better understand and use disaggregated student assessment data. An "academic audit" was conducted by the county office of education to help the staff look at the effectiveness of their various programs, their delivery of instructional services, and their use of available resources. The district also provided substantial professional development aimed at improving instructional strategies in the classroom, teaching to standards, using assessment data, and effectively using resources.

Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners

For the past four years, all English language learners in California are tested annually with the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to determine their proficiency in English. The English language learner subgroup in California includes those students who meet the federally-approved definition of limited English proficient (LEP) students and those who have been redesignated as fluent in English but have not scored at the proficient level or above for three years on the California Standards Test in English/Language Arts.

Almost one of every four Grant students (23%) are English language learners, a total of 2,976 students in grades 7-12 who speak 69 different languages. This is a significant number of students for secondary schools, especially when poverty and great diversity of languages are also barriers to learning. Learning English can be frustrating for teenagers who cannot read and write in their native language, as is the case for many Grant students. The most common primary languages of the Grant students are Russian, Hmong, and Spanish, three very different cultural groups. Most of the Spanish-speaking students are from Mexico, although some are recent arrivals and others have been in California for a longer time. Hmong students represent the second generation of refugee families who were resettled from Southeast Asia and eventually came to northern California; even though some of these students were born in the U. S., they are not yet fluent in English. Russian-speaking families continue to come to the Sacramento area from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Among all of these linguistic groups, the secondary school students are often the most proficient English speakers in their families.

Although Grant English language learners increased their academic achievement in 2003 and met their target for AYP in math, they continue to face challenges with the English/language arts test.

Other Implementation Issues

Services for Homeless Youth

The Grant district also enrolls large numbers of homeless youth, who live in shelters or temporary housing, bounce around among friends' houses, or live on the streets. Some of these students live with their parents who are also homeless, but some are on their own. These homeless young people need and receive additional resources to assure that they are not deprived of education. These students are served under the Title I program of NCLB.

NCLB includes several new requirements for serving homeless youth, as follows:

1. Homeless students cannot be segregated. In other words, a school district cannot have a school for homeless children that operates out of a homeless shelter.
2. States and districts must adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided so homeless students can attend their school of origin if that is what parents request.
3. If there is a dispute over which school a homeless student should attend, the student is placed in the school of the parent's choice until the dispute can be resolved.
4. All school districts must designate someone to serve as a local liaison for homeless students.

Grant staff members believe they make every effort they can to find and serve these students. A coordinator for the Homeless Education Program works closely with school sites in finding and identifying students who meet the homeless criteria. Arrangements are made for school supplies, transportation, and connections to available resources. Family reunification is the goal for runaways and consistently transient students, but this goal is not easily achieved.

Most of the funding for the homeless students in Grant Joint Union is covered by the Title I program. Services such as clothing, transportation, school supplies, and assistance with immunizations were provided for 171 homeless students in 2002-03.

District officials are committed to improving the academic achievement of all students in all schools. The district has a long history of active parental involvement with all schools, and this is being expanded to include churches and other local community groups. The superintendent, district staff, and Board of Education members believe they are making a real effort to improve student performance and that NCLB is helping to reinforce this goal.

Data File 2002-03 — Grant Joint Union High School District

Location: Northern California – Sacramento County

Type: Urban; borders city of Sacramento

Number of Schools:

14 total
6 middle schools (7-8)
4 high schools (9-12)
3 alternative schools
1 special education school

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 12,682
White: 36%
Hispanic: 21%
African American: 19%
Asian: 13%
Other: 11%
English Language Learners: 23%
Students with Disabilities: 12%
Low-Income Students: 58%, with range in individual schools from 35% to 99%

Number of Teachers

Total: 657
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 9
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 9 (100%)

Number of Title I Schools: 12

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to Offer School Choice: 1 in 2002-03; 2 in 2003-04
Required to Offer Supplemental Services and Choice: 4 in 2002-03; 1 in 2003-04
In Corrective Action (also offering choice and supplemental services): 0 in 2002-03; 4 in 2003-04

Colorado

Fort Lupton Weld Re-8 School District

Superintendent: Stephen Morrison

Contact: Kathi Van Soest, Director, State and Federal Programs

Students: K-12, 2,622 – rural

Key Findings

- Ft. Lupton has made dramatic changes in its basic structure, including reconfiguring schools and grade levels, to improve academic achievement.
- As a small, rural district, Ft. Lupton cannot match the higher salaries of larger districts in the region, which means that highly qualified teachers often transfer to other districts.
- English language learners as a subgroup are relatively low performing in Ft. Lupton, so staff and parents are searching for the best ways to teach English to these students.

Background

The Fort Lupton Weld Re-8 School District is located about 25 miles from Denver in north central Colorado. Fort Lupton, the main community in Weld County, is a residential center with an agricultural and industrial base. (The Re-8 designation refers to a Colorado reorganization of rural school districts that occurred several years ago.) The district has four schools—two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Its enrollment of 2,622 students includes a high percentage of Hispanic students (56%), most of whom are English language learners. The poverty level for the district is 59%, and student performance is at low levels.

For 2003-04, elementary grades have been reconfigured from schools serving grades PreK-2, 3-4, and 5-8 to two schools serving PreK-5 and one serving grades 6-8. The district staff believes this change will work better to improve academic achievement. The class size is 18:1 at the elementary level and 26:1 at the high school level. Improvements and additions will be made to the schools as the result of a school bond that was passed in 2001.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Paraprofessional Qualifications

Of the 52 paraprofessionals in the Ft. Lupton district, only 6 have had two years of college. Nearby universities offer training for paraprofessionals, and even though many employees attended these classes, there was no college credit attached to the courses, so participants did not receive credit toward meeting NCLB qualifications. Plans are in place for Ft. Lupton paraprofessionals to receive training at AIMS Community College, where they will receive

credit for the coursework they take. The district staff is also finalizing plans for an assessment to measure whether paraprofessionals have the specific knowledge required by NCLB. The staff is also working on ways to assess paraprofessionals' ability to assist in instruction, also required by law. Paraprofessionals will receive assistance to help them pass this test and meet the NCLB requirements.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Teacher Qualifications

Of the 180 Ft. Lupton teachers, 70 are on emergency credentials. The district aims to decrease that number by half each year, so that every teacher is fully qualified by 2005, as required by law. Teachers from out of state account for the majority of the credentialing problems, because they need 24 hours of additional coursework to meet Colorado's teacher requirements. Ft. Lupton depends on out of state teachers because there are not enough teachers in the state to meet the demand.

The relatively low pay of the district is a key reason why the district has difficulty keeping highly qualified teachers. In some instances, teachers stay in the district long enough to get fully credentialed, and then they move on to other districts that pay up to \$7,000 more per year. In the past three years, 25% of Ft. Lupton's teachers (about 15 each year) have left the district to take jobs elsewhere.

Some of the district's special education teachers also need additional certification from the state. Furthermore, teachers of English language learners need 18 hours of coursework for certification, if they teach English as a Second Language or bilingual classes. Teachers from Mexico, hired specifically for their skills in teaching English language learners, are another group that does not always meet the NCLB definition of "highly qualified." These teachers have Spanish language skills, and they understand the cultures of the Hispanic students, but they frequently do not meet the state teacher licensure requirements.

Other teachers who have entered alternative licensing programs may have a bachelor's degree in a particular field, but they may lack the state teaching license or have not passed the required test for their content area. Two of the greatest areas of need are teachers of middle and high school math and science. Teachers who teach in two or more content areas are common in small rural high schools, and it is especially difficult for these teachers to meet the qualifications in multiple subjects. Although a teacher may meet the requirements for one content area, it is the second content area (which the teacher often teaches for just one or two periods) for which certification is needed.

Ft. Lupton was able to fill all new positions for 2003-04 with teachers who met NCLB requirements. Some teachers were reassigned as needed; for example, a middle school teacher who lacked content-specific certification but held an elementary certification was reassigned to an elementary class.

The district provides financial support to teachers who need to become fully qualified. Each teacher can receive up to \$2,000 in NCLB Title II funds to complete their certification. Of this amount, \$1,000 is provided up front, and the other \$1,000 is provided when the teacher completes a second year in the district.

Adequate Yearly Progress

As noted above, the district's schools were recently reorganized to serve a different set of grade levels. School leaders believe that this new arrangement will make accountability clearer and allow for a smooth transition from one school to the other. In 2003, the two elementary schools were targeted for school improvement. The middle and high school are no longer Title I schools, since the district is using Title I funds at the elementary schools only.

In the 2002-03 school year, all four of the district's schools were in school improvement, which meant that all students in the district were eligible to transfer to another school under the NCLB choice provisions, but there were no eligible schools within the district. The district notified parents at the beginning of the year about school choice and offered to provide transportation for any child to attend a school in a neighboring district. No parents chose to move their children to these schools, which were miles away; they kept their children close to their home in the Ft. Lupton schools.

In 2003-04, the parents of all students in grades 1 through 5 were offered school choice, but again, this meant going to another district because both elementary schools are still in school improvement. Because of the reconfiguration of grade levels for 2003-04, Ft. Lupton has been given a two-year waiver by the state before it has to implement supplemental services.

Most of the technical assistance that the district provided to schools in school improvement in 2002-03 focused on professional development—specifically, teaching teachers and other staff how to do data analysis and use data to enhance instruction. Principals received guidance on improvement strategies and how to prepare their plans to address specific student needs. The school staffs and principals presented their improvement plans to the District Advisory Committee (made up of parents and community members). This group analyzed the data and, based on their analysis, made accreditation recommendations to the Board of Education.

The Ft. Lupton district has also made a considerable investment in preschool education, anticipating that efforts toward early learning and literacy will pay off later, especially for English language learners. By taking advantage of state funding and supplementing those funds with district funds, nearly all four-year-olds in the district receive a year of learning before kindergarten, and special education children have two years. With state funding reduced for 2003-04, however, this program is in jeopardy.

Ft. Lupton staff members are considering ways to close the large gap in academic achievement between Hispanic students, who comprise 56% of the district's enrollment, and White students, who make up 44% of the enrollment. In 2002, the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level or above on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) was 34% for Hispanic students versus 54% for White students at grade 3; 14% versus 51% at grade 7; and

29% versus 65% at grade 10. In math, the comparable percentages for Hispanic and White students were 26% and 52% in grade 3, 8% and 31% in grade 7, and 1% and 18% in grade 10.

Considering that more than half of the district's students are poor and almost half are English language learners, Ft. Lupton staff members recognize that they face a huge challenge in assuring AYP for all students. They believe, however, that they can make a difference. One issue that not been resolved is how to improve instruction for English language learners. Although the district recognizes that students are not progressing as they should in becoming proficient in English, there is not a consensus about the best way to reach the desired goals. Yet the Ft. Lupton schools must take action in 2003-04 to meet AYP criteria for this subgroup.

Other Implementation Issues

Services for Homeless Students

As part of its response to NCLB, the Ft. Lupton district made an effort to find and provide instructional services for homeless students in its attendance area. Each principal chose a building representative to work with community liaisons, and these representatives trained a group of people in how to search for and identify homeless families. The teams found families living in roadside motels or with relatives or friends. Some families lived on the river in tents and camp trailers. A total of 46 students (White and Hispanic families) were identified, and parents were assisted in obtaining appropriate school services for their children. This may not seem like a large number, but when looked at as 10% of the total district enrollment, the undertaking was considerable.

Data File 2002-03 — Ft. Lupton Weld Re-8 School District

Location: North Central Colorado; Ft. Lupton's population is 5,200

Type: Rural

Number of Schools:

- 4 total
- 2 elementary schools
- 1 middle school
- 1 high school

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 2,622

Hispanic: 56%

White: 44%

English Language Learners: 45% (1,180 students)

Students with Disabilities: 12%

Low-Income Students: 59%

Number of Teachers

Total: 180

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 70 (39%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 40

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 32 (80%)

Number of Title I Schools: 2 schools, elementary only

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 2

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

Florida

Collier County School District

Superintendent: H. Benjamin Marlin

Contact: Barbara Mascari, Director of Federal Programs

Students, K-12: 37,109 – urban and rural

Key Findings

- Collier County, as a rapidly growing district faced with ever increasing student enrollment, recognizes that continual improvement of the instructional program is as important as the constant need to build new schools in order to keep roofs over students' heads.
- Keeping highly qualified teachers in the district's high-poverty rural schools, where students face many barriers to learning, is difficult for the Collier County district because teachers often prefer working in the higher-performing and more affluent urban communities.
- Collier County is using its Reading First grant to place reading coaches in Title I schools. These coaches will serve as role models for delivering effective reading instruction and will train teachers in various strategies for raising student achievement in reading.
- Collier County School District has partnered with local community colleges to develop coursework to help paraprofessionals become highly qualified. Some of the district's Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals are unlikely to complete an associate's degree, however, because of family pressures to stay at home in the evening. As an alternative, the school district plans to provide free test preparation and test fees to encourage paraprofessionals to take the state-approved test to demonstrate their competence when it becomes available in February 2004.

Background

The Collier County School District is a large countywide system in southern Florida that educates 37,109 students in 35 schools. The district serves diverse communities that stretch from the wealthy beach area of Naples on the Florida Gulf, through the Everglades, and into the high-poverty inland area of Immokalee. Most of the families in Immokalee and in the southern end of the county are very poor, and many are migrants and immigrants. One school in the Everglades is a K-12 school that serves 185 students, primarily from Mexico (Spanish speaking) and Haiti (Haitian Creole speaking). Collier County has the largest number of migrants in the state, a total of 4,968 or about 13% of the district's enrollment.

An hour away from Immokalee is the beach region of Naples, a fast growing community with an annual growth rate of 5-7%. This means new schools, facilities, and educational services for the

Collier County School District, as well as continual adjustments to the always-changing newcomer and residential population. In the summer of 2003, the district was building two high schools, a middle school, two intermediate centers, and an elementary school.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Each school in Collier County has a plan in place that describes how it will raise academic achievement. Much time has been spent training teachers and support personnel how to analyze data to determine what instructional changes should be made to help all students reach the desired targets. A districtwide database is in place that enables school staff and classroom teachers to access a student's entire history of achievement, including the student's academic strengths and weaknesses. The goal is for teachers to use this information to differentiate instruction according to a student's individual needs.

One of the district goals is to improve the reading skills of students in the early grades so that they will be successful in all content areas as they progress across grade levels. With a new Reading First grant, reading coaches have been placed at school sites to support teachers in various ways. The coaches serve as role models for delivering instruction to students. They also provide staff development and training for teachers in a variety of instructional strategies and help teachers acquire the skills necessary to make teaching and learning more effective. A massive training program is underway to assure that all teachers will be able to bring students to higher achievement in reading.

Collier County has also undertaken an initiative to provide children with a strong base of readiness before they enter formal instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades. Toward this end, Title I schools have pre-kindergarten classes for four-year-olds, funded from Title I and Head Start. Universal pre-kindergarten will be required in Florida in two years.

Because Collier County staff recognizes the need to improve student achievement, the district is working to remove barriers that prevent children from progressing through the grades without the skills they need to be successful.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals

High teacher turnover of in the district's high-poverty schools may continue to be a challenge for Collier County, because so many teachers want to live in the highly desirable beach area. Schools in the beach area perform at higher levels than others in the district but have fewer vacancies. As a condition of employment, the district requires teachers in all schools to stay in the school for which they were hired for three years.

The district's staff is looking at ways to reduce teacher turnover and ensure greater staff stability in high-poverty, low-performing schools. The greatest areas of need for teachers overall are special education, mathematics, and science. A total of 144 of the 2,400 teachers in Collier County, about 6%, did not meet the NCLB qualification requirements in 2002-03. All new hires for 2003-04, however, met the requirements.

To make the requisite courses available to paraprofessionals, the district has developed a partnership with the community colleges in Immokalee and Naples and is encouraging employees to attend courses at these colleges. Books and tuition for the community college courses are provided at no cost to paraprofessionals through Title I funds, and both school and district staffs persuade paraprofessionals to attend the classes. The district estimates, however, that as many as half of its paraprofessionals will not be able to pursue an associate's degree, let alone become teachers. Many of the paraprofessionals are Hispanic and are needed in the schools for their Spanish language skills. In many families, however, women are discouraged from going out at night to take classes, and child care is an issue for those that do.

The district has also selected a state-approved competency test to use for paraprofessionals when it becomes available in February 2004, but any test that is on the state-approved list can be chosen by an employee or prospective employee. In the fall of 2003-04, the district plans to offer free study skills classes and workbooks to help paraprofessionals pass this test. When currently employed paraprofessionals are ready to take the test, the district will pay the fee.

School Choice

Two schools in the Collier County district did not make AYP in 2002-03 and are required to offer school choice for the 2003-04 school year. Parents were notified by mail about their choices of schools. The letters were in three languages, and announcements were made in the newspapers, on the Spanish language radio station, and on the school system cable TV channel. Announcements were also posted throughout the community. An informational meeting was held at the local high school to answer questions from parents. The parents of 56 students requested transfers for their children to a different school; all were assigned to their first choice school. Four of the students requested to attend the high school in Naples, and transportation is being provided.

School choice will be offered in 2003-04 for students attending the high school and one elementary school in Immokalee. The elementary students can choose from two other elementary schools in Immokalee, but there is only one high school in Immokalee. The nearest choice high schools are 60-90 minutes away in the Naples area.

Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners

The district is aware that it needs to improve the performance of English language learners because state expectations for these students are much greater than in the past. This is likely to be a challenge because the families so often change jobs and residences and the parents often have limited education. Communicating effectively with these diverse families is a related

challenge; even though most speak Spanish, dialects and cultures differ, depending on whether the families came to Collier County from Mexico, Haiti, or Cuba.

Recent results from the Florida state high school exit examination indicate that many Collier County Hispanic students lack the skills to reach the passing level on the exam. Even though these students passed their courses and had enough units to graduate, their inability to master the test has kept them away from high school graduation. This has created a new level of high school dropouts and new challenges for the district.

Other Implementation Issues

District administrators credit parental support, community efforts, and a committed staff as the key elements that will help the district improve the academic performance of all students. Collier County's educational improvement plan includes a process for evaluating new initiatives and a thorough cycle of program evaluation, a practice that will be continued and expanded with the implementation of NCLB.

Data File 2002-03 — Collier County School District

Location: Southern Florida

Type: Rural and urban

Number of Schools:

36 total

22 elementary schools (K-5)

8 middle schools (6-8)

5 high schools (9-12)

1 K-12 school

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 37,109

White: 58%

Hispanic: 34%

African American: 8%

Asian: 1%

American Indian: 0.4%

English Language Learners: 16% (5,862 students representing 40 languages)

Students with Disabilities: 8%

Low-Income Students: 47% (ranging from 7% to 99% in individual schools)

Number of Teachers

Total: 2,400

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 144 (6%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 255

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 90%

Number of Title I Schools: 15

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 2 in 2003-04

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

Illinois

Chicago Public Schools

CEO: Arne Duncan

Contact: Xavier Botana, Dan Bugler, and Philip Hansen

Students: K-12: 438,589 – urban

Key Findings

- Conflicting and changing information from the U.S. Department of Education and the state of Illinois about the law's interpretation complicated the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in the Chicago Public Schools during school year 2002-03.
- The implementation of the NCLB school choice provisions in Chicago has been hampered, district officials say, by small numbers of available slots at receiving schools and a short period between the time the state identified the eligible schools and the beginning of the school year.
- The Chicago Public Schools undertook efforts to identify teachers who are highly qualified, but state requirements for teacher certification and licensure are at odds with the NCLB requirements, so there are many teachers who meet the state's standards but are not "highly qualified" according to the federal Act.

Background

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is one of the largest school districts in the country. Its student population exceeds 438,000—put another way, about 21% percent of all public school students in Illinois attend Chicago public schools. The district's students are representative of the diversity found in the city of Chicago. More than 46 languages are spoken in the district's 602 schools. Student demographics include 50.9% African American, 36.4% Latino, 9.2% White, 3.3% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.2% Native American. The CPS budget for fiscal year 2003 was over \$3.66 billion. Children from low-income families constitute 85.3% of the student enrollment, and 14.3% are listed as English language learners. In 2002-03, of the district's 46,601 budgeted positions, 42,091 were employed in the schools, 3,055 held citywide positions and 1,455 worked at central office or in one of six regions.

Since the mid-1980s, the Chicago school district has undergone a series of reforms that have profoundly affected the status of education in the city and shaped how the system approached implementation of NCLB. In 1989, the city took a far-reaching step toward public accountability by creating local school councils in every school. These councils gave parents and others in the community the opportunity to have a direct and active choice in how their schools would be operated. In 1995, after years of battling with the state legislature for funding, the mayor of Chicago argued that if the legislature was not going to give the city sufficient money to run the

schools properly, then the legislature should place control of the school system under the mayor—and it did.

The marriage between the local school council action and the mayor's takeover of the schools has been a rocky one, but it is far from ready for the divorce courts. The district has made progress in school improvement, teacher professionalism, reading scores, curriculum, and choice. No one is satisfied with the speed, but even the most rigid CPS opponents can point to some progress on many issues.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

The early implementation of NCLB in Chicago was hampered by disputes between the city's mayor and the district's CEO and the school board president. In April 2001, the two latter individuals resigned and new leaders came in. When Arne Duncan was appointed as the CEO of Chicago Public Schools in June 2001, he faced a series of challenges, not the least of which was beginning implementation of NCLB.

In the early months after NCLB was enacted, the CPS legal department carefully reviewed the law and began to put on a series of workshops and seminars. The goal was to actively get the word out about the law—both internally, so that CPS departments would be prepared to do what they had to, and externally so that the community would understand the new law.

Chicago people had no problem with the overall focus of the law: improve professionalism among teachers, offer additional tutoring for struggling students, strengthen accountability, improve reading scores, and create urban schools that work for children. But in the details of implementation, Chicago school officials saw potential difficulties that could slow down reform in a system that had finally begun to show progress through its own efforts.

School officials also had numerous questions about how various provisions of the law would be interpreted. For example, if children were to be given the option of changing schools, would there be enough eligible schools and seats in those schools to take the students? How would costs be absorbed? And what criteria would the state use to designate the schools, and would those criteria stand the test of scrutiny? School leaders worried that implementing the school choice provisions alone would not only tax CPS departments but also make it difficult for them to accomplish the real intent of the law—to give students safer and better schools to attend. Even preliminary reports and analyses from the Illinois State Board of Education were leading many to believe that few Chicago students would really be able to move to another school. There simply weren't enough *good* schools with empty seats in them to accommodate the students who would be deemed eligible to switch.

CPS officials felt that they did not receive clear answers to their questions about these and other matters from the state and federal levels. The district was anxiously awaiting guidelines from the state and specific information about which schools would have to offer choice and supplemental services.

Shortly after Duncan took office, when action began in earnest on implementation of NCLB, the CEO opted to develop teams from different departments rather than create a new NCLB Department. This allowed the district to build on what it was already doing, rather than viewing NCLB as a new reform that would have to be layered on top of what was already in place.

The reforms occurring in Chicago at the time the law was passed were far more advanced and orderly than in many other cities across the country. With school reform elements already well underway in Chicago, the question became how to implement NCLB without undermining the work already started in public school choice options, teacher improvement and accountability, reading instruction, and other areas.

CPS seemed to be adopting a two-pronged approach to implementation for fall 2002. On one hand, departments that would be most affected by NCLB began to plan for implementation, making every effort to adapt systems that were already in place to meet the demands of NCLB. At the same time, CPS was waiting until the state board developed its own accountability system, prepared the list of schools in need of improvement, and issued more definitive guidelines on a host of other issues before it moved ahead at full speed. CPS strategically made the choice to avoid any public “nay-saying” about the law, even though many school officials had concerns about how its provisions would affect large urban systems.

Chicago already had three schools that Duncan had closed in June 2002 because they had a long history of doing poorly—some for more than 10 years. Plans called for the three schools to be closed for at least a year so that they could be completely restructured, then reopened. Seats for these children had to be found, putting any others who might opt for school choice under NCLB in line behind them.

Duncan had already established several goals for his tenure: improved professionalism and professional development for teachers; more choice for those who wanted it, in the form of magnet schools, small schools, and gifted centers; better accountability; and more schools that could serve as centers of the community.

Duncan put together a quality management team to manage NCLB, consisting of members from many CPS departments: Academic Advancement, Research and Accountability, Education, Human Resources, Technology, Communication, Law, Budget, and Finance. Duncan currently heads the group and other departments are brought in on an as-needed basis. Because of the senior level of those who work on the team, effective decisions can be made promptly and implemented quickly.

During the hectic summer of 2002, it seemed clear to many at CPS that if it relied solely on the state for implementation and guidelines, it would not serve CPS’s best interests, so Duncan moved to get approval from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for the district’s implementation plans.

One area of confusion between CPS and the Illinois state board on one hand and USED on the other concerned the rate of students’ adequate yearly progress. As discussed in more detail in the section on AYP, CPS officials thought it would be acceptable, under the state’s AYP plan,

for the district to improve at different rates in different years. But after negotiations between the state of Illinois and USED, the two parties emerged with a policy which assumed that average achievement would grow at a steady annual rate.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

School Choice

CPS has a history of offering its students public school choice options. About 150,000 students across the district opt out of their neighborhood school to attend magnet schools, charter schools, and gifted centers. CPS considers that to some degree it had already implemented a variation of choice before NCLB was enacted.

Rather than create new NCLB systems, CPS looked around within its own processes and procedures to find something already in place and operating effectively that could be adapted for NCLB purposes. With respect to choice, CPS had a system that was working reasonably well for some of its selected-enrollment schools. Parents would fill out interest and preference forms, mail them by a specific deadline, and then their names would be entered in a lottery. From the lottery—if they had more than one choice—parents could visit the schools and then choose the one they wanted. A similar process, conducted by the same CPS department, was developed for NCLB choice. Parents received notification from CPS, applied by a deadline, and then their names were put in a lottery to be moved to a new school.

Letters to parents about the options to move their children were mailed out in summer 2002. During August of that year, open houses were held at schools that would be receiving students. Parents were required to send their applications for participation in the choice programs by the postmark date of August 15, 2002. They would be notified of student placements through the mail, and letters were sent out on August 23, 2002.

Because CPS had received approval from USED to pilot choice at 48 of its 179 low performing schools, only parents at those schools received letters about submitting an application for either the Paired Choice or the Cluster Choice option. Shortly after the letters went out but before the deadline for applying, two open houses for both pilot programs were held at the *receiving* schools. Information was provided to parents about their options and the choice process. Of the 26,000-plus families from the 48 low-achieving schools who received notification, only 1,400 parents attended the open house information sessions.

When the August 15, 2002 deadline arrived, CPS had received applications from 2,425 parents who wanted to exercise their choice option. These names were placed in a lottery held a week later for the 1,500 seats CPS had been able to identify in receiving schools. Low-income, low-performing students from the 48 schools identified for school improvement were given preference. The lottery resulted in 1,165 students of the more than 430,000 in the CPS system changing schools under the NCLB choice implementation.

By the end of the 2002-03 academic year, 707 students were still at their new choice schools. About 25%, or 294 students, had returned to their original schools, and 36 students had left the CPS system for other districts. The remaining 128 had moved to other CPS schools.

The small number of students who participated in the first round of choice can be attributed to several factors, district officials said. One clearly was the option granted to CPS by USED to test the plan during the first year rather than move all of the students who were eligible. Another factor could be traced to the fact some CPS schools that would have been classified as receiving schools were already at capacity or seriously overcrowded and therefore could not take new students.

CPS staff noted other factors reducing use of the choice option, including the large number of low-performing schools in the system that simply weren't doing well enough themselves to take on students. Consequently, the number of available seats within the system was severely limited. Another issue was the management, logistical, transportation, and financial turmoil likely to arise if school choice had been offered to the more than 26,000 students who were eligible.

CPS officials made what they saw as an additional gesture of good faith regarding choice. For the receiving schools, as well as for all 179 low-performing schools on the state-designated watch list, CPS offered what it called educational enhancements. Parents of students enrolled at low-performing schools who were not eligible for the choice option were sent letters about the educational enhancements their schools would be receiving. These included reading specialists, diagnostic testing, increased teacher professional development, and tutoring and after-school programs.

Two types of choice programs were offered during 2002-03:

- Paired choice: 40 schools from the state list of 179, including the bottom 21, were paired with other, better-performing schools with slots available to take students. The receiving schools were within three miles of each other.
- Clustered choice: 8 low-performing schools were clustered with 2 or 3 schools offering specialized curricula, and students could transfer within the cluster. Two pilot programs were created in 48 of the 179 elementary schools not meeting state standards.

Parents could transfer their children to better schools either through Paired Choice or Cluster Choice. The cluster system, which struggled in 2002-03, was dropped for the 2003-04 school year.

In August 2003, more than 250,000 letters went out to CPS parents advising them of their school choice opportunities. Again a lottery was held that included the names of students who returned their forms before the deadline. There were approximately 1,200 seats available. Nineteen thousand applications were received for the lottery, and 1,097 students were offered the opportunity to move under choice for the 2003-04 school year. It was estimated that about half of those who "won" the lottery actually reported to their new schools when classes began in

September 2003. The following table shows what has happened to the students who qualified for choice in 2002 and 2003.

What Happened to the CPS Students Who Qualified for and Then Took Advantage of School Choice and Supplemental Services?		
	August 2002	August 2003
Number of students who were eligible for choice and received letters	26,000+	250,000
Approximate number of seats available in “approved for receiving students” schools	1,500	1,200
Number of students who applied for choice slots	2,425	19,000
Number of students who were placed in available school slots	1,165	1,097
Number of students who stayed in the new choice school for the year	707	
Number of students who returned to their former schools	294	
Number of students who left their new choice school and went to other CPS schools	128	
Number of student who left and transferred to non CPS schools	36	
Number of schools identified for choice and supplemental services	179 choice only; 25 choice and supplemental services	325

Number of letters sent out regarding supplemental services	18,000+	133,000
Number of students who received supplemental services	1,100	17,000

CPS was criticized for having made the choice process very complicated, particularly in its letters to parents explaining their rights. CPS staffers responded that NCLB guidelines were specific as to what the letters could and should say, and that compliance itself complicated the process.

Frustrations with school choice implementation among district officials ran so high that many speculated whether it would be worth implementing in future years. Suggestions for legislative changes, such as putting all the choice dollars into supplemental services, were receiving an attentive ear because many believed it would be a better use of time, money, and manpower. Duncan also went on record as indicating that supplemental services should be undertaken first before the drastic step of moving children.

Supplemental Services

The Chicago Public Schools, along with other districts in the state, thought they had an understanding that supplemental services would not be offered until the 2004-05 school year. This came about as a result of a clause in the state's consolidated application to USED. In the state application, Illinois had given this start date, and the application had been approved. Additionally, CPS felt that it could take a little more time to implement the supplemental tutoring because it was already offering many after-school programs that provide additional educational assistance to students.

However, in February 2003, according to CPS staff, USED notified Illinois that its districts had to begin complying with the law by providing supplemental services immediately, despite the clause in the state's approved application. The state hurried to approve more than 20 service suppliers who could begin to provide tutoring services to eligible schools, and CPS worked overtime to put them online so they could be paid.

After the state identified 25 schools (13 elementary and 12 high schools) in Chicago that qualified for supplemental services because they had been identified for school improvement for a second year, CPS was again pressed into creating and implementing, on the fly, a process for parents to request the supplemental tutoring for their children. Service providers were asked to submit information about their programs and to indicate how many students they would be able to handle. Letters were sent out to approximately 18,000 parents advising them of their rights under NCLB. Information from the providers was included, along with a form on which parents could indicate which provider they wanted to use for their children. CPS created a deadline and required that all forms be returned by mail.

Once the parents had made their selections, CPS assigned students to the various providers and set up sites across the district's schools where the tutoring would be held. (Some had off-school sites, and parents were responsible for getting the children to them.) Providers were required to meet with the parents on an individual basis, test the children, and design an achievement plan for each.

Approximately 1,400 parents completed the process and were assigned to supplemental service providers. CPS reported that 1,100 children actually registered for the tutoring. The program began in late April 2003 and ran for seven weeks.

NCLB calls for the supplemental services to be provided so that test scores improve, but district officials note that because of the confusing signals from the state and federal governments, Chicago children did not receive the services until after testing was completed.

CEO Duncan publicly expressed his support of supplemental services and hoped that 25,000-30,000 students might be served during the 2003-04 school year. (About 17,000 registered for supplemental services in fall 2003.) Duncan went on record as very much in favor of the additional help, and has spoken about wanting to have supplemental services at all 600 CPS schools. He has stated his belief that supplemental tutoring services should come before school choice and has suggested changing the law to require this. "It just makes sense educationally," he said. "Where we're seeing improvement, we want to invest in the schools – not in more yellow school buses."

Highly Qualified Teachers

As part of its responsibility to comply with the teacher quality provisions of NCLB, CPS began working in late 2002 to compile the necessary information about teacher qualifications. By January 2003, CPS had established—in partnership with the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association—the Educator Qualification System (EQS) to effectively verify whether teachers were in compliance with the law. The role of EQS was to inventory teacher certification, endorsements, and assignments. It was also charged with developing and implementing the system to inform parents regarding the qualifications of the teachers in their children's schools.

Data for the inventory came from CPS records, principals, and the teachers themselves. The system was put online so the information could be updated at the school level—what subjects teachers were teaching, whether they were teaching in their content area, and if they had the necessary certifications and endorsements. Data was collected about 26,000 teachers and 5,000 assistant teachers.

The CPS teacher audit was conducted in January and February 2003. CPS set a timetable for assessing the teachers whose credentials were to be reviewed, including regular appointed teachers, FTB substitute teachers, citywide special education teachers giving students instructional support, and librarians. The review also looked at paraprofessionals who served in various kinds of instructional positions. Not reviewed during 2002-03 were day-to-day substitutes, cadre substitutes, special education teachers (because there were no guidelines) and

others who gave instructional support to staff (not students), reading specialists, and other types of paraprofessionals or ancillary staff. CPS did not keep records to indicate which children were assigned to each teacher—information necessary to comply with the NCLB requirement to inform parents if their Title I children were not being taught by a “highly qualified” teacher. So the task of matching the teacher EQS information to students in each classroom fell to the principals at the school level.

A process was developed to advise parents of their rights to know about the educational background and certification of the children’s teachers. Initial letters were sent home by school principals. Second letters, generated by central office, with information regarding teachers who were *not* highly qualified according to the NCLB definition were forwarded to the schools. Principals reviewed the information about their teachers; matched teachers to the students in their classrooms; and assigned staff to stuff the student-labeled envelopes provided by CPS central office. Principals returned the completed mailing to central office for processing and mailing to parents on April 10, 2003.

While current teachers have four years under NCLB to become highly qualified according to the law’s definition, many wore the stigma of being unqualified because of differences between the NCLB requirements and those of the Illinois state certification/North Central Accrediting Association. Many teachers are considered well above state standards and hold Illinois endorsements, but they are not highly qualified teachers according to the federal law. The chart below delineates the variations between the two.

State Requirements for Teacher Qualifications vs. NCLB Requirements	
<i>STATE of ILLINOIS</i>	<i>NCLB</i>
Teachers need reading endorsement if they are teaching reading more than 50% of the time	Teachers need reading endorsement even if they are only teaching one reading class
Teachers with Type 29 (bilingual) certification can teach all subjects for the 8-year life of the certification	Teachers with Type 29 do not meet standards unless they also passed the basic skills and subject area tests
Special education teachers need grade level certification and special education endorsements for the disabilities with which they work	Special education endorsements are not used to make determinations
Teachers and recent out-of-state graduates with provisional certificates may teach for a full year under these certifications	Provisional certificates do not meet standards
High school teachers and subject-specialists in	These teachers need an endorsement or a

middle schools need grade level certification and endorsements in subjects taught 3/5 of the time; 2/5 of subjects taught may be off certification	college/university subject major, or must have passed a state subject area test for each subject taught
Teachers enrolled in programs for, or working on, alternative certification are considered by the state and local district to be qualified	These teachers do not meet standards
(Some Chicago public schools have as many as 23-62 foreign languages spoken by students)	Teachers must be fluent in the languages of the children in their classrooms

CPS faced some difficult NCLB implementation issues regarding its districtwide reading initiative and teacher qualifications. When the reading program was begun, almost all teachers were required to teach reading at some time during the day. CPS knew it faced a major challenge. Many core teachers were pressed into the service of teaching reading even if they did not have a reading endorsement. So a series of training programs and workshops were provided to prepare teachers. Training was extensive and consistent. CPS provided considerable training but it was not accompanied by any university or professional development credits, so it did not qualify as training meeting NCLB specifications. Once again, many teachers found themselves well-trained to handle their reading responsibilities but unqualified according to the NCLB.

CPS encountered other implementation problems. In Illinois, teachers were allowed to teach “off endorsement” for up to two-fifths of their daily schedule—a ruling endorsed by both the Illinois State Board of Education and the North Central Accrediting Association. This long-standing Illinois practice was in direct contradiction to NCLB, which insisted that teachers face the immediate label of being not highly qualified if they lacked the proper credential in every content area taught. When the NCLB criteria replaced existing state practices, this created an inordinate number of core content teachers who were publicly labeled as not highly qualified. The NCLB requirements for new hires to be “highly qualified” by the law’s definition posed further difficulty for CPS because the district, like many across the country, was facing a dwindling pool of teacher candidates from which to choose.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Battles with how to measure adequate yearly progress began early. CPS was clear: it had a new accountability system that created categories of schools that *Exceed, Meet, or Do Not Exceed* standards.

Elementary schools would be measured on improvement in scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills compared to the citywide average; the schools’ average student improvement in Iowa scores; their improvement on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test compared to the citywide average; and progress on the ISAT compared to the previous year’s scores. High schools would be measured on the Prairie State exam and on dropout rates and on-track-to-graduate rates. The

new system would concentrate on all schools instead of just those on probation; would consider many indicators instead of just one; would include rewards for improvement; and would focus on the more important issue of student gains rather than school gains. School officials believed it was much more important to know if its students were making yearly gains.

The system was newly rolled out in fall 2002, and by early accounts a Chicago school could fall in CPS's Schools of Distinction category ("exceeds standards") and then find itself on the state watch list created by the NCLB criteria for measuring AYP. This might happen as a result of disaggregating student populations or because of student movement through choice, as the example in Box 1 illustrates.

Box 1 -- C school example

The experience of one Chicago school, C Elementary School (CES), illustrates the challenges of having a different evaluation system under NCLB than the state or district's system. The school had shown gains over a several year period and was on the state's list of improving schools. Under NCLB, however, improvement had to be shown in all disaggregated student groups. Among its English language learner students, CES had percentages that initially failed to show the NCLB-required improvement. This in turn led to the school being removed from the state's improving list.

Another factor contributed to the CES dilemma. ELL students were moved out of the bilingual program and into the general student population when they made significant progress—or in other cases—after three years. This meant that the only students who were left in the ELL pool, disaggregated for NCLB purposes, would always be those who were not proficient.

Adding yet another hurdle for CES was the fact that the Illinois State Board of Education changed its required percent of improvement for ELL students to "allow for statistical margin of error." CES went off the state's list of schools not meeting standards and retractions had to be issued.

CPS and many other districts also worried that it would be very difficult to achieve the same annual percentage of academic progress every year. Their experience showed that improvement did not happen in neat increments. There were likely to be years when a steady annual growth of a specific percentage was not a realistic goal, they reasoned.

According to CPS officials, conversations between CPS, state officials, and USED led to what many felt was a reasonable solution. AYP would be flat at first, then rise sharply and sustain itself at that level over a period of time. Initially, USED agreed to this concept, or so Illinois educators thought, and the state proceeded under the assumption that this was acceptable path. But in June 2003, USED indicated dissatisfaction with the plan because the growth would not occur in equal increments. At the time this case study was completed, USED had indicated its

preference for a fixed growth rate per year. CPS and state staffers—along with educators across the country—argue that no growth is ever consistent in all groups over a sustained period of time.

Some district insiders argued that CPS should have taken a stand on this issue with USED. But others felt that it was not a good time to take on the federal Department. Some believed that USED might be looking to make an “example” of a district that was not complying, and they did not want CPS to be that district. In addition, as more and more districts across the country might come to face the same problem, there might be a stronger case made to adjust the law.

Release Dates for State Data

Release dates for the state lists of schools that did not make AYP gave CPS short time frames in which it could implement choice. The state released the first list in July 2002, and CPS had to roll out its choice plan in the same month. This meant, among other issues, identifying schools that could receive students, determining which services would be provided, determining which students would be eligible, contacting those students, and establishing a lottery process because there would not be enough spaces among improving schools.

NCLB required states and districts to use the most recent data to determine school eligibility lists. This meant acquiring the data from 2001-02—data that historically was not available in Illinois until late in the summer. Waiting for the most recent information did not allow much lead-time for implementation to take place in a timely manner. The initial list for CPS in summer 2002 included 179 schools. CPS could have gone down the road another district took: going with the most recent data from the previous year, which would result in a shorter list of poorly performing schools and fewer eligible students and thereby make implementation somewhat easier.

While there were frustration about NCLB in many areas, educators were clear on one challenge: receiving information about how they were supposed to implement the law. District staffers were concerned that the U.S. Department of Education gave different answers to the same questions and then was reluctant to put the agreed-upon answer in writing. This posed a problem for the district; if it implemented a policy, it could be told later by USED that what the district did was unacceptable. A lack of firm responses, according to CPS staffers, also led to missed deadlines and to parents, teachers, principals, and others being left hanging as to what was required.

Many CPS departments felt the challenges too. When a new law of such magnitude as NCLB is enacted, it stands to reason the departments in a school system would also be affected. CPS was no exception; some district staffers estimated that as many as 30% of the departments at CPS had to make some adjustments or major changes. A sampling of affected departments follows:

- *Payroll:* Teachers were required to obtain university transcripts in order to aid with determinations of their status as qualified or not. CPS agreed to pay their fees for this service. Checks were processed for \$6.00 each for the 26,000-plus teachers in the system.
- *Transportation:* Systems to transport students to their choice schools were developed, only to be scrapped as not feasible. Alternative systems involving reimbursements and public transportation were created. This in turn drew in *Safety and Security*, which had to deliver them to the schools.
- *Sports Administration:* High school student athletes who opted for choice had to deal with sports eligibility and recruitment issues.

In summary, NCLB has created considerable challenges for the Chicago Public Schools, challenges shared by other large urban districts. Nearly all aspects of the law's requirements become more logistically complex when hundreds of thousands of students, tens of thousands of teachers, and hundreds of schools are involved. Chicago also seems to be working hard to implement NCLB in a way that maintains the momentum of its reforms that were already showing positive results. As state and federal policies become more concrete over time, the district should be better able to respond because at least it knows what is expected.

Data File 2002-03 — Chicago Public Schools

Location: Northern Illinois

Type: Urban

Number of Schools:

602 total

470 elementary schools (421 traditional, 35 magnet, 14 special)

23 middle schools

95 high schools (70 general/technical/academic preparatory, 13 special, 5 magnet, 7 vocational)

14 charter schools (9 elementary, 5 secondary)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 438,589

African American: 50.9%

Hispanic: 36.4%

White: 9.2%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 3.3%

Native American: 0.2%

English Language Learners: 14.3%

Students with Disabilities: N/A

Low-Income Students: 85.3%

Number of Teachers

Total: approximately 26,000

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 1,900 did not meet NCLB criteria in 2002-03; criteria have changed for 2003-04 so these numbers are not reliable for 03-04.

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: approximately 5,000 Title I paraprofessionals

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Title I Schools: N/A

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Identified as not making adequate yearly progress for at least one year:

Required to offer school choice: 48 in 2002-03; 365 in 2003-04

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 225

In corrective action: N/A

Kansas

Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Superintendent: Dr. Ray Daniels

Contact: Jim Clevenger, Director, Federal Programs

Students, K-12: 20,425 – urban

Key Findings

- Kansas City has an extensive program of professional development and technical assistance, which local administrators believe has helped the district improve student performance and implement the requirements of NCLB.
- Overall student achievement in Kansas City rose in 2003, and three of the 10 schools subject to school improvement in 2002-03 made sufficient academic gains to exit improvement status. District officials attribute this progress to intensive technical assistance and professional development. Among the more effective initiatives are school audit teams that review school goals and make recommendations for targeting all resources to achieve these goals, and site-level teacher leaders who help teachers change their instruction through coaching and mentoring.
- Only a limited number of eligible parents in Kansas chose to enroll their children in supplemental services. The Kansas City school district was the only approved provider of supplemental services in school year 2002-03, and the number of providers is limited for the current school year. To increase participation in these services, district officials believe that parents and students must recognize how students can benefit from this extra help and must embrace an expanded concept of “school” that includes additional learning hours in various settings.

Background

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools is an urban district that serves 20,756 students, most of them poor and most African American. Forty-two schools house students in configurations of grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

In recent years the school district has benefited from the involvement of the Kauffman Foundation, a private foundation, in its professional development program. The Kauffman Foundation initiated this partnership with the public schools with profits from the sale of the Kansas City Royals baseball team. School year 2002-03 marked the district’s third year of funding from the foundation.

Professional development, supported by the Kauffman Foundation, has been a major goal of the Kansas City Public Schools since before NCLB was enacted. A structured professional development program called *Teaching Is Learning* provides weekly professional development

sessions to all teachers in every school, grade, and subject. Students at all schools are released two hours early on Wednesdays so that teachers and other school staff can participate in this training, which helps them to incorporate standards and benchmarks into their teaching, develop strategies to improve reading and math instruction, and use student assessment data to refine instruction. Staff members who work as instructional coaches help plan these weekly sessions, and coaches also serve as mentors for their colleagues. The district is also implementing a web-based professional development program, described below.

The district is also using other strategies to raise achievement, such as instituting a computerized data system that tracks educators' efforts to keep parents informed about their children's progress and encouraging teachers to move to the next grade with the same class of students, so the students can stay with the same teacher for two or three years.

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Professional Development and Technical Assistance

The Kansas City school district is implementing a web-based professional development program that contains the content standards, benchmarks, and other indicators that teachers need for specific grade levels. Plans are in place to create links to high-quality lesson plans, created by teachers, that directly address specific standards and contain scoring rubrics and exemplary activities. Teachers will be able to find the standard and benchmark they need to address, then click on available lesson plans for their grade level. After selecting a lesson plan, they can change it to suit the particular needs of their students and can save the revised plan in their own computer folder for future use.

In 2002-03, the district provided major technical assistance, including professional development, to the 10 schools targeted for school improvement. In 2003, three of these schools made large enough achievement gains for the second consecutive year to exit school improvement. District officials assert that school-level "audit teams" for math and reading have made a substantial impact in all 10 schools. These audit teams, which consist of district teachers and other staff, spent a week at each of the 10 schools reviewing how personnel, facilities, and funds were used and how all of these resources were targeted toward areas of need. They also sought to assure that schoolwide goals were in place and that all efforts were directed toward achieving those goals. The table below shows the kinds of questions the audit teams examined.

Kansas City School Audit – Technical Assistance for School Improvement Schools

1. Are school goals set?
2. Are they adequate to move the school to AYP achievement?
3. Are the strategies described in the School and Small Learning Community Action Plans sufficient to improve student achievement to a level that achieves AYP?
4. Is the staff development plan sufficient to support the staff in learning and implementing the strategies?

5. Are the resources (instructional materials, money, personnel, space, time) aligned to maximize the effectiveness of the action plans?
6. Is Principal Leadership and practice effectively supporting and expecting the implementation of the plan?
7. Is Instructional Coach leadership and practice effectively supporting and expecting the implementation of the plan?
8. What is the current implementation level of action plan?
9. Recommendations

The audit teams often made very specific recommendations about ways to improve school plans, such as recommending particular instructional strategies in reading.

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

Although in the past, Kansas City schools have not performed as well academically as the district's leaders and the community have desired, solid achievement gains were made in 2003. Academic achievement increased at most schools and in most content areas, and there was a substantial increase in the number of students who scored at the proficient level, including those in the designated subgroups. District staff members believe that their investment in professional development is beginning to pay off, and it was very encouraging to staff that three schools moved out of school improvement.

All 10 schools in school improvement in 2002-03 made AYP in reading, and seven made AYP in math. Three schools came off school improvement for reading and math, and two schools came off in reading only. Of the seven schools remaining in school improvement, all made achievement gains in 2003, but they will need to sustain these gains for another year to exit school improvement. Four of these schools made AYP in both reading and math, two made AYP in reading, and one made AYP in math. Four schools could come off improvement in reading and math in 2004 if they make AYP in reading and math again. Three schools could come off school improvement in reading if they make AYP in reading again.

The 2003 assessments show a substantial increase in the number of students achieving at the proficient or above levels across the district on the state tests for grades 4, 7, and 10 in math and grades 5, 8, and 11 in reading. At the district level, all subgroups met the AYP requirements in reading, but four of nine subgroups (low-income, English language learner, African American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students) did not make AYP in math.

The percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level in reading in grades 5, 8, and 11 combined increased substantially from 31% in 2001, to 33% in 2002, to 48% in 2003. The percentage of students in these same grades who scored at unsatisfactory levels declined from 39% to 21% between 2001 and 2003. The share of students scoring at the proficient level in math, although not as dramatic as reading, increased from 21% to 29% during this same period, while the percentage scoring at the unsatisfactory level declined from 53% to 44%.

One of the schools in improvement status scored among the highest in the district in 2003, with 70% of its students scoring at or above the proficient level in reading and 69% in math. This high-poverty school seems to be on its way to becoming a high performing school.

Five of the Kansas City schools were targeted for corrective action in 2002-03, a serious phase of the NCLB sanctions for schools that consistently fail to make AYP. Because these schools made exceptional achievement gains in 2003, however, they will continue to implement their improvement plans in 2003-04 and will not be subject to harsher sanctions, such as reorganization or staff replacement. The district intends to continue providing technical assistance to these schools, anticipating that another year or two of achievement gains will enable all five schools to exit improvement status. One school is in restructuring status, but the state has agreed to accept the reform efforts being done at the school for 2003-04.

School Choice and Supplemental Services

Kansas City was required to offer school choice in 10 schools in 2002-03, including three schools that had to offer supplemental services, as well. In 2003-04, seven schools must continue to offer choice and supplemental services.

In 2002-03, only a small number of parents took advantage of the opportunity to move their children to a different school—just 127 students transferred schools, out of 4,500 eligible. Almost half of the requests to transfer (56) were from one school. Although parents were notified about their options in a variety of ways, most were reluctant to move their children from their neighborhood schools. District officials anticipate that the number of parents taking advantage of school choice in 2003-04 will be even lower. The school that had the most requests for transfers in 2002-03 is no longer in school improvement, and it is not anticipated that parents will want to transfer their children from the school that is performing so well.

Similarly, only 283 students participated in supplemental services in 2002-03. In 2002-03, the school district was the only approved provider. School officials believe the district can serve students more efficiently than many other providers. Service providers continue to be limited. One of the providers wanted to charge the parents for part of the costs of services, because what they charged was more than the district could pay, but the district would not allow that to occur.

Most supplemental services are delivered after the regular school day. To increase students' participation in these services, district officials believe that parents and students will have to change their concept of "school" to encompass a longer learning day in a variety of settings and to understand how students can benefit from the additional services.

Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Of the 1,600 teachers in the Kansas City district, only 40 do not meet NCLB qualifications. The district participates in a state program that allows people who are seeking second careers in education to be assigned to schools through an alternative endorsement program for new

teachers. The teachers who do not meet NCLB requirements teach in hard-to-fill content areas for which they do not have a state endorsement.

The state of Kansas has determined that for an experienced teacher to be considered highly qualified according to NCLB, he or she must have a bachelor's degree, must hold a state license in the area in which he or she teaches, and must have achieved one of the following: passed a rigorous content assessment, hold a college major in the content area being taught, have 30 credit hours in the content area being taught, or earn 100 points on a state-developed rubric. The state rubric, piloted last spring, awards points for teaching experience in the content area, credit hours in the content area, service to the profession, awards and honors earned in the content area, and published articles in the content area. It is anticipated that all teachers who need to complete the rubric will do so in 2003-04. However, middle school teachers who have little teaching experience and lack a strong background in the content area they are teaching may have difficulty earning 100 points on the rubric.

The Kansas City school district also employs 93 paraprofessionals who work in Title I schools. Of these, 82 (88%) do not meet NCLB requirements. In accordance with the NCLB criteria, Kansas will require paraprofessionals to have an associate's degree, have 48 hours (two years) of college credit, or achieve a passing score on the paraprofessional assessment. For those who want to take the approved test, the district is providing support and assistance. In the summer of 2003, a total of 40 paraprofessionals took the pre-test, and those who did well will now take the assessment. NCLB Title II funds are being used to purchase study guides and 100 on-line testing licenses. Study sessions are offered on topics covered on the test.

New hires are required to have two years of college, and the district is encouraging paraprofessionals to take additional college coursework.

Other Implementation Issues

Kansas City uses funding from the Kauffman Foundation to support district students who want to pursue a college education and become teachers. In a district where 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, this scholarship program is indeed a bonanza, a top prize for academic excellence, and a way to assure an ample teaching cadre for the future.

Data File 2002-03 — Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Location: Eastern Kansas

Type: Urban, city of 149,767

Number of Schools:

42 total

28 elementary schools (K-5)

8 middle schools (6-8)

1 school serving grades 8-12

5 high schools (9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 20,425
African American: 50%
Hispanic: 25%
White: 21%
Asian: 3.5%
Other: 0.5%
English Language Learners: 13%, mostly Spanish speaking
Students with Disabilities: 13%
Low-Income Students: 75%, ranging from 46% to 100% in individual schools

Number of Teachers

Total: 1,600
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 40 (2.5%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 93
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 82 (88%)

Number of Title I Schools: 26

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 10 in 2002-03; 127 students transferred
Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 7 in 2002-03; 283 students participated in supplemental services
In corrective action: 5

Massachusetts

Avon Public School District

Superintendent: Margaret Frieswyk

Contact: Paul Zinni, Director, Pupil Services

Students, K-12: 730 - 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. 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. For example, first grade classes were under 22 until the start of the school year, but new students arrived and now these are up to 24. A teaching assistant, who is also certified as an elementary teacher, was hired to work in the non-inclusion classroom to accommodate the larger numbers—a class that also has a full-time aide and the support of the special education teacher. Because of budget cuts, first grade started the year with two teachers; a teacher who had retired from first grade was not replaced. This decision was made even though there were 39 students anticipated for that grade level at that time.

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 for other programs from NCLB. 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 decisionmaking 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 2002-03 — 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

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

Minnesota

Cloquet Independent School District # 94

Superintendent: John Langenbrunner

Contact: Randy Thudin, Principal

Students, K-12: 2,278 – 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 9%. 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 85% proficient for all students and 76% 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 *exceeded* the districtwide average by 1%.

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

READING

	% Proficient All Students	% Proficient American Indian Students	Achievement Gap
2002	80%	56%	24
2003	85%	76%	9

MATH

	% Proficient All students	% Proficient American Indian Students	Achievement Gap
2002	71%	38%	33
2003	75%	76%	NONE

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 2002-03 — 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

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

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	Reading, Grade 3	Math, Grade 4
Hermitage students	79%	72%
State average	34%	37%

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 2002-03 — 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

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

New Jersey

Bayonne School District

Superintendent: Patricia L. McGeehan

Contact: Ellen M. O'Connor, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum/Instruction

Students, Pre-K-12: 8,400 – 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 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 2002-03 — 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: 8,000

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

Required to offer school choice: 4 in 2002-03; 3 in 2003-04

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 3 in 2003-04

In corrective action: 0

Ohio

Cleveland Municipal School District

Chief Executive Officer: Barbara Byrd-Bennett

Contacts: Myrna Elliot-Lewis, Chief Academic Officer

Carol Hauser, Executive Director of Employee Services

Erbert Johnson, Chief Financial Officer

Peter Robertson, Chief Information Officer

Nina Turner, Director of Government Affairs

Theresa Yeldell, Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement

Students: K-12: 69,534 – urban

Key Findings

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

Background

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

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

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

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

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Evolving Information

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

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress

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

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

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

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

The subgroups of English language learners and students with disabilities also posed particular challenges for the Cleveland school district in 2002-03. Robertson said that the district originally thought that ELL students could take an alternative assessment, so many teachers and principals went ahead and tested these students using an alternative assessment. "Our people were convinced they were doing the right thing," he said.

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

More students with disabilities also took their grade-level OPT this year. In many cases, however, this testing turned out to be unnecessary, according to Robertson. In March, the district understood that it was to test 95% of all special education students, and that only 1% of these students could use alternative assessments. Obviously, Robertson said, "We can't just say, 'We're going to test all kids,'" noting that this subgroup includes a number of autistic and/or non-verbal students who attend Cleveland schools. However, the district tested as many special education students as possible using the OPT.

Then in July, after school was out, Robertson said the state informed the district that Secretary Paige had removed the requirement that the all special education students be assessed at grade level; instead, these students could “pass” if they met the goals of assessments recommended in their IEPs. When students who passed these assessments were included, Cleveland actually did better on 10 of the state’s 22 indicators of improvement. State officials confirmed that Cleveland acted appropriately based on Secretary Paige’s letter.

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

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

Based on 2003 performance, 21 individual Cleveland schools have been identified for school improvement or corrective action for school year 2003-04. Eight are in year one of improvement and will offer choice. Seven are in year two and will offer choice and supplemental services. Six are in year three and will craft a specific improvement plan, in addition to offering choice and supplemental services.

Choice

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

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

Yeldell also said that because the state announced its list of schools in need of improvement in late August 2002, parents didn’t really have much time to consider choice. For parents using

choice this year, the district will provide transportation and a choice of two schools with similar grade configurations that are not among the schools identified for school improvement.

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

Supplemental Services

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

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

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

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

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

Highly Qualified Teachers

Ohio's definition of highly qualified teachers essentially matches the federal definition. As of fall 2003, however, state officials reported that they only have data available to determine whether about 80% of Ohio teachers are "highly qualified" under NCLB. The status of the remaining 20% is unknown. Ohio has only collected the necessary information about teachers consistently since it changed its teacher licensure requirements in 1998; therefore, many veteran teachers may

or may not have met these higher standards. In particular, the state has little information about the content area course work of middle school teachers.

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

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

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

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

Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals

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

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

Currently, 64 of Cleveland's 800 paraprofessionals have associate's degrees, and this summer at least 55 passed a standardized test to certify their qualifications, another option under NCLB. The problem, Hauser said, is not finding highly qualified paraprofessionals, but making sure the paraprofessionals the district currently has are in the right positions. Ultimately, however, all

paraprofessionals should be highly qualified so that the district can be flexible in assigning positions, in the view of Paula R. Buckner-Lilly, who coordinates training of paraprofessionals under Hauser.

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

Budget Cuts and Funding Issues

NCLB is being implemented at a time when the state is experiencing budget difficulties. For fiscal years 2003-05, the state has allocated \$14.5 billion for education, a 5% increase over the previous biennium budget. But this is several million dollars less than what the Ohio Department of Education said was needed for Ohio's schools. Some districts will face actual budget cuts. Cleveland, for example, will have \$33 million less to spend over the next two years. State budget troubles have already affected the implementation of NCLB. For instance, 2003 was the first year state report cards were not mailed to all parents and are instead only available online.

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

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

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

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

Despite his optimism about the funding available for NCLB, Johnson cautioned that the district must take care to implement NCLB in ways that are consistent with other district initiatives. In

particular, he says the district has a \$1.5 billion initiative to refurbish neighborhood school facilities. The initiative, he said, is based on “the demographics of where people live” and is designed to make all schools better and more responsive to their surrounding communities. If not implemented carefully, school choice under NCLB could undermine this district initiative, in Johnson’s view.

Other Implementation Issues

Reading First

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

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

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

Data File 2002-03 — Cleveland Municipal School District

Location: Northern Ohio

Type: Urban, city of 480,000

Number of Schools:

- 125 total
- 63 elementary schools (K-5)
- 23 elementary schools (K-8)
- 16 middle schools
- 3 alternative middle schools
- 15 high schools
- 5 alternative high schools

Student Enrollment and Demographics

- Total Enrollment: 69,534
- African American: 70.6%
- White: 18.3%
- Hispanic: 9.1%
- Multi-Racial: 1.0%
- Asian: 0.7%
- American Indian: 0.3%

English Language Learners: 4.2%
Students with Disabilities: 14.8%
Low-Income Students: 98.8%

Number of Teachers

Total: 5,064
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: N/A

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 23
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 17 (74%)

Number of Title I Schools: 110

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 8
Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 7
In corrective action: 6

Texas

Cuero Independent School District
Superintendent: Dr. John Hall
Contact: Debra Baros, Assistant Superintendent
Students, K-12: 1,993 – rural

Key Findings

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

Background

Cuero schools celebrate their 110th birthday in 2003. In 1893, the small city passed a school tax, a woman named Sarah French donated land for the school, and the John C. French School, one of the first educational institutions in south Texas, was established for children in grades 1-10. The school is still in existence, serving grades Pre-K through 1. The Cuero Independent School District also has a school for grades 2-5, a junior high, and a high school—four schools altogether.

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

Ranching is a major business in the area. A cotton mill is also a major employer, but three large wood-product manufacturers closed their doors recently due to bankruptcy. The poverty rate in the Cuero district averages 55%, with higher rates at some schools. Many children have

academic needs, and the student transiency rate is 18.5%. Cuero families move frequently due to lack of employment, changes in the cattle industry, and a static business climate. Nearly half of the district's students are Hispanic and African American, and there are small numbers of American Indian and Asian students as well. About 1% of the students are English language learners, and 245 students, or about 12% of the district's enrollment, have disabilities, a percentage higher than most districts. Cuero is part of a cooperative special district so it provides services for students with disabilities from other neighboring districts.

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

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress

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

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

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

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

The district is consistently rated at a high level—an achievement that district staff attributes to extensive, structured professional development for teachers and staff. The district also strongly emphasizes reading and math across the grades. The curriculum is aligned to state standards and

the state accountability system. In addition, all 3rd grade students and their parents are scheduled for in-depth conferences with a counselor to make sure that academic learning is on track and that every student is appropriately challenged. If needed, a plan is designed to help the student “catch up” in any weak areas. Teachers and counselors focus on improvement goals and needed follow-up for every student.

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

Professional Development

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

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

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

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

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for Students with Disabilities

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

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

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

Other Implementation Issues

Readiness for Kindergarten and Parent Involvement

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

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

School Choice

If school choice were to become necessary for Cuero, it would be very difficult for this rural district to implement it, because it has only one school for each grade-level configuration. It is

unlikely that arrangements could be made with neighboring districts because they are so far away, so the district would have to provide supplemental services instead of choice. Encouraging children to participate in supplemental services could also be a problem because so many live long distances from their schools.

Data File 2002-03 — Cuero Independent School District

Location: Southeastern Texas

Type: Small city of 6,700

Number of Schools:

4 total

1 PreK-1

1 elementary school (2-5)

1 junior high (6-8)

1 high school (9-12)

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total Enrollment: 1,938

White: 52%

Hispanic: 35%

African American: 13%

English Language Learners: 1%

Students with Disabilities: 12%

Low-Income Students: 55%

Number of Teachers

Total: 150

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 7 (5%)

Number of Paraprofessionals

Total: 25

Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 92%

Number of Title I Schools: 2 elementary schools

Number of Schools in School Improvement or Corrective Action

Required to offer school choice: 0

Required to offer supplemental services and choice: 0

In corrective action: 0

Wisconsin

Sheboygan Area School District

Co-superintendents: Jeanne Bitkers, Joseph Sheehan

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

Students: 10,315 – city

Key Findings

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

Background

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

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

Progress in Implementing NCLB

Parent Involvement

The Sheboygan Area School District took active steps to prepare its staff and the community for implementation of NCLB. The district sends a brochure to parents of children enrolled in its schools that clearly spells out the student learning expectations. Signed by the district co-superintendents, Jeanne Bitkers and Joseph Sheehan, the brochure tells parents that the Sheboygan Area School District will continue to make sure that "no child is left behind." The brochure explains to parents the main elements of NCLB, including more choices for parents;

more opportunities for the state and local school districts to decide how to use federal money for schools; more testing for students to make sure schools are doing a good job; and additional requirements affecting qualifications of school staff. To reach families who speak languages other than English, the brochure lists names and phone numbers of key personnel for each of the main languages. The district also annually provides parents with a brochure that explains the standards for each elementary grade level, with versions in Spanish, Hmong, Albanian, Bosnian, and other languages. Similar information is being developed for middle and high school courses.

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

Major Issues of Implementing NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners

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

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

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

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

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

Although Sheboygan's English language learners outperform students in comparable districts, this subgroup did not make AYP in 2003 at three schools. The district is reviewing student performance data and determining which specific instructional areas need improvement.

Qualifications for Teachers and Paraprofessionals

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

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

Other Implementation Issues

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

Data File 2002-03 — Sheboygan Area School District

Location: Southern Wisconsin on Lake Michigan

Type: City of 50,000

Number of Schools:

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

Student Enrollment and Demographics

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

Number of Teachers

Total: 764
Not Meeting NCLB Qualification Requirements: 0

Number of Paraprofessionals

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

Number of Title I Schools: 6

Number of Schools in School Improvement and Corrective Action

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