A call to restructure restructuring: Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in five states*

Focus

Synthesizes findings from CEP’s multiyear studies of NCLB restructuring in five states with relatively large numbers of schools in restructuring: California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio. Also looks at the number of schools in restructuring across the whole nation and restructuring policies and practices at the state and local levels in these five states.

Methodology

Collected data through document reviews, interviews with state and local officials, and case studies across five states in 19 districts and 42 schools within those districts. Focuses on restructuring activities through school year 2007-08.

Major Findings

- **Number of schools nationally in restructuring.** More than 3,500 schools, or about 7% of all Title I schools, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring in school year 2007-08; this represents an increase of more than 50% over the preceding year. In the five states studied, the vast majority of restructuring schools were in urban districts.

- **Staying in restructuring.** In the five states studied, just 19% of the schools that were implementing restructuring had made AYP based on 2006-07 tests. Some had been in restructuring for as long as four years.

- **Most common restructuring option.** The so-called “any-other” restructuring option—taking any major action to fundamentally change school governance, other than the four more specific options in NCLB law—was the most popular federal restructuring option. Between 86% and 97% of restructuring schools in the five states chose the "any other" option. However, interpretations and implementation of this option varied widely among the five states and 42 case study schools.

- **School improvement set-aside.** The amount of funding available per school under the Title I 4% state set-aside for school improvement varied widely across the five states studied. These states also had very different methods of distributing the set-aside funds, although all five states sent a sizeable share to school districts.

- **State supports.** The five states studied varied greatly in the supports they offered restructuring schools. Four states sponsored extra professional development to help schools and districts with restructuring and school improvement. Three of the states provided on-site technical assistance to some restructuring schools, with more intense support and monitoring to schools that had been in restructuring for multiple years. Two states offered extra professional development specifically for some principals of restructuring schools, and two provided on-site leadership coaches or facilitators for restructuring schools.

- **Results of restructuring.** Outcomes varied by state not but strategy. Significantly larger percentages of restructuring schools in Michigan and Georgia made AYP than

*CEP’s individual annual reports about each of these five states are available at http://www.cep-dc.org.
in the other states; these variations were most likely related to differences among states in their content standards, test difficulty, and definitions of “proficient” performance, as well as differences in funding and state policies for restructuring. None of the five federal restructuring options was associated with a greater likelihood of a school making AYP. In addition, none of the staff interviewed in schools that had exited restructuring could point to a single strategy they believed was the key to improving student achievement.

- **Common strategies.** Even schools that chose different federal restructuring option used some common strategies to raise student achievement. All 42 case study schools used data for instructional decision making. The majority also provided tutoring to struggling students and employed an instructional or leadership coach.

- **Staff replacement.** Replacing all or most of the school staff sometimes had unintended negative consequences in restructuring case study schools. Some principals reported being unable to replace staff with qualified teachers, while others spent so much time hiring staff they had little time to plan for the school year. Union regulations sometimes compromised effective restaffing. Most schools that replaced staff successfully had a large pool of applicants, a plan that allowed the school to overcome its past reputation as a “failing” school, help from the teachers’ union, and effective hiring systems that did not rely on principals alone. The experience of some Maryland schools suggests that problems with staff replacement decrease in time.

- **Actions to raise achievement.** The case study schools that missed AYP targets solely due to the performance of student subgroup(s) typically provided special programs to help raise achievement for students in traditionally underserved subgroups. But their focus on subgroups was less intense than might be expected. Even the case study schools that missed targets solely due to subgroups still devoted considerable resources to initiatives to raise achievement for all students.

- **Maintaining achievement.** Principals and teachers at case study schools that had exited restructuring expressed concern about maintaining achievement gains and continuing to make AYP as targets kept rising toward 100% proficiency. Maintaining student achievement was also seen as difficult because schools that exited restructuring often lost some of their resources, including special funding for school improvement.

**Where to Obtain**

http://www.cep-dc.org
Center on Education Policy, 2007

Moving beyond identification: Assisting schools in improvement

Focus

Examines what kinds of assistance schools identified for NCLB improvement receive and how effective state and district officials believe that assistance to be. Focuses on activities during school years 2005-06 and 2006-07. One of a series of CEP reports on the fifth year of NCLB implementation.

Methodology

Collected data through an annual survey of 50 state departments of education; a nationally representative annual survey of 349 responding school districts; and case studies involving interviews with district and school officials in 12 school districts.

Major Findings

- **District with schools in improvement.** About 18% of school districts had schools in improvement during school year 2005-06. Significantly more urban districts (47%) had schools in improvement than suburban (22%) or rural districts (11%).

- **State view of most effective strategies.** States rated the following four frequently used state strategies as most effective for improving schools: professional development through Reading First (81% of 48 responding states), Reading First curriculum and assessment materials (79% of 47 states), alignment of curriculum and instruction with standards and/or assessments (76% of 46 states), and special grants to districts to support school improvement (74% of 47 states).

- **District views.** A high percentage of districts (69% in reading and 71% in math) rated their own policies for improving schools as “important” or “very important” factors in raising student achievement—much higher than the share that rated state policies as important or very important (45% in reading and 35% in math). A relatively high share (68% or more) of districts with Reading First grants rated Reading First assessment systems and instructional programs as important or very important factors in raising achievement. In math, no federal policy was rated as important or very important by a large proportion of districts.

- **Federally mandated or encouraged actions.** Actions that NCLB requires or encourages districts to take with schools in improvement—extending the school day, implementing new curricula, engaging in school improvement planning, and appointing outside experts to advise the school—were typically viewed by districts as helpful, but many districts said they lacked funding to take some of these actions.

- **Additional strategies.** Districts reported that the most effective strategies to assist schools in improvement included “increasing the use of student achievement data to inform instruction and other decisions” (97% used this strategy), “increasing the quality and/or quantity of teacher and principal professional development” (94%), and “improving the school planning process” (93%).

- **Gap-closing measures.** Districts took a variety of actions to close achievement gaps. The most common strategies included providing tutoring for low-performing subgroups, improving collaboration between special education and regular classroom teachers, and training teachers in specific methods to address the academic needs of
low-performing subgroups. Both districts and states reported that gaps for students with disabilities were the most difficult to close.

- **Funding for school improvement.** Due to NCLB’s “hold harmless” provision, not all states were able to set aside the full 4% of Title I funds for school improvement as directed by the law. Many states reported using state funds to address some goals of NCLB, but noted that state funding was uncertain. The majority of districts studied reported being unable to do certain things to assist schools in improvement because of lack of funds.

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the federal, state, and local implementation and impact of various provisions of NCLB during school years 2004-05 and 2005-06. Summarized below are the study’s findings about school improvement strategies.

Methodology

Collected data through a survey of all 50 states, a nationally representative survey of 299 school districts, case studies of 38 geographically diverse districts and 42 schools, three national forums, and six special analyses of critical issues in implementing NCLB.

Major Findings

- **State improvement strategies.** The strategies used in 2005-06 by the largest number of states to improve student achievement in schools identified for improvement were making “special grants to districts to support school improvement efforts” (45 states) and “aligning curriculum and instruction with standards and assessment” (44 states). These were the same strategies that states reported to be moderately or very successful in raising student achievement.

- **District improvement strategies.** Among school districts, the most popular strategies used in 2005-06 to improve achievement in schools identified for improvement were using research to inform decisions about improvement strategies (used by 96% of districts), aligning curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments (96%), and increasing the use of student achievement data to inform instruction and other decisions (95%). These same strategies were reported to be moderately or very successful in raising student achievement by at least three-quarters of school districts.

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Center on Education Policy, 2005

From the capital to the classroom: Year 3 of the No Child Left Behind Act

Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the federal, state, and local implementation and impact of various provisions of NCLB during school years 2003-04 and 2004-05. Summarized below are the study’s findings about school improvement strategies.

Methodology

Collected data through a survey of 49 states, a nationally representative survey of 314 school districts, case studies of 36 geographically diverse districts and 37 schools, three national forums, and four special analyses of critical issues in implementing NCLB.

Major Findings

- **District improvement strategies.** To boost performance in schools identified for improvement, virtually all of the districts we surveyed in 2004-05 said they had increased their use of student test data to inform instruction (100% of districts), aligned curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments (99%), and provided extra or more intensive instruction to low-achieving students (99%). About 96% of the districts also said they had increased the quality and quantity of teacher professional development. In addition, CEP’s case studies suggested that many districts were using “coaches” to revise reading and math curriculum, help teachers introduce more effective teaching strategies, or change the culture of underperforming schools.

- **Corrective action and restructuring strategies.** More dramatic changes were occurring in 2004-05 in schools identified for corrective action or restructuring. Some districts reported that they had replaced school principals and teachers. Others closed low-performing schools, in some cases reopening them as new schools with different staff and management structures (and a clean slate for demonstrating AYP).

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Council of the Great City Schools, 2006

No Child Left Behind in America’s Great City Schools: Five years and counting

Focus

Comprehensive study that examines the status and implementation of NCLB in the large urban districts that comprise the Council of the Great City Schools. Summarized below are the study’s findings about schools improvement, corrective action, and restructuring.

Methodology

Based on data from 36 large urban districts, enrolling more than 5.1 million students, that responded to a survey by the Council of Great City Schools of its 66 member districts. The survey focused on NCLB implementation from school years 2002-03 through 2005-06.

Major Findings

- **Schools and districts in improvement.** Altogether, 2,203 schools in the 36 districts studied, or almost 30% of all schools in these districts, were in various stages of NCLB improvement in 2005-06. This marked an increase over the 975 schools in improvement in 2002-03. About 26.1% of the nation’s schools in improvement were located in one of these 36 cities.

- **District improvement.** Twenty-four of the 36 districts studied were identified for improvement in 2005-06. Some of the districts had been required by their state to implement new curricula, undergo restructuring, or replace some personnel. Four districts said that their states had reduced or deferred some funding. Eighteen of the districts received technical assistance from their states; most of the districts rated this assistance as “moderate” in quality. Districts in improvement pursued several systemic steps to raise achievement, including setting clearer goals, improving planning, adopting more stringent personnel accountability and evaluation systems, upgrading curriculum, instituting better instructional interventions, more closely aligning curriculum and supplemental materials with state standards and assessments, providing more targeted professional development, using more benchmark testing, focusing more on data analysis, using more intensive coaching and instructional monitoring, and similar strategies.

- **Corrective action.** Approximately 458 schools in the 36 districts responding to the Council’s survey were in the corrective action stage of NCLB. The majority of the districts provided technical assistance to schools in corrective action, afforded these schools professional development, instituted new research-based curriculum, developed joint school improvement plans, and notified parents about the status of the school. A modest number of districts appointed outside experts to advise the schools, replaced the principals, extended the school day, or decreased the management authority of the school. Few districts contracted the schools to a private entity to operate, replaced all the staff, or turned over the schools to the state.

- **Restructuring.** About 449 schools in the 36 districts were in NCLB restructuring. Districts most often provided these schools with additional technical assistance, professional development, and additional planning help. A modest number of districts implemented tougher sanctions, such as decreasing management authority at the school, replacing the principal or relevant staff, restructuring or reorganizing the school, or appointing an outside advisor. Most districts stayed away from more punitive sanctions, including reopening the schools as charter schools, contracting with a private entity to run the schools, or turning over the schools to the state.
• *Achievement.* The effect of NCLB sanctions on student achievement was unclear. Achievement in the nation’s urban schools has increased over the last several years. Most urban districts indicated that their gains were the result of more systemic instructional reforms beyond those called for in NCLB, but it is conceivable that NCLB helped produce these gains.

**Where to Obtain**

http://www.cgcs.org/images/Publications/NCLB_Fiveyears.pdf
Focus

Examines how state education agencies have been involved in planning and implementing school restructuring under NCLB. Also gives a brief snapshot of how each of the 13 states studied had interpreted its role in restructuring.

Methodology

Based on interviews with state officials and reviews of relevant documents in the 13 states with schools in the implementation phase of NCLB restructuring in 2004-05.

Major Findings

- **Different levels of state involvement.** In 2004-05, the 13 states surveyed varied in their level of involvement in the school restructuring process. Seven of these states had approval processes for all school restructuring plans, two collected plans but did not officially approve them, one collected plans of only some schools, and three did not collect plans at all.

- **School choices.** Most schools chose mild or moderate restructuring strategies—such as modifying curriculum, altering the school management structure, or choosing a school reform model—that fall under the federal option of “any other” major restructuring of school governance. The smaller number of districts that tried stronger interventions found themselves in the midst of difficult political battles. For example, the option of replacing staff sometimes conflicted with existing union contracts, while the charter school or private management options were often seen as politically unpalatable. However, some schools and districts used NCLB restructuring to replace staff who otherwise would have been difficult to replace.

- **Federal and state alignment.** Alignment between NCLB and prior state accountability systems was difficult. States with robust accountability systems in place before NCLB had a difficult time combining the two systems. States that allowed significant interventions under their own accountability systems, such as conversion to a charter school or private management, rarely used these actions with schools that had to be restructured under NCLB.

- **Timing issues.** Removing staff or reopening with different leadership was difficult when schools were not identified for improvement until after the school year began. States also complained that reforms made in the corrective action phase of NCLB were not given enough time to succeed before the restructuring phase kicked in.

- **Little federal guidance.** All 13 states surveyed reported that the U.S. Department of Education had given them either no or insufficient guidance on how to implement restructuring. States generally viewed this as a negative.

Where to Obtain


No Child Left Behind Act: Education actions could improve the targeting of school improvement funds to schools most in need of assistance

Focus

Examines how Title I school improvement dollars are allocated and expended and the types of improvement activities that schools use and find effective.

Methodology

Administered a survey to state education agency officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia between July and October 2007. Interviewed officials in each state and in 12 districts and 22 schools.

Major Findings

- **Source of school improvement funds.** Since NCLB was enacted, 22 states have been unable, for one or more years, to set aside the full 4% of Title I funds for school improvement due to the law’s hold harmless provision. In addition to Title I school improvement funds, 38 states have dedicated other federal funds and 17 have contributed state funds to school improvement efforts.

- **Allocation of school improvement funds.** Though states generally targeted improvement funds to the most persistently underperforming schools, some states did not fulfill all NCLB requirements for allocating or tracking these funds. To allocate school improvement funds, 37 states used state-established criteria, which included factors such as the number of years schools have been identified as needing improvement. Two states used a competitive grant process, and eight used another method. Four states reported, however, that they required funds be allocated equally to schools and may not have considered factors required by NCLB, such as focusing on the lowest-achieving schools. The U.S. Department of Education has not provided guidance on how states should make publicly available lists of schools receiving funds and does not monitor states’ compliance with this requirement.

- **Improvement activities.** Schools and states that received funds have undertaken a variety of improvement activities. For school year 2006-07, 45 states reported that schools which received improvement funds were engaging in professional development, reorganizing curriculum or instructional time, or analyzing data using student assessment information. To assess school improvement activities, 42 states reported that they analyze student achievement data or track school performance trends, and 36 of those states also obtain feedback from school and district officials.

- **ED support.** ED provided various forms of support concerning school improvement. Department staff provided direct assistance with school improvement to states through written guidance, policy letters, and national meetings. ED’s comprehensive centers provided technical assistance and research results to states on developing approaches for improving schools. ED made available information on school improvement strategies through its What Works Clearinghouse.

Where to Obtain

Government Accountability Office, 2007

No Child Left Behind: Education should clarify guidance and address potential compliance issues for schools in corrective action and restructuring status

Focus

Examines the characteristics of Title I schools in corrective action and restructuring, the actions these schools implemented, the assistance they received from districts and states, and how the U.S. Department of Education supported state efforts to assist these schools.

Methodology

Administered two Web-based surveys to a nationwide sample of schools in corrective action and restructuring in 2005-06. Conducted site visits to five states with sizeable numbers of schools in corrective action or restructuring (California, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania) and to 10 school districts and 20 schools in those states. Also interviewed state officials in four states (Idaho, South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia) with few schools in corrective action or restructuring.

Major Findings

- **School characteristics.** Nationwide, the 2,790 Title I schools that were in corrective action or restructuring status in school year 2005-06 were more often located in urban areas and in a few states. These schools served higher percentages of minority, poor, and middle-school students than other Title I schools, and many reported that factors like neighborhood violence and student mobility posed additional challenges to improving students’ academic performance.

- **Implementation.** A majority of schools in corrective action or restructuring implemented the activities required by NCLB. GAO estimated, however, that 6% of schools did not take any of the required corrective actions, and about one-third of schools continued actions implemented during earlier years of school improvement rather than taking a new action after entering corrective action. In addition, about 40% of schools did not undertake any of the five restructuring options in NCLB. ED does not require states to report on the specific measures taken for each school.

- **Assistance to schools.** GAO estimated that 42% of schools in corrective action or restructuring did not receive all required types of assistance through their school districts, although most received discretionary assistance from their state education agencies. The U.S. Department of Education provided technical assistance and research results to states primarily through its Comprehensive Centers Program. ED also provided other material in its Web-based clearinghouse and was developing an initiative to outline practical steps for schools in various phases of improvement, including restructuring.

Where to Obtain

Learning Point Associates, 2006

School restructuring under No Child Left Behind: What works when?

Focus

Aims to help education leaders choose the best restructuring options for schools with large numbers of students who are failing. Focuses on the four major restructuring options in NCLB law: reopening the school as a charter school, replacing the principal and staff, contracting with an outside entity to run the school, and turning over school operations to the state education agency. Includes practical decision-making tools and process steps based on research about restructuring. Considers strengths and constraints of implementing these restructuring options in a wide variety of school districts.

Methodology

Reviewed research on restructuring options under NCLB. Conducted interviews with educators and leading researchers with knowledge of when restructuring options do and do not lead to dramatic improvements in learning. Conducted a review of research literature that compared high-performing schools to other schools with similar populations.

Major Findings

Education leaders can use four main steps to choose the best restructuring options for their school. (The report also describes the detailed actions involved in each step.)

Step 1. Take charge of big change. Includes organizing the district restructuring team, assessing the team’s and district’s capacity to govern restructuring decisions, deciding whether to invite a state takeover of the entire restructuring process, making a plan to include stakeholders, and preparing the district team to take further action.

Step 2. Choose the right changes. Includes organizing the school-level decisionmaking process, conducting a school-by-school restructuring analysis, and making final restructuring decisions across the whole district.

Step 3. Implement the plan. Includes setting goals for implementation and identifying and tackling likely roadblocks to success. Lists resources to help with full implementation of each restructuring strategy.

Step 4. Evaluate, improve, and act on failures. Provides a brief list of actions needed to improve future restructuring efforts.

Where to Obtain

Focus

Proposes a flexible, systematic approach to transforming schools deemed chronically underperforming under No Child Left Behind or state accountability systems.

Methodology

Conducted interviews with practitioners, researchers, leading policymakers, and reform experts in more than a dozen states, including extensive interviews with directors of school intervention in six major urban districts and with 50 school management and/or support organizations. Analyzed more than 300 reports, articles, and written resources.

Major Findings

- **Need to rethink strategies.** Efforts to turn around the lowest-performing 5% of schools have largely failed. A few large urban districts have undertaken promising turnaround strategies, but most are in their early stages. Chronically low-performing schools and the systems supporting them require fundamental rethinking.

- **State roles.** To implement broadly the lessons learned from turnaround pioneers, states need to: a) require failing schools and their districts to pursue more proactive turnaround strategies or lose control over the school; b) make fundamental changes in the conditions in which these schools operate; c) develop a local marketplace of partners and providers skilled in turnaround efforts; and d) appropriate the $250,000 to $1,000,000 per year needed to turn around a failing school.

- **Three C’s.** Three basic elements are required for a successful turnaround strategy:
  - Change conditions by creating a “protected space” free of bureaucratic restrictions and overly stringent collective bargaining agreements. Provide incentives to motivate people to do their best work.
  - Increase capacity among school staffs and leaders; develop a strong marketplace of local partners with the experience and ability to lead turnaround efforts.
  - Organize clusters of schools, either within or across districts, with their own lead turnaround partner providing comprehensive services.

- **Readiness dimensions.** Turnaround efforts should emulate the following characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty schools:
  - Readiness to learn: Schools directly address student deficits with such strategies as an extended school day and longer year, action against poverty-related adversity, discipline and engagement, and close student-adult relationships.
  - Readiness to teach: Staff share responsibility for student achievement and stress collaboration and continuous improvement. Instruction is personalized.
  - Readiness to act: Leaders make mission-driven decisions about people, time, money, and programs, and are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships. Schools respond creatively to constant unrest.

Where to Obtain

RAND Education, 2006

School and district improvement efforts in response to the No Child Left Behind Act

Focus

Addresses the strategies schools and districts are using to improve student performance, the perceived quality and usefulness of these efforts, and the perceived constraints and enablers of improvement efforts.

Methodology

Carried out case studies in school years 2003-04 and 2004-05 in three states (California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania). Data were drawn from interviews with 43 superintendents and surveys of 67 superintendents; surveys of 148 elementary principals and 112 middle school principals; and surveys of 1,833 elementary teachers and 1,340 middle school teachers.

Major Findings

- **Strategies.** School improvement strategies were well underway in all three states. Three of the most important improvement strategies identified by principals and superintendents were making increased use of achievement data to inform instruction, matching curriculum and instruction with standards and/or assessments, and providing additional instruction to low-performing students.

- **Data use.** Districts and schools used a variety of student assessment data. Superintendents and principals found state test data especially useful for making decisions about improvement plans, focusing professional development, and making curriculum and instructional changes. Principals and teachers varied in their views of the usefulness of state assessment data, and many expressed concerns about the timeliness of the data. In two of the three states, teachers found the results of progress tests administered throughout the year more helpful than state test results.

- **Alignment.** Almost all principals reported aligning curriculum and instruction with state standards and/or assessments. Districts actively supported these efforts by providing pacing schedules, calendars, sample lessons, classroom feedback, and curriculum mapping. Although more than half of teachers in all three states viewed these district alignment activities as helpful, some expressed concerns about pacing and lack of time to teach for understanding and mastery.

- **Help for low-performing students.** In all three states, about half or more of the districts studied required some or all schools to provide remedial instruction outside of the school day. In Georgia and Pennsylvania, many districts required schools to spend more time on math for low-achieving students. Other popular strategies included creating separate classes for low-performers and eliminating some remedial math classes in favor of more challenging instruction.

- **Obstacles.** The number one hindrance to school improvement reported by superintendents and principals was inadequate funding, although case study data suggested that state and district capacity issues may also be due to a lack of qualified, trained personnel. Other perceived hindrances included frequent changes in state policy or leadership, teacher association rules in unionized states, inadequate lead time to prepare for reforms, and a lack of information on effective, research-based teaching methods and on ways to tailor instruction for students with disabilities and English language learners.
Where to Obtain


Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide

Focus

Identifies evidence-based recommendations that educators can use to quickly and dramatically improve student achievement in chronically low-performing schools.

Methodology

Based on 10 case studies of 35 low-performing “turnaround” schools that improved student achievement in one to three years; expert analyses of turnaround practices; and correlation studies and longitudinal studies of patterns of school improvement. However, none of the studies analyzed were based on a research methodology that yielded valid causal inference.

Major Findings

The study makes four recommendations and provides details on the steps needed to follow the recommendations:

1. **Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership.** Schools should make a clear commitment to dramatic changes from the status quo, and the leader should signal the magnitude and urgency of that change.

2. **Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction.** Chronically low-performing schools need to maintain a sharp focus on improving instruction at every step of the reform process. To improve instruction, schools should use data to set goals for instructional improvement, make changes to immediately and directly affect instruction, and continually reassess student learning and instructional practices to refocus the goals.

3. **Make visible improvements early in the school turnaround process.** Quick wins can rally staff around the effort and overcome resistance and inertia.

4. **Build a committed staff.** The school leader must build a staff that is committed to the school’s improvement goals and qualified to carry out school improvement. This goal may require changes in staff, such as releasing, replacing, or redeploying staff who are not fully committed to turning around student performance and bringing in new staff who are committed.

Where to Obtain

Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the progress of states, districts, and schools through school year 2004–05 in implementing key provisions of Title I, including assessment and accountability provisions. Summarized below are the study’s findings about school improvement.

Methodology

Drew on data from a set of implementation studies by the U.S. Department of Education. Data for these studies came from surveys conducted in a nationally representative sample of school districts, other state and local surveys, state performance reports, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Major Findings

- **State notification of school improvement status.** Only 15 states provided final notice to schools before September 2004 of their improvement status for 2004-05. Thirty states provided preliminary results by that time.

- **Statewide support for identified schools.** Almost all states had implemented a statewide system of support for identified schools by fall 2004. These often involved school support teams (37 states) and individual school improvement specialists (29 states). Most states (42) reported that providing assistance to all schools identified for improvement was a moderate or serious challenge in 2003-04.

- **Improvement strategies.** Schools identified for improvement were more likely than non-identified schools to report needing assistance in a variety of areas; 80% reported needing assistance to improve the quality of teachers’ professional development. The most common improvement strategies implemented by identified schools included developing a school improvement plan, using assessment data to inform instruction, and providing additional instruction to low-achieving students.

- **Corrective action.** About 95% of Title I schools in corrective action in 2004-05 underwent the interventions laid out by NCLB. The most common interventions for Title I schools in corrective action in 2003-04 and 2004-05 resembled forms of technical assistance rather than sanctions. For instance, 89% of these schools were required to implement new research-based curricula or instructional programs, and 59% had an outside expert appointed to advise the school. Corrective actions were also often implemented in schools at other stages of NCLB improvement.

- **Parent information.** Nearly one-quarter of principals and teachers in identified schools were unaware that their school had been identified for improvement. Parents in eight urban school districts were much less likely than principals or teachers to know whether their child’s school had been identified as low-performing.

Where to Obtain