

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
POLICY AND PROGRAM STUDIES SERVICE  
REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

**State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act  
Volume III—Accountability Under NCLB: Interim Report**

**Background**

Accountability for improved student performance lies at the very heart of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This report draws on data from the 2004-05 data collection cycles of two federally funded studies—the *Study of State Implementation of Accountability and Teacher Quality Under NCLB* (SSI-NCLB) and the *National Longitudinal Study of NCLB* (NLS-NCLB)—to describe major patterns in state, district, and school implementation of NCLB’s central accountability provisions. The SSI-NCLB study interviewed state education agency staff and collected extant data in all states. The companion NLS-NCLB study surveyed districts, principals, teachers, and Title I paraprofessionals in a nationally representative sample of 300 districts and 1,483 schools. Both studies will collect a second round of data in the 2006-07 school year. The two studies will issue a series of joint reports on accountability, teacher quality, Title I choice provisions, and targeting and resource allocation.

The findings presented in this report indicate rapid implementation of many NCLB requirements, including assessments in additional grades, new definitions of AYP, and increased reporting of disaggregated assessment data. Findings also suggest areas that may need more attention, such as the timeliness of notification about AYP and identification status, implementation of English language proficiency standards and assessments, and assistance to schools regarding students with special needs.

**State Standards, Assessments, and Targets**

**All states have content standards in at least mathematics and reading.** Most states continued to engage in standards development or revision activities in reading and mathematics during the three years between 2001-02 (when NCLB was passed) and 2004-05. Many had no science standards in place prior to 2001, but 38 states had adopted content standards in science by 2004-05.

**States are making progress in addressing NCLB testing requirements.** By 2004-05, 28 states had instituted yearly testing in grades 3-8, which NCLB requires by the 2005-06 school year—more than double the number of states (12) that had such tests in 1999-2000. Nearly all states administered or were planning to administer alternate assessments for students with disabilities in 2004-05.

**States varied widely in the levels at which they set academic achievement standards to define student proficiency.** Using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a common external metric, state standards for proficiency under NCLB in 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics, for example, range from NAEP equivalent scores of approximately 247 to 314. States that set higher performance standards tended to have a lower percentage of students scoring at the proficient level and will need to make greater progress in order to reach the goal of all students proficient by 2013-14.

**States are still working to implement English language proficiency standards and assessments two years after the original deadline.** Few states were able to meet the NCLB deadline to implement English language proficiency (ELP) standards and assessments before or during the 2002-03 school year, but 41 states had adopted ELP standards by the 2004-05 school year. In addition, in 2004-05, 20 states

reported they had an ELP assessment in place to meet NCLB requirements and 27 planned to have such an assessment in 2005-06.

### **School and District Adequate Yearly Progress**

**States varied greatly in the proportions of schools and districts that made AYP.** Three-quarters of the nation's schools made AYP in 2003-04, as did 71 percent of school districts. The proportion of schools that made AYP ranged from nearly 95 percent in Wisconsin to 23 percent in Alabama and Florida. Similarly, the proportion of districts that made AYP ranged from all districts in Arkansas and Delaware to less than 10 percent in Alabama, West Virginia, and Florida.

**Schools that were high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and large were less likely to make AYP than other schools.** For example, 57 percent of high-poverty schools made AYP in 2003-04, compared with 84 percent of low-poverty schools. Secondary schools also were less likely to make AYP than elementary schools.

**Half (51 percent) of schools that did not make AYP in 2003-04 missed due to the achievement of the "all students" group (33 percent) or two or more student subgroups (18 percent).** In contrast, 23 percent missed only for the achievement of a single subgroup. Small percentages of schools missed AYP for test participation only (6 percent) or the other academic indicator only (7 percent).

### **Identifying Schools and Districts for Improvement**

**The number of Title I schools identified for improvement increased considerably in 2005, from 6,219 in 2003-04 to 9,333 in 2004-05.** Overall, 13 percent of all schools and 18 percent of Title I schools were identified for improvement in 2004-05. Of these schools, about 1,000 Title I schools were in corrective action and about 1,200 were in restructuring status.

**States varied greatly in the percentage of Title I schools identified for improvement for 2004-05.** Rates of school identification ranged from only 2 percent in Iowa and Nebraska to 68 percent in Florida. Schools in states where proficiency standards for AYP are high, as referenced to NAEP, were more likely to be identified than schools in states with lower proficiency standards.

**High-poverty, high-minority, large, urban schools, and middle schools, were most likely to have been identified for improvement.** For example, 36 percent of high-poverty schools were identified for 2004-05, compared with 4 percent of low-poverty schools. Similarly, 34 percent of schools with high concentrations of minority students were identified for improvement, compared with 4 percent of low-minority schools.

**About one in four identified Title I schools (23 percent) exited improvement status in 2004-05** by making AYP for two consecutive years. The remaining 77 percent of identified schools remained at the same status or moved into a more-serious school improvement status.

**Ten percent of all districts were identified for improvement for 2004-05, and 32 percent of these contained no identified schools.** Districts without identified schools become identified when student subgroups are large enough to count at the district level but too small to count at the school level. Fewer than 50 districts were placed in corrective action for 2004-05.

## State Data Systems and Reporting

**States are reporting assessment results more quickly, but nearly half of principals did not receive notification of their schools' AYP and identification status before the start of the 2004-05 school year.** For accountability determinations based on 2003-04 testing, 31 states delivered at least preliminary data to schools before September, up from 28 states in the previous year. Fifty-six percent of principals said they were notified of their identification status before September 2004.

**Most principals—but fewer teachers—knew whether their school made AYP or was identified for improvement.** Overall, 88 percent of principals were able to correctly report their schools' AYP status for 2003-04, and 92 percent knew whether their schools had been identified for improvement in 2004-05. About two-thirds of teachers correctly reported their school's AYP or identification status.

## State Systems of Support for Identified Schools and Districts

All states provided some support to schools identified for improvement. Thirty-nine states reported providing support to all identified schools during the 2004-05 school year, while other states provided support to only a subset of identified schools.

**Support teams and distinguished educators were the most common means through which states provided support to identified schools during the 2004-05 school year.** Thirty-seven states provided support teams, and 29 states used distinguished educators—experienced teachers or administrators external to the district—to provide support to schools identified for improvement.

## Promoting School Improvement

**Identified schools were more likely to report needing technical assistance than were non-identified schools, and also reported receiving more days of assistance from their districts** (15 days vs. 10 days). Identified schools in states with comprehensive systems of support received technical assistance at higher rates than those in states with limited or moderate support systems.

**Most principals said their schools received the technical assistance they needed, but assistance regarding students with special needs was frequently insufficient.** For most technical assistance topics, a majority of schools needing assistance reported that they received it and that it was sufficient to meet their needs. However, about half of the schools that needed assistance for students with special needs (such as those with disabilities or with limited English proficiency) did not have their needs met.

**Most schools reported using a variety of improvement strategies, and identified schools were focusing on more different types of improvement efforts than other schools.** Almost all schools were involved in joint school improvement planning with their district or state, and more than half used assessment results for planning instruction and professional development or implemented periodic “progress” tests to monitor student performance during the school year.

## Interventions and Sanctions for Identified Schools

**Consequences required for identified Title I schools in Year 1 or Year 2 of improvement status were implemented in most, but not all, of these schools.** Eighty-nine percent of Title I schools in Year 1 of improvement status said they notified parents of their children's schools status, and 82 percent offered parents the option of transferring their child to a higher-performing school. Similarly, 90 percent of Title I schools in Year 2 of improvement status offered students supplemental educational services.

**Nearly all (96 percent) Title I schools in corrective action status experienced at least one of the NCLB-defined interventions.** The most common interventions involved changes in curriculum (89 percent) or the appointment of outside advisors (59 percent). In contrast, only 27 percent of schools in corrective action status reported a significant reduction in management authority in the school, and only 7 percent reported that staff members were replaced.

**Few Title I schools in restructuring status experienced interventions specified under NCLB for schools in that stage of improvement.** This may in part reflect the two stages of school restructuring status, where schools first spend a year planning for restructuring and then implement the plan the following year. Few principals of schools in the first or second year of restructuring status reported state take-over of the school (9 percent), re-opening of the school as a public charter school (2 percent), contracting with a private entity to manage the school (2 percent), or replacement of all of the school staff (2 percent). Appointment of a new principal, although not specified as a restructuring intervention under NCLB, was reported by 20 percent of schools in restructuring status, as well as by 20 to 21 percent of schools in other stages of school improvement status.

### **Focus of School Improvement Efforts**

**Most schools, identified and non-identified, were involved in efforts to improve curriculum and instruction, placing particular emphasis on aligning curriculum and instruction with standards,** and most teachers reported having access to resources to help them accomplish this. However, one-third of teachers in identified schools reported that they lacked sufficient textbooks and other instructional materials, and 18 percent said that textbooks and instructional materials that were not aligned with state standards presented a moderate or major challenge to improving student performance.

**Increasing instructional time was a common improvement strategy among identified schools.** Half (51 percent) of identified schools reported a major focus on extended-time instructional programs (such as after-school programs). Nearly one-third (30 percent) of identified elementary schools reported increasing instructional time in reading by more than 30 minutes, and 55 percent of identified secondary schools said they increased instructional time in reading for low-achieving students.

**Teachers found annual state tests and local progress tests useful for improving instruction.** For example, 80 percent of elementary teachers in identified schools reported using state assessment results to identify areas where they needed to strengthen their own content knowledge or teaching skills.

### **Promoting District Improvement**

**Most states made a broad range of technical assistance available to all districts, as mandated, but did not target technical assistance services specifically to identified districts.** Some states integrated assistance for identified districts with the support provided for identified schools. Identified districts were more likely than non-identified districts to report needing technical assistance relating to planning for district improvement and analyzing student assessment data.

The majority of identified districts reported that they implemented additional professional development for teachers and principals, distributed test preparation materials, and increased monitoring of instruction and school performance.

The complete report is available at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html). Other reports in the series based on the SSI-NCLB and NLS-NCLB studies are also available at this website.