

NCLB Making a Difference in Nebraska



- Between 2002 and 2004 (latest data available):
 - Fourth-grade reading proficiency increased by five percentage points
 - Fourth-grade mathematics proficiency increased by seven percentage points
(*Nebraska Report Card*)
- “Using a [federal] Reading First grant, Gering School System implemented a new direct instruction reading program called Reading Mastery. Instead of focusing on grade levels, the program places students in groups based on their reading level. Tests (that usually take only a few minutes) determine if a student has mastered a level and can move up. ... ‘All of our kindergartners (across the district) left kindergarten reading,’ Gering Public School System’s Reading First Coordinator Andrea Boden added. There were a total of 137 kindergartners in the Gering School System this last year, and out of those 85 of them were reading at Reading Mastery level two. As a result of the new program, ‘Special Education referrals dropped by 80 percent this year. A year ago, we had about 25 referrals; this year we only had five.’ Also, the gap between the different demographic groups has narrowed dramatically with the new reading program. In the winter of 2004 there was a 20-percentage point gap; this winter, the difference in scores had narrowed to one percentage point, according to Boden. ‘That is the purpose of Reading First – to level the playing field.’” (*Gering Courier*, 7/1/05)
- “Just hearing the word ‘math’ can make some kids stick out their tongues in disgust, but not eighth-graders Jazmyn DeBose and Sara Perkins. They’re beginning to like it.... The girls are two of about 10 students in a special course that is helping struggling kids learn math at the Lincoln school district’s Culler Middle School. The class, in its second year, is offered districtwide to students in sixth- through eighth-grades. They give up an elective to take it but still must take their regular math class. Programs like this are part of an effort by schools to ensure that students have the skills needed to advance through high school.... In the Lincoln Public Schools program, there’s no pressure, no grade. Students get to leave the class when their work is equal to a grade of B or above. The district created ‘Math Intervention’ because scores revealed some students had trouble solving equations with fractions and decimals and other such computations. Students who need such programs are found through their assessment data. Teachers use the data to identify which skills their students lack, then focus their lessons to help children become proficient, the federal benchmark of achievement.... Lincoln appears to have had success. ... This year, 275 seventh-graders and 280 eighth-graders took math intervention, down from 370 seventh-graders and 400 eighth-graders last year. Sixth-grade participation is fairly steady: 330 this year and 350 last year.” (*Omaha World-Herald*, 5/22/05)
- “Luis Garcia had been struggling. His grades in four classes were near the failing mark. But with help from an after-school tutoring program, the Schuyler Central High School sophomore has seen his grades improve. For the past two weeks, Garcia has attended tutoring sessions where he can get one-on-one attention from teachers. He said it is simpler to concentrate on his homework and studies while he is at school, unlike at home. ... The tutoring program at Schuyler is in its second year and is designed to help students like Garcia. ... Funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant, the project is geared toward assisting minority groups and economically disadvantaged students. But anyone at the school can take advantage of the program.” (*Columbus Telegram*, 3/10/05)