

NCLB Making a Difference in Pennsylvania



- Between 2002 and 2004 (latest data available):
 - Fifth-grade reading proficiency increased by six percentage points
 - Fifth-grade mathematics proficiency increased by nine percentage points
 - The black-white achievement gap in fifth-grade reading narrowed by eight percentage points
 - The black-white achievement gap in fifth-grade mathematics narrowed by four percentage points

(*Pennsylvania Report Card*)
- “This year, Philadelphia schools began measuring test performance over time. For example, officials look at how 2002 second graders did in 2003 as third graders, in 2004 as fourth graders, and in 2005 as fifth graders. And the results, said Paul Vallas, the district’s chief executive officer, show that students improved from 2002 to 2005 in 23 of 26 categories, including reading, language arts, and math. Percentage point increases reached double digits in 12 categories and more than 20 percent in three categories, Vallas said. Results were based on the TerraNova exam, a standard test. ‘I think it shows that the reforms are working. Clearly, the move to standardize the curriculum and to increase the amount of instructional time on task is having an effect,’ Vallas said, noting the district’s summer school, after-school, and Saturday programs.” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6/22/05)
- “In 2002, Burgwin Elementary School in Pittsburgh – where more than 83 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch and, therefore, are considered low-income – was in crisis. It had been earning some of the worst test scores in the state. Teachers’ morale was suffering. The vast majority of fifth-grade students were graduating to sixth grade without being proficient in reading, writing and math. So when principal Cindi Muehlbauer took over in fall 2002, she brought a no-excuses attitude, a dream that Burgwin’s students could become exceptional scholars and a plan she hopes will boost achievement for years to come. ... The result, teachers say, is a school that has been ‘100 percent transformed.’ Nearly all the kindergarten and first-grade students can read and do math proficiently, their teachers say, and the older children’s test scores have leaped since 2002. Math scores rose from 5.9 percent of students being considered proficient in 2002 to 34.1 percent the following year to 35.3 percent last year. Reading scores rose from 7.9 percent of students being considered proficient in 2002 to 22.7 percent the following year to 29.4 percent last year. In all but last year’s math score, which met state standards, the results fell short of state thresholds but still were considered passing because they improved so dramatically.” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 6/21/05)
- “An honors program for minority ninth-graders and grade-level teacher teams are two approaches that Scranton High will use to close the achievement gap between whites and minorities. The school is creating its own version of the successful strategies observed during a state-sponsored trip to Pompano Beach High School in Florida over the winter.... A major finding was that many low-achieving students were not finishing homework because of poor study habits and organization. To address that problem, the district has started ‘structured’ study skills classes. Teachers supervise students as they work on homework, making sure they finish certain tasks and receive help.” (*Scranton Times & Tribune*, 6/1/05)