RAC Northeast
For Educational Needs Assessment

A Report to the
U.S. Department of Education
On Educational Challenges and Technical Assistance Needs
For the Northeast Region

Prepared by the
Northeast Regional Advisory Committee
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Preface

This report of the Northeast Regional Advisory Committee (NE RAC) for Educational Needs Assessment was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education under a contract number ED04CO0043/0001 awarded to The CNA Corporation (CNAC). Members of the NE RAC and their professional affiliations are listed below.

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Executive summary

The Northeast Regional Advisory Committee (NE RAC) provides an assessment of the technical assistance needs of educators in the Northeast Region in response to a directive from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The Secretary will use this assessment in establishing 20 comprehensive centers to provide technical assistance to state educational agencies, local educational agencies, regional educational agencies and schools in implementing the goals and programs of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. RAC membership includes individuals from a variety of stakeholder groups in education, although members were not regarded as spokespersons for their stakeholder group but rather as leads in soliciting the views of members of those stakeholder groups.

The Northeast Region includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These states vary widely in terms of school and student demographic characteristics, student achievement, progress establishing state standards, teacher demographics and qualifications, primary language, governance structure, and interaction with one another. They have in common a need to restructure their education systems in order to educate all children to high standards.

The NE RAC met on four occasions. The initial Orientation Briefing and closing meeting were conducted face-to-face; two meetings in the interim were held as conference calls with Web site support. These meetings were held in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and all meetings were public. Between meetings the RAC conducted public outreach with stakeholders though personal contact, public appearances, e-mailings, and listservs as well as though the NE RAC section of the overall

RAC Web site. A large number of public contacts generated comments on a diverse array of issues.

The Northeast RAC identified six highest priority challenges to achievement of the goals of NCLB in the Northeast Region. These challenges are:

- ***Learning and teaching to improve achievement for all students.*** Learning and teaching are at the heart of education achievement and of NCLB. Educators today must ensure that all children—irrespective of language group, socioeconomic status, special needs, or other characteristics—learn to the high levels of challenging standards. Improving teaching, engaging parents and community in schools and students' learning, adjusting instructional strategies and often time to influences of the environment, and establishing rigorous content standards are all crucial in meeting this challenge. Regional needs for technical assistance include teacher professional development, curriculum development in core subjects, improved pedagogy for the student subgroups identified in NCLB, and alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

- ***Strategies to assess student learning and inform teaching.*** Assessment of student learning and the analysis and use of school performance results are essential under NCLB for both instructional and accountability purposes. Data and assessment systems must be integrated and aligned across the state, district, school, and classroom, so that assessments make constructive educational contributions, are directly applicable to the improvement of student learning, provide information about individuals as well as group averages, track progress, and provide for growth models or "value added" assessment strategies. Educators at all levels of the education system need to become skilled at identifying and using a range of

appropriate data from such assessments. In order to develop this assessment system and the expertise to use it, technical assistance needs to provide help to states in: developing coordinated data collection and analysis systems; developing staff skills in using data; working with assessments of student groups identified under NCLB; developing and equipping educators to use new measures of performance, including progress and value-added contributions to growth; aligning standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments; and providing methodological expertise to educators in the field.

- ***Literacy: Developing a broad command of language, both written and spoken.*** Literacy can be defined as the skillful use of forms of spoken and written language across a range of content areas and is the foundation competence for continuing educational and social development. Advances have been made in understanding literacy learning, and there are bodies of knowledge around "what works" in specific areas of literacy. This knowledge needs to be translated into "best practices" in schools to benefit all learners. Recommended technical assistance includes disseminating research-based knowledge on "what works" to states and districts, including struggling readers at middle and high schools, making available current information on federal and other literacy initiatives, brokering expertise and job-embedded professional development and research-based training on best practices, fostering communication among state and local agencies, and providing expert advice on target achievement gaps especially among learners identified under NCLB.

- ***Connecting parents and community to the education of children and improvement of schools.*** The involvement of parents and community in the school

and system can have significant benefits in the school's functioning and its long-term improvement. Parents who are involved are more likely to support student learning at home. Many parents do not become involved in schools, and it is incumbent upon the schools to initiate sustainable, productive involvement. Communities too must be engaged in their schools and provide them with broad support to ensure the continuing viability of a significant social institution. It is particularly important that parents and communities become aware of the goals of NCLB and supportive of the overall vision of learning to high standards for all students. Since other federally funded sources of technical assistance exist to promote parent involvement, Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) should concentrate on support for the development of community engagement.

- ***Preparing and supporting a highly effective educator workforce.*** A highly skilled and motivated workforce is needed to achieve the goals of NCLB. States face the challenge of recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce and ensuring that high quality preparation and ongoing professional development programs are in place. Many teachers and administrators are not now prepared to meet the NCLB demands for engaging in school improvement and teaching in highly diverse classrooms. Technical assistance is needed to help large urban and isolated rural districts recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, to prepare teachers with the attitudes and skills needed to teach all students to high levels, to support districts and schools in aligning professional development with improvement plans and imperatives to close equity and achievement gaps, to strengthen preparation of early education and care professionals, to identify and share information about successful approaches to teacher and administrator preparation from both traditional and non-traditional

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programs, and to equip administrators to plan, implement, and provide support for effective school improvement plans.

- ***Building capacity at the state, district, and school levels.*** NCLB makes new, high-stakes demands on practitioners at each organizational level of the education system. At each level, individuals and the structures they work in must have the skills and resources needed to contribute effectively to the process of student learning and school improvement. Leadership, the ability to organize and keep the focus on improvement in the classroom, school, district, or state, requires particular attention and development. Technical assistance is needed to help SEAs, LEAs, IHEs, and schools function as effective parts of an integrated improvement system. Helping states and districts develop improvement plans and provide support for the implementation of these plans at operational levels is critically important. States and districts must have the capacity to deploy teams, reform models, governance schemes, and other constructive forms of support to help underperforming schools. The NE RAC offers the following conclusions and recommendations:

TACs must first and foremost focus upon learning, building cultures of efficacy and accountability dedicated to helping all children reach established standards and creating effective learning communities in schools and districts. They must help their clients in particular to meet the challenges of high achievement for all students, including student sub-groups identified by NCLB. At the same time, their programs should emphasize the special state, district, and school needs at the early childhood and high school levels. TACS should be oriented not only to helping solve today's problems but also to building capacity of state, district, and school systems and their personnel to meet new challenges as they arise. The tradition of functional independence and local control prevalent in several parts of the

education system in the region's states must give way to functional integration and systemic alignment. States, districts, schools, and classrooms must focus resources on supporting the common purpose of improved student learning and carry out their individual functions in ways that fit with and complement the functions of one another. TACs must help clients become skilled in the use of accurate, timely, appropriate, and useful data to make sound decisions about student learning and school improvement, and they must help clients locate and put into practice tested, research-based tools for implementing those decisions.

Two preconditions to effective implementation of NCLB need to be acknowledged: (1) there is a need to educate the public and professional educators about the intent of NCLB, and (2) conflicts between some pre-existing state standards and accountability programs and requirements under NCLB need to be worked out.

RAC members note particular perspectives on systemic alignment, "best practice," and assessment to be kept in mind in considering effective implementation of NCLB.

True to the systemic nature of the challenges, there are several themes that cut across them. The RAC has identified early childhood, readiness, leadership, the high school, data-driven decision-making, and professional development as particularly deserving of attention in the framing of technical assistance.

Technical assistance should be designed and delivered with important principles in mind. Appropriate technical assistance for the Northeast Region will take a systemic approach, build capacity for continuous improvement, broker information on research-based best practice, make expertise available at the point of contact (i.e., for teachers in the classroom), and conduct vigorous public awareness campaigns.

Finally, unique characteristics of the Northeast Region should be taken into account in the design of technical assistance to meet them. The RAC urges TACs to study the

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region's demographic, economic, political, and historical context and to design and deliver technical assistance in a way that takes such characteristics into consideration.

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Introduction

The NE RAC provides an assessment of the technical assistance needs of educators in our region in response to a directive from the Secretary of the ED. This RAC is one of ten such committees appointed by the Secretary to conduct such assessments during the period from December 2004 to March 2005. This committee approached the task in two stages. It first identified the major challenges facing the region in improving student achievement and implementing the provisions of the NCLB Act. It then assessed the types of technical assistance that might enable educators in the region to overcome these challenges.

Legislative background

Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279) directs the Secretary of the ED to establish 20 comprehensive centers to provide technical assistance to state educational agencies, local educational agencies, regional educational agencies, and schools in implementing the goals and programs of NCLB and in the use of scientifically valid teaching methods and assessment tools for use by teachers and administrators in:

- Core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts
- English language acquisition
- Education technology
- Facilitating communication between education experts, school officials, teachers, parents, and librarians

- Disseminating information that is usable for improving academic achievement, closing achievement gaps, and encouraging and sustaining school improvement to schools, educators, parents, and policymakers within the region in which the center is located

- Developing teacher and school leader in-service and pre-service training models that illustrate best practices in the use of technology in different content areas.

Northeast regional conditions and data

School and student demographics

The Northeast Region includes: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The Virgin Islands have the smallest public school system of this region, with only 35 schools and 18,333 students, while New York's is the largest with almost 4,500 schools and 2.9 million students. Massachusetts is the next largest, followed by Connecticut. Puerto Rico has a relatively large student population (table 1).

Table 1: Number of schools and students

State	Public schools SY2002-2003	Public school students SY2002-2003
Connecticut	1,087	570,023
Maine	672	204,337
Massachusetts	1,894	982,989
New Hampshire	473	207,671
New York	4,470	2,888,233
Rhode Island	326	159,205
Vermont	359	99,978
Puerto Rico	1,532	596,502
Virgin Islands	35	18,333

Sources: Common Core of Data 2002-2003; Education Week's Quality Counts 2005.

Four of the states in the region are predominantly suburban—Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire—with proportions of suburban school districts ranging from 74 percent to 57 percent of all public districts. Not surprisingly, New York has the highest proportion of urban districts (44 percent), and a little less than half of its districts are suburban. Almost half of Maine's districts are considered suburban, yet the state also has a large portion of rural districts (43 percent). With 67 percent of its districts considered rural, Vermont is the least urban/suburban of the region's states. Puerto Rico is

roughly evenly split between urban and rural districts. (Data are not available on the percent of urban school districts in the Virgin Islands.)

Diversity and special populations

New York has the most racially and ethnically diverse student population among the Northeast states; slightly more than half (54 percent) of its students are White, whereas African-American and Hispanic students each represents about one-fifth of all students. Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts also have fairly diverse student populations with White students accounting for between 69 percent and 75 percent of all students. Among these states, Rhode Island and Connecticut schools have higher portions of Hispanic students (16 percent and 14 percent, respectively) in relation to Massachusetts (11 percent). African-American students represent about 14 percent of Connecticut students, and less than 10 percent of Rhode Island and Massachusetts students.

Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont have the least diverse student populations; almost 95 percent of their students are White. Minority students populate Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands public schools; all of Puerto Rico's students are Hispanic and 85 percent of the Virgin Islands' students are African-American (the remaining students are Hispanic).

These states have very small portions of students who are English Language Learners (ELL) or migrant students. All states fall below the national average (8 percent) -- and only three states have 5 percent or more of their students who are ELL (Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island, along with the Virgin Islands). Most of the states are within a percentage point or two of the national percentage (13 percent) for students with Individualized Education Plans. Only Maine, with 17 percent, and Rhode Island, with 20 percent, are substantially above the national average for IEP percentages.

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Student achievement

In most Northeast states, African-American and Hispanic students trail Whites in academic achievement based on National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores of fourth graders (see table 2). (The low numbers of African-American and Hispanic students prevent NAEP data analysis of these groups in Maine and Vermont; Puerto Rico does not participate in NAEP.) The widest gap occurred in Connecticut, where 53 percent of White students scored at proficient levels or above in math, compared to 10 percent of African-American students and 15 percent of Hispanic students. The state's students had a similar gap in reading scores, with 54 percent of Whites reaching proficiency (or higher), whereas only 12 percent of African-American students and 18 percent of Hispanic students did so.

In Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island the gaps were not much smaller; differences of 30 percentage points or more between Whites and African-Americans and Whites and Hispanic were reported in mathematics, and the gaps were 24 percentage points or more in reading. The achievement gap between White and Hispanic students in New Hampshire was a bit smaller (26 percent in math and 23 percent in reading). In the Virgin Islands, African-American students lag behind Hispanic students by 10 percentage points in both math and reading.

Table 2: Percent of students proficient in key subjects, 4th grade, based on NAEP

State	Math			Reading		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Connecticut	53	10	15	54	12	18
Maine	34	Low n	Low n	36	Low n	Low n
Massachusetts	49	13	13	48	15	15
New Hampshire	44	Low n	18	41	Low n	18
New York	45	11	15	48	14	19
Rhode Island	37	6	6	36	12	12
Vermont	44	Low n	Low n	37	Low n	Low n
Puerto Rico	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virgin Islands	N/A	1	11	N/A	6	16

Note: Puerto Rico did not participate in NAEP.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, State Profiles for the Nationa l Assessment of Educational Progress, 2003

Establishing state curriculum standards

None of the states has fully met the requirements under the NCLB Act for creating

standards in reading, math, and science (table 3).

Table 3: Meeting requirements to establish state standards

State	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Connecticut	Partial	Partial	Yes
Maine	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Hampshire	Partial	Partial	Partial
New York	Partial	Partial	Partial
Rhode Island			
Vermont	Yes	Yes	Yes
Puerto Rico	Partial	Yes	Yes
Virgin Islands			

Source: Education Commission of the States NCLB database downloaded Nov 2004

Teacher demographics and qualifications

New York has the highest number of public school teachers (210,926), followed by

Massachusetts and Connecticut (table 4). The remaining states have relatively small numbers

of teachers, and this data are not available for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

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Another NCLB requirement is that each classroom in a core academic subject has a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year. While data are not available for Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, three Northeast states (Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont) fare well under this indicator, as shown by the table below. Only 63 percent of Rhode Island's core academic subjects were considered high quality. These states have not invested in the National Board Certification (NBC) program, as evidenced below.

Table 4: Teacher numbers and quality indicators

State	Number of public school teachers	Percent of classes taught by high quality teachers	No. of NBC teachers (SY2004)	NBC teachers as a percentage of all teachers
Connecticut	42,296	96	107	0
Maine	16,837	N/A	72	0
Massachusetts	74,214	N/A	422	1
New Hampshire	14,977	86	12	0
New York	210,926	N/A	477	0
Rhode Island	11,196	63	164	1
Vermont	8,542	93	77	1
Puerto Rico	42,369	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virgin Islands	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

NA indicates data were not available for this state

Sources: Center on Education Policy Year 2 of NCLB Report (2002-2003), Education Week's Quality Counts 2005

Unique regional characteristics[2]

Certain characteristics of the Northeast Region should be taken into account in considering challenges identified by the RAC and the design of technical assistance to meet them.

Although considered a region for federal technical assistance purposes, the nine jurisdictions constitute a highly diverse collectivity. The states in New England share many

[2] Data on New England are from the "Demographic Profile of New England," Federal Reserve Branch Boston, www.bos.frb.org, viewed March 16, 2005.

cultural and historical characteristics as well as some history of collaboration on education issues, but they are highly diverse demographically and economically. New York looms over the New England states in the size of its student body and educator workforce, equaling or surpassing the totals for all of New England, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands in both categories.

There is significant demographic and economic variation within the states. Overall, the population of New England has grown considerably more slowly since 1950 than the average population growth for the country. The population of New Hampshire has grown rapidly since the 1960s, outpacing the rate of growth in the other five New England states. A large proportion of the New England population was born in the region. As of 2000, a small percentage of the region's population was born outside the country: three percent from Latin American and the Caribbean, two percent from Asia. New England is considerably less racially and ethnically diverse than the rest of the country, and the Southern Tier states (Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts) are more diverse than states in the Northern Tier (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont). New England has gained an edge over the rest of the country in educational attainment in the past 30 years. In 1970, New England had a higher high school graduation rate than the rest of the U.S. but a comparable share of college graduates. By 2000, a larger share of the New England population had a college degree than across the country as a whole.

RAC members emphasize the region's distinctions across the urban/suburban/rural dimension. Nearly half of New York's school districts are urban; two-thirds of those in Vermont are rural. While acknowledging the special challenges of rural education, members emphasized the special challenges of urban districts created by the combination of low income, low revenue, deteriorating infrastructure, immigration, and high needs for services.

Governance and financing of education in the region have important consequences for education delivery and policy.   New England cherishes its traditions of local control of education. The region as a whole depends more heavily on the local property tax for school revenues than do other regions. Within the Northeast Region, sources of revenue vary widely. For example, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are unitary districts where all funding is provided by the central government. The New York state government provides nearly one half of the funding for K-12 education in the state. In New Hampshire, by contrast, local governments contribute approximately 90 percent of K-12 education funding.

Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are both SEA and LEA. Puerto Rico is the third largest LEA in the nation. Technical assistance providers will need to clarify the roles in each jurisdiction and ensure that technical assistance is appropriate in light of each role.

Puerto Rico is primarily a Spanish-speaking jurisdiction. Facility with English varies across generations. Information on NCLB and on the variety of technical assistance identified later in this report needs to be made available in Spanish-language versions.

Outreach efforts and data collection procedures

The NE RAC conducted public outreach through personal contact, public appearances, e-mailings, and listservs as well as through the NE RAC section of the overall RAC Web site.   RAC members from each state caucused as subcommittees at the Orientation Briefing in December 2004 and shortly thereafter to develop a list of suitable contacts for their state. Members took responsibility for contacting specific audiences.

RAC members used standard materials developed by the CNAC as well as individualized means of communication to reach their audiences. CNAC developed a standard letter and a standard PowerPoint presentation. RAC members distributed these to a variety of stakeholder groups in their states.

Table 5 displays a summary of the scope of outreach activities conducted by individuals RAC members. It can be assumed that organizational contacts and many individual contacts resulted in further contacts and dissemination of RAC information and materials, but no data on these secondary effects are available. (Higher education contacts, which would have included both "research" and educator preparation program contacts, among other categories, are shown under "Other." Contacts with superintendents and central office staff as individuals are shown as individual contacts, although it is difficult to distinguish in general between an individual and an organization contact in most such cases.)

Table 5: Outreach efforts by stakeholder group

Group	Organizations	Individuals
State Agencies	6	35
Local Agencies	5	152
Practitioners	24	385
Parents	6	
Research		
Business	2	115
Media		
Others	24	215

Public interest and input

The goal of the outreach efforts was to generate public interest and input in the RAC's deliberations. The RAC Web site (www.rac-ed.org) served as the information center for the RAC and provided the central point for public access to the RAC.   The public was encouraged to provide comments both of a general nature and on specific RAC ideas in a variety of ways. Table 3 provides a summary of these interactions. The first line in the table shows the number of enrollees on the RAC Web site from the Northeast Region. The next section of the table shows the amount of input the Northeast RAC received through online comments and through the RAC Support Office either through e-mail or regular surface mail. The third section of the table tries to measure public interest in a more indirect way by

capturing the number of times the public viewed comments on the Web site. Attendance at RAC meetings is another indicator of public interest. Each RAC convened four public meetings. Two meetings were held face-to-face, and two were held as online teleconferences through conference calls supported by Web site display.

In the face-to-face meetings held in Washington, DC, and Houston, TX, the public was invited to observe the proceedings in person. The public listened in on but did not actively participate in the conference calls. For both the face-to-face meetings and the online teleconferences, the public was invited to observe with a link through the RAC Web site. The next section of the table shows the number of public attendees at RAC meetings either in person or through the Web site.

Table 6: Public inputs for the Northeast RAC

Type of Input	Count
Enrollment on RAC Web site	416
State Agencies	52
Local Agencies	55
School Board Members	22
Principals	26
Teachers	85
Parent	29
Business	9
Higher Education	35
Researcher	17
Other	86
Comments	47
On Web site Forums	36
Through e-mail to the RAC Support Office	11
Through surface mail to the RAC Support Office	0
Views on the RAC Web site	975
Attendance at RAC Public Meetings (Orientation Meeting, Public Meeting 1 and 2)	15

* As of February 28, 2005

Substance of public input

The substance of public comment concerned both the content and effects of NCLB itself and challenges and technical assistance needs in implementing NCLB. Given the focus

of this report, it is the public's comments on education challenges and technical assistance needs that we note. Public comment was received on the following topics: assessment, special education, equity, training and staff development, early childhood care and education, arts education, district governance and school boards, science and mathematics education, research-based materials, training, and practice, after-school programs, migrant education, parent, student, and community accountability and commitment, resources and funding, higher education, system capacity, adequate yearly progress (AYP), teacher induction and retention, support services, student discipline, technology, urban education, and data-based decision-making.

Recommendations for technical assistance covered the following topics: professional development, early education, migrant education, urban education, assessment, "what works," systems thinking and alignment, arts education, AYP, special education, and alignment of standards and assessments.

A full summary of public comment of all sorts is provided at Appendix A.

Educational challenges in the Northeast Region

The NE RAC conducted extensive discussions of educational challenges in the region and settled upon six priority challenges. Their order does not reflect an effort to establish priorities among identified challenges; all are important, and improvements on one priority will come only with commensurate improvements on others. There is a symmetry to the challenges: three address the technical core of schooling at the micro level, including learning and achievement, assessment, and literacy; and three address broader system issues of parent and community involvement, workforce development, and capacity-building at the macro level. That the listing begins with learning and teaching and ends with capacity-building only serves to emphasize the connections across all challenges. In the various discussions and comments the group acknowledged that there is unavoidable overlap among categories. But rather than seek categorical perfection, the group took the practical step of moving to describe the forms of technical assistance required to meet the specific challenges.

Challenge 1: Learning and teaching to improve achievement for all students

There was clear consensus in the Northeast group that this seemingly broad category was nonetheless important because it is axiomatic that learning is the principal end of the public enterprise of education. Identifying learning as a challenge stimulated productive thinking about the technical means that could be brought to bear to improve learning in ways that achieve the aims of NCLB. A particular (and repeatedly mentioned) goal under the general heading of "Learning and Teaching" was the goal of closing the achievement gap. The NE RAC shares a sense that it is vitally important that technical assistance be

brought to bear in ways that will assist states, districts, and schools close the achievement gaps across the subgroups identified by NCLB. It also shares a sense of urgency that attention and resources be focused at the high school level.

The NE RAC members discussed the range and diversity of the challenge the region's educators face in improving learning against the backdrop of special educational requirements of regional linguistic and socioeconomic diversity. Some RAC members pointed out that teachers need to be masters of a variety of means and methods in order to adapt to this diversity. Members were also cognizant that the success of educators in meeting the goals of NCLB was in considerable measure dependent on phenomena outside the classroom, which were nonetheless highly relevant. These include poverty, violence, housing deficiencies, and health care, as well as attitudes towards education (and its possibilities) on the part of parents, communities, and others. These phenomena were mentioned not as excuses but as necessarily informing our effort to describe what form technical assistance might take and how it might be delivered, with particular consideration for the importance of community involvement. The group was particularly interested in finding strategies for learning and teaching that have proven to be successful with specific subgroups.

The group's conversation about learning and teaching was consistently undergirded by the recognition that high quality instruction is a critical lever for closing achievement and equity gaps. There was less consensus about what defines high quality instruction. But members agreed that NCLB either reflected or helped institutionalize a shift toward concentrating on the key challenge of learning with the attendant challenge of defining and implementing specific means (or "instructional strategies") for ensuring that all students

meet established standards. (Among these were differentiated instruction and universal design.)

Technical assistance

Suggestions for technical assistance to meet the learning and teaching challenge were wide-ranging. At the most general level it was envisioned that TACs could serve as repositories for research-based information about instruction and agents for the distribution of research findings with the specific aim of reaching classroom teachers and school leaders with reliable information that would inform instruction and school improvement.

Other suggestions deriving from the RAC's deliberations about learning and teaching included:

- Technical assistance centers could initiate, support, and facilitate a conversation focused upon learning and teacher preparation that brought together state agencies, districts, and institutes of higher education, as well as the community.

- Technical assistance centers could identify and disseminate effective methods for helping students in high school achieve literacy to the high standards called for under NCLB.

- Technical assistance centers could identify and disseminate models for effective content area instruction, including science and mathematics and the arts.

- Technical assistance centers could identify and disseminate effective programs, models, and teaching strategies for raising achievement levels of all students and for closing achievement gaps by identifying differentiated means for improving instruction for students in NCLB-identified subgroups and such other groups as migrant students. The committee placed particular emphasis on language-related instructional challenges. It was noted that in Puerto Rico students with limited

Spanish proficiency faced hurdles similar to those faced by students with limited English in other Northeast Region states. (Moreover, not only instructional materials but also NCLB information must be made available in Spanish for use in Puerto Rico.)

- Technical assistance centers could help promote alignment of curriculum, standards, and means of assessment, within states and regions and across grade levels, from early childhood programs all the way through to higher education.

- Technical assistance centers could identify research-based instructional strategies with a track record of success for all students and provide training on effective protocols for teacher consistency in instruction.

The most consistent themes in the RAC's conversations about technical assistance that could improve learning and teaching were (a) alignment of state, district, and school structures to support learning and teaching in the classroom, (b) cataloging and disseminating sound practices that reflect serious research and address the complicated and diverse needs of students, (c) ensuring delivery of usable, research-based information about instruction to school leaders and classroom teachers, and (d) ensuring that instruction meets the needs of individual students, including particularly those in the NCLB-identified subgroups so that the literal meaning of the law's title is honored in fact and spirit.

These themes, most members would acknowledge, are broad and, in some respects, obvious. But the considerable effort required to meet the demanding requirements of NCLB is more productive and efficient if what is being taught aligns clearly with state frameworks and state testing. (Obviously these also must align.) Similarly, the issues of language, poverty, special needs students, and diversity are serious and awareness of means of instruction that work under the real conditions of American public education is critical.

Challenge 2: Strategies to assess student learning and inform teaching

The NE RAC as part of its broader review of educational challenges facing the region conducted a wide-ranging and detailed discussion of assessment. The strong current running through the discussion was that in order to address the fundamental challenges of learning and teaching, assessment is necessarily a function that goes beyond the sporadic or episodic measurement of outcomes. The RAC agrees that the region needs comprehensive, aligned systems of assessment that include both formative and summative instruments.

Notwithstanding some range of opinion in the group about the accountability uses of test data and the legitimacy that NCLB has given to the implementation of high stakes testing, there was significant agreement that it is important that teachers, principals, and district leaders be given the means to analyze student performance on an ongoing basis in order to adjust and improve instruction. The RAC believes that a range of formative and summative means of assessment that routinely inform and improve instruction are necessary tools for improving performance on the various high stakes, aggregate measures in the states.

The predominant educational challenge is to help educators learn how to take what is learned from various assessments and apply it to improve instruction in a timely way, with the further stipulation that the information be applied or exploited not just in the aggregate but at the individual student level. The group saw a clear role for technical assistance centers in meeting this challenge.

Technical assistance

Group members suggested that technical assistance centers could:

- Collect, disseminate information about, and provide training for school leaders and teachers on comprehensive assessment systems that included both formative and summative measures.

- Work with districts to help them work with their school staffs and principals to build a strong, institutionalized understanding of means of assessment (formative and summative) as well as the interpretation and application of the data generated by those means.

- Collect and create easy access for classroom teachers to instructional practices that address specific needs or problem areas as identified by assessments.

- Provide advice and training specifically tailored to the assessment of the learning of students in the NCLB-identified subgroups.   This is particularly important because of the provisions of NCLB that apply to the performance of various subgroups on high-stakes tests.

- Develop new measures of performance based on established standards, particularly measures that better track individual progress across grades and grade levels rather than "single point in time" grade level performance. An example would be value added assessments.

- Work with higher education institutions to encourage teacher and administrator preparation that would include detailed, current instruction on means of assessment and the data challenges created by the educational aims of NCLB.

- Provide expert technical advice on standardized testing and other forms of assessment to state and local education agencies. The RAC sees this as a key leverage point for a TAC because of the relative scarcity of psychometric experts

or research methodologists and the recognition that this particularly capacity could be concentrated and maximized fairly easily.

Challenge 3: Literacy: Developing a broad command of language, both written and spoken

There was consensus in the NE RAC that literacy is a fundamental regional challenge. Literacy is viewed as the practiced use of sophisticated forms of spoken and written language across a range of content areas and, consequently, as a foundation competence for all academic achievement. If there is one point on which there is virtually no disagreement it is that equipping children at early ages with a genuine, strong command of language will contribute in great measure to the achievement of the aims of NCLB. There was some discussion of some of the long-running controversies, particularly having to do with the teaching of reading (the NE RAC's view is that there is now a general consensus about the teaching of reading). But it was clearly recognized that literacy is a critical challenge and that technical assistance centers should play an important role in meeting the challenge.

Important subthemes in the discussion were early literacy, second language issues, adult and family literacy, and adolescent literacy.

Technical assistance

Group members suggested that the next generation technical assistance centers could address the literacy challenge by:

- Collecting detailed, research-based information about what works (particularly in reading instruction) and working with states, districts, and schools to disseminate this

information and offer guidance on how it could be applied to ensure consistency and long-term resiliency of implementation.

- Providing detailed information and support for federal literacy initiatives such as Reading First.

- Collecting and organizing research-based and best practice information about middle and high school literacy and providing information on effective programs and interventions for struggling readers at these levels.

- Providing trained staff able to provide concrete, expert professional development on target achievement gaps, particularly those of NCLB-identified subgroups.

- Identifying institutions and individuals with specific expertise in literacy (and subspecializations such as early or family literacy, for example) so that schools, districts, and agencies can draw upon a bank of sound information and targeted assistance. (In the RAC's conversations this was initially described as a "locate and broker" function.)

- Providing information on models of job-embedded professional development in literacy based on sound scientific research.

Challenge 4: Connecting parents and community to the education of children and improvement of schools

There was much thoughtful discussion within the Northeast RAC about parents and community. It was virtually axiomatic for the group that parents and community play a critical role in supporting their children's education at home and, more broadly, in improving schools. Thus a key challenge for schools and districts, in particular, was to find ways to effectively engage parents and communities in schools. This engagement can take many forms, ranging from participation in school governance at various levels to the seemingly

more prosaic, but critically important, direct engagement with children at home so that homework is completed, education is seen by children to be valued, and high standards are set and maintained.

Members recognized that the challenge of parent and community involvement is more pronounced and in many respects more critical in schools and districts serving families who are economically disadvantaged and in schools and districts serving immigrant families whose children speak languages other than English at home. Part of the challenge, as members of the NE RAC saw it, was in ensuring that schools and districts genuinely valued and welcomed parent engagement. It was also recognized and emphasized that parent involvement and community engagement were overlapping but by no means identical ideas. The latter spoke to the roles various agencies and organizations in a community can play in supporting schools and celebrating the importance of academic achievement for the community's young people. As noted earlier, because the challenges of public education extend beyond the schoolyard, partnerships (formal and informal) between educational institutions and other public and community organizations are vitally important.

Members of the RAC noted (during the Houston meeting) that there was a Department of Education-funded network of parent centers (Parent Information Resource Centers) that was in place to address some of the issues raised in the discussion of parent and community engagement.   The fact that several experienced educators on the panel were unaware of these led to the suggestion that while the panel didn't intend to duplicate the functions of existing DOE-funded entities, coordination and collaboration with new technical assistance centers would make sense.

Technical assistance

Forms of possible technical assistance that were envisioned by the group included these suggestions:

- A regional TAC could provide information and training about successful models of community engagement.

- A TAC could provide assistance and advice in the formation of governance and participation structures that directly involved parents and community members in governance at a variety of levels from individual school buildings up to state panels and boards.

Challenge 5: Preparing and supporting a highly effective educator workforce

The NE RAC conducted a wide-ranging discussion of educator workforce issues. Notwithstanding some expressed concerns with the teacher quality provisions of NCLB, there was consensus on the point that teacher quality (generically defined) is essential to the accomplishment of the goals of the law. Group members identified a variety of challenges. These included:

- A call for better coordination and cooperation between higher education institutions and state education agencies and school districts.

- The need to prepare all teachers to address the particular needs of students in NCLB-identified subgroups as well as those students who are gifted. Particularly in schools and districts where turnover, poverty, and linguistic diversity magnify the difficulty of meeting achievement goals, teachers whose preparation has included rigorous application of the research on effective teaching will be equipped to manage the instruction of a classroom of diverse learners in a manner that meets each

student's individual learning needs and establishes a classroom climate supportive of learning for all. Classroom order and individualized learning are interactive, mutually reinforcing preconditions for high levels of student achievement and school performance.

- The need to support and implement strategies for more effective recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and administrators, particularly in districts facing especially large challenges (RAC members had in mind both large urban districts and impoverished, rural districts) in meeting the goals of NCLB.

- A need to make professional development more systematic and concurrent with both school and district improvement goals and individual learning plans. (This in contrast to what was described occasionally in the RAC's deliberations as "drive-by" professional development.)

- A need to develop and retain highly effective building level leadership. These leaders need to be skilled education leaders as well as competent school executives and facilities managers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help shape a vision of learning for all students specific to each school, to observe and evaluate teacher effectiveness and guide teachers' professional development, to align the school's standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs, to resource the system adequately, and to link the school with expertise and support in the larger environment, including the involvement of parents and community.

Technical assistance

The group's discussions produced a useful range of suggestions about ways in which new Northeast TAC's could be helpful in building and sustaining a highly qualified educator workforce through support for higher education institutions as well state and local agencies.

The recommendations and suggestions that came out of the conversations were that TACs could:

- Identify means of assessing teacher performance in improving student achievement and help implement systems that would collect and measure feedback on that performance so that states and higher education institutions could improve teacher preparation. (This kind of effort would necessarily concentrate on recent graduates from teacher preparation programs.) It should be noted that the goal here would not be to interfere with school or district teacher evaluations but, rather, to generate better feedback for teacher preparation institutions.

- Collect information and provide assistance in the planning and implementation of job-embedded professional development programs that would be genuinely systematic and aligned with local and state goals or with school improvement plans.

- Provide assistance to higher education institutions specifically aimed at improving the preparation of teachers of students in NCLB-identified subgroups as well as gifted and talented students. RAC members, particularly principals, emphasized the need for new teachers to know about differentiated instruction and universal design instruction. There was a sense that higher education institutions were rhetorically on board with the idea of individualized or targeted instruction, but that there was room for feedback and improvement so that new teachers didn't have to be re-educated with a significant commitment of school district resources.

- Provide assistance to both state agencies and higher education institutions in order to strengthen preparation of early education and care teachers so as to ensure well-qualified early childhood educators fully aware of current research in early literacy, including promising developments from the field of neuropsychology.

- Catalog and disseminate information about successful alternative teacher preparation tracks as a service to states and districts as well as to non-traditional institutions interested in establishing alternative programs.

- Collect and disseminate information on successful models of teacher and administrator development, including attention to individualized continuous improvement plans, and retention.

- Provide support, perhaps through a "trainer of trainer" model, for team approaches to coaching and mentoring new and developing teachers and school leaders in their buildings.

Challenge 6: Building capacity at the classroom, school, district, and state levels

The NCLB Act requires new levels of accountability for ensuring that all students meet the same high performance standards. RAC members in the Northeast agreed that the work of closing the existing achievement gaps between identified groups of students and across grade levels is daunting, especially at the high school level and in districts with high concentrations of poverty where overall performance is lowest and where the gaps between groups of students is greatest. Addressing this challenge requires new ways of thinking and working. State, district, and local educational organizations need to learn to collaborate with one another, with the community, with institutions of higher education, and with other state agencies to work on mutual goals. There needs to be an understanding that the work of educating all students to high levels of performance will require focused, collaborative work. This work needs to be coordinated and aligned to form a coherent and systemic whole. The roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders must be clear, explicit, and integrated.

Developing leadership is at the heart of this challenge: the solitary leader working alone cannot realize the goals of NCLB. School leadership needs to be broadened to include teacher leaders, school improvement teams, and other school leadership teams in collaborative leadership. The challenge for today's school leader is to harness the combined leadership capacity of the staff in order to better address the essential, integral components that will leverage the work at hand.

Technical assistance

The Northeast RAC members suggested that to build capacity, particularly in leadership, technical assistance centers could:

- Provide training for school and district teams to design and implement school improvement plans focused on improving achievement for all students
- Implement communication networks linking agencies and departments.
- Assist leaders in engaging community stakeholders in meaningful ways.
- Provide learning opportunities for people with similar responsibilities at different levels of the educational system.
- Identify and disseminate examples of successful leadership practice such as collaborative leadership, community engagement models, inter-agency collaboration, etc.
- Collect and disseminate examples of outcome-based school and district improvement plans.
- Provide models and templates for the alignment of instruction, assessment, and learning
- Assist leaders in using information to determine priorities for change

- Assist leaders in planning for systemic improvement in teaching and learning through the alignment of instruction, assessment, and accountability.

Conclusions and recommendations

The NE RAC offers the following conclusions and recommendations:

Preconditions

Two preconditions frame the substantive challenges to implementation of the NCLB in the Northeast Region. First, there is a need to educate the public and professional educators about the intent of NCLB; that is, to explain the law more clearly, to build understanding and support for the intent of the law, and to remove barriers to commitment to the goal of eliminating achievement and equity gaps in education. Where experience indicates substantial need, changes in some aspects of the law's implementation should be made.

Second, the Act conflicts with some pre-existing state standards and accountability programs. It is a challenge under these conditions to make implementation of the law compatible with prior policy and to maintain the states' original commitment within the compressed timeline required by NCLB.

Lack of understanding and policy conflict are obstacles to successful implementation of NCLB. They exacerbate other challenges of implementing NCLB described in this report.

Important perspectives on challenges

Systems perspective. The RAC has identified six challenges. It is important to understand that they are all part of a systemic whole. What happens with learning and teaching in the classroom is inextricably tied to policy and to capacity for supporting

improvement at the state and district as well as school level. The parents of school children and the larger community environment are influenced by and influence the processes of learning and teaching, the structure and climate of the school and district, and, indirectly, the broad policy directions of the state. The educator workforce determines the quality of instruction and leadership in service of schooling, and is in turn shaped by state policies and relatively independent university and professional development programs. These forces and elements constitute a *system* of education, and it is important that the processes of improving the system should themselves be coherent, comprehensive, and systemic.

The challenges exist within a system, but they do not appear the same to each stakeholder group. Challenges present different facets to different stakeholders, challenging them in different ways. Technical assistance must address the unique presentation of the challenge as it affects each group, and it must do so in a way that is coherent and well integrated.

"Best practice." One tradition that impedes reaching the goals of NCLB is the focus on "best practice" as a unitary approach to effective instruction uniformly applicable to all students. The cultural and linguistic diversity of students alone make it imperative that any teacher be ready to employ nearly as many "best practices" as there are students in the classroom. And while this condition might not too long ago have been said to apply largely to the typical urban classroom or pocket of rural poverty, it is now a reality in the suburbs and more typically affluent areas as well. In any classroom one might pick, some students come from literate homes, and others do not; English may be the first language at home or it may not; one or two parents, or an aunt or grandmother may care for the student. Habits of learning, methods of coping with stress, and even goals for achievement vary widely. To use

the same best practice for all students would ensure that one or another group is not learning well.

The idea of best practice where success is judged by learning, not teaching, is both a technical and a cultural challenge. As a technical challenge, it requires that teachers have a broad-based repertoire of teaching strategies even before they leave teacher preparation programs. Thereafter, teachers need career-long opportunities to develop their expertise using these strategies and to add to them. This idea of best practice also means that teachers need to have expertise with different diagnostic tools—both formal and informal—that allow them thoroughly to understand their students' skills and knowledge and to translate this knowledge into teaching strategies most likely to succeed. Teachers also need the related skills of monitoring the progress of the learning and teaching interactions they have with their students so those interactions remain consistently productive of good learning. They must understand how to guide students as they establish their own learning agendas and how to teach students explicit lessons when those lessons are needed by the student or when the student is receptive to them. Overall, teachers need to become more expert at knowing when they should lead their students' learning, and when they should support it.

As our classrooms across the nation become more diverse, teachers need to become much more skilled at matching what, and how, they teach to the variety of students they are moving towards state standards for learning. Generally speaking, the new paradigm of "best practice" for teachers is for them to:

- Have a wide variety of strategies in their teaching repertoire
- Be able to access enough information about each of their students so they can successfully match teaching strategies to students

- Use information from the ongoing learning and teaching interaction to adjust and modify their teaching strategies.

Assessment. Only recently has assessment come to be widely viewed as a tool that is an integral part of the instructional process, as opposed to a tool for quantifying the results of the instructional process. Assessment, as an integral part of instruction, creates the opportunity for teachers to understand the knowledge and skills their students have as well as the level of expertise at which their students are able to use these skills and knowledge. In this way, assessment focuses the teacher powerfully on what the class as a whole, student subgroups, and individual students know and need to learn.

In the current NCLB environment, the information about what a student needs to learn as revealed by good assessment is of paramount importance. However, having such information leads to the next important challenge, which is, how does a teacher take what assessment results say and translate them into what the teacher does next with the student? The feedback from traditional standardized tests has always provided very weak answers to this question. Fortunately, the feedback from tasks and other formative assessments provides much more useful answers. Educators need to work on providing teachers and students assessments that:

- Are aligned to meaningful standards

- Require complex work

- Give timely feedback that both students and teachers can use to shape the next steps in the learning and teaching process.

Across the entire school, assessment results provide powerful data for improving climate, curriculum, instruction, and other important aspects of the school's structure and environment. Administrators and educational leaders need to create ways for teachers to

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communicate their findings and diagnoses of assessed learning needs. They need to be able to help teachers move to greater levels of professional collegiality and collaboration, building teacher professional community, to galvanize productive but difficult conversations around the data, and lead the community in changing school structure and the educational program in ways needed to meet the intent of NCLB. While such improvements do not result from the effective use of assessment alone, state-of-the-art assessment practices and school-wide adoption of data-driven decision-making would contribute greatly to making such improvements.

Cross-cutting themes

True to the systemic nature of the challenges, there are several themes that cut across them. The RAC has identified early childhood, readiness, leadership, the high school, data-driven decision-making, and professional development as particularly deserving of attention in the framing of technical assistance.

Early childhood. Care and education of children ages birth to five is of paramount importance to their subsequent development, success in school, and life chances. Recent developments in our understanding of cognitive growth and social development and evaluations demonstrating the effectiveness of well-designed education and care programs make the case even stronger and the need to act more urgent. How America's children at this early age are nourished directly concerns the nation's capacity to succeed under NCLB and the challenges of learning and teaching, literacy, parent and community involvement, workforce development, and capacity identified for the Northeast Region.

Readiness. The nation is still far from meeting the first of the National Education Goals identified in 1989, that all children should come to school ready to learn—and that

schools should be ready for them. Readiness does not cease to be an issue, however, once the beginning student first crosses the school's threshold. Ensuring that students are thoroughly prepared for each new grade, each new education experience, and that the schools are thoroughly prepared to help them succeed, is a continuing challenge through all the years of schooling. The mutual readiness for each other of student and school is a theme that resonates in any consideration of the challenges of learning and teaching, assessment, literacy, and parent and community involvement.

Leadership. NCLB and the nation's high expectations for education create new leadership challenges for educators at all levels. Education leaders—the individuals who organize and keep the focus on improvement processes in the classroom, school, district, and state—have to be prepared to respond to new levels and kinds of accountability, to master and act on new bodies of knowledge, to function effectively in a complex, systemic environment, and to win resources and commitment for education in times of scarcity. New approaches must be found to recruit and retain, to support, and to prepare and nourish the continued professional development of highly skilled, dedicated education leaders.

High school. The RAC identified for special emphasis the challenge of learning and teaching at the high school level. Of course, each of the other five challenges noted in this report has an important dimension at the high school level as well. Too many youth of high school age are disengaged from the demanding intellectual work good high schools require, unwilling to make the effort it takes to serve their communities, and lacking the maturity needed to face an uncertain future with courage and initiative. Efforts must now be made to address the particular challenges at this level equal to efforts made in years past at the earlier grades. The need to succeed with subpopulations identified under NCLB and high stakes consequences of the Act make this even more urgent.

Literacy. Believing literacy to be of singular importance, the RAC has identified this as one of six regional challenges; literacy clearly is also at the heart of learning and teaching, and it relates in important ways to assessment and to parent and community engagement. Although the RAC believes that learning both the core knowledge and habits of mind of the subject areas is essential, literacy has a prior claim on the responsibility of educators for there can be no learning beyond the basics, no possibility of lifelong learning, and no hope of a productive and fulfilling adult life without a capacity for skilled written and spoken communication.

Data-driven decision-making. Keen intuition, well-honed judgment, and skillful technique must start and end with the facts; that is, with reality as defined by data. Making decisions at all levels of education has become both more complicated and more consequential. More c*omplicated* as our understanding of the processes of learning and teaching and of education improvement have themselves become more complex and sophisticated. More c*onsequential* as expectations for student achievement and opportunity have grown and the effects of those decisions affect more people with higher stakes results. Fortunately, methods of collecting and manipulating data are growing to meet the need. Data are the source for aligning strategies to goals in every part of the education system and must drive decisions to learn and teach, build a literate body of graduates, engage parents and community, develop a high quality workforce, and build the capacity of the whole system.

Professional development. The RAC has identified workforce development as a priority challenge and wants to emphasize the importance of professional development in meeting other challenges. Members spoke with great conviction of teachers' needs to know subjects well, master manifold "best practices," and become proficient at managing data in the

classroom. Building, district, and state administrators must be skilled at leading improvement programs under more difficult conditions and the pressure of greater accountability. Support and opportunities to continue to develop new skills for this work are critical to their success.

Design and delivery of technical assistance

Technical assistance should be designed and delivered with important principles in mind. Suitably designed technical assistance for the Northeast Region:

Takes a systemic approach. Technical assistance should be designed and delivered in a manner that reinforces the state education system as a whole and provides assistance in integrating various elements of the system. For example, design and delivery of assistance intended to support *assessment* at the district level should be consistent with and reinforce actual or potential approaches to assessment at the state agency and school and classroom levels.

Builds capacity for continuous improvement. Technical assistance should not only help clients over the immediate hurdles they face in implementing the intent of NCLB, it should also help the clients develop the internal capacity to clear similar hurdles on their own in the future. With TAC help, the elements of the education system need to incorporate processes for managing ongoing improvement and for supporting other system elements in managing their own improvement.

Brokers information on research-based best practice. With the caveat on "best practice" noted earlier, the TACs should serve as intermediaries to connect clients to knowledge and materials reflecting state-of-the-art approaches to learning and teaching and school improvement based on research and tested experience of others.

Makes expertise available at the point of contact (i.e., for teachers in the classroom). The RAC acknowledges that TACs will not necessarily be able directly to serve individual schools, but the committee believes that any technical assistance service should be provided with the ultimate objective of making expertise available to the end user, the classroom teacher. Technical assistance in which some unit other than the classroom is the client—and the client will often be the state agency, or perhaps school districts—needs to be framed with its ultimate impact on the teacher in mind. Moreover, assistance in the development of "circuit teams" or "house calls", "trainer of trainers" approaches, and onsite coaching and mentoring from both internal and external expertise are strongly recommended.

Conducts vigorous public awareness campaigns. The TACs should make themselves and the availability of their services highly visible to clients. Schools, districts, institutions of higher education, parents, and community members need to know that the TACs exist, what the TACs offer, and how they can benefit from the TAC services.

Unique regional characteristics

Certain characteristics of the Northeast Region should be taken into account in the design of technical assistance to meet them. The RAC urges TACs to study the region's demographic, economic, political, and historical context and to design and deliver technical assistance in a way that takes such characteristics into consideration.

Appendix A: Summary of Northeast RAC public comment by website, email, and surface mail[3]

Challenges/Impediments

Assessment

Assessments are too narrow and rigid especially for disability and ELL populations.

Broader definitions of academic and school success are needed than are provided by single test.

Special education

Difficulty for special education teachers who might need certification in several areas—either change policy or provide guidance on how to meet requirement within cost constraints.

With special education population, success in moving students out of special education impinges negatively on rate of meeting AYP.

NCLB standards harm special education population in increasing dropout and does not result in higher levels of achievement.

Adequate federal funding of 94-142 is needed.

Equity

Over-representation of minority students in special ed and under-representation in G&T.

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[3] As of February 28, 2005

Training and staff development

Training is needed to help board of education, administrators, and faculty provide leadership in implementing NCLB.

Professional development that is research-based and state-of-the-art (e.g., coaching follow-up).

Inappropriate mandating by districts of models of professional development that are appropriate at elementary but not high school level.

Need funding to train counselors, social workers, parents and other non-teachers.

Knowing how to strengthen content mastery of preservice and inservice teachers of mathematics and science.

Early childhood care and education

Early intervention with multiple health and education services for children aged birth to five with and without disabilities is important.

Providing safe, predictable affordable child care for pre-K children is a challenge.

Access to early childhood mental health services including child psychiatrists is needed.

To meet challenges in reading, intervention is needed in first five years, more funding and staff, staff development, and computers for instruction.

Arts

The arts are suffering under NCLB as excessive attention is paid to English and Math at the cost of arts (and other subjects). This was not intended by NCLB and is denying children and society essential learning.

The arts are an important dimension of literacy. It is a mistake to diminish the place of arts in the curriculum under NCLB. Given the NCLB provisions for "highly qualified

teachers," more attention must be paid to the fact that there are uncertified teachers instructing in the arts and more opportunities for teacher professional development in the arts are needed.

Governance/School boards

District school boards can interfere with school initiatives and attention should be paid to their role and to policies for board membership.

Science and Math

Science educators need high quality professional development. Resources and professional development in this subject area are being pushed aside under NCLB.

Research-based materials, training, and practice

More opportunities for funding and training in research-based literacy and math programs are needed.

Awareness of and access to research-based practice.

After-school programs

Funding for after-school programs is needed.

Migrant education

Several challenges and needs in the area of migrant education: comprehensive needs assessment, effective identification and recruitment strategies, supplemental education strategies, data to fit students and programs, identifying and meeting needs of secondary level students, staff development to provide suitable curriculum and individualized instruction, coordinator training in collecting and analyzing data, training in program evaluation, mentors for new personnel and for support staff, helping directors to identify staff training needs, parent involvement, identification of research-based materials and strategies.

Parent, student, community accountability and commitment

The lack of student and parent accountability is the top challenge.

Parental and community commitment in support of their schools.

Philosophical acceptance of NCLB.

Resources and funding

Financial support and flexibility in using Title funds.

Adequate numbers of staff appropriate for students and responsibilities.

Funding is the major challenge, especially to provide adequate staff to provide

differentiated instruction to reduced class sizes.

Overcrowded classrooms.

Higher education

IHE's need to catch up to the present and get on board.

Capacity

Lack of long-term planning around facilities, programs, morale, and program

continuation after grant support is withdrawn.

Districts and schools lack understanding of how to plan.

AYP

100% proficiency of all subgroups under NCLB just may not be achievable and

realistic.

Teacher induction and retention

Teacher retention.

Knowing how to effectively monitor and retain newly inducted teachers.

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Support services

Need for support services to meet emotional needs of students by staff other than teachers.

Student discipline

There is not adequate capacity to place students with discipline problems.

Student discipline.

Technology

Uses of technology: implementation models, professional development, systems integration, IEP for every child, integrating supplemental educational services, and curriculum alignment.

Funding and equipment for technology in private schools.

Urban education

Urban districts face unique challenges with high concentrations of low-performing students and are more like other large districts across the country than other districts in their own states and regions.

Data-based decision-making

How to use data for improvement at all levels of the system.

Technical assistance

TA is not needed so much as fundamental reform of the system.

Professional development

Professional development around NCLB components for teachers, administrators, parents and other community members.

Promote use of research and professional development.

Regional staff development around research-based practice.

Early education

Help for schools and districts in setting up preschool and other programs.

Migrant education

In the area of migrant education, TA is needed for professional development, with staff developers available for regional and national training opportunities, disseminating research on best practice and providing consultation on program development, and as resource for individual educators.

Migrant education: Greater access to TA support for program development and assessment. Assistance implementing the migrant provisions of NCLB.

Urban education

Special attention to needs of urban districts in strengthening k12 math, reading, science, technology.

Assessment

A city-wide assessment in reading and math is needed.

What works

Make knowledge of what works available to regional and national gatherings.

Regional staff development around research-based practice.

Base all TA on sound research.

Systems thinking and alignment

Create cyclical relationships among TACs, IHEs, and field.

Systems thinking: The system needs to think and function as a system instead of a collection of fragmented parts. Help knowing how to use system data in monitoring and evaluating student learning. Providing all training within a system context.

Arts education

TA and funding on how to provide an adequate education in the arts, especially at middle and high school levels.

AYP

AYP requirement need to be aligned with the reality of the subpopulations.

Special education

Research should help resolve the conflict between IDEA and NCLB.

Alignment of standards/assessments

Assistance aligning standards to resources, curriculum, professional development, and assessment, including help to districts and states in developing and improving standards, developing assessment that map to standards, and assuring meaningful integration of standards into curriculum.

Appendix B: Members of the Northeast Regional Advisory Committee

Jewel Ross Brathwaite was born on St. Croix, U.S.VI. She is an educator for 28 years, is currently the principal of the Eulalie R. Rivera Professional Development School in addition to being an adjunct professor of reading at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix Campus for the past 19 years. Mrs. Brathwaite is a professional storyteller, and author of the teachers manual for the fourth grade Virgin Islands history text "Clear De Road" and of a children's biography "Ingeborg Hyacinth Nesbitt". She is married to Raphael Brathwaite and has two children Mervelle and Mervin, and one grandchild, Ellijah.

James Butterworth is the Assistant Commissioner for School Improvement and Community Services in the New York State Department of Education.

Ceronne B. Daly is the Director of the Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI), a pre-collegiate teacher recruitment program of the Boston Public Schools (BPS). TPI's founding goal is to increase the number of BPS graduates (a predominantly multiethnic student population) who return to the school system as qualified educators with the skills and passion to inspire and prepare their own students for future success. She has a master's degree in Education in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University Graduate School of Education and a bachelor's degree in History from Trinity College in Connecticut. She is on the executive committee of the Board Directors at the Whittier Street Health Center. She is married and has a four-year old daughter

Nicholas Donohue served as New Hampshire's education commissioner from 2000 until January 2005. He had previously been deputy commissioner. He has also served as project director for the Boston Leadership Academy, which provides support for Boston

Public Schools, at Boston University. Donohue was recently named special master of Hope High School in Providence, RI, by Rhode Island Education Commissioner Peter McWalters.

Sandra Juanita Granchelli is a reading coach in an urban elementary school in Northeastern Connecticut. Her specific area of expertise is emergent and early literacy.

Jaci Holmes is Federal/State Liaison/Early Childhood Consultant with the Maine Department of Education. Her job entails working with Maine's Congressional delegation tracking federal legislation that impacts the Maine Department of Education; working with the State Legislature coordinating testimony and monitoring work sessions and hearings on legislation for the Department; facilitating state level task forces for the State Board of Education and the Governor; and providing technical assistance and support for public schools in the development of programs for four year olds.

Peter McNally has been a New York City elementary school principal for sixteen years. During his first twelve years, he served as a principal of PS 229 Q, an elementary school where the 1,390 students included an ELL population of 36 different language groups and 250 IEP students and were given wonderful opportunities in the arts, technology initiatives, inclusion programs, and a rigorous academic program. For the past three years, he has been serving as the First Vice President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) in NYC as well as the Vice President of the New York State Federation of School Administrators (NYSFSA).

Elizabeth Neale is Principal of the Silvio O. Conte Community School. She was National Distinguished Principal in 2002, serves as Chair of the Brown University Principals' Leadership Network, Co-Chair of the Harvard Principal Center Advisory Board, and Vice President of the Massachusetts Elementary Principals Association. She received a Fulbright Administrator's Award for study in London in 2004.

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Jean Pillsbury has been an elementary school principal at North Elementary School in Skowhegan, Maine for the last ten years. Previously Jean had been the Title I Coordinator for Maine School Administrative District #54 and half time elementary school. Jean served as a Distinguished Educator for the Maine Department of Education during the 2001-02 school year. She enjoys living in Maine with her husband, Scott and three daughters.

Elaine Pinckney is the Deputy Commissioner of Education in Vermont. She received her BA in History and M.Ed. with a double major in Reading and Language Arts and School Administration from the University of Vermont. Additionally, she completed a NSF fellowship in the Physical Sciences. Her teaching experiences have included team-teaching in a multi-age Grades 1-3, Gifted and Talented education, and Middle School Science and Language Arts. Her leadership roles have included Bilingual Education Director for a K-12 supervisory union and principalships at the K-6, K-8 and Middle School levels.

John Ramos Sr. is Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education. He has served as superintendent of schools for the Watertown (CT) Board of Education, as assistant superintendent with the Norwalk (CT) Board of Education, and principal of Norwalk (CT) High School, among other posts in the public schools, higher education, non-profit sector, and state agency. He earned his BA in English and American Literature from Brown University, MPA from the University of Rhode Island, and EdD from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Francis A. Richards works in the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.   His primary responsibilities include working as a policy analyst on the Commissioner's staff and managing the Department's School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) project, which combines a school visit process with improvement planning to create a statewide school accountability system. He also is co-

director of the Rhode Island Skills Commission where his principal focus is helping high schools develop local assessment systems based on tasks. In addition, he is involved in developing and implementing the Department's new Progressive Support and intervention (PSI) system, which focuses on developing district capacity to help schools improve learning and teaching.

Sally Riley is K-12 Curriculum Coordinator for the Rochester (NH) School District. Prior to this position, she was an elementary principal for 17 years and a classroom teacher before that. Sally has degrees in elementary education, social science and educational administration.

Ramonita Rodriguez Nogue is Director, Teacher's Professional Development Institute in the Secretariat for Academic Services, Puerto Rico Department of Education (PDRE). Before coming to the PRDE she worked as Assistant Coordinator for the School Empowerment Component of Puerto Rico Statewide Systemic Initiative (PRSSI) at the Resource Center for Science and Engineering at the University of Puerto Rico. Ramonita has also been a high school biology teacher.

Doug Sears (Chair), Dean of the Boston University School of Education since 2001, served for five years as superintendent of the Chelsea Public Schools in Chelsea, MA, which are managed by Boston University under a partnership agreement. Prior to joining the Boston University administration, Dr. Sears served in the United States Foreign Service at the U.S. embassies in the Philippines and Switzerland, where he earned tenure and the Meritorious Honor Award. He earned his doctorate in political science from Pennsylvania State University and serves on the boards of the American Swiss Foundation and the Hanson Initiative for Language and Literacy.

Carole Thomson is the Associate Commissioner for Special Programs and Services at the Massachusetts Department of Education. Carole has been at the MADOE since 1979 and has held a variety of positions during her time there. Prior to joining the Department, Carole was an early childhood teacher in the Brookline Public Schools (MA). She also worked as an early childhood curriculum developer and trainer at the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, MI.

Lyonel Tracy, Superintendent of Schools in Portsmouth, NH, brought to the Portsmouth School Department his "child specific education" philosophy, which includes a personalized education for each student. He is a Past President of the New England Association of School Superintendents. He is a big supporter of the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), and served as New Hampshire PTA Education Chair. Dr. Tracy has facilitated study circle groups and administrative retreats.

Robert Villanova has been Superintendent of Schools in Farmington, CT since 1993. He is Chair of the Connecticut Association of School Administrators' Testing Committee; holds a position as Clinical Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, Neag School of Education, and serves as University of Connecticut Coordinator of the Executive Leadership/Superintendent Preparation Internship Program.

Vivian G. Weisman, MSSW, is the Executive Director of the RI Parent Information Network, the home of the RI Parent Education Resource Center (RIPERC) and the Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC). Committed to quality family involvement in public education, she serves on many advisory and planning committees at the RI Department of Education and the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Mathematics and Science Education, Vivian's community work also includes serving on the Executive Committees of the RI Children's Policy Coalition and the Fund for Community Progress,

and the National and RI Boards of the American Civil Liberties Union. Her two daughters

attended the Providence Public Schools, where she and her husband Dan were active,

involved parents.

Glossary

AYP—Adequate Yearly Progress, defined in the NCLB Act as a way to measure the academic achievement of elementary and secondary school students in relation individual state student academic achievement standards.

CHARTER SCHOOLS—Public schools that are largely free to innovate, and often provide more effective programs and choice to underserved groups of students. Charter schools subject to the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) and other accountability requirements of the NCLB Act.

COMPREHENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS—Centers authorized by Section 203 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279). Appropriations for the centers in Fiscal Year for 2005 would enable the U.S. Department of Education to support 20 centers, 10 of which must be in current regions.

COMMON CORE OF DATA—The National Center for Education Statistics' comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of information concerning all public elementary and secondary schools and local education agencies.

CONSOLIDATED STATE PLAN FOR NCLB—Plan from each state that demonstrates it has adopted challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards that will be used by the state, its local educational agencies, and its schools.

CORE SUBJECTS—English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography (Section 9101(11)). Although the federal statute includes the arts in the core academic subjects, it does not specify which of the arts are core academic subjects; therefore, states must make this determination.

DFO—Designated Federal Official acts as a liaison between a federal advisory committee and federal agency and must be present at all committee meetings.

ELL—English Language Learners

FACA—Federal Advisory Committee Act was created in 1972 (Public Law 92-463) by the U.S. Congress to formally recognize the merits of seeking the advice and assistance of our nation's citizens. Congress sought to assure that advisory committees: provide advice that is relevant, objective, and open to the public; act promptly to complete their work; and comply with reasonable cost controls and recordkeeping requirements.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS—States must define a "highly qualified" teacher. The requirement that teachers be highly qualified applies to all public elementary or secondary school teachers employed by a local educational agency who teach a core academic subject. "Highly qualified" means that the teacher: has obtained full state certification as a teacher or passed the State teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state, and does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the

teacher teaches, in a manner determined by the state and in compliance with Section 9101(23) of ESEA.

IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP—Individualized educational plan required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IES—Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education that was established by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002

LEA—Local Education Agency

OESE—Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education

RACs—Regional Advisory Committees that are authorized by Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279)

RAC QUORUM—A majority of appointed members. A RAC must have a quorum to meet or hold an official meeting.

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORIES—Federally-supported regional institutions that have operated since 1966 and reauthorized by Section 174 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002

SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH—Section 9101(37) of ESEA, as amended by NCLB, defines scientifically based research as "research that involves the

application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs." (P.L. 107-279)

SEA—State Education Agency

STATE—References to "states" include the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the freely associated states, and the outlying areas.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES—Additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students in schools that have not met state targets for increasing student achievement (AYP) for three or more years. Services may include tutoring and after-school services by public or private providers approved by the state.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE—Assistance in identifying, selecting, or designing solutions based on research, including professional development and high-quality training to implement solutions leading to improved educational and other practices and classroom instruction based on scientifically valid research; and improved planning, design, and administration of programs; assistance in interpreting, analyzing, and utilizing statistics and evaluations; and other assistance necessary to encourage the improvement of teaching and learning through the applications of techniques supported by scientifically valid research (P.L. 107-279)

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE (WWC)—Clearinghouse established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide

educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education.

List of tables