

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

Title I Accountability and School Improvement Efforts From 2001 to 2004

Background

This report examines the implementation of Title I accountability and school improvement at the state, district and school levels. Based on surveys of all states, a nationally representative sample of districts, and a sample of schools,¹ this report presents findings on the implementation of key accountability requirements under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) from 2001-02, the year before NCLB went into effect, through 2003-04, the second year of implementation of NCLB, with a special focus on 2003-04. Findings from 2002-03, the first full year of NCLB implementation, showed that states and districts were making progress in implementing accountability systems under NCLB but that big gaps remained between their status in 2002-03 and the NCLB vision of coherent systems that support all schools and students in reaching high standards. Findings from 2003-04 show increasing concentration of identified schools in large, urban and poor districts; broader support for school improvement in identified schools; and districts and schools responding to NCLB requirements in different ways that often were associated with district demographic characteristics.

Identified Schools and Districts

- **The number of Title I schools identified for improvement in 2003-04 was slightly lower than the number identified in 2002-03.** About 5,600 schools were identified in 2003-04 compared with 6,000 in 2002-03. These schools were located in 14 percent of Title I districts in 2003-04.

- **Identified Title I schools became increasingly concentrated in large or very large districts and in urban districts between 2001-02 and 2003-04.**
 - Fifty-three percent of Title I schools identified for improvement were in urban districts in 2003-04, compared with 39 percent in 2001-02.
 - Sixty-six percent of identified Title I schools were in large or very large districts in 2003-04, compared with 47 percent in 2001-02.
 - Between 2003-04 and 2001-02, the percent of identified Title I schools in small districts declined from 32 percent to 19 percent.
 - In 2003-04, 15 percent of districts with identified Title I schools had 5 or more such schools, compared with 12 percent in 2002-03. In contrast, in 2003-04, 70 percent of these districts had only one or two identified Title I schools, compared with 74 percent in 2002-03.

¹ In 2001-02, the study's sample of identified schools was nationally representative. For 2003-04, the sample is the subset of these schools that continued to be identified in 2003-04.

- **Schools in large, urban and poor districts were more likely to be identified for improvement than other schools in 2003-04.**
 - Roughly one-third (36 percent) of all Title I schools were in large or very large districts, yet two-thirds (66 percent) of identified schools were in these districts.
 - Almost one-quarter (24 percent) of Title I schools in urban districts were identified but only 6 percent of Title I schools in rural districts were identified.
 - Two-fifths (41 percent) of all Title I schools were in districts with the highest poverty, yet 73 percent of identified Title schools were in the poorest districts.

- **Among Title I schools identified for improvement in 2001-02, those that continued to be identified in 2003-04 were more likely to be in high-poverty, urban, and large or very large districts.**
 - Forty-nine percent of continuously identified Title I schools were located in very large districts compared with 19 percent of schools no longer identified. In contrast, 12 percent of continuously identified Title I schools were located in small districts compared with 40 percent of schools no longer identified.
 - School poverty and district size were better predictors that schools would exit improvement status than were the improvement strategies undertaken by the schools.

Trends in Title I Public School Choice and Supplemental Services

- **Increasingly more parents took advantage of supplemental services than public school choice under Title I from 2002-03 to 2003-04.**
 - Nineteen percent of eligible students participated in supplemental services in 2003-04, compared with 1 percent of students eligible for public school choice under Title I. In 2002-03, 7 percent of eligible students participated in supplemental services and 1 percent participated in public school choice.

- **Most districts (77 percent) offering Title I choice gave parents the option of two or more alternate schools at the elementary level in 2003-04. On average, fewer alternate schools were available at the middle and high school levels.**
 - Public school choice was offered in over 80 percent of schools where the option for students was required, but in only 67 percent of districts with such schools.
 - Districts that implemented Title I choice for the first time in 2003-04 were more likely to report that the absence of alternative schools and inadequate information for parents were challenges than districts that implemented choice in 2002-03 and 2003-04.
 - Of the one-third of districts required to offer choice that did not do so, most were small with limited or no alternate schools available for students.

- **In both 2002-03 and 2003-04, 57 percent of the districts that were required to offer supplemental services did so, though in 2003-04 these districts contained 83 percent of schools where the option was required.**
 - Among districts implementing supplemental services in 2003-04, lack of providers in the area was the most commonly cited challenge (reported by 61% of districts).

- **Most districts did not notify parents about public school choice and supplemental services options for their children prior to the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.**

School Improvement Efforts

- **School improvement strategies among schools and districts remained similar across the three years of the study.**
 - Schools continued to focus on increased data use, better planning, and adoption of new instructional programs as their primary improvement strategies. Schools identified in 2001-02 that remained identified in 2003-04 more commonly reported conducting such improvement activities than their counterparts that were no longer identified.
 - The presence or absence of various school improvement activities in a school had little effect on the probability that a school would exit improvement. School poverty and district size were strong predictors of whether a school would exit improvement status. Of seven improvement strategies analyzed, only curriculum alignment with an emphasis on professional development in this area contributed to predicting whether a school would exit improvement, over and above demographic factors.

- **Almost all districts reported providing identified schools with some type of assistance on school improvement tasks such as writing an improvement plan and analyzing data.**

- **More states had statewide systems of school support in place in 2003-04 than in 2002-03.** In 2003-04, 36 states reported having school support teams, compared with 23 states in 2002-03. In 2003-04, 30 states reporting using distinguished educators for school improvement, compared with 19 in 2002-03. States also reported that their systems of support were serving larger proportions of identified schools than the previous year.

- **Despite state and district support for identified schools, assistance was limited for substantial numbers of identified schools.**
 - A much higher percentage of continuously identified schools compared to those no longer identified received assistance from a school-based staff developer or support team. However, large percentages of continuously identified schools reported they did not receive assistance from a school support team (57 percent) or a school-based staff developer (37 percent).
 - Twenty-one percent of identified Title I schools were located in districts that provided no school-based staff developers, principal mentors, or school support teams to their identified Title I schools.
 - Larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to report providing assistance of all kinds to their identified schools.

- **In 2003-04, only 6 percent of Title I districts had schools in corrective action (about 700 districts) and even fewer had schools in restructuring status (about 200 districts).**
 - The most common corrective actions implemented for schools were appointing an outside expert to advise the school and requiring implementation of a new curriculum.
 - Very few schools identified for four or more years reported experiencing interventions associated with restructuring.