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Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts (TASSIE): First-Year Findings

2004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY
DOC # 2004-01

Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts (TASSIE): First-Year Findings

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U.S. Department of Education
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2004

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Education under Contract Number ED00CO0091 with SRI International. Collette Roney served as the contracting officer's representative. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

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Executive Summary

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) frames a common goal for educators: to ensure that no child, regardless of background, is left behind by the nation's education system. NCLB, the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), strengthened accountability requirements for schools, districts and their states.

This report examines the implementation of ESEA Title I accountability provisions in 2001-02, the first year of the three-year *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE), and the final year in which ESEA as it existed prior to NCLB, was still in effect. The data reported here will serve as a baseline against which to track the implementation of NCLB. Subsequent TASSIE reports will focus on the implementation of NCLB in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years.

The ESEA, as reauthorized by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, required states to establish challenging standards, implement assessments that measure students' performance against those standards and hold schools and school systems accountable for the achievement of all students. States were also required to define criteria for measuring *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) in school performance for Title I schools and districts. Schools and districts that did not make AYP for two consecutive years were identified for improvement. This document focuses on Title I accountability provisions as they were implemented in 2001-02 for schools identified for improvement because of failure to may AYP in previous years. Specifically, it covers:

1. **Title I schools identified as in need of improvement,** including how many there were, their characteristics, the process by which they were identified and how states and districts communicated with and about them.

2. **Support and interventions for Title I schools identified as in need of improvement,** including the types of support provided, efforts to offer school choice to students in identified schools and the corrective actions taken by districts in schools that did not make progress.

Throughout, the document contrasts IASA with NCLB and comments on the implications of the findings for the implementation of NCLB. Evaluation methods included surveys of districts and Title I schools identified as in need of improvement in those districts, as well as case studies of a set of identified Title I schools in districts in five states.

Title I Schools and Districts in Need of Improvement

Numbers and Characteristics

In 2001-02, approximately 8,078 schools or 21 percent of all Title I schools nationwide had been identified for improvement under Title I based on previous

years' assessment results. These identified schools were concentrated in a relatively small proportion (21 percent) of Title I districts.

Schools in the nation's very largest districts were more likely to be identified for improvement, compared with schools in other districts. An estimated 37 percent of schools in very large districts (those with enrollments over 37,740) were identified for improvement, twice the identification rate of 17 percent in small and medium districts.

However, because there are relatively few very large districts and many more small and medium Title I districts in the nation, the largest *numbers* of schools identified for improvement were located in small and medium districts. Districts with enrollments below 10,449 contained 52 percent of all identified schools, and districts with enrollments under 3,504 contained nearly a third (32 percent) of identified schools. Almost two-thirds of the districts with a school identified for improvement under Title I were small, while very large districts represented just 3 percent of the total number of districts with identified schools.

Districts with identified schools were more likely to be in the highest-poverty category than were Title I districts in general. Forty-four percent of all districts with identified schools were in the highest-poverty category (i.e., districts with poverty rates above 22 percent), compared with 26 percent of all Title I districts.

How States and Districts Defined Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Identified Schools for Improvement Under Title I

How states and districts defined AYP under Title I of IASA affected the number and types of schools identified for improvement. IASA required states to set targets for school performance. These targets could be absolute or relative, summarized across subjects and aggregated for all students at a school. NCLB, in contrast, contains more specific criteria for AYP, including an end point of all students achieving proficiency by 2013-14 and accountability for the achievement of key subgroups of students. Both IASA and NCLB, however, place final responsibility for the details of AYP definitions in the hands of state and local policymakers.

Under IASA, AYP definitions varied widely from state to state. States assessed AYP in different ways. Thirty-three states relied entirely on relative-growth models where schools made AYP if their assessment scores meet a target based on specific improvement compared with their past performance and often their distance from state performance goals. Twelve more combined some form of relative-growth model with requirements that schools meet an absolute performance target as well (Council of Chief State School Officers 2002). States also differed in the measures they adopted to assess school performance.

Great variation also existed in the identification rates of schools across states. The difference among states in their AYP definitions was one factor, along with the rigor of assessments and the actual performance level of students, that accounted for this variation. For example, in 2000-01, based on previous years' assessment results, six states reported identifying 1 percent or fewer of their Title I schools (Florida and Wyoming identified no schools), 10 states identified between 10 percent and 20

percent of their schools, and three states identified more than 30 percent of their schools (Michigan, Hawaii and Georgia) (U.S. Department of Education 2002).

Under IASA, the majority of states relied primarily on relative-growth models to define AYP, sometimes causing relatively high-performing schools to be identified for improvement while other, lower-performing schools were not identified. Under NCLB, absolute measures of performance are much more important in determining AYP. NCLB requires that states adopt a status model for determining AYP, in which benchmarks are the same for all schools statewide; measures of growth (as provided for under the legislation's "safe harbor" provision) will apply only if schools do not meet these absolute benchmarks. As states comply with this requirement, less overlap in performance may occur between identified and non-identified schools.

The implementation of district identification systems, required under both IASA and NCLB, was proceeding slowly in 2001-02. In spring 2002, two-thirds of districts reported that their state had begun to review the progress of districts under a definition of AYP developed for the districts by the state. Of these districts, 15 percent reported that they were identified for improvement under Title I.

Alignment of Title I Accountability with Accountability Systems for All Schools

IASA called on states to have a single—or "unitary"—accountability system in which Title I students are held to the same high standards for achievement as their non-Title I peers. Yet states without statewide assessment systems were allowed to have Title I-only accountability systems. NCLB requires that states use the same accountability system (including assessment instruments and goals for AYP) for all schools, Title I and non-Title I.

In 2001-02, most states did not have unitary accountability systems that applied the same criteria for identification for improvement to both Title I and non-Title I schools.

Communication about Schools Identified for Improvement

Under IASA, states and districts were required to inform schools of their status and to issue individual school profiles. NCLB strengthens the reporting provisions by specifying that states and districts must issue "report cards" with state assessment results and lists of schools identified for improvement. NCLB also requires that data on student subgroups and the Title I improvement status of a school be reported.

Under IASA, there was a lack of clarity about the particulars of how and which schools are identified for improvement. Forty-one percent of principals of schools identified for improvement in 2001-02 reported that they had not been identified or did not know if they had been identified for improvement. Even among principals who agreed with their districts or states that they were identified for improvement, almost a third reported some uncertainty about the criteria they would need to meet to exit improvement status. As AYP definitions become more standard within and across states

under NCLB, state education agencies and districts may find it easier to communicate with schools about specific expectations for performance.

In 2001-02, report cards were prepared and actively disseminated in almost all districts. In addition, public reporting of achievement data for student subgroups was relatively common: between one-half and two-thirds of districts that enrolled significant proportions of minority students, limited-English-proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities reported that data were already being disaggregated for these groups, as well as by gender, in public reporting on schools. (Disaggregation by economically disadvantaged status was slightly less common, being reported by 45 percent of districts that enroll significant numbers of economically disadvantaged students.) State and district reporting often included information on state assessment results (in 97 percent of districts), and comparisons with other schools and districts in the state (in 81 percent of districts). However, reporting on the Title I school improvement status, as is now required under NCLB, was done much less frequently. In 2001-02, 46 percent of districts reported that their state reported this information, about a third reported that the district itself reported it, and about a third reported that schools did.

Support and Interventions for Title I Schools Identified for Improvement

Under both IASA and NCLB, Title I identified schools must develop school plans, are eligible for assistance and face increasingly strong consequences the longer they do not make AYP. NCLB adds a much greater emphasis on parental choice by providing options for parents to move their children to schools not identified as in need of improvement and to choose supplemental educational services for their children. NCLB also provides more specific guidance regarding schools in corrective action and those subject to restructuring, requiring districts to implement one of the steps outlined in the legislation.

In 2001-02, districts were actively seeking to support schools identified for improvement, most commonly through approaches such as school planning, use of student achievement data to plan and monitor progress and professional development for teachers.

- Ninety-five percent of districts with low-performing schools assigned staff to work with schools to analyze student achievement data to identify the specific academic problems that caused the school to be identified.
- Eighty-four percent assigned staff to work with schools to identify research-based improvement strategies.
- Half of districts with low-performing schools reported assisting these schools by placing a "major focus" on increasing the quality and quantity of professional development.
- Seventy percent of these districts reported assigning staff to work with schools to analyze and revise the school's budget so that school resources were effectively allocated for the activities that were most likely to increase student performance.

- Similarly, 69 percent of districts with low-performing schools reported assigning staff to work with schools to review staffing plans.
- Almost 65 percent of districts with low-performing schools required some or all of their schools to adopt new reading and language arts curricula in the last three years; more than 50 percent required the adoption of new math curricula.

However, few identified schools were receiving resource-intensive support, such as coaches or distinguished educators. Fewer than half of all identified schools reported receiving assistance from school support teams or additional staff assigned to provide professional development or coach the principal. Overall, larger districts with low-performing schools were more likely than smaller districts to report the provision of resource-intensive support, including school support teams, special grants, full-time staff developers and mentors for principals. Similarly, larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to provide more resource-intensive types of support for curriculum alignment. Most districts, regardless of size, do appear to have the capacity to pursue less-resource-intensive strategies, such as helping schools develop school plans, providing support for professional development and resource reallocation or requiring schools to adopt new curricula.

District policy regarding support and assistance did not always distinguish between schools identified for improvement under Title I and other low-performing schools—or even all schools.

School Choice

Nationwide, 41 percent of all Title I districts (an estimated 4,521) reported offering some sort of public school choice option during the 2001-02 school year. For Title I under IASA, Congress added requirements in 1999 and 2000 that school choice be offered to students in certain Title I schools. A little more than half (54 percent) of districts (approximately 1,217) with identified Title I schools offered public school choice during the 2001-02 school year. However, these choice options did not necessarily meet the criteria now specified under NCLB that parents be notified of choice options before the start of the school year and that transferring students be provided with transportation to nonidentified schools.

Under IASA, few districts provided parents of students in identified schools with the choice to transfer to alternative public schools with transportation provided in 2001-02. Only 7 percent of all Title I districts and 12 percent of districts with schools identified for improvement offered transfers to an alternate public school within the district, with transportation provided.

In making choice options available to parents, districts with identified Title I schools often faced structural challenges: lack of space in alternate schools, lack of transportation to alternate schools and the lack of alternate schools within the district. The new federal requirements for Title I choice under NCLB, unlike the earlier IASA policies, do not exempt districts facing these obstacles from the requirement to offer choice.

Corrective Actions and School Restructuring

Districts, allowed to define corrective actions locally under IASA, were much more likely to take actions with identified schools that might be characterized as assistance rather than as sanctions in 2001-02. Districts were required to take corrective actions with schools during their third year in improvement status. Districts most frequently took three corrective actions: requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum (49 percent), extending the school day or year (39 percent) and appointing an outside expert to advise the school (32 percent). These are among the corrective actions in NCLB that districts must select from for schools that continue to not make AYP. Larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to report that corrective-action status schools receive greater monitoring and oversight, more intensive support from technical assistance providers and larger school improvement grants than other schools identified for improvement.

Overall, only 2 percent of districts with identified schools imposed any one action associated with restructuring under NCLB, and fewer than 5 percent of districts that were required to take corrective actions with identified Title I schools did so. In both cases, these more severe actions were taken only in districts where the accountability system had been in place at least three years.

Under IASA, districts were not required to take corrective actions if their states did not yet have an assessment system approved under Title I, and only 21 states had these final assessment systems in place as of October 2002. Unlike IASA, NCLB requires districts to impose corrective actions no matter what the Title I approval status of their state's assessment and accountability systems. Moreover, NCLB additionally requires that districts begin to plan for "restructuring" actions (e.g., replacing the principal and staff) in schools that do not make AYP for three years *after* being identified for improvement. As a result, these stronger consequences may occur more commonly under NCLB.

Conclusions

Findings from the first year (2001-02) of the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE) suggest that states, districts, and schools are well positioned to meet many of the challenges of implementing rigorous accountability systems for NCLB but will need to make substantial changes to meet certain provisions of the law. Specifically, in terms of progress, the evaluation found:

- Nearly all states and districts had standards that applied to all students, had or were developing assessment systems aligned with those standards and had processes in place for identifying low-performing schools.
- Most states and districts had mechanisms—such as school report cards—for informing parents and the public about the achievement of students in individual schools.
- In most places, publicly reported data were already being disaggregated by student subpopulations, although not by all subgroups required under NCLB.

- Most districts were actively seeking to support schools identified for improvement, especially through school planning, the use of assessment data for decision-making, and teacher professional development.
- Many states and districts already were providing some school choice options to parents, often through districtwide open enrollment policies.

At the same time, in other areas, states and districts have a long way to go to meet both the letter and the spirit of NCLB. For instance, in 2001-02:

- Many states continued to operate accountability systems that applied different standards to Title I schools.
- The criteria used to identify schools for improvement under Title I varied widely from state to state, and some states relied heavily on measures of growth in student achievement to assess school performance.
- Few states had fully implemented practices for identifying low-performing *districts* under Title I.
- School staffs in particular were often confused about the specifics of the identification process and of how and whether their school was identified for improvement.
- Few schools were receiving resource-intensive support, such as coaches or distinguished educators.
- Many district efforts to support low-performing schools made little distinction between schools identified under Title I and other low-performing schools.
- Most districts did not have experience implementing the corrective action strategies for schools outlined in NCLB.
- State and district efforts to provide parental choice often would not meet the requirements in NCLB.

The *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE) will continue to track state, district and school implementation of the Title I accountability requirements in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. Findings reported here profile the status of implementation just prior to NCLB compared to the expectations NCLB sets for Title I accountability. Future reports will further describe the changes in state, district and school practice that occur under NCLB.

I Introduction

Local practitioners and state policymakers are focused on implementing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (P.L. 107-110), which in 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). At the same time, federal policy-makers are working to help educators meet both the letter and the spirit of the law: to ensure that no child, regardless of background, is left behind by the nation's education system.

This document reports the key findings from the first year of the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE), which examines districts' and schools' implementation of Title I of ESEA's accountability provisions. The data reported here were collected during the 2001-02 school year and serve as a baseline against which to track the implementation of NCLB. The 2001-02 school year was the last year in which the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA—entitled the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) (P.L. 103-382)—was still in effect.

NCLB provisions began to take effect in the 2002-03 school year. Subsequent TASSIE reports will focus on the implementation of NCLB in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. This document focuses on key issues that have implications for the implementation of NCLB: the process by which schools receiving Title I funds are identified as being in need of improvement, which schools are identified, how districts support identified schools and what interventions are taken with identified schools.

Background: Accountability Provisions of Title I

The Improving America's Schools Act (1994) introduced a standards-based accountability system into the Title I program. IASA required states to establish challenging standards, implement assessments that measure students' performance against those standards and hold schools and school systems accountable for the achievement of all students. IASA also required states to define criteria for measuring *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) in school performance for Title I schools and districts. Schools and districts that did not make AYP for two consecutive years were identified for improvement. These schools were required to develop school improvement plans and were to be provided with technical assistance. Schools that continued to not make AYP for more than two consecutive years became subject to a series of more serious "corrective actions."

The implementation of the IASA legislation and of the broader standards-based reform movement has been far-reaching: nearly all states have adopted standards, created assessment systems aligned with these standards and implemented accountability measures for school performance. Yet, progress toward meeting both the letter and spirit of IASA was mixed. Periodic shifts in assessment measures limited the number of states that could track student performance over a number of years (Manise, Blank and Dardine 2001). As states struggled to meet federal expectations, they settled on quite different

definitions of what it means for a school to make AYP. Partially as a result of these differences, the proportions of schools identified for improvement varied from a few percent in certain states to more than 70 percent in others (U.S. Department of Education 2001). States have also struggled to coordinate and align their own accountability provisions with those called for in IASA. In many states, schools found themselves subject to both state and federal systems of accountability—one for the state and one for Title I (O'Day 1999). By school year 2001-02, IASA's final year, only 21 states had achieved final approval from the U.S. Department of Education for their assessment systems.

The No Child Left Behind Act seeks to address the shortcomings and uneven implementation of accountability systems under Title I. NCLB follows the basic philosophy of IASA: high standards for all students, establishment of clear performance goals and accountability for results. Yet, the new legislation clarifies a number of provisions, adds rigor to AYP definitions and includes requirements that ensure more uniformity across states.

Exhibit 1 compares the key Title I accountability provisions regarding the definition of AYP and the identification of schools identified as in need of improvement in IASA to those in NCLB. Both laws have the same basic structure for accountability: establishment of a definition of AYP toward state goals and the identification of schools and districts that do not meet those goals. There are some important differences, however. Under NCLB, states will have to test all students in each of grades 3 through 8 annually, as well as once between grades 10 and 12, in reading or language arts and mathematics by 2005-06, and in science by 2007-08 (although NCLB does not require that science assessments be used to determine AYP). IASA had required testing only in mathematics and reading, and only once in each of the three grade spans (elementary, middle, and high school). Under NCLB, states must also follow more specific requirements for defining AYP. NCLB requires AYP definitions based on goals of all students reaching proficiency in a specified time period, where IASA did not require goals for all students reaching proficiency or end dates for reaching student achievement goals. To AYP calculations based primarily on state assessment results in reading or language arts and mathematics, NCLB adds minimum assessment participation rates of 95 percent, graduation rates for high schools and at least one other state-selected academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. States are required to establish baseline measures using test data from the 2001-02 school year for both reading or language arts and mathematics. States must then ensure that all students reach state-defined proficiency levels in reading and mathematics in 12 years or by the 2013-14 school year. In addition, states must set intermediate goals between 2002-03 and 2013-14 that will be used to gauge schools' AYP. Unlike IASA, NCLB requires that states hold schools accountable for reaching AYP targets for students in each major subgroup at the school (major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and LEP students).

Exhibit 1: Key Accountability Requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Identifying Schools for Improvement

Requirements	IASA	NCLB
Performance measures used in AYP definitions	Annual state assessments in reading or language arts and math at least once in each of the following grade spans: 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. States could include additional indicators.	Annual state assessments in reading or language arts and math. Assessments must be administered at least once in grades 3-5 and 6-9 until 2005-06 when all grades 3-8 must be assessed; assessments also must be administered at least once in grades 10-12. Assessment participation rates, graduation rates, and another academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. States can include additional indicators.
Criteria for state definitions of AYP for schools	Targets for school performance could be absolute or relative, summarized across subjects or not. No timeline for gains or students reaching proficiency. Results could be aggregated for all students or disaggregated by student groups. Districts could use additional criteria to add or delete schools from state lists.	Must include absolute targets for each measure of school performance. Participation rate targets must be at least 95 percent. Must provide for all students reaching proficiency within 12 years, set annual objectives and intermediate goals. Baseline must be calculated following specific formula. Must include separate, absolute targets for key groups of students (all, major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and LEP students). Districts may use additional criteria to add, but not subtract, schools to state lists of identified schools.
AYP for districts	States created definitions for district AYP based on state assessments in reading and math.	Formula for AYP for districts same as for schools.
Identification of schools for improvement, corrective action and restructuring	Schools that do not make AYP: • For two consecutive years were identified as in need of improvement under Title I. • After three years in improvement status were identified for corrective action.	Schools that do not make AYP: • For two consecutive years are identified as in need of improvement under Title I. • For four years are identified for corrective action. • For five and six years are identified for restructuring (planning for restructuring for one year, then restructuring the following year).
Identification of districts for improvement	Districts that did not make AYP for two consecutive years were identified as in need of improvement under Title I. After four years of improvement status were identified for corrective action under Title I.	Districts that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified as in need of improvement under Title I. Districts that do not make AYP for four years are identified for corrective action under Title I.

Exhibit 1: Key Accountability Requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Identifying Schools for Improvement (Concluded)

Requirements	IASA	NCLB
Single, statewide system	States with a statewide assessment required to apply AYP definitions to all schools in the state. Other states allowed to implement assessment and accountability systems only for Title I.	All students must be assessed by the same state assessment and AYP definitions must apply to all schools in the state, Title I and non-Title I.
Public reporting	Districts required to publish "individual school profiles."	State and district report cards required to include information on state assessment results, schools and districts identified for improvement, and certain other information.

Exhibit 2 compares the key provisions regarding assistance to and consequences for schools and districts identified as in need of improvement in IASA to those in NCLB. Again there are many similarities: under both IASA and NCLB identified schools must develop school plans, are eligible for assistance, and face increasingly stronger consequences the longer they do not make AYP. Yet, NCLB also places much greater emphasis on parental choice, providing options for parents to move their children to schools not identified as in need of improvement and to choose supplemental educational services for their children. NCLB also provides more specific guidance regarding schools in corrective action and those subject to restructuring, requiring districts to implement one of the steps outlined in the legislation. Under IASA, corrective actions were defined by the district and state.

Exhibit 2: Key Requirements for Assistance and Consequences for Schools and Districts Identified for Improvement, Corrective Action and Restructuring

Requirements	IASA	NCLB
Consequences for schools identified as in need of improvement	Schools must develop or revise a school improvement plan. Districts must provide technical assistance to identified schools.	Schools must develop or revise a school improvement plan. Districts must provide technical assistance to identified schools. Parents of students in identified schools must be offered school choice. Districts must offer students from low-income families in identified schools supplemental educational services from an approved provider (beginning year 2).
Consequences for schools identified for corrective action	Districts must implement "corrective action" as defined by the state and district if state assessment system was approved by ED.	Consequences from years 1 and 2 of improvement continue. Districts must implement one of a series of "corrective actions" defined in legislation.
Consequences for schools identified for restructuring	Not applicable.	Districts must spend first year planning to implement at least one of a series of school "restructuring efforts." During second year, district must implement school restructuring plan.
Consequences for districts identified for improvement	Districts must develop or revise a district improvement plan. State must provide technical assistance to the district.	Districts must develop or revise a school improvement plan. States must provide technical assistance to identified districts.
Consequences for districts identified for corrective action	States must implement "corrective action" as defined by the state for identified districts.	States must implement one of a series of "corrective actions" for identified districts.
State assistance for identified districts and schools	States required to have school support teams to assist schoolwide programs and, if funds available, high-poverty schools and schools identified for improvement under Title I. States required to establish a corps of distinguished educators to assist schools and districts identified for improvement.	States required to have school support teams to assist with schools identified for corrective action, schools identified for improvement, and other Title I schools. States are required to use teams of distinguished teachers and principals to support identified Title I schools and districts.

Overview of the Study

The timeline for TASSIE data collection spans the last year of IASA and the first two years in which states, districts and schools will be operating under NCLB. Thus, the

evaluation will be able to track changes in state and local Title I accountability practices during this transition period.

TASSIE addresses the four key evaluation questions listed below:

- How have districts and schools implemented accountability provisions under Title I?
- To what extent are Title I accountability systems aligned with state and district accountability systems?
- What assistance and incentives are provided to Title I schools to help them improve?
- What is the impact of district accountability policies and practices on Title I schools?

The evaluation consists of four related, longitudinal components spanning three years of data collection beginning in school year 2001-02:

- **A survey of Title I administrators in a nationally representative sample of approximately 1,300 districts that receive Title I funds**. The universe of eligible districts was developed with information from the 1999 Common Core of Data and the 2000 Quality Education Data database. Districts were stratified according to size (enrollment), poverty (based on the percentage of children living in poverty within each district) and geographic region. The stratification by geographic region was done to facilitate selection of an oversample from three states that are the focus of the analysis of school performance. Districts were selected using a simple random sample without replacement within each stratum. All very large districts were sampled; approximately equal numbers of districts were selected from the other size strata. Each poverty stratum includes approximately one-third of all children in the sampling frame.
- **A survey of principals in a nationally representative sample of 739 Title I schools identified as in need of improvement**. The sampling frame for schools in need of improvement was developed in a two-stage process. First, lists of the schools in each of the sampled districts were developed from the 1999 Common Core of Data (CCD) and the 2000 Quality Education Data database. Schools eligible for the sample were classified as regular, but not charter, in the CCD and served a grade range that could be classified as elementary, middle, or high school. In the second stage, sampled districts were asked to provide a list of current Title I schools in need of improvement at the time of the request in fall 2001. In states where Title I schools in need of improvement are identified by the state education agency, the list of schools identified on the basis of 2000-01 assessment data was requested. Only Title I schools identified for improvement in reading, math, or both subjects were included in the sampling frame. The sampling frame of the resulting 4,054 Title I schools in need of improvement was stratified by district size, school level (elementary, middle or high), poverty and geography. [1]

[1] Response rates for the district and principal survey were 88 percent and 86 percent, respectively.

- **Case studies of 20 schools identified for improvement under Title I in 15 districts in five states**. Case study schools were selected through a multiple stage process in which states, then districts within those states, and then schools within those districts were chosen. Three critical dimensions for state sample selection were identified: state AYP definition, alignment of Title I and the general state accountability systems, and the process of identifying schools in need of improvement. States were sorted along these three dimensions and selected through an iterative process to represent the actual variation. Within states, the largest urban districts were targeted as well as one suburban and one rural district, in consultation with the state Title I director. Within each urban district, two elementary schools identified for improvement were selected in consultation with the district Title I coordinator. Within the rural and suburban districts, one elementary school was chosen, often the only identified school in those districts.
- **Secondary analyses in three of the case study states of school performance data** for all schools in the state that serve elementary students. Eligible schools were those classified as regular, but not charter schools, in the Common Core of Data. The analysis contrasts scores of Title I schools in need of improvement, other Title I schools, and non-Title I schools for each state.[2]

The district and school surveys and the case studies are being repeated in school years 2002-03 and 2003-04. Secondary analysis of school performance data will be carried out again in school year 2003-04. The study is also adding data collection components to examine state policies.[3]

This document reports on findings related to the first three evaluation questions above—the emphases of TASSIE's first year of data collection. It is based on data only from the first year of data collection, 2001-02, during which IASA was still in effect. As noted earlier, these findings can serve as a baseline against which to examine activities under NCLB.

The remainder of this document presents findings on the implementation of IASA accountability provisions, and discusses the implications for the implementation of NCLB. The following section focuses on which schools have been identified for improvement and the process through which identification has been made. The third section focuses on the support provided to and interventions taken with schools identified as in need of improvement. The central theme running through the findings is that states, districts and schools are well positioned to implement many of the NCLB provisions but will need to make substantial changes to meet other provisions.

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[2] In the analysis of school performance and throughout this report, group differences that are reported are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$. Details on the statistical tests and the standard errors of statistical estimates are found in the TASSIE technical report (Shields et al. 2003).

[3] For more information about TASSIE and to view the district and principal surveys, see http://www.TASSIEonline.org.

II Identification of Schools and Districts in Need of Improvement

A pivotal component of Title I accountability is the identification of schools and districts that have not met their goals of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two years. This section of the report provides estimates of the number and distribution of schools and districts identified for improvement in school year 2001-02, the year prior to the enactment of NCLB. It also examines the process and definitions used to identify schools and districts, and describes the results of different approaches. Third, the section discusses the alignment of the Title I accountability system with state and local accountability systems. The final portion of this section focuses on the key issue of communication to stakeholders about the status of schools identified for improvement. Wherever possible, the document focuses on the degree to which state, district and school practice in 2001-02 was already aligned with the NCLB accountability provisions.

Characteristics of Schools and Districts Identified for Improvement Under Title I in 2001-02

In fall 2001, the school year before NCLB went into effect, an estimated 8,078 schools had been identified for improvement under Title I based on previous years' assessment results representing 21 percent of all Title I schools nationwide.[4] This estimate, based on the data gathered from states, districts, and schools in the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE), is consistent with the number of identified schools reported by states in their Title I performance reports and reported by the U.S. Department of Education.[5]

More than three-quarters of Title I schools identified for improvement served the elementary grades, reflecting the grade-level distribution of all Title I schools. Of schools identified for improvement under Title I, 78 percent were elementary schools, nearly the same proportion as among all Title I schools. Of identified schools, 15 percent (approximately 1,248) were middle schools; in comparison 14 percent of all Title I schools were middle schools. Relatively few high schools were identified for improvement nationwide (approximately 538), although the proportion of identified schools that were high schools is roughly the same as the proportion of all Title I schools that were high schools (see Table 1).

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[4] The estimate of 8,078 schools was computed from a weighted analysis of the number of schools responding to the principal survey. Once weighted, the count of the number of schools in the respondent sample projects up to the number estimated in the national population of schools in need of improvement. The weights were derived from the sampling frame that contained the lists of all Title I schools in the TASSIE district sample that were identified to be in need of improvement. The TASSIE technical report (Shields et al. 2003) describes in detail the sampling strategy and derivation of weights.

[5] In July 2002, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 8,652 schools had been identified for improvement under Title I, based on the most recently submitted Consolidated State Performance Reports; however, some states' lists in these Consolidated State Performance Reports were for the 2000-01 or 1999-2000 school years rather than the 2001-02 school year examined by this study (U.S. Department of Education 2003).

Schools in the nation's very largest districts (those with enrollments over 37,740) were more likely to be identified for improvement, compared with schools in other districts. An estimated 37 percent of schools in very large districts were identified for improvement, as were 17 percent of the schools in small and medium districts (see Table 1). Thus, an estimated 75 of the nation's largest school districts contain an estimated 2,200 identified schools.

However, the largest numbers of schools identified for improvement were located in small and medium districts. As shown in Table 1, 52 percent of schools identified under Title I were located in districts with enrollments under 10,449 students. Because there are relatively few very large districts and many more small and medium Title I districts in the nation, these smaller districts contain large numbers of identified schools. Nearly a third of identified schools were located in districts with enrollments under 3,504. Districts with enrollments below 10,449 contain the majority of identified schools and therefore hold primary responsibility for providing support and assistance to more than half of all identified schools nationwide.

A relatively small proportion of Title I districts had schools in need of improvement—approximately one in five Title I districts nationwide. As shown in Table 2, an estimated 2,313 districts, or 21 percent of districts that received Title I funds, reported that they had at least one school identified for improvement under Title I. Almost two-thirds of the districts with a school identified for improvement under Title I (an estimated 1,475 districts) were small; very large districts represented just 3 percent of the total number of districts with identified schools.

Districts with identified schools were more likely to be in the highest-poverty category than were Title I districts in general. Forty-four percent of districts with identified schools were in the highest poverty category (i.e., above 22 percent), compared with 26 percent of all Title I schools (Table 2).

Table 1

Schools Identified for Improvement and All Title I Schools, by District Size and Grade Level Distributions[6]

	Estimated Number of Schools Identified for Improvement	Percent of All Schools Identified for Improvement	Percent of All Title I Schools	Percent of Schools Identified Within Categories
District size, by student enrollment				
Small (200 to 3,503)	2,597	32	41	17
Medium (3,504 to 10,448)	1,611	20	25	17
Large (10,449 to 37,740)	1,669	21	19	23
Very large (> 37,740)	2,200	27	16	37
Total	8,078*	100	100*	21
Grade level				
Elementary	6,292	78	79	21
Middle	1,248	15	14	24
High	538	7	8	18
Total	8,078	100	100*	21

* Totals may not be exact because of rounding.

Exhibit reads: An estimated 2,200 schools in very large districts were identified for improvement, which represents 27 percent of all identified schools in the nation. Very large districts contain an estimated 5,975 Title I schools overall, or 16 percent of all Title I schools. In very large districts, an estimated 37 percent of Title I schools (i.e., 2,200 divided by 5,975) have been identified for improvement.

Note: The denominator for computing the percent of schools identified for improvement in each category is 8,078 schools (unweighted N = 578). The denominator for computing the percent of all Title I schools in each category is 38,194 schools (unweighted N = 1,030); this is the weighted N based on the TASSIE survey sample described on page 6. The identification rate for schools was computed by dividing the number of identified schools by the number of all Title I schools in each category.

Source: National estimates of the numbers (and associated percentages) of schools identified for improvement were derived from a weighted analysis of the number of respondents to the TASSIE principal survey. Estimates for all Title I schools are based on the numbers of Title I elementary, middle, and high schools reported by districts on the TASSIE district survey, weighted up to estimate the responses of all districts nationwide.

[6] See Esch, Lash and Shields 2003, for a more comprehensive picture of schools identified under Title I.

Table 2

Size and Poverty Distributions of Districts with at Least One School Identified for Improvement under Title I and All Districts That Receive Title I Funds

	Estimated Number of Districts with Schools Identified for Improvement	Percent of Districts with Schools Identified for Improvement	Percent of All Districts That Receive Title I Funds
District size, by student enrollment			
Small (200 to 3,503)	1,475	64	76
Medium (3,504 to 10,448)	472	20	17
Large (10,449 to 37,740)	290	13	6
Very large (> 37,740)	75	3	1
Total	2,313*	100	100
District poverty, by percent of children living in poverty			
Highest poverty (>22 percent)	1,021	44	26
Middle poverty (11-22 percent)	820	36	39
Lowest poverty (<11 percent)	471	20	35
Total	2,313*	100	100

* Totals may not be exact because of rounding.

Exhibit reads: An estimated 75 very large districts have schools identified for improvement, which represents 3 percent of the total number of districts with identified schools. The nation has an estimated 125 very large Title I districts, which represent 1 percent of Title I districts.

Note: The denominator for computing the percent of districts with schools identified for improvement in each category is 2,313 districts (unweighted N = 404). The denominator for computing the percent of all districts that receive Title I funds in each category is 11,208 districts (unweighted N = 1,141); this is the weighted N based on the TASSIE survey sample described on page 6.

Source: National estimates of the numbers (and associated percentages) of all districts and districts with schools identified for improvement under Title I were computed from a weighted analysis of responses to the TASSIE district survey.

Among districts that reported that their state had begun to identify districts for improvement, 15 percent—an estimated 1,075 districts nationwide—reported that they were identified for improvement under Title I. Identification for improvement did not vary by district size, but did appear to be related to the degree of district poverty: high-poverty districts were more likely to report that they were identified as in need of improvement (28 percent) than medium-poverty districts (12 percent) or low-poverty districts (8 percent).

How States and Districts Define Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Identify Schools for Improvement under Title I

How states and districts define AYP under IASA affected the number and types of schools identified for improvement. IASA required states to set targets for school performance. These targets could be absolute or relative, summarized across subjects, and aggregated for all students at a school. NCLB, in contrast, contains more specific criteria for AYP, including an end point for all students achieving proficiency by 2013-14 and accountability for the achievement of key subgroups of students. Both IASA and NCLB, however, place final responsibility for the details of AYP definitions in the hands of state and local policymakers. Examination of the implementation of AYP definitions under IASA provides a context for understanding how state systems may transition to meet NCLB requirements.

Under IASA, AYP definitions varied widely from state to state. The five states in the TASSIE case study sample illustrate this variation in 2001-02 (see Exhibit 3). For example, Maryland adopted a simple relative-growth measure that allowed schools to make AYP if they showed growth, of any magnitude, on the state's school performance index. Michigan's AYP definition called for narrowing the gap in performance among student groups by reducing the number of students scoring at the lowest performance levels. Arizona, Louisiana and Washington adopted multipart AYP definitions that combined criteria based on absolute thresholds (e.g., 90 percent of students scoring "proficient" in both reading and mathematics) with criteria based on relative progress (e.g., making a two-year growth target that would enable schools to achieve the state's standard for proficiency in 10 years). States also differed in the measures they adopted to assess school performance: two states combined test scores across multiple subjects with attendance and dropout rates to create a weighted average index that served as a single measure of school performance; the remaining three set separate performance goals for each subject area. Michigan required schools to meet targets in four subject areas, two more than most other states.

In all of these states, AYP definitions (either the benchmarks set for individual schools or the assessment measures on which they were based) were complex and could not be summarized easily in a single sentence or reduced to a single numerical goal for any one school. Two reviews of Title I accountability systems conducted in 1999-2000 found similar variation in AYP definitions across states nationwide (U.S. Department of Education 2001; Schenck and Carlson 2002).

Great variation also existed in the identification rates of schools across states. The variation among states in AYP definitions is one factor, along with the rigor of assessments and the actual performance level of students, that accounts for this variation. For example, in 2000-01, based on previous years' assessment results, six states reported identifying 1 percent or fewer of their Title I schools (Florida and Wyoming identified no schools), 10 states identified between 10 percent and 20 percent of their schools, and three states identified more than 30 percent of their schools (Michigan, Hawaii and Georgia) (U.S. Department of Education 2002).

Exhibit 3
AYP Definitions in Five States, 2001-02

Arizona schools had to meet absolute or growth targets separately for both reading comprehension and mathematics in a single grade level for each school. Schools made AYP if 90 percent of students scored "proficient" or above on the state test in both reading comprehension and math, or if no student scored below "basic" on either test. If the school did not meet these absolute targets, it could make AYP if it reduced the gap between the state goal and its 1997 performance by the average change needed to achieve the state goal by 2005. Districts had responsibility for making final AYP determinations and could use additional local measures to add or remove schools from the state list.

In **Louisiana**, the state combined scores from multiple grade levels on two different assessments of reading, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as attendance and dropout rates, in a complex weighted composite known as the School Performance Score (SPS). Louisiana had defined a growth target for each school that represented the amount of progress it must make every two years to reach the state's 10- and 20-year goals. The state established separate targets for students with disabilities and for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students and combined them in a weighted average to calculate the overall growth target for the school (thus, a school's growth target depended in part on how many students it had in these subgroups). Schools made AYP if their SPS was 100 or above (the state goal), regardless of growth; schools were automatically identified for improvement if their SPS was 30 or lower. For schools between 30 and 100, identification depended on meeting the growth target.

In **Maryland**, the state combined scores on the state assessment from multiple grade levels across six subject areas with attendance rates to create a School Performance Index (SPI). The SPI measured each school's distance from the state's goal of having 70 percent of students scoring "satisfactory" or above in each subject included in the state assessments. Schools that showed an increase in SPI—no matter what the size—over the average of the previous two years were considered to have made AYP. There was no clearly specified timeline that required all schools to meet the state goal of 100 on the SPI.

In **Michigan**, schools were identified for improvement on the basis of their performance in each of four subject areas (reading, mathematics, science, and writing). Deficient performance in any one of these subject areas could cause a school to not make AYP. The Michigan AYP definition was based on a relative-growth model that was defined in terms of narrowing the gap between the percentages of students scoring in the highest and lowest achievement categories. Schools had to reduce the gap every year by 10 percent. Individual school targets changed every year in every subject and varied across schools within the state.

In **Washington**, the state had developed nine separate criteria for determining AYP among elementary schools. These criteria were based on the school's performance on the state assessment: five addressed reading and four addressed mathematics. Four of the nine criteria were absolute targets for performance, and five were relative-growth targets. Schools that had met any five of the nine criteria (across either or both subjects) were judged to have made AYP.

Under IASA, the majority of states relied primarily on relative-growth models to define AYP, with the expected gain varying for each school depending on its baseline performance. In 2001-02, data collected on AYP definitions indicated that 33 states relied entirely on relative-growth models and that 12 more combined some form of relative growth with an absolute target (Council of Chief State School Officers 2002). Under NCLB, absolute measures of performance are much more important in determining AYP. NCLB requires that states adopt a status model for evaluating AYP, in which benchmarks are the same for all schools statewide; measures of growth (as provided for under the legislation's "safe harbor" provision) will apply only if schools did not meet these absolute benchmarks.

As states move away from relative-growth AYP models under NCLB, it is likely to affect the types of schools that are identified for improvement. School performance data collected in Maryland and Louisiana show that AYP definitions built on growth in achievement rather than absolute levels of performance can cause some relatively high-performing Title I schools to be identified for improvement, whereas some lower-performing Title I schools may not be identified. Because both Maryland and Louisiana examined growth in school performance to assess AYP, some Title I schools with low performance levels were not identified for improvement if they showed adequate growth, whereas higher-performing schools that did not achieve growth targets were identified. Nonetheless, in both states, identified Title I elementary schools scored lower than nonidentified Title I elementary schools, on average, on their state's measures of school performance (see Exhibits 4 and 5).

Differences in the AYP definitions between Maryland and Louisiana helped to explain the extent of overlap in school performance for identified and nonidentified schools. In Maryland, schools were identified if they did not show growth of any size, regardless of the school's absolute level of performance. As shown in Exhibit 4, approximately 95 percent of the identified schools scored higher than the lowest scoring nonidentified school, and 95 percent of the nonidentified schools scored lower than the highest scoring identified school. In Maryland, half of identified schools scored as well as or better than 25 percent of the nonidentified schools.

In Louisiana (see Exhibit 5), scores overlapped somewhat less than in Maryland, in part because Louisiana's AYP definition combined absolute and relative criteria; thus, no schools attaining a school performance score of 100 or more were identified for improvement, and all schools scoring 30 or lower were identified. In addition, the growth criteria for AYP for schools scoring between 31 and 99 varied, depending on the score of the school: lower scoring schools required higher growth to meet AYP. In this state, slightly more than one-quarter of the identified schools scored as well as or better than 25 percent of the nonidentified Title I schools.

Exhibit 4

Distributions of School Performance, for Maryland Schools with Elementary Students

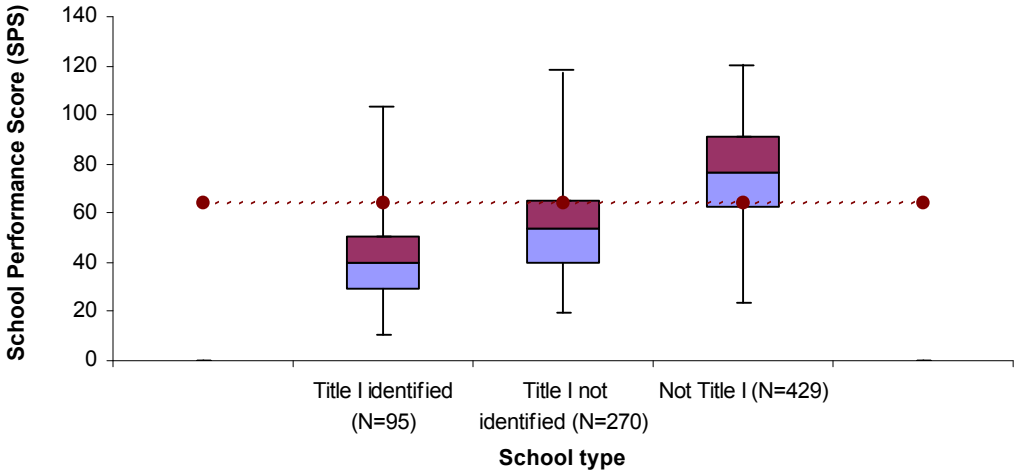

Exhibit reads: The school performance score for identified Title I schools ranged from about 10 to 100 with a median of 40. In this type of plot, the vertical line spans the range of scores obtained in the group. The box spans the range for the middle 50 percent of the distribution, from the 25th to the 75th percentile, and the horizontal line within the box identifies the 50th percentile, or median. The horizontal line that spans the width of the figure identifies the 50th percentile (median) for the total population of schools in the analysis.

Exhibit 5

Distributions of School Performance, for Louisiana Schools with Elementary Students

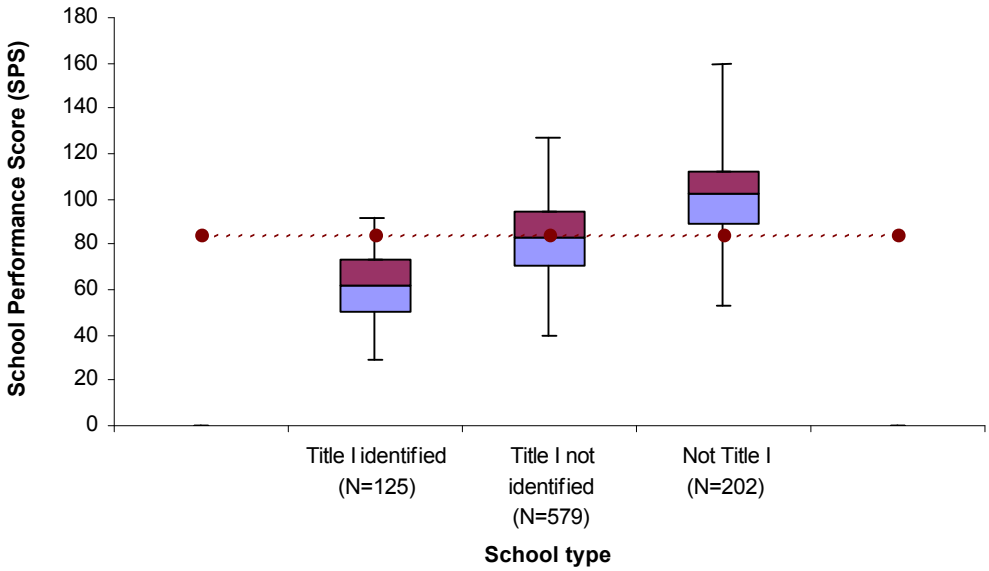

Exhibit Reads: The school performance score for identified Title I schools ranged from about 29 to 92, with a median of 61.5. Also see the note to Exhibit 4 above.

As states comply with NCLB and use an AYP based on absolute scores as opposed to relative growth models, less overlap in performance may occur between identified and nonidentified schools—especially in higher-performing schools. Under NCLB, all schools that attain the benchmark target that the state sets will make AYP, whether or not their scores have risen or declined from the year before. As a result, overlap in performance between identified and nonidentified schools should decrease at the higher end of the achievement spectrum, with fewer high-scoring schools identified for improvement, all other factors being equal. At the same time, other factors may contribute to the overlap in distributions. Because under NCLB's "safe harbor" provision strong growth in the percentage of students scoring "proficient" will allow a school to make AYP even if it does not attain the state's benchmark, the ranks of nonidentified schools may continue to include some schools that are relatively low performing but have demonstrated strong growth. Finally, because AYP definitions under NCLB will hold schools accountable for attaining the same intermediate benchmark and 95 percent assessment participation rates for all subgroups of students, a number of schools with high average scores may nevertheless be identified on the basis of subgroup performance.[7]

Other changes to AYP definitions required under NCLB are likely to influence the number of schools identified as in need of improvement under Title I, but the net effect of the various changes is difficult to predict. Some potential changes could result in more schools being identified. Schools of all types may have difficulty meeting progressively more challenging benchmarks that states must establish on the road to ensuring that all students reach the state's standard for proficiency in both reading and mathematics within 12 years. Schools with high or moderate average scores but large gaps in performance among subgroups may now be identified for the first time. On the other hand, given the absolute targets required for AYP under NCLB, some higher achieving schools that are declining in achievement will not necessarily be identified as long as their achievement levels remain above the target. Yet, until states' NCLB AYP definitions, including definitions of "proficient" and the measures used to measure proficiency, are put in place, the impact of the new law on the number and types of schools is uncertain.

The implementation of district identification systems, required under both IASA and NCLB, was proceeding slowly in 2001-02. In spring 2002, two-thirds of Title I districts reported that their state had begun to review the progress of districts under a definition of AYP developed for the districts by the state. A third of districts reported either that their state did not review the progress of districts or that they were not sure whether their state had begun that function. There was some confusion among respondents within states about whether or not the state had begun to review the progress of districts. For example, of the 113 districts that responded to the district survey in California, 41 indicated that the state had not begun to review district performance, 57

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[7] Few states used subpopulation performance as a criterion for AYP under IASA (Goertz, Duffy, and Le Floch 2001).

[9] For tables in this report, statistics are reported only when the unweighted sample is 30 or more.

indicated that the state had begun to do so, and 15 reported that they were not sure.

Among districts that reported that their state had developed a definition of AYP for districts, four-fifths reported that they had made AYP in the 2000-01 school year. The percentage of districts reporting that they had made AYP did not vary significantly by district poverty or by district size.

NCLB strengthens and standardizes AYP requirements for districts. Under NCLB, districts will be held accountable for the same goals for student performance as schools, both in the aggregate districtwide and for each subgroup of students enrolled by the district. Students whose performance is not disaggregated at the school level because there are not enough students in the subgroup at the school will be considered separately at the district level if enough students in that subgroup are enrolled in the district. Under NCLB, more states are likely to identify districts for improvement, and districts will be held accountable for many more benchmarks for student performance. As a result, more districts may be identified for improvement, all other things being equal.

Alignment of Title I Accountability with Accountability Systems for All Schools

IASA called on states to hold all schools and districts accountable to the same standards for achievement through the development of aligned systems of high standards and challenging assessments to determine AYP, and by aligning their Title I programs with these requirements. Yet states without statewide assessment systems were allowed to have Title I-only accountability systems to identify low-performing schools. NCLB strengthens this provision, requiring that states use the same accountability system (including assessment instruments and goals for AYP) for all schools, Title I and non-Title I.

In 2001-02, most states had still not established unitary (i.e., single, statewide) accountability systems that applied the same criteria for identification for improvement to both Title I and non-Title I schools. Only 18 states reported that they had unitary identification systems to measure AYP; 13 other states reported Title I-only systems (Council of Chief State School Officers 2002). States had not made progress toward implementing unitary systems in the few years before these data were collected. In 1999-2000, 22 states operated unitary accountability systems (U.S. Department of Education 2001). In 19 states, Title I was the only system in operation; the remaining states operated dual systems (one for Title I and one for non-Title I schools). The existence of different accountability systems can send mixed messages about what constitutes the attainment of standards.

Establishing unified systems was a challenge for many states under IASA and is likely to continue to be a challenge under NCLB. The experiences of the TASSIE case study states in 2001-02 pointed to a number of the challenges in creating such a system. Only two of the five case study states operated unitary accountability systems with the same or very similar criteria applied to both Title I and non-Title I schools. The other three states faced serious obstacles to passing new accountability legislation that would both satisfy the requirements of NCLB and apply to all schools in the state. In

Washington, the state legislature failed to pass legislation to establish a new statewide accountability system that would apply to both Title I and non-Title I schools. The Arizona legislature, in contrast, had recently passed legislation establishing a new statewide accountability system that, according to the Arizona Department of Education, would not meet the requirements of NCLB. In spring 2002, the Michigan State Board of Education approved a plan for a new statewide accreditation system that assigns schools a letter grade on the basis of achievement status, achievement trends over three years, achievement growth for individual students and indicators of engagement, instructional quality and learning opportunities. This new system may operate in conjunction with a Title I-based accountability system because the measures and criteria used to accredit schools under this system are so different from those required under NCLB. These challenges that states faced in meeting the requirements of IASA will, of course, remain as they seek to build accountability systems in line with NCLB.

Communication about Schools Identified for Improvement

A central principle underlying the Title I accountability system is that local educators, as well as parents, have a clear understanding of the progress for which schools are being held accountable. For accountability systems to be effective, local educators and parents must understand the criteria by which their schools are held accountable and must be aware of whether or not their schools have been identified for improvement. Without such an understanding, the Title I accountability system can be expected to have a limited impact. Under IASA, states and districts were required to inform schools of their status and to issue individual school profiles. NCLB strengthens the reporting provisions by specifying that states and districts issue "report cards" with state assessment results and lists of schools identified for improvement.

Communication with Educators

Under IASA, there was a lack of clarity about the particulars of how and which schools are identified for improvement. Fifty-nine percent of the principals surveyed, all of whom had been selected for the TASSIE sample because they were included on a district or state list of identified schools for 2001-02, reported that they had been, in fact, identified for improvement; 41 percent reported that they had not been identified or did not know if they had been identified for improvement. This finding replicates the results of another survey of identified schools conducted in 1999-2000, which also found that 41 percent of principals disagreed that their school had been identified or reported that they did not know (U.S. Department of Education 2002). This discrepancy between principal reports and district and state lists suggests that considerable confusion exists among principals, district Title I directors, and state education agency staff about which schools have been identified for improvement at any one time. This confusion does not appear to have lessened over the last several years.

Principals may confuse program improvement status with adequate yearly progress determinations; confusion may also stem from the complexity of AYP definitions and the measures used to track progress. Identified schools that make AYP for one year remain in program improvement until they make AYP a second time.

But of the 42 percent of schools identified as in need of improvement in 2001-02 that had made AYP the year before, only 36 percent agreed with their states or districts that they continued to be identified for improvement. One explanation for the extent of this disagreement is that principals do not distinguish clearly between making AYP and exiting improvement status. Some principals whose schools have made AYP for just one year appear to believe that their school has exited improvement status. (Principals whose schools had not made AYP the year before were much more likely to agree that their school was identified for improvement.) Even among principals who agreed with their districts or states that they were identified for improvement, almost a third reported some uncertainty about the criteria they would need to meet to exit improvement status.

As noted in Exhibit 3 above, AYP definitions in the case study states were multifaceted and generally could not be reduced to a single number or criterion. As a result, school staff in the TASSIE case study sites generally were unfamiliar with the fine points of the AYP definitions under which they had been identified for improvement or with the particulars of their Title I identification status. Many of the principals interviewed, for example, disagreed with their districts about the length of time their school had been identified for improvement.

Confusion may also stem from the presence of state accountability systems that operate in conjunction with Title I. About a third of the schools that disagreed with their states or districts that they were identified for improvement under Title I reported that they *were* identified for improvement under their state's accountability system. Overall, close to 68 percent of schools reported that they were identified for improvement, either under the state system or under Title I (conversely, 32 percent reported that they were not identified or did not know if they were identified under either system). This finding suggests that most schools that are designated as in need of improvement under Title I by their states and districts recognize that they are in some kind of improvement status; however, they are not always clear about the role that Title I accountability requirements played in their identification.

Despite this confusion about the particulars of Title I identification, school staff in the TASSIE case study sites understood that their schools were low-performing and that student achievement needed to improve. School staff across the TASSIE case study sites—both teachers and principals—had carefully reviewed the achievement data provided by their states and districts and were familiar with the public reporting that had been done on the performance of their schools. As a result, teachers and principals shared the general perception that their schools were low-performing and that they needed to improve their scores, especially on state assessments. In these sites, regular participation in state assessments, public reporting of assessment results and regular review of assessment data had contributed to a general understanding that the school was being held accountable for student results.

As AYP definitions become more standard within and across states under NCLB, state education agencies and districts may find it easier to communicate with schools about specific expectations for performance. However, to the extent that states use additional rating systems for evaluating the performance of schools, confusion may persist.

Communication with Parents

In 2001-02, report cards were prepared and actively disseminated in almost all districts. By spring 2002, some form of public reporting on school performance was nearly ubiquitous: 92 percent of schools identified for improvement under Title I reported that their state or district prepared a school report card or profile of their performance. A large majority of districts (78 percent or more) reported that school report cards were distributed to parents in a newsletter or other publication, reported in local newspapers, or posted on the state or district Web site. Similarly, a 2002 report indicated that all 50 states required dissemination of some sort of report card, and 42 states included data at the school level (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2002).

Public reporting of achievement data for student subgroups was relatively common in 2001-02 with many districts making the data available to the public in

Table 3

Public Reporting of Disaggregated Data, Among Districts with a Subgroup Enrollment of 10 Percent or More, by District Size[9]

Data Disaggregated by:	Percent of All Districts	Percent of Districts by Size			
		Very Large	Large	Medium	Small
LEP Status	61	81	79	80	47
Racial and Ethnic Group	64	82	73	68	59
Gender	54	66	69	54	53
Special Education Status	52	69	63	57	50
Economically Disadvantaged Status	45	65	62	47	43
Migrant Status	27	*	*	*	*

Exhibit reads: Among respondents in very large districts with LEP students accounting for at least 10 percent of total enrollment, 81 percent indicated that data disaggregated by LEP status are publicly reported. Among comparable small districts, 47 percent indicated that data disaggregated by LEP status are publicly reported.

Note: The number of districts included in these analyses varies for each row and cell because only districts reporting each subgroup were included. The weighted sample size for LEP status = 47 to 1,318 (unweighted = 42 to 263) for all districts; for racial and ethnic group = 104 to 3,744 (unweighted = 92 to 624) for all districts; for gender = 121 to 10,273 (unweighted = 106 to 1,061) for all districts; for special education status = 81 to 7,687 (unweighted = 71 to 812) for all districts; for economically disadvantaged status = 111 to 8,857 (unweighted = 98 to 936) for all districts; for migrant status = 1 to 471 (unweighted = 1 to 51) for all districts. * = too few cases to report; data are reported for a subgroup only when that group accounts for at least 10 percent of the district's student population.

Source: TASSIE district survey

some form. In spring 2002, between one-half and two-thirds of districts (see Table 3) that enrolled significant proportions of minority students, LEP students and students with disabilities (i.e., districts where these subgroups accounted for at least 10 percent of total enrollment) reported that data were already being disaggregated for these groups in public reporting on schools. More than half of districts reported that data were disaggregated by gender. Disaggregation by economically disadvantaged status was slightly less common, being reported by 45 percent of districts that enroll significant numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

Among districts with student subgroups of significant size, larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to report that student data were disaggregated by subgroups on school report cards or other public reporting, regardless of the student feature used to define subgroups. These patterns suggest that larger districts have greater capacity to produce disaggregated data for school report cards or to support schools in reporting disaggregated data, a finding confirmed in the TASSIE site visit districts. NCLB requires that this information be included in report cards.

States, districts, and schools did not commonly include information about Title I improvement status in their reporting to the public in 2001-02, as is now required under NCLB. State and district reporting, which can include school report cards as well as press releases and other kinds of reporting to the media, most often included information on state assessment results (in 97 percent of districts), comparisons with other schools and districts in the state (in 81 percent of districts), attendance rates (in 81 percent of districts), and graduation rates or dropout rates (in 79 percent of districts). Public reporting by states, districts and schools was less likely to include information on a school's Title I accountability status. Fewer than half of districts (46 percent) reported that their state indicated whether a school was identified for improvement under Title I in its reporting to parents and the general public. About a third of districts reported that they included Title I improvement status in their reporting to parents, and about a third of districts reported that schools did.

None of the report cards developed for 20 case study schools included specific information about Title I improvement status. Although lists of identified schools were printed in local newspapers and included in other publicly available documents in a number of case study sites, none of the school report cards posted on the Web or distributed to parents contained specific information about Title I improvement status. In several cases, report cards prepared by states included information about the school's performance relative to goals set by the state accountability system, rather than Title I benchmarks.

III Support and Interventions for Low-Performing Schools and Title I Schools Identified for Improvement

Once a Title I school was identified for improvement under IASA, a sequence of increasingly serious interventions was set in motion. Initially, schools were to receive assistance from the district and state. Districts were required to provide technical assistance to identified schools during the process of planning and implementing an improvement strategy. States were required to establish school support teams and a corps of distinguished educators to support districts and schools. If schools continued to not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two years after identification, the district must implement some form of "corrective action," such as withholding funds or decreasing school-site decision-making authority. The parents of students in schools identified as in need of improvement were also to be given the choice to transfer to another school, if feasible.

As with other provisions of Title I, NCLB clarifies and strengthens requirements associated with assistance to and interventions in schools identified as in need of improvement. Where IASA called for technical assistance to identified schools, and some state or locally defined forms of corrective action, NCLB also mandates school choice options for parents, the offering of supplemental educational services to children from low-income families, certain forms of technical assistance, a specific menu of corrective actions, and, eventually, school restructuring. For schools identified for improvement, NCLB calls for districts to provide those schools with at least three certain kinds of technical assistance. Specifically, districts must require the development or revision of school plans designed to address the problems that caused the school to be identified. Districts also must assist in:

- Analyzing data from state assessments to identify problems and solutions.
- Identifying and implementing professional development and instructional strategies that have proven effective in addressing the issues that caused the school to be identified.
- Analyzing and revising the school's budget to allocate resources more effectively.

States continue to have the responsibility for establishing a statewide support system comprised of school support teams and distinguished teachers and principals from successful schools.

Under NCLB, as soon as a school is identified as in need of improvement, districts must provide parents of students enrolled in that school the option to transfer their children to a school that has not been identified for improvement. If the school does not make AYP the following year, low-income parents also must be provided with the option of supplemental educational services (e.g., tutoring) from state-approved providers for their child.

If schools continue to not make AYP for two years after initial identification, NCLB requires districts to take at least one of a series of "corrective actions," including:

- Replacing school staff responsible for the continued inability to make AYP.
- Implementing a new curriculum based on scientifically based research.
- Significantly decreasing management authority at the school level.
- Appointing an outside expert to advise the school.
- Extending the school day or school year.
- Reorganizing the school internally.

Ultimately, if a school does not make AYP after one full school year of corrective action, NCLB calls for major restructuring of school governance through one of the following interventions:

- Reopening the school as a public charter school.
- Replacing the principal and staff.
- Contracting with a private management company with demonstrated effectiveness.
- Having the state take over school operation.
- Undertaking any other major restructuring of school governance.

Findings from the 2001-02 school year suggest that states and districts are well positioned to implement some—but not all—of these NCLB requirements.

In this section, the various forms of district support are discussed, focusing on districts with low-performing schools (defined broadly, see footnote).[10] Next is a discussion of school choice among all Title I districts, as well as the subset of districts that have schools identified for improvement under Title I. Finally, corrective actions implemented by all districts with Title I schools in need of improvement and then by the subset of districts with Title I schools in corrective action, are described.

District Support for School Planning and Data Use

In keeping with IASA requirements—as well as with the new requirements under NCLB—most districts with low-performing schools (estimated to be 4,290 districts nationwide) reported focusing support for low-performing schools on planning, including the use of student achievement data to inform improvement efforts. In 2001-02, 86 percent of districts with low-performing schools identified school planning or the use of student achievement data to plan improvement efforts and monitor progress as among their two most important school improvement strategies (see Table 4). Such efforts are consistent with the NCLB requirement that districts provide technical

[10] For almost all analyses of district support, TASSIE included those districts that reported having at least one school in at least one of five categories of low-performing schools: schools identified for improvement under Title I; schools identified under the state's own accountability system; schools identified under the district's own system; schools about to be identified under Title I, state or district accountability systems; and schools in danger of being identified in future years. The single exception is in the area of curriculum adoption, where we also separately describe the subset of districts that have schools identified for improvement under Title I.

assistance to identified schools as they develop and implement a two-year school improvement plan designed to address the academic achievement problems that caused them to be identified.

Almost all (95 percent) of the identified Title I schools reported that they had school improvement plans. Though the prevalence of school improvement plans is encouraging, it must be considered in light of the Title I requirement that all identified schools have such plans.

To support data analysis and the development of school improvement plans, many districts with low-performing schools were providing the types of technical assistance called for in NCLB: assigning staff to work with schools to analyze student achievement data to identify the specific academic problems that caused the school to be identified (95 percent of districts) and assigning staff to work with schools to identify research-based improvement strategies (84 percent). In addition, 90 percent of districts reported assigning staff to work directly with schools to write or revise a school improvement plan, and 74 percent reported providing feedback on early drafts of the school improvement plan.

Table 4

District Rankings of School Improvement Strategies, Among Districts with Low-Performing Schools

	Percent of Districts Ranking Each Strategy 1 or 2 out of 5, Where 1 Is the "Most Important Strategy"
School planning or the use of student achievement data to plan improvement and monitor progress or both	86
Teacher and principal professional development	51
Adoption of new curricula and instructional programs or curriculum guidance or both	34
Reallocation of resources (i.e., time, money, staff) to support school improvement	20
Adoption of school reform models	10

Exhibit reads: Among respondents from districts with low-performing schools, 86 percent identified "school planning and/or the use of student achievement data to plan improvement and monitor progress" as their district's most important *or* second most important school improvement strategy.

Note: Weighted N = 4,290; unweighted N = 642.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Districts with low-performing schools are also well positioned to comply with the NCLB requirement that student achievement data be disaggregated and reported for key student subgroups. In 2001-02, most districts with low-performing schools reported that data were being disaggregated and provided to schools in line with NCLB's public reporting requirements (see Table 5). (It should be noted that two of the subgroups included in public reporting requirements, migrant and gender, are not included in AYP requirements.)

Table 5

Districts with Low-Performing Schools Reporting That Schools Had Access to Student Achievement Data, Disaggregated for Various Student Subpopulations

Data disaggregated by:	Percent of Districts
Limited-English-proficient (LEP) status	98
Migrant status	96
Racial and ethnic group	95
Special education status	93
Gender	83
Economically disadvantaged status	68

Exhibit reads: Among respondents from districts with low-performing schools, 98 percent reported that schools had access to student achievement data disaggregated by LEP status.

Note: The number of districts included in these analyses varies for each row because only districts serving each subpopulation were included (weighted Ns from 246 districts for migrant to 3,962 districts for gender; unweighted Ns from 30 districts for migrant to 617 for gender). Data are reported for a subpopulation only when that group accounts for at least 10 percent of the district's student population.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

District Support for Professional Development

Half of districts with low-performing schools reported assisting these schools by placing a "major focus" on increasing the quality and quantity of professional development. NCLB requires this type of technical assistance to identified schools, augmenting the emphasis on professional development for school planning under IASA. Site visits in spring 2002 revealed that many districts were focusing their professional development resources on literacy and were beginning to increase the support they provided in mathematics. In many cases, district-supported professional development activities focused on the implementation of new curricula and other efforts to align curricula with standards and assessments (for an example, see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6

Two Maryland Districts Provided Extensive Curricular Guidance

Two large Maryland districts developed tools and provided professional development to support the alignment of curriculum and instruction with standards. Both developed curriculum frameworks that set out learning objectives by grade level. One district also issued detailed curriculum guides for mathematics instruction in grades 1 through 5, and recently unveiled new reading curriculum guides for grades 1 and 2, which were accompanied by extensive summer training for teachers and follow-up during the year. Similar guides were to be issued for additional grade levels in succeeding years. These efforts were designed to create consistent reading and language arts instruction in all schools—"Everyone in first grade should be teaching personal narratives," one district official explained—and to ensure that all instruction reflected the state standards and thus prepared students for the state assessment. Similarly, the other district provided teachers with a thick binder that lays out, by grade level, the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLOs) in mathematics, examples of the kind of learning the MLOs require, directions for pacing and sequencing material and suggestions for resources and instructional materials to be used in teaching each of the objectives. Teachers explained that they used mathematics textbooks sporadically, as a source of supplemental material, rather than as a *de facto* curriculum or set of content standards. In contrast, teachers referred to the county's mathematics framework as "the bible."

Much of this support was targeted toward all schools or all schools serving a particular grade span. Nonetheless, in 89 percent of districts with low-performing schools, respondents reported that low-performing schools were provided with additional professional development or special access to professional development resources. In some cases, identified schools received more intensive professional development or participated in special programs (see Exhibit 7 for an example of states providing identified schools with special access to professional development resources).

Exhibit 7

Washington State Targeted Identified Schools for the Adoption of New Reading Programs

Washington Reads was a state grant program supported with federal funds. Selected Washington schools received up to $200,000 a year for two years to "systematically use practices which increase reading achievement in grades K through three." In accordance with federal requirements, the grant served schools identified for improvement under Title I and schools in districts with the highest or second-highest poverty rates. Washington Reads provided grantees with a full-time reading coach (for the two years of the grant), training for teachers, reading coaches and principals in reading strategies and interventions. Instructional materials were also provided.

District Support for Resource Allocation

Aligning resources—money, staff, instructional materials, equipment, and time—with instructional goals is a key school improvement strategy that should be

an outcome of a careful school planning process. Unlike IASA, NCLB calls specifically for districts to assist schools in their efforts to allocate resources in the service of their instructional goals. In 2001-02, many districts with low-performing schools reported that they were already providing this assistance. As districts worked with schools to develop improvement plans, 70 percent of districts with low-performing schools reported assigning staff to work with schools to analyze and revise the school's budget so that school resources were effectively allocated for the activities that were most likely to increase student performance. Similarly, 69 percent of districts with low-performing schools reported assigning staff to work with schools to review staffing plans.

In addition to providing support through the planning process, more than seven in 10 districts reported providing low-performing schools with technical assistance on ways to focus resources on instruction (74 percent) and allocate resources more effectively to the activities most likely to increase student achievement (72 percent). Although both IASA and NCLB require identified schools to spend a minimum percentage of their Title I funds on professional development, only 52 percent of districts with low-performing schools reported that they require their low-performing schools to do so.

Despite these reports of assistance being provided, most districts were not focusing their improvement efforts on resource reallocation. Only 20 percent of districts with low-performing schools ranked resource reallocation among their two most important school improvement strategies (see Table 4).

District Support for the Implementation of New Curricula

Almost 65 percent of districts with low-performing schools required some or all of their schools to adopt new reading and language arts curricula in the last three years; similarly, more than 50 percent required the adoption of new math curricula.[11] TASSIE also examined the reasons why districts required schools to adopt new curricula, focusing on those districts with Title I schools identified for improvement. Among districts with identified schools that required schools to adopt new curricula, most reported that requiring new curricula was a strategy aimed at improving and aligning instruction (see Table 6). Importantly, the regular textbook adoption cycle appeared to drive these district requirements more often than the fact that a school was identified for improvement under Title I. Of districts with identified schools that required the adoption of new reading and language arts curricula, 56 percent did so as part of their regular textbook adoption cycle, whereas 30 percent did so because schools were identified for improvement. The pattern was similar for mathematics.

[11] Although requiring the implementation of new curricula is listed as a corrective action in NCLB, TASSIE findings suggest that districts and schools generally see it as an assistance strategy. For this reason, it is included in the discussion of technical assistance.

Table 6

Reasons Schools Were Required to Adopt New Curricula, Among Districts with Identified Schools That Reported Requiring Some or All Schools to Adopt New Curricula

	Percent of Districts Reporting Reason for Requiring the Adoption of New Reading and Language Arts Programs	Percent of Districts Reporting Reason for Requiring the Adoption of New Mathematics Programs
To support instruction that is consistent with our state or district standards	92	96
To establish consistency in instruction across schools, classrooms, and grade levels	90	94
To focus teachers on improving instruction	89	87
As part of our regular textbook adoption cycle	56	64
Because schools were identified for improvement under Title I	30	23

Exhibit reads: Among respondents from districts with identified schools that reported requiring some or all schools to adopt new reading and language arts curricula, 56 percent reported that they required adoption as part of their district's regular adoption cycle, and 30 percent reported that they required adoption because schools were identified for improvement under Title I.

Note: Weighted N = 1,382 (unweighted N = 244) for calculating the percent of districts reporting reason for requiring the adoption of new reading and language arts programs. Weighted N = 1,313 (unweighted N = 218) for calculating the percent of districts reporting reason for requiring adoptions of new mathematics programs.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Use of School Support Teams, Site-Based Professional Developers and Special Grants

Both IASA and NCLB call for the use of school support teams and distinguished educators to support schools identified for improvement. Administrators from districts with low-performing schools and principals of identified schools were generally consistent in their responses to questions about the relative use of these strategies for providing assistance to schools. Both reported that school support teams and special grants were more common means of delivering assistance than the use of additional staff to provide professional development or coach the principal (see Table 7). **Principal reports, indicate that resource-intensive improvement strategies, such as school support teams and additional staff assigned to provide professional development or coach the principal, were used with fewer than half of all identified schools.** Case

study data suggest that, because of limited state and district capacity, these strategies were often used with only a subset of identified schools. This finding that many schools are not receiving intensive support for instructional improvement also raises questions about expectations for fundamental improvements in classroom practice and student learning. Such a finding is consistent with previous research that districts and states are not adequately helping low-performing schools build the capacity they need to improve performance because they themselves lack the capacity to assist individual schools (U.S. Department of Education 2001).

Table 7

Strategies for Providing Assistance, as Reported by Administrators of Districts With Low-Performing Schools and Principals of Identified Schools

	Percent of Districts Reporting Assistance Provided	Percent of Principals Reporting Assistance Received
School support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance	74	39
Special grants to support school improvement	66	59
Additional full-time school-level staff to support teacher development	27	16
A mentor or coach for the principal	26	14

Exhibit reads: Among respondents from districts with low-performing schools, 74 percent reported that "school support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance" were provided to low-performing schools. Among principals of schools identified for improvement under Title I, 39 percent reported receiving assistance from "school support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance."

Note: Weighted N = 4,290 (unweighted N = 642) for calculating the percent of districts reporting assistance provided. Weighted N = 8,078 (unweighted N = 578) for calculating the percent of principals reporting assistance received.

Source: TASSIE district and principal surveys.

District policy does not always distinguish between schools identified for improvement under Title I and other low-performing schools—or even all schools. The provision of technical assistance in support of school planning was, in some cases, targeted to schools identified for improvement (for an example, see Exhibit 8). In other cases, as site visits to districts in spring 2002 suggest, districts were engaged in district-wide efforts to support educators as they learned to make better use of data.

Exhibit 8

Louisiana Provided Tools for Identified Schools to Use Data in Their Improvement Plans

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) provided tools for use in the school improvement process. LDE developed the School Assessment Model (SAM), which lays out a needs assessment and planning process for schools identified for improvement. The SAM includes a faculty needs assessment (including observation of instruction), an administrator questionnaire, a faculty questionnaire, interviews with 30 percent of faculty, focus groups with another 30 percent of faculty, a parent questionnaire, and a student questionnaire. LDE had also developed the School Implementation Model (SIM), which provides guidance on how districts and schools should monitor their progress on implementing activities outlined in the school improvement plan. Training on each of these models had been provided to District Assistance Teams, made up of district and school staff, through the state regional assistance centers.

Variation in Capacity to Provide Assistance by District Size

In 2001-02, larger districts with low-performing schools were more likely than smaller districts to report the provision of resource-intensive support, including state or district school support teams, full-time staff developers and mentors for principals, as well as special grants (see Exhibit 9).[12] Similarly, larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to provide more resource-intensive types of support for curriculum alignment (see Exhibit 10). These findings indicate that the question of whether districts have the capacity to support low-performing schools may be especially salient for small districts.

[12] Analyses of principal reports by district size show a similar pattern: principals of schools in larger districts were more likely than principals in smaller districts to report receiving assistance from both school support teams and site-based professional developers.

Exhibit 9

District Reports of Strategies Used to Provide Assistance to Low-Performing Schools

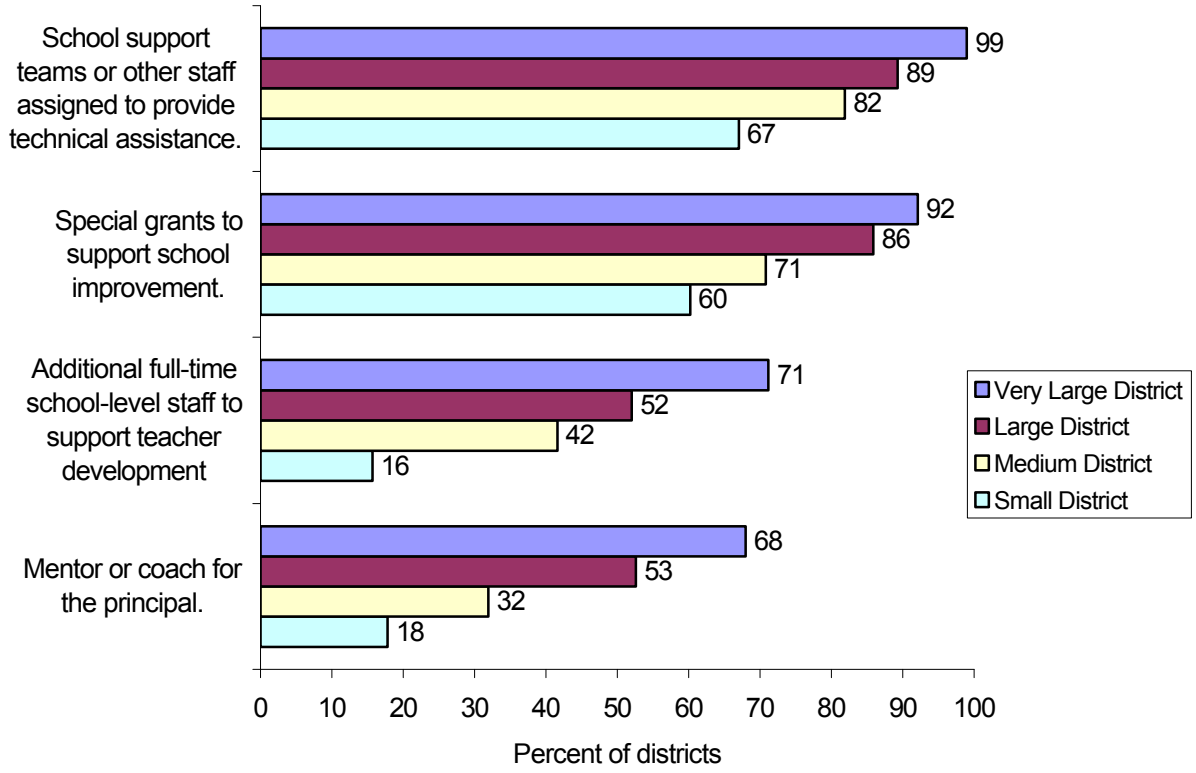

Exhibit reads: Among districts with low-performing schools, 68 percent of the very large districts, 53 percent of the large districts, 32 percent of the medium districts, and 18 percent of the small districts deliver assistance to low-performing schools through mentors or coaches.

Note: Weighted N for very large districts = 107 (unweighted = 94), for large districts = 413 (unweighted = 217), for medium districts = 946 (unweighted = 188), and for small districts = 2,824 (unweighted = 143).

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Exhibit 10

District Reports of Assistance Provided to Low-performing Schools to Ensure Consistency of Curriculum and Instruction with State or District Standards

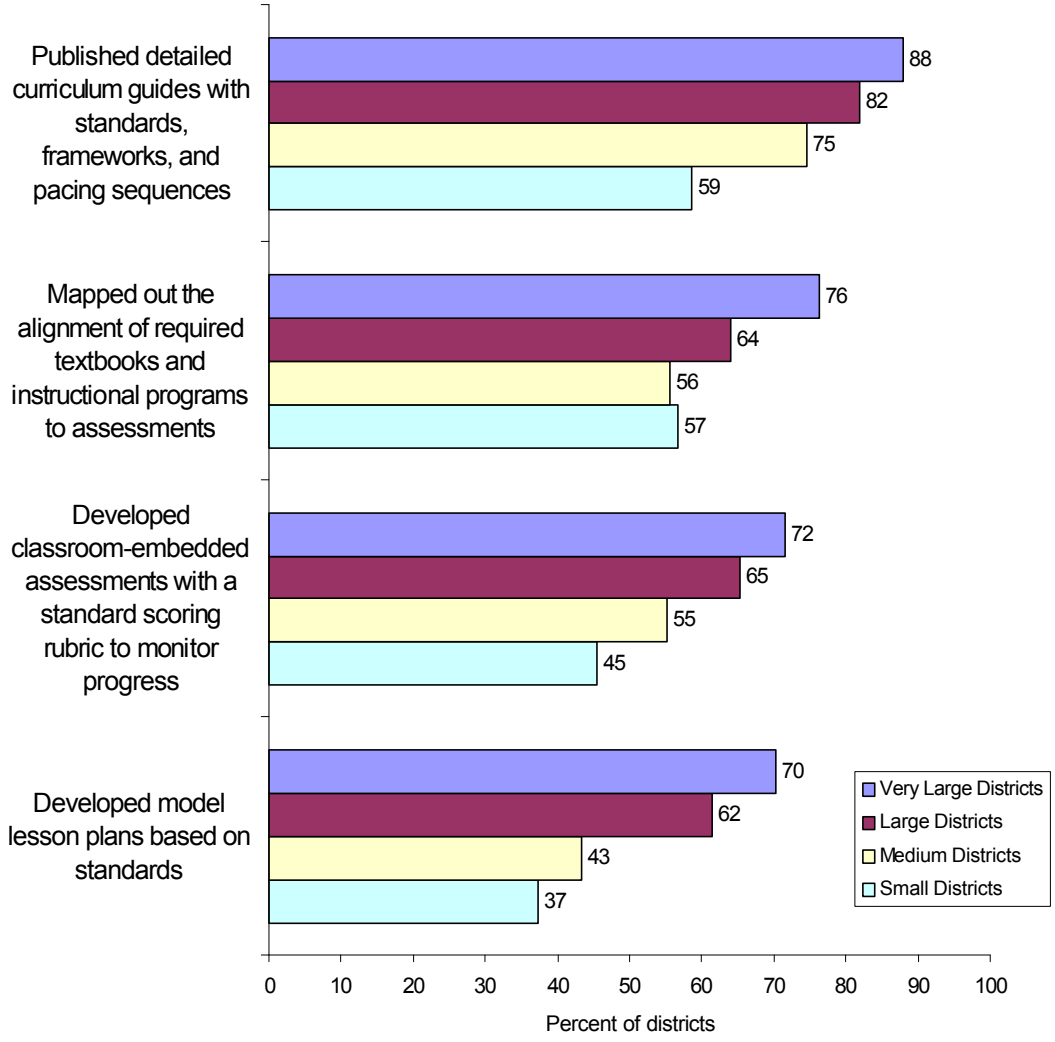

Exhibit reads: Among districts with low-performing schools, 88 percent of the very large districts, 82 percent of the large districts, 75 percent of the medium districts, and 59 percent of the small districts assist schools by publishing detailed curriculum guides with standards, frameworks, and pacing sequences.

Note: Weighted N for very large districts = 107 (unweighted = 94), for large districts = 413 (unweighted = 217), for medium districts = 946 (unweighted = 188), and for small districts = 2,824 (unweighted = 143).

Source: TASSIE district survey.

In contrast, smaller districts with low-performing schools were similar to larger districts in terms of how they set priorities: when asked to rank order school improvement

strategies (see Table 4), the pattern was the same, regardless of district size. Similarly, the technical assistance that districts reported providing to identified schools in the development of their school plans did not show a consistent pattern by district size. Nor were there significant differences in district reports of support for professional development and resource reallocation or in the rate at which districts required schools to adopt new curricula. These findings suggest that most districts, regardless of size, have the capacity to pursue these types of less resource-intensive strategies.

Limited district capacity, especially among smaller districts, is particularly important because districts were the primary providers of assistance to low-performing schools under IASA and may still be under NCLB. More than three-fourths of districts with low-performing schools reported that they, not states, were the source of four types of assistance provided to their low-performing schools: additional professional development, school support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance, additional full-time school-level staff to support teacher development and a coach for the principal (see Table 8). Only in the case of special grants to support school improvement did districts report that states were the primary source of assistance (see Exhibit 11 for a description of the state grant program in Arizona). Although NCLB calls on states to help districts comply with their school improvement responsibilities and, if necessary, provide direct assistance to schools, districts are still expected to be the primary providers of assistance.

Table 8

Source of Assistance Provided to Low-Performing Schools

Type of Assistance	Percent of Districts Reporting Assistance Provided	Source of Assistance	
		District	State
Additional professional development or special access to professional development resources	89	88	35
School support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance	74	79	37
Special grants to support school improvement	66	36	80
Additional full-time school-level staff to support teacher development	27	77	33
Mentor or coach for the principal	26	90	17

Exhibit reads: Among the 74 percent of districts with low-performing schools that reported that low-performing schools in their district had been provided with assistance from "school support teams or other staff assigned to provide technical assistance," 79 percent reported the district provided the assistance, and 37 percent reported that the state provided the assistance.

Note: Weighted N = 4,290; unweighted N = 642.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Exhibit 11

Arizona Department of Education Provided Grants to "Most in Need" Schools

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) administered a grant program, the Title I Accountability Planning Grant, to provide assistance to schools identified by the state as "most in need of improvement;" that is, they have the largest gap between the state goals for student achievement in reading and mathematics and their current status, and they have not made AYP for two consecutive years. To receive these grants ($30,000 per grantee), schools were asked to select, contract and work with an ADE-approved external facilitator; develop a school improvement plan as specified in the Arizona School Improvement Guide; provide in-depth, frequent professional development for instructional staff and administrators based on school needs and focused on instructional strategies and content; implement research-based strategies that show a strong relationship with student achievement; and attend ADE school improvement training. This state-run grant program was funded with federal Title I Accountability Grant funds.

Public School Choice

Nationwide, 41 percent of all Title I districts (an estimated 4,521) reported offering some sort of public school choice option during the 2001-02 school year. For Title I under IASA, Congress added requirements in 1999 and 2000 that school choice be offered to students in certain Title I schools. **A little more than half (54 percent) of districts (approximately 1,217) with identified Title I schools offered public school choice during the 2001-02 school year, but the choice options did not necessarily meet the criteria now specified under NCLB** that parents be notified of choice options before the start of the school year and that transferring students be provided with transportation to nonidentified schools. In many cases, these choice options were in place as a result of broader state policies that were not necessarily connected to Title I or to low-performing schools. As of the 2000-01 school year, 33 states had enacted various open enrollment policies (Education Commission of the States 2002).

Under IASA, few districts provided parents of students in identified schools with the choice to transfer to alternative public schools with transportation provided, as NCLB now requires. Only 7 percent of all Title I districts and 12 percent of districts with schools identified for improvement offered transfers to an alternate public school within the district, with transportation provided (see Exhibit 12).

The most frequently reported option was residential assignment with the option to transfer to schools outside of a student's attendance area (27 percent for all districts; 40 percent for districts with schools identified for improvement). The next most frequent choice option was transfer to an alternative public school outside the district (22 percent of all districts; 26 percent of districts with identified schools).

The likelihood that some choice options were offered during the 2001-02 school year depended on the size of the district (as measured by student enrollment). Smaller districts were more likely than larger districts to offer transfers to schools outside their boundaries. Conversely, larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to

offer open enrollment among magnet schools or public charter schools, transfers to an alternate public school within the district (without transportation) and residential assignment with the option to transfer to schools outside a student's attendance area. This was the case whether or not districts had Title I schools identified for improvement.

Most (68 percent) of the districts with identified Title I schools that offered public school choice reported that they did not give students in identified schools priority over other students in exercising the district choice options available to them under IASA. Policies in these districts typically provided all students opportunities to select alternative public schools, regardless of the status of their own

Exhibit 12

District Reports of Available Public School Choice Options

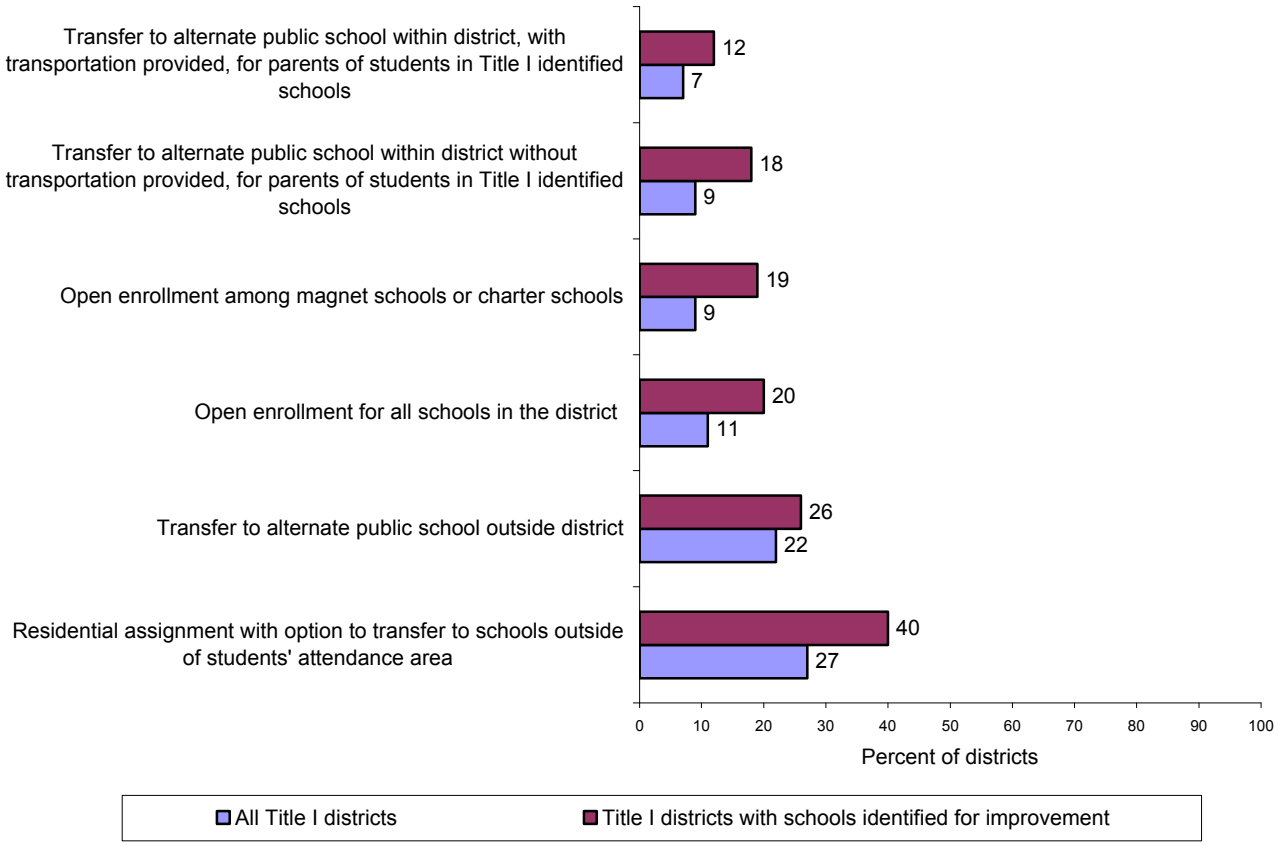

Exhibit reads: Among all Title I districts, 11 percent allowed open enrollment for all schools in the district; among Title I districts with schools identified for improvement, 20 percent allowed open enrollment for all schools in the district.

Note: Weighted N = 11,208 for all Title I districts (unweighted N = 1,019); weighted N = 2,313 for Title I districts with schools identified for improvement (unweighted N = 404).

Source: TASSIE district survey.

school. Under NCLB, such policies will likely change because the new legislation requires choice for parents of students in Title I schools identified as in need of improvement as soon as a school is identified and that such choice be provided regardless of structural constraints (e.g., space).

Partly as a result of the varying policies and practices involving public school choice, many districts were not able to specify the number of students who have exercised the option to transfer from a Title I school identified for improvement. Of the districts that were able to provide information, 76 percent said that no students exercised their choice options, another 22 percent said fewer than 10 students chose to move, and the remaining 2 percent said that 10 or more students had moved.

Even when districts with identified schools made choice options available to parents, they often faced structural challenges: lack of space in alternate schools, lack of transportation to alternate schools, and the lack of alternate schools within the district (e.g., there was only one school per grade level, or all schools were identified for improvement) (see Table 9). Only a small portion of districts was affected by these challenges to a great extent (20 percent to 29 percent). On the other hand, the challenges differed by the size of the district. Only 17 percent of the small districts reported lack of space to be a challenge. This percentage increased to 37 percent in medium districts, 50 percent in large districts, and 62 percent in very large districts. In contrast, 40 percent of small districts reported the lack of alternate schools to present a challenge while less than 7 percent of medium, large, and very large districts reported this challenge. The new federal regulations for Title I choice under NCLB, unlike the earlier IASA policies, do not exempt districts facing these obstacles from the requirement to offer choice.

In 2001-02, 43 percent of districts with schools identified for improvement indicated that they provided some form of supplemental services as a strategy for helping students in identified schools, but districts' definition of what constituted supplemental services would not necessarily meet NCLB requirements. Thus these data can be used only to consider the general use of supplemental services before enactment of NCLB and not for understanding the implementation of NCLB supplemental services provisions.

Table 9

District Reports of Challenges to Successful Implementation of Public School Choice, Among Districts with Schools Identified for Improvement under Title I

	Percent of Districts Reporting Extent of Challenge		
	Not at All or Small Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
No alternate schools within the district (e.g., there is only one school per grade level, or all schools are identified for improvement under Title I)	70	10	20
Lack of space in alternate schools	53	17	29
Lack of transportation to alternate schools	54	21	25
Inadequate information for parents about school choice options	85	12	3
Inadequate information for parents about the status of their child's school as identified for improvement under Title I	80	15	4

Exhibit reads**:** Among districts with identified Title I schools, 70 percent reported that having no alternate schools in the district did not pose a challenge to the successful implementation of public school choice or posed a challenge only to a small extent. Ten percent of respondents reported that a lack of alternate schools posed a challenge to a moderate extent, and 20 percent said it posed a great challenge.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding. Weighted N = 2,313; unweighted N = 404.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Corrective Actions and School Restructuring

Districts, allowed to define corrective actions locally under IASA, were much more likely to take actions with identified schools that might be characterized as assistance rather than as sanctions in 2001-02. Districts were required to take corrective actions with schools during their third year in improvement status. Districts with identified schools most frequently reported four corrective actions: requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum (49 percent), extending the school day or year (39 percent), appointing an outside expert to advise the school (32 percent) and decreasing school-level decision making (14 percent). These and all of the other strategies included in Exhibit 13 are among the corrective actions or restructuring efforts in NCLB that districts must select from for schools that continue to not make AYP. As Exhibit 13 shows, districts rarely reported pursuing those options associated with restructuring.

Exhibit 13
District Reports of Corrective Actions Taken
With Schools Identified for Improvement under Title I

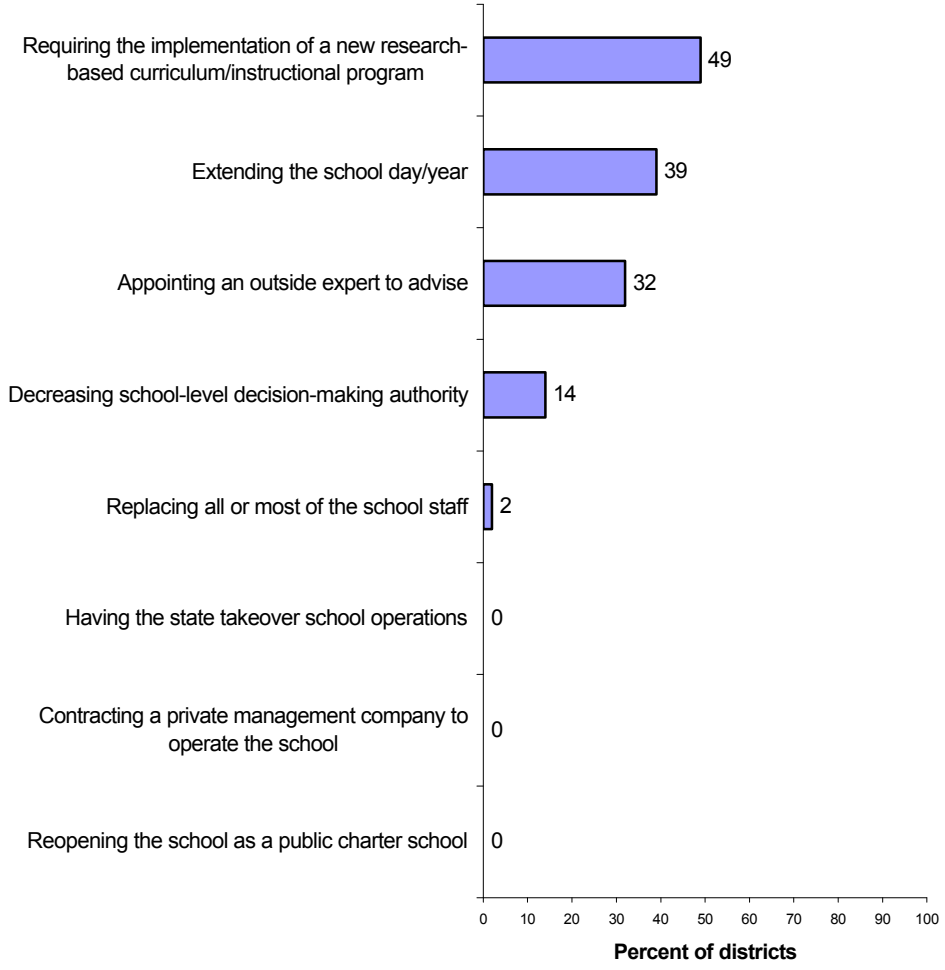

Exhibit reads: Fewer than half (45 percent) of districts with schools identified for improvement under Title I required identified schools to implement a new research-based curriculum or instructional program.

Note: Weighted N = 2,313; unweighted N = 404.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

When comparing improvement efforts taken with schools identified for corrective action to those with schools identified for fewer years, districts with schools in corrective action reported that corrective action schools were more likely to receive assistance (e.g., adoption of a school reform model, more-intensive support from school support teams) than sanctions (e.g., reduced autonomy in selecting school improvement strategies) (see

Table 10). As was true for providing resource-intensive support, these findings varied by district size: larger districts were more likely than smaller districts to report that corrective action schools received greater monitoring and oversight, more intensive support from technical assistance providers and larger school improvement grants than other schools identified for improvement.

Table 10

District Reports of Assistance Provided to Schools in Corrective Action, Among Districts with Schools in Corrective Action

Compared with other schools identified for improvement, schools identified for corrective action under Title I…	Percent Reporting to a Moderate or Great Extent
Are more likely to adopt a new instructional program or school reform model.	71
Receive greater monitoring and oversight from the district or the state or both	61
Receive more intensive support from school support teams or other technical assistance providers	57
Are more likely to receive regular monitoring of classroom instruction by district staff	48
Receive larger school improvement grants	40
Have principals who are more closely supervised	36
Have less autonomy in selecting school improvement strategies	28
Have less discretion over school-level spending	22

Exhibit reads: 71 percent of districts reported that, to a moderate or great extent, Title I schools identified for corrective action are more likely to adopt a new instructional program or school reform model than other schools identified for improvement.

Note: Weighted N = 1,224; unweighted N = 209.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Overall, no more than 2 percent of districts with identified schools imposed any one action associated with restructuring, and fewer than 5 percent of districts that were required to take corrective actions with identified Title I schools did so. (Only districts with identified schools in states with approved assessment systems were required to take corrective action under IASA.) In both cases, these more severe actions were taken only in districts where the accountability system had been in place at least three years. The stability of the accountability system may have influenced which corrective actions were taken—the longer an accountability system was in place, the more likely that sanctions were imposed, because schools could be identified for improvement for a longer period. In addition, under IASA, districts were not required to take corrective actions if their states did not yet have an assessment system approved

under Title I, and only 21 states had these final assessment systems in place as of October 2002.

NCLB requires districts to impose corrective actions no matter what the approval status of their state's assessment and accountability systems. Moreover, it requires that districts begin to plan for "restructuring" actions (e.g., replacing the principal and staff) with schools that do not make AYP for three years *after* being first identified for improvement. As a result, these stronger consequences may occur more commonly under NCLB.

IV Conclusions

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) seeks to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn to high standards. NCLB's requirements for rigorous accountability systems at the state and local levels are meant to further this goal by creating incentives and support for local educators to improve student performance in low-achieving schools. Findings from the first year (2001-02) of the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE) suggest that states, districts, and schools are well positioned to meet many of these challenges, but will need to make substantial changes to meet certain provisions of the law.

In terms of progress in implementing rigorous accountability systems, the evaluation found:

- Nearly all states and districts had standards that applied to all students, had or were developing assessment systems aligned with those standards and had processes in place for identifying low-performing schools.
- Most states and districts had mechanisms—such as school report cards—for informing parents and the public about the achievement of students in individual schools.
- In most places, publicly reported data were already being disaggregated by student subpopulation.
- Most districts were actively seeking to support schools identified for improvement, especially through school planning, the use of assessment data for decision-making and teacher professional development.
- Many states and districts already were providing some school choice options to parents, often through districtwide open enrollment policies.

At the same time, progress in these areas did not always meet the requirements of NCLB; and in other areas, states and districts have a long way to go to meet both the letter and the spirit of NCLB. For instance, in 2001-02:

- Many states continued to operate accountability systems that applied different standards to Title I schools.
- The criteria used to identify schools for improvement under Title I varied widely from state to state, and some states relied heavily on measures of growth in student achievement to assess school performance.
- Few states had fully implemented practices for identifying low-performing *districts* under Title I.
- School staffs in particular were often confused about the specifics of the identification process and of how and whether their school was identified for improvement.
- Few schools were receiving resource-intensive support, such as coaches or distinguished educators.

- Many district efforts to support low-performing schools made little distinction between schools identified under Title I and other low-performing schools.
- Most districts did not have experience implementing the corrective action strategies for schools outlined in NCLB.
- State and district efforts to provide parental choice often would not meet the requirements in NCLB.

The evaluation found that policymakers were aware of these problems and were seeking ways to address them. Of particular concern was the capacity of states and districts—especially small districts—to provide the resource-intensive support thought to be needed to turn around low-performing schools. TASSIE will continue to track changes at the state, district, and school levels in school years 2002-03 and 2003-04 to assess progress in meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind.

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