



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

Prepared by the
Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee
Dr. Antoinette Rath, Chair

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Preface

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

Antoinette Rath, Chair	Mt Laurel Public Schools, NJ
William Adams	Washington School Board, PA
Darlene Allen	DC Parent Teacher Association, DC
Sharon Brittingham	Frankfort Elementary School, DE
Cheryl Krehbiel	Montgomery County Public Schools, MD
Dane Linn	National Governors Association, DC
Bruno Manno	Annie E. Casey Foundation, MD
Patricia Mazzuca	Philadelphia Public Schools, PA
Michael McCarthy	PA Business Roundtable, PA
Albert Monillas	NJ Department of Education, NJ
Jessie Pollack	MD Department of Education, MD
Robert Rice	DC Public Schools, DC
Carl Roberts	Cecil County Public Schools, MD
Wendi Webster O'Dell	Parent & Family Involvement Comm, NJ
Jim Sheffer	PA Department of Education, PA
Nancy Wilson	DE Department of Education, DE

The Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee's (MARAC) Designated Federal Official, Daisy Greenfield of the U.S. Department of Education, helped prepare this report, along with CNAC and its partners the Institute for Educational Leadership, The McKenzie Group, IceWEB, InterCall, and Kidz Online. The facilitation team for this committee included Donald J. Cymrot and Lynda Houck from CNAC. Arthur Sheekey, Corbin Fauntleroy, Laura Wyshynski and Tara Harrision provided additional support and assistance on this contract.

Executive summary

This report gives the findings of the Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee for Technical Needs Assessment in Education. The Secretary of Education appointed this committee to conduct its assessment for education stakeholders in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania between December 2004 and March 2005. This committee of 16 members included state education officials from each of the four states and the District of Columbia, local education officials, practitioners, parents, a researcher, a policy analyst, and a business person.

The purpose of this report is to identify the challenges facing education stakeholders in meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and the types of technical assistance that might address these challenges. The U.S. Department of Education will use this report in establishing 20 Comprehensive Centers starting later this year.

The Mid Atlantic (MA) RAC identified eight key challenges.

- Aligning standards, curriculum, instructional, and assessment goals with proven instructional practices that use developmentally appropriate teaching methodologies that address the needs of all subgroups, especially special education and English language learners
- Recruiting, training, and retaining a high quality workforce
- Building a collaborative environment using research-based standards and support at the school and district levels with other education stakeholders (e.g., family, business, community, and other social service agencies)

- Assisting or enabling practitioners to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environment and to implement programs, policies, practices, and safety measures
- Educational decision-making aligning all governing structure, activities, roles, and responsibilities toward the goal of improving student achievement
- Disseminating clear, concise, culturally responsive language and appropriate information about NCLB and its implementation to all educational stakeholder groups
- Educators are facing new types of sanctions and a total lack of incentives under NCLB, with little guidance on how to deal with this new environment
- Developing the capacity to provide appropriate student interventions and support, including school choice and supplemental education services under NCLB

The MARAC believes that each of these challenges can be addressed with a variety of technical assistance strategies. This report lists a series of suggestions for providing technical assistance to various stakeholders for each challenge. The theme of these technical assistance suggestions is strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to play a constructive role in an education system with high standards and scientifically based curricula and practice and progressively improving student achievement as fostered by the No Child Left Behind Act. The committee also believes that these challenges are all interrelated, making it difficult to establish a priority ordering. Rather the committee believes that the federal government should create a network of comprehensive centers that can address all of its concerns. These centers need to be strategically linked and integrated to ensure a seamless flow of assistance from different providers to those stakeholders in need of assistance.

Introduction

The Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) provides an assessment of the technical assistance needs of educational stakeholders, including educators, parents, and policymakers in our region, in response to a directive from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. This RAC is one of ten such committees appointed by the Secretary to conduct an education needs assessment during the period of December 2004 through March 2005. This committee, which includes members from the states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, first identified the major challenges facing the region in improving student achievement and in implementing the provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It then assessed the types of technical assistance that might enable educators in the region to overcome those challenges.

Legislative background

Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279) directs the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to establish 20 comprehensive centers with the following goals:

- Provide training, professional development and technical assistance in the following areas:
 - Implementation of NCLB
 - Using scientifically valid teaching methods/assessment tools in
 - The core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts
 - English language acquisition

- Education technology
- Facilitate communications among stakeholders, including schools, educators, parents, and policymakers within the region
- Disseminate and provide information and publications to
 - Improve academic achievement
 - Close the achievement gap
 - Encourage sustained school improvement
- Develop teacher and school leader in-service and pre-service training models that illustrate best practices.

In addition, these comprehensive centers are expected to coordinate and collaborate with the regional education laboratories, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, the Office of the Secretary of Education, State service agencies and other technical assistance providers in the region.

The law directs the Secretary to appoint advisory committees for each of the 10 education regions¹ across the country before these comprehensive centers are established. Each advisory committee consists of members from the following stakeholder groups: state and local education agencies, practitioners, both education and non-education researchers, parents, and the business community. MA RAC includes six state agency members, three local agency members, two practitioners, two parents, two researchers/analysts, and one business member.² According to the organizing legislation, individual RAC members were not regarded as spokespersons for a particular stakeholder group, but rather as lead persons in soliciting the views of members of those stakeholder groups.

¹ These regions follow the boundaries of the Regional Education Laboratories.

² See biographic information in the appendix.

Outreach efforts and data collection procedures

The approach to public outreach and data collection included both a national and a regional component. At the national level, the RAC Support team at The CNA Corporation (CNAC) created a variety of media and documents to inform the public about the RAC process. CNAC distributed this information to national organizations with stakeholders or interests.³ These organizations were asked to pass this information onto its constituent members across the country.

At the regional level, MA RAC Chair asked each member of the committee to conduct outreach activities within their stakeholder group or within their state. Thus, the state educational representatives were able to distribute RAC information both to others within their agencies and to local educational agencies within their state. Table 1⁴ provides a brief overview of these efforts. It shows the approximate number of contacts, whether personal or electronic, by stakeholder group and by whether the contact was an individual or a group. These numbers are meant only to be a lower bound of the true information flow because we did not monitor the redistribution of the information.

Table 1: Outreach efforts by stakeholder groups

Group	Organizations	Individuals
State Agencies	41	1,919
Policymakers	4	40
Local Agencies	171	317
Practitioners	47	426
School Board Members	4	4512
Parents	8	15
Research	5	13
Business	3	100
Media	4	0
Others	1	100

³ A list of these organizations is provided in the Summary Report for all RACs

⁴ The numbers in table 1 represent only a partial reporting of outreach activities by RAC members.

The table shows that MA RAC members contacted about 300 organizations and about 5,000 individuals as part of this outreach campaign.

Public interest and input

The goal of the outreach efforts was to generate public interest and input into the RAC's deliberations. The RAC Website (www.rac-ed.org) provided the central focal point for public access to the RAC. The Website served as the information center for the RAC. The public was encouraged to provide comments both of a general nature and on specific RAC ideas. Table 2 provides a summary of these interactions. The first section in the table shows the number of enrollees on the RAC Website from the Mid Atlantic Region, broken down by stakeholder groups. Local and state agencies had the largest number of enrollees. The next section of the table shows the amount of input the Mid Atlantic RAC received through online comments and through the RAC Support Office either through e-mail or regular surface mail. The third section of the table shows public interest in a more indirect way by capturing the number of times the public views comments on the Website. Another indicator of public interest is attendance at RAC meetings. The MA RAC convened four public meetings. For the meetings held in Washington, DC and Houston, Texas, the public was invited to observe the proceedings in person. The other two meetings were online teleconferences. For both the face-to-face meetings and the online teleconferences, the public was invited to observe with a link through the RAC Website. The next section of the table shows the number of public attendees at RAC meetings either in person or through the Website.

Table 2: Public inputs for the Mid Atlantic RAC

Type of Input	Count
Enrollment on RAC Website	460
State Agencies	92
Local Agencies	107
School Board Members	7
Principals	33
Teachers	67
Parent	34
Business	12
Higher Education	13
Researcher	18
Other	77
Comments	119
On Website Forums	101
Through e-mail to the RAC Support Office	16
Through surface mail to the RAC Support Office	2
Views on the RAC Website	2,470
Attendance at RAC Public Meetings	25

*As of February 28, 2005

Regional background

This background information for the Mid Atlantic region helps provide a context for the remainder of the report.

School and student demographics

The demographic characteristics of the states public school systems in the Mid Atlantic region vary greatly. For example, Delaware and DC support relatively few public schools (201 and 203, respectively), while Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania have much larger school systems (with 1359, 2414, and 3186 public schools, respectively). Similarly, the range in terms of student numbers is great. DC has the smallest number of public school students (76,166), followed by Delaware (116,342), Maryland (866,743), New Jersey (1,367,438) and Pennsylvania (1,816,747).

With the exception of Pennsylvania and Delaware, schools in the region are primarily urban/suburban. Delaware, with 19 percent rural districts, and Pennsylvania, with 15 percent

rural districts, have the highest proportion of rural districts. Because Pennsylvania is relatively populous and most states with large concentrations of rural students are small, it actually has the largest total population of rural students in the country. In contrast, New Jersey and the District of Columbia have no rural students.

With respect to the racial distribution of students attending public schools in this region, Maryland, New Jersey and Delaware are the most diverse. For example, students in the District of Columbia public schools are predominantly black (84 percent) and the student population in Pennsylvania is largely white (77 percent). In Maryland and Delaware, almost a third of public school students are black (38 percent and 31 percent, respectively), and in New Jersey the black and Hispanic student populations are almost equal, representing about 18 percent of public school students. All of these figures are above the national average for these groups.

Teacher demographics and qualifications

The number of public school teachers in each Mid Atlantic state roughly matches the numbers of public school students. DC hires the smallest number (5,005), followed by Delaware (7,698), Maryland (55,382), New Jersey (107,004) and Pennsylvania (118,256). Delaware, DC and Pennsylvania have the same basic student to teacher ratio (15:1); New Jersey's is smaller (13:1) and Maryland's is slightly higher (16:1).

NCLB also requires that each classroom in a core academic subject has a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Mid Atlantic states have a mixed record in this area, as shown by the table below. Pennsylvania has the highest percentage of classes taught by high-quality teachers, at 95 percent. Additional indicators of teacher quality are shown, and again, there is wide variation among the states, especially in the percentage of teachers not teaching in their field of study (19 percent to 45 percent).

Table 3: Teacher quality indicators

	State % of classes taught by high quality teachers	Number of NBC teachers (SY2004)	NBC teachers as a percentage of all teachers	% of high school teachers with college major in the relevant core academic subject
Delaware	85	250	3	55
DC	75	12	0	81
Maryland	65	498	1	68
New Jersey	NA ¹	97	0	74
Pennsylvania	95	180	0	72

¹ NA indicates data were not available for this state

Sources: Center on Education Policy Year 2 of NCLB Report (2002-2003), NBPTS (2002-2003), Measuring Up: 2004 (Ed Week 2005 for NBC data)

Alignment with standards

The states have mixed records in terms of developing statewide standards in core subjects.

Establishing state curriculum standards. All of the states have met the law’s requirements for creating standards that are in compliance with the requirements set in the NCLB Act.

Test Alignment with State Standards. *Education Week* analyzed whether state assessments are aligned with state standards and found that among the Mid Atlantic states, all but DC had some state test that was aligned to content standards. Delaware was one of only 12 states that have content standards aligned with its assessments for every grade level in the four core subjects (math, science, English, social studies/history). Maryland’s state exams are aligned with standards in all grades spans for English and math, but the tests for history and science are aligned with standards only at the high school level. New Jersey has standards-based tests in English and math for grades 3, 4, 8 and 11, and standards-based science tests are administered only at the middle school level. Pennsylvania’s state tests are aligned with content standards in English and math at all grade spans, but the tests for science are aligned only at the eighth grade

level. DC does not have any assessments aligned with its standards and is under a compliance agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to develop standards-based tests.

Educational challenges within the region

The Mid Atlantic RAC identified the eight challenges listed below. Although these challenges are listed with numbers, the committee members did not place them in priority order because the challenges are integrally connected.

Challenge #1: Aligning standards, curriculum, instructional, and assessment goals with proven instructional practices that use developmentally appropriate teaching methodologies, which address the needs of all subgroups, especially special education and English language learners

Aligning various components of the educational system is essential for creating an effective system. These components include everything from the conceptual level of curriculum development to the content of assessment instruments and to instructional practices. Furthermore all of these components need to be aligned to the overall goals of the systems as articulated by state and local standards. In practice these components are often not very well coordinated. As a result, different components can be working at crossed-purposes. For example, if the curriculum is not coordinated with the goal of the assessment, the assessment will not accurately reflect the level of student learning, but instead simply the fact that what students are learning is not covered in the assessment and what is covered in the assessment is not covered in the curriculum. Thus, students may have a much greater capacity to learn and may have acquired more knowledge than is reflected by the assessment.

Under this category of alignment, the committee was also concerned that practice cannot be based on one-size fits all. Instructional practice must reflect student development. Schools and even individual classrooms sometimes have a wide range of developmental abilities that

must be accommodated. It may not be appropriate to use the same approach to teaching a concept to a special education student and to an academically gifted student. Instructional practice must also consider both the curriculum and the assessment goals.

Technical assistance needs

By improving the alignment of components of the educational system, the new comprehensive centers can help state and local education agencies improve academic achievement, particularly in the core subjects. Table 4 shows activities that the comprehensive centers might undertake to improve the alignment and the target audience for the assistance.

Table 4: Improving alignment

Target Audience	Activities
State Agencies	Assist in evaluating the alignment between standards and assessments
Local Agencies	Identify and access training modules on curriculum materials that are aligned with state standards
Local Agencies	Convene statewide meetings to discuss strategies for aligning curriculum choices to standards/assessments
Practitioners	Develop materials to help identify validated practices aligned with curriculum and standards

MA RAC Members feel that all the stakeholders also need assistance in better understanding what is going on in other jurisdictions (states, districts, or schools) so they could share and learn from the successes and mistakes of others. One member said that her state already has a training module to align curriculum materials to state standards in one subject, but this information may not be widely known elsewhere. Members also feel that educators need help in making data more useful to stakeholders. Although this discussion might have been more appropriate in the context of Challenge No. 4 (see below), it has some relevance for all of the challenges. The two main concerns about the data are their lack of availability and their incomprehensibility to most stakeholders. Both of these problems might be overcome by a concerted information campaign through a variety of forums such as newspapers, Web sites, and

face-to-face meetings with community groups. To leverage its limited resources, a technical assistance center could take a “train the trainer” approach focused on building the capacity of state education agencies to help local agencies and community groups make better use of data. Technical assistance could be provided to help districts coordinate the mandates of the Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA) to NCLB. In addition, technical assistance could be provided to help make state and local education leaders better consumers in selecting and designing data warehouses.

Challenge #2: Recruiting, training, and retaining a high quality workforce

No factor is more important in determining the effectiveness of a system than the quality of workforce, and the educational system is no exception. The importance of the workforce is further reflected by the inclusion of Title II of NCLB that requires a high-quality teacher in every class and sets quality standards for paraprofessionals as well as teachers. States in the Mid Atlantic region reported the following percentages of high-quality teachers in their 2003 reports⁵ to the U.S. Department of Education: Delaware – 85 percent, the District of Columbia – 75 percent, Maryland – 65 percent, and Pennsylvania – 95 percent. (New Jersey did not report.) Since each state sets its own standards for determining the definition of teacher quality, cross state comparisons are not necessarily valid. Nonetheless, these numbers suggest that the states in the region have a ways to go in meeting the NCLB criterion for teacher quality.

Of particular interest to the committee were the critical needs for teaching talent in certain categories. It identified several categories where the needs seem particularly critical, including mathematics and science, low performing and often-dangerous urban neighborhoods, and isolated rural communities. Several recent reports find a gap between the percentage of

⁵ As reported in *Telling the Whole Truth (or Not) About Highly Qualified Teachers*, *The Education Trust*, 1993

high-quality teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools. In New Jersey,⁶ low-poverty schools have 95 percent high-quality teachers and high-poverty schools have 81 percent high-quality teachers. Maryland, which has 65 percent in low-poverty schools and 47 percent in high-poverty schools⁷, has the largest reported differential of any state.

The committee also mentioned the need for greater diversity in the workforce to better reflect the changing student population. During the 2003-2004 school year, about 85 percent of the New Jersey teacher workforce was white, but only about 58 percent of the student population was white. In contrast, about 1 percent of the teachers but 7 percent of the students were Asian American.⁸

One difficulty facing policymakers and administrators is the perceived lack of tools available to ameliorate such shortages. The compensation system in most states and districts has insufficient flexibility to deal with both the temporal and persistent shortages in various categories of employees. In many locations teachers' base salaries are determined entirely by years of service and education level. Such a salary structure prevents districts from offering teachers (either existing staff or new recruits) with specialized skills or willing to take difficult or unattractive assignments (e.g., in dangerous urban or isolated rural schools) more pay. Skill-based and location-based pays are a common phenomena in many occupations and industries but rare within education. But pay is not the only tool to deal with shortages. More flexibility in teacher assignment policy, improvements in working conditions and finding ways to increase the status of the teaching profession and paraprofessionals might all contribute to better alignment of educational needs to the teacher workforce.

⁶ High Quality Teacher Survey Results, The New Jersey Department of Education website: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/data/hqt/summary.htm>

⁷ Education Trust, op.cit.

⁸ These data are also from the New Jersey State Department of Education website: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/index.html>.

Technical assistance needs

Providing a high-quality teacher in every classroom is one of the key provisions of NCLB Act. As such, improving management of the teacher and paraprofessional workforce becomes an important part of the mission of the new comprehensive centers. Table 5 provides some specific ideas for the types of activities that could help in this task.

Table 5: Managing the teacher workforce

Target Audience	Activities
State & Local Agencies and Practitioners	Identify approaches for assessing teacher quality such as National Board Certification and support the assessment and implementation of policies/programs to encourage improvement in teacher quality
State Agencies	Assist in developing policies/programs that are effective in helping local districts eliminate shortages
State Agencies	Support the adoption of compatible standards for teacher preparation programs and then license portability across states
Local Agencies	Identify what tools/programs/practices can increase teacher and paraprofessional retention by improving working conditions/induction programs, etc.
Local Agencies	Help districts expand the number/quality of new teacher and paraprofessional candidates by identifying quality pre-service programs and best recruiting practices

The MA RAC feels that states and districts in general lack a strategic approach to managing their workforces, and that technical assistance could help improve the ability of these agencies to face this challenge. Among the approaches that the federal government might consider is the creation of a program of best practices to improve the recruitment of teachers in specialized areas such as math or special education and in hard to fill locations. A member of the public suggested a loan forgiveness program for teachers willing to locate in hard-to-staff rural districts. While the MA RAC does not necessarily endorse this particular program because it may not be effective, it does support exploring innovative approaches to increase management flexibility in the teacher and paraprofessional workforce.

Challenge #3: Building a collaborative environment using research-based standards and support at the school and district levels with other education stakeholders (e.g., family, business, community, other social service agencies)

Schooling is only one component of a child's education. In a typical week during the academic year, a typical student spends only about one third of waking hours in school. During holidays and vacations, students are not in school at all. And yet, to be successful education must continue during the periods that students are not in school. In order to ensure that activities outside of school support the education students are receiving in school, schools need to develop better relationships and communications with the family and other institutions in the community.

Furthermore, problems in the family or the community can sometimes undermine educational success. A student with inadequate healthcare or in need of social services may be unable to attend school regularly or be unable to concentrate while in school. If the teachers and administrators have a better understanding of these problems, they may be able to develop a coordinated strategy with community organizations to help improve the quality of time that such distressed students spend on their education. Conversely teachers may be able to see behaviors or problems that others might miss. If the lines of communication to outside groups are strong, these problems may be addressed before they become too serious.

The enabling legislation for the Regional Advisory Committees sites the dissemination of information across all stakeholder groups as one of the prime focuses of the new legislation. The MA RAC felt strongly that education cannot stop at the classroom door but must extend to all corners of a student's life.

Technical assistance

One of the functions of the new comprehensive centers is to facilitate communications particularly among stakeholder groups. Table 6 shows activities that a comprehensive center might undertake to improve the quality of communications among stakeholders.

Table 6: Improving communication among stakeholders

Target Audience	Activities
State & Local Agencies	Create a model outreach campaign improving engagement between educators and other stakeholders
State & Local Agencies	Identify publications that are effective in translating the challenges and requirements of NCLB into laymen's language
Local Agencies	Assist in creating and collecting standard metrics on the extent and effectiveness of community engagement
Pre-service Programs	Develop curricula materials for pre-service teacher programs to improve their understanding of the information needs of parents and other stakeholders

MA RAC members believe that there is actually a lot of information already available about what works to improve community engagement, but stakeholders need technical assistance in identifying what works under different circumstances. Because of the extent of the problem, members thought that state agencies might be the most effective leverage point for this type of assistance. Better-trained and informed state officials could then use their newly developed knowledge to help improve the capacity of local agencies in dealing with the engagement challenge. In developing programs on improving communications, the group expressed caution about finding a single program or set of programs that might be applied to all situations. There are significant differences, both across states within the region and within states, in the demographic and economic composition of the population. Solutions that might work in engaging the relatively homogeneous rural stakeholders in Pennsylvania will necessarily be different from what might work with the diverse urban population in the District of Columbia.

Challenge #4: Assisting/enabling practitioners to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environment and to implement programs, policies, practices, and safety measures

The NCLB legislation cites well over 100 times the need to base education decisions on data. And yet, many practitioners have little or no training or experience in evaluating the effectiveness of programs, policies and practices using scientifically based data. Practitioners do not necessarily have to conduct full-scale scientific evaluations themselves, but they do need to understand what constitutes a valid evaluation well enough to become knowledgeable consumers of the work of others.

The U.S. Department of Education is developing the mechanisms to improve the access of educators to valid evaluations through the What Works Clearinghouse, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, and other agencies. Although these mechanisms could be valuable assets in helping educators, the level of support needed in many situations may exceed the level of support that these agencies could reasonably supply. For example, members of the MA RAC have noted that the What Works Clearinghouse has yet to include any content on a whole range of issues necessary to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Even as the Clearinghouse is populated with more content, many educators will still need support in translating its listings into practical decision-making advice.

The need to evaluate programs and policies goes beyond those directed at the education content but stretches to include the broader education environment in a school. The committee believes that the need to address the issues of school safety is critical. Students deserve to learn in an environment that is safe and orderly. Stakeholders, that is, parents, business community, etc. must be informed of the criteria or rubric used in determining status for persistently dangerous schools. Technical assistance centers need to provide support to ensure that schools

promote a positive school environment to ensure academic success. The committee felt it important that scientifically based approaches be used in identifying criteria/principles and intervention strategies to improve school safety and for identifying persistently dangerous schools.

Technical assistance needs

Improving the ability of education practitioners both to conduct and to assess the quality of scientifically based research and evaluations is clearly a key goal of new comprehensive technical assistance centers under the provisions of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. Table 7 lists the ideas of the MA RAC with respect to particular types of technical assistance activities.

Table 7: Evaluation of effectiveness

Target Audience	Activities
State Agencies	Build capacity of staff by providing access to experts in the use of scientific methods in a program/policy environment
Local Agencies	Conduct workshops/in-service training programs on designing & implementing evaluations of programs/policies
Practitioners	Provide tools and trainings in the use of assessment instruments to guide classroom instruction
Pre-service Programs	Develop curricula and standards to ensure that teachers will have some understanding of scientifically based research methods

The real issue here is building capacity within the system. NCLB and allied legislation is calling for a major change in the standards of evidence within education. Among stakeholders, there is only limited capacity for understanding and conducting scientifically based research. A key question in the environment of limited resources is where might the investment in technical assistance in this area have the greatest payoff.

Challenge #5: Educational decision-making aligning all governing structure, activities, roles, and responsibilities toward the goal of improving student achievement

In contrast to Challenge #1, this challenge deals with alignment of the governance structure. The educational hierarchy starting in the classroom and stretching up through the school, district, region, state, and perhaps even the federal education agencies must have its primary focus on the improvement of student achievement. The governance structure determines how each participant will interact on both formal and informal bases. But, each level of the existing hierarchy has its own set of goals and incentives, and these goals and incentives may not enable different components of the educational system to interact effectively. In some locations governance structures are changing because the top executive in a jurisdiction are taking more interest and responsibility for the successful operations of the school. At the state level, governors are an increasing force in shaping education policy and accountability, and at the local level, mayors are also playing an increasingly important role. The governance structure in Philadelphia, for example, includes a School Reform Committee with members appointed by the governor and the mayor and a chief executive officer to oversee the operations of the school.

Furthermore, in districts that have retained a more traditional governance structure, school boards often struggle to be a true check and balance in the system. The quality and opportunity for professional development is scattered in its availability for policymakers.

New Jersey has a requirement of training for its school boards. School boards make decisions affecting the lives of thousands of children and budgets of millions of dollars every year, but the training that school board members receive is limited. New Jersey, however, is one of the few states that have such a requirement. Compounding the conditions described above, few board members know how to make inquiries so that they can truly evaluate whether the

administration's recommendations are sound. There is a clear distinction between requiring adequate information to evaluate recommendations and micromanaging.

The challenge described above is not limited to policymakers. Parent-teacher organizations have attempted to expand stakeholder participation in the decision-making process. The District of Columbia, Philadelphia, and some districts in New Jersey have used site-based councils at the school level to provide advice and support for school operations in an effort to expand stakeholder participation.

Technical assistance needs

Overcoming this challenge could help stakeholders and policymakers ensure more extensive use of scientifically based research in education decision-making and encourage sustained school improvements. Table 8 suggests some activities for a comprehensive technical assistance center that could address this challenge.

Table 8: Alignment of governance

Target Audience	Activities
State Agencies	Identify governance models to determine promising practices
Local Agencies	Develop and assess professional development curricula directed at school policymakers to help them improve their understanding of issues related to their responsibilities
All Stakeholders	Disseminate information on evaluation of governance models

Governance refers to the responsibilities of individuals and groups within the governance structure to make sound education decisions. Not all models work equally well under all circumstances. The adoption of the exact governance model used by states and local education agencies is beyond the scope of the technical assistance provided by the comprehensive centers.

Challenge #6: Disseminating clear, concise, culturally responsive language, and appropriate information about NCLB and its implementation to all educational stakeholder groups

NCLB introduces some new concepts and policies into the education lexicon. Many education stakeholders who do not deal regularly with the NCLB requirements have not heard of or do not understand these concepts. As a result, there is confusion and, at times, distress caused by some apparent contradictions between NCLB categories and policies and generally held perceptions within a community. For example, stakeholders might ask why some good districts “need improvement” or why highly regarded teachers are not “highly qualified”?

The dissemination of information to all stakeholders must take into account that the level of knowledge and understanding of education issues will vary significantly by individuals and groups. State officials who deal with education rules and regulations on a daily basis need different types of information from a parent or another member of the broader community. Detailed information about federal regulations and resources may be of value to the state officials, but of little interest to others. On the other hand, parents need information about their rights to choice under NCLB and perhaps how to understand assessment data to help guide their choices.

Even within stakeholder groups, college-educated, middle-class parents with e-mail and ready Internet access may need information communicated in a different way from poorly educated or low-income parents or those without English language skills. Some districts or regions have many different languages spoken at home. If all communications come in English, it will deny information access to some segment of the population.

Technical assistance needs

Dissemination of information about scientifically based research, school improvement, academic achievement and the achievement gap, and other NCLB related concepts and policies is one of the many purposes of the new comprehensive centers, according to the enabling legislation. Table -9 provides some specific activities that these centers could undertake to ensure the effective dissemination of useful information to all stakeholders.

Table 9: Dissemination of appropriate information

Target Audience	Activities
All Stakeholders	Create and implement a public education campaign aimed at informing all stakeholders including different sub-groups of stakeholders (e.g., non-English speaking parents) about key NCLB concepts and policies
State Agencies	Develop workshops and other professional development activities to help agency staffs build capacity to improve dissemination
Local Agencies	Provide training to personnel on developing community-wide forums about the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder under NCLB

Because of the economic and demographic diversity among the stakeholders within the education system, it is important not to place too much emphasis on the use of the Internet as the main instrument for dissemination. The information must be presented in clear language that minimizes the use of the educational jargon so often found in the educational materials. Great care must be taken to ensure that the cultures and associated languages found in the regions are considered when preparing materials for distribution and use. Given the limited resources likely available for dissemination activities, technical assistance providers might take advantage of existing networks such as state and local professional associations, PTA groups, and business and service organizations in spreading information about NCLB policies, concepts, and related topics.

Challenge #7: Educators are facing new types of sanctions and a total lack of incentives under NCLB, with little guidance on how to deal with this new environment

NCLB imposes a series of sanctions on schools and districts that fail to make their adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals. NCLB also requires education leaders to use research-based data in guiding their intervention decisions. Currently, there are no readily available studies (perhaps because they don't exist) on the effectiveness of sanctions or on effective ways of dealing with sanctions. Also, NCLB includes sanctions but no incentives to motivate change. A system with all sticks and no carrots is difficult to manage. State and local education agencies need help both in understanding the consequences of sanctions and in designing effective incentives to ensure that stakeholders face a more balanced array of factors in implementing NCLB.

Technical assistance needs

The issue of sanctions is an appropriate one for the comprehensive centers because they are supposed to assist with the implementation of NCLB, including the sanctions. Table 10 provides some specific tasks that these centers might undertake relative to the issues of sanctions and incentives.

Table 10: Effectiveness of sanctions and incentives

Target Audience	Activities
State Agencies	Identify evidence on the effective implementation of sanctions in non-NCLB contexts and analyze how this information might be relevant for the implementation of NCLB
Local Agencies	Identify best practices about creating incentives to help improve the implementation of NCLB and improve student outcomes
Practitioners	Provide information on the nature of the sanctions and incentives and their implications for different types of educational strategies

The imposition of NCLB sanctions is a new phenomenon within education, so there is not likely to be experimental data on the effects of such sanctions on the behavior of stakeholders. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of sanctions has been studied in other contexts. Educators may not have extensive knowledge on strategies for dealing with sanctions in other contexts. A technical assistance provider could sort through the literature and find appropriate analogies that could help provide guidance regarding sanctions. Members of the MA RAC also noted the asymmetry in NCLB between sanctions and incentives—that is, the law includes sanctions but no explicit incentives. State and local agencies need not restrict themselves to existing NCLB sanctions. If creating state or local incentive plans can improve student outcomes, then these agencies might want to consider this option. But, these agencies may not know the characteristics of an effective incentive program or how to ensure its effective implementation. A technical assistance provider could give guidance in this area.

Challenge # 8: Developing the capacity to provide appropriate student interventions and support, including school choice and supplemental education services under NCLB

Among the sanctions in NCLB are requirements to provide parents of students in schools under improvement with an educational choice. This choice could take the form of transfer to another school or supplemental education services (SES). In some districts and in some locations, the capacity to provide a meaningful choice to all students who qualify for such choice under NCLB is inadequate or non-existent. State and local agencies need to consider policies and programs to create or encourage the creation of this capacity.

States and districts need technical assistance that provides effective options to address NCLB choice capacity. For example, the technical assistance could develop a model of a school within a school or a sample inter-district choice agreement.

Another element of choice is SES capacity. State agencies certify that SES providers offer adequate quality of instruction to operate in the state. This certification process, however, may not always require research-based evidence of effectiveness or ensure that the services are well aligned with local curriculum and instructional practice. (See challenge #1.) In areas with inadequate SES capacity, such as rural communities where the scale of services required may be insufficient to induce private SES suppliers, the states may need to help local districts develop such capacity.

Another issue with regard to supplemental services is timing. Schools need the ability to provide early intervention and ongoing individual student support based on timely feedback from formative and summative assessments. SES needs to be part of a comprehensive plan to address student needs throughout the year. .

Technical assistance needs

The mission of the comprehensive centers includes helping stakeholders conform to the requirements of NCLB. Since school and districts failing to meet average yearly progress (AYP) goals are required to offer parents choices, finding ways to improve the capacity for choice may be viewed as within the scope of the comprehensive centers. Table 11 lists some types of technical assistance that could help generate such choices.

Table 11: Creating school choices

Target Audience	Activities
State Agencies	Identify research-based models for successful SES services and help in the evaluation of criteria used to certify a provider within a state
Local Agencies	Identify policies/programs that would encourage the development of alternative sources of schooling, including virtual courses and schools
Local Agencies	Develop materials to help potential organizers of charter schools get started and to help existing providers run their programs more effectively
Practitioners	Help local stakeholders use existing school choice and SES resources by providing information on availability and options

Under NCLB states have the responsibility to certify SES providers. As with other challenges, building the capacity of key state agencies to evaluate the quality of the evidence supporting a particular approach to supplementary services seems to be an effective approach to providing technical assistance within the fiscal limits of the comprehensive centers. This support might include developing protocols for evaluating SES providers. Comprehensive centers might also develop some expertise on charter schools to support providers in managing their enterprises more effectively.

Conclusions and recommendations

The MA RAC has identified eight key challenges for the successful implementation of NCLB. The committee's collective experience has shown that these challenges are interrelated and should be dealt with simultaneously. Therefore the MA RAC determined that a priority ordering could not be set.

To address these challenges, the MA RAC recommends that the Federal Government establish a network of technical assistance centers that are strategically linked to help stakeholders meet all of these key challenges. This network should be linked with other technical assistance providers as well as federal, state, and local agencies, and other stakeholder groups. These new comprehensive technical assistance centers should provide services of varying intensity and duration to respond to stakeholder needs. Technology should be an important leveraging tool for facilitating service delivery.

Technical assistance centers are an important resource to states and districts in their mission to increase student achievement. As part of their proposals, those who offer these centers should be required to demonstrate how they will ensure high quality services and have a plan for their continuous improvement. The overall goal of all of these federal investments should be the improvement of student learning.

Appendix: Biographic information about members of the Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee

Antoinette Rath, Chair is an educator with 22 years of experience who is currently serving as Superintendent of Schools for the Mount Laurel (NJ) Township Public Schools. Dr. Rath has served on various state and regional level committees and is a noted presenter among numerous educational and business groups.

William R. Adams, Jr., P.G., P.E. is a geologist and engineer who has worked for the Pennsylvania Dept. of Transportation for the last 17 years. Over the past 12 years his involvement with education has included helping to write the first draft of Pennsylvania's academic science standards, as well as membership on the Washington School Board, Intermediate Unit 1 Board, Executive Board of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, and the LeMoyne Multicultural Community Center.

Darlene Allen is the President of the Parent Teachers Association in the District of Columbia and has held a number of local positions in the PTA over much of the past 15 years. She is a member of the National Council of States, which is an advisory group to the National PTA. She is a founding member of the DC Education Compact, the city-wide effort to improve the public schools.

Sharon Brittingham has been an educator for 34 years, serving as a teacher, assistant principal of a middle school, and principal of an elementary school. She has served on the board of the Delaware Principal Academy and currently serves on the Delaware Professional Standards Board, appointed by the governor. She was recognized in 2003 as a National Distinguished Principal. Both

her middle and elementary schools were recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools. Her school recently was recognized as a National Distinguished Title 1 School.

Cheryl Krehbiel is a literacy teacher at the Broad Acres Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland. Ms. Krehbiel is a National Board Certified Teacher who has also been a Standards and Instruction Specialist at the Council for Basic Education.

Dane Linn is the Director, Education Division, Center for Best Practices at the National Governors Association. He is a member of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, American Association of School Administration, Council for Exceptional Children, and Phi Delta Kappa. His previous experience includes working as an administrator and teacher in an elementary school.

Bruno Manno is the Senior Program Associate of the Annie E. Casey foundation, and an author of many books and articles including *Charter Schools in Action*, *Outcome Based Education*, and *Goals 2000*.

Patricia Mazzuca is the principal of the Roberto Clemente Middle School in Philadelphia. She has been an educator for 25 years and has lectured extensively on bi-lingual education and reducing the high school dropout rate of Hispanic Americans. She most recently served as co-chair of the Presidential Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. She has been an award-winning leader in urban education and selected as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics in America.

Michael McCarthy is the President of the Pennsylvania Business Roundtable, which is an association of CEOs of large Pennsylvania companies that represent significant employment and

economic activity in the state. Mr. McCarthy also serves as a member of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board.

Albert Monillas has been an educator for 30 years with service at the elementary, secondary, and college levels. Dr. Monillas was superintendent of schools for 13 years and presently serves as New Jersey State Assistant Commissioner. The New Jersey Senate and Assembly has honored him on a number of occasions for his leadership.

Jessie Pollack is the Educational Coordinator in Measurement and Statistics for the Division for Leadership Development at the Maryland State Department of Education. Dr. Pollack has served as a Peer Consultant To USDE on Standards and Assessments; Peer Reviewer of State Assessment Systems Under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; Consultant to the Ministry of Education in Baden Wurthenburg, Germany and The Ministry of Education and the National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei, Taiwan, ROC; USDE evaluator of Regional Educational Laboratory programs; and USDE proposal reviewer.

Robert Rice is a special assistant to the Superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools. For two decades Dr. Rice has worked as a local superintendent, in state research and development and as an executive in the private sector.

Carl Roberts has been the Superintendent of Schools in Cecil County Public Schools, Maryland, for the past nine years. Dr. Roberts was named Maryland Superintendent of the Year for 2004-2005.

Wendi Webster-O'Dell is the co-chair of the Committee for New Jersey Parent and Family Involvement. Dr. Webster-O'Dell is also a member of the New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board.

Jim Sheffer is the Division Chief for Federal Programs in the Pennsylvania State Department of Education.

Nancy Wilson currently serves as Deputy Secretary for Delaware's Department of Education. She has had a leading role in the state's implementation of *No Child Left Behind*. Key areas of her expertise include district and school improvement, early childhood intervention, interagency collaboration and education policy.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ELL—English language Learners

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

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS—States must define a “highly qualified” teacher. The requirement that teachers be highly qualified applies to all public elementary or secondary school teachers employed by a local educational agency and teach a core academic subject. “Highly qualified” means that the teacher: has obtained full state certification as a teacher or passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the State, and does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; holds a minimum of a bachelor’s degree; and has demonstrated subject matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, in a manner determined by the state and in compliance with Section 9101(23) of ESEA.

IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP—Individualized educational plan required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (NOT used in the text)

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

LEA— Local Education Agency

National Board Certification—A program run by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to enable teachers to affirm their knowledge of content and pedagogy, use of high-quality instructional practices, and involvement in professional activities.

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

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

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

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

SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH—Section 9101(37) of ESEA, as amended by *NCLB*, defines scientifically based research as “research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.” (P.L. 107-279)

SEA—State Education Agency

STATE—references to “States” include the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the freely associated states, and the outlying areas.

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

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

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE (WWC)—established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences to provide educators, policymakers,

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

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