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State and Local Implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act*

Volume III—Accountability Under *NCLB*: Interim Report

A report from the National Longitudinal Study of *No Child Left Behind* (NLS-*NCLB*) and the Study of State Implementation of Accountability and Teacher Quality Under *No Child Left Behind* (SSI-*NCLB*)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* is designed to achieve an ambitious goal: *All children will be proficient in reading and mathematics by the 2013–14 school year.* A key strategy for achieving this goal is accountability. *NCLB* holds schools and districts accountable for their students’ mastery of state content standards, as measured by state tests. *NCLB* accountability rests on several key premises: that clear definitions and targets for desired academic outcomes will provide both incentives for and indicators of improvement; that identification of districts and schools not meeting their improvement targets will help focus assistance and interventions in places where they are most needed; that widely available information about student performance will enable parents, educators and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about how best to serve their students or children; and that targeted assistance will stimulate school and district improvement.

Based on findings from two federally funded studies—the Study of State Implementation of Accountability and Teacher Quality Under *NCLB* (SSI-*NCLB*) and the National Longitudinal Study of *NCLB* (NLS-*NCLB*)—this report describes the progress that states, districts and schools have made in implementing the accountability provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* through 2004–05.

KEY FINDINGS

- States, districts and schools had mostly met the relevant *NCLB* accountability requirements through 2004–05.
- All states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had enacted the accountability provisions required by *NCLB*, including academic achievement standards in reading and mathematics and other required performance indicators.
- More than half of states were testing students in all required grades in reading and mathematics in advance of the 2005–06 *NCLB* deadline. However, 20 states were behind schedule in implementing assessments that measure English language proficiency. A similar number of states were not able to notify schools of their performance on the statewide assessments before the start of the 2004–05 school year.
- Seventy-five percent of the nation’s schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2003–04; of the 25 percent that did not make AYP, half (51 percent) did not succeed because the school as a whole (i.e., the “all students” group) or multiple student subgroups did not meet achievement standards. When schools did not make AYP for a single subgroup, it was usually for students with disabilities.
- About one-third of schools that did not make AYP did not do so for students with disabilities or LEP student groups. About two-thirds of those schools reported needing technical assistance to improve instruction for these subgroups.
- Thirteen percent of the nation’s schools were identified for improvement in 2004–05. Those schools were most likely to be high-poverty, high-minority, large, urban schools to which Title I has historically directed substantial resources.

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- Nearly all schools reported making multiple improvement efforts. Schools identified for improvement focused on more areas of improvement than non-identified schools. Schools also reported receiving technical assistance that met their needs, with exceptions in two areas. About one-half of schools needing assistance to improve services to students with disabilities and to improve services to limited English proficient students, did not have these needs met. States and districts were implementing the required interventions in schools identified for improvement and corrective action, but they were not implementing the required actions in most of the 1,199 schools in restructuring.

Overall, states took advantage of the flexibility provided by *NCLB* to establish accountability systems that vary significantly in a number of areas, including the level of student academic achievement required to be proficient, the type of assessments, and the pace of improvement required to reach 100 percent student proficiency by 2013–14. The result was a large variation across states in the percentage of schools missing AYP and being identified for improvement.

This report presents findings from the SSI-*NCLB* and NLS-*NCLB* and summarizes major issues in state-, district-, and school-level implementation of the accountability provisions of *NCLB*. It addresses questions in four areas:

- How have states implemented the standards, assessments, and accountability provisions of Titles I and III of *NCLB*?
- How are districts and schools performing with respect to making adequate yearly progress (AYP)? What are the reasons why schools do not make AYP? Are there common characteristics among districts and schools identified for improvement?
- How is information about *NCLB*, AYP, and identification for improvement communicated to stakeholders, and how well do district and school staff understand the status of their districts and schools' performance?
- What efforts are being made to improve district and school performance, including state support systems, technical assistance, mandated interventions, and local initiatives?

***NCLB* REQUIREMENTS**

NCLB is the 2001 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. *NCLB* is stricter and more specific than the *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)*, the 1994 reauthorization of the same law. Key *NCLB* accountability provisions include the following:

- Every state must have in place content standards for what students should know and be able to do in reading and mathematics, and must implement content standards in science by 2005–06.
- Every state must administer annual tests in reading and mathematics for all students—including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency (LEP)—in grades 3–8 and at least once in grades 10–12 by 2005–06. By 2007–08, all states also must assess students in science at least once each in grades 3–5, 6–9 and 10–12.
- Every state must also develop annual AYP targets for schools and districts for all students and for key subgroups of students based on state test results, student test participation rates, and one other academic indicator (such as graduation rate). Increasing AYP targets require that all students demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2013–14.

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- States must implement English proficiency standards and assessments for LEP students by 2002–03, and must administer these tests annually. By 2005–06, states must have set annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) specifying expected progress in LEP students’ learning English proficiency and in meeting AYP targets.
 - Information on school and district performance must be communicated to parents, teachers, and other stakeholders.
 - Specific assistance and consequences must be implemented for schools and districts that repeatedly do not make AYP.

NCLB sets up a series of progressively more serious interventions for schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years (see Exhibit S.1). First, such schools become “identified for improvement”; the interventions include developing or revising a school plan to address the areas that caused the school to miss AYP, offering parents the choice to transfer to another public school, and in the second year of improvement, providing supplemental educational services (e.g., free tutoring). Following identification for improvement, schools are also to receive technical assistance from their respective districts and states, and they must set aside 10 percent of their Title I allocations for professional development. After a school in improvement misses AYP for two years, its district must take one of a number of specified corrective actions, followed by restructuring the school if it misses AYP yet again. *NCLB* also defines consequences for districts identified for improvement and corrective actions for districts. A school or district exits from improvement, corrective action or restructuring status when it makes AYP for two consecutive years. *NCLB* requires these interventions only for schools and districts receiving Title I funding, although states have the option of applying some or all of the interventions to non–Title I schools and districts using the state’s own resources.

STATE STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS, AND TARGETS

Setting Standards and Aligned Assessments

In 2004–05, all states had met *NCLB* requirements for content standards and were making progress toward meeting *NCLB* requirements for assessments of all students in all required grades.

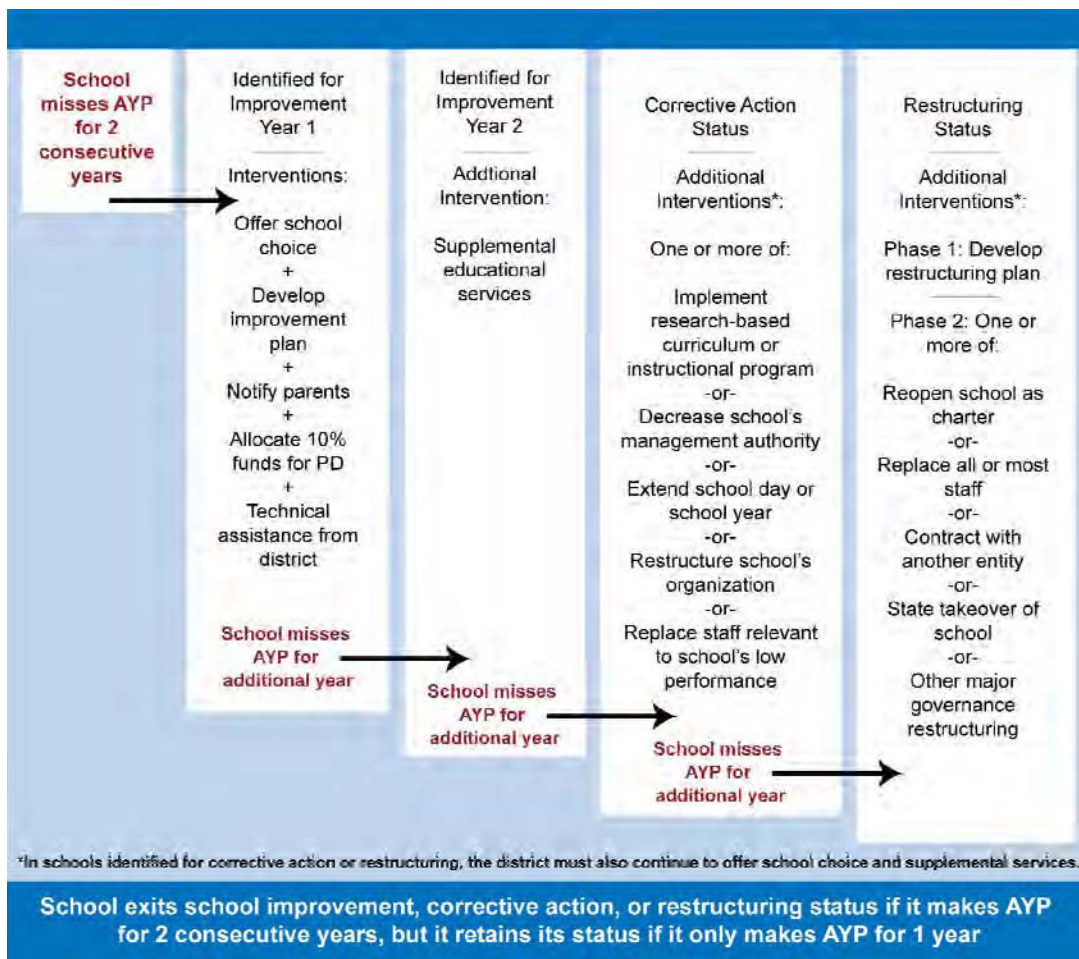
All states have content standards in reading, mathematics and science, but most continue to revise their standards or adopt new standards.

By 2003, all states had received federal approval for the processes used to develop reading and mathematics standards. Nonetheless, many states adopted new standards or revised existing standards for reading (32 states and the District of Columbia), mathematics (33 states and the District of Columbia), and science (37 states and the District of Columbia) between 2001–02 when *NCLB* was passed and 2004–05, the year of data collection for this report.

As of 2004–05, 27 states and the District of Columbia had instituted yearly testing in grades 3–8. Twenty-three states and Puerto Rico were still working to implement testing in all required grades for 2005–06, as required by *NCLB*.

By 2004–05, 28 states had instituted yearly testing in grades 3–8 as required by *NCLB* for the 2005–06 school year, an increase from 12 states with such tests in place in 1999–2000. Nearly all states also administered high school assessments intended to meet *NCLB* requirements for 2005–06. States reported that implementing the annual testing requirements was one of the most substantive challenges they faced in the first three years of *NCLB*.

Exhibit S.1 Stages of Identification for School Improvement



Student “proficiency” has little common meaning across states.

NCLB sets the goal of all students reaching proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 but allows each state to determine what it means to be “proficient.” States varied widely in the levels at which they set their performance standards for proficiency in reading and mathematics. Using the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a common external metric, state standards for NCLB proficiency ranged from a NAEP equivalent score of approximately 247 to a NAEP equivalent score of approximately 314, a range of 67 points. Thus, a student deemed to be proficient for NCLB purposes in one state might not be considered proficient in another state.

In 2004–05, all states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico either administered or were planning some form of alternate assessments for students with disabilities. All states also allowed testing accommodations to enable students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency to take the regular statewide tests.

Alternate assessments are relatively new in most states, but in 2004–05, nearly all states administer some form of alternative assessment for students with disabilities. In addition, all states offered

accommodations for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency, including 16 states with native-language assessments. States varied considerably in the proportions of students taking tests with accommodations.

Measuring Progress Towards Proficiency

States used their allowed flexibility to define (and amend) their AYP indicators, adding to the complexity of AYP calculations and their variability across states.

NCLB requires states to use five indicators to determine AYP: (1) the percent of students who are proficient in reading; (2) the percent of students who are proficient in mathematics; (3) the percent of students who participate in reading assessments; (4) the percent of students who participate in mathematics assessments; and (5) at least one other academic indicator at each school level (elementary, middle, and high school). Even small differences in the rules for calculating each AYP indicator will affect whether schools or districts make AYP. In addition, as most states have taken advantage of federal flexibility in developing and refining their definitions of AYP, these definitions have changed over time and vary across states.

The variation in states' AYP starting points—and thus in how much progress a state must demonstrate by 2014—is strongly related to how high the states set their academic achievement standards for proficiency.

In order to develop AYP targets, each state established starting points (baselines) for their *NCLB* accountability systems. With these starting points in place, each state then charted a trajectory of expected progress toward the goal of 100 percent proficiency. States that set higher performance standards tended to have a lower percentage of students scoring at the proficient level and must therefore make greater progress in student achievement by 2013–14. Put simply, states with higher standards are likely to face more challenges in reaching 100 percent proficiency.

MEETING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS TARGETS

Three-quarters of the nation's schools and 71 percent of districts made AYP in 2003–04.

In 2003–04, 75 percent of the nation's schools made AYP as defined by their states, a 2 percentage point increase from 2002–03. However, if many non-identified schools that did not make AYP in 2003–04 did not make AYP again in 2004–05, the number of schools identified for improvement would rise substantially for 2005–06.

States varied greatly in the proportions of schools and districts that made AYP.

The percentage of schools that made AYP in 2003–04 ranged from 95 percent of schools in Wisconsin to 23 percent of schools in Alabama and Florida. Similarly, the percentage of districts that made AYP ranged from 100 percent of districts in Arkansas and Delaware to less than 10 percent of districts in Alabama, West Virginia, and Florida.

AYP results reflect state accountability policy decisions.

In 2003–04, schools in states that used the scores of students in all of grades 3–8 and one high school grade to determine AYP were less likely to make AYP than schools in states that used scores from fewer

grades. In addition, schools in states that set their AYP proficiency levels higher (relative to NAEP) were less likely to make AYP than schools in states with lower proficiency standards.

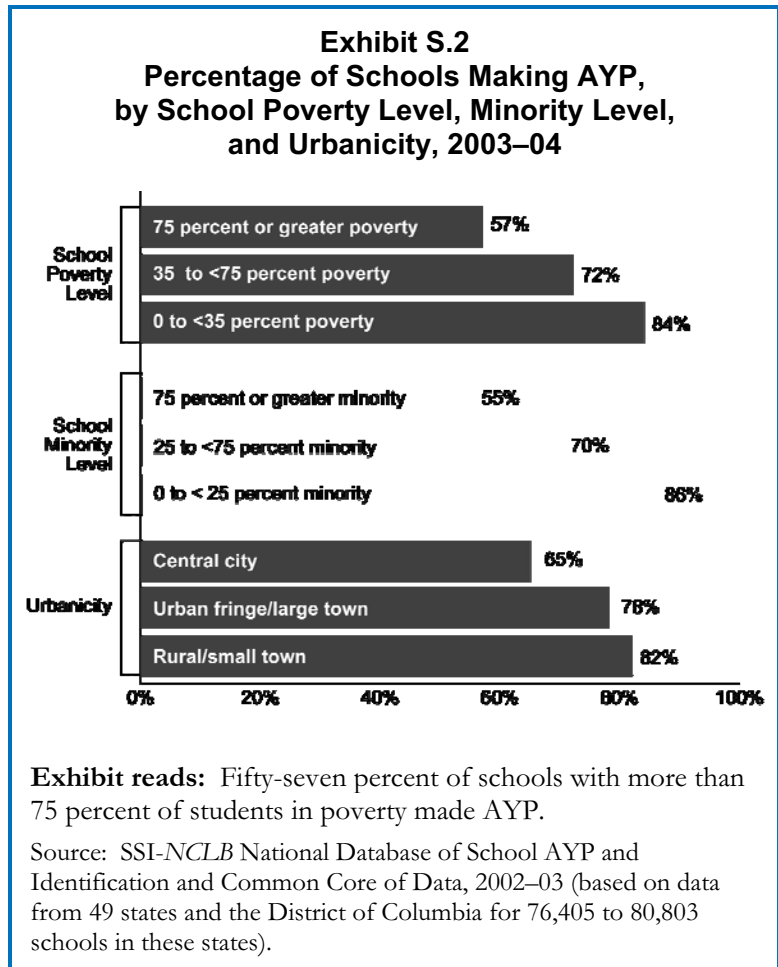
High-poverty, high-minority and urban schools were less likely to make AYP.

Whether or not a school made AYP was strongly related to the percentage of low-income and minority students in the school (see Exhibit S.2). Schools with higher proportions of low-income and minority students were less likely to make AYP than schools with lower proportions of such students. Urbanicity was also related to AYP; rural schools made AYP at higher rates than schools in urban fringe areas or central city schools.

Schools that were held accountable for greater numbers of subgroups were less likely to make AYP.

Sixty-one percent of schools that had six or more subgroups made AYP, compared with 90 percent of schools for which AYP was calculated for only one subgroup. Even after controlling for the level of poverty, schools with more subgroups were less likely to make AYP.

After controlling for other school and district characteristics, secondary schools were less likely to make AYP than were elementary schools. Larger school enrollments, higher proportions of low-income and minority students, and greater district concentrations of students with disabilities also were associated with lower likelihood of making AYP.

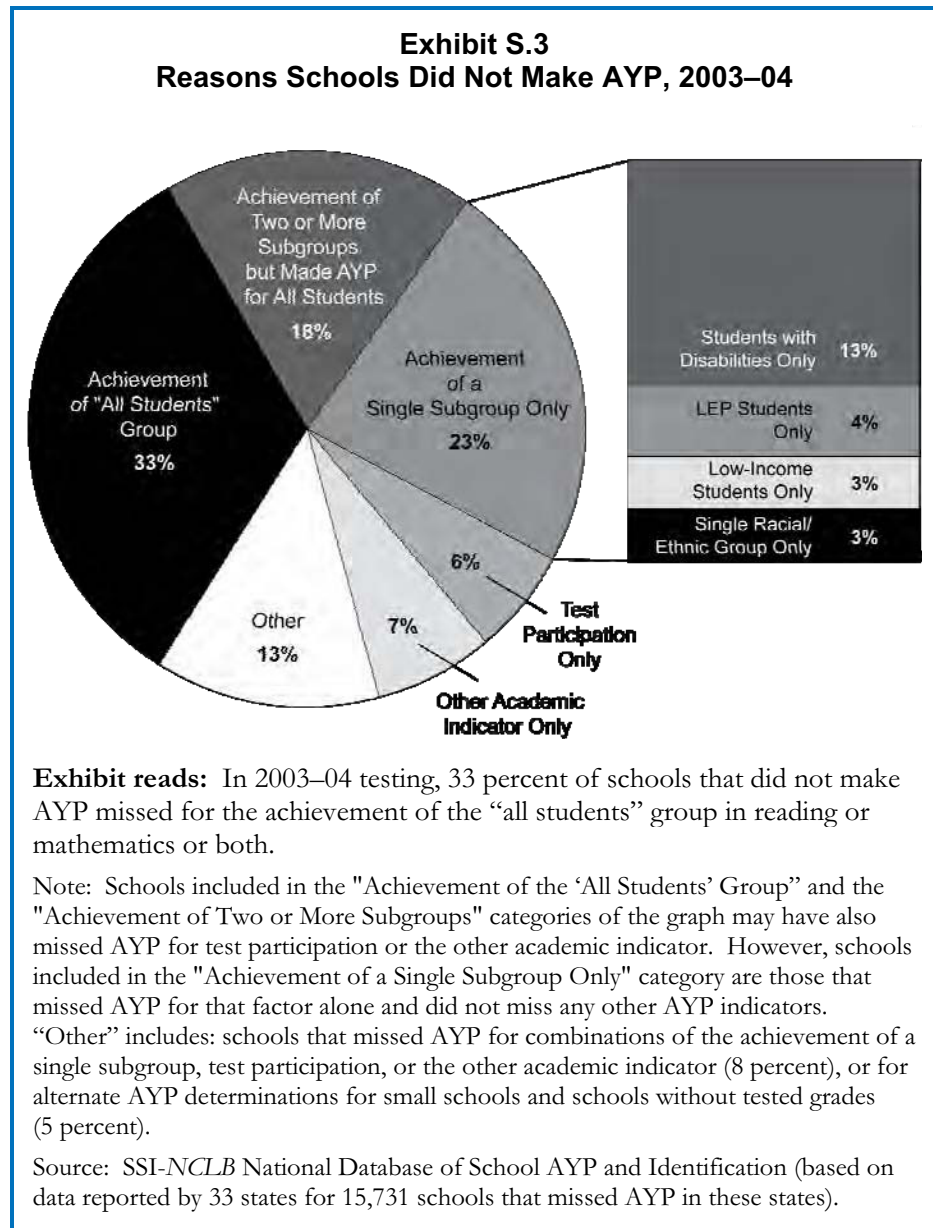


Half of the schools that did not make AYP in 2003–04 did not do so because the “all students” group or multiple subgroups did not meet achievement targets.

Fifty-one percent of schools did not make AYP for the achievement of the “all students” group and two or more student subgroups in 2003–04 (see Exhibit S.3). Missing AYP due to the achievement of the “all students” group or of two or more student subgroups suggests that schools are being held accountable for widespread low performance. Twenty-three percent of schools that did not make AYP missed due to the achievement of any single subgroup, most frequently students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and African-American students were the subgroups most likely not to make AYP.

The rates at which specific subgroups did not make AYP varied dramatically. Of those schools in which AYP was calculated for the subgroup of students with disabilities, 37 percent did not make AYP because that group did not meet achievement targets. Similarly, 26 percent and 22 percent of schools held accountable for the LEP and African-American subgroups, respectively, did not make AYP because those subgroups did not meet achievement targets. In contrast, less than 5 percent of the schools held accountable for white and Asian subgroups did not make AYP because those subgroups, respectively, did not meet achievement targets.



Most African-American, Hispanic, and white students, and most students from low-income families, attended schools with sufficient numbers of similar students to require the school to compute AYP for their respective subgroup.

Seventy-nine percent or more of African-American, Hispanic and white students, as well as students from low-income families, attended schools in which 2003–04 AYP was calculated for their subgroup.¹ However, only 25 percent of Native American students and 45 percent of Asian students attended schools in which AYP was calculated for their subgroups. In schools in which subgroups were too small

¹ Available data did not permit making similar estimates for the students with disabilities subgroup or the LEP students subgroup.

to warrant separate subgroup AYP calculations, the students' scores were included in the school's "all students" AYP calculation.

IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Thirteen percent of the nation's schools were identified for improvement for 2004–05 (including both Title I and non–Title I).

The percentage of Title I schools identified for improvement increased from 12 percent for 2003–04 to 18 percent for 2004–05.

The number of Title I schools identified for improvement increased from 6,212 for 2003–04 to 9,333 for 2004–05 (18 percent of the nation's 52,220 Title I schools). The number had remained stable for the previous three years at about 6,000–6,500 out of 50,000 schools. In 2004–05, 977 Title I schools were in corrective action and 1,199 were in restructuring status.

States varied greatly in the percentage of Title I schools and districts identified for improvement for 2004–05.

Rates of school identification of Title I schools ranged from 2 percent in Iowa and Nebraska to 68 percent in Florida. Rates of district identification ranged even more widely—from none in several states to 100 percent in Florida. Schools in states with high AYP proficiency standards, as referenced to NAEP, were more likely to be identified for improvement than schools in states with lower standards.

High-poverty, high-minority and middle schools, and large urban schools were most likely to have been identified for improvement in 2004–05.

The same types of schools that were most likely to not make AYP were also most likely to be identified for improvement. Over one-third (36 percent) of high-poverty schools were identified for improvement, compared with 4 percent of low-poverty schools (and 13 percent of all schools). Thirty-six percent of high-poverty schools were identified for improvement compared with 4 percent of low-poverty schools. Similarly, 34 percent of schools with a high concentration of minority students were identified, as were 22 percent of urban schools. Eighteen percent of middle schools were identified for improvement compared with 11 percent of elementary schools and high schools.

Nearly one in four identified Title I schools exited improvement status in 2004–05.

Twenty-three percent of the Title I schools identified for improvement for 2003–04 were no longer identified for 2004–05.

Ten percent of districts were identified for improvement for 2004–05.

Ten percent of all districts were identified for improvement for 2004–05, a lower rate than that of schools. Further, 49 districts in 11 states were identified for corrective action for 2004–05. About one-third of the identified districts contained no identified schools. This situation occurred when subgroups were large enough to be included in AYP calculations aggregated at the district level but were too small to be used in calculations at the school level.

PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

States reported performance results for 2003–04 more quickly than the previous year, but nearly one-half of principals did not receive notification of their school’s status before the start of the 2004–05 school year.

States are responsible for notifying schools and parents about performance. To be most useful, such information should be reported before the school year begins so that both schools and parents have adequate time to take appropriate actions. For 2003–04 testing, 31 states provided preliminary notification to schools identified for improvement before September 2004—typically the beginning of the school year. The timing of reporting based on 2003–04 testing was an improvement over the previous year, when only 28 states delivered AYP and school-improvement determinations prior to October. Overall, 56 percent of principals indicated they were notified of their school’s improvement status before September 2004.

Most state report cards included the required accountability data, but many did not include graduation rates and teacher quality data.

A review of state agency Web sites in September 2005 found 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico reported on the percentage of all students achieving at the proficient level and also reported on the performance of white, African American, Asian and Hispanic students achievement data disaggregated by subgroup for 2003–04 testing. However, most states did not yet include many of the newer reporting requirements in their state report cards. For example, *NCLB* requires states to provide disaggregated data on graduation rates, an element that was absent from the majority of state reports. Forty-two states and the District of Columbia reported the names of schools identified for improvement, but far fewer included the required data on the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly-qualified teachers. In addition, many state and district reports (available via the Internet) were difficult to find and student reports sent to parents were often difficult to understand. States have steadily increased the sophistication of their data systems. In 2004–05, 30 states were using data systems with unique student identifiers up from 23 states in 2003–04 and 11 states in 1999–2000.

Principals, generally, knew whether their schools made AYP or were identified for improvement; however, about one-third of teachers were not aware of the status of their schools.

A large majority of principals knew whether their schools had made AYP in 2003–04 (88 percent) or whether they were identified for improvement for 2004–05 (92 percent). Among identified Title I schools, 78 percent of principals correctly knew their school’s status in 2004–05, compared with 59 percent in 2001–02, the year before *NCLB* went into effect. Teachers were less likely than principals to know whether their schools had made AYP in 2003–04 or were identified for improvement for 2004–05. For example, 72 percent of elementary teachers and 58 percent of secondary teachers correctly reported whether their school made or did not make AYP. In general, elementary teachers were more knowledgeable than secondary and special education teachers about their schools’ AYP and improvement status. In a sample of eight urban districts, parents were much less likely than either principals or teachers to know if their child’s school had been identified as low-performing.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE IMPROVEMENT

Creating state systems of support for school improvement

Nearly all states established systems of support for school improvement; more than half reported providing some level of support to all identified schools. Others targeted support to a subset of identified schools.

NCLB requires states to establish support systems to help schools and districts that are identified for improvement. Nearly all states provided some type of support for at least some identified schools. Thirty states reported providing some level of support to all schools identified for improvement during the 2004–05 school year. Other states provided support to a subset of identified schools.

The most common mechanisms for supporting identified schools were those mandated by *NCLB*: school support teams and individual school improvement specialists. Thirty-seven states employed support teams, and, in 14 states, these structures predated *NCLB*. Twenty-nine states also used individual school improvement specialists—experienced teachers or administrators external to the district—to provide support to schools identified for improvement.

Providing technical assistance for school improvement

Both identified and non-identified schools reported needing technical assistance in many areas in 2003–04 or 2004–05; but the need was greater among identified schools.

Principals in three-quarters of all schools reported needing technical assistance for some aspect of *NCLB* implementation. Schools identified for improvement were more likely than non-identified schools to report needing assistance in most areas, including improving the quality of professional development, getting parents more engaged in their child’s education, addressing the instructional needs of students with disabilities, or identifying effective curriculum.

In most areas, schools reported receiving the technical assistance they needed and found it sufficient to meet their needs.

A majority of principals who indicated their schools needed technical assistance reported receiving it and reported that it was sufficient to meet their needs. This was true for both identified and non-identified schools. However, identified schools reported receiving more days of assistance, on average, from their districts (15 days) than did non-identified schools (10 days). Identified schools in states with comprehensive systems of support reported receiving technical assistance in many areas at higher rates than those in states with limited or moderately comprehensive support systems.

Of the schools that needed technical assistance to improve services to students with disabilities or students with limited English proficiency, half reported that they did not have their needs met.

About half of the schools that needed assistance with respect to students with disabilities or limited English proficient students did not have their needs met. For example, about 30 percent of schools that reported needing assistance to address the needs of students with disabilities did not receive it. Moreover, about one-quarter of the schools that did receive technical assistance related to these students

reported that the assistance was not sufficient to meet their needs. Thus, about one-half of the schools that needed assistance to improve services for students with disabilities indicated that their needs were not met.

Improvement initiatives by schools

Nearly all schools were making improvement efforts. Identified schools emphasized more areas of improvement than did non-identified schools.

Almost all schools reported engaging in their own voluntary improvement initiatives; 90 percent of schools reported a major focus on at least one kind of improvement effort, and most principals reported placing a major focus on multiple school improvement strategies during 2004–05. Almost all schools were involved in joint school improvement planning with their district or state, and were using assessment results for planning instruction and professional development. Two-thirds of schools implemented periodic “progress” tests to monitor student performance during the school year. Schools identified for improvement reported engaging in more types of improvement efforts than non-identified schools.

Curriculum enhancement was a major focus of school improvement in identified and non-identified schools, but about one-third of teachers in identified schools reported having an inadequate number of textbooks and instructional materials.

Most schools, regardless of improvement status, were involved in efforts to improve curriculum and instruction, placing particular emphasis on aligning curriculum and instruction with standards. Most teachers reported having access to necessary resources to align curriculum with standards; however, about one-third of teachers in elementary and secondary schools identified for improvement reported that they lacked sufficient numbers of textbooks and instructional materials. Increasing reading and mathematics instructional time for some or all students was another improvement strategy in many identified elementary and secondary schools. In addition, about half of identified schools reported a major focus on other extended-time instructional programs (such as after-school programs).

Teachers found annual state tests and local progress tests useful for improving student learning in one or more ways.

Nearly 90 percent of teachers made moderate or extensive use of state test results for one or more instructional purposes. For example, 80 percent of elementary teachers and secondary English teachers in identified schools reported using the results to identify areas in which they needed to strengthen their content knowledge or teaching skills.

Progress tests are periodic standardized assessments that are administered and scored locally so results can be made rapidly available to teachers. The use of progress tests was widespread in 2004–05: More than two-thirds of the schools supplemented annual state assessments with additional periodic assessments. Most teachers who administered progress tests reported using the results to identify students in need of remedial assistance or to tailor instruction to individual students.

Interventions for identified schools

Required interventions occurred in most, but not all, Title I schools in Year 1 or Year 2 of identification for improvement or in corrective action.

More than 80 percent of Title I schools in Year 1 of improvement reported that parents had been notified of the status of the school and offered the option of transferring their child to a non-identified school. Similarly, almost all Title I schools in Year 2 of improvement offered students supplemental educational services.

Ninety-six percent of Title I schools in corrective action status experienced at least one of the *NCLB*-defined interventions. The most common interventions involved changes in curriculum (89 percent) or the appointment of outside advisors (59 percent). In contrast, only 27 percent of schools in corrective action status reported a reduction in management authority in the school, and only 7 percent reported that staff members were replaced.

Few Title I schools in restructuring status reported experiencing any of the specific interventions listed in the law.

Restructuring is the most serious form of *NCLB* intervention, reserved for those schools that did not make AYP for five or more years. However, according to principal reports, few schools in the first or second year of restructuring status reported state take-over of the school (9 percent), reopening of the school as a public charter school (2 percent), contracting with a private entity to manage the school (2 percent), or replacement of all of the school staff (2 percent).² In addition to these specific interventions, the law also permits districts to make “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms.” Schools in restructuring status frequently reported interventions associated with the “corrective action” stage of school improvement, and 20 percent reported that a new principal had been appointed.

State reports also indicate that use of the most serious *NCLB* interventions was infrequent; for example, only two of 27 states with Title I schools in restructuring status used the takeover option, four reopened schools as public charters, and nine replaced most or all of the school staff.

District improvement efforts

Most states reported providing a broad range of technical assistance to all districts.

States have a responsibility to provide technical assistance to all districts to develop their plans and work with schools needing improvement. In addition, states must take more intensive actions with districts that are identified for improvement. All responding states but one reported providing technical assistance to all districts on accountability system rules and requirements, and almost all reported providing assistance to some districts on a variety of other aspects of *NCLB*. Some states provided technical assistance specifically to identified districts, most notably in developing and implementing

² The NLS-*NCLB* principal survey question did not exactly parallel the law on one intervention: The law gives the option of “replacing all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal)” who are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress,” while the survey asked if the state or district had “replaced all of the school staff” or “appointed a new principal.” The survey did not include an option for “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance.”

district improvement plans (23 states) and providing better professional development to schools in the areas in which they did not make AYP (12 states).

Three-quarters of districts reported receiving the technical assistance they needed and were satisfied with the assistance they received. However, assistance related to students with disabilities or limited English-proficient students was often not sufficient to meet districts' needs.

Three-quarters of all districts federal program coordinators reported needing technical assistance regarding some aspect of *NCLB* implementation, such as analyzing student assessment data to understand program strengths and weaknesses. Districts identified for improvement reported greater need for technical assistance than did non-identified districts. Forty percent of districts reported needing technical assistance to help them meet the needs of students with disabilities; of the districts needing this assistance, more than half reported that their needs were not met. Similarly, one-quarter of all districts reported needing assistance to address the needs of LEP students, and of these about half reported their needs were met.

Almost all districts were engaged in improvement efforts.

Almost all districts, not just those identified for improvement, reported engaging in one or more initiatives to improve their own performance. The majority of identified districts reported that they implemented additional professional development for teachers and principals, distributed test preparation materials, and increased monitoring of instruction and school performance as a result of being identified for improvement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY

Overall, the findings presented in this report paint a picture of considerable activity and rapid implementation of *NCLB* requirements. The findings also identify areas in which limited implementation and information present challenges to achieving the goal of proficiency for every student in reading and mathematics by 2014.

- The numbers and percentages of identified schools and districts varied considerably across states, in part due to differences in state standards, assessments, and AYP targets.
- Some states still struggle to deliver information on school status in a timely manner.
- Some states and districts still struggle to provide basic resources to schools—for example, about one-third of teachers in identified schools reported that they did not have an adequate number of textbooks and instructional materials.
- The increasing number of schools and districts identified for improvement presents challenges to state and district support systems.
- Little is known about the quality of local improvement efforts or the effectiveness of state and district technical assistance and interventions.

In summary, states, districts and schools have engaged in a high level of activity and have largely met the *NCLB* accountability system requirements through 2004–05.