

DRAFT OUTLINE

July 2000

FIRST ANNUAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE ORDER ON TURNING AROUND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

I. Overview

A. **FEDERAL POLICIES.** Overview of federal policies and initiatives related to standards, accountability, and turning around low-performing schools.

- Executive Order on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
- Title I standards and accountability requirements
- \$134 million in school improvement funds
- Programs to support low-performing schools (CSRD, REA, 21st c., Class Size Reduction)

II. Trends/Data

A. **SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION.** Report number of schools identified for improvement under Title I by state (1998-99)

B. **DISTRICT IDENTIFICATION.** Report number of districts identified for improvement under Title I by state (1998-99)

C. **TRENDS.** Track changes in schools identified for improvement numbers from 1997-98 to 1998-99

D. **FACTORS RELATED TO TRENDS IN SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION.** Discussion of factors related to differences in identification of low-performing schools across the states

- Differences in rigor of standards
- Diversity of adequate yearly progress criteria
- Varying state and district capacity to assist low-performing schools

E. **SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE ON STATE ACCOUNTABILITY/SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS.** Presentation of findings from 1998-99 and 1999-2000 National Longitudinal Survey of Schools (NLSS) on schools identified as in need of improvement.

- What happens to schools identified for improvement?
- Are low-performing schools getting extra help?
- What do their districts do?
- What kinds of corrective actions are being implemented in low-performing schools?
- Are there differences in expectations, progress in standards-based reform, parent involvement, access to technology, use of Title I funds between Title I schools in general compared to Title I schools identified as in need of improvement?

III. Recent Research and Promising Practices

A. RESEARCH. Highlight findings of recent research reports on school improvement efforts. For example:

- Dispelling the Myth (Education Trust)
- Hope for Urban Education (U.S. Department of Education)
- A Baker's Dozen: Strategies for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools (Chicago Accountability Council)
- No Excuses (Heritage Foundation)
- Emerging knowledge on instructional practice in reading and math (National Academy of Sciences)

B. PROFILES OF TURNAROUND SCHOOLS/SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS.

Focus on the school reform process from within the school including how schools have gained control of the school environment, focused on instruction, intervened early to identify student needs, provided effective professional development, used data for continuous improvement, and involved families. Include examples of school effectively integrating resources. Sources of examples include:

- Kids First: Sharing Solutions (Regional Education Labs)
- Schools Implementing Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)
- Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Educators (U.S. Department of Education)
- Summer Institute on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

C. PROFILES OF STATE AND DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

Focus on preventive and systemwide efforts to create the conditions for school improvement, including state and district efforts to identify, assist, and intervene in low-performing schools, raise teacher quality, promote community involvement, redesign low-performing schools. Sources of information include:

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- CPRE profiles of state accountability systems
 - Findings from Integrated Review Teams
 - Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Educators (U.S. Department of Education)
 - Summer Institute on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
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- State plans for \$134 million in school improvement funds

IV. Progress on Federal Support for Efforts/Response to Executive Order for Turn Around Low-Performing Schools

This section will focus on what the Department has accomplished to date on helping states develop coherent, integrated standards, assessment, and accountability systems and assist and intervene to turn around low-performing schools.

- A. Status on Department review of state assessment systems
- B. Development of updated guidance on AYP/criteria for reviewing state accountability systems
- C. Highlights of state plans for use of \$134 million in school improvement funds
- D. Re-release of Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide to State and Local Leaders
- E. Review of Summer Institute on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
- F. Planned U.S.-U.K. Conference on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
- G. Integrated Reviews focused on turning around low-performing schools
- H. Efforts around improving teacher quality

V. Looking Ahead

- A. Future plans for addressing Executive Order on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

BRIEFING ON FIXING FAILING SCHOOLS

1) What are the characteristics of low-performing schools?

Always?

Low-performing schools are located in impoverished communities. The data we have on gaps in student performance are most pronounced when we look at student performance in schools with highly concentrated poverty compared with low poverty schools. NAEP results show that average performance lags by grade levels in schools where 75-100 percent of the students receive free and reduced price lunch. Despite recent performance gains among low-performing students, throughout the years NAEP results show consistent 20-30 point differences in the average scores in high-poverty schools compared to affluent schools.

Low-performing schools often have limited financial, human, and programmatic resources to support high-quality teaching. Many low-performing schools have inadequate facilities (aging buildings), and lack of books and supplies. Teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to be teaching without a license or outside their field of training.

Low-performing schools are often characterized by stress and disorder. Because many low-performing schools are located in impoverished communities, family distress, crime, and violence are often prevalent, making it difficult for children to come to school prepared. These factors cause stress and disorganization in schools. Teachers develop lower expectations for students. Some teachers burn out and turnover of faculty can be high. The relationship between teachers and parents is often hostile. Motivation and hope can evaporate. The result is chronically low student performance.

Low-performing schools often have highly mobile student populations. Low student achievement is accompanied by high rates of absenteeism, dropping out, and/or delinquency.

2) Where are low-performing schools?

Refer to Table 10.1 from the 1998-99 National Longitudinal Survey of Schools. This nationally representative sample of Title I schools allows us to look at the characteristics of schools identified as in need of improvement (as low-performing) under Title I, compared with Title I schools in general. Schools are identified largely based on student performance against state standards.

Note: 1998-99 data on schools identified as in need of improvement across the states – approximately 11,000 nationally.

Low performing (Title I) schools tend to be larger schools. As the chart indicated, schools with 600 or more students are disproportionately identified as in need of improvement.

Causality?

Again, Low-performing schools tend to be schools with a high percentage of minority students.

Low-performing schools Title I schools where 75-100 percent of students are minority are significantly more likely to be identified as in need of improvement under Title I.

Low-performing schools Low-performing schools are disproportionately located in urban areas. Title I schools identified as in need of improvement are disproportionately urban schools.

3) What are some of the biggest challenges facing these schools?

Poverty

Limited English proficiency

Student mobility

Teacher quality and retention of high-quality teachers

Stable leadership

Retention and social promotion

Safety

4) What kind of help do these schools get?

From the U.S. Department of Education, \$6 billion in Title I is the most important source of federal investment in addressing needs of low-performing students and high-poverty schools. Title I requires states to identify, assist and intervene in schools that fail to make progress toward all students meeting standards.

\$134 million in school improvement funds to raise the capacity of states and districts to intervene and assist low-performing schools.

\$220 million in CSRD to help low-performing and high-poverty schools adopt research-based strategies and use external technical assistance to engage in whole school reform.

Federal support for class size reduction, extended learning time/afterschool, reading excellence, etc.

5) What are effective strategies for turning around low-performing schools? What steps have turned around schools taken?

— Set high expectations

— Use data to drive continuous improvement

— Early intervention and prevention

— Hold schools accountable for performance

External assistance

Professional development focused on instruction and curriculum

Recruit and retain qualified teachers

Stable and competent leadership

7. Focus on academics

Extended learning time

— Smaller learning settings

Engage parents and families as partners

6) To what extent is reconstitution used and with what results?

In 1998, the AFT reported that there were 22 states that had the power to reconstitute schools. Note that this references authority residing at the state level. Within states, districts may have and/or be exercising reconstitution authority.

Reconstitution takes many forms, from replacing a principal to completely removing faculty, shutting a school down and reopening it. Some places, such as New York, exercise reconstitution as more of a collaborative school "redesign" effort, bring external teams into a school to help it fashion and improvement plan and help move out of the school staff who are not on board with reform efforts.

We don't have a great deal of information on reconstitution and how often it is used nationwide. We do know that some of the districts that have reconstituted schools (San Francisco, Chicago, Houston) and states such as Oregon and Maryland, have used this strategy on a VERY limited basis.

Jennifer O'Day's work on reconstitution suggests that there is no conclusive data demonstrating that the threat of reconstitution is an effective motivator for change. Reconstitution can be demoralizing or constructive. Research suggested that for reconstitution to work, it is not enough to replace the adults in a troubled school. Low-performing schools must overcome long-term legacies of failure. These schools need external assistance in rebuilding – chronically low-performing schools are least in a position to help themselves. Successful reconstitution requires:

strong leadership
a clear break with past practices
sustained professional development in instruction
high expectations for students
district and state support and assistance

ALL SIMULTANEOUSLY

7) How well do comprehensive models work?

CSRD is highly targeted in high-poverty schools and schools identified for improvement under Title I. The program helps schools adopt research-based models as part of a comprehensive reform effort. It is important to note that "comprehensive" may not well describe models – many focus on particular subject areas for example – few address all aspects of a school. The key to models is that they can introduce research base practices and give schools an external provider of support, professional development and assistance. The key to comprehensive school reform is that schools rethink and address how all school resources, activities, programs and energies can be focused and coordinated to help all students reach standards.

That said, we need a lot more rigorous research on school improvement models. In 1999, the American Institutes for Research analyzed more than 100 research studies on 24 reform models in *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*. AIR concluded that three models showed significant positive evidence of effectiveness in improving student achievement (Success for All, Direct Instruction, and High Schools That Work) and several were judged to have promising or emerging positive research findings.

Looking across the studies, AIR also identified some common characteristics to models that showed results. AIR found that structured models that are more directive about what or how teachers teach have higher levels of implementation than models focused on changing the philosophy or offering a general approach to school reform. Models that focus on curriculum and instruction tend to have stronger effects on student achievement.

We are beginning to collect student achievement data on all CSRD schools this fall and will track student performance over time in schools using various models. The Department is also tracking a number of research efforts aimed at adding to the research-base on model effectiveness.

8) Federal barriers to reform?

Mostly lifted. The last reauthorization of the ESEA made it significantly easier for higher-poverty Title I schools (with 50 percent or higher poverty) to combine and coordinate federal funds across federal programs and with state and local resources by operating as schoolwide programs.

However, it remains a challenge to help schools, districts, and states use this flexibility to empower school improvement efforts.

9) Title I accountability fund – how do the applications look and how will districts implement choice provisions?

[Elois was going to talk with Susan Wilhelm about this]

Trends in Schools Identified as in Need of Improvement Under Title I

- In 1996-97, state education agencies reported that they identified more than 7000 schools (16% of Title I schools) as in need of improvement under Title I. In 1997-98, that number rose to more than 9000 schools (20 percent of Title I schools). Preliminary figures for the 1998-99 school year indicates that the numbers of schools identified as in need of improvement continues to rise -- to more than 11,000 or 23 percent of all Title I schools.
- The increases in schools identified for improvement, however, are fueled by major increases in identification in a few states. For example, in 1996-97 California identified 8 percent of its schools (or 330 schools) as in need of improvement under Title I. In 1997-98 California identified 34 percent (more than 1300 schools) and in 1998-99, California identified 42 percent (more than 1600 schools) as in need of improvement. Iowa identified 4 percent of schools in 1996-97 and 46 percent in 1997-98. States such as Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, and Maine significantly increased the numbers of schools identified as in need of improvement under Title I between 1996-97 and 1997-98. These increases may exist for a number of reasons. Some states have only recently instituted new, more rigorous assessment systems, which usually result in an initial increase in the number of schools identified as low-performing.
- Some states appear to identify a very small number and proportion of their schools for improvement under Title I. Texas, for example, with more than 4000 Title I schools in the states, identified 58 schools (1 percent) for improvement in 1998-99. In the same year, Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon and South Dakota identified less than 5 percent of their Title I schools as in need of improvement.

Preliminary Findings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Schools on Schools in Need of Improvement (1998-99)

- Schools identified as in need of improvement serve disproportionately poor and minority students. Almost half of Title I schools in need of improvement (compared to only 20 percent of all Title I schools) are schools where 75 percent or more students are minority and eligible for free and reduced price lunch.
- According to the survey, 31 percent of Title I schools identified as in need of improvement did not know what their districts considered adequate or substantial yearly progress. Urban and elementary Title I schools were much more likely than rural Title I schools or high schools in need of improvement to know what their districts considered adequate progress.
- Of those school principals that are familiar with how school performance is judged, more than a third overall, and a majority of urban principals, feel that the measures of adequate yearly progress are inadequate for judging their schools.

- interesting*
- Similar to findings reported in the National Assessment of Title I for the 1997-98 school year, data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Schools for the 1998-99 school year show that less than half (47 percent) of principals of schools identified as in need of improvement under Title I report that they receive additional technical assistance or professional development as a result. In general, the longer schools are identified as in need of improvement, the more likely they are to report receiving additional assistance. Sixty-two percent of principals in schools identified for more than three years reported extra assistance. However, only 30 percent of principals of schools identified for three years reported extra assistance.

- Almost a quarter of principals in schools identified as in need of improvement under Title I report that they have not implemented any additional strategies to address the issue.
- For the schools that reported receiving additional assistance as a result of identification for improvement, the majority report receiving that assistance from their school district (84 percent), the state department of education (65 percent), or school support teams (77 percent). Eighteen percent reported assistance from the U.S. Department of Education comprehensive assistance centers and 14 percent reported assistance from the Department's Regional Educational Laboratories.

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: What the Research Indicates

Research Studies

Low-performing schools, especially those in high poverty neighborhoods, are receiving a good deal of attention from education researchers. Several organizations, as well as the Department of Education, have conducted studies trying to determine why some schools manage to perform at high levels of academic achievement while others do not. These studies tend to be narrowly focused, concentrating on relatively small numbers of schools, and they vary in terms of the rigor and intensity of their research methods. Several of these studies have come out in recent months:

- *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools* (1999). Researchers at the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin conducted this study for the Planning and Evaluation Service of the United States Department of Education. Researchers conducted intensive observations at nine urban, predominantly minority schools and interviewed administrators, teachers, parents, and students at all sites, noting similarities between practices at the nine campuses. Schools were chosen to participate in the study on the basis of how well they met the criteria of the study in terms of poverty levels, availability of student achievement data, and the schools' willingness to participate.
- *Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations* (1999). This study was conducted by the Education Trust, in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers. Surveys were sent to 1,200 urban schools with poverty rates of over 50 percent that had been identified by their states as high-performing or dramatically improving. Educators at 366 of these campuses responded to the survey. Researchers used survey data to determine common practices that might account for the schools' success. Researchers did not visit participating schools.
- *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High Poverty Schools* (2000). Samuel Casey Carter, a Bradley Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, wrote this report. The report contains case studies of 21 urban and rural high poverty schools, 15 of which are public schools. Schools were selected for the study on the basis of recommendations from state education officers, state assessment offices, state and local think tanks, teachers' unions, and research organizations. The list of over 400 schools compiled by researchers was narrowed down to 21 schools on the basis of concentrations of low-income students, the ability of the researchers to verify student achievement, and schools' willingness to participate. All 21 schools were visited, and interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students and parents.

- *Leave No Child Behind: A Baker's Dozen Strategies to Increase Academic Achievement* (1999). This report is based on the findings of a two year study conducted by the Chicago Schools Academic Accountability Council. The study examines the practices of principals in 32 improving elementary schools in the Chicago school system, some of which are high poverty. The report details practices common to the schools.

In addition to these studies, the United States Department of Education has released *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders* (May 1998), which provides research based pointers for state and local officials on how to improve low-performing schools.

Research Findings

Although these studies and others like them are products of individuals and organizations representing a broad range of political and ideological positions, and despite their varying degrees of academic rigor and size of sample, they are remarkably similar in their findings.¹ While the studies differ in detail and emphasis, there is general agreement among the researchers about what works in improving low-performing schools. Researchers in the studies discussed above repeatedly stress seven important characteristics of high-performing schools. These findings are consistent with recommendations from the effective schools research of the last decade, and they seem to indicate that if low-performing schools were to emulate these characteristics of high-performing schools, performance would improve.

1. *High-performing schools set high standards for student achievement and plan curriculum and assessment based upon those standards.*

In order for students to perform at high levels, schools need to plan carefully, and in order to plan, they need to know what their goals for students are. Setting clear, consistent, measurable standards for what students should know and be able to do is one way to set such goals and to help schools focus on their central mission. But simply creating or adopting standards is not enough; the standards must be *ambitious*. If schools have low expectations for what students can accomplish, it is unlikely that students will exceed those expectations.

High standards, by themselves, are not enough. They must be *used*, and used regularly and consistently. Successful schools use standards as a framework for curriculum design and for both horizontal and vertical planning. They also use standards as a basis for assessment, to measure whether or not students are actually learning what they are

¹ The small size of the studies discussed above is a concern. The fact that the small studies are in general agreement is promising, but a larger scale analysis of practices in high-performing schools would be helpful. An additional concern is the dearth of information about high-performing secondary schools; most of the existing studies look exclusively at elementary schools. It is unclear whether methods that work for lower grades will be equally successful with secondary students.

intended to learn. Standards are also used to evaluate teacher performance. If a teacher's students do not meet the required standard, the school can take appropriate action.

2. *High-performing schools hold teachers and administrators accountable for meeting school goals.*

Schools and school personnel need to be held accountable for meeting their schools' goals. Teachers and administrators must be willing to accept negative consequences when students fail to achieve as well as incentives when schools succeed. Successful schools do not see low-performance by students as "a student problem." Instead, they see it as a problem with the school, a problem that can be addressed through changes in curriculum and instruction.

Most researchers see testing as a key component in accountability. Test data provide an opportunity for schools to build capacity by allowing them to determine which areas of the curriculum and which groups of students need additional attention. Data allow schools to target areas for improvement and adjust instruction accordingly. Data are best used to provide constructive criticism for teachers and administrators rather than as a form of punishment. In order to use data in this way, school administrators and teachers need adequate training in how to use data.

The most important aspect of a good accountability system, however, is having established, adequate strategies to build capacity and provide support when schools do have problems. Having high standards for accountability and achievement does little good if schools have no means, financial or otherwise, to correct areas identified as problematic. State and district support is crucial if schools are to make good use of their accountability systems.

3. *High-performing schools create a safe, orderly environment that allows students to concentrate on academics.*

Good order is a prerequisite to learning; if students are trapped in an unsafe, violent, or drug-infested school environment, it is unlikely that they will be able to achieve at high levels. Successful schools foster an environment where all school stakeholders, including school personnel, parents, and students, contribute to and take responsibility for the orderly running of the school. Simply having "get tough" disciplinary policies will not help; students must feel that they have an important responsibility to help maintain a safe environment. Children need to see that achievement depends upon self-discipline and self-control. Schools also need to foster an environment where students' self-esteem is dependent on achievement, not on disruptive behavior; this is best done through the example set by committed faculty, administrators, and parents.

4. *High-performing schools maximize time spent on instruction.*

Successful schools do everything they can to increase time spent on instruction, especially in reading and mathematics. Many successful schools make use of longer

school days or school years to increase learning time. Others provide learning opportunities before and after school or on the weekends. Instruction time can also be increased through greater efficiency in the use of time during the regular school day. Block scheduling, small class size, and the use of tutors and mentors are all techniques that successful schools have used to increase the efficient use of school time. Schools can also work to reduce or eliminate distractions that disrupt the school day and detract from time spent on task.

5. *High-performing schools have teachers and administrators who are committed to the philosophy and mission of their schools and who have access to quality professional development that helps them achieve that mission.*

In order for schools to succeed in achieving high standards, teachers need to work together as a team to fulfill the school's goals. Hiring staff who are a good match with the school's mission and philosophy is crucial. Teachers who insist on working in isolation from other teachers and from administrators will probably not be effective. In order for the whole school to reach its goals, there must be open and effective communication between teachers and administrators, as well as among teachers.

Teachers' skills are also important. If teachers lack the knowledge or experience to effectively carry out the school's mission and meet its educational philosophy, they must have access to adequate professional development to alleviate deficiencies. Schools need to create professional development programs that are aligned with the content of the curriculum, consistent with school standards, and focused on improving instruction. Ideally, professional development activities should be sustained, with follow up and monitoring to assure that teachers are putting new knowledge into practice. Teachers should also be encouraged to share what they learn from professional development activities with other teachers on their campuses.

Professional development should not be limited to teachers. School principals and administrators should also have access to professional development that will allow them to enhance their roles as instructional leaders. Of particular importance is training in how to use data to improve instruction.

6. *High-performing schools have high levels of parent and community involvement.*

Schools cannot do their jobs alone. Low-performing schools, in particular, need the help of parents and the community to improve student performance. Effective schools find ways to communicate regularly with parents and to involve them in their children's education. Parental involvement, however, needs to extend beyond traditional fund-raising activities and limited volunteering. Communication with parents is vital; parents need to know about and understand the school's curriculum, standards, and goals so that they can better help students prepare to do well. Successful schools encourage parents to read to and with their children, to check their homework, and to ask about their assignments. Teachers also need training in how best to work with parents to maximize instructional benefits for students.

Successful schools also form ties with the larger community. Many successful schools have formed fruitful partnerships with local businesses, colleges and universities, and cultural organizations that help students learn more and help teachers teach more effectively.

7. *High-performing schools have the freedom of flexibility in curriculum design, as well as in personnel and finance.*

School leaders need to have sufficient flexibility to use resources in ways that best meet the needs of their schools. Principals need reasonable freedom to hire teachers who are willing and able to adapt to the needs of the school as well as to the school's guiding philosophy. In the same way, principals should be able to reassign or fire teachers who cannot or will not adapt to meet the school's mission. School administrators who have some leeway in how they spend available funds and some flexibility in terms what gets taught and how it is taught are more likely to be able to make decisions that will enhance the performance of their schools.

Table 10.1

Comparison of Title I Schools Identified as in Need of Improvement and All Title I Schools,
by Selected Characteristics

Selected Characteristics	Schools In Need of Improvement	Title I Schools
	Percent	
School Level		
Elementary School	77.5	77.3
Middle School	16.2	12.5
High School	6.2	10.2
Enrollment		
1-200	12.5	18.0
201-400	20.2	28.0
401-600	32.5	31.6
601-800	19.0	12.3
801 and over	15.9	10.0
Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch		
0-34.9	12.0	28.6
35-49.9	17.7	18.9
50-74.9	21.4	33.1
75-100	→ 48.9	19.4
Percentage of minority students		
0-24.9	30.1	50.2
25-49.9	9.1	18.8
50-74.9	14.0	11.1
75-100	→ 46.9	19.9
Urbanicity		
Urban	→ 41.5	24.8
Suburban/Large Town	25.6	30.0
Rural/Small Town	32.9	45.3
Title I Type		
Schoolwide	71.9	50.4
Targeted Assistance	28.1	49.6
Percentage adopting comprehensive schoolwide reform models	43.8	31.4

meaningful? [77.5 77.3]
[16.2 12.5]
[6.2 10.2]

Doherty, Kathryn

From: Mark Duffy [markd@gse.upenn.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2000 10:35 AM
To: Doherty, Kathryn
Subject: paper attached



Acct under Title I
reportv6.do...

Kathy:

Attached is the paper on Title I and low-performing schools. Hope it is helpful.

Mark Duffy
CPRE

Identifying Low-Performing Schools: The Role of Title I

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Identifying Low-Performing Schools: The Role of Title I

On May 3, 2000, President Clinton signed an executive order directing the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to help states and school districts turn around low-performing Title I schools. It requires ED to target resources and technical assistance efforts on schools that have been identified as needing improvement; report annually on school improvement efforts; and monitor Title I requirements for identifying and assisting low-performing schools.

This order has focused greater attention on how states hold schools and districts accountable for meeting the student content and performance standards they have established, and on how states (and districts) identify schools and districts for assistance. Title I of IASA requires states to determine whether schools are making *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) in bringing students up to state standards. Specifically, the law calls for AYP to be defined

in a manner that (1) results in continuous and substantial yearly improvement of each school and local education agency sufficient to achieve the goal of all children...meeting the state's proficient and advanced levels of achievement; [and] (2) is sufficiently rigorous to achieve that goal within an appropriate timeframe. (As cited in Elmore and Rothman, 1999, p. 85).

Local school districts must then *identify for school improvement* any school that has not made adequate yearly progress for two consecutive school years and states must identify for improvement any district that has failed to make adequate progress toward meeting the state's performance standards for two consecutive years. While this is a seemingly straightforward process, states (and districts) must make a series of decisions in defining AYP and identifying low-performing schools.

- First, they must select indicators of student performance. Under Title I of IASA, states must include the annual state assessment and may include other measures, such as attendance and drop-out rates.
- Second, they must establish school performance goals, such as having 100% of students proficient on the state assessment by the year 2005.
- Third, states must define what they consider substantial and continuous progress toward that goal.
- Finally, using this definition of adequate yearly progress, states (and districts) must identify schools and districts in need of improvement.

States differ considerably in how they make these decisions, however. Some states measure student performance solely with a test, while others include attendance and

other non-cognitive measures. Some states expect all students to reach proficiency over an extended time, while other states set lower, shorter-term goals for their schools. Some states define AYP as meeting this performance goal, while others focus on movement towards this target. Because of variation in state policy, schools with comparable levels of student performance could be identified as in need of improvement in one state, but not in another.

This report uses data collected from the 50 states in spring 2000 to describe how states are holding Title I schools accountable for student performance. It begins with a brief description of the study methodology and the context for our findings. The following four sections examine how states have addressed the four decision points discussed above—establishing performance indicators, setting school performance goals, defining AYP, and identifying schools and districts in need of improvement. The report ends with brief discussions of (1) the inclusion of special student populations in state accountability systems and (2) broader issues for Title I accountability.

It is important to note that this report focuses on state accountability policies. It does not address the content, quality or rigor of state standards or the rigor or alignment of state assessment systems, although these variables also affect what student, schools and school districts are held accountable for, and how they are held accountable. The report also does not address student-level accountability. Although 28 states have or will implement high school graduation tests, and another eight states are enacting promotion gates at the elementary and middle school levels, this report looks only at institutional accountability.

Study Methodology and Context

Methodology

The findings reported here are drawn from a 50 state survey of state assessment and accountability systems conducted by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) between February and June 2000. We focused our data collection on state policies that were in place in the 1999-2000 school year. We used a four-step process to collect and verify our data. First, we collected and analyzed extant data from secondary sources: weekly and special issues of Education Week such as *Quality Counts* (1999, 2000), the Council of Chief State School Officers (2000), the American Federation of Teachers (1998, 1999), and state department of education web sites. We then conducted semi-structured interviews with the directors of assessment, accountability and Title I programs in each of the states to confirm, clarify and update information collected from written sources. We also used these interviews to identify proposed changes in state policies. These interviews were often supplemented by materials sent by the respondents. The third step entailed writing an extensive profile of each state that included descriptive information on the state's assessment, inclusion, reporting, accountability, assistance and Title I policies and practices. Finally, we asked state respondents to verify the written profiles, and we incorporated suggested changes and corrections into the final profile.

The information included in this report is current as of the time at which a profile was verified by each state, generally between April and July 2000.

Different starting points

Title I requires all states to have challenging content and performance standards in place by 1997-98 and to have adopted high quality assessments aligned to these standards and criteria for measuring sustained progress toward these standards by the 2000-2001 school year. States, however, were at different stages of standards-based reform as they started to address the Title I requirements. One group of states, such as Kentucky, Maryland and Texas, had well-developed standards-based education systems prior to the enactment of IASA. A second group of states, such as New Jersey and Mississippi, had well-established district-based, but no school-based, accountability systems. A third group of states had no or limited systems of performance-based accountability.

Policy flux

One of the challenges of conducting this study is the transitional nature of many state accountability systems. Several states are in the process of redesigning assessment and accountability systems to meet state and/or federal policy requirements, including those of Title I. Even states with established accountability systems like Kentucky have modified their policies in response to technical and/or political concerns. Many states will put new assessment and/or accountability systems into place in 2000-2001. Other states will implement new policies starting in 2001 or later.

Thus, we found ourselves studying a moving target. We have addressed this policy flux in the following way. The data reported here represent policies in place in 1999-2000 unless a state (1) has enacted and will implement revised policies in 2000-2001; (2) has enacted new policies for 2000-2001 and reports they are awaiting federal approval of their new system; or (3) has proposed new policies for the 2000-2001 school year and is awaiting approval by their state board of education. In these three cases, we treat new policies as current practice. If a state has enacted or proposed policies that are scheduled to be implemented after the 2000-2001 school year, we report the policies in place in 1999-2000 as current practice.

Multiple accountability systems

The intent of IASA was to create single and “seamless” accountability systems that would treat all schools equally. States were expected to develop aligned systems of high standards, challenging assessments and accountability, and then align their Title I programs with these policies. We found, however, that only 22 states will have single, or “unitary” accountability systems in place by 2000-2001. These are systems in which all

schools and/or districts are held to the same performance standards through the state accountability system regardless of their Title I status.¹ (See Table 1.)

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Some of these states, such as Florida, Kentucky, Maryland and Texas, had developed state assessment and accountability systems prior to the enactment of IASA, and brought their Title I programs into alignment with state policies. Five of the states-- Delaware, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York and Oregon--will implement a unitary system of accountability for the first time in 2000-2001.

Twenty-eight states operate dual systems of accountability in which either: 1) Title I and non-Title I schools are held accountable using different sets of indicators and/or performance standards, or 2) only Title I schools are held accountable by the state or district outside of the performance reporting structure.

Sixteen states with dual systems of accountability have established one system of accountability for all schools and a separate system of accountability for Title I schools. Colorado and Michigan provide examples of such systems. The Colorado legislature recently approved a new reporting structure that assigns letter grades to all schools based on their state assessment scores. Schools that receive a "C" or lower will be assigned an additional improvement letter grade based on change in average scores from the prior year. In contrast, Title I schools are held accountable for annual improvement on a School Index that focuses on the movement of students from the lowest to the highest proficiency levels and sets annual performance targets over a ten year period. Michigan's general accountability system places schools in one of three accreditation categories based on the percent of students who are proficient on the state assessments. Like Colorado, however, the Title I accountability system defines adequate yearly progress as narrowing the achievement gap between the highest and lowest achievement categories, not overall performance on the state test.

The other twelve states have developed definitions of adequate yearly progress for Title I schools, but hold non-Title I schools accountable primarily through the public

¹ When categorizing state accountability systems as "unitary" or "dual," we looked at the performance indicators, school performance goals and measures of adequate yearly progress used to hold schools accountable and at the consequences of the accountability system. We did not include the kinds of assistance that would result from the system of accountability. Even within the category of unitary systems, we found slight differences between the indicators used to measure the performance of Title I and non-Title I schools. In West Virginia, for example, the definition of adequate yearly progress is based on performance on the Stanford 9, and does not consider attendance and drop-out rates that are included in the general state accountability system. As the general and Title I systems are identical with regard to what is expected of schools in terms of performance on the state assessment, we classified the state as having a "unitary" system.

reporting of state and/or district assessment scores.² Arizona, for example, reports student performance on both the SAT-9 and the state criterion referenced assessment, AIMS, at the school and district level. This is the only form of accountability for non-Title I schools. In contrast, the state sets annual improvement goals for its Title I schools that are designed to increase the number of students scoring at the proficient level and reduce the number of students scoring at the below basic level. States like Arizona have a strong history of local control and have found it politically difficult to enact stronger accountability systems for all schools. Three of these states--Alaska, Georgia, and Hawaii--are in the process of developing school-based accountability systems that are supposed to go into effect in 2001-2002 or later. Policymakers in other states, such as New Hampshire and Minnesota, have proposed such systems, but have not gained the political support necessary to gain passage of accountability systems in their state legislatures.

Selecting Performance Measures

The first decision a state makes is to select measures or indicators of student performance. States can mandate what assessments will be used, or let local education officials decide. The state can use criterion-referenced tests to measure performance against state standards, or use norm-reference tests to compare student performance against a sample of students from across the country. A state may also decide it will measure student behavior outside of achievement on an assessment.

Which test to use?

For Title I purposes, 46 states include at least one state mandated assessment as an indicator to be used in determining whether or not a school or district has made adequate yearly progress. In the other four states, the state allows the district to select an assessment to use as an indicator. Iowa and Minnesota require only that local districts use a nationally norm-referenced test. (Most LEAs in Iowa, however, select the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED).) Montana has allowed districts to choose from five norm-referenced exams, but is in the process of selecting one for use on a statewide basis. While Nebraska currently permits districts to choose a norm-referenced test for Title I, the state legislature recently enacted a measure requiring school districts to give the same state writing test to all students in grades 4, 8 and 11 in spring of 2001. The assessment plan also phases in tests in reading, mathematics, science and history/social studies each year until 2003, but these tests will be developed locally with state guidance. After the first year of testing, the state will select the four "best" local tests and require districts to select one of them or bring their own tests up to the standards of the models.

² Some of these states have inputs-based school accreditation programs as well.

The other 46 states use statewide assessments to determine whether a school and/or district has made adequate yearly progress under Title I. Ten of these states also allow local assessments to be used as part of the process. For example:

- Vermont's new accountability system gives predominant weight to its state assessments--the Vermont Developmental Reading Assessment and the New Standards Reference Exams in math and English/language arts in grades 4, 8, and 10. Schools, however, are encouraged to use other assessments and they may select one or more local assessment for accountability purposes, including the Vermont Mathematics and Writing Portfolios, a commercially published norm-referenced test, and other assessments approved by the State Board of Education. The state will determine the individual and combined maximum weight of the local assessments (relative to the state assessments) in the accountability system. Local assessments could count for up to 30 percent of a district's accountability measure.
- In Hawaii, adequate yearly progress for Title I schools has been defined as an annual two percent gain, or 75 percent of students, in stanines 5-9 in reading and math as measured by the SAT-9, improved student attendance gains of at least two percent annually and an annual gain of at least two percent on the school-selected student achievement indicators. The school-selected student achievement indicator could include one of three assessments developed by the state or another indicator selected entirely by the school but approved by the state.
- In South Dakota, the state has identified a number of local measures that can be used for adequate yearly progress. The districts elect which measure they would like to use. Seventy-seven percent of South Dakota schools will use Star Reading and Math, thirteen percent Curriculum Based Measurement, two percent or less will use Successmaker, Portfolios, Stanford Open Ended, Integrated Assessment System, Work Sampling System, Plato or criterion referenced tests. The state will convene a representative group to set cut scores for these exams to ensure uniformity in performance levels. These will be phased in the fall of 2000.

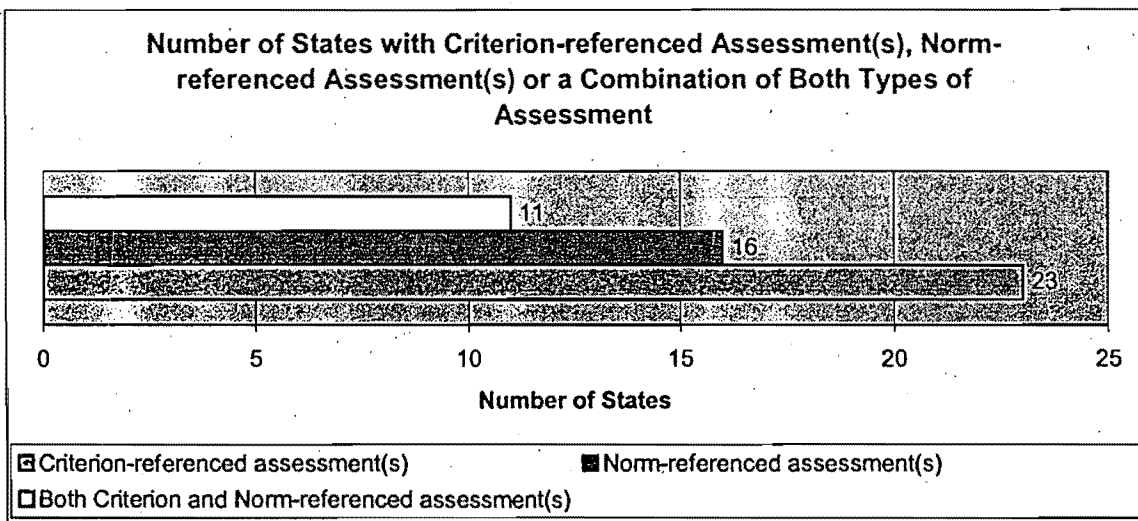
States use criterion-referenced tests (CRT), norm-referenced tests (NRT) or a combination of both to measure adequate yearly progress. Just under half of the states (23) use only criterion-referenced assessments to measure achievement in Title I schools. Sixteen states use norm-referenced exams such as the Stanford 9 (SAT9), the Terra Nova or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to assess students in Title I schools. The four states with locally-determined Title I assessment systems fall into this latter group. (See Figure 1.)

The remaining 11 states use a combination of norm- and criterion-referenced assessment systems for Title I. These states fall into one of two categories:

- States that administer separate CRTs and NRTs but include the results of both kinds of assessments in their Title I AYP calculations; or
- States that include a combination of norm- and criterion-referenced sections in their assessments.

Kentucky, for example, has created an accountability index with two components: component 1 (95%) includes the criterion-referenced assessment and the non-academic indicators used in the state (attendance rate, retention rate, dropout rate and rate of successful transition to adult life) while component 2 (5%) includes only scores on the CTBS-5. The CTBS-5 is administered in those grades (3, 6, and 9) that are not covered by Kentucky's standards-based assessments.

Figure 1

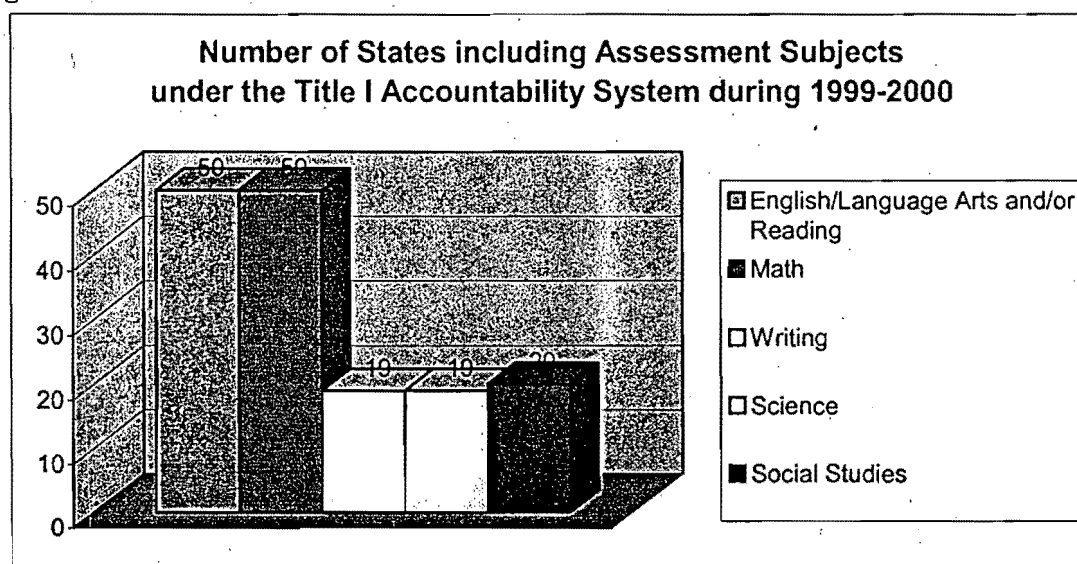


More typically, states use a combination of items in their overall state assessment system. For example, the reading and math data from the *Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP)* that will be used for Title I in 2000-2001 are divided into two parts: 1) the National Percentile Rankings (NPRs) and 2) the Standards-Based Scores (SBSs). The national percentile rankings come from a subset of items from the SAT-9, while the standards-based scores in math and reading are designed to measure student progress toward state standards, and are reported on a scale that runs from approximately 150-800. Indiana similarly includes both NRT and CRT items in its *Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP+)* program. The CRT items provide information on the percentage of students meeting the state's mathematics and English/language arts standards, while the NRT items generate NCE scores. Some states use NRTs with augmented items that are aligned with state standards. The *New Mexico Achievement Assessment Program*, for example, uses the CTBS5/TerraNova Survey Plus test along with a customized supplemental test booklet in order to assess student progress toward the New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks.

Which subjects to include?

The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) requires states to include at least reading and mathematics in their standards, assessment and accountability policies. As shown in Figure 2, all states include student performance in mathematics and either English/language arts or reading in their Title I accountability systems. About 40 percent of the states included other subjects as well in 1999-2000: writing (19 states), social studies (20 states) and science (19 states). In all but one case, the same states assess both social studies and science for Title I purposes. Three states will add writing in 2000-2001 and one state will add both social studies and science.

Figure 2



Additional states include multiple subjects in their reporting and/or general accountability systems, but do not use the results to determine Title I AYP.³ Missouri, for example, tests and includes scores from all four core subject areas in its general accountability program, but limits Title I accountability to performance on mathematics and reading assessments. The Montana Board of Public Education requires all accredited schools to report student achievement scores for grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies but bases Title I AYP solely on reading and mathematics performance.

Beyond test scores

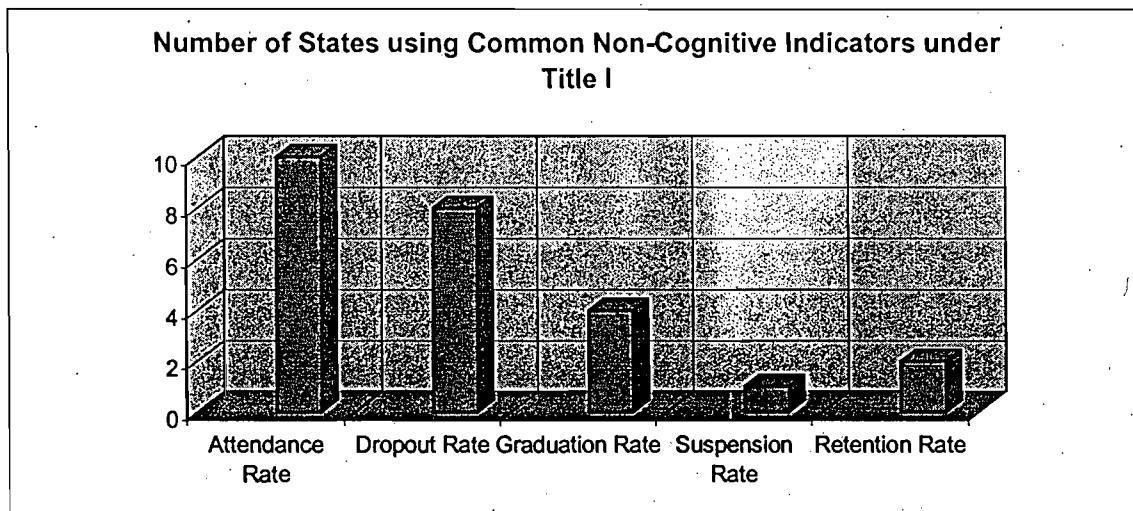
Thirteen states used or intend to use non-cognitive indicators to measure the adequate yearly progress of Title I schools during the 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school years. (See Figure 3). The most common non-cognitive indicators are attendance (10

³ In 1998, 35 states reported having or developing assessments in the four core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies (AFT, 1998).

states) and dropout rates (8 states). Less frequently used indicators include graduation, suspension and retention rates.⁴

These 13 states incorporate non-cognitive indicators in their Title I accountability systems in one of three ways: (1) as part of a school performance index; (2) as discrete measures; or (3) as secondary indicators. Maryland's School Performance Index, for example, is a weighted average of a school's relative distance from the satisfactory standards on the state assessment, attendance rate and dropout rate (high school only). Kentucky's Long-term Accountability Model includes a non-academic index with four outcomes: attendance rate, retention rate, dropout rate (middle and high school) and rate of successful transition to adult life (high school only). The combined non-academic index represents from just under five percent of the total state index at the elementary level to just under eleven percent at the high school level.

Figure 3



Texas gives equal weight to cognitive and non-cognitive indicators by requiring schools to meet minimum performance standards on attendance and dropout rates, as well as on state assessments. New York schools are expected to have a dropout rate below five percent, while Ohio expects its schools to achieve minimum attendance rates of 93 percent and a minimum graduation rate of 90 percent. Hawaii requires schools to show improved student attendance gains of at least two percent annually.

A few states include non-cognitive measures as a secondary indicator or a district option. Under Florida's A+ Plan, a school's letter grade is reduced by one level if it reports absenteeism, dropout or suspension rates that are significantly above the state

⁴ Two additional states have included non-cognitive indicators in their accountability systems under Title I through legislation (California) or state board policy (Vermont). In both cases, however, these indicators were not included in the performance calculations for the 1999-2000 school year, and the specific weights given to these indicators have yet to be determined. When and if these indicators will be fully implemented is, at this point, unknown.

average. Nebraska has adopted attendance as a district option in their local accountability systems for Title I schools.

School Performance Goals

Title I of the IASA calls for states to define and establish criteria for measuring *adequate yearly progress* for Title I schools and districts. The idea behind the concept of AYP is to ensure that schools are making continuous and substantial progress, within an appropriate timeframe, toward the goal of having all students meet the states' proficient and advanced levels of achievement. This section looks at the actual goals that states have established for their schools. Do they expect schools to bring all students to the proficient level or have they set different expectations against which to measure a school's progress?

We were surprised by the wide variation in school performance goals across the 50 states. State targets appear to vary along four dimensions: (1) whether they set an absolute goal or a progress goal; (2) the expected level of student performance (e.g., basic, proficient) if they set an absolute goal; (3) the percentage of students schools must get to these standards; and (4) the length of time schools are given to meet their goal. Where states set their school performance goals, reflects in part, their strategy of how to create incentives for growth and change. As we see in the next section, the level of school performance goals interacts with the states' definition of AYP. And, goal-setting is, in part, a political process.

All but five states have established absolute goals for school performance. A few states, like Michigan and Washington, set their performance goal as increasing the percentage of students meeting state standards and reducing the percentage of students who are well below standards but have not set a target number or percentage of students who should fall into each category. This approach, which we call *narrowing the achievement gap*, is used by several other states in their definition of AYP.

Most of the states that set an *absolute* goal for school performance expect to bring some or all of their students to the "proficient" level of performance. The measure of proficiency is not comparable across states, however. States use different assessments aligned with different standards and set different cut scores for each performance level. A student who is proficient on Rhode Island's assessment, for example, may (or may not) exhibit a different level and/or mix of knowledge and skills than a student who scores at the proficient level in Maryland or Wisconsin. A half dozen states focus on having students achieve a more basic level of performance. Florida, for example, gives grades of "A" and "B" to schools where at least half of the students reach Level 3 on the state assessment ("the student has partial success with the state standards"). Louisiana's 10-year goal is to have all students at the "basic" level; a student at this level "has demonstrated only the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling."

States also differ in the percentage of students that schools are expected to bring up to the basic or proficient standard. About a dozen states specify that they expect 90% to 100% of students to reach proficiency, about a dozen specify they expect 60% to 85% to reach this level, and about another ten states set the goal at 50% of students meeting the assessment target. Other states focus on average scores, such as having schools achieve an average NCE of 45.2 in reading or math in Montana.

Finally, states set different timelines for meeting these performance goals. Fourteen states have established explicit target dates, ranging from six to twenty years; the modal target is ten years. Some examples are: 100% of students at standards by 2008 (Vermont); a school improvement index of 100 in ten years (Colorado) or by 2014 (Kentucky); or 70% (math) to 75% (ELA) of students meeting the basic standard in six years (South Carolina). A second group of states does not specify target dates for meeting standards, but uses AYP targets as an implicit timeline for moving schools toward the state's performance goals. California, for example, has set an interim goal for its Academic Performance Indicator of 800. The state assigns each school an Annual Growth Target (of at least 5%) based on the distance between its current performance and the state goal.

A few states set lower, but more immediate (and in their opinion, more achievable) performance goals, intending to raise these goals over time. Texas is an example of this strategy. When the state enacted its reform, it rated schools as "acceptable" if 25% of their students passed the state assessment. The state raised this threshold by five percentage points a year, to the current level of 50% passing. Virginia has set a passing rate of 40% to 60% (depending on the subject) on its tests for the year 2000. In the year 2006, however, at least 70% of students will need to pass the state assessments in English, except for third and fifth grade students (75% must pass) and at least 60% of students will need to pass the state assessments in three other core areas (except third and fifth grade math). As New York phases in its new accountability system, schools are initially expected to get 90% of their students to Level 2, which is defined as "students will need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents exam." Starting in September 2000, the Commissioner of Education in New York will determine annually what percentage of students should perform at or above the proficient level (Level 3) for schools to meet accountability goals.

Definitions of Adequate Yearly Progress

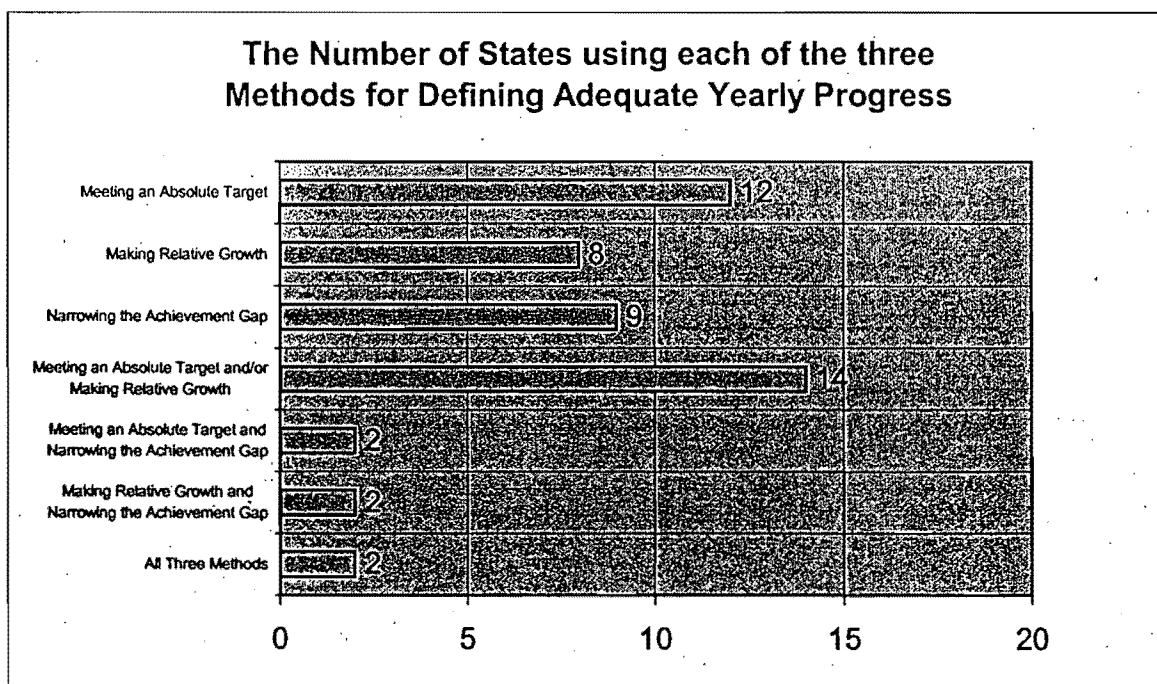
As noted above, the federal government expects states to define AYP in a way that ensures schools make continuous and substantial progress toward state standards. As shown in Figure 4 (and Table 2), states use at least one of three approaches to measure adequate yearly progress:

- Meet an *absolute* target: a performance threshold(s) that all schools must attain to have made satisfactory progress;

- Make *relative growth*: an annual growth target that is based on each school's past performance and often reflects its distance from state goals; and/or
- Narrow the *achievement gap*: reduce the number or percentage of students scoring in the highest and lowest performance levels.

Only Iowa has not developed a state plan for defining adequate yearly progress in Title I schools; districts establish their own improvement goals. Twelve states use absolute targets as the only measure of making adequate yearly progress. The remaining 37 states incorporate some measure of continuous progress in their AYP definitions, either as the sole measure or in combination other measures. Eight states require that schools make relative growth as the sole measure of AYP, while nine more require schools to narrow the achievement gap between those students scoring at the lowest and highest levels on the state assessment. The other 20 states use some combination of absolute, relative growth and narrowing the achievement gap measures.

Figure 4



[Insert Table 2 about here]

Florida and Texas provide examples of states that use absolute targets. Florida grades schools on a scale of A to F. A school earns each grade by meeting specific performance standards. For example, at least 60 percent of a school's students must score at Level 2 ("limited success at meeting state content standards") on the state assessments in reading, mathematics and writing to receive a grade of "C." Schools that do not meet this criterion in *any* of the three tested areas are given a grade of "F" and are judged as not

making adequate yearly progress. Texas defines AYP as achieving the state's "acceptable" rating. For a school to be rated "acceptable" in 1999-2000, at least 50 percent of students in each sub-group had to pass the state assessment in reading, writing and mathematics, the drop out rate had to be six percent or less, and the student attendance rate had to be at least 94 percent.

The use of relative criteria emphasizes continuous improvement. Maryland and California provide examples of states that have established annual goals for their schools that require continuous progress towards a state-specified performance target. California recently assigned schools individualized annual growth targets that are based on five

**Adequate Yearly Progress:
Three States ~ Three Methods**

Meet an Absolute Target

Texas requires schools to meet threshold performance levels on tests, attendance and drop out rates, such as having 50 percent of students in each grade and subgroup pass the TAAS.

Make Relative Growth

Maryland requires schools to show "statistically significant" change each year on their School Performance Index.

Narrow the Achievement Gap

Michigan requires Title I schools to reduce by 10 percent the gap in the percentage of students scoring in the highest and lowest performance levels on the state assessments.

percent of the difference between their Academic Performance Index baseline score for July 1999 and the statewide interim performance target of 800. In contrast, Maryland only requires schools to show "statistically significant" change in their School Performance Indices. The SPI, however, is re-calculated annually to reflect how far the school is from meeting state performance goals.

Eleven states require schools to meet an absolute target or make relative growth. For example, in Utah, elementary schools demonstrating percentages of students equivalent to the state average percentage at the basic or higher levels of proficiency are considered to have made progress. If a school does not meet the state average percentages, an improvement of three percent in the number of students per year attaining the basic or higher levels will be considered adequate progress.

Secondary schools in Utah attaining the midpoint of the expected range of performance established for each school shall be considered as having made adequate progress. If a school does not obtain the midpoint, improvement of three national percentile rank points per year in the reading and the mathematics totals will be considered adequate progress. In North Carolina, a Title I school makes AYP if it either meets the absolute performance minimum threshold (not more than 50% of students below grade level) or its expected growth goal.

Three other states require that schools meet an absolute target and make relative growth. Massachusetts provides an example with its new system to be implemented for the 2000-2001 school year. Under the School Performance Rating Process, each school

will be assigned an overall performance rating (absolute target) and an overall improvement rating (relative growth). These measures will be combined to place each school in a performance category.

The use of either absolute or relative targets raises a potential equity issue, however. Both of these approaches focus on building-level accountability; that is, on the performance of the aggregate student population. Neither approach addresses the gap between the lowest and highest achieving students in a school, nor between the performance of subgroups of students within a school. For example, if Maryland's K-8 goals (70 percent of students scoring 'satisfactory' or above on the state assessment) are met, nearly one-third of a school's students may be left behind with poor scores.

Fifteen states have addressed this achievement gap issue by defining adequate yearly progress in terms of moving students from one achievement level to the next higher level; nine of the states use this as the sole definition of AYP. Michigan, for example, requires Title I schools to reduce by 10 percent the gap in the percentage of students scoring in the highest and lowest performance levels on the state assessments. Each school's achievement gap and improvement goal are calculated annually and separately for each subject area that is assessed. Schools are held accountable for closing the gap in all subject areas. Missouri has developed several options for schools in narrowing the gap. In order to make Adequate Yearly Progress in Missouri, a school or district must achieve:

- At least a five percent (5%) increase in the composite percent of students in the upper three performance levels and at least a five percent (5%) decrease in the percent of students appearing in the bottom performance level; or
- A twenty percent (20%) decrease in the percent of students appearing in the bottom performance level in schools in which at least forty percent (40%) of the class group is represented in the bottom level; or
- Any year in which the percent of students in the bottom performance levels equals 5% or less the district will have made Adequate Yearly Progress.

Six states include narrowing the achievement gap as part of multiple AYP criteria. Two states call for schools to meet an absolute target and narrow the achievement gap, while two states require schools to both narrow the achievement gap and make gains on their average scores. For example, Rhode Island requires schools to increase both overall performance and the performance of students in the lowest-performing category by three to five percent a year. Two states use all three approaches. Starting in 2000-2001, Delaware, for example, will rank schools on three factors: 1) the absolute performance of all the school's students on the assessments ("absolute performance"); 2) the school's record in improving the performance of all the school's students on the assessments ("improvement performance"); and 3) the school's record in improving the performance

of students at lower levels of achievements on the assessments ("distributional performance").

Subgroup Performance as an Equity Indicator

Although 15 states have addressed the achievement gap between the lowest and highest performing students by defining adequate yearly progress in terms of moving students from one achievement level to next higher level, a handful of states have addressed the issue through the inclusion of subgroup performance to differing degrees. States have included adequate subgroup performance in one of three ways under Title I:

- as a *requirement* for adequate yearly progress,
- as a requirement to be eligible for a *state rewards program*, or
- as a *secondary accountability indicator*.

Only two states include or plan to include adequate performance among subgroups as part of their AYP definition.

- To receive a rating of "acceptable" in Texas, each racial/ethnic (African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian) and socio-economic (economically disadvantaged) subgroup, as well as the total student population in a school and a district, must meet the performance targets for each subject and non-cognitive indicator.
- Under Maine's adequate yearly progress proposal to the United States Department of Education, the data used to determine AYP will be based on the results from the following groups:
 1. the *entire student population* that completed the tests, and
 2. *subgroups* selected by the school from the following options: student receiving free or reduced priced lunch, special education students, LEP students, migrant students, and racial/ethnic minorities.

Other states with unitary accountability systems have begun to include subgroup performance in *rewards programs*. Under new policies in California and Maryland, for example, state rewards and recognition will take into consideration the performance of minority and other subpopulations in each school. To receive a grade of "A" or "B" in Florida, a school must ensure that racial/ethnic subgroups (African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian and American Indian students) and poor students meet minimum performance criteria. To be eligible for rewards in Louisiana, schools are required to show improvement in at-risk population scores.

A few states also use subgroup performance as a *secondary indicator* within the Title I accountability system. Rhode Island's accountability system provides an example of such a state. Specifically, the state targets subgroup performance using a model that

considers the characteristics of the student body to establish achievement benchmarks that acknowledge the challenges of different children. Subgroups of students within a school are compared with similar groups of students statewide. If a school finds a discrepancy of more than 15% between the achievement of these subgroups and the state benchmarks, then the school must create a plan to address this issue.

Identifying Schools and Districts in Need of Improvement

Title I calls for districts (states) to identify for program improvement schools (districts) that have not made adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years. The process that these jurisdictions use, however, entails four decisions:

- *How will schools be identified as in need of improvement?*
- *Will the state or the district be responsible for identifying these schools?*
- *How will districts be identified as in need of improvement?*
- *How will schools and districts get out of improvement status?*

Identifying schools

Generally, states do identify schools for program improvement if they fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years. A few states, such as Hawaii, Minnesota and Virginia have shortened the timeline, determining that a school that has not made adequate yearly progress for *just one year* will be placed in program improvement.

Some states with unitary accountability systems, such as Connecticut, Kentucky and Massachusetts, have developed more “state-specific” processes to identify schools. For example:

- Connecticut uses a school performance index of 40 as a “cut-score” for identifying “priority schools” or those schools that are low-performing. The SDE identified 28 elementary and middle schools based on student performance on the state assessment and test score improvement (growth) as compared to the state average. The 27 Title I schools in this group are in program improvement under Title I.
- In Kentucky, if a school’s accountability index falls below the “assistance line” (a line that is one standard deviation below the goal line), it will be eligible for a scholastic audit to determine what kind of assistance it should receive.
- Under the proposed system for 2000-2001 in Massachusetts, low-performing schools that do not meet improvement expectations may be referred to a Review Panel for more extensive evaluation. Schools’ attendance and dropout

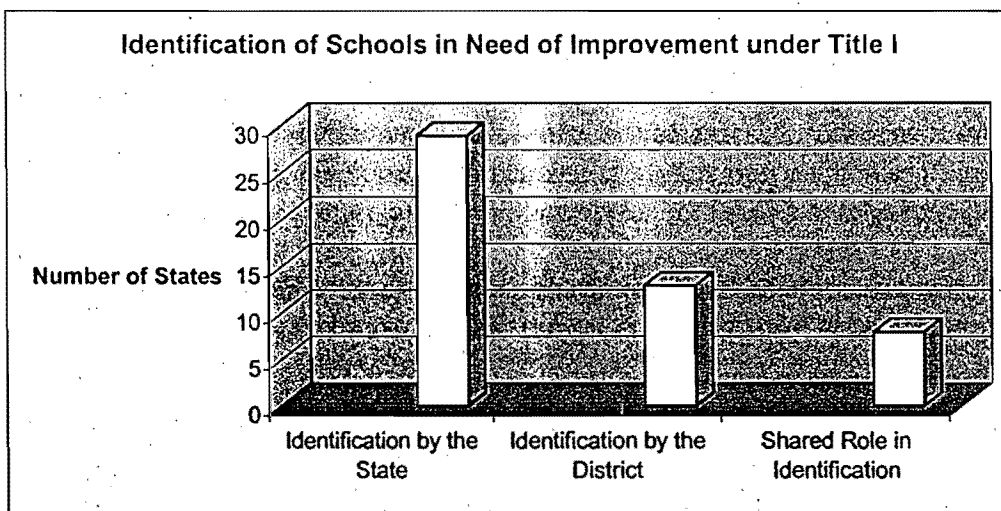
rates and improvement trends may be considered in determining which schools may be referred for review.

Who is responsible for identifying schools?

Under IASA, the responsibility of identifying schools in need of improvement rests with the local school district. Not all of the states have adopted this district-focused identification system, however. Three levels of responsibility emerge across the states:

- The state identifies Title I schools in need of improvement;
- The district identifies Title I schools in need of improvement; or
- The state and the local district share responsibility for identifying, verifying and/or notifying Title I schools that they are in need of improvement.

Figure 5.



As shown in Figure 5, 29 states keep the responsibility for identifying schools in need of improvement at the state level, while 13 states have districts identify such schools. The remaining eight states have developed varied processes in which both the state and the district play shared role in identification.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

The states with shared responsibility provide interesting examples of state and district collaboration. These eight states—Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, and Wisconsin—each developed a different process through which both the state and the district could take ownership for either determining which schools were eligible for program improvement or notifying those schools of their program improvement status. For example:

- In Colorado, districts are responsible for determining whether a school is to be identified for school improvement. An assigned consultant from the state department will review the district recommendations and the data that led to those decisions for each possible school to make a final determination. The district staff and the assigned consultant will review the body of evidence and determine if a school should be exempted from this final list.
- Maryland first notifies the district as to which schools are not making progress. The district is asked to identify those schools for program improvement as a means of verification with the state. If the district and school actions that follow do not improve the school's achievement, a school can become reconstitution-eligible. That determination is made between the state superintendent and the district superintendent, with the state holding final authority on reconstitution eligibility.

Identifying districts

States have been much slower to define adequate yearly progress for *districts*, and therefore to identify districts as in need of improvement. Many states have not yet developed district-level systems of accountability. Further, the processes that states have developed in order to identify districts as in need of improvement provide a more varied picture of state policy options.

States tend to use one or more of the following methods, however, to identify districts in need of improvement:

- The state identifies a district for program improvement if at least half of the schools within the district have been so identified;
- The state aggregates the assessment scores of the schools within the district or takes the average school score across the district, thereby creating a composite district score. It then applies the same AYP definition to the district as it applies to schools within the district; and/or
- The state applies the criteria outlined in federal regulation under the IASA of 1994: districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years will be identified for improvement.

Some states, however, have developed definitions for district program improvement based on state rating systems or levels of accreditation. In Texas, for instance, districts are identified for program improvement if classified as "unacceptable" in the state's Accountability Ratings System. Under the system to be implemented in Delaware for 2000-2001, districts that are low-performing will be classified as under "accreditation watch." In rural states, such as Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota

with many single-school districts, identifying a school as in need of improvement is tantamount to identifying the district.

Exiting program improvement status

States have generally adopted a “two in, two out” rule for schools, and in some cases districts, to determine who should exit program improvement. Specifically, states require schools to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years after they have been identified for program improvement. Some states have varied this rule by allowing schools to make adequate yearly progress for two out of three years after being identified for program improvement in order to be removed from that status.

Including Special Populations in the Title I Accountability System

There are two major reasons to include special student populations in accountability systems. The first reason is to improve the quality of educational opportunities afforded special needs students. The theory is that holding educators accountable for students' test scores will increase these students' access to a high quality, standards-based general education curriculum. The second reason is to provide useful information about the performance of special needs students so that parents and the public know how well a school is educating all of its children.

Achieving these goals, however, requires that special needs students:

- Be assessed on the content of the standards-based curriculum;
- Have their scores disaggregated and reported; and
- Have their scores included in the school and/or district accountability measures.

The provisions of Title I, as well as those of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), are designed to meet these requirements. States must include all students in the grades they test, and assess all students against the same content and performance standards. If standard assessment procedures cannot provide this information for students with diverse learning needs, such as students with disabilities or English language learners (ELL), states must make reasonable test adaptations and accommodations, or provide alternate assessments. These changes, however, must yield accurate and reliable information on students' mastery of the content covered in state standards. Test results must be disaggregated if the data are statistically sound, and reported with the same frequency as results reported for the general population.

In addressing the requirements of Title I and IDEA, states policymakers face a seemingly intractable problem: How to include all students in state assessment systems while ensuring that these assessments generate valid data. Can we assess all students

with instruments and under conditions that yield construct-relevant information and generate valid inferences about their knowledge and performance? These issues of test validity and construct-relevance underlie the decisions policymakers make about: (1) who gets tested on what and how; (2) whose test scores are reported and how; and (3) whose scores are included in accountability measures. The remainder of this section briefly describes how policymakers address these issues.

Who gets tested?

States report testing more students with disabilities and report they offer a range of test accommodations and modifications.⁵ States appear to offer a broader range of accommodations and modifications to their own criterion-referenced assessments. When using commercial, norm-referenced tests, states may be limited to accommodations allowed by the test publisher. States are developing and beginning to implement alternate assessments⁶ for students with disabilities, but states face ongoing challenges in determining student eligibility, aligning these tests with state standards, and scoring and reporting test results (Sack, 2000). States also report they are monitoring exclusion rates, and some are incorporating exclusion rates into their school accountability measures.

The story is different for English language learners. Tests that are given in English to students with limited English proficiency can be more of an assessment of their English ability than their content knowledge (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000). Therefore, states have developed a variety of policies regarding whether and when English language learners are included in state assessments. California, for example, requires all ELL students to take the state assessment, but allows those students who have been in the public school system less than a year to take a Spanish language assessment, the SABE 2, as well. Other states exclude students who have resided in the United States or in their state for up to three years if they are enrolled in a bilingual or ESL program.

A second group of states exempts students based on their length of time in an ESL or bilingual education program. Florida excludes students with less than two years of ESL; those with two or more years must be tested in English, but can have accommodations, such as additional time, or dividing the test into shorter periods. Many other states offer similar test accommodations to English language learners. A third set of states exempts students based on their level of English proficiency. English language learners in Nevada, for example, must pass the Language Acquisition Skills assessment to be included in the state assessment. Colorado exempts non-English speaking students

⁵ Although states use these terms in different ways, and sometimes interchangeably, we define "accommodations" as changes in presentation, response mode, time and/or setting, and "modifications" as changes that alter the content of the assessment.

⁶ Alternate assessments can be designed to measure different content and skills (such as functional life skills), or to measure the same content and skills as other students but in different ways (such as through portfolios).

who score at levels 1 or 2 on a 5-stage language proficiency rubric. Texas exempts non-Spanish speaking students from its grade 3-8 testing program based on their level of English proficiency, but requires all students to take the 10th grade exit test in English.

Finally, a handful of states like Arizona, New Mexico and Texas offer Spanish versions of some of their assessments. New York provides mathematics tests in four languages and will translate high school examinations in subjects other than English into five languages. The President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (2000) has raised concerns, however, about the rigor of Spanish language and translated versions of state assessments and the appropriateness of many test accommodations for English language learners.

Whose scores get reported?

States take one of five approaches in the disaggregation and reporting of the scores of students with disabilities and of English language learners: (1) they neither disaggregate nor report these scores; (2) they disaggregate but do not publicly report the scores; (3) they do not disaggregate but include the scores in aggregate score reports; (4) they report the scores of those tests taken under standard conditions or under conditions that don't interfere with the comparability of scores of students tested under regular conditions; or (5) they disaggregate and report all scores.

Delaware is an example of a state that falls into the fourth category. Students are assessed under one of five testing conditions: (a) regular conditions; (b) with accommodations that do not interfere with the comparability of their scores to scores of students tested under regular conditions; (c) with accommodations that interfere with comparability; (d) an alternative portfolio assessment; or (e) exemption for limited English proficiency (one time only, and if in Delaware schools for less than two consecutive years). Only tests taken under the first two conditions are included in school, district and state score reports.

Arizona, on the other hand, disaggregates and reports the scores of all test-takers, but by category of testing condition: All students--standard conditions; regular education--standard conditions; special education--standard conditions; and special education--non-standard conditions. Indiana takes a similar approach, but reports scores as: all tested; general education with and without accommodations; and special education with and without accommodations.

Most states include the scores of ELL students who are tested in their aggregate reports, but vary on whether they report these scores separately.

Who gets included in the accountability system?

The final decision states must make concerns whose scores to include in school and district accountability measures. Many states report including the scores of all tested students in their accountability systems, although some exclude students taking

alternative assessments and other students who took tests under non-standard conditions. Again, states face the issue of validity and comparability when holding schools accountable for student performance, especially if they use norm-referenced tests.

Issues

States differ widely in the goals they set for Title I schools, their measures of continuous progress, who they include in their assessment and accountability systems and how they identify schools and/or districts for program improvement. It is not surprising, therefore, to see considerable variation in the numbers of Title I schools that have been identified for program improvement. This last section uses findings reported in this paper as well as insights garnered during the data collection process to identify some issues facing Title I accountability.

Multiple accountability systems

Supporters of Title I of the IASA hoped that this federal legislation would serve as an impetus for states to develop an integrated set of education reform policies that would apply equally to all students and schools. Title I schools and students would be brought under the larger umbrella of state standards-based reform; states would no longer have different expectations for Title I students or requirements for Title I schools. This vision has not been realized in the majority of states, however. As described in this report, more than half of the states have dual accountability systems where Title I schools are subject to different measures of adequate yearly progress. Some of these states are taking steps to create “seamless” school-level, performance-based accountability systems. Many states, however, particularly strong local control states, will retain dual systems.

In states with dual accountability systems, AYP requirements for Title I schools generally meet the spirit (if not the letter) of the federal legislation, while accountability requirements for non-Title I schools may be less rigorous. This difference is not a problem if most or all low-performing schools participate in a state’s Title I program. In North Dakota, for example, nearly all districts have a Title I school and most districts contain only one school. In other states, however, it is likely that a substantial number of low-performing schools may not be subject to the more rigorous Title I accountability policies. Middle and high schools are under-represented in the Title I program. And some large, very high poverty cities are unable to serve all of their Title I-eligible schools.

Continuous progress toward high standards

The intent of the AYP provision of Title I is to ensure that schools make continuous progress toward the goal of having all students meet high state standards. Many states fall short of this goal, however. Twelve states do not incorporate any measure of continuous progress into their AYP measures and most of these states have established modest performance goals, such as having 50% of students meet state standards. Of those states that do include some measure of continuous progress, many do

not expect schools to bring all of their students to proficient and advanced levels of achievement.

Assessment issues

State assessments are the cornerstone of state accountability systems and are a critical variable in determining whether schools will be identified for program improvement. Our findings raise a set of issues about the nature of these assessments.

The first set of issues concerns the use of norm-referenced tests to measure student performance on state content standards. Sixteen states currently use only norm-referenced tests to measure student performance and adequate yearly progress toward state standards. Another 11 states use some combination of NRTs and CRTs in their accountability systems. By definition, NRTs measure the knowledge and skills of students across the country, while criterion-referenced tests are designed to measure knowledge and skills that are specific to a state (and/or district). For this reason, some educators, researchers and policymakers question whether and how well NRTs are aligned with state standards and whether they are appropriate measures of student performance on challenging standards.

State policymakers appeared to have three reasons for relying on norm-referenced assessments. First, parents, policymakers and the public want some way of comparing the performance of their students to students outside their states. The National Assessment of Educational Progress provides this kind of comparison, but only at the state level, periodically, and for a limited number of subjects. In addition, NAEP is not a high profile assessment like national commercial tests. Second, and perhaps for this reason, some state legislatures require the administration of norm-referenced assessments. Finally, small states find the cost of developing state-based criterion-referenced tests too high.

A second set of assessment issues concerns the required use of “multiple measures.” Neither policymakers nor the education community have a clear or common understanding of what this term means. Does “multiple measures” mean assessing the same content in different ways, assessing a range of content with multiple instruments (but possibly with one test format), assessing multiple grades in a school, and/or measuring non-cognitive behaviors? The U.S. Department of Education has interpreted this requirement in the first way—to mean the inclusion of multiple approaches and formats in a state assessment system, through either one or multiple assessment instruments (1999). Some states, however, use only one format in their assessment systems—multiple choice items—while others include open-ended and/or performance items. A few states address the multiple measure requirement by including more formative assessments, such as early literacy tests, in their AYP measures, while a few others include local assessments. Some states include non-cognitive measures in their accountability systems.

Third, current assessment policies do not yield valid and comparable measures of performance for all students. As discussed in the preceding section on Including Special Student Populations, states either exclude some students from their state assessment programs or exclude student test scores from reporting and accountability systems because their scores are not valid measures of what they know and/or their scores are not comparable to those of students tested under regular conditions. The requirement to offer accommodations, modifications and alternate assessments to students with disabilities will increase their access to both the general education curriculum and state assessments, but it does not address the technical issues of how to incorporate these scores into a larger accountability system. The situation is equally, if not more, complicated for English language learners, particularly given the diversity of languages represented in our schools today.

Equity

Documenting and addressing performance gaps within schools, districts and states is another challenge. A growing number of states are making school-level data on subgroup performance at the school level readily available to educators and the public. States with large numbers of small schools and small districts (including one-school districts) cannot report these data, however, for reasons of statistical soundness and confidentiality. Fewer states have accountability policies that are designed to narrow or close the achievement gaps among groups of students. Only 15 states require schools to narrow the gap between the lowest and highest performing students as part of their definitions of AYP. Only two states include adequate performance for subgroups in their AYP policies. Thus, many schools and/or districts can meet the performance goals set by their states without addressing achievement disparities within their boundaries.

Capacity

The unanswered question in the performance-based accountability movement (and in the implementation of the Title I accountability provisions) is whether states and districts have the capacity to support school improvement efforts in struggling and failing schools. States and districts need knowledge, human resources and financial resources to turn around poorly-performing schools. It is unclear what the optimum mix and level of resources is, but states and districts report having insufficient capacity to help the number of schools that have been (or should be) identified as in need of improvement. California, for example, designated 3,144 schools as under-performing in 1999-2000, but included only 430 of these schools in the first year of its Immediate Intervention/ Underperforming Schools Program. President Clinton's executive order is a step in the right direction, but considerably more research needs to be done on the roles that states and districts play and on the kinds of assistance they need and that they can provide to schools that have been identified as in need of improvement under both state and Title I criteria.

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Table 1: Alignment of Title I and General State Accountability Systems, 1999-2000		
State	Unitary Systems	Dual Systems
Alabama	x	
Alaska		x
Arizona *		x
Arkansas		x
California	x	
Colorado		x
Connecticut	x	
Delaware ¹	x	
Florida	x	
Georgia ³		x
Hawaii		x
Idaho		x
Illinois * ³	x	
Indiana		x
Iowa	x	
Kansas ³		x
Kentucky	x	
Louisiana	x	
Maine ²		x
Maryland	x	
Massachusetts * ¹	x	
Michigan		x
Minnesota		x
Mississippi *		x
Missouri		x
Montana		x
Nebraska		x
Nevada		x
New Hampshire * ²		x
New Jersey		x
New Mexico ³	x	
New York ³	x	
North Carolina	x	
North Dakota		x
Ohio	x	
Oklahoma		x
Oregon * ²	x	
Pennsylvania		x
Rhode Island	x	
South Carolina *		x
South Dakota		x
Tennessee *		x
Texas	x	
Utah		x
Vermont ¹	x	
Virginia *	x	
Washington		x
West Virginia	x	
Wisconsin *	x	
Wyoming ¹		x

Table 2: Categories of Defining Title I Adequate Yearly Progress, 1999-2000					
State	Meeting an Absolute Target	and/or	Making Relative Growth	and/or	Narrowing the Achievement Gap
Alabama	x				
Alaska	x				
Arizona *	x	or	x		
Arkansas	x				
California			x		
Colorado					x
Connecticut	x				
Delaware ¹	x	and	x	and	x
Florida	x				
Georgia ³	x			and	x
Hawaii	x	or	x		
Idaho			x		
Illinois *	x			and	x
Indiana	x	or	x		
Iowa	n/a		n/a		n/a
Kansas ³	x	or	x		
Kentucky			x	and	x
Louisiana	x	or	x		
Maine ²					x
Maryland			x		
Massachusetts * ¹	x	and	x		
Michigan					x
Minnesota			x		
Missouri					x
Mississippi *	x	and	x		
Montana	x				
Nebraska					x
Nevada					x
New Hampshire * ²	x	and	x		
New Jersey	x				
New Mexico ³	x				
New York ³	x	or	x		
North Carolina	x	or	x		
North Dakota			x		
Ohio	x	or	x		
Oklahoma	x	or	x		
Oregon * ²	x				
Pennsylvania					x
Rhode Island			x	and	x
South Carolina *	x	or	x		
South Dakota					x
Tennessee *			x		
Texas	x				
Utah	x	or	x		
Vermont ¹			x		
Virginia *	x				
Washington					x
West Virginia	x				
Wisconsin*	x	or	x	and	x
Wyoming ¹			x		

Table 3: Identification of Schools in Need of Improvement under Title I, 1999-2000

State	Identification by the State	Identification by the District	Shared Role in Identification
Alabama			x
Alaska	x		
Arizona *		x	
Arkansas	x		
California	x		
Colorado			x
Connecticut	x		
Delaware ¹	x		
Florida	x		
Georgia ³	x		
Hawaii	x		
Idaho		x	
Illinois * ³			x
Indiana	x		
Iowa		x	
Kansas ³		x	
Kentucky	x		
Louisiana	x		
Maine ²	x		
Maryland			x
Massachusetts * ¹	x		
Michigan	x		
Minnesota		x	
Mississippi *	x		
Missouri		x	
Montana	x		
Nebraska			x
Nevada			x
New Hampshire * ²		x	
New Jersey	x		
New Mexico ³		x	
New York ³		x	
North Carolina			x
North Dakota	x		
Ohio		x	
Oklahoma	x		
Oregon * ²	x		
Pennsylvania		x	
Rhode Island	x		
South Carolina *	x		
South Dakota	x		
Tennessee *		x	
Texas	x		
Utah	x		
Vermont ¹	x		
Virginia *	x		
Washington		x	
West Virginia	x		
Wisconsin *		-	x
Wyoming ¹	x		

Tables 1, 2, and 3

1. To be implemented 2000-2001.
2. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending Federal approval.
3. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending State Board approval.

* Profiles on these states have not yet been fully verified by the state's department of education.

