

Small and Rural Schools: Alaska, Delaware and Hawaii

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Introduction to the Problem

In early September, 2003, several states were struggling with the reporting issues of the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 (NCLB). Issues of participation rates, proficiency levels, privacy issues (such as FERPA) and the range of minimum “n” scores used by different states for participation rates, proficiency levels and due process issues abounded. Discussions surrounding what different states (and in some cases districts) legally defined what constituted a school and the minimum number of students to be enrolled at a school to be considered a school were shared. What we found was a diverse definition of a school, various AYP requirements according to state accountability workbooks and a general sense of unease at the possible downstream consequences of implementing our individual state accountability workbooks once we started working with actual student, school, LEA and SEA data from small schools for the 2002-2003 school year.

Three states: Alaska, Delaware and Hawai‘i had specific questions regarding small schools, isolated schools, and Alaska and Hawai‘i had concerns about students taught in traditionally non-western education systems and located in areas, islands or territories that did not speak English. At this time, before we had time to analyze the data from our states, we agreed that we would work together to report out our general findings within each of our states and discuss issues that might relate more specifically to our unique situations: small schools, isolated schools, schools where native languages and cultures were not taught teaching

traditional Westernized standards and benchmarks pertaining to Algebra 1 or Shakespearean literature and the downstream effects of AYP and NCLB on these schools. We agreed that school effectiveness should not solely be based on three NCLB indicators and agreed that it would be statistically invalid to compare schools between states based on NCLB measurements.

Effective Schools

Initial studies pertaining to effective schools were generally a reaction to the disappointing Coleman report (1966) which suggested that schools and teachers did not have an influence on student achievement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1996). However, even though most of the variance in achievement is explained by student ability and family socioeconomic status (factors that are external to a school), research has found that school-level factors also explain variance in educational outcomes (Brookover et al., 1979; Choi et al., 2004; Creemers, 1994; Edmonds, 1979; Goldschmidt & Choy, 2004; Gong, 2004; Hamilton & Stecher, 2004; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Mortimore et al., 1988; Witte & Walsch, 1990). Previous research supports the assumption that not all schools are equitable, as they exhibit characteristics that differentially affect student achievement (Choi et al., 2004; Fowler & Walberg, 1991; Goldschmidt & Choy, 2004; Gong, 2004; Hanushek, 1989, 1997; Heck & Mayor, 1993; Kohn, 2004). However, the results of educational effectiveness studies have been varied and difficult to replicate (Creemers & Scheerens, 1994; Heck & Mayor, 1993; Kreft, 1993; Slavin, 1994). Because schools, districts and states are now the NCLB targets for policy makers' reforms (e.g., resources, accountability procedures, staff development), it is critical that valid and reliable research continues to address the influence of school characteristics on achievement and accountability (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2004; Erpenbach, Forte Fast & Potts, 2003; Forte Fast & Hebbler, 2004; Kohn, 2004).

The requirements of NCLB are affecting all schools within the nation. The reported minimum “n” used for NCLB purposes has been an issue of debate and varies between states which distinguish the minimum “n” needed for confidentiality reporting purposes and the minimum “n” States use for AYP decisions and participation results. The question has been posed: “What minimum “n” yields the most reliable decisions but also does not lead to negative consequences by under-identifying schools that should be identified for improvement and over-identifying those that should not be so identified?... While a minimum “n” of 25 to 30 might strike a reasonable balance between decision consistency and practicality, this may still result in many potentially unreliable decisions” (ASR-CAS Joint Study Group on Adequate Yearly Progress, 2002, p. 4).

There are additional policy implications regarding the minimum “n” size—issues of participation rates, subgroup size and assessment issues. This paper will review the results of three states; Alaska, Delaware , and Hawai‘i and review the results of AYP decisions, participation rates for the 2002-2003 school year and unique situations within each of our states. After writing this paper, we determined that it would be more appropriate to address the issues of assessment confidentiality at a latter date once other minimum n-size AYP and participation issues have been examined. In this paper we are concerned about four issues:

How many schools were initially not counted in the SEA or LEA for AYP participation results because their school enrollment in the tested grades fell below the minimum “n” for participation and therefore made AYP on language arts and mathematics because they got “byes” as they did not have enough students within the school? In these situations, what other evidence did we have about these schools and did we use the other academic indicators to determine if

they were a school truly in need of improvement? In Alaska, Delaware and Hawai‘i the minimum “n” size for participation rate is equal to or greater than 40 (Erpenbach, et al., 2003).

We were also interested in the number of situations where the minimum sample cell size of 25 to 30 students (which a state determined would yield reliable results for proficiency/performance levels) would be left blank and if small schools would have been judged to “meet” AYP based on having fewer numbers (therefore getting a “bye” because they has less than 30 or 25 students) than required for reporting performance by subgroups. We wanted to see if the SEA or LEA, who is responsible for all students, was identified as failing to meet AYP even though the school that the students attend have met AYP due to getting “byes” for their smaller than the minimally required cell group size. For meeting proficiency, Alaska, has an n size equal to or greater that 20 with a confidence interval of 99%, Delaware has an n size equal to or greater that 40, and Hawai‘i has an n size equal to or greater that 30 (Erpenbach, et al., 2003). Based on the initial state accountability workbook for these states, how many schools met AYP due to a small “n” size for proficiency and did the SEA or LEA fail to meet AYP proficiency because they had a large enough n size?

We were additionally extremely interested in the reporting issues surrounding the 37 sub cells (i.e. all students, and the sub groups for economically disadvantaged, migrant, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, Native American, White, Students with disabilities and ESLL students) by subgroup. What percentage of schools, met all the annual Reading and Mathematics targeted proficiency levels and participation rate by sub group? Did the majority of the schools that did not make AYP, fail to make AYP due to one or two subgroups or did the majority fail to make AYP based on several subgroups? Did a pattern arrive with the subgroups failing to make AYP? Were they secondary schools? Isolated schools? Small schools? Large schools? Did most

schools met the other academic indicator? How many schools got “byes” in the subgroups due to small n-size? The minimum “n” for reporting at the subgroup level in Alaska, has an n size equal to 5, Delaware has an n size equal to 15, and Hawai‘i has an n size equal to 10 (Erpenbach, et al., 2003). How many schools did not have to report and therefore “meet” subgroup AYP due to a small “n” size for the subgroup cell? These issues become politically volatile when these small, usually isolated schools meet AYP and the large urban schools do not.

Finally, and most importantly, we wanted to review what we have learned this first year of NCLB. What did we expect to occur? What were the unintended consequences? What would we do differently and, what did we do to correct our unintentional mistakes in our accountability workbooks in each of our states? We wanted to be able to discuss some of our unique school settings and get any feedback you all might suggest for meeting the NCLB requirements of our semi-unique school and data findings.

We wanted to conclude this paper with some of the situations that have occurred in Alaska, Delaware and Hawai‘i. We are sure you all have some stories to share as well. In this paper we will be reporting by state and conclude with global remarks about these areas of concern.

ALASKA

Alaska accountability in 2002-2003 included data from benchmark tests in grades 3, 6, and 8, the high school graduation qualifying examination given in grade 10, and the TerraNova exam given in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9. In 2005 Alaska will change to all criterion referenced examinations for the purposes of calculating AYP. Alaska used a 99% confidence interval on status, and had an AMO of 64.03% for ELA and 54.86% for mathematics. The graduation rate is

the other indicator, with a four year cohort rate of 55.58, and for those schools that do not graduate students the attendance rate is the other indicator with a threshold of 85%.

Summary of Alaska School Accountability (2002-2003)

Total number of schools = 488

Total number of K-5 schools = 146

Total number of K-8 schools = 24

Total number of middle schools (6-8) = 34

Total number of middle to high schools (6-12) = 28

Total number of high schools (9-12) = 46

Total number of K-12 schools = 210

Ratings of Title I versus Non-Title I Schools (2002-2003)

	Title I School	Non-Title I Schools
Met AYP	118	88
Level 1 – Alert	112	104
Level 2 – School Improvement I	49	
Level 3 – School Improvement II	9	
Level 4 – Corrective Action	8	

Schools meeting AYP by Type:

K-5 schools 76 of 146
 K-8 schools 19 of 24
 Middle (6-8) 8 of 34
 Middle/High (6-12) 10 of 28
 High (9-12) 16 of 46
 K-12 schools 77 of 210

Level I - Alert:

K-5 schools 67 of 146
 K-8 schools 4 of 24
 Middle (6-8) 26 of 34
 Middle/High (6-12) 17 of 28
 High (9-12) 30 of 46
 K-12 schools 72 of 210

Level II – School Improvement:

K-5 schools	1 of 146
K-8 schools	1 of 24
Middle (6-8)	N/A
Middle/High (6-12)	1 of 28
High (9-12)	N/A
K-12 schools	46 of 210

Level III – School Improvement:

K-5 schools	2 of 146
K-8 schools	N/A
Middle (6-8)	N/A
Middle/High (6-12)	N/A
High (9-12)	N/A
K-12 schools	7 of 210

Level IV – Corrective Action:

K-5 schools	N/A
K-8 schools	N/A
Middle (6-8)	N/A
Middle/High (6-12)	N/A
High (9-12)	N/A
K-12 schools	8 of 210

Reasons Schools Did Not Make AYP

282 schools did not meet AYP

217 missed for the first year only

49 schools missed for two years consecutively

9 schools missed for three years consecutively

8 schools missed for four years consecutively

71 schools did not meet for other indicator of graduation rate.

No school was able to use the improvement provision, or “Safe Harbor” to meet AYP.

Number of Schools Not Meeting AYP - Performance					
Identification Group	MATH	LANG.	BOTH	TOTAL	PERCENT
		ARTS (M & LA)		SCHOOLS	OF TOTAL
School as a Whole	99	120	92	127	26.0%
African-American	10	7	5	12	2.5%
Alaska Native	85	114	82	117	24.0%
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Asian	5	5	4	6	1.2%
Caucasian	1	2	1	2	0.4%
Hispanic	5	5	4	6	1.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	90	107	85	112	23.0%
Students with Disabilities	92	110	89	113	23.2%
LEP Students	79	90	78	90	18.4%

Schools not Meeting Participation Rate but Meeting AMO's					
School as a Whole	49	44	43	50	8.8%

Number of Schools Not Meeting AYP - Participation Rate		
Identification Group	TOTAL	PERCENT
		OF TOTAL
School as a Whole	70	14.3%
African-American	3	0.6%
Alaska Native	44	9.0%
American Indian	1	0.2%
Asian	1	0.2%
Caucasian	28	5.7%
Hispanic	7	1.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	35	7.2%
Students with Disabilities	34	7.0%
LEP Students	16	3.3%

Number of		
Categories	Count of	Percent
Not Meeting	Schools	of Total
1	53	18.7%
2	65	22.9%
3	38	13.4%
4	19	6.7%
5	11	3.9%
6	13	4.6%
7	9	3.2%
8	46	16.2%
9	4	1.4%
10	1	0.4%
11	8	2.8%
12	7	2.5%
13	4	1.4%
14	1	0.4%
15	3	1.1%

Summary of Alaska Accountability

Alaska has 55 systems that are considered “districts” and 13 of those met district AYP and 42 did not meet district AYP. Of those 42 districts that did not meet AYP, 36 did not meet for the first year, four did not meet for two consecutive years, and two did not meet for three consecutive years. The state as a whole did not meet AYP, however participation requirements were met in all groups. Alaska did not meet for performance in ELA or math within the groups of Native American (including Alaska Native and American Indian), economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and limited English proficient students. Alaska as a whole did meet for the “other indicator” of graduation rate.

All schools are included for accountability in Alaska because internal state issues drive the desire for every school to be included in the accountability system. At the school as a whole level AYP is calculated regardless of size. At the subgroup levels Alaska has a participation rate minimum “n” of 20, and from 21-39 two students may not participate and the school will be considered to have met participation rate, and at 40+ participation is based on 95%. For performance Alaska uses a minimum “n” of 20 FAY tested students to determine AYP calculations. Having a one size fits all accountability system for a state where school sizes range from ten to over 1000 students raises concerns from within the state, and the state recognized a need to complete validity studies to assure the right schools are designated and those that are improving or demonstrating they are meeting AYP are not designated. Approximately sixteen percent of Alaska schools have 10 students, 27% have 25 or fewer students and 40% of Alaska schools have fewer than 100 students. Many of the very small schools are rural-remote where one can only reach the village by bush piloted airplane, primarily Alaska Native student enrollment with large populations of students with limited English proficiency. Alaska also has

larger schools, with 13% having more than 500 students. This diversity in size, in addition to geographic location, make one accountability system difficult to implement and guard against problems with validity.

Alaska faces concerns regarding the other indicator of graduation rate starting in 2003-2004 due to the implementation of the high stakes High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, which may cause schools to miss AYP due to graduation rate when they otherwise may have met AYP.

Alaska believes a growth model that measures progress based on targeted growth is a better mechanism for determining adequate yearly progress, and is working to develop a growth model. As part of the amendments to the Alaska accountability plan for 2004 Alaska has requested use of a confidence interval on safe harbor with the intent this allows this tool to be more effective with greater confidence, and the one aspect of AYP that has some recognition of growth. Alaska believes a confidence interval on safe harbor will allow a smoother transition to a growth model in the future.

Delaware

Delaware has some other unique characteristics which make us more like some of the large states, Texas and California, than the smaller states of Rhode Island or Connecticut. This is an amazing comparison when one considers the size of Delaware: 96 miles from the Northern border to the southern border, varies from 9 to 35 miles wide, and a total of 1,982 square miles. Delaware has urban, suburban, rural, beaches, golf courses, farmland, chickens, chemical plants, DuPont Company, major banks yet only 15 miles of an interstate highway. In fact, the population of Delaware is small – 783,600 people (an increase of 17.6% from the 1990 census data to the 2000 census data and ranks 45th among the states) and 117,000 public school students.

An additional 19.2% of school age students are enrolled in non-public schools in Delaware. To get to the point, the small state of Delaware has a very diverse population as demonstrated in the school data as well as the census data.

Summary of Delaware School Accountability (2002-2003)

Total number of schools = 171

Total number of Elementary schools = 100

Total number of middle schools = 33

Total number of high schools = 28

Total number of charter schools = 9

Total number of combination (middle/high) = 1

Total number of other agency schools = 1 (juvenile corrections and HSS)

4 schools rated as Not Applicable (first year schools)

Ratings of Title I versus Non-Title I schools (2002-2003)

	Title I Schools	Non-Title I Schools
Superior	45	17
Commendable	8	4
Academic Review	40	45
Academic Watch	12	0
Total	105	66

Schools Rated as Superior by Type (made AYP)

Elementary	56 of 100
Middle	1 of 33
High	2 of 28
Charter	3 of 9
Total	62 of 171

Schools Rated as Commendable by Type (made AYP)

Elementary	6 of 100
Middle	3 of 33
High	1 of 28
Charter	2 of 9
Total	12 of 171 plus 1 agency school

Schools Rated as Academic Review by Type (Did not meet AYP)

Elementary	32 of 100
Middle	23 of 33
High	25 of 28
Charter	4 of 9
Combination	1 of 1
Total	85 of 171

Schools Rated as Academic Watch by Type (Did not meet AYP)

Elementary	6 of 100
Middle	6 of 33
High	0 of 28
Charter	0 of 9
Total	12 of 171

Reasons schools did not make AYP

97 schools did not make AYP

85 missed for the first year only

12 schools missed got two or more consecutive years

No schools missed AYP solely because of the LEP subgroup

14 schools missed AYP solely because of the SPED subgroup

23 schools missed the performance or participation target because of the subgroup

SPED: 9 schools were helped by safe harbor in the SPED subgroup

9 schools missed AYP solely because of the OAI- (elementary and middle)

9 schools missed AYP for not meeting the 95% participation target but all 9 also missed at least one of the performance targets:

3 schools missed both ELA and Math

2 schools missed only ELA
4 schools only missed Math
55 schools missed AYP and did not meet both ELA and Math performance targets
20 schools missed AYP and did not meet the ELA target
13 schools missed AYP and did not meet the Math target
7 high schools missed the OAI (Graduation rate) but also missed at least in of the performance targets

Safe Harbor

12 schools made AYP because of safe harbor
2 schools made safe harbor but did not meet AYP because of OAI

Summary of Delaware District Accountability

19 districts total in Delaware (16 regular and 3 vocational districts: All are Title I districts)
2 districts made AYP and were rated as superior
17 districts did not make AYP for the first time
Safe Harbor did not help any district

State Accountability for Delaware

Delaware as a state did not make AYP in 2002-2003, but had enough students in all subgroups to meet minimum n of 40. All 9 subgroups met the 95% participation rate for ELA and Math. In fact, the subgroups had either 99% or 100% participation rates in both content areas. For the ELA performance target of 57%, 4 subgroups did not meet the target – African-American, Hispanic, LEP and low income. The math performance target of 33% was missed by only 1 subgroup, the special education subgroup. The state did show progress on both the elementary/middle and high school Other Academic Indicators.

Summary of Accountability in Delaware

Delaware did not use confidence intervals in 2002-2003 but has modified its plan to do so for the 2003-2004 school year accountability process. Further, Delaware's accountability system

for 2003-2004 includes an AYP determination for every public school and district, which this year will determine whether the given school was above the AYP target, meets the AYP target or below the AYP target. In addition, Delaware plans this year to fully merge AYP with the state's prior accountability system by including both AYP and state progress determinations. These two components will form a single statewide accountability system. The state progress measure is based on the extent to which each school improved the performance of students across all performance levels and all core content areas (i.e., reading, math, science, and social studies). Schools will be given a state progress determination based on whether they perform above state performance targets ("A"), meet state performance targets ("M"), or score below state performance targets ("B"). The state progress determination will not mitigate AYP (i.e., a school that scores below the target for AYP for two consecutive years in the same content area/other indicator will be identified as under improvement) but will allow for more valid and reliable accountability determination and distinctions in performance for schools who are making significant progress in improving student achievement in addition to AYP.

The Hispanic population in Delaware has increased by 135.6% with one county showing an increase of 368.5%. The trend continues in the public school enrollment numbers with more than a 300% increase in the Hispanic enrollment. The percent of students that are identified as low income statewide, eligibility for free or reduced meals as the indicator of low income, was 35.4% with a low of 9% in one district to a high of 54.1% in another district. The racial/ethnic breakdown for public school students statewide in 2003-2004 is:

White	57.3%
African-American	31.9%
Hispanic	7.9%

American Indian/Native Alaskan	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.6%

Thus, for a small state, we have a very diverse population that is rapidly growing – a pattern that is similar to several other states.

Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i is one single school district and the state has two official languages: English and Hawaiian. The Hawai‘i Department of Education (HDOE) has a centralized school system that incorporates seven geographical districts and seven islands that have Department of Education Schools. The HDOE is comprised of four major districts; O‘ahu (68% of the students who attend public school), Hawai‘i (14% of the student population) , Kaua‘i (6% of the student population), and Maui (12% of the student population; the islands of Moloka‘i and Lana‘i are part of the Maui district). Additionally, the Kaua‘i district encompasses a privately owned island, Niihau, where there is one school with approximately 40 students who all speak and write Hawaiian. During the 2002-2003 school year, there were 280 schools within the state and over 185,000 students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Of these schools, 24 were charter schools and 5 schools were considered Hawaiian immersions schools where English is not taught until 5th grade.

Our state accountability workbook states that forty is the minimum number of students required to appropriately measure the participation rate of schools and subgroups within schools. Thirty is the minimum number of students required to appropriately measure the proficiency rate (i.e., percent proficient) of schools and subgroups within schools. For reporting purposes, ten is the minimum number of students, in a school or subgroup in a school, required to protect the privacy (i.e., identity) of students.

Comments

In Hawai‘i, the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (Stanford 9), published in 1997 by Harcourt Educational Measurement, along with customized open ended and multiple choice items that have been aligned to our Hawai‘i Content and Performance Standards was used to assess the academic achievement of all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 during 2002 through 2004. Several school were concerned about how we would calculate AYP for school with small n-sizes and wanted clarification as to how AYP will be determined for small schools. Our answer came from our posted NLCB Accountability Workbook (8-6-03), p. 8:

“At present, all Hawai‘i public schools have at least one grade (3, 5, 8, 10) assessed under the state assessment program. Additionally, most schools meet the minimum group size threshold of 30. On the 2002 state assessment, 21 schools had a total n-count in the grades assessed of less than 30, and it is projected that of these only three schools will have less than 30 students when data are aggregated over two consecutive years. For schools with fewer than 30 students enrolled, when pooled across all grades assessed, we will aggregate data over two consecutive years (or more, if necessary) in order to meet the minimum group size requirement. If the minimum n-count requirement is not met in a given year even with multi-year aggregation of school-wide data, the AYP determination is still made using the regular AYP model. In such cases, the reported AYP results will include a statement indicating that the results may be unreliable due to the small number of students enrolled in the school available for analysis.”

Additionally, the analysis to determine AYP will be limited to the “All Students” level since subgroups within these very small schools will not have sufficient n-counts within subgroups. We needed to amend our accountability workbook and look at the other academic indicator as the method for determining if the school made AYP when the n size was too small.

It had always been intended that schools should make or not make AYP based on the academic indicators. We had never really considered the possibility that schools would make or not make AYP based on the other academic indicator, in these instances retention rate and graduation rates (Mike Heim, April 19, 2004). One of our downstream unanticipated effects was that schools made or did not make AYP based on retention and graduation rates.

During the 2003-2004 school year, there were only 5 schools that did not meet the minimum “n” needed for participation nor proficiency levels. One of the schools was on Oahu, our most populated Island and was not a charter school (which tend to be smaller schools).

Summary of School Accountability (2002-2003)

Total number of schools = 280

Total number of elementary schools = 172

Total number of middle schools = 37

Total number of high schools = 35

Total number of multi-level schools= 33 (elementary/ middle, Middle High and K-12)

Total number of charter schools = 24

Total number of Hawaiian Immersion schools= 5

Total number of special schools = 2

3 schools rated as Not Applicable (first year schools)

Total number of populated islands with schools = 7

Ratings of Title I versus Non-Title I schools (2002-2003)

	Title I Schools n=137 (49%)	Non-Title I Schools n=140 (51%)
In Good Standing, Unconditional	19 (14%)	67 (48%)
In Good Standing, Pending 2003-2004 AYP	34 (25%)	73 (54%)
School Improvement Year One	3 (2%)	0
School Improvement Year Two	12 (9%)	0
Corrective Action	25 (18%)	0
Planning for Restructuring	44 (32%)	0
Total Met Overall AYP	42 (31%)	67 (48%)
Total Not Met Overall AYP	95 (69%)	73 (52%)

School Type by NCLB Status for Schools that Met AYP (N=109)

	Elementary	Middle	High	Multilevel	Charter	Regular
In Good Standing, Unconditional	76	4	1	5	10	76
School Improvement Year Two	6	0	0	0	0	6
Corrective Action	15	0	0	2	0	17
Total Number Met Overall AYP	97	4	1	7	10	99

School Type by NCLB Status for Schools that Did Not Meet AYP (N=168)

	Elementary	Middle	High	Multilevel	Charter	Regular
In Good Standing, Pending 2003-2004 AYP	38	22	33	14	14	93
School Improvement Year One	1	1	0	1	0	3
School Improvement Year Two	3	1	1	1	0	6
Corrective Action	6	1	0	1	0	8
Planning for Restructuring	27	8	0	9	0	44
Total Not Met Overall AYP	75	33	34	26	14	154

Reasons schools did not make AYP

168 schools did not make AYP

2 did not meet due to the third indicator

31 did not meet due to participation only

41 did not meet due to proficiency only

8 did not meet due to proficiency in both reading and math for all students

4 did not meet due to proficiency in reading only

1 did not meet due to proficiency in mathematics only

49 did not meet due to participation in reading for all students

45 did not meet due to participation in mathematics for all students

57 did not meet due to proficiency in reading for all students

42 did not meet due to proficiency in mathematics for all students

64 did not meet due to a subgroup and missed AYP for the first year only

81 missed for two or more consecutive years

Some final thoughts:

Hawai'i does not use Confidence Intervals in calculating AYP. As we are one unified school district, with the current (April 2004) averaging flexibility, which was not available during August 2003, many of the issues of small n size will disappear.

Yet we will continue to have issues regarding isolated schools and Hawaiian Immersion schools where English is not taught until 5th grade.

Many schools had the following types of question: The minimum number of students in a subgroup to get a proficiency rating is 30 and the minimum number of students to get a participation rate is 40. What does this mean? Does it mean if we have 35 students in a subgroup, we will get a proficiency rating but not be counted towards AYP purposes since the number of students is less than 40? We responded that the subgroup would receive a proficiency rate since "n" is greater than or equal to 30 students. The findings would count toward determining AYP. The subgroup

would not receive a participation rate since “n” is less than 40 students and would not count toward determining AYP.

Several questions regarding dis-enrolling from school resulted in revisiting policy decisions that clarified concerns, dates of releasing students from schools and exceptions to compulsory education. Many questions related to the impracticality of assessing truant students who are either run-aways or have stopped coming to school.

In response to several questions from the field (teachers, administrators, parents, testing coordinators) we have begun to combine a question and answer book which will be more fully updated by school year 2004-2005. We found that many of the problems were with antiquated practices that had been continued at schools, (specifically in the area of enrollment) in spite of recent and updated directions to the contrary.

Future Practices

Effective Schools Research

School reform has been through many phases during the last forty years. In the mid-1960's and early 1970's, reports concluded schools did not have a substantial effect on student achievement. The reports of Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) proposed that schools had very little influence on student achievement as the students' performance was primarily determined by the students' family background.

Coleman's classic report (1966) concluded students' socioeconomic status accounted for most of the differences in their academic achievement. This report indicated “the initial differences with which children enter school simply continue over the years of school, unaffected by the impact of good or poor schools” (Coleman, 1970, p. 32).

Prior to NCLB, many of the effective schools studies were a reaction to the disappointing educational reports which suggested that schools and teachers did not influence student achievement. Many educators and researchers did not agree with the Coleman findings and believed that schools had an effect on student outcomes (Anderson, 1982; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Hanushek, 1989, 1997; Kohn, 2004; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Murnane, 1981; Sammons, Thomas, Mortimore, Matthews, & Hillman, 1994). Initially, school effectiveness models were trying to demonstrate that schools and teachers influenced student achievement. However, these preliminary models did not address the multilevel nature of education—students within classrooms, with teachers within departments, within schools within school districts.

As the theories were “improved,” models were developed to address the different levels within schools (Choi et al., 2004; Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Goldschmidt & Choi, 2004; Heck & Mayor, 1993; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Stringfield & Slavin, 1992). Multilevel school effectiveness models have several distinct features. These models are generally multilevel, recognize causal chains, and are categorized as context-input process-output structures (Bosker & Scheerens, 1994). Due to the high stakes of NCLB, many HLM, Value added and growth models are being proposed, applied and evaluated as possible methods of improving the measurement of school effectiveness, particularly within subgroup populations (Choy, et al., 2004; Goldschmidt & Choy 2004, Gong, 2004).

Conclusions

Research has shown there are practices that make a positive difference in student achievement, in spite of the background of the student. Now that we are faced with the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 which has severe ramifications for schools, solely based on the schools academic test scores and other indicators, schools are required to improve student performance. Currently, educational reform is generally centered on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), assessment test scores and not effective schooling practices nor parental involvement. However, effective school research may continue to be inconclusive and unreliable if we do not look at the entire picture of the school community. Perhaps this is because many schools, specifically in Alaska, Delaware, and Hawai'i have unique issues, situations and isolated locations. One model may not fit all states. However, taking into account other methods of analysis, we may be able to validate the decisions that states are making about the effectiveness of schools, taking into account the various subgroup entities and uniqueness of settings.

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