

Charleston Daily Mail

Many schools fail to meet standards

Superintendent says things
could have been worse

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More than 30 percent of Kanawha County's schools -- including all eight high schools -- failed to meet tough new federal standards under the new No Child Left Behind Act.

But only one will have to offer parents the choice to send their children to a better school.

"It could have been a lot worse," Superintendent Ron Duerring said. "There are 27 different ways a school can fail and we have 77 schools. I think overall this shows that our schools are doing well."

School performance measures were released by the state Department of Education at a press conference Tuesday, showing 402 schools statewide met the standards, while 326 did not.

The new legislation requires schools to be graded on categories such as test scores, the number of students taking standardized tests, graduation rate and attendance. It goes even further and breaks those categories down into sub-groups such as gender and race.

Of the 326 schools that failed to make what the government calls Adequate Yearly Progress, 42 failed for two consecutive years.

The list includes Pratt Elementary, Weimer Elementary, East Bank Middle, McKinley Junior High, Sissonville Middle, Sissonville High and Stonewall Jackson Middle.

Putnam County had no schools on the two-year list, but there were 10 targeted for not making progress in at least one category.

Only Weimer, because it is a Title One school receiving federal funding, will have to offer choice. There are seven schools statewide in this category.

Of that seven, four -- including Weimer -- must also offer supplemental services like tutoring, summer school or other programs to boost student achievement because they were on the improvement list for two years.

Penalties under No Child Left Behind get increasingly stiffer each year a school doesn't make progress.

One school -- Van Devender Junior High in Wood County -- is in its third year of improvement and will have to take corrective action, including possibly replacing the staff.

Schools that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress could have made the list by declining numbers in just one of 27 categories, even if they showed improvement in every other area.

"Principals, parents and the public must understand that the 'schools in need of improvement' is a bit deceiving," state Schools Superintendent Dave Stewart said. "More than 100 schools did not make the AYP partially because not enough students took the test."

The law requires that 95 percent of students complete standardized testing, regardless of any disabilities they may have.

Duerring said Kanawha County may appeal some of the schools on the list because they had 94.7 percent of students taking the test.

While some officials worried that the release of the so-called troubled school list would generate controversy in some communities, others say it allows teachers to target their curriculum so every student is receiving a quality education and not slipping through the cracks.

"We're much better off knowing where the problems are so we can correct them," said school board president Bill Raglin.

School officials will begin working this week on ways to help schools that made the list.

Mark Milam, an assistant superintendent for Kanawha County schools, said they would analyze test scores and develop a plan for each school.

"This is a work in progress for us," he said. "But we'll do whatever we can to help our schools succeed."

Troubled schools

Twenty-eight Kanawha County and 10 Putnam County schools did not meet adequate yearly progress in at least one category:

KANAWHA COUNTY

Alban Elementary, Alum Creek Elementary, Bonham Elementary, Cedar Grove Elementary, Pratt Elementary, Richmond Elementary, Valley Grove Elementary (which has since closed), Watts Elementary, Weimer Elementary,

John Adams Middle, Andrew Jackson Middle, DuPont Middle, East Bank Middle, Elkview Middle, Hayes Junior High, Horace Mann Middle, McKinley Junior High, Sissonville Middle, Stonewall Jackson Middle,

George Washington High, Herbert Hoover High, Nitro High, St. Albans High, Sissonville High, South Charleston High, Capital High, Riverside High.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Poca Elementary, Rock Branch Elementary, West Teays Elementary, Winfield Elementary,

George Washington Middle, Hurricane Middle, Poca Middle, Winfield Middle,

Hurricane High, Winfield High.

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HEADLINE: Two county schools could be penalized East Bank Middle, Weimer school cited July 29, 2003, Tuesday

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Two Kanawha County schools - East Bank Middle School and Weimer Elementary School in St. Albans - face penalties under new federal accountability standards, according to Kanawha County school officials.

Around the state, more than 30 schools failed to meet rigorous requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, according to a preliminary report state school officials are expected to release today at Piedmont Elementary School in Charleston.

The schools struggled with low test scores, poor attendance and low graduation rates for the past two years.

Under the federal act, parents can send their children to another nearby school at county expense if their local school receives federal Title I funding and fails to meet "**adequate yearly progress.**"

Weimer, which receives the federal money because it serves many low-income students, also failed to meet federal standards last year. Fewer than a dozen Weimer students elected to switch schools.

East Bank Middle does not receive federal funds, but the school will be identified as "impaired" and could face sanctions in future years.

"We'll do everything we can to give those kids every opportunity," said Bill Raglin, Kanawha County school board president. "I'm a firm believer that No Child Left Behind is a good philosophy. We ought to do the best we can to give all children a fair shake." State officials also are expected today to release a list of more than 200 schools that failed to meet the federal standards for the past year.

Many schools were flagged because their special education and low-income children scored low on achievement tests.

Numerous schools also didn't test 95 percent of students, which the federal act requires, state officials said. Other schools were cited for poor attendance.

The low-performing schools, which are put on a "watch list," have a year to improve student performance or face state and federal penalties.

About 20 Kanawha County schools are expected to wind up on that list, including all but one of the county's middle schools.

Several Putnam County schools also didn't meet the federal standards during the past year, Putnam County Superintendent Sam Sentelle said Monday.

State and county school officials declined to name the schools Monday. A complete list will be posted online this afternoon at <http://wvachieves.k12.wv.us>.

Kanawha school leaders vowed Monday to help low-performing schools.

"We'll put together a plan to correct the deficiencies," said school board member John Luoni. "And we'll check to make sure they're making progress."

State school administrators have been drawing up plans to help schools that don't meet the federal standards.

The state Department of Education now sends "distinguished educators" to struggling schools and gives money for teacher training programs.

That program will be expanded. State officials plan also to work with top administrators in county school board offices.

The state plans to use federal funds to pay for the expanded school assistance plan.

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Watch list cites nearly half of state schools

By **Davin White**

Staff writer

Nearly half of West Virginia's schools were placed on a watch list after failing to meet federal accountability standards, state education officials announced Tuesday.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act's requirements, 326 of West Virginia's 728 schools are listed as in "need of improvement," State Schools Superintendent David Stewart said in a news conference at Charleston's Piedmont Elementary School.

Even Kanawha County schools honored for academic achievement, like George Washington High School and John Adams Middle School, fell short in some areas.

Schools were placed on the list for several reasons, including low test scores or participation in the tests, high schools' graduation rates and elementary and middle schools' attendance numbers. Schools must show improvement in these areas to drop off the list.

In all, 28 of Kanawha County's schools, including every high school, need to improve some numbers from the 2002-2003 school year. Of those, seven face penalties for lacking progress two or more years.

Earlier this week, Kanawha school officials reported that only two schools — Weimer Elementary in St. Albans and East Bank Middle School — would be on the list.

Most of the schools — in the county and statewide — will not be penalized for a first offense.

Weimer Elementary, however, must allow students to transfer if they want, at county expense. Because the school receives federal Title I funding, it also must offer tutoring, after-school help and other “supplemental education services” outside the regular school day.

Other Kanawha County schools that haven’t met the federal standards for at least two years are Pratt Elementary, East Bank Middle, McKinley Junior High, Sissonville Middle and Sissonville High School. Students at those schools will not have to allow students to transfer.

Stewart called the high number of schools listed “a bit deceiving,” saying some schools had problems in one of several areas. Other state education leaders also said the numbers are not as dire as they appear.

Some said the federal government still owes West Virginia schools \$71 million to help implement the new standards under No Child Left Behind.

“The public has to realize we have good schools,” said Kanawha County Superintendent Ron Duerring. “This doesn’t mean it’s a bad school. It just means they have work to do.”

“You’ve got to recognize improvement,” said Tom Lange, president of the West Virginia Education Association. “Eventually, we’ll see a lot of schools off the list.”

Many schools are flagged because groups of students don’t do as well as others. The act bases these groups on race, gender, economic background and other areas.

“Instead of taking the roof off the school and looking in, we’re opening up all the windows and seeing if there’s a small group that doesn’t look well,” said Kenna Seal, executive director of the state Office of Education Performance Audits, which monitors schools.

Lange believes Title I supplemental education services — which Weimer and four other state schools must now offer — should be provided by the government, not an outside agency.

“We believe those resources need to be kept in the schools and not given out to some outside agency,” Lange said. “Let the school system provide them assistance.”

Groups like the Regional Education Service Agency, the state department of education and even nongovernmental agencies, which prove they can provide “quality” service, can offer the outside help, Stewart said.

Potential providers must apply with the state department of education to receive counties' Title I dollars.

Six schools in Fayette, Roane and Boone counties were placed on the list of schools not meeting standards for two or more years.

Statewide, besides Weimer, six schools must allow students to transfer if they want: Enslow Middle and West Middle, Cabell County; East Hardy Early/Middle, Hardy County; Birch River Elementary, Nicholas County; Stratton Elementary, Raleigh; and VanDevender Junior High, Wood County.

A complete list of schools not meeting all requirements can be found online at <http://wvachievers.k12.wv.us>.

Staff writer Eric Eyre and The Associated Press contributed to this story. To contact staff writer Davin White, use [e-mail](#) or call 348-5113.

Schools fall short of federal standards

But local elementary schools meet No Child Left Behind Act criteria

By [JEAN TARBETT](#) - The Herald-Dispatch

Low-income students and special-education students could use some more attention to their individual needs, suggests a new test-score breakdown released Tuesday by the West Virginia Department of Education.

The state report -- which shows how schools fared according to the new demands of the No Child Left Behind Act -- showed that seven Cabell County schools and 11 Wayne County schools need to improve in at least one area.

The report was based on testing and other data from the 2002-03 school year. It looks at scores for the overall student body and subgroups of students, such as racial minorities, low-income students and special-education students.

In Cabell County, both Cabell Midland and Huntington high schools have improvements to make, as well as Barboursville, Beverly Hills, Enslow, Milton and West middle schools.

All elementary schools met the standards.

In Wayne County, schools that were targeted for improvements were Spring Valley, Tolsia and Wayne high schools; Buffalo, Crum, Fort Gay and Wayne middle schools; and Crum, East Lynn, Fort Gay and Wayne elementary schools.

Statewide, 326 schools need to improve in at least one area, and 402 met all standards.

While the report may seem like a smack on the hand for schools, at least one local educator is encouraged by the news. When a school is on the list, it doesn't mean it's a failing school, said Sally Piepenbrink, coordinator of assessment for Cabell County Schools. It means the school needs to zero in on a particular area, and she's glad the state is letting schools know what those areas are.

Educators can now take a closer look at scores of minority children, those who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and those with special needs, and that can't do anything but help, she said.

"This is truly what I should have been doing for years, so we'd know what our different populations are doing," she said. "The exciting thing is that no child will be left behind. You won't get lost in the averages anymore."

For most of the schools, the news is just a warning. If they improve by next school year, they face no sanctions. But for two local schools, the report will have an impact this school year because they have not met standards two years in a row and because they are Title I schools, having high numbers of low-income students.

West Middle School will again be required to give students a chance to attend another school with transportation costs covered, and Enslow will have to offer that for the first time.

Both Enslow and West missed just one standard. West needs to improve its test scores among low-income students, and Enslow needs to improve its test scores among special-education students. They are two of seven schools in West Virginia that will be required to offer school choice.

Only one or two West students took that opportunity last year, said Linda Craig, counselor at West.

Teachers there worked extremely hard, setting aside time during the school day to work on skills and offering after-school tutoring, said Wilma Daniels, a reading teacher at West. Helping students from low-income families can sometimes be the most trying task for teachers, she said.

When students sit down to take a test, they could have more pressing matters on their mind, like a family members' alcoholism or a divorce. And some move from school-to-school too often to get a solid education.

Too often, "The emphasis is not on education in the home," Daniels said. "Nobody shows up. Nobody cares about grades. We can make phone calls and send home grade cards, and then at the end of the school year, a parent might say, 'Why is my student failing?' But it's not as high of a priority as it should be.

"We do everything we can with the time we're allotted," she said. "We can't go home with them, and we can't bring them home with us."

Meeting the standard for special-education students is a challenge for schools as well. Deborah Russell, principal at Wayne Elementary School, questions whether the standard is even appropriate.

Last school year, Wayne Elementary was recognized as a West Virginia School of Excellence, a West Virginia Exemplary School and was one of only 26 schools nationwide to receive the International Reading Association Exemplary Reading Award. Tuesday, it was cited as needing to improve test scores among special-education students.

This new measuring stick, based on No Child Left Behind, isn't a fair comparison with special-education students, Russell said.

"With all the other sub groups, the equity is there because you're comparing apples to apples," she said. "But when you're comparing special-needs students, who are testing on their grade level -- not their ability level -- you can't compare. They're following their IEP (individual education plan) and are in specialized programs that meet their needs, but they're being asked to do something out of the realm of possibility."

Russell said she supports high standards for all students, but said comparing special-needs students with traditional peers doesn't do any good.

"They're extremely frustrated," she said. "We've seen them cry when we give them a test. We've tried to bolster their self-esteem, and then you throw this test in front of them. Let's be realistic. Let's take those children where they are and then expect to see growth."

The new standards also don't equally weigh larger and smaller schools, she said.

In West Virginia, schools are only accountable for meeting a standard if there are at least 50 students in that group or subgroup.

Wayne Elementary, which has about 480 students total, is at a disadvantage because it has more than 50 students in the special-education subgroup, whereas another school might have 45 students in that group and not be cited, Russell said.

Any school that is not cited because it has fewer than 50 students in a given subgroup could be leaving children behind, Russell said.

In terms of racial minorities, there are only two schools in Cabell County with enough minority students to count toward their accountability standards. Huntington High and Cammack Middle School have enough black students to count, and Huntington High was cited for test scores in that subgroup.

Piepenbrink said she thinks the state might end up lowering the subgroup number from 50 as a way to catch more student needs. She plans to ask the state to send her data on all the subgroups in all the schools, whether they had 50 students or not.

"We want to know the numbers of all students, no matter the cell (or subgroup) size so we can target students," she said. "We're going to look at individual children in these subgroups so no child will be left behind."