

The 2003 NATD Symposium¹

No Child Left Behind: One Year into Implementation

This symposium will focus on the ramifications and implications of the No Child Left Behind Act one year into implementation. Participants will present several viewpoints including the federal perspective, a large urban school district perspective, a small urban/suburban school district perspective and a consultant assisting states in the development of state-level information systems for reporting No Child Left Behind federal mandates. Of particular attention will be issues related to the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements of the legislation.

Chair - Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Evanston School District 202, Evanston, Illinois

Federal Perspective: Zollie Stevenson - Supervisor of Standards, Assessment and Accountability for Title I, US Department of Education

Perspective From a Consultant to States: Glynn Ligon - Evaluation Software Planning, Austin, Texas

Perspective From a Large Urban School District: Phil Hansen - Chief Accountability Officer, Chicago Public Schools

Perspective From a Small Urban/Suburban School District: Allan Alson -Superintendent, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois

Time and Location: Tuesday, 12:25 p.m., Sheraton Hotel, Michigan A

Judith Levinson, Introduction

¹ Ray Fenton and Judy Levinson (Editors). The symposium was transcribed and edited by Ray Fenton, FentonResearch, 8520 N. Coral Ridge Loop, Tucson, AZ. Additional editing by Judy Levinson.

Welcome to the annual National Association of Test Directors and National Council on Measurement in Education joint symposium for 2003. We again try to bring together experts and practitioners to examine the impact of an important issue in the assessment of student performance. This year our focus is the current status of the comprehensive attempt of the federal government to improve the quality of student performance in America, No Child Left Behind. We are now one year into the implementation of No Child Left Behind and it is affecting teachers, schools, school districts from coast to coast and beyond. Our first speaker, Zollie Stevenson, will take a look at the current status of No Child Left Behind, NCLB, from a federal perspective.

Federal Perspective

Zollie Stevenson - Supervisor of Standards, Assessment and Accountability for Title I, US Department of Education

I am happy to be here to talk about NCLB today. My comments are coordinated with a slide show and we will move quickly through some of the parts with which you are familiar. I also want to share what some of the states have had to do to meet NCLB requirements. NCLB has been in effect for a little more than a year and already some dramatic changes are taking place.

Where NCLB is at this point with a focus on what some of the states have had to do this year in the implementation of the NCLB Act. There are already dramatic changes in what some states are doing to serve the neediest children. Many are making substantial progress in working toward improving student achievement and accountability systems.

In fact, many people in this room have been involved with what has been happening with accountability systems across this nation since January 2003. Could we just have a show of hands to see how many people here have some involvement with State Accountability Systems? (About one third of the NATD/NCME Symposium audience raised their hands.)

The NCLB law requires a single statewide accountability system that will include all students and will allow the reporting of Adequate Yearly Progress for schools and school districts. Everybody is required to implement this. This is a change from the 1994 law to the 2001 law. All schools must be held accountable where under the old law only Title I schools were required to participate in accountability. Even the full assessment systems were required only for Title I students.

The current NCLB accountability system is based on academic standards and assessments. As of today only 24 states have comprehensive standards based

accountability systems under the 1994 IASA legislation. There are 28 states² that are still trying to complete their final accountability systems as called for under the old law while at the same time they are starting to work on their system to meet the 2001 legislation for NCLB assessments. The difference between the old and new requirements for assessments is that the new law essentially requires assessments in grades 3 through 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Math by 2005 – 2006. You have to add science for 2007 – 2008 at each of three grade spans. All students are included. Unlike IASA, there are no blanket exemptions for specific groups of students. Everyone who is enrolled in a school must be assessed with appropriate measures including English language learners and students with disabilities with appropriate accommodations.

The new system includes appropriate rewards and sanctions as part of a system that includes all public schools. The sanctions and rewards may differ between Title I and other schools but all schools must be included in each state system. There is a need to focus on schools that are not performing in the way that they need to perform.

Why is there a need for accountability?

There are pressing reasons for having an accountability system. For example, you all know that there are substantial gaps in the academic performance of disadvantaged students and their more affluent classmates. We have been spending a great deal of money since 1965 through Title 1 to support reduction of these gaps between groups that are the neediest economically and academically. Fifty percent of fourth graders cannot read at the basic level as seen from the results of the NAEP assessments. We also know that students in the United States lag behind students in other countries from TIMMS, and other assessments of that type.

You have a set of charts that I have handed out that show these differences and performance trends. I am not going to talk about them in detail. The charts provide the rationale for the need for a system that demonstrates our accountability for student performance.

For example, see the chart on the mathematics performance of black and white students over time from 1990 to 2000. You can see that there has not been much improvement and in some places there have been declines in some areas.

The need for improved achievement for all students is the rationale for No Child Left Behind. The accountability focus is on schools, school districts and states. There is a focus on the disaggregation of data and using the data to evaluate if schools are making sufficient progress, if the districts are making sufficient progress, and if each state is making appropriate progress in a number of categories. This is new and did not exist under the old IASA law.

You could say that in the past we did not place enough emphasis on taking a look at the performance of all kids and doing what we needed to do to improve academic

² States refers to the 50 states, District of Columbia, and U.S. possessions and territories.

performance. There is a need for all students to make progress including such categories of students as students with disabilities, English language learners, race and ethnicity, and those who are economically disadvantaged. We have looked at the economically disadvantaged for some time but we have not seen the progress that we should have seen up to this point.

Each group must make adequate yearly progress, AYP.

There are a series of steps in the analysis of the data that must take place to assure that the information is good enough for making an accountability assessment. The first of these steps is to look at the participation rate to assure that all students are included for each of the categories that are assessed with the state test when it is administered. Participation rate is the first cut.

If you get beyond the participation rate, you have to take a look at the content areas. Are the students reaching the proficiency level that is required in mathematics and reading language arts? Then, are the students making progress on other academic indicators? If schools in a district are not making improvement, the district may have to implement an improvement plan if sufficient numbers of students are not making the progress that has to be made to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress required by the state.

Schools and districts have to make the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements that are set by their state.

How does the state get to Adequate Yearly Progress definitions?

Well, you have to look at the percentage of students that are proficient or advanced in the state.

After making certain that 95% of the students are tested, the percentage of students who are reaching levels of performance designated as proficient or as advanced in the state has to be identified. Then, you have to look at the progress of students that is needed to have 100% of students reach proficient performance levels by 2013 - 2014. Having 100% reach proficient performance is the major challenge of NCLB.

I will not go into the other characteristics of AYP in any great detail. Most of you know that there have to be intermediate objectives and that the progress between those intermediate goals has to be equal from point to point. Having equal intervals from point-to-point is specified in the law. However, annual progress does not have to be equal from year to year within years except when you reach one of the intermediate goal years. The notion is that the points will assure a steady growth that will result in all children being able to reach proficiency by the time we reach here (2014).

The key is that Adequate Yearly Progress requires the same level of performance for all students using the same standards-based assessment system for all students. It is not based on norms. It is based on one set of standards and expectations for all students.

The assessments are all aligned to those state standards. You look at actual student performance relative to state standards.

This gets away from some of the negative aspects of norm-referenced testing such as having outcomes tinged by economic factors. This gets back to looking at what every child should be taught and what every child should know and be able to do as they progress through school in terms of the standards approved by the state.

The academic standards are developed and approved by the state. Instruments to measure performance selected or developed by the state have to be proven to be statistically valid and reliable measures of performance relative to state standards. There has to be a uniform administration of assessments to complete the system.

The goal is to have an annual measure of the growth of all children relative to specific annual goals. Overall, student performance is important and something that we have always considered. This legislation goes beyond that to look at groups of students to assure that all students are making progress. But, the system assures that poor performance by some groups is not masked by an overall average. Looking at the subgroups is something different than what we have done before.

There are also some other indicators. We need to take a look at graduation rate for high schools and one other indicator for middle and elementary schools. Most states are using attendance as the other indicator, some are using retention. Some locations are using additional assessments that they have as the basis for other indicators of performance.

What do you set for a minimum number in a group for reporting and comparing results?

It is important that you have confidence in your results when information is disaggregated by category.

One of the important things that have to be established in considering the groups to be compared over time is the minimum number of participants required for information from a group to be considered when decisions have to be made. Minimum "N" is important. Are you setting confidence level requirements as the basis for setting the minimum "N" to be included? Are you using some other statistic to try to address the variability in student performance that might exist in student performance or school performance over time that will affect the reliability and validity of making comparisons of school performance? Have you set your "N" large enough that you feel that you do not have to use confidence intervals?

Do you have evidence that your statistics and your decisions make sense over time?

How does a district or school make AYP?

You have to look at the standards for performance that have been set by the state. You have to meet or exceed the state standards to meet AYP. The scores of students have to be compared with the expectations of the state on an annual basis.

Except, of course, there is a thing that is called “Safe Harbor”. Safe Harbor allows you to apply an analysis to your data that shows that even if you have not met the AYP requirement for the year you have reduced the number of students who are not proficient. You can say that you have reached “Safe Harbor” if you have reduced the number of students in a group who are not proficient by 10% from where they were last year.

Once you find that you have been successful in making progress on your primary indicators for each group, you must look at the other indicators such as graduation rate for high school, attendance rate for middle school and elementary school, and other indicators that your state has established.

If a school or district had met the state defined levels of performance on the academic indicators and has also met the requirements on the other indicators, you can say that you have met AYP.

States as a whole go through the same thing, but they must also look at the performance of their Title III children. Title III children who are the English language learners must also be shown to be making progress in their mastery of the English language.

Now I am going to put this up for you to look at to give you a little chuckle.

If a state does not make annual progress for two consecutive years, the Secretary shall provide technical assistance that is valid, reliable, and rigorous and provide constructive feedback to help the state make annual yearly progress toward making annual objectives.

Not to worry, the U.S. Department of Education is not taking over the educational system of any state. .

This next section goes through some of the levels of improvement and I am just going to ask that you take a quick look at these because I know that my time is going quickly.

Here is the status of where we are in 2003 on this day in terms of the Accountability System Plans Review. Since January, we have been to every state in the country, almost. Today we have a team member in Wisconsin and then we have one more to complete. I am going to Idaho tomorrow with a team to complete the last accountability system peer review. So, we have reviewed the plans for 50 states and Puerto Rico. The Department of Education has approved the plans for 11 states. We are in the process of getting the additional information that we need for the approval of the remaining.

Many people have said that NCLB has no flexibility in terms of what can be approved as an accountability system and NCLB does not take into account what a state had done in the past with testing and accountability. In fact, we have found that there are many ways

that NCLB and the existing state accountability system can work together. We have flexibility through the peer review process and have been able to put in some components that reflect the unique nature of states and to put in a process that reflects a more accurate, more sensitive accountability system.

We have been very careful to look at the context of every state and peers have made recommendations with an understanding of each state's context. Peers do not make decisions, but they do make recommendations that come to the department. The department makes the final decisions after collecting evidence.

The department has come to a deeper understanding of the issues that affect the state programs. Let me take a closer look at two of the issues that have been identified; definitions of graduation rate and integration of existing state systems with NCLB requirements.

There was an allowance for states to make their own determination of graduation rate. They could use the NCES definition as long as they made some accommodation for handling transfer students, GED graduates, and that kind of thing. At this point there are a lot of differences in definitions within states. Some states do not even have the capacity to collect a uniform graduation rate and do not have any statewide database that would allow the disaggregation of graduation statistics into the groups that are required by NCLB. Graduation rate has been an issue.

Integration of NCLB adequate yearly progress indicators with the state system has been a real issue in a number of states. This is particularly true where there has been a compensatory model and state accountability system. Making AYP determinations for English language learners and students with disabilities has been a substantial challenge and a big task.

I will just give you one example of the problem using English language learners. Some states have proficiency tests where an English language learner who passes tests is no longer considered to be in the English language learner category.

Here is an analogy to help think about what is happening in these states that drop students out of the English language learner group after a proficiency test. Think of a bucket of water. You fill this bucket up. The water is running and more is coming into the bucket all the time. Water is also spilling over the top of the bucket all the time. This makes it hard to measure the water in the bucket at any one time or to compare the water in the bucket from time to time. It just isn't the same water.

This situation makes it hard to measure the progress of the English language learners from time to time. Some states have thought of some creative ways to handle this problem. Look at Indiana. We need to look at Colorado and some of the other states that are coming down the pike toward approval.

Inclusion of valid and reliable measures for English language learners, participation rates,

how you record information, having an answer sheet for every child raises a question because the intent of the law is to have every child really take an assessment. The intent of the law is to actually have students participate in an assessment.

I don't have much time left but there are some other issues. One major issue is small schools and small school districts. There are a lot of very small schools in the United States. There are many districts in this country with one school that has fewer than 50 students in it. How do you hold these small schools and districts accountable when the law specifies that all must be held accountable?

I have been able to talk about some of the challenges we have experienced. All of the accountability plans have been approved or in process. We have accepted some and we know that there will be changes in what states are doing over time. We are already monitoring some changes.

I think the process is moving forward well in terms of establishing accountability plans and monitoring achievement. But, you must understand that this presentation did not address many major areas of NCLB such as having highly qualified teachers, the qualifications of paraprofessionals, about school improvement, choice and supplemental services and all of the funding issues. Those are areas of concern for some states and states are coming up with creative ways of dealing with many of these issues.

I have already infringed on our next speaker's time. Thank you.

**State Perspective
From a Consultant to Many States**

Glynn Ligon - Evaluation Software Planning, Austin, Texas

I'm pleased to be able to follow Zollie Stevenson and his discussion of the current status of NCLB implementation. Zollie should be a little out of breath given that he has been on the run today to do presentations and that he has been on the run for the last year working with states all across the United States. As always, Zollie, you also always leave the rest of us breathless.

Evaluation Software has been in an interesting role when compared to others who are working on No Child Left Behind. We have served as consultants to a number of states and to the United States Department of Education. Our job has been to figure out what technical assistance is needed to support No Child Left Behind.

To put my role into some context, I started out a long time ago as a teacher in a Migrant Education program. I then moved into a school district central office as an evaluator for Title I when Title I was originally called Title I. Then, I moved into another district office where we evaluated a broader scope of programs and ran a district wide assessment program. Then I moved on to working with the United States Department of Education and State education agencies on various issues related to evaluation of programs and assessing students.

I have had the chance to work with a large number of states and it is a challenge for states that are so different from each other to all align with a single law. I do think that an admirable job is going on out there.

We have followed Zollie Stevenson and his teams around from state to state and seeing what has to come out of the state system to meet NCLB requirements.

How many people here actually work with a state education agency? Ok, I think I know those states so I will modify my talk -- but not much.

What do the states need? What do the state education agencies need for No Child Left Behind? I have made a list. I think there are eight things that have to be considered by state and local education agencies.

The first think on the list and the thing that I am going to end up at the end of the talk is knowledge.

States and local school districts need to talk to each other and share the knowledge that they have gained. This is especially important after the first year or two of No Child Left Behind when there has been some chance for people to gain some experience. AERA is

a good place for people to get together to talk but there are also other meetings that are important. There need to be meetings sponsored by NCES and other agencies. There is never enough time provided for people to get together and share their experience so there need to be more ways to share the knowledge.

Second, there need to be resources for analysis and understanding of data.

There are far too few people and there is too little time to analyze all of the data that is now available. What we are seeing as we go around the country is that more states are gathering more and more data; they are keeping more and more data.

Sigmund Freud would be happy with what is happening at the state level. States are becoming “annual retentive.” He would be happy, but not amused.

Anyway, the states have more and more data that they have to deal with in a prompt and meaningful way.

Data warehouses are my number three.

More and more states are getting more into my number three, data warehouses to control all of the information that they are collecting to fulfill the requirements of NCLB.

Data warehouses are only a first step. Having a data warehouse is not much help if you do not have the time of the staff to do the analysis that is necessary to learn things from the data.

Data sharing is my number four on the list.

There has to be more and more automated ways of data sharing. This means both that there needs to be more sharing among institutions and better ways to share across various software systems for storage and analysis of data. We must share data across schools, between, offices, and among states.

There is a need to follow multiple students from year to year and school to school to explore the impact of programs. We have to be able to track students and match them up with their assessment data.

I will say that there is a group that has been around for a number of years that is now making some amazing progress in the creation of a standard for sharing data called the Schools Interoperability Framework – SIP. How many here have heard about SIP?

Wow! That is quite a few who know about SIP.

Well, the states are hearing more and more about it. The United States Department of Education cannot take a formal stand or endorse a private standards organization but the intent of SIP is to create data exchange standards so that when a person at one school puts

data into a system in one software application the data can be shared with all of the other applications and can be reported to the state. The information in the state information system then could be shared with the federal information system and used in reporting systems for No Child Left Behind.

SIP would provide for an easy way of exchanging data so long as the people in the software industry would make their systems to be consistent with the standard. This holds a lot of promise for our data sharing. But, for SIP to happen we also need my number five, Data Standards.

Data standards are number five on my list.

We started working with the National Center of Education Statistics over seven years ago in an attempt to define what the *de facto* data standards are that exist for educational data. About four weeks ago the United States Department of Education adopted a set of data specifications for the school district and state level that are related to No Child Left Behind. It will affect about half a dozen of the federal programs.

This standardization will come under the umbrella of a program called Performance Based Data Management Initiative – PBDMI. PBDMI is the U.S. Department of Education’s first real attempt to go out to the states and collect data in an automated electronic standardized way that will allow the program offices to avoid collecting the same data over and over again on paper forms.

The data standards, the common definitions and the common codes, are very critical to success in this effort. When you translate the data standards back down into the state and district level, there will be more and more electronic exchanges made possible. The more we can have the same codes and the same definitions from the local student databases on up to the United States Department of Education, the easier the process will be.

Commitment to electronic individual student and staff records is number six.

Consolidation of collections and reduction of collections only to that information that is necessary has to be an ongoing commitment. It is necessary to maintain the vision of allowing the consistent collection and transfer of information.

There also has to be a timely value added return of information to the data providers to make people feel that this is worthwhile. This takes me on to my next point.

Cycle time reduction is number seven.

Cycle time reduction is related very much to assessment scores and other data that are collected and reported throughout the system. Everyone is feeling the impact of No Child Left Behind in terms of the increase in the amount of data that must be collected for students and reported.

The fact is that there are only a limited number of test publishers who will collect, scan, and score student tests. Frankly, the test publishers are currently overburdened and may have problems in returning information in a timely way.

For example, we have a contract with one state education agency to prepare their state report card. Last week we got their high school graduation test scores that have to be included in their electronic report card. That is fantastic if you consider that it was only the prior week when they had given the tests. Of course, the data that we got was for the prior year. It took a whole year and a couple of weeks for them to get those test scores back and certified so that they could make them public.

Cycle time reduction is going to be a big, big issue.

Data quality is number eight.

Data quality always follows as an issue. As you know, it should be there at the beginning as an issue but it really becomes a point of discussion when the data is published. It is when people really start to look at the data and they get concerned about data quality.

Well, there is my list of the things that every state and local education agency has to take into consideration as they move into No Child Left Behind.

The challenge that we see at the state and at the local level as more and more of an issue is how you keep and teach the expertise to do this? How does a governmental agency hire, train, and maintain the staff that has the skill and expertise necessary to do all of this. It is very, very difficult.

More and more professionals are needed. And, as individuals who work for the public gain the expertise there are private jobs available that often pay much more than public employment. In terms of assessment, technology, information management it is a bigger and bigger challenge to maintain and develop the expertise. States often do not have the resources that they need either in house or to hire outside help from consultants.

Let me close with something that might give you some hope that there will be some success in this whole area. The Performance Based Data Management Initiative has a location where you can follow what is happening on a daily basis. You can go to our project management WWW site which is evalsoft.com/PBDMI.

Prior to the end of July of 2003, we will have visited each state to certify the ability of the state to handle the data that is required for No Child Left Behind for Office of Civil Rights, Special Education, Title I, Migrant Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and a number of others. We will go to each state education agency for two and a half days to review where the data is collected, how it is reported, and the formats will be examined to assure that it will meet the federal reporting requirements.

The result of this will be that each state will have an excellent picture of the Federal reporting requirements. Right now we have determined that about 75% of the data that a state collects is sent on to some other agency in the Federal government.

States with a full picture of data requirements will rethink and rework their data collection efforts to improve their own collection standards to improve the quality of the information that comes from schools and school districts. This whole process will result in improvement in the 8 areas that I have discussed and that there will be better sharing of knowledge.

Data quality should improve so that when the United States Department of Information does an analysis and report there will be a high level of confidence in the data and the conclusions to be drawn from it.

Perspective from a Large Urban School District

Phil Hansen - Chief Accountability Officer, Chicago Public Schools

(Phil Hansen is currently working full time for the State of Illinois Department of Education. He is a prior member of the Chicago Public Schools staff and current consultant to Philadelphia on No Child Left Behind.)

Cities are now working hard to leave no child behind. This effort is becoming more and more difficult as the days and months go on. There are three areas that have had a substantial impact on urban centers this year: assessment, accountability, and teacher qualifications.

First let us take a look at the area of assessment. Different states and different cities have had a variety of assessments that they have implemented over the years. There is no one kind of assessment that every place has used. Many urban systems have developed their own systems based on nationally normed tests.

Chicago is one example of a system that has developed its own tests that are based on local standards. Chicago has been using the Iowa tests of Basic Skills. Philadelphia is another example. Philadelphia has used the Stanford.

Under NCLB, nationally normed tests and assessment systems based on these tests are not what are required. So, cities are finding that they have to do this major shift in emphasis to standards based state tests. In Chicago we have been telling people that the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is everything – promotion policy is based on the Iowa, every bit of research done on the Chicago schools has been based on the Iowa and the data that comes from the Iowa. Now, the state test which is a relatively new test that started in 1999 becomes the assessment system.

More important than the test is the need to assure that teachers are teaching to the state standards that are measured by the test. Chicago like other urban centers had developed their own standards even though Illinois had the Illinois Learning Standards and other states had their own standards. We are spending a lot of time this year talking to schools about what has been taught, how the standards are aligned, and what must be done to focus on the state learning standards. In short, Chicago teachers are told to put their red Chicago Learning standards away and to pull out the Illinois Learning Standards. Now we have to look at staff development in terms of the Illinois standards.

This is an ominous task. In most systems, teachers have not looked at the old standards yet in the detail needed to prepare students. Now they are being asked to change directions. Now it is these standards, not those. Now it is these tests, not those.

This is complicated in Illinois because the Illinois standards were aimed at ranges of grade levels rather than individual grade outcomes. Grade level performance indicators

have just come out in draft form on the State of Illinois WWW site in the past two weeks. Some people are still waiting for the Illinois indicators to be finalized.

In urban centers like Chicago where there are 600 schools, any shift such as this one is a major change that takes time. You can not assume when you make a shift as large as this that all 600 schools will pick up on the shift. Many schools still do not understand the world of No Child Left Behind.

The schools that are put on lists understand. Schools that are designated for school improvement understand. Schools where there is a direct impact have more of an understanding than other schools where there has not been an immediate impact do not grasp the full meaning of No Child Left Behind or what is likely to happen as requirements increase.

The second problem affecting Chicago schools is related to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind assessment system in Illinois. If No Child Left Behind testing started this year, it would have given schools and students some time to prepare. In Illinois, the state testing system starts with 1999 scores so we are starting three years back in the use of test scores of establishing AYP. Because of this retroactive use of testing, Chicago got its list of 179 schools in school improvement that had to offer public school choice in July of 2002. We were then to have a plan in place offering school choice in September.

We know that we will have more schools go into school improvement when the test scores come back from this year. Unfortunately, the scores will again come in July and we will have to have plans in place for the schools that qualify for improvement in September. We have a plan but we are not certain of which school. It is a system that could work better if there was a better turnaround time in reporting test results to schools.

Late data is one challenge for urban centers.

With the Illinois implementation in 2002 -2003 there was another challenge. When the 179 schools had been identified, the state had said that there was no need to make changes by September because of the late notification. In September, however, the state met with the Federal representatives and found that supplemental services had to be offered. This was resolved in December, December 24th which was my last day with the Chicago school district, the state said there had to be services offered by the end of the year.

The actual start date of services will be April 29 – after state testing for 2003. So, I am not certain how we will be held accountable for results on the state test in terms of NCLB reforms. Next year we will be offering both transportation and supplemental services for students.

It has been a challenge for many urban centers because of the time frame for implementing regulations. Everyone agrees with the philosophy of No Child Left Behind

but there is a problem in passing through information and regulations in such a way that there is time to get things done in a way that will be meaningful for students.

Some of this will be solved as time passes but there is another thing I would like to point out. NCLB seems to result in schools being labeled in an unequal fashion. Overall, Illinois has about 250 schools in school improvement. This is far more schools than Texas has in school improvement.

Some people like to say this is a sign of the success of Texas is doing an infinitely better job than Illinois in teaching children. Texas has an easier test with lower expectations for performance. Iowa, of course, has no schools identified for school improvement because Iowa has no test. We chuckle in Illinois and say that when we are to the point where all of our schools are in improvement programs we will just bus all of our students to Iowa where they will all do well.

Really, the question is the unequal nature of state tests and state performance standards. Different states have different numbers of schools in improvement because of differences in the tests and the different implementation schedules of tests in different states. There is a real lack of equity here.

We are all anxious to see how the NAEP results come out. It may be that NAEP will become the great equalizer. We are now in the position where we no longer have a basis of comparison with other states. We can not compare ourselves with Indiana or Texas or any of the other states that are around us. All of the states use different tests with different questions and different levels of objectives and different definitions of what is proficient performance. It becomes a frustration for us to know how we are doing relative to other states.

With our system, the Illinois Board of Education estimates that there will be 700 Illinois schools in school improvement by next year. If this trend continues, there will be 2,100 schools the next year out of our total of about 4,200 schools that are not making adequate yearly progress.

One of the lessons we learned in Chicago between 1995 and 2001 with the aggressive accountability system that we had established was that you need to have high standards and an aggressive system or you did not have an impact. If you have low expectations, people will rise to those low expectations. Chicago and other urban systems are saying let us move forward with aggressive systems.

So we now say let us move forward with the aggressive nature of No Child Left Behind. But, it is important to understand how massive an undertaking this is and what will have to be done to impact the thousands of schools that will soon be on school improvement. We need to develop school improvement and comprehensive choice in such a way that it will have a positive impact. To do it in the timeframe that is prescribed will be difficult. This will become a problem.

The third and the most telling problem with No Child Left Behind with many school systems is the teacher qualification question.

The teacher qualification issue is getting to be a more interesting problem for urban school systems. We have sent out our letters just prior to spring vacation in the hope that it might minimize the effect. We hope that the vacation delay will give parents a chance to think and not run up to their school screaming, "Get my kid out of this classroom". About 90% of our teachers in Chicago are highly qualified and about 10% are not.

We are sending out letters to meet the requirements when some of the elements seem to not yet be defined.

We have problems. For example, we have a wonderful international teachers program where we bring teachers in from Spain. All of those 200 and some experienced teachers received letters that said they were not highly qualified because we had brought them into Chicago on provisional certificates that do not meet the goals of NCLB. In Illinois, we have a middle school system where teachers would teach with a K-9 endorsement. The new law requires a subject area endorsement so we are caught short. We have Fulbright Scholarship teachers who come here for a year. All of those teachers got a NCLB letter as not qualified.

I'm sorry to say that we also have a lot of teachers like me who were certified more than 20 years ago who meet all of the requirements but have not had a course in their subject area in years. Of course, none of these teachers got a letter because they meet the NCLB requirements. Some of our older teachers are not highly qualified in their areas.

We struggle with lots of issues around the qualification of teachers.

More than anything else, we have to focus on communicating with our parents, our teachers, and our schools what this is all about. When you get a letter that seems to say your school is no good or your teacher is not good; where do you go with that? As a school system you try to improve but there is no immediate outlet for parents. This makes it a real frustration for cities because we are on the front line and we have to react.

That was the first year of No Child Left Behind. We are now looking forward to our second year.

Perspective from a Small Urban/Suburban School District

Allan Alson -Superintendent, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois

(Dr. Allan Alson is the founder of the minority student achievement network.)

How many of you are from the academy? How many of you are working in school districts?

Let me say to you what I believe my task is for today. It is to share with you how No Child Left Behind resonates with what it feels like at the ground level. We will look at today and what it feels like and what it means to us. I will tell you that when I first became a principal in Massachusetts I was befuddled by all of the rules and regulations that came from the Massachusetts State Department of Education. And, frankly, that seemed to be *lasiez faire* after I became acquainted with what we have in Illinois.

When I first became a principal I approached the principal of a Brookline High School and asked him what he did in response to the many regulations. I asked what you were to do when you came to something that you could not accept. He said you apologize. You say how sorry you are and, then, you go back to doing what you think is right for kids.

I come from a philosophy of being wary of state and federal government bureaucracy. Maybe that is not too bad a start in a democracy.

I am the superintendent of the Evanston High School District. This is a one school district. It is a large school of almost 3,200 students. The enrolment is almost an equal split between white students and students of color. Twenty-six percent of the students are from below the poverty level qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. There are 35 different languages represented.

Schools in the minority student achievement network are for the most part similar in their demographics. Please give me your card at the end of the presentation if you are interested in the network and I will see that you get a packet of information.

Prior to becoming promoted at Evanston, I worked for two years as an assistant principal in charge of curriculum. It was clear to me then that the most outstanding problem in the district was the achievement gap. When I became superintendent, I made it very clear that our first and most important goal was closing the achievement gap.

This is the sort of problem that does not solve itself overnight. I made it clear that this would remain my number one goal over time and so long as I was superintendent and the gap was not closed.

What does the gap look like at E.T.H.S.? This is what it currently looks like. You can see that for students going to two and four year post secondary school there is a gap of more than 15% between white students and African American students. Even though there has been an improvement of over 8% in the past five years, the gap remains a problem.

Take a look at the ACT scores. See how far the scores for white students are above the national average white ACT score and the national ACT score for those going on to college. Look at the average for African American students. The average last year for Illinois African American students was 16.2. Here we are in a school where the African American students in Evanston do better than the state and national averages for their group but they remain well below the average of the white students. Our gap is larger than the national or state gaps.

I would also like to comment on the Illinois state testing that we are doing. Tomorrow all Illinois grade 11 students are taking the ACT as a required part of their state assessment. This number, 17.9, compares with where we were five years ago when only 72% of the African American students were tested and the score was 17.7. This year 78% of the students took the test so there are some gains.

These are not numbers of which I am proud even though we have seen some closing of the gap. Students enter our school with a notable test score differential, 95th to the 52nd percentile. We are a high school and have only four years to attend to that gap.

Let me bring this discussion closer to what is happening with No Child Left Behind. Here we can see what is likely; the state will use the 40 percent as the proportion of students who must meet state standards. You can see that on almost all measures and in almost all groups we are meeting that standard. Our school is outperforming most schools in Illinois.

It is also clear that there are a number of areas where we are in jeopardy. It is likely that we will be in jeopardy even in the ACT testing that is taking place this week. We may not meet the goals with all groups and might not be able to move forward and meet the increasing goal levels.

We are really concerned about keeping up with the increasing standards over time. It will become more and more difficult to meet state standards as time goes on. We will improve but have no reason to believe that we will improve at the rate prescribed by the state.

There are two other areas of demographics that I would like to discuss. These are two other characteristics of our school.

Graduation rate is the first. Using the formula required by our state for the calculation of graduation rate, our graduation rate is just under 92%; our dropout rate was just 1.8%.

What did we do to get here? We boosted our graduation requirements as part of the effort to close the achievement gap. We did quite a bit in math. We worked with a great math educator who came in and helped improve our program. We moved kids in Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry into double period classes. We took a look at kids as they came into high school to see if they had pre-algebra. We created summer bridge programs to help prepare students and help to move students from the middle of the distribution to the top.

The achievement gap is not monolithic. It is not just about kids who are poorly achieving. It is all about kids who are languishing in the middle and who should be doing better. In ten years we have moved from 110 kids taking three levels of calculus to 310. In the past four years, we have moved from 10% of kids who are students of color taking calculus to 19%. The gain has a lot to do with the summer work we are doing in math and a lot of supportive work that we are doing with students.

For every core subject area, there are tutoring centers inside the school that are open inside the school day. Students can bring problems to the centers. We are trying to improve access and are starting to group students into mixed achievement level groups. We cluster students of color in advanced placement and honors courses because this seems to make a difference. We have offered special ACT prep for students of color that has seemed to have dramatic results. We have had special programs that seem to make a difference and lately we have been attempting to integrate literacy strategies into core courses by pairing reading teachers with academic subject area teachers.

We are making an effort through the minority student achievement network to find things that can be done to close the achievement gap. If you take a look at the 15 original districts that made up the network, you see that these are places where many good minds can come together to improve the rate and scope of academic change. Nine new districts have just been invited to join.

One requirement of being a member of the network was the public disaggregation of data on minority achievement. We have a number of activities that include conferences for students. We have had four national student conferences. We have teacher conferences. We have conferences that look at the role of counseling.

We do a significant amount of research. We have received an NSF grant to study the barriers to high achievement in math for students of color. We are looking at early childhood and adolescent literacy. We are looking at the connection between teacher and student relationships and achievement.

Now we come to the challenge of No Child Left Behind.

Can we both improve test scores and deepen learning and understanding? I argue that these are not mutually exclusive but I also argue that it is not a perfect circle. I applaud the concern with the issue of equity and the importance of the disaggregated data.

It is important that we have a national push to improve the performance of all children and this takes looking at the performance of all children. We need to believe not just that all children can learn but that all children can achieve high standards.

It is important that we have public awareness of the gap that exists among groups of students. We have to look at the reasons behind it. We have to push for schools to do more. Given our equity issues, it is logical consequence to move to accountability.

However, there are some things that I worry about related to No Child Left Behind.

There is the issue of how data is handled. Right now we are using snapshot data from one point in time. We look at different groups of students at two different points and try to compare the numbers. What effect does it have on any meaningful interpretation to use cross-sectional data with different cohorts of students? We are not looking at students longitudinally.

What are the implications of saying that we are going to get 100% of students to meet standards by 2014?

Will the responses to not making the goals be so punitive that schools will be in a worse place than they were prior to No Child Left Behind?

What are the implications of the focus on tests? There seems to be a lack of a link between the testing and how to improve instruction.

The time schedule does not help us. I don't know how the prior speaker from Chicago got test results back in July. In Evanston, we did not get results until August. How can you use results from tests to make an improvement in the next school year when you do not get the test results until the month when school is starting? There is just not enough time to have any real improvement prior to the next testing. We need to get results sooner.

We need tests and testing and will help instruction so that we can help kids.

Another issue is the stability of the testing system and expectations. When you are in a state like Illinois where you have had three major changes in the testing system and in the expectations in a decade, there does not seem to be much stability.

We have gone from a system where the test scores had no real effect and no one valued it to one where the impact is substantial. Under the old system, the kids did not value it; many did not even come to school on test day. Many parents did not value the old system; they helped to keep the kids home. Teachers did not value it.

In places like Evanston, Cleveland Heights, Ann Arbor and the other members of the minority student improvement network, the tests were not valued. There was a sense of, “What is the point of these tests anyway”?

We now have an educational obligation to help people to understand that the meaning of testing has changed. Students, teachers, and parents have to learn that this is something important.

In Evanston, we have teachers who get very unhappy when they think you are telling them that they have to teach to a test or that a test should shape the curriculum that they teach. They want to be able to teach their curriculum which they feel produces more in-depth learning. It gets to be a real issue when you try to tell teachers to teach to a test.

Another issue is the requirement that 95% of students be tested. This is a current issue with us because we are in a system where students have kept their students home at the time of testing. How do you get to 95% when people do not value the test?

Assessing the quality of teachers is another issue. I would say that having a piece of paper from a University is not enough proof to say that a person is a quality teacher. We really have to think about how we judge teachers and I hope that statement is not heretical.

It is a good thing that we are aligning assessments with standards. It is a good thing that we are pushing on reading and literacy. It is good to have a requirement to use scientifically based programs if we know what that means.

But then we have the question of resources. If the Bush administration is serious about No Child Left Behind, how is it that they can put forward a budget that marks out the Educational Labs, Technical Support, and comprehensive programs for school improvement? It just does not make sense.

I see that I am out of time but I do want you to consider the following questions:

- 1. Will No Child Left Behind improve equity, quality, and accountability?*
- 2. Will authentic learning be a byproduct of rising test scores?*
- 3. Can test scores rise to the levels called for by NCLB?*
- 4. Where are the resources needed to improve schools to meet the prescribed goals?*
- 5. How will we be able to establish the partnerships with families, communities, and universities that are needed to reform education?*

Response and Questions

Moderator: Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Evanston School District 202, Evanston, Illinois

Prior to getting into the open session and questioning period, I would like to just take a moment to summarize some of the major points of our speakers and offer some questions to help the group frame their responses. Here are some of my questions and reactions.

First, here are some reactions for Zollie Stevenson:

Do children really progress in the increments that have been specified in the legislation?

How do the required increments in performance and AYP requirements relate to the growth of children?

How are states and the federal government making decisions about what needs to be done to improve the educational system?

Is good information on what can be done being brought to bear on what should be the expected growth increments?

How much do states and school districts really know about confidence levels and how they should relate confidence levels to making decisions about categorization of educational institutions through No Child Left Behind?

What do the confidence levels mean within the context of making judgments about one year's progress and the context of multiple year's data and decision making?

What does confidence level mean when talking about the level of error in individual scores versus error in classifications based on proportions reaching acceptable levels of performance for schools, districts, and states?

Everyone wants this law to work but there do not seem to be mechanisms in place to move information on what is working and what is not working up from schools to districts to the state and on to the federal government. What is going to create these mechanisms to help in communication? We are learning things about what might be done to improve the No Child Left Behind Legislation but it is not clear how this information can work its way back to help improve the legislation

Second, here are some reactions for Glynn Ligon:

The collection of consistent and valid information is a critical issue in making decisions about the relative success of states and of states over time. It is not clear that this consistency and quality exists to support national statements and decisions.

It is important to have data standards and to actually take a look at the quality of data to assure that good data is being used for decision making.

Everyone wants the law to work but we seem to be learning things about problems with the legislation and with the data systems that support making decisions. Much of what was said related to states providing good information to the federal government but we also have concerns about the quality of information that goes from schools and school districts to states. Some states are clearly much farther ahead in having good systems that assure the quality of data.

How do we get all of the states to the point where they can provide good data?

Another question is how are we using and going to use the data that is collected? It is not clear that data is being collected and reported in a way that will make it easy to apply the data to understand how students are doing in school, how they are growing, and how the educational system might be improved.

Third, here are some reflections for Bill Hansen's presentation:

It is clear that there are major changes taking place in school districts and that change takes time.

The discussion of testing in Illinois and the impact of the many changes made to the testing system over the past ten years seems to reflect the experience that many states have had over the past few years. Many places have invested years in training teachers and curriculum staff in the analysis and interpretation of tests that are now no longer being used.

We have to be concerned about the snap shot nature of the No Child Left Behind system and how that relates to the continuous growth of individual students that is the concern of teachers. How can the NCLB system be made relevant to improving the experience of individual students and schools? How can we target the students that we need to target to help the school or district make annual yearly progress? This is a substantial change in the way we have looked at test scores in many places.

Another real concern was that teachers who are in the trenches do not have a real understanding of No Child Left Behind. There is a concern that they know the words but really have no idea of the impact of NCLB over time. Who in the school districts has the time to teach teachers about NCLB and the implications over time?

Right now, NCLB is far removed from the classroom and the day-to-day work of teachers.

At the state and district level, there are still lots of confusion about the law and what it means for all students, especially disabled students and English Language learners. Right

now states are looking to other states for definitions when there need to be consistent definitions that apply to all states.

Differences in definitions from state to state will result in substantial error in the conclusions that might be drawn about state performance and national performance. Right now it is likely that a failing school in one state would be judged to be a successful school in another state because of inconsistencies in standards and tests.

We really have to come to terms with these different definitions if No Child Left Behind is to have any national meaning. English Language Learners come to mind as a group that is not treated the same way from state to state. Here in Illinois we certainly do not do what is done in other states.

You talk about tracking LEP students in the state. We need to have a national system. We need to have one national policy on who is included, who is tested, and how students are tested if we are to have a fair and meaningful system.

It does not make much difference where you stand when you look at the need for definition and having a workable system. Federal, state, district, and school people are all in the same boat of being confused by inconsistencies in definitions and standards. We all need to work toward having a meaningful system that will work at all levels and within the levels. For example, we need meaningful and fair analysis and decisions that will apply to both large urban districts with large numbers of minority students and small districts with small numbers of poor and minority students.

With that, I will open it up for questions.

Question for Zollie Stevenson: Do you personally believe that every student in America will meet NCLB standards in reading and math by 2014? Do you anticipate litigation over the issue that education is the responsibility of the states rather than the Federal government?

Zollie Stevenson's Response: On the second question, I don't know what will happen. On the first question, yes. I think that it is possible to put standards based assessment in place where you are assessing academic content standards set by the state. I do believe that you can have all students proficient on those standards.

Question to Zollie Stevenson: There seems to be a paradox in the expectation of meeting standards for LEP and disabled students. These students are put into those groups because they do not have the ability to perform with other students at their grade level and are exited from those groups when they are no longer low achieving. How can these groups that are defined in part on the basis of their not meeting standards be expected to meet annual yearly progress goals in the same way that other groups are expected to make gains from year – to – year?

Zollie Stevenson's Response: This is a long and evolving story but I am going to go to the short version as I now understand it. Some states have identified an approach that will allow looking at English Language Learners beyond the point where they may be identified as no longer being part of the group due to their increased language proficiency. As you know, LEP students currently may be monitored for three years after leaving the LEP group; there is just no requirement in Title I that this take place. I would direct everyone to Indiana as a state to look at on this problem. They continue to monitor and in some cases even provide academic support to English Language Learners after these students reach proficiency in English.

Follow-Up: But there are always new students moving into the group so can you really compare?

Zollie Stevenson's Response: I cannot correct what Congress has set in the legislation. To be clear, we all know that there has been a lot of concern expressed about this.

Discussion from the audience. Illinois is now proposing as part of our plan that we keep the scores of students in the English language learners category for three years after the students have show English proficiency on our test, the IMAGE. We are now providing more information to the federal government on this proposal.

Question to Zollie Stevenson: Norm referenced tests have been used for years and many are closely aligned to the standards in reading and math. There is a great deal of research done on these tests and they are generally found to be valid and reliable. State tests, on the other hand, often change from year to year and do not have the track record showing their consistency and validity. Why have the norm referenced tests been set aside in favor of tests that might in some states not be as valid as norm referenced tests?

Zollie Stevenson's Response: Norm referenced tests as we know them are not based 100% on the standards of any one state and they are constructed in such a way that there is not an expectation that a student can be measured on proficiency relative to standards. Norm referenced tests are constructed to have scores where some kids score low, most kids in the middle, and some kids high. They are not constructed to allow the judgment that 100% of students are proficient. The norm referenced tests are also not keyed to state academic standards in a way to allow judgments to be made relative to specific standards.

Follow-Up: Yes, but many tests do give standards based scores.

Zollie Stevenson's Response: Yes, but they do not have the standard by standard review and match that is common on State standards based tests that assure a 100% match with the specific state academic standards. With state tests, groups of state educators review the tests item by item to assure that the tests are measuring the state standards. The current regulations do not allow for the use of a norm referenced test without augmentation. Under current law and regulation a test must either be criterion referenced test based on state standards or an augmented norm referenced test.

Audience Discussion: In Illinois, there are three tests for high school students including the ACT. Two of the three tests are norm referenced. All of the tests have been aligned with the state standards and information is available on standards that are tested. The problem that is created by mixing the tests and providing different information on the tests is the meaningful interpretation of the test scores. There are some studies in Illinois that say that the tests are aligned and other studies that say the tests are not aligned. The Illinois plan is still under review.

Question to Zollie Stevenson: I am representing a test publisher working to develop tests for LEP students. We are told that the tests have to be aligned to state standards but most states do not have tests or standards for LEP students. Is there any timeline for the U.S. Department of Education to provide the states with guidance on what should be a standard for ESL students?

Zollie Stevenson's Response: I am happy to say that I now have a question that does not come under Title I so it is out of my area. However, let me say this about what you have asked. The states are now in the process of the development of these ESL standards. New York may have gone farther than other states at this point and they have an assessment in place based on their state English standards as well as LEP standards. The test does not cover all of the state English standards but the score does represent performance on standards and can be helpful to teachers. States should have their standards ready for review in September of this year.

Moderator: Well, it looks like we have reached the end of our time. I would like to thank all of the panel members. Special thanks go to Zollie Stevenson because I know how busy he is these days and how hard it is for him to participate in sessions like this one.

