

# How Eight State Education Agencies in the Northeast and Islands Region Identify and Support Low-Performing Schools and Districts

## New Hampshire



*Provide a pyramid of services to districts and schools most in need, drawing on different offices in the department of education, as well as consultants with expertise in areas of need, and providing districts with tools to help their schools.*

N.B. Data collection for this SEA took place between July 2007 and April 2008.

### CONTEXT

New Hampshire is a small rural state in northern New England, with a large number of small schools and single-school districts. Well known for a culture emphasizing personal responsibility and local control, New Hampshire's philosophy is epitomized by its recent education accountability law, which specifies that the State of New Hampshire will not take over schools. New Hampshire has neither a state income tax nor a sales tax. The state education property tax is the primary source of revenue for education funding. Local communities have taken the issue of school funding before the courts, which ruled that the New Hampshire constitution "imposes a duty on the State to provide a constitutionally adequate education to every educable child and to guarantee adequate funding." Because of this ruling and subsequent ones, New Hampshire has had to define "constitutionally adequate education" and is charged next to specify its cost.

Long before No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted, New Hampshire established its Statewide Education Improvement and Assessment program (RSA 193-C) in 1993 to set standards and require education improvement and assessment plans (New Hampshire General Court, n.d.a). In 2003, legislation (RSA 193-H) sought to establish a single state accountability system for schools, coordinated with NCLB (New Hampshire General Court, n.d.b). This system seeks to meet NCLB requirements and go beyond them to apply to all public schools, non-Title I as well as Title I schools. It also provides \$500,000 for assistance to schools and districts, which can be used to provide services where there is need. It allows funding to Title I districts identified as in need of improvement (INI) for planning, which is not covered by Title I, and services to non-Title I schools, which would not receive services funded by Title I. In 2006–2007, each low-performing school and the two districts in corrective action each received funding to support implementation of their improvement plans.

New Hampshire has joined with Rhode Island and Vermont to develop the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) (New Hampshire Department of Education [NHDE], 2008). Since 2005, NECAP has been administered each fall in Grades 3 through 8; it was first given to students in Grade 11 in Fall 2007. New Hampshire educators are also constructing course competencies at the secondary level that link content to skills and use multiple measures to evaluate student proficiency.

Since Lyonel Tracey became Commissioner of Education in 2005, emphasis has been placed on educating the "whole child." The resulting Follow the Child Initiative fosters a

personalized learning experience for each student and challenges districts to measure growth in and develop support systems for the personal, social, physical, and academic aspects of each student’s life. Participation by districts and schools (and individuals, if they choose) is voluntary (Quaglia Institute, n.d.). Follow the Child school-level performance data based on individual students’ annual progress served as the basis of a growth model proposed as part of the state’s accountability system. This proposal was not accepted as a pilot by the U.S. Department of Education in May 2007, but the NHDE is using the model as an information tool for districts.

## Selection Criteria

In May 2006, the U.S. Department of Education approved amendments to the New Hampshire Accountability Plan that allowed the state to transition to an index system for calculating school, district, and state adequate yearly progress (AYP) status (NHDE, 2006). Under the index system, schools receive 100 points for each student scoring Proficient or better in reading and math and partial credit for students who score below Proficient, based on a sliding scale. The index for a school is the average of the student points. The index system also rewards a school’s progress in addressing the needs of students scoring below Proficient and awards points for positive movement toward proficiency. See Table NH-1 for details of New Hampshire’s AYP measures.

**Table NH-1. New Hampshire AYP Measures**

<b>NCLB AYP Determination Requirement</b>	<b>New Hampshire’s Approach</b>
<b>Assessment</b>	NECAP
<b>Proficiency Target</b>	Percent Proficient transitioning to Index System
<b>Starting Point</b>	20th Percentile
<b>Participation</b>	95%
<b>Additional Measure</b>	Attendance/Graduation Rate
<b>Additional Provisions</b>	No
<b>Minimum Number for Subgroups</b>	
Accountability/Performance	11
Participation	40
<b>Confidence Intervals</b>	99%
<b>Other</b>	No

**Source:** U.S. Department of Education, 2007.

Table NH-2 outlines the number and percentage of low-performing schools in New Hampshire, as well as the number of years they have been designated as such.

**Table NH-2. New Hampshire Low-Performing Schools, Academic Year 2007–2008**

No. of Schools in State	No. (%) of Schools Designated as Low-Performing	Number of Years Designated								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exiting
468	136 (29%)	67	44	25	-	-	-	-	-	5

**Note:** Years Designated corresponds to previously noted NCLB designations accordingly: Year 1 = INI (year 1), Year 2 = INI (year 2), Year 3 = Corrective Action, Year 4 = Restructuring (year 1), Year 5 = Restructuring (year 2), Year 6 = Restructuring (year 3), Year 7 = Restructuring (year 4), Year 8 = Restructuring (year 5).

**Source:** NHDE, 2007.

District AYP is based on the aggregated student performance across the district, not on individual school performance. Data are aggregated at the elementary/middle school level as well as at the high school level. A district is designated as low performing when both grade spans do not make AYP for 2 consecutive years in the same performance indicator. A district can be designated for multiple areas at the same time. Districts and schools can exit the NCLB status by making AYP in the same indicator for 2 consecutive years. See Table NH-3 for information about New Hampshire’s low-performing districts.

**Table NH-3. New Hampshire Low-Performing Districts, Academic Year 2007–2008**

No. of Districts in State	No. (%) of Districts Designated as Low-Performing	Number of Years Designated								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exiting
162	32 (13%)	24	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	7

**Note:** Years Designated corresponds to previously noted NCLB designations accordingly: Year 1 = INI (year 1), Year 2 = INI (year 2), Year 3 = Corrective Action, Year 4 = Restructuring (year 1), Year 5 = Restructuring (year 2), Year 6 = Restructuring (year 3), Year 7 = Restructuring (year 4), Year 8 = Restructuring (year 5).

**Source:** U.S. Department of Education, 2007.

Note: The following sections of this profile are grounded in data gathered from interviews and a focus group conducted between July and November 2007. The state education agency (SEA) website, official SEA policies and administrative policies,

legislation, court cases, and other official documents supplement the interviews and focus groups.

## Interventions with Low-Performing Schools and Districts

Table NH-4. New Hampshire Interventions with Low-Performing Schools and Districts

<b>Policies</b>	<p>New Hampshire Statewide Education Improvement and Assessment Program (RSA 193-C: 9) establishes a local education improvement fund to provide assistance to school districts.</p> <p>New Hampshire State Accountability Law (RSA 193-H) provides for technical assistance to non-Title I schools/districts as well as Title I; prohibits the department from taking over non-Title I schools.</p>
<b>Primary Focus of Intervention</b>	Districts identified as in need of improvement (DINI).
<b>Services</b>	
Site-Specific	School improvement staff provide help in regions; coaches include coaches in special education, mathematics, English language arts, and data use.
Planning Assistance	Title I schools and the two low-performing districts get a planning grant, are asked to use root cause analysis (RCA), can use the grant to hire approved consultants to deepen plans. Department staff review and help revise plans.
Work with Data	Districts get data reports from an online data analysis system and regional training in how to use the data.
Professional Development	<p>Summer institute for district teams (with school representation) focused on leadership and literacy. Facilitators provided.</p> <p>Coaches (staff and outside consultants in reading, math, special ed).</p>
Convening Schools/Districts	<p>Summer institutes for district teams.</p> <p>Mid-winter follow-up conference on data and leadership.</p> <p>DINI coordinators meet monthly.</p>
<b>Sanctions</b>	The designation label is considered a sanction by local educators and communities.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Department teams monitor district reports of progress.

## Rationale for Intervention

The NHDE’s Office for School Improvement is responsible for managing the improvement of student achievement through a continuous school improvement process that includes targeted assistance for districts and schools identified as low performing. While the department focuses primarily on encouraging schools and districts to develop enhanced capacity, the accountability aspect of this work has increased due to the

influence of NCLB. As the Administrator of the Office of Accountability said, “We had an assessment system before, but not an accountability system,” and provision of assistance has evolved from voluntary and invitational to having some requirements. For example, a DINI is now required to appoint a DINI coordinator, and DINI coordinators are required to meet monthly with the NHDE (interview, July 25, 2007).

Schools identified as in need of improvement (INI) are required by both state and federal legislation to develop improvement plans within 90 days of designation. Low-performing districts participate in a phased planning process: In Phase 1, they analyze data (90 days); in Phase 2 they develop plans (45 days). The NHDE recommends that low-performing schools and districts use RCA or some other form of deep analysis of data to help strengthen their improvement plans and to address the specific deficiencies that led to the low-performing designation. NHDE has trained and approved a pool of external facilitators with whom districts can contract to assist with the process (Allen & Avery, 2005; Preuss, 2003).

Consistent with the state’s culture emphasizing local control, the NHDE’s state system of support is built on the philosophy that districts are responsible for the performance of their schools and the state is responsible for support to districts. The Deputy Commissioner of Education observed, “Local control makes it difficult to set in place a systemic movement because we have to work with each local school board individually. But we try to use a common framework and individualize within that” (interview, October 30, 2007). After plans are approved, the department considers the district responsible for ensuring implementation of school plans and supports districts in doing so. As a result, the state’s support for low-performing schools has shifted from direct service to schools to providing districts with tools (e.g., data or professional development) to support schools.

### Preconditions

There are no preconditions. Staff said, “We take them as they are” (interview with officials, July 25, 2007).

### Strategies

NHDE provides a pyramid of support services, with low-performing districts given priority and low-performing schools eligible for a limited amount of ongoing support. Staff members are organized into regional service teams to provide support to schools that have been identified as INI and check in with them periodically. INI schools can apply for school improvement or content (e.g., English language arts or mathematics) coaches, who are often external service providers on loan from a district. The school improvement office also works with other department offices—including assessment, accountability, and instruction—to collect data and leverage resources across departments in order to provide assistance to schools in such areas as data use or special education. Their goal is to coordinate and integrate monitoring of and support for low-performing schools and their respective school improvement plans.

An important part of the services offered are summer institutes that pre-date NCLB. While the institutes have changed somewhat over the years due to shifting priorities and funding, they have consistently been designed to build local capacity for school improvement. Key elements of the week-long residential institutes are participation by local teams (first school teams, now district teams that include school representatives); an outside trained facilitator to help each team conduct a self-assessment and prepare or revise improvement plans; and professional development based on identified common needs offered as a resource to the teams. In Summer 2007, the institute was called the Follow the Child Leadership Institute, and preference was given to low-performing districts, with content focused on literacy and leadership. District teams included members from schools.

### Intended Outcomes

The focus of work is to help schools and districts make AYP.

### Lead SEA Contact(s)

Deb Wiswell, Administrator, Office of Accountability, New Hampshire Department of Education

Gary Guzouskas, Administrator, Office of School Improvement, New Hampshire Department of Education (retired 2008)

### Challenges and Future Plans

The NHDE is in the process of building a comprehensive state system of support for all schools, with a particular emphasis on low-performing schools. As part of this ongoing work, the department is consulting with the New England Comprehensive Center. One early step of this work was to identify programs, services, and assets already in place that can be leveraged to support low-performing schools; a minimum of 16 programs across all departments were identified. In addition, the Commissioner's Follow the Child Initiative is underway and beginning to provide the data, curriculum resources, and leadership model that New Hampshire schools can use to look at the whole child and make district-, school-, or student-level decisions to improve academic outcomes. Department staff want to ensure that the Follow the Child Initiative is coordinated with NCLB requirements, believing that it captures the intent of NCLB in a more holistic approach.

Questions remain about how to leverage programs across department divisions to provide districts and superintendents with the capacity to oversee and guide key organizational, fiscal, and curriculum decisions that will drive improved academic achievement. One NHDE official noted, "This is the missing piece: How does the state give districts the tool box they need to effectively manage their individual schools?" (interview, October 10, 2007).

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*This profile was co-authored by Leslie F. Hergert, Sonia Caus Gleason, and Carole Urbano. For more information about the [Issues & Answers Report](#), e-mail Hergert at [lhergert@edc.org](mailto:lhergert@edc.org) or Caus Gleason at [sonia@soniacausgleason.org](mailto:sonia@soniacausgleason.org).*

*The Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands (REL-NEI) is administered by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in partnership with American Institutes for Research (AIR), and WestEd's Learning Innovations program. REL-NEI is one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories funded by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. It provides rigorous research that is relevant to national education priorities, responsive to local needs, and usable for policy and practice. Visit [www.relnei.org](http://www.relnei.org).*

*This project has been funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract Number ED-06-CO-0025. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.*

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