

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

This descriptive project documents the interventions that eight State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the Northeast and Islands Region have implemented with schools and districts designated as in need of improvement, as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and state law. Sites included are the six New England states, New York State, and Puerto Rico.

— SONIA CAUS GLEASON, SMALL BUSINESS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP LEARNING INNOVATIONS AT WESTED, AND
LESLIE F. HERGERT, CAROLE URBANO, EDC, PROJECT TEAM

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Document state criteria for schools and districts being designated for intervention and the number of designated schools and districts.
- Describe policies, services, and/or other interventions SEAs are using with schools and districts that do not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- Describe the reasoning around intervention in each state/jurisdiction.

METHODOLOGY

- Review publicly available documents and those provided by SEAs.
- Interview key informants from the SEAs.

AUDIENCE & APPLICATION

- State policymakers, especially those responsible for interventions with schools and districts under NCLB.
- Others interested in improving low-performing schools and districts.

FINAL PRODUCTS

- Issues & Answers Report published by the Institute of Education Sciences, which may be found at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009068.pdf
- A cross-site analysis of patterns, trends, and differences.
- Profiles of each SEA's approach to intervention, which may be found at: <http://www.relnei.org/research.supplementalmaterials.php>

What Are Fast-Response Projects?

Fast-Response Projects are short-term projects that respond to regional and national needs and priorities and provide research-based knowledge to inform policy and practice. They use methods such as research syntheses, mining of existing data sets, and descriptive studies.



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All eight SEAs had intervention systems in place for schools and districts at the time of the SEA interviews (July through November 2007). This report provides a snapshot of how SEAs identify low-performing schools and districts, their interventions to support those schools, and the rationales for the interventions.

Identification of Low-Performing Schools and Districts. SEAs implemented the federally defined accountability principles in a variety of ways; that variation means that what qualifies as adequate yearly progress (AYP) in one jurisdiction might not in another. For instance, assessments and subsequent definitions of proficiency differ by SEA, except for the three states (New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) that use the NECAP (New England Common Assessments Program). For 2007–08, the percentage of schools designated low-performing ranged from 11% in Vermont to more than 50% in Puerto Rico. For 2007–08, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont each identified between 9% and 20% of their districts as low-performing. Rhode Island identified 28% of their districts as low-performing, and Maine identified none.

Supports and Interventions by SEAs for Low-Performing Schools and Districts. This report finds that interventions are continuously being revised in light of new thinking, numbers of low-performing schools and districts, and changing contexts. Some SEAs (Maine, Puerto Rico, and Vermont), directly assist low-performing schools. Others (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island) focus on low-performing districts with the greatest need. New Hampshire and New York directly assist both low-performing schools and districts. Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont extend supports to non-Title I low-performing schools. SEAs provide multiple supports including planning assistance, ongoing consultation, and targeted professional development.

Rationales for Various SEA Approaches to School and District Improvement. In interviews with representatives from each SEA, researchers asked about the rationales, including goals, for various approaches to school improvement. In four jurisdictions (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island), SEA officials had documented rationales or logic models that grounded their approaches. They raised concerns about balancing the tension between state and local decision-making, limited resources for intervention, cross-department collaboration, and ensuring coherence of multiple interventions.

This report offers the stories of SEA administrators from their perspectives. School and district educators would have their own stories to tell about how to support student achievement and how best to organize and prioritize SEAs' contributions to that process.

Contact Information

For more information about this project, e-mail Rebecca Carey (rcarey@edc.org) or visit REL-NEI online (www.relnei.org).

