ISSUES&ANSWERS REL 2012–No. 121

REL MIDWEST
Regional Educational Laboratory

Characteristics of Midwest Region school districts identified for improvement

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March 2012

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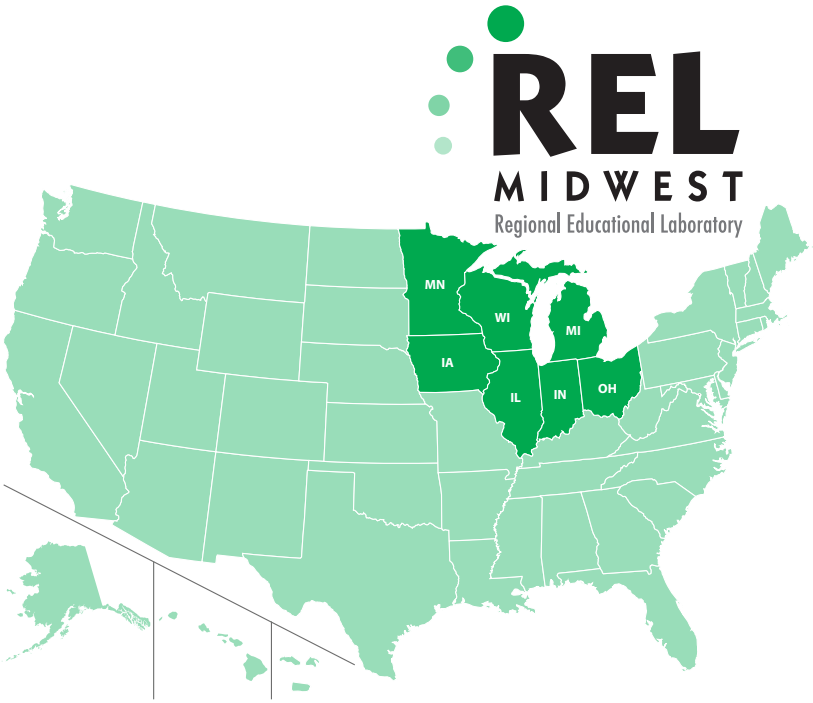

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March 2012

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Summary

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Characteristics of Midwest Region school districts identified for improvement

This report presents statistical profiles for the Midwest Region states of school districts designated as "in improvement" for school year 2009/10 under accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and compares the prevalence and characteristics of these districts and those of districts not in improvement. It also reports the prevalence of districts in need of improvement under three states' own accountability systems.

Like other states across the country, the seven states in the Midwest Region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) have been striving to meet the performance targets established under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Under the NCLB Act, districts are identified as "in improvement" and schools as "in need of improvement" after two successive years of not meeting adequate yearly progress performance targets. Districts in improvement or schools in need of improvement that receive Title I funds are subject to sanctions that range from providing supplemental services to students to restructuring schools.

The states vary in how they identify underperforming districts and schools using the NCLB criteria. In addition, some states maintain their own parallel performance classification systems using state-defined criteria. This report responds to requests from policymakers and leaders in the Midwest Region for statistical profiles of districts in improvement within the region's states.

The report addresses three questions:

- What is the prevalence of districts in improvement in each Midwest Region state under the NCLB Act and under states' own accountability systems?
- How do district characteristics (size, locale, poverty, student race/ethnicity, students with special needs, expenditures, and revenue sources) compare for districts in improvement and not in improvement under the NCLB Act?
- Are districts' designations of in improvement consistent with their schools' designations as in need of improvement, and do districts and schools perform similarly on NCLB performance criteria?

These topics are investigated using publicly available data provided by state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education (2010), and the U.S. Census Bureau (2009). The data are summarized to describe conditions at

the beginning of the 2009/10 school year. The following are key findings for each question.

On the prevalence of districts in improvement in each Midwest Region state under the NCLB Act:

- Most school districts (85 percent) in the seven states were not in improvement.
- States varied widely in how many districts were in improvement: Michigan had one district in improvement and Wisconsin had two, while Minnesota had more than half (51 percent) of its districts in improvement.
- The proportion of students enrolled in districts in improvement also varied widely, from 6 percent in Michigan to 81 percent in Minnesota.
- The largest school district in each state had been in improvement for several years, with some districts in improvement for as long as six years.

In states with their own accountability systems, the state systems identified additional districts in need of support. For example, Indiana's own system identified 100 districts for improvement that were not identified under the federal system.

On a comparison of districts in improvement and those not in improvement:

- Rural districts account for half the districts (52 percent) in these seven states, but few rural districts were in improvement (7 percent).
- Except in Michigan and Wisconsin, the median percentage of White students was 60–90 percent in districts in improvement but exceeded 90 percent in districts not in improvement.
- The median percentage of students with disabilities varied little across states or between districts in improvement and districts not in improvement.
- In six states, the median per student expenditure was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement.
- In each state, the median percentage of funding from federal sources was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement; the median percentage of funding from local sources was lower in districts in improvement in all states except Minnesota.

On the consistency of district and school accountability designations:

- Slightly more than a quarter of districts in improvement included no schools in improvement, and slightly less than a quarter of districts not in improvement included schools in improvement.
- The academic performance of students with disabilities contributed most frequently to differences in adequate yearly progress determinations between districts and their schools. In more racially/ethnically diverse districts, the performance of minority students also contributed to these differences.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This report presents statistical profiles for the Midwest Region states of school districts designated as "in improvement" for school year 2009/10 under accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and compares the prevalence and characteristics of these districts and those of districts not in improvement. It also reports the prevalence of districts in need of improvement under three states' own accountability systems.

WHY THIS STUDY?

Like other states across the country, the seven states in the Midwest Region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) have been striving to meet the performance targets established in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. As part of these efforts, each state's NCLB accountability system identifies underperforming districts and schools and stipulates improvement measures. In addition, four Midwest Region states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio) have retained the performance accountability systems they created before the NCLB Act. They use the accountability systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of all schools statewide against criteria set by the state. In doing so, they ensure that accountability requirements can be applied to all schools in the state, not just those receiving Title I funds (see box 1 for key terms). The state systems in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio also hold districts accountable under these criteria; Michigan does not.

States identify low-performing districts and schools with the expectation that the districts and schools will take specific steps to improve performance. All states annually report publicly and to the U.S. Department of Education the number and identity of schools in need of improvement.[1] The prevalence and characteristics of districts in improvement are less well documented. Thus, while the extensive literature on school improvement has a long history and is growing rapidly, district improvement has been less discussed.[2]

Responding to requests from policymakers and decisionmakers in the Midwest Region, this report presents statistical profiles of districts in improvement and those not in improvement under the NCLB Act and under state accountability systems to support district efforts to improve student performance.

BOX 1

Key terms

Adequate yearly progress. Each state is required to define proficiency based on achieving a minimum acceptable score on the state assessment. Districts and schools make adequate yearly progress in a given year if the proportion of students achieving proficiency, overall and for all student subgroups, meets or exceeds state targets for that year. States stipulate the accountability procedures they will follow in accountability workbooks, negotiated annually with the U.S. Department of Education (Forte Fast and Erpenbach 2004; Sunderman 2006). As states have learned from research and experience, nearly all have modified their accountability workbooks, some repeatedly (Chudowsky and Chudowsky 2007; Chudowsky et al. 2004; Erpenbach 2007; Erpenbach 2008; Erpenbach and Forte 2005; Forte and Erpenbach 2006).

Decision rules. Three constructs govern the designation process for districts: content area (reading, math, and the other academic indicator, usually attendance for elementary and middle schools (states select this indicator, subject to approval by the U.S. Department of Education) or graduation rate for high schools), time in improvement status, and grade span. Accountability workbooks specify how each state defines these constructs. The procedures are not identical across Midwest Region states, although the states share most features.[1]

The decision rules that place districts in improvement status or increase the sanction levels apply separately for each content area. A district may be in improvement for math but not reading, for example. Districts move to a position of increased sanctions after additional years of not meeting targets. Climbing out of improvement status typically requires two successive years of meeting a set of conditions. Adequate yearly progress determinations are completed for each of three grade spans and the student subgroups within each span (elementary, middle, and high school).

Six Midwest Region states—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin—place in improvement any district in which all three grade spans do not meet adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years in the same content area. Michigan places districts in improvement if any one grade span does not meet the same adequate yearly progress criterion for two consecutive years.

Districts and schools in need of improvement. The state is required to identify districts that do not make adequate yearly progress for two successive years as in improvement and schools as in need of improvement (20 U.S.C. § 6143). Districts in improvement and schools in need of improvement that receive Title I funds are subject to sanctions. The longer a school or district remains in improvement status, the more severe the sanctions become. Sanctions range from providing students with supplemental services to restructuring.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965 and has been reauthorized since. The 2001 reauthorization, known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, introduced substantial changes in accountability. The act tied together standards, assessments, and accountability (Luce and Thompson 2005; Palmer and Coleman 2004) and required states to establish adequate yearly progress targets and raise the targets periodically to ensure that all public school students "meet or exceed the state's proficient level of academic achievement" by 2013/14 (No Child Left Behind Act, Sec. 1001). States must evaluate all schools and districts for adequate yearly progress, but sanctions apply only to schools and districts receiving Title I funding.

School district. The U.S. Department of Education identifies eight types of local education agencies (see table A1 in appendix A), which it overlays on each state's own definitions of what constitutes a school district. This study examines only the first two categories in table A1, which include locally governed school districts that provide free public elementary or secondary education. It does not consider agencies in the other categories because these agencies do not have fixed boundaries and the power to tax. States' own accounting of districts does not necessarily adhere to the consistent rules this report adopts, so the totals reported here may differ from those states have published.

Note

1. In spring 2006, Henry Johnson, then Assistant Secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, issued guidance that outlined five approaches to identifying districts for improvement. All the Midwest Region states use the fourth approach. Nevertheless, the states vary in how they implement the approaches.

Earlier Regional Educational Laboratory West studies detailing and analyzing the characteristics of districts in improvement in Arizona (Crane, Huang, Derby et al. 2008a) and California (Crane, Huang, Derby et al. 2008b; Crane, Huang, Huang, and Derby 2008) found that districts in improvement tended to be larger and more often in urban settings with larger proportions of racial/ethnic minority students or students from low-income households than were districts not in improvement. The studies also found that district-level accountability tended to identify problems that were missed by school-level accountability, primarily because student subgroups are larger at the district level than at any individual school and so are more likely to meet the criterion for group size.[3]

This report supplements the earlier studies by presenting similar information for districts in the Midwest Region states. It describes the distribution of districts across improvement categories for each state and compares districts in improvement and those not in improvement on several characteristics, many related to the student subgroups monitored for accountability. Exploring these characteristics can provide insight into the contexts in which districts in improvement face accountability-related challenges. Finally, the report notes instances when low-performing student subgroups are identified at the district level but not at the school level.

Specifically, the report addresses three questions:

- What is the prevalence of districts in improvement in each Midwest Region state under the NCLB Act and under states' own accountability systems?
- How do district characteristics (size, locale, poverty, student race/ethnicity, students with special needs, expenditures, and revenue sources) compare for districts in improvement and not in improvement under the NCLB Act?
- Are districts' designations of in improvement consistent with their schools' designations as in need of improvement, and do districts and schools perform similarly on NCLB performance criteria?

These topics are investigated using publicly available datasets provided by state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education (2010), and the U.S. Census Bureau (2009). Box 2 briefly summarizes the data sources and methods; appendix A provides greater detail. The analysis draws on data for 2008/09, which determined the improvement status for 2009/10.

BOX 2

Data and methods

Demographic, performance, and accountability data for 2008/09–2009/10 were collected from the websites of state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education (2010), and the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) to build profiles of schools and districts in each Midwest Region state. Data files for each state were inspected to identify the most recent, complete, and consistent set of files for analysis. When similar data were available from multiple sources, the data were cross-checked for accuracy and consistency, and knowledgeable state education agency staff were consulted as needed. State education agency staff also provided additional or updated data when data from these sources were missing. The data files for 2008/09, which recorded improvement status for 2009/10, were selected as the primary resources for analysis.

Counts, percentages, and measures of central tendency (means and medians) were used to present basic descriptive information about districts in improvement and to compare them with districts not identified as in improvement. Each district's improvement status and adequate yearly progress determination was compared with its schools' improvement statuses and adequate yearly progress determinations. All analyses were conducted separately for each state. (Appendix A describes data sources, file structures, and analysis procedures.)

STUDY FINDINGS

This study finds that, as a group, most school districts (85 percent) in the seven states were not designated as in improvement under the NCLB Act. There was marked variation by state in how many districts were in improvement, from a low of one or two districts in Michigan and Wisconsin to 173 in Minnesota (51 percent of the state's school districts). The largest school district in each state had been in improvement for several years, some as long as six years. In states that maintained their own accountability systems, the local systems identified additional districts as in need of monitoring and support.

Although rural districts constituted half (52 percent) the districts in the seven states, few (7 percent) were in improvement. In each state, the median percentage of White students was higher in districts not in improvement (above 90 percent) than in districts in improvement (60–90 percent). The median percentage of students with disabilities varied little across districts in improvement and districts not in improvement. In all states but Minnesota, median per student expenditure was slightly higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement. Districts in improvement had a higher median percentage of revenues from federal sources and a lower median percentage of revenues from local sources than did districts not in improvement.

Slightly more than a quarter (28 percent) of districts in improvement included no schools in need of improvement, and slightly less than a quarter of districts not in improvement included schools in need of improvement. The academic performance of students with disabilities was the most frequent contributor to differences between districts and their schools in meeting adequate yearly progress targets. In more diverse districts, the academic performance of minority students also contributed to these differences.

The prevalence of districts in improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act and under states' own accountability systems

Under NCLB Act accountability. Most school districts in the Midwest Region states were not in NCLB improvement status at the beginning of the 2009/10 school year, except in Minnesota, where 51.2 percent of districts were in improvement (table 1). In each state, the percentage of districts in improvement was much smaller than these districts' share of student enrollment, implying that larger districts were more likely to be in improvement.

TABLE 1

Enrollment in districts in improvement in Midwest Region states under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year, by state

State	Number of districts	Number of students	Districts in improvement		Students enrolled in districts in improvement	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illinois	869	2,070,125	184	21.2	1,085,015	52.4
Indiana	292	1,015,528	42	14.4	390,338	38.4
Iowa	362	482,861	24	6.6	178,249	36.9
Michigan	491	1,450,314	1	0.2	80,873	5.6
Minnesota	338	781,852	173	51.2	629,972	80.6
Ohio	610	1,661,275	116	19.0	623,747	37.5
Wisconsin	426	821,771	2	0.5	84,328	10.3

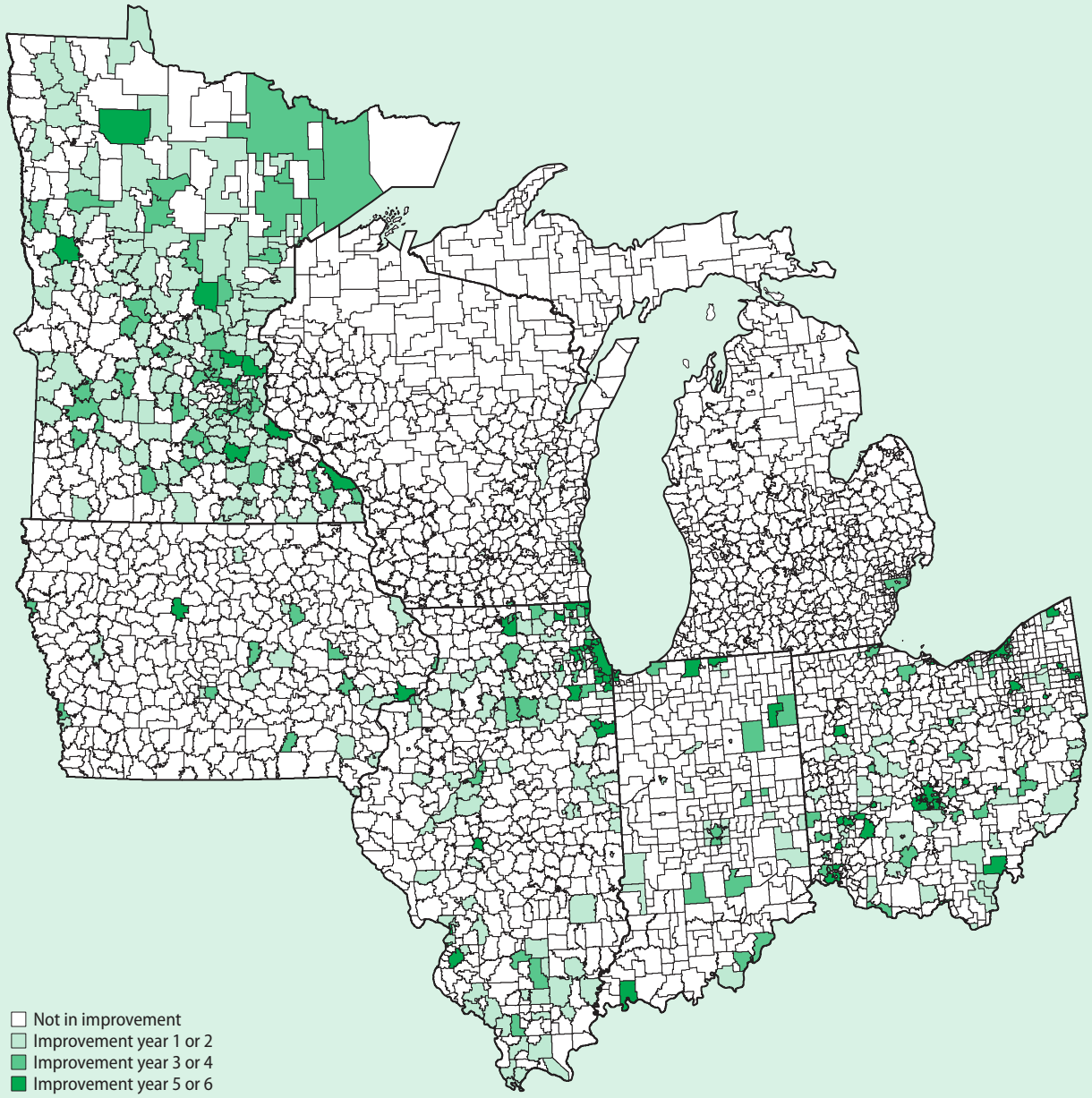
Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies; see appendix A for details.

There was considerable variation in the number of districts in improvement in each state. Five states had at least two dozen districts in improvement entering the 2009/10 school year. (Illinois had the most districts in improvement, with 184, while Michigan had only 1 and Wisconsin only 2.) The very small numbers in Michigan and Wisconsin should be kept in mind when interpreting the data on districts in improvement.

Map 1 depicts the geographic distribution of districts in improvement, with darker hues identifying districts that spent more time in improvement. In states with low overall rates of districts in improvement,

MAP 1

Distribution of districts in improvement in Midwest Region states under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies; see appendix A for details.

urban districts tend to be in improvement more than rural districts (for example, School District of Beloit and Milwaukee Public Schools in Wisconsin, Detroit Public Schools in Michigan, Davenport Community Schools in Iowa, and Columbus City Schools and Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Ohio). In states with a higher proportion of districts in improvement, suburban or rural districts appear more frequently among districts in improvement.

Tables 2–8 summarize the improvement status of each state's districts under NCLB accountability, including the numbers and percentages of districts designated as in improvement and not in improvement entering the 2009/10 school year. Because districts vary greatly in size and states vary in how they organize schools, the numbers of schools and students in each category are also presented. Districts not in improvement are disaggregated by whether they made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09. Districts in improvement are disaggregated by number of years in improvement status.

Except for Illinois, the states apply their own labels to NCLB improvement categories. In tables 3–8, these state-specific labels are presented alongside NCLB category names.

Illinois. Of Illinois' 869 school districts, 184 (21.2 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 2). These districts accounted for 42.7 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 52.4 percent of its students. Half these districts were in their first year of improvement. About 1 in 10 districts had spent multiple years in improvement, including the state's largest district, Chicago Public Schools, which was in corrective action year 3 (meaning that it had spent five years in improvement). Of the 685 districts not in improvement, 251 (36.6 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress the previous school year.

Indiana. Of Indiana's 292 school districts (called corporations in Indiana), 42 (14.4 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 3). These corporations, distributed across six improvement categories,

TABLE 2

Improvement status of Illinois school districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

	Districts			Schools		Students	
Improvement status	Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement							
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09	434	49.9	63.4	1,165	29.8	449,646	21.7
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09	251	28.9	36.6	1,074	27.5	535,464	25.9
Subtotal	685	78.8	100.0	2,239	57.3	985,110	47.6
Districts in improvement							
District improvement year 1	90	10.4	48.9	457	11.7	228,453	11.0
District improvement year 2	26	3.0	14.1	111	2.8	72,305	3.5
Corrective action year 1	20	2.3	10.9	189	4.8	126,915	6.1
Corrective action year 2	15	1.7	8.2	51	1.3	45,775	2.2
Corrective action year 3	33	3.8	17.9	863	22.1	611,567	29.5
Subtotal	184	21.2	100.0	1,671	42.7	1,085,015	52.4
Total	869	100.0	na	3,910	100.0	2,070,125	100.0

na is not applicable.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Illinois State Board of Education (2010a,b) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

accounted for 35.4 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 38.4 percent of its students. The 12 corporations in their fifth or sixth year of improvement status included Indiana's school corporations with the highest enrollments. Of the 250 districts not in improvement, 14 (5.6 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Iowa. Of Iowa's 362 school districts, 24 (6.6 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 4). These districts accounted for 24.8 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 36.9 percent of its students. Half these districts were in their first year of improvement status; the remainder had been in improvement two to five years. Of the 338 districts not in improvement, 11 (3.3 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Michigan. Of Michigan's 491 school districts, only Detroit Public Schools (0.2 percent) was in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 5). Detroit, the state's largest district, enrolled 5.6 percent of the state's students and included 4.9 percent of its schools. Of the 490 districts not in improvement, 5 (1.0 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Minnesota. Of Minnesota's 338 school districts, 173 (51.2 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 6). These districts accounted for 74.2 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 80.6 percent of its students. Half the districts in improvement were in their first year of improvement status, and 39.3 percent were in their second year or third year (corrective action year 1). Of the 165 districts not in improvement, 47 (28.5 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Ohio. Of Ohio's 610 school districts, 116 (19.0 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10

TABLE 3

Improvement status of Indiana school corporations under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		School corporations			Schools		Students	
Improvement status		Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		236	80.8	94.4	1,035	57.0	538,516	53.0
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		14	4.8	5.6	138	7.6	86,674	8.5
Subtotal		250	85.6	100	1,173	64.6	625,190	61.6
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Indiana label*							
District improvement year 1	1	7	2.4	16.7	44	2.4	23,363	2.3
District improvement year 2	2	9	3.1	21.4	103	5.7	63,482	6.3
Corrective action year 1	3	9	3.1	21.4	92	5.1	63,897	6.3
Corrective action year 2	4	5	1.7	11.9	79	4.4	45,870	4.5
Corrective action year 3	5	6	2.1	14.3	158	8.7	85,652	8.4
Corrective action year 4	6	6	2.1	14.3	167	9.2	108,074	10.6
Subtotal		42	14.4	100	643	35.4	390,338	38.4
Total		292	100	na	1,816	100	1,015,528	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Indiana Department of Education (2010b,c) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 4

Improvement status of Iowa districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		Districts			Schools		Students	
Improvement status		Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		327	90.3	96.7	1,062	71.0	273,664	56.7
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		11	3.0	3.3	63	4.2	30,948	6.4
Subtotal		338	93.4	100.0	1,125	75.2	304,612	63.1
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Iowa label*							
District improvement year 1	DINA 1 (or DINA 1–delay)	12	3.3	50.0	110	7.4	51,358	10.6
District improvement year 2	DINA 2	1	0.3	4.2	4	0.3	1,223	0.3
Corrective action year 1	DINA 3 (or DINA 3–delay)	3	0.8	12.5	78	5.2	39,713	8.2
Corrective action year 2	DINA 4	6	1.7	25.0	134	9.0	66,267	13.7
Corrective action year 3	DINA 5	2	0.6	8.3	45	3.0	19,688	4.1
Subtotal		24	6.6	100.0	371	24.8	178,249	36.9
Total		362	100	na	1,496	100	482,861	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. DINA is district in need of assistance. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Iowa Department of Education (2010a) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 5

Improvement status of Michigan districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		School corporations			Schools		Students	
Improvement status		Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		485	99.8	99.0	2,909	94.5	1,360,815	93.8
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		5	1.0	1.0	18	0.6	8,626	0.6
Subtotal		490	99.8	100	2,927	95.1	1,369,441	94.4
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Michigan label*							
District improvement year 1	DINA 1 (or DINA 1–delay)	1	0.2	100	151	4.9	80,873	5.6
Subtotal		1	0.2	100	151	4.9	80,873	5.6
Total		491	100	na	3,078	100	1,450,314	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. DINA is district in need of assistance. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Michigan Department of Education (2010) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 6

Improvement status of Minnesota districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

Improvement status		School corporations Number	School corporations Percent in state	School corporations Percent in category	Schools Number	Schools Percent	Students Number	Students Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		118	34.9	71.5	319	18.1	105,221	13.5
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		47	13.9	28.5	135	7.7	46,659	6.0
Subtotal		165	48.8	100	454	25.8	151,880	19.4
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Minnesota label*							
District improvement year 1	Needs improvement	87	25.7	50.3	516	29.3	251,961	32.2
District improvement year 2	Needs improvement	32	9.5	18.5	262	14.9	114,338	14.6
Corrective action year 1	Corrective action	36	10.7	20.8	350	19.9	167,554	21.4
Corrective action year 2	Corrective action	6	1.8	3.5	63	3.6	33,118	4.2
Corrective action year 3	Corrective action	10	3.0	5.8	83	4.7	38,355	4.9
Corrective action year 4	Corrective action	2	0.6	1.2	34	1.9	24,646	3.2
Subtotal		173	51.2	100	1,308	74.2	629,972	80.6
Total		338	100	na	1,762	100	781,852	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Minnesota Department of Education (2010) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

(table 7). These districts accounted for 37.5 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 37.5 percent of its students. Of these districts, 3.8 percent were in their first year, 4.4 percent in their second year, and 2.5–3.0 percent were in each additional category through year 6. Of the 494 districts not in improvement, 212 (42.9 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Wisconsin. Of Wisconsin's 426 districts, just 2 (0.5 percent) were in improvement entering 2009/10 (table 8). These two large districts, School District of Beloit and Milwaukee Public Schools, accounted for 10.5 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 10.3 percent of its students. Beloit was in its first year of improvement, and Milwaukee was in its fourth year. Of the 424 districts not in improvement, only 2 (0.5 percent) had not made adequate yearly progress in the previous school year.

Under state accountability. Under the NCLB Act, states make adequate yearly progress determinations for all public schools and districts in the state. However, because sanctions are enforceable only for schools that receive NCLB Title I funds and districts that include schools that receive Title I funds, states issue improvement status designations only for Title I schools and districts. Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio chose to continue state accountability systems that predated the federal requirements.[4] These states now coordinate their state programs with the federal

TABLE 7

Improvement status of Ohio districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		School corporations			Schools		Students	
Improvement status		Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		282	46.2	57.1	1,266	37.1	646,023	38.9
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		212	34.8	42.9	870	25.5	391,505	23.6
Subtotal		494	81.0	100	2,136	62.5	1,037,528	62.5
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Ohio label*							
District improvement year 1	Improvement year 1, (Delay)	23	3.8	19.8	139	4.1	70,239	4.2
District improvement year 2	Improvement year 2, (Delay)	27	4.4	23.3	174	5.1	86,701	5.2
Corrective action year 1	Improvement year 3	18	3.0	15.5	186	5.4	91,876	5.5
Corrective action year 2	Improvement year 4, (Delay)	15	2.5	12.9	102	3.0	53,303	3.2
Corrective action year 3	Improvement year 5, (Delay)	15	2.5	12.9	440	12.9	204,352	12.3
Corrective action year 4	Improvement year 6	18	3.0	15.5	238	7.0	117,276	7.1
Subtotal		116	19.0	100	1,279	37.5	623,747	37.5
Total		610	100	na	3,415	100	1,661,275	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Ohio Department of Education (2010a) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 8

Improvement status of Wisconsin districts under No Child Left Behind Act accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		School corporations			Schools		Students	
Improvement status		Number	Percent in state	Percent in category	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not in improvement								
Made adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		422	99.1	99.5	1,862	87.0	710,836	86.5
Did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008/09		2	0.5	0.5	53	2.5	26,607	3.2
Subtotal		424	99.5	100	1,915	89.5	737,443	89.7
Districts in improvement								
NCLB label	*Wisconsin label*							
District improvement year 1	Improvement–Level 1	1	0.2	50.0	18	0.8	6,739	0.8
Corrective action year 1	Improvement–Level 4	1	0.2	50.0	207	9.7	77,589	9.4
Subtotal		2	0.5	100	225	10.5	84,328	10.3
Total		426	100	na	2,140	100	821,771	100

na is not applicable.

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

program because the NCLB Act mandates that schools or districts that do not make adequate yearly progress may not receive satisfactory ratings in state accountability systems.

The percentage of districts in improvement was 14.6 percent (89 of 610 districts) in Ohio, 23.6 percent (205 of 869 districts) in Illinois, and 65.1 percent (190 of 292 districts) in Indiana (table 9).[5]

The number of students enrolled in districts in improvement varied considerably, from 27.5 percent in Ohio to 58.0 percent in Illinois and 68.5 percent in Indiana. Map 2 shows the geographic distribution of districts in improvement in the three states.

Illinois. The state accountability system was reshaped by 2003 legislation to ensure coordination

TABLE 9

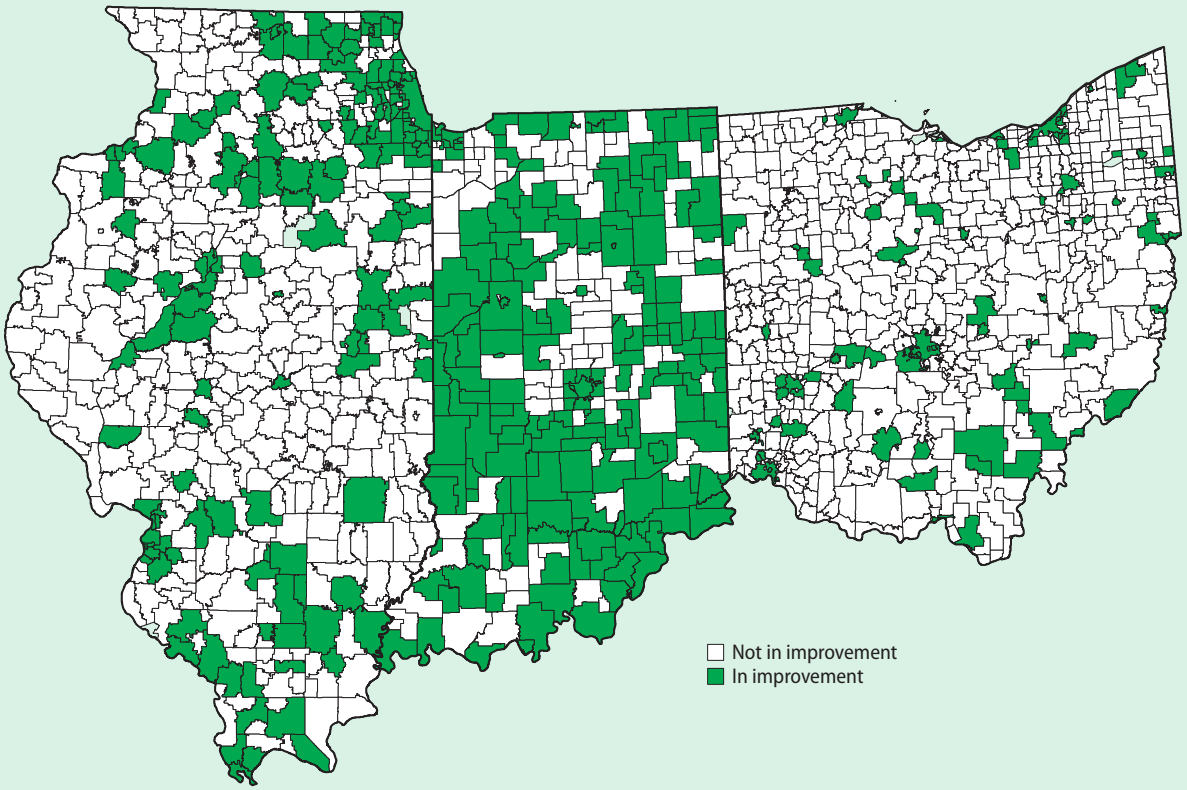
Improvement status under state accountability in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, entering the 2009/10 school year

State	Number of districts in state	Number of students in state	Districts in improvement		Students enrolled in districts in improvement	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illinois	869	2,070,125	205	23.6	1,199,785	58.0
Indiana	292	1,015,528	190	65.1	695,940	68.5
Ohio	610	1,661,275	89	14.6	456,516	27.5

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

MAP 2

Distribution of district improvement status in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio under state accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies; see appendix A for details.

with the requirements of the NCLB Act. The state system now uses the federal adequate yearly progress measure to evaluate all districts for improvement status (Illinois Compiled Statutes 2010). If a district does not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, it is placed in Academic Early Warning Status. A district that does not make adequate yearly progress for four consecutive years is placed in Academic Watch Status. Districts are removed from improvement status if they make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years.

Of Illinois' 869 districts, 205 (23.6 percent) districts were in improvement. These districts included 45.2 percent of the state's schools and accounted for 58.0 percent of its students (table 10). Of these districts in improvement, 4.8 percent were in their third year of watch status, and 3.3 percent were in their second year of warning status. The average district in improvement enrolled 5,853 students, whereas the average district not in improvement enrolled 1,310 students.

Indiana. The state accountability system, specified in Public Law 221 of 1999, has incorporated elements of the federal system (Indiana Department of Education 2009). In addition to accountability provisions, the Indiana law initiated a full-scale overhaul of the state's academic content standards and aligned the state's assessments to them.

Indiana's accountability system is based on pass rates on the state's English and math assessments averaged across subjects and grade levels, improvement in pass rates averaged over three years, and adequate yearly progress status. On these measures, school corporations are categorized as follows: exemplary progress, commendable progress, academic progress, academic watch, and academic probation. The highest designation that can be given to a corporation that has failed to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years is academic progress.

Of Indiana's 292 school corporations, 190 corporations (65.1 percent) were in improvement. These school corporations accounted for 71.1 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 68.5 percent of its students (table 11). Of the school corporations in improvement, 63.7 percent were in academic watch status, and 1.4 percent were in academic probation status.

Ohio. In a stepwise decisionmaking process, the state accountability system uses multiple measures to assess district performance, including student achievement, growth in achievement, and

TABLE 10

Improvement status of Illinois districts under state accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

	Districts		Schools		Students	
Accountability status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not identified for improvement	664	76.4	2,142	54.8	870,340	42.0
Districts identified for improvement	205	23.6	1,768	45.2	1,199,785	58.0
Academic early warning year 1	98	11.3	491	12.6	250,589	12.1
Academic early warning year 2	29	3.3	148	3.8	107,527	5.2
Academic watch status year 1	19	2.2	188	4.8	122,113	5.9
Academic watch status year 2	17	2.0	47	1.2	51,503	2.5
Academic watch status year 3	42	4.8	894	22.9	668,053	32.3
Total	869	100	3,910	100	2,070,125	100

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Illinois State Board of Education (2010a, 2010b) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 11

Improvement status of Indiana school corporations under state accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

	School corporations		Schools		Students	
Accountability status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Corporations not identified for improvement	102	34.9	525	28.9	319,588	31.5
Exemplary progress	25	8.6	274	15.1	161,477	15.9
Commendable progress	56	19.2	153	8.4	107,758	10.6
Academic progress	21	7.2	98	5.4	50,353	5.0
Corporations identified for improvement	190	65.1	1,291	71.1	695,940	68.5
Academic watch	186	63.7	1,147	63.2	623,305	61.4
Academic probation	4	1.4	144	7.9	72,635	7.2
Total	292	100.0	1,816	100.0	1,015,528	100.0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Indiana Department of Education (2010e) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

adequate yearly progress (Ohio Department of Education 2009). The state categorizes districts as follows: excellent with distinction, excellent, effective, continuous improvement, academic watch, and academic emergency. Ohio uses 30 indicators in this decision process: 28 on grade-level test performance, 1 on graduation, and 1 on attendance.

The percentage of indicators met by a district is compared with its "performance index score," a calculation using the same indicators in a weighted combination. The preliminary designation is based on the higher of the two measures. Districts that make adequate yearly progress can be designated no lower than continuous improvement. A district that has not made adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years and does not make it for more than one student group in the most recent year cannot be designated above continuous improvement. For districts whose preliminary designations are not affected by their adequate yearly progress, results from Ohio's value-added model are also examined; this review may move their final designation up or down one level from the preliminary designation (Ohio Department of Education 2009).

Of Ohio's 610 school districts, 89 (14.6 percent) were identified as in improvement. These districts accounted for 28.8 percent of the state's schools and enrolled 27.5 percent of its students (table 12). The largest number (79) of districts in improvement were classified as continuous improvement. The average district not in improvement enrolled 2,312 students, and the average district in improvement enrolled 5,129 students. The 116 districts designated excellent with distinction had been raised one designation because of their value-added performance.

Comparing federal and state accountability systems. In Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, the federal and state systems of accountability designated districts in improvement somewhat differently. Thus, in states with their own parallel state accountability system, it is possible for a district to be identified for improvement under the NCLB Act, the state system, both systems, or neither system (table 13).

In Illinois, 97.6 percent of districts received equivalent improvement designations under both the federal and the state systems. This is not surprising because the NCLB procedures form the core of the state system as well. The remaining 2.4 percent of districts received different designations under the two systems. In Indiana, 47.9 percent of districts received equivalent designations,

TABLE 12
Improvement status of Ohio districts under state accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

	Districts		Schools		Students	
Accountability status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts not identified for improvement	521	85.4	2,433	71.2	1,204,759	72.5
Excellent with distinction	116	19.0	675	19.8	408,518	24.6
Excellent	154	25.2	708	20.7	338,533	20.4
Effective	251	41.1	1,050	30.7	457,708	27.6
Districts identified for improvement	89	14.6	982	28.8	456,516	27.5
Continuous improvement	79	13.0	771	22.6	361,472	21.8
Academic watch	9	1.5	195	5.7	88,379	5.3
Academic emergency	1	0.2	16	0.5	6,665	0.4
Total	610	100	3,415	100	1,661,275	100

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Ohio Department of Education (2010b) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

and 51.4 percent of districts were identified for improvement only under the state system. In Ohio, 83.8 percent of districts received similar designations under the two systems, while 16.2 percent received different designations.

Characteristics of districts in improvement and not in improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act

Districts in improvement status under the NCLB Act differ from those not in improvement status in geographic locale, district size, poverty status, student race/ethnicity, special needs of students, expenditures, and revenue sources. Each Midwest Region state contains a few very large districts and many very small ones, which skews distributions of some of these characteristics (see appendix A). Thus, this analysis reports medians, which are less subject to the influence of skews, in tables 14–18.

District locale. The National Center for Education Statistics categorizes every public school by 12 urban-centric locale codes sorted into four categories (city, suburb, town, and rural), based primarily on population density and proximity to metropolitan areas (U.S. Department of Education 2010), as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (Geverdt and Phan 2006). A district's code is determined by the locales of the schools that most students attend (see appendix A for additional details).

Figure 1 presents the distribution of districts in improvement and not in improvement by locale code, displaying both between-state and between-category differences. All seven Midwest Region states have a large proportion of rural districts. This preponderance of rural districts was more pronounced among districts not in improvement; across the states, rural districts accounted for 47–85 percent of districts not in improvement. Districts in improvement tended to be located in cities, suburbs, or towns.

District size. Although each state's largest districts were in improvement, most districts in improvement were not very large (see tables 2–8). The median number of schools in districts in improvement across the seven Midwest Region states ranged from 3 to 12 schools and the median enrollment ranged from 1,500 to 7,300 students (table 14).[6] However, the median number of schools in districts not in improvement was smaller still, ranging from two to four schools and enrolling fewer than 2,000 students in each of the states.

District poverty. In Minnesota, the median percentage of the total district population and of all school-age children (ages 5–17 inclusive) living in

TABLE 13

Districts in improvement in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio under No Child Left Behind accountability and state accountability, entering the 2009/10 school year

		Districts		Schools		Students	
NCLB	State system	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illinois							
Agreement between the two systems		848	97.6	3,813	97.5	1,955,355	94.5
In improvement	In improvement	184	21.2	1,671	42.7	1,085,015	52.4
Not in improvement	Not in improvement	664	76.4	2,142	54.8	870,340	42.0
Disagreement between the two systems		21	2.4	97	2.5	114,770	5.5
In improvement	Not in improvement	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not in improvement	In improvement	21	2.4	97	2.5	114,770	5.5
Total		869	100	3,910	100	2,070,125	100
Indiana							
Agreement between the two systems		140	47.9	1,130	62.3	682,672	67.2
In improvement	In improvement	40	13.7	624	34.4	376,711	37.1
Not in improvement	Not in improvement	100	34.2	506	27.9	305,961	30.1
Disagreement between the two systems		152	52.1	686	37.7	332,856	32.7
In improvement	Not in improvement	2	0.7	19	1.0	13,627	1.3
Not in improvement	In improvement	150	51.4	667	36.7	319,229	31.4
Total		292	100	1,816	100	1,015,528	100
Ohio							
Agreement between the two systems		511	83.8	2,878	84.3	1,399,944	84.3
In improvement	In improvement	53	8.7	862	25.2	409,466	24.6
Not in improvement	Not in improvement	458	75.1	2,016	59.0	990,478	59.6
Disagreement between the two systems		99	16.2	537	15.7	261,331	15.7
In improvement	Not in improvement	63	10.3	417	12.2	214,281	12.9
Not in improvement	In improvement	36	5.9	120	3.5	47,050	2.8
Total		610	100	3,415	100	1,661,275	100

Note: NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

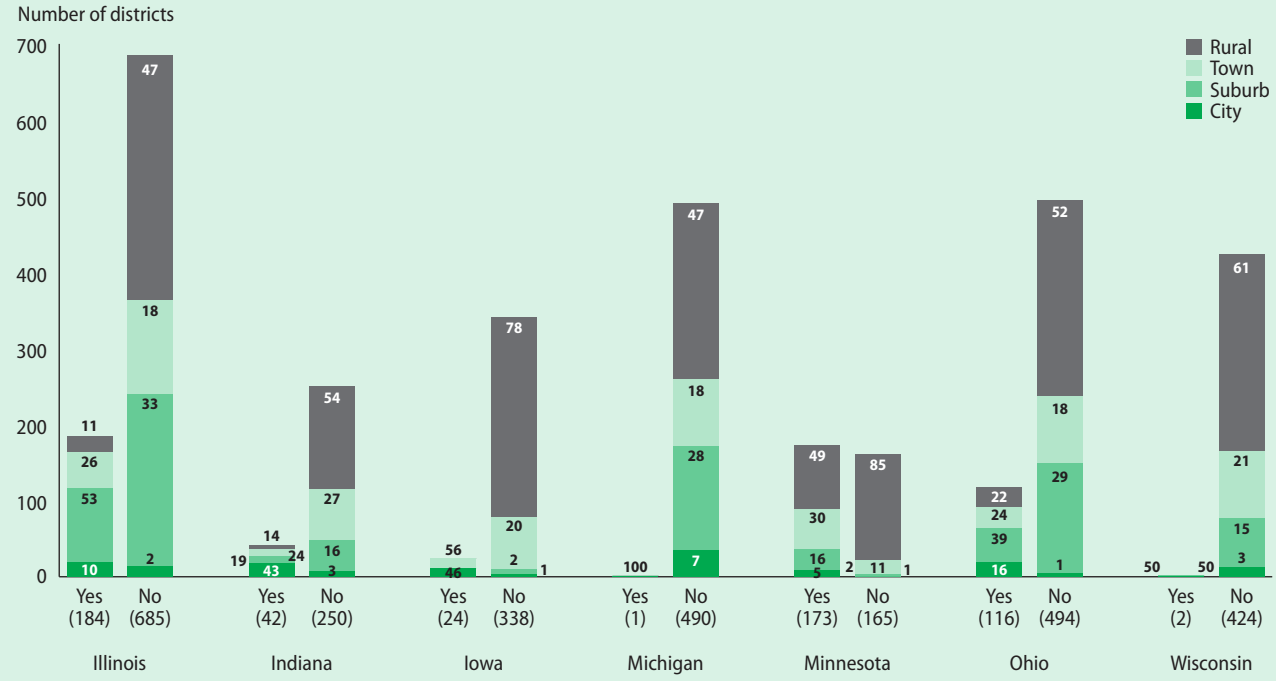
households with incomes below the poverty line according to the 2000 Census was nearly equal across improvement categories (table 15; U.S. Department of Education 2010). In the other six states, the median percentage for both poverty measures was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement.

Student characteristics

Race/ethnicity. In all states, the median percentage of White students was higher in districts not in improvement (more than 90 percent for all states) than in districts in improvement (61.8–89.9 percent, excluding Michigan and Wisconsin because of data sparseness; table 16). The opposite was true for racial/ethnic minorities, but prevalence matters. The median percentage of American Indian and Asian students in districts in both improvement categories was very low throughout the region, but in almost every case the median percentage was higher in districts in improvement. Likewise, there were few Hispanic students, but they were more prevalent in districts in improvement. The pattern was similar for Black students, excluding Beloit, Detroit, and Milwaukee.

FIGURE 1

Distribution of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region states, by rural and urban locale, entering the 2009/10 school year



Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. Numbers within the bars are the percentages for each locale type. Numbers in parentheses below each bar are the number of districts.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 14

Comparison of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region states, by size, entering the 2009/10 school year

	Illinois		Indiana		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Ohio		Wisconsin	
Number	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Total														
Districts	184	685	42	250	24	338	1	490	173	165	116	494	2	424
Schools	1,671	2,239	350	1,092	643	1,173	151	2,927	1,308	454	1,279	2,136	225	1,915
Students	1,085,015	985,110	390,338	625,190	178,249	304,612	80,873	1,396,441	629,972	151,880	623,747	1,037,528	84,328	737,443
Median														
Students	2,221	750	7,252	1,673	4,649	632	80,873	1,848	1,579	560	3,597	1,546	42,164	957
Schools	3	3	12	4	10	3	151	4	4	2	6	4	112	3
Staff	156	61	958	223	647	92	14,817	204	189	85	416	180	5,268	117
Teaching staff	118	47	423	98	328	50	6,407	96	97	43	194	87	2,641	68

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. Statistical tests are not used because each analysis encompasses the universe of districts; there is no need to generalize.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 15

Comparison of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region states, by poverty level, entering the 2009/10 school year (median percentage)

	Illinois		Indiana		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Ohio		Wisconsin	
Poverty	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[a]	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[b]	No
Population in poverty[c]	9.7	5.9	9.6	6.8	11.1	7.8	26.1	7.9	7.8	8.7	11.2	6.1	16.8	6.6
Children in poverty[d]	11.4	6.9	11.5	7.9	12.3	9.1	34.1	9.5	15.5	14.0	14.5	7.2	22.9	7.4

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. Statistical tests are not used because each analysis encompasses the universe of districts; there is no need to generalize.

a. Michigan has one district in improvement; its value is presented since a median cannot be calculated.

b. Wisconsin has two districts in improvement; the average for these two is reported.

c. The percentage of district inhabitants living in households below the poverty line according to the 2000 Census.

d. The percentage of children in the district ages 5–17 living in households below the poverty line according to the 2000 Census.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 16

Comparison of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region states, by student race/ethnicity, entering the 2009/10 school year (median percentage)

Student	Illinois		Indiana		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Ohio		Wisconsin	
race/ethnicity	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
American Indian	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.6
Asian	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.4	1.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.4	2.8	0.8
Black	6.7	0.9	8.5	0.3	5.7	0.9	89.1	1.4	1.4	0.8	6.0	0.7	42.3	1.0
Hispanic	7.8	1.9	5.1	1.1	7.1	1.4	7.2	2.1	2.5	1.2	0.9	0.8	23.1	2.2
White	61.8	92.9	73.1	95.8	79.8	96.4	2.5	92.3	89.9	94.7	85.8	95.9	31.4	93.9

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. Statistical tests are not used because each analysis encompasses the universe of districts; there is no need to generalize.

Source: Authors analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE 17

Comparison of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region sates, by limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, and student eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, entering the 2009/10 school year (median percentage)

Special needs	Illinois		Indiana		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Ohio		Wisconsin	
students	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[a]	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[b]	No
Limited English proficient	0.9	0.1	4.3	0.5	3.7	0.2	7.3	0.0	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.1	11.6	0.8
Students with disabilities	16.4	16.9	17.3	16.8	16.1	13.7	15.7	13.6	14.5	14.5	16.7	13.6	18.4	14.0
Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	40.8	26.7	49.1	31.4	46.2	30.2	73.9	37.8	33.2	34.7	44.4	26.5	69.5	25.4

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. Statistical tests are not used because each analysis encompasses the universe of districts; there is no need to generalize.

a. Michigan has one district in improvement; its value is presented since a median cannot be calculated.

b. Wisconsin has two districts in improvement; the average for these two is reported.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

Limited English proficiency. In each state, the median percentage of limited English proficient students was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement (table 17). However, the overall incidence remained low, usually fewer than 1 in 20 students in districts in improvement. In districts not in improvement, the median incidence rate was fewer than 1 in 100 students in each state.

Disability. The median percentage of students with disabilities varied little across districts in improvement and those not in improvement and across states (see table 17). In states with differences, districts in improvement showed median rates 2–4 percentage points higher, except for Illinois, where the rate was 0.5 percentage point higher for districts not in improvement.

Poverty. In all states except Minnesota, the median percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement (see table 17). In districts in improvement, the median percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch ranged from 33.2 percent to 73.9 percent; in districts not in improvement, the median percentage ranged from 25.4 percent to 37.8 percent.

Expenditures and revenue. Data on per student expenditure and revenue are reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2009) and the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2007/08 school year.[7] In all states except Minnesota, median per student expenditure was slightly higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement (table 18). Median per student expenditure ranged from $8,675 to $9,455 for districts in improvement and from $8,159 to $9,132 for districts not in improvement, a difference of approximately $715 per student across states.[8]

TABLE 18

Comparison of districts in improvement and not in improvement in Midwest Region states, by expenditure and revenue, 2007/08 (median)

	Illinois		Indiana		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Ohio		Wisconsin	
Item	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[a]	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes[b]	No
Expenditure														
Total expenditure per student ($)	9,405	8,621	9,455	8,159	8,675	8,520	12,106	8,492	9,085	9,132	8,976	8,400	11,868	10,330
Direct instructional expenditure per student[c] ($)	5,392	5,165	5,465	4,820	5,706	5,474	6,522	5,248	5,881	5,692	5,123	4,951	7,099	6,284
Direct instructional expenditures as portion of total (percent)	57.7	59.2	59.1	58.7	65.1	63.4	53.1	60.8	61.8	61.0	57.8	58.8	59.6	60.0
Revenue source (percent)														
Federal portion of revenue	5.7	4.3	8.5	4.2	6.3	4.1	12.8	4.2	4.5	4.2	7.6	4.8	12.7	4.0
Local portion of revenue	51.4	53.4	42.5	43.9	42.1	50.2	25.4	30.4	23.9	22.5	41.5	49.6	22.1	43.7
State portion of revenue	42.9	42.9	49.3	51.5	51.6	45.0	61.8	64.7	71.0	72.8	49.6	45.5	65.3	52.5

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement. The 2007/08 results are the most recent school district finance survey data available. Data were not adjusted for regional or historical variations in prices. Statistical tests are not used because each analysis encompasses the universe of districts; there is no need to generalize.

a. Michigan has one district in improvement; its value is presented since a median cannot be calculated.

b. Wisconsin has two districts in improvement; the average for these two is reported.

c. Salaries and benefits paid to classroom teachers, instructional materials, and contracted instructional services.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2009); see appendix A for details.

In every Midwest Region state, median direct instructional expenditure per student was higher in districts in improvement ($5,123–$7,099) than in districts not in improvement ($4,820–$6,284), although the magnitude of the differences varied. With the exception of Iowa and Minnesota, median instructional support expenditure also was larger in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement.

In both districts in improvement and districts not in improvement, median instructional expenditures accounted for approximately 60 percent of total expenditure, suggesting overall stability in district choices about these expenditures.

In all seven states, median revenue received from federal sources was higher in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement. The difference was largest in Wisconsin (8.7 percentage points) and Michigan (8.6 percentage points). However, the districts in improvement in these two states are the three poorest city districts. In the remaining five states, the difference in median percentage of revenue from federal sources between districts in improvement and districts not in improvement ranged from 0.3 percentage point to 4.3 percentage points.

In six states, the median percentage of district revenue received from local sources was lower in districts in improvement than in districts not in improvement. The difference was largest in Wisconsin (21.6 percentage points) but was also large in Iowa and Ohio (8.1 percentage points).

Consistency in No Child Left Behind improvement designations and performance criteria between districts and their schools

It is possible for a district to be in improvement status under NCLB accountability even though none of its schools is in need of improvement or for a district not to be in improvement even though its schools are in need of improvement (table 19).[9] In four states, 141 districts in improvement had no schools in need of improvement. The most discrepancies of this kind occurred in Minnesota (48.0 percent of multiple-school districts in improvement) and Illinois (33.3 percent). This type of inconsistency was infrequent in Indiana and Ohio and did not occur in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

The reverse pattern—districts not in improvement with schools in need of improvement—was also common, with instances in all seven states.

TABLE 19

Inconsistencies in improvement designations between multiple-school districts and their schools in Midwest Region states, entering the 2009/10 school year

	Multiple-school districts in improvement			Multiple-school districts not in improvement		
		With no school in need of improvement			With no school in need of improvement	
State	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Percent
Illinois	138	46	33.3	510	43	8.4
Indiana	42	6	14.3	246	70	28.5
Iowa	24	0	0.0	326	73	22.4
Michigan	1	0	0.0	487	227	46.6
Minnesota	173	83	48.0	153	13	8.5
Ohio	116	6	5.2	494	178	36.0
Wisconsin	2	0	0.0	375	11	2.9
Total	486	141	28.4	2,591	615	23.7

Note: Findings are presented only for districts that contain multiple schools because inconsistencies between schools and districts are extremely rare in single-school districts.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies; see appendix A for details.

In each of the four states providing disaggregated adequate yearly progress performance data, district and school discrepancies were most common for the academic performance of students with disabilities

The greatest frequency was in Michigan and Ohio: almost half of Michigan's and more than a third of Ohio's districts that were not in improvement had multiple schools in need of improvement. This pattern was much less frequent in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, with less than 10 percent of all multiple-school districts not in improvement having schools in need of improvement. Indiana and Iowa were in between, at about a quarter of all districts.

A related issue concerns discrepancies between districts and schools in meeting adequate yearly progress performance criteria. In each of the four states providing disaggregated adequate yearly progress performance data, district and school discrepancies were most common for the academic performance of students with disabilities (table 20). In most states, the discrepancy was more pronounced for reading than for math. In a few districts, discrepancies also resulted for other student subgroups. Illinois and Minnesota have the greatest variation in subgroups whose performance contributed to district-school discrepancies. In three states, inconsistencies are more common for districts in improvement. Illinois runs strongly counter to that trend, with about a third of multiple-school districts not in improvement failing to meet adequate yearly progress criteria for reading and math, despite the fact that all of the schools in those districts met the criteria.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. The study reports variations across districts in attributes that are often perceived as markers of academic performance. However, the reasons for the variations cannot be determined from the study data. Schools and districts also vary on characteristics that the study does not address, such as the quality of the teachers and the programs that exist outside the school. The descriptive nature of the study does not support inferences about why differences exist, how they came to be, whether they are consequential for student performance, and what actions schools and districts might have taken to address student performance weaknesses.

This report focuses on designations at the start of the 2009/10 school year. This focus on one point in time risks giving the impression that the situations described are stable over time, which may not be true. District and school improvement designations change over time. At a minimum, this fluctuation occurs because the NCLB Act requires states to raise the proficiency rate against which districts, schools, and subgroups are evaluated at least once every three years until they reach 100 percent for 2013/14.

Data quality and reporting practices vary across the seven Midwest Region states. Despite the study's reliance on multiple sources of data to verify accuracy, resolve inconsistencies, and fill gaps (see appendix A), some analyses could not be conducted for all states.

The data that states report on their websites and in the Consolidated State Performance Reports they submit to the U.S. Department of Education do not always agree. Discrepancies can occur because reports are generated by different people using different business rules at different times. The school year or calendar year that a state report or data file addressed was not always clear. For instance, a particular list of districts in improvement might refer to the school year for which the data were collected or the year to which the designation applied, but this was not made explicit in the source files.

For charter schools and districts, data fully comparable to that for regular public schools and districts could not be obtained. The Common Core of Data for 2008/09 showed 232 charter districts in Michigan (U.S. Department of Education 2010), while state data identify 29 charter districts in 2009/10. Key data elements for individual charter schools were sometimes included in regular school

TABLE 20

Adequate yearly progress criteria that districts in Midwest Region states did not meet but that schools did, by district improvement status entering the 2009/10 school year

	Illinois				Michigan				Minnesota				Ohio			
	In improvement		Not in improvement		In improvement		Not in improvement		In improvement		Not in improvement		In improvement		Not in improvement	
Adequate yearly progress criterion	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All districts, any criterion	86	62.3	186	36.5	1	100	0	0.0	59	34.1	22	14.4	13	11.2	51	10.3
Math performance, any criterion	50	36.2	72	14.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	38	22.0	14	9.2	7	6.0	22	4.5
All students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
American Indian students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Asian students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Black students	11	8.0	6	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hispanic students	2	1.4	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.7	0	0.0	1	0.9	0	0.0
White students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Multiethnic students	1	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Low-income students	7	5.1	7	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	4.0	2	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
English language learner students	6	4.3	4	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.7	1	0.7	1	0.9	0	0.0
Students with disabilities	29	21.0	56	11.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	7.5	11	7.2	6	5.2	22	4.5
Reading performance, any criterion	68	49.3	171	33.5	1	100.0	0	0.0	31	17.9	11	7.2	6	5.2	35	7.1
All students	1	0.7	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
American Indian students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Asian students	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Black students	12	8.7	15	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	2	1.7	0	0.0
Hispanic students	10	7.2	10	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.3	2	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
White students	3	2.2	2	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Multiethnic students	2	1.4	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.9	0	0.0
Low-income students	11	8.0	30	5.9	1	100.0	0	0.0	5	2.9	5	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
English language learner students	13	9.4	25	4.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.2	0	0.0	2	1.7	0	0.0
Students with disabilities	33	23.9	134	26.3	1	100.0	0	0.0	17	9.8	5	3.3	2	1.7	35	7.1
Other criteria																
Math participation	1	0.7	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.7	1	0.9	0	0.0
Reading participation	1	0.7	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.7	1	0.9	0	0.0
Attendance	1	0.7	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Graduation	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: Findings are presented only for districts that contain multiple schools because inconsistencies between schools and districts are extremely rare in single-school districts. Complete, disaggregated adequate yearly progress data were available only for four states; see appendix A for details.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

district totals and sometimes not. Sometimes state education agencies did not report on charter districts at all. This report therefore does not include analyses of charter schools. This decision is unlikely to affect the core inferences drawn from this study. For instance, even in Minnesota—the state with the largest number of charter schools and districts—charter students constituted less than 4 percent of public school students.

Finally, this study did not address differences in the quality and rigor of state assessment and accountability practices. States vary in the academic challenge of the assessments they use (U.S. Department of Education 2007; Phillips 2010a) and their definitions of proficiency. Difficult tests may have low proficiency cutpoints and vice versa. Adequate yearly progress targets are higher in some states than in others.

APPENDIX A
DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

This appendix provides details on the study's data sources and methods.

Data sources

Most of the demographic, performance, and statistical data used for this study were publicly available data retrieved from the websites of state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Occasionally, similar data files were available from multiple sources, for example, from a state's website and from files attached to Consolidated State Performance Reports. Such data sets, while reporting for the same period, were not always identical.[10] Files were cross-checked for accuracy, consistency, and completeness. Typically, the most complete source was used. State education agency staff advised the study team in this process. If data were missing, state education agency staff helped obtain additional data (for details, see the state by state sections below).

Inspection of data files for each state for school years 2004/05–2009/10 identified the data files for 2008/09 as the most recent, complete, and consistent. These data files, which recorded improvement status applicable to the 2009/10 school year, are the primary data resource.

School districts. This study is restricted to local public school districts—that is, local government entities responsible for educating children from kindergarten (preschool in some cases) through high school. Such entities are authorized to receive tax dollars from their state government, levy local taxes to support education, and distribute these funds to schools. As local governmental agencies, they have defined geographic boundaries.

Agencies that did not meet these conditions were excluded from the study. Excluded entities include charter schools and charter agencies, because they lack fixed geographic boundaries and the right to levy taxes. In addition, states vary in how they report data for charter agencies, sometimes reporting separately, sometimes commingling charter data with that of the "authorizing" district. Also excluded are special-purpose schools, such as those for children who are deaf, blind, severely disabled, or in penal institutions, which are usually operated by special federal, state, or local agencies. In addition, local and regional administrative agencies that provide support to districts and schools but do not operate schools were excluded. Finally, only districts for which states made adequate yearly progress determinations and designated improvement status under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act were included.

The definition of *district* used in this study is consistent with the typology in the Common Core of Data, the U.S. Department of Education's (2010) primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the United States. A comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of all public elementary and secondary schools and school districts, it contains data that are designed to be comparable across all states. Its typology of local education agencies currently recognizes eight categories (Chen 2010; table A1).

Table A2 compares the number of agencies reflected in the data files received from the states with the typology of the Common Core of Data. Table A3 presents the corresponding number of students. These tables show that the Common Core of Data files include many regional agencies and charter agencies that do not appear in the files that state education agencies provided for this study. The last two columns of table A2 identify the number of agencies this study includes and excludes.

In Minnesota, 151 charter agencies were excluded; schools under these agencies enrolled some 31,000 students out of a statewide enrollment of approximately 813,000, with an average enrollment of under 200 students. In Michigan, 26 regional education service agencies and 29 charter agencies, enrolling some 34,000 students, were excluded. On average, these districts were larger than the

TABLE A1
Common Core of Data typology of local education agencies

Code	Type name	Definition
1	Regular local school district	Locally governed agency responsible for providing free public elementary or secondary education; includes independent school districts and those that are a dependent segment of a local government, such as a city or county.
2	Component district	Regular local school district that shares its superintendent and administrative services with other school districts participating in the supervisory union.
3	Supervisory union	Education agency that performs administrative services for more than one school district, providing a common superintendent for participating districts.
4	Regional education service agency	Agency providing specialized education services to a variety of local education agencies, or a county superintendent serving the same purposes.
5	State-operated agency	Agency charged, at least in part, with providing elementary or secondary instruction or support services. Includes the state education agency if this agency operates schools. Examples include elementary/secondary schools operated by the state for children who are deaf or blind and programs operated by state correctional facilities.
6	Federal-operated agency	A federal agency that is charged, at least in part, with providing elementary or secondary instruction or support services.
7	Charter agency	All schools associated with the agency are charter schools.
8	Other education agency	Agency providing elementary or secondary instruction or support services not defined for agency types 1–7.

Source: Chen 2010.

districts excluded in Minnesota, but they represented a smaller proportion of total students. In Indiana, the exclusion of one component district reduced the state's student count by 248. In the other four states, all the agencies in the state files met study requirements.

No Child Left Behind and state accountability data

Illinois. Data on NCLB designations of districts and schools in improvement and adequate yearly progress determinations for Illinois schools and districts are from Illinois State Board of Education (2010b) Report Card data files for 2008/09. The data provided information on NCLB improvement status, overall adequate yearly progress determinations, and adequate yearly progress determinations for each student subgroup in each subject area for elementary, high school, and unit school districts and schools in those districts. This study includes data for 869 districts and 3,910 schools.

Illinois applied its NCLB accountability procedures to its non–Title I schools and districts as well as its Title I schools and districts. Districts that did not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years were placed in academic early warning status, and districts that did not make adequate yearly progress for four consecutive years were placed in academic watch status. Data were available for 869 districts.

Indiana. Data on NCLB designations of districts and schools in improvement and adequate yearly progress determinations for Indiana schools and school corporations are from four state data files (Indiana Department of Education 2010a,b,c,d). These files provided information on NCLB improvement status, overall determinations of adequate yearly progress, and adequate yearly progress determinations for student subgroups in each area for all public school corporations and schools. Because testing was moved from fall to spring in 2008/09, NCLB improvement status for the 2009/10 school year was based on fall 2008 assessment determinations. The study used data for 292 school corporations and 1,816 schools.

Data on state accountability designations for Indiana school corporations were obtained from

TABLE A2

Comparison of types of local education agencies included in Midwest Region state education agency and Common Core of Data datasets

State and data source	Agencies included	Agencies excluded from analyses by type[a]								Agencies excluded	Agencies retained for analysis
		Local education agency (1)	Component district (2)	Supervisory union (3)	Regional education services agencies (4)	State (5)	Federal (6)	Charter (7)	Other (8)		
Illinois											
State	869									0	869
CCD	1,078				203	5		1		209	869
Indiana											
State	294		1		1					2	292
CCD	379		3	1	29	4		50		87	292
Iowa											
State	362									0	362
CCD	372				10					10	362
Michigan											
State	547				26	1		29		56	491
CCD	846	61[b]			57	5		232		294	491
Minnesota											
State	552				31	2		151		184	338
CCD	564	2[c]			63	3		158		224	338
Ohio											
State	610									0	610
CCD	1,068	4[d]			107	4		343		454	610
Wisconsin											
State	426									0	426
CCD	462	1[e]			16	3		16		35	426

Note: CCD is Common Core of Data.

a. See table A1 for definitions.

b. Distant rural agencies with low and variable enrollments. They are not included in accountability calculations.

c. Nonoperating agencies that send their few students to other agencies.

d. Two of these agencies had zero enrollments.

e. Described as "scheduled to be in operation within two years."

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010).

the Indiana Department of Education (2010e). The data file contained records for 294 school corporations, placed in one of five categories: exemplary progress, commendable progress, academic progress, academic watch, or academic probation.

Iowa. Iowa Department of Education staff forwarded a data file of NCLB improvement status and adequate yearly progress determinations for schools and districts. Every district and school on the data file was coded as meeting or not meeting adequate yearly progress goals in three areas: reading, math, and other academic indicator. A school or district did not make adequate yearly progress if it failed any one of these areas. This file was used to derive an overall adequate yearly progress determination for each

TABLE A3
Comparison of students included in state education agency and Common Core of Data datasets

State and data source	Students included	Students excluded from analyses by type of agency[a]								Students excluded	Students retained for analysis
		Local education agency (1)	Component district (2)	Supervisory union (3)	Regional education services agencies (4)	State (5)	Federal (6)	Charter (7)	Other (8)		
Illinois											
State	2,070,125									0	2,070,125
CCD	2,083,704				9,222	3,997		360		13,579	2,070,125
Indiana											
State	1,015,776		248		0					248	1,015,528
CCD	1,029,119		154	0	46	1,438		11,953		13,591	1,015,528
Iowa											
State	482,861									0	482,861
CCD	482,861				0					0	482,861
Michigan											
State	1,484,304				11,843	132		22,015		33,990	1,450,314
CCD	1,573,820	9,696			15,342	132		98,336		123,506	1,450,314
Minnesota											
State	812,773				2,991	283		27,647		30,921	781,852
CCD	812,775	2			2,991	283		27,647		30,923	781,852
Ohio											
State	1,661,275									0	1,661,275
CCD	1,743,300	139			0	1,636		80,250		82,025	1,661,275
Wisconsin											
State	821,771									0	821,771
CCD	828,299	0			0	943		5,585		6,528	821,771

Note: CCD is Common Core of Data. Blank cells indicate that no agencies were excluded (see table A2); a "0" indicates that at least one agency was excluded but that no students were enrolled.

a. See table A1 for definitions.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010).

school and district. The file did not contain student subgroup determinations for districts. Each school and district was coded with an improvement status designation for each of five NCLB criteria: reading and math participation, reading and math annual measureable objectives, and the NCLB-required "other academic indicator." The lowest rated criterion determined the overall improvement status for a school or district. Data from the Iowa Department of Education (2010a,b) were used to verify school and district improvement status. The study included data for 362 districts and 1,442 schools.

Michigan. The Michigan Department of Education (2010) provided custom data extracts on NCLB improvement status and adequate yearly progress determinations for Michigan schools and districts. The data contained information on NCLB improvement status, overall adequate yearly progress determinations, and adequate yearly progress determinations for NCLB subgroups on each subject area (English language arts and math test participation, English language arts and math proficiency, and the "other academic indicator") for each Michigan school and district.

The district-level adequate yearly progress data file reported determinations by subgroup and subject area by grade span. A district was considered not to have met adequate yearly progress for a subgroup in a subject area if all grade spans within the subgroup did not meet the requirement in the subject area. The study used data for 491 school districts and 3,221 schools.

Minnesota. Data on the NCLB improvement status of Minnesota districts and schools are from the Minnesota Department of Education website (2010). The data file provided information on NCLB improvement status, overall adequate yearly progress determinations, and adequate yearly progress determinations for NCLB subgroups in each subject area (reading performance, math performance, reading test participation, and math test participation) for all districts and schools. The study used data for 338 districts and 2,114 schools.

Ohio. Data on NCLB improvement status and adequate yearly progress determinations of Ohio districts and schools were obtained from the Ohio Department of Education website (2010a,c). The data provided information on NCLB improvement status, overall adequate yearly progress determinations, and adequate yearly progress determinations for student subgroups in each subject area (reading and math performance and reading and math test participation) for districts and schools. The study included data for 610 districts and 3,415 schools.

Data on state accountability designations included 610 districts (Ohio Department of Education (2010b). Districts were placed into one of six categories: excellent with distinction, excellent, effective, continuous improvement, academic watch, and academic emergency.

Wisconsin. Data on NCLB improvement status and adequate yearly progress determinations of Wisconsin districts and schools were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website (2010). The data file provided information on NCLB improvement status and overall adequate yearly progress determinations for districts, as well as school-level adequate yearly progress determinations for student subgroups in each subject area (reading and math performance and reading and math test participation). District-level adequate yearly progress determinations for student subgroups were not included. Because Wisconsin had only two districts in improvement in 2008/09, the state data were augmented with data from these districts' websites. The study included data for 426 districts and 2,140 schools.

District characteristics

School and district enrollment. At the time this report was being prepared, the 2007/08 school year was the most recent year included in the Common Core of Data (U.S. Department of Education 2010). Data were downloaded from http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/ccddata.asp. Updated school and district enrollments were acquired from the following state education agency websites:

- Illinois: 2008–09 Illinois State Board of Education (2010b) Report Card data file (www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report_card.htm).
- Indiana: The data page, Extract Indiana Education Data (http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/SAS/sas1.cfm).
- Iowa: 2008–2009 Iowa Public School PreK–12 Enrollments by School, Grade, Race and Gender and 2008–2009 Iowa Public School PreK–12 Enrollments by District, Grade, Race and Gender (www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563).
- Michigan: Fall 2008 Total Enrollments (www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-21423_30451_30460-214378--,00.html).
- Minnesota: 2008–2009 Enrollments-School-Grade/Ethnicity/Gender and 2008–2009 Enrollments-District-Grade/Ethnicity/Gender

(http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/Data_Downloads/Student/Enrollment/School/index.html).

- Ohio: District Rating Data and School Rating Data (http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/Downloads.asp).

- Wisconsin: Schools Identified for Improvement (SIFI) in Wisconsin Districts (2008–09) (http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/acct/aypdata.html).

Student demographics. Data on district enrollment by student race/ethnicity, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students were obtained from the 2007/08 school year Common Core of Data (U.S. Department of Education 2010). This source also provided data on the number of people and the number of children ages 5–17 living in households below the poverty threshold in 2000, as reported by the U.S. Census.[11] The following formula was used to calculate district poverty:

$$\text{District poverty percent} = \frac{100 \times \text{Number of persons in poverty}}{\text{Number of persons in poverty} + \text{Number of persons not in poverty}}$$

The district school-age child poverty measure was calculated similarly:

$$\text{Child poverty percent} = \frac{100 \times \text{Number of children (ages 5–17) in poverty}}{\text{Number of children (ages 5–17) in poverty} + \text{Number of children (ages 5–17) not in poverty}}$$

Teacher characteristics. This study used two measures of characteristics of district personnel: total staff and total teaching staff (as teacher full-time equivalents). Data were obtained from the Common Core of Data (U.S. Department of Education 2010).

District finances. Data on district revenue and expenditure were obtained from Public Elementary–Secondary Education Finance Data, Individual Unit Tables for fiscal year 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). This study used total expenditure, total revenue, total expenditure per student, direct instructional expenditure per student, direct instructional expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure, state revenue as a percentage of total district revenue, local revenue as a percentage of total revenue, and federal revenue as a percentage of total revenue.

District locale. The Common Core of Data provides urban-centric locale codes that classify school locations into four major categories: city, suburb, town, and rural (U.S. Department of Education 2010). City and suburb categories are further classified by size of population center (large, midsize, or small); town and rural categories are further classified by distance from an urbanized area or urban cluster (fringe, distant, or remote). This results in 12 locale classifications based on the latitude and longitude of a school building's physical address. District locale codes are derived from the school locale codes.[12] This study used the four major categories assigned by the National Center for Education Statistics: city, suburb, town, and rural.

Study methods

The report relies on descriptive statistics such as counts, percentages, measures of central tendency, and measures of spread. All tabulations are by state. Analytic strategies are described in more detail below. All data represent universe counts; therefore, no tests of statistical significance are necessary.

Number and percentage of districts identified for improvement. For each state, the report presents the numbers and percentages of districts in improvement or not in improvement under the NCLB Act. Districts in improvement are disaggregated by number of years in improvement status. States use a variety of labels for the designations. For ease

of exposition, the study adopted uniform labels. The first year of improvement is termed district improvement year 1. If a district remains in the same improvement status in subsequent years, it is labeled progressively district improvement year 2, corrective action year 1, corrective action year 2, corrective action year 3, corrective action year 4, and so on. Districts not in improvement status are reported by whether they met adequate yearly progress goals in 2008/09.

In addition to reporting the numbers and calculating the percentages of districts in each improvement category, the study presents the numbers of schools in those districts and the numbers of students enrolled, to provide context.

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio also operate state accountability systems. Michigan's system applies only to schools and is not discussed in this report. In this study, analyses similar to those for NCLB accountability are conducted for districts and schools in improvement or not in improvement. Because states' own accountability systems were not explicit on this point, this study collapsed the state categories as follows. It treats as in improvement Illinois' academic early warning status and academic watch status categories, Indiana's academic watch and academic probation categories, and Ohio's continuous improvement, academic watch, and academic emergency categories.

District characteristics. The study compares the distributions of districts in improvement and not in improvement within each state by enrollment, location, student demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities), and the percentage of the total district population and of children ages 5–17 living below the poverty line. In addition, districts in improvement and not in improvements are compared for their distributions of staff and financial resources, including total staff, total teaching staff, total expenditures, expenditures per student, and revenue sources (local, state, and federal).

Each Midwest Region state contains a few very large districts and many very small ones. This produces highly skewed distributions of demographic, enrollment, and financial characteristics. In such cases, averages may misrepresent the central tendency of a distribution. For that reason, medians, not averages, are reported.

Consider this example. At the end of the 2009/10 school year, Illinois counted 869 regular public school districts, 3,910 schools, and 2,070,125 students (Illinois State Board of Education 2010a). One district, Chicago, enrolled 412,377 students in 876 schools, about a fifth of the state's students and schools. The next largest district, Elgin, was a tenth that size, enrolling 41,263 students in 58 schools; it accounted for 2 percent of the state's students and schools. At the other tail of the distribution, there were 152 districts each enrolling fewer than 300 students; taken together, they made up 17.5 percent of districts in the state and 1.3 percent of students. This one-sidedness is not unique to Illinois. Indianapolis stands apart in Indiana, Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota, Detroit in Michigan, and Milwaukee in Wisconsin.

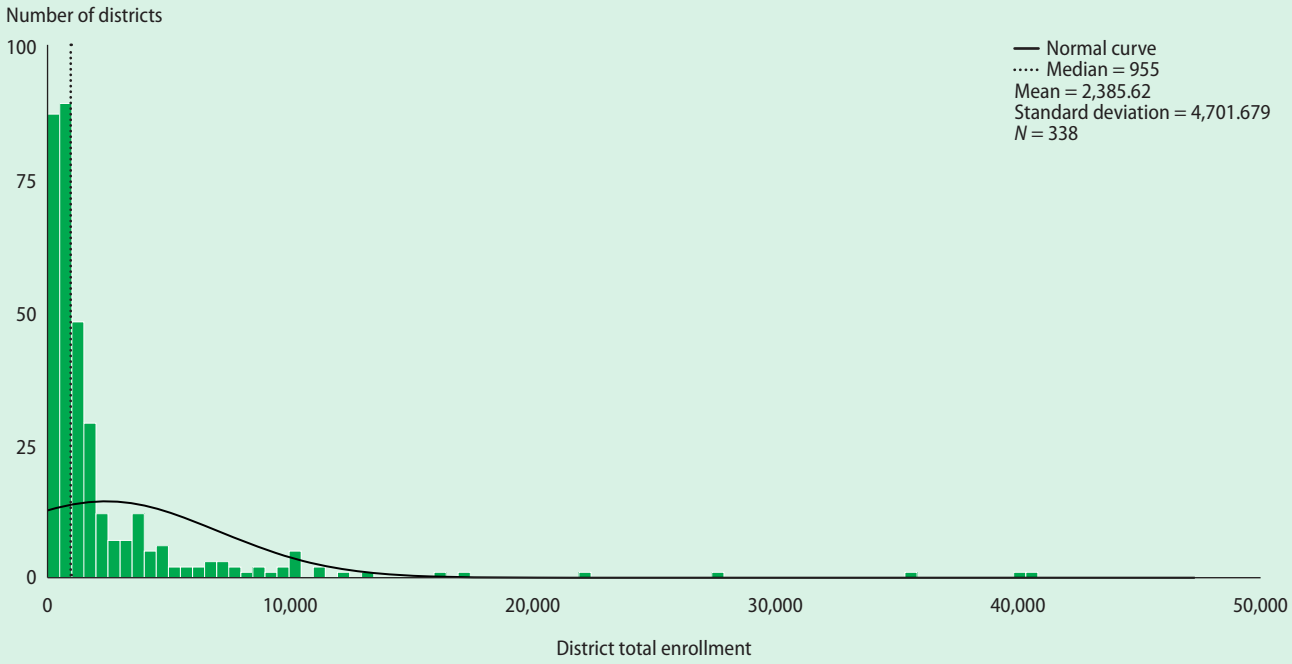
As examples, histograms of three characteristics in three states help clarify the distribution of district attributes. Each plots a count of districts against categories of enrollment, student proportions, or per student expenditures. Each plot also shows a superimposed normal curve.

Figure A1 of district student enrollments in Minnesota for 2008/09 shows that most districts are quite small, with fewer than 5,000 students. A few are much larger, some with more than 40,000 students. The average district enrolls 2,386 students. Enrollment for the median Minnesota school district is 955 students. The median is closer to the enrollment values for most districts and is therefore the preferable indicator.

Figure A2 presents the distribution of the percentage of White students enrolled in Illinois districts for 2007/08. The pattern here is a long tail to the left. In most Illinois districts, White students

FIGURE A1

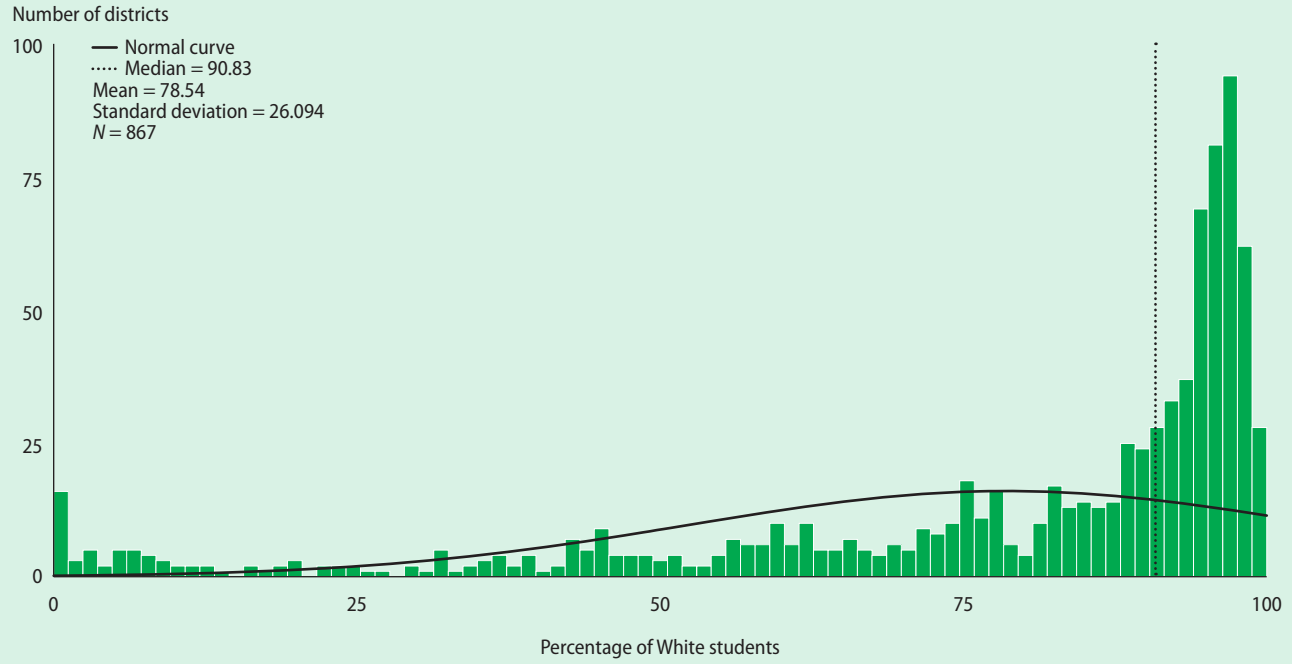
Distribution of district enrollments in Minnesota, 2008/09



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Minnesota Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

FIGURE A2

Distribution of the percentage of White students in Illinois districts, 2007/08



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Illinois State Board of Education (2010a) and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

make up more than 95 percent of the enrollment. But other racial/ethnic groups show a wide range of proportionality in some districts. The mean of this distribution of White students is 78.5 percent, while the median is 90.8 percent. The median is closer to the values for percentage of White students for most districts and is therefore the preferred indicator.

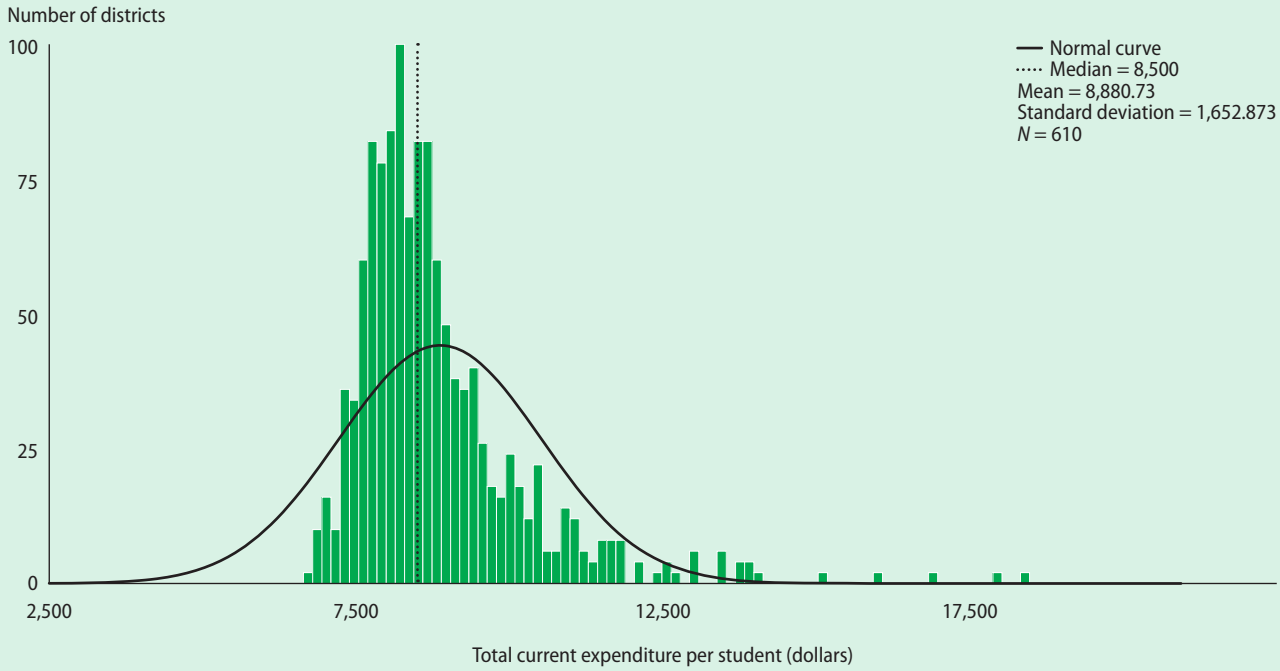
Figure A3 displays the number of Ohio districts at each level of per student expenditure for 2007/08. There are a small number of districts to the far right, with current expenditures exceeding twice what the median Ohio district spends. The mean of this distribution is $8,881; its median is $8,500. The skew here is smaller than in the previous two examples, but the difference between the two ($381 per student) is far from inconsequential for districts' annual budgets.

Inconsistent accountability classifications. Districts and their schools may be identified for improvement for different reasons. Categorical variables were created to capture differences between districts and their schools for each adequate yearly progress criterion. Districts in improvement were coded into one of three categories based on their schools' adequate yearly progress determinations:

- *None.* No schools in the district that were accountable for the criterion met it.
- *Some.* At least one school in the district did not meet the criterion, and at least one school met the criterion.
- *All.* All schools in the district accountable for the criterion met it.

Each district's adequate yearly progress determination (met, did not meet, or not applicable) was compared with this attribute of its schools (none, some, all) to determine the number of districts whose NCLB accountability status was inconsistent with the NCLB accountability status of their schools on each adequate yearly progress criteria.

FIGURE A3
Distribution of current per student expenditure for Ohio districts, 2007/08



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Ohio Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

TABLE A4

Number and percentage of multiple-school and single-school districts by state and improvement status, 2008/09 school year

	All districts					Multiple-school districts						Single-school districts					
		Yes		No				Yes		No				Yes		No	
State	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illinois	869	184	21.2	685	78.8	648	74.6	138	21.3	510	78.7	221	25.4	46	20.8	175	79.2
Indiana	292	42	14.4	250	85.6	288	98.6	42	14.6	246	85.4	4	1.4	0	0.0	4	100.0
Iowa	362	24	6.6	338	93.4	350	96.7	24	6.9	326	93.1	12	3.3	0	0.0	12	100.0
Michigan	491	1	0.2	490	99.8	488	99.4	1	0.2	487	99.8	3	0.6	0	0.0	3	100.0
Minnesota	338	173	51.2	165	48.8	326	96.4	173	53.1	153	46.9	12	3.6	0	0.0	12	100.0
Ohio	610	116	19.0	494	81.0	610	100.0	116	19.0	494	81.0	0	0.0	0	na	0	na
Wisconsin	426	2	0.5	424	99.5	377	88.5	2	0.5	375	99.5	49	11.5	0	0.0	49	100.0
Total	3,388	542	16.0	2,846	84.0	3,087	91.1	496	16.1	2,591	83.9	301	8.9	46	15.3	255	84.7

Note: Yes and *no* refer to districts in improvement and not in improvement.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from state education agencies and U.S. Department of Education (2010); see appendix A for details.

The design of the NCLB accountability system means that inconsistencies in district and school accountability designations will rarely be found in districts consisting of a single school. In Illinois, approximately a fourth of districts are single-school districts. Accountability inconsistencies were found in just one of these districts in 2008/09. Similarly, inconsistencies were found in all 12 of Minnesota's single-school districts. Table A4 summarizes the numbers of multiple- and single-school districts by improvement status. This study considered a district to be a multiple-school district if it included two or more schools for which a state made NCLB adequate yearly progress determinations.

NOTES

1. States typically provide detailed school by school reports on their websites. Lists of schools also appear in the Consolidated State Performance Reports submitted annually by states to the U.S. Department of Education (viewable at http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html). Appendixes to the U.S. Department of Education's annual reports to Congress on status and progress under the NCLB Act (for example, U.S. Department of Education 2005) also list Title I schools in need of improvement.

2. Examples of earlier research on school improvement include, among others, Dewey (1899) and Fullan (1991). More recent examples include Finnegan and O'Day (2003), Mintrop and Trujillo (2005), U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007), Herman et al. (2008), and Bryk et al. (2010). The less extensive literature on district improvement includes American Institutes for Research (2006), Education Commission of the States (2002), McLaughlin and Talbert (2003), Rudo (2001), Supovitz (2006), and Taylor et al. (2010).

3. The more varied the demographics of a school or district, the more subgroups for which states calculate adequate yearly progress—and the greater the opportunity for some groups to fail to meet the targets. No Child Left Behind accountability allows states to set minimum group sizes for adequate yearly progress determinations. Consequently, if a classification of low-performing students is split across several schools, the schools may be exempt from the adequate yearly progress calculation because the group has too few students, but the district will face consequences because its determination is based on all the students in the group in the district.

4. Michigan's system applies only to schools and is not discussed in this report (Michigan Department of Education 2009).

5. The state systems do not use the terms "in improvement" or "not in improvement." For ease of exposition, this study overlays these terms on the state categories. See appendix A for details.

6. Michigan and Wisconsin were excluded from this analysis because each had only one or two districts in improvement.

7. The 2007/08 results were the most recent school district finance survey data available (Ampadu and Zhou 2010). No adjustments have been made for regional or historical variations in prices.

8. The values reported in the text differ slightly from those reported in table 18 because the analysis reported in the text excludes Michigan and Wisconsin as outliers, since they have only one or two districts in improvement.

9. A district not in improvement with all its schools in need of improvement is a logical impossibility under NCLB accountability for multiple-school districts—unless the subgroup size criterion for a district is very much larger than for a school, which the U.S. Department of Education opposes. Tables 19 and 20 present findings only for districts that contain multiple schools because inconsistencies between school and district designations are extremely rare in single-school districts.

10. File contents may vary because they were issued at different times and included different updates, were processed by different personnel using different software, were affected by variations in business rules, and for other reasons.

11. This study used the 2000 Census poverty data, even though the data were 10 years old. School district poverty data from the 2010 Census were not yet available at the time the analyses were conducted. Because state education officials are accustomed to using poverty

and other data from the decennial census, the study team decided to retain these data even though more recent data were becoming available.

A Census project, the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), constructs school district estimates by disaggregating data from the annual American Community Survey and cumulating the results over time. SAIPE assigns weighted shares of county estimates to the portions of school districts within a county. A step in this procedure uses information from the 2000 Census (see www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/methods/schools/index.html for more detail). The Census school district tabulations, on the other hand, aggregate data up from Census tracts and blocks to school districts. This procedure requires less splitting and weighting of geographic areas that extend across school district boundaries and then only for geographic areas much smaller than the county geographies used by SAIPE.

12. Complete specification of the construction of this typology is available at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_locales.asp.

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