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NATIONAL NEWS

Six Insights from New NCES Data on K-12 Distance Education

Educationnext

By: Bill Tucker

December 1, 2011

<http://educationnext.org/six-insights-from-new-nces-data-on-k-12-distance-education/>

New 2009-10 school year survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics confirms the rapid growth of K-12 technology-based distance education enrollments, from an estimated 317,070 in 2002-03 to 506,950 in 2004-05 to 1,816,400 in 2009-10*.

While growth is no surprise, here are six more interesting insights:

1. Wide Variation Across the Country: Overall, 55% of public school districts reported students enrolled in distance education courses. Large districts (74%), towns (67%), rural districts (59%), and those in the southeast (78%) were much more likely to report enrollments. Districts in cities (37%) and those in the northeast (39%) lagged behind. Poverty concentration was not a factor.
2. High Schools Dominate: The vast majority of enrollments (74%) continue to be at the high school level.
3. Tracking Improves, But Still Incomplete: In 2004-05, urban schools didn't even know the course completion status for 46% of their students. Districts report improved tracking, but too many still don't have critical information, such as how many students withdraw prior to course completion, to judge effectiveness.
4. Wide Variety of Providers: 75% of districts reported that all courses were developed by a different entity. These include post-secondary institutions (50% of districts), independent vendors (47%), state virtual schools (33%), other districts (21%), and education service agencies (16%). Again, there are big variances across regions, with 77% of districts in the southeast using state virtual schools compared with 16% in the northeast.
5. Both Ends of the Spectrum: Among districts with students enrolled in distance education courses, credit recovery (62% of districts), dual enrollment (47%), and advanced placement (29%) are all options.
6. Access and Credit Recovery are Main Drivers for Districts: Districts with distance education enrollments say that providing courses not otherwise available (64% of all districts, 73% of rural) and credit recovery (57% of all districts, 81% of large) are very important reasons for offering these opportunities. And, despite frequent concerns that finances are driving these options, 82% of districts say that neither addressing school space limitations nor generating more revenues are important reasons for offering distance education.

* The NCES term "distance education" also includes one-way prerecorded video, such as television and cable broadcast, though data show only four percent of districts use these to a large extent. Also note that the same student can take multiple courses, so the number of enrollments is not the same as the number of individual students taking courses.

NCLB Waiver Plans Offer Hodgepodge of Grading Systems

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

December 2, 2011

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/02/13waivers_ep.h31.html?tkn=YNXFCYrjBGzxG0oxreM6Kwa9JQo%2FpUFD6nv&cmp=clp-edweek

States seeking waivers under the No Child Left Behind Act are hoping to replace what is widely considered an outdated, but consistent, school accountability regime with a hodgepodge of complex school grading systems that are as diverse as the states themselves.

That's the picture that emerged from an Education Week analysis of waiver proposals submitted last month to the U.S. Department of Education by 11 states, whose proposals offer insight into what the next generation of state-led accountability looks like.

The applications for federal flexibility under the NCLB law, the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, show 11 states aiming for vastly different student-achievement goals, with a jumble of strategies to improve low-performing schools. Even the factors that make up a school's rating will vary greatly by state, rendering it virtually impossible to compare student performance from one state to another.

But one area most of the 11 states seem to agree on: a hallmark of the law—the emphasis on traditional subgroups of at-risk students, such as minority children, those with special needs, and English-language learners—should be scaled back.

For all its flaws, the No Child Left Behind law brought a certain level of uniformity to school accountability. There was a single goal: to make all students proficient in math and reading by 2014. And there was a single yardstick: whether a school made adequate yearly progress, or AYP.

That would all disappear if the templates laid out in the 11 applications are accepted as the new norm by the U.S. Department of Education.

"Flexibility means a lack of commonality," said Jack Jennings, the president of the Washington-based Center on Education Policy, which has tracked implementation of the NCLB law since its passage in 2001.

He said as states shift to common standards and common tests, those worries will be eased; nearly all states have signed on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. But until those standards and tests go into effect, he said, "it will be very difficult to tell across states what's happening."

Given that reauthorization of the ESEA continues to languish in Congress, the waivers that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan approves could set the landscape for school accountability for years to come.

"Some people wondered if states were going to use this as an opportunity to raise the bar or use this as an opening to game the system," said Scott Palmer, the managing partner at Education Counsel, in Washington, which has worked with a number of states on education accountability plans. "Clearly, we're seeing they're trying to raise the bar."

Wish Lists

The first round of waivers could be issued as early as next month. A second application deadline for remaining states is Feb. 21, although the department will accept proposals on a rolling basis throughout next year. Twenty-eight states, plus the District of Columbia, have said they want to apply in February.

To gain a waiver, states will have to adopt college- and career-ready standards and tie state tests to them, adopt a differentiated accountability system that focuses on 15 percent of their most troubled schools, and craft guidelines for teacher- and principal-evaluation systems that will be based partly on student growth and be used for personnel decisions.

In return, states will no longer have to face the 2014 deadline for bringing all students to proficiency in math and reading, their schools will no longer face NCLB sanctions such as providing school choice, and district officials will have more freedom to move around Title I money for disadvantaged students.

Within the department's framework, the 11 states have produced greatly different ways—from the simple to the elaborate—to gauge which schools are succeeding, and which aren't.

On one end is New Jersey, which would emphasize student proficiency on reading and math in its accountability system, plus graduation rates. On the other end is Oklahoma, which also would factor in performance on science, social studies, and writing, in addition to student growth, improvement among the bottom 25 percent of students, and a slew of "whole school" factors, such as parent engagement.

The rest of the states are somewhere in the middle in terms of what counts for a school's grade.

Many of states have been operating the accountability systems that they've been proposing (or versions of them), in addition to a separate system governed by the NCLB law. Now, they have the chance to meld the two into a single, uniform system.

"I believe schools should have a lot of leeway here," said Michael J. Petrilli, the executive vice president of the Washington-based Thomas B. Fordham Institute, which favors more flexibility for states. "We don't want to pull away from the law's focus on needy, low-achieving kids, so if you can figure out a way to meet that intent, then go for it."

Although reading and math must remain the core subjects that factor into states' accountability systems under the new regimes, seven states plan to add at least one other subject, usually science or writing.

For schools, what lies at the end of those accountability mazes is what matters most. Many states have settled on an A-F letter grade. But some states would introduce scores, or indices. Georgia would add colored flags and stars to single out schools in different areas. Tennessee, purposefully, will avoid using the label "failing." Instead, schools will "miss" their targets.

Subgroup Treatment

One of the most significant deviations the initial 11 states would make from the original NCLB law is backing away from the importance of individual student subgroups in assessing schools' performance. Indeed, the role of subgroups has been a significant flashpoint in congressional debates about the future of the ESEA.

Most of the 11 states want to focus on low-performing students as a whole—a U-turn from the NCLB law, in which poor performance by a small cohort of at-risk students could sink a school's rating.

Seven states—Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Oklahoma—would create new super-subgroups encompassing either the bottom 25 percent of students at each school or traditional subgroups combined into a single unit. The argument these states make is that this new super-subgroup would allow schools to focus on a more specific goal and get around issues with subgroups that don't have enough students to warrant statistically reliable achievement data. After all, every school has a lowest-performing 25 percent, they say.

"Our school grading law will give triple the weight to improved student achievement among our lowest-performing students, meaning the focus of our schools will, and should be, to help all struggling students and quickly narrow the achievement gap," said Larry Behrens, a spokesman for the New Mexico education department.

The weight states give to closing achievement gaps is an important factor, said Amy Wilkins, the vice president for government affairs and communications of the Education Trust, a Washington-based group that advocates on behalf of disadvantaged children. (Two leaders at Education Trust, although not Ms. Wilkins, are also serving as the department's peer reviewers for this waiver process.)

Particularly for states that are devising indexes to rate schools, it's important to examine how much of a factor closing achievement gaps is in a school's evaluation, she said. "Gap closing is the North Star," Ms.

Wilkins said.

Even critics of the law admit that one of the NCLB law's greatest achievements has been shining a light on individual groups of students and holding schools accountable for speeding up their progress. And so there remains one vestige from the law meant to protect subgroups during the waiver process: annual measurable objectives, or AMOs. Those are the annual targets set for students, and subgroups of students, that determine whether a school makes AYP.

Under the waivers, states must still set AMOs by subgroup; however, most of the 11 states wouldn't give AMOs a prominent role in their accountability systems. And they don't have to.

While those AMOs are supposed to "guide support and improvement efforts," according to the Education Department, they won't determine which schools are turnaround or "focus" schools—the 15 percent of a state's schools that get the most intervention—nor will they drive when schools can get out from under those labels. The new AMOs also don't have to be fully integrated into each state's grading system.

Florida, for example, would set annual targets for subgroups, but hitting or missing them wouldn't affect a school's grade. And it's the grade that's the main catalyst for support and intervention in Florida's accountability system.

Massachusetts also acknowledges the backseat AMOs take in its application, saying those targets are meant to provide "transparent reporting" about schools' progress toward college and career readiness. Meanwhile, a school's separate index score, which is at the heart of Massachusetts' accountability system, would be used to identify schools most in need of help.

Indiana wanted to go so far as to replace traditional subgroups entirely in its accountability system.

"We applied with the goal of utilizing our bottom 25 percent in place of the traditional subgroups. We have good data to show that a large portion of the traditional subgroups are included in the bottom 25 percent," said Alex Damron, a state education department spokesman. However, federal officials have already told the state it must revise its proposal to set achievement targets for traditional subgroups.

Tutoring Loses Out

States' waiver proposals also reveal another important trend. Most states don't plan to keep the NCLB law's universal sanctions for failing schools: supplemental education services, or the tutoring known as SES that's usually provided by outside organizations, and school choice.

Though not all states explicitly addressed SES and choice in their applications, only Colorado and Oklahoma indicate they want to keep those requirements and that their schools set aside at least a small portion of Title I funding to pay for such service. Georgia wants to replace SES with a new "flexible learning program" that would provide extended learning time for students in low-performing schools. Most other states mention tutoring, in general, as a specific intervention in low-performing schools.

Even if a state ultimately wins a waiver—a decision that rests with Secretary Duncan—the proposals reveal how much more work states have to do to fully usher in this new era of accountability. At least five states would need new legislation to turn their waiver proposals into reality.

The heaviest lifting would have to happen in Georgia, New Jersey, and New Mexico, which all said they needed their legislatures to implement new statewide teacher-evaluation systems that factor in student growth—a key component of the department's requirements for flexibility.

Mr. Duncan has both promised to maintain a high bar for awarding a waiver and to give the flexibility to any state that wants one.

"We hope Secretary Duncan maintains that high bar," said New Mexico schools chief Hanna Skandera in an interview, "and calls out states that don't reach it."

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Survey Shows Nearly All States Can Track Data on Students

Nearly all states now have comprehensive data systems that allow them to track students' academic careers over time, and state officials are starting to dig into using the mountains of information, according to the sixth annual national survey on the subject.

The [Data Quality Campaign](#) , a Washington-based nonprofit group that promotes data use in education, released the report Thursday at noon. For the first time, the survey focused on governors' perspectives on state longitudinal-data systems, as opposed to the systems' technical capacity.

"Leadership is critical," said Aimee R. Guidera, the executive director of the campaign, noting that in the past year, Idaho and Maryland "leapfrogged many states that had been building along slowly," thanks to statewide data-use programs launched by Idaho schools Superintendent Tom Luna and Maryland Gov. Martin J. O'Malley.

"There's been incredible progress this year in states' ability to provide access to stakeholders, including teachers and principals and parents," Ms. Guidera said, though she added that no state has enacted comprehensive state policies to support data use.

"We really think the next several years need to be spent on the toughest issues in [data use], around turf, trust, technical issues, and time," she said in an interview. "This is much knottier and hard to solve, because it deals with changing behavior. It's much easier to build a data system that collects information."

Infrastructure Complete

The 2011 survey finds states have basically completed that first phase of developing data infrastructure.

This will be the last year that the DQC will track states' progress in what it considers the 10 "essential elements" of student data systems because, as the report concludes, "without exception, every state in the country has robust longitudinal data that extend beyond test scores and could inform today's toughest education decisions."

Nearly all states now have a unique identification code for each student. They also have student-level enrollment, demographic, and program data, as well as high school graduation data, college-readiness-test results, and the ability to match P-12 and postsecondary student records. All or nearly all states also can track academic growth from year to year using students' test scores, provide information on students who are not tested, and audit their data for quality and reliability.

However, only 41 states and territories track individual students' transcript data. Those that cannot are: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Moreover, the District of Columbia and seven states—Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Montana, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Vermont—still cannot match teachers to their students. That data element is considered critical for developing test-based teacher-evaluation systems, the report notes.

The DQC found 39 states now regularly train active teachers and principals to understand and use longitudinal data to improve instruction. But fewer than a third as many states require preservice teachers to demonstrate data literacy in order to obtain certification or licensure, and only six states use data to provide feedback to teacher education programs.

"One of the lessons learned from 10 essential elements is to really push [education] leaders on quality," said Paige Kowalski, the director of state policy initiatives for the DQC. "You can't just check the box and move on. States may be providing access to data for teachers, but are they really providing timely, actionable, user-friendly data?"

During the next several weeks, the DQC intends to release more in-depth studies of how states use longitudinal student data to inform education policy in four areas: teacher effectiveness, parent engagement,

high school early-warning systems, and college and career readiness. The group will also hold a national data "summit" with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in Washington on Jan. 18.

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STATE NEWS

Gov proposes parents 'union' to control underperforming schools

News-Press

By: Chris Umpierre
December 1, 2011

<http://www.news-press.com/article/20111202/NEWS0104/312020009/1013/LIFESTYLES/Gov-proposes-parents-union-control-underperforming-schools?odyssey=nav|head>

From academics to quality of teachers, Tice Elementary parent Maria Mendoza would make a lot of changes at her daughter's east Fort Myers school.

Outside of PTA meetings or teacher conferences, though, Mendoza has little power to effect change.

That could be changing.

Gov. Rick Scott's draft legislative agenda includes a bill that would allow parents to close struggling schools and replace them with a charter school. The so-called parent trigger bill, which has yet to be filed in the Florida Legislature, creates a parents union that advocates say will provide powerful and needed counterweight to teachers unions and district bureaucracies. If 51 percent of parents in a persistently failing school sign a petition, they could force the school to change into a charter, close or replace the principal and teachers.

Similar legislation has passed in California, Texas, Ohio and Connecticut and is being considered in almost a dozen more states. Bill opponents argue that parents lack the expertise to make important policy decisions better left to career educators.

"Parent trigger shifts the debate from esoteric food fights over charter schools or teachers unions to one simple concept: giving parents power over the educational destiny of their own children," said Ben Austin, the executive director of Parent Revolution, a California-based nonprofit that helped get the legislation passed in California in 2010.

Donna Mutzenard, executive director of the Florida Education Association's Island Coast chapter, said parents need to be involved in their children's education but giving them power to change traditional public schools to charter campuses is going too far.

"I don't think parents know how to run a school," Mutzenard said. "That's why our administrators have to have master's degrees and (school boards) prefer superintendents to have doctorates. And why do we need a parent trigger bill? Anybody can start a charter school if they want. If a parent wants to start a charter school, they can just fill out an application."

Many choices

Lee schools Superintendent Joseph Burke said parents have many choices about where to send their children to school, so he'd be against parent trigger legislation. Lee has a controlled lottery system that allows parents to pick from a variety of schools within three geographic zones.

In Collier County, schools use a combination of neighborhood and school choice systems. Students who live more than two miles from a school get transportation if they go to their neighborhood school. If a student enters and receives the district's school choice, or out-of-zone, it's bused to that school.

Lee has 26 charters and 93 traditional schools; Collier has three charters and 48 traditional public schools.

"(Turning traditional schools to charter) is something we have been giving some thought to," Burke said. "There are some bills filed right now that would give school districts more flexibility on a number of different issues. The issue of whether the school district can turn schools into charter schools is an intriguing idea. I can tell you the unions wouldn't like it because it would put them out of business."

Charter schools operate under a performance contract, or a "charter," which frees them from many regulations created for traditional public schools. Teachers and administrators get more authority to make decisions than most traditional public schools.

Charter schools tend to be small schools (median enrollment is 242 students compared to 539 in traditional public schools) and serve different communities with a wide variety of curriculum.

Mutzenard said changing all traditional schools to charters would be getting rid of public education because every school would be run its own way.

Mixed reaction

Mendoza, the Tice Elementary parent, believes her daughter's school could benefit if it were to be changed into a charter school.

Tice, where 93 percent of students are on free and reduced lunches, has received C grades from the state in three of the past five years.

The percentage of Tice student scoring at grade level in math has dropped from 57 percent in 2007 to 53 percent in 2010, according to Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores. Just 64 percent of Tice students scored at grade level in reading in 2010-11.

"The school could be better," Mendoza said. "The teachers could be better."

Mendoza's daughter, 10-year-old Janet, agreed.

"I like the school, but they could teach the subjects better," she said.

Collier County teacher Inrid Walsh, who has a daughter in the sixth grade, is against the parent trigger legislation.

"If kids are struggling, you wouldn't change their home," Walsh said. "Parents blame the school, but they have to take a look at what's affecting the kids. Are their kids absent all the time? Do parents refuse to have kids tested for learning disabilities because they don't want them to get labeled that way? Are parents taking kids to the eye doctor because maybe they can't see and that's why they're not doing well at school?"

Compton example

California's Parent Trigger law helped make a change at an under performing school in Compton, Calif. Last fall, hundreds of parents signed a petition to replace McKinley Elementary. Parents wanted a charter school, at which students would spend more time with a staff of new teachers.

After months of legal battles, the status of that petition is tied up in court. Meanwhile, a new charter school opened near McKinley Elementary and about 33 percent of the parents who initially signed the petition enrolled their children in the charter school.

McKinley has improved since the fall. Test scores have risen slightly and administrators are more welcoming. Austin believes parents at underperforming schools such as McKinley can benefit from parent trigger legislation.

"It's the parents like those in Compton, Calif., that are trapped in schools where less than 50 percent of the kids have a chance at graduating and only 2 percent have a chance at going to college," Austin said.

But local teachers such as Riverdale High's Illeana Flores believe the problem could be helped by getting more parents involved in their children's education. She doesn't believe giving parents power to change traditional public schools would make a difference.

"I think there should be a bill for teachers to help eliminate underperforming parents," Flores said about the parent trigger legislation. "Not all of my kids come to school prepared. I think parents have a lot of control over their children's education, but they'd just rather blame the institution than take steps with their own child to improve their education."

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More experienced teachers often gravitate to lower-poverty schools, study finds

Kalamazoo Gazette

By: Julie Mack

December 1, 2011

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2011/12/more_experienced_teachers_ofte.html

In theory, spending should be higher at Title I schools than those who don't receive Title I federal funding, which is given to schools that serve larger numbers of low-income students.

But even in the same school district, that's often not true, [according to a 78-page report released today by the U.S. Department of Education](#).

The study found that even with Title I dollars, which pays for reading specialists and other personnel to provide extra support for low-income students, about 40 percent of Title I schools spend less on personnel than non-Title I schools in their district.

The reason: Experienced teachers often use their seniority to transfer into schools that serve more middle-class and affluent students, the study suggests.

Why that's a problem: It means the students most in need of high-quality teachers are the most likely to get less experienced instructors.

The [New York Times offers this quote](#) from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan: "Low-income students need extra support and resources to succeed, but in far too many places, policies for assigning teachers and allocating resources are perpetuating the problem rather than solving it."

Ron Fuller, superintendent of the Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency, acknowledge the problem — and said the recent changes in Michigan law regarding teacher contracts might help address the issue.

"You need your most experienced dynamic teachers in those Title I schools," Fuller said, but Michigan school administrators often "have been locked out from doing that by the union," which typically has had clauses allowing instructors with seniority to pick their teaching assignment.

No surprise, he said, that often means the least-experienced teachers get the hardest, most undesirable positions.

Fuller noted that his own teaching career began more than 30 years ago in a high-poverty urban school where teachers are all trying to transfer out because of their frustrations in teaching to high-needs students with a minimum of resources.

The particular school "was a horrible environment," Fuller said, adding "it's human nature" for teachers to seek out schools where the job will be a little easier.

But under changes passed by the Legislature earlier this year, Fuller said, union contracts no longer can allow teaching assignments to be determined by seniority. That allow administrators much more latitude in regards to staffing.

"It will take awhile to sort itself out," Fuller added, as administrators are unlikely to dramatically overhaul

teaching assignments in the immediate future.

"It's going to take awhile for administrators to fully understand the law and what they can do," he said. "There will be some administrators who won't want to rattle the cage."

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Teacher rating plan progressing

Capitol News Bureau

By: Will Sentell

December 2, 2011

<http://theadvocate.com/home/1461439-125/teacher-rating-plan-progressing.html>

Despite a simmering controversy, Louisiana's top school board is expected to approve a detailed plan next week that will link many annual teacher evaluations to student test scores starting in 2012.

The change, which stems from a state law pushed by Gov. Bobby Jindal, will pave the way for teachers to be rated as highly effective, effective and ineffective.

Fifty percent of the rating will stem from how students fare on standardized tests, and how scores compare with previous years.

The rest will be based largely on formal and informal classroom observations by principals, which has been the key standard for years.

Penny Dastugue, president of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, said that after "some hearty discussion," she thinks BESE will approve a plan recommended last month by an advisory panel of teachers and others after more than a year of study.

A committee of BESE is set to review the plan on Tuesday. The full board, which faces a major turnover in January, is scheduled to act on Wednesday.

Officials of the state Department of Education said Wednesday that more than 10,000 educators took part in a briefing on the changes, more than 2,600 participated in an online survey on development of the new reviews and that 15,000 teachers have taken part in pilots for the new evaluations.

"We feel completely confident," said Rayne Martin, deputy superintendent of innovation in the state Department of Education.

"We are ready," Martin said "We know this is the right thing to do."

But teacher union officials, who opposed the bill when it went through the Legislature, contend the new rating system is riddled with problems and needs more time and work.

"I do believe they are moving forward with a flawed idea," said Joyce Haynes, president of the Louisiana Association of Educators, one of the two largest teacher unions in the state.

"I think it is going to be a fiasco," said Haynes, who was a member of the advisory panel.

Steve Monaghan, president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers and another panel member, said major questions remain, especially involving plans to rate teachers on a scale of one to five and knowing that a low score could eventually lead to dismissal.

"If you do it, it has to be right," Monaghan said. "Otherwise, there is going to be so much noise out there that it is going to fall on its own."

The new evaluation system is aimed at improving student achievement by ensuring top-flight teachers in all of Louisiana's roughly 1,300 public schools.

Under previous rules, teachers underwent formal job reviews every three years.

However, critics contend that, since nearly all teachers typically get satisfactory marks, the reviews have little

meaning.

Louisiana has about 50,000 classroom teachers.

The bulk of the reviews, starting in the 2012-13 school year, would focus on teachers in grades 4-9 and how their students fared on standardized tests, including LEAP and iLEAP.

That group makes up about 33 percent of public school teachers, officials said.

Pilot projects are planned, starting in January, on how the other 67 percent of teachers will be evaluated, such as those who teach art and music and those who teach kindergarten and first-grade students.

But Monaghan said rating teachers on a 1-5 scale, knowing there is a substantial margin of error, raises questions.

He said teachers, by a narrow and suspect margin, could get an “ineffective” label and be forced into corrective action or, through other suspect calculations, be rated as “highly effective,” which may eventually mean financial rewards.

He said the ratings are tentatively set for:

1.0-1.9, ineffective.

2.0-2.6, effective, emerging.

2.7-3.3, effective, proficient.

3.4-4.0, effective, accomplished.

4.1-5.0, highly effective.

Monaghan said the expectation is that 10 percent of the affected teachers would be rated as ineffective — about 1,700 — and another 10 percent would be listed as “highly effective,” with the other 80 percent considered effective.

State Rep. Frank Hoffmann, R-West Monroe and chief sponsor of the 2010 law, said that, while the new way of evaluating teachers is a work in progress, it will be ready to go for the 2012-13 school year.

“I want to make sure it is fair to teachers,” he said. “I have said that from day one.”

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