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NATIONAL NEWS

Duncan's 82% NCLB Failure Prediction Way Off Base, New Data Show

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

December 15, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/12/duncans_82_nclb_failure_predic.html

Remember when U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan issued the warning that [82 percent of schools would fail to make the grade](#) this year under the No Child Left Behind Act, and hoped that would spur Congress to rewrite the law?

Well, the researchers (or politicians!) behind Duncan's prediction clearly are "in need of improvement," based on one group's analysis.

The real number, according to today's latest [report from the Center on Education Policy](#): 48 percent.

That's how many schools are estimated to have failed to make "adequate yearly progress" under NCLB during the 2010-11 school year. The proportion is up from 39 percent the year before, but nowhere close to Duncan's 82 percent prediction. (This year's number could change by a percentage point or two, CEP researchers say, because some states are still finalizing their numbers and working through appeals from individual schools.)

Duncan's team missed the mark by *34 percentage points!*

"Unfortunately, their estimate is off," said CEP President Jack Jennings. Regardless, he added, the increase in schools failing to make AYP "shows that NCLB needs to be changed." What's more, he said, the administration is justified in issuing waivers.

Under NCLB, the number of "failing" schools is expected to escalate each year as the country gets closer to the 2013-14 school year deadline for all students to be proficient in math and reading.

Duncan used this 82 percent figure number as a scare tactic to try to goad Congress into reauthorizing the law. It didn't work, and now his department is [issuing waivers](#) from key elements of NCLB. At the time, education policy experts on both sides of the political aisle [were critical](#) of this intimidating prediction, which some said would only serve to create an atmosphere of fear

and damage the department's credibility.

Duncan said yesterday in a statement that even though the numbers are different, the message is still the same. "Whether it's 50 percent, 80 percent, or 100 percent of schools being incorrectly labeled as failing, one thing is clear: No Child Left Behind is broken," he said. "That's why we're moving forward with giving states flexibility from the law in exchange for reforms that drive student success."

In fact, only three states, plus the District of Columbia, actually hit or exceeded Duncan's estimate on failure to make AYP: the District, at 87 percent; Florida; at 89 percent; Missouri, at 88 percent; and New Mexico, at 87 percent.

On the other end of the spectrum are Wisconsin, where only 11 percent of schools did not make AYP; Kansas, at 16 percent; and Rhode Island at 17 percent.

Importantly, the report notes that this doesn't mean Wisconsin, Kansas, and Rhode Island necessarily have better K-12 systems than their counterparts with much higher failure rates. Instead, the difference in AYP success is likely more a reflection of test difficulty, cut scores, student demographics, and the academic targets.

This discrepancy, Jennings said, "shows the wisdom of having common academic standards and common tests."

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An Insider's Guide to the 11 NCLB Waiver Plans

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

December 14, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/12/an_insiders_guide_to_the_11_nc.html

If you haven't had time to read the thousands of pages that make up the [NCLB waiver](#) applications for the first 11 states, that's okay. Your intrepid Politics K-12 bloggers, along with other EdWeek colleagues, have.

The bottom line: Even if you can make it through the incredible complexity of the states' accountability plans, and the sometimes surprising vagueness of states' teacher-evaluation and turnaround plans, you will be left with a lot of questions about what this new state-led accountability looks like. To be fair, these first-round states had mere weeks to complete their plans, which are meant to take the place of a comprehensive federal accountability law. And, the U.S. Department of Education and its outside peer reviewers will presumably work to shore up states' plans, and deal with those unanswered questions.

If you want to read the applications, check out the map below. (Set it in motion, then click on the state to see a link to its application.)

Otherwise, for an overview of how the states are proposing to grade schools and **hold them accountable**—including an intriguing emphasis on a new "super" subgroup—check out this [story](#).

For a look inside how these states plan to implement **common core standards and common assessments**, check out Catherine Gewertz's [story](#), which shows that teachers are often the last to be trained on the new standards.

For an in-depth look at how states plan to comply with the Education Department's requirements on **teacher evaluations**, read Stephen Sawchuk's [piece](#), which shines a light on most states' reluctance to acknowledge the role of collective bargaining in those plans.

If you want to learn about states' plans to **turn around** 15 percent of their worst schools, then check out Alyson Klein's [story](#),

which reveals the lack of creativity on the part of some states. However, the story also points out that this lack of creativity may be because the Education Department's requirements were somewhat stifling.

And if you want to gauge the impact these waivers will have on **English-language learners**, read Lesli Maxwell's two blog posts that zero in on the plans of [Florida](#), [New Mexico](#) and [Massachusetts](#).

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STATE NEWS

Michigan House approves charter school expansion

Associated Press

By: Staff

December 14, 2011

http://www.mlive.com/education/index.ssf/2011/12/michigan_house_approves_charte.html

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A proposal designed to allow more public charter schools in Michigan is nearing final approval in the Republican-controlled state Legislature.

The House approved a measure lifting some restrictions on the number of charter schools Wednesday by a 58-49, mostly party-line vote.

The House bill has differences from a version passed by the Senate earlier this year. The two chambers could resolve differences in the legislation and send it to Republican Gov. Rick Snyder with votes as early as Thursday.

Democrats say they're worried about eliminating caps on the number of charter schools without more assurances of quality such as limiting new schools to operators with proven academic track records.

Republicans say expanding charters would give families more educational options.

The state now has 255 charter schools.

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Alaska department of education proposes 'overhaul' of education standards

Associated Press

By: Becky Bohrer

December 14, 2011

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/f677b1c570c34690b3aa62c89e3fa959/AK--Education-Standards/>

JUNEAU, Alaska — Alaska officials are proposing new standards for K-12 education, including an emphasis on speaking and listening skills, as they seek to boost rigor and create more well-rounded students.

Education department spokesman Eric Fry said the proposal would overhaul the existing system. Under the current system, standards stop at the 10th grade, aligning with testing requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

One of the major complaints about the federal law is that it's a one-size-fits-all approach to education, and Alaska is considering seeking waivers from some of the law's provisions. The Obama administration will let states avoid certain requirements under No Child Left Behind, like children showing they're proficient in reading and math by 2014, if the states meet other conditions.

Those conditions include imposing their own standards to prepare students for college and careers and setting evaluation standards for teachers and principals.

Education Commissioner Michael Hanley has said the steps the state is taking to revamp standards and create a "next generation accountability system" should line up with what's needed to seek a waiver, if the state decides to go that route.

Fry said the proposed standards were created by Alaskans and are comparable in rigor to standards being adopted nationally.

The department will ask the state Board of Education and Early Development this week to release the proposals for extended public comment. Students would not be assessed on the new standards until spring 2016. The board begins two days of meetings in Anchorage on Thursday.

Barb Angaiak, president of the National Education Association-Alaska, said it's important that the review process is thorough

and fair.

"We want to make sure what is proposed and what is put in place does make sense," said Angaiak, whose group, a major teachers' union in the state, has been reviewing the standards.

According to the proposal, the standards "do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they attempt to override the unique qualities of each student and classroom. They simply establish a strong foundation of knowledge and skills all students need for success after graduation."

"It is up to schools and teachers to decide how to put the standards into practice and address cultural diversities," the proposal stated.

The revision would apply only to classes on the English language and math, which were last updated in 2005. Fry said those are fundamental to achievement in other school subjects and in the workplace, and they are used daily. History and science standards would remain the same.

Classes on the English language would get new standards for communication, including speaking and listening. Students would be required to "gain, evaluate and present increasingly complex information, ideas and evidence through listening and speaking, as well as through media," according to the proposal.

Fry said that for more than a year, the department worked with rural and urban Alaskans, including English and math teachers and those who teach English-language learners; representatives of universities, college and technical programs and industries; and teachers of economically disadvantaged, disabled or minority students.

Alaska's current standards were compared with new nationwide K-12 and college- and career-ready standards. The review process "incorporated the best of Alaska's current standards, added new standards, and revised standards for clarity," Fry said.

The University of Alaska will review the standards to determine if they will lead to more high school graduates who are ready for college without remediation, he said.

The public education system has been marred with problems like high dropout rates and the need for many students who do graduate to take remedial courses once they reach college. Gov. Sean Parnell, who has pushed merit scholarships as a way to help transform the system, said the state needs to raise expectations for students.

In a letter to the education board's chairwoman this month, he said he supported efforts to make Alaska's academic standards more rigorous. He also said it's important that the private sector, military, colleges and technical schools weigh in on the proposed standards.

"If we ensure that their involvement is substantial, these entities will inform us of the qualities and skills they look for in high school graduates," he wrote. "In turn, this will help us shape a transformative and competitive Alaskan education."

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Charter School Approved for Affluent Brooklyn Enclave

New York Times

By: Fernanda Santos

December 15, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/education/charter-school-approved-in-cobble-hill-brooklyn.html?_r=1&ref=education

The panel that oversees education policy in New York City approved the first [charter school](#) for brownstone Brooklyn on Wednesday night, backing a plan to give it space inside a building already shared by three other public schools.

The [Panel for Educational Policy](#) handed a significant victory to a network of charter schools run by [Eva S. Moskowitz](#), the former city councilwoman, in her quest to expand its reach to affluent parts of the city.

The new school, in Cobble Hill, will be [Ms. Moskowitz](#)'s 12th in the city, but only the second in a well-to-do enclave. The other opened last summer on the Upper West Side amid protests similar to what the Cobble Hill school faced on Wednesday as it gained its final approval, during a meeting that lasted hours.

The teachers' union brought opponents by the busload, and they flocked to the microphone to offer their views during the meeting, at Newtown High School in Corona, Queens.

The opponents hurled insults and accusations at the panel's members; the schools chancellor, Dennis M. Walcott; and several of his deputies.

Though the meeting happened far outside the communities affected by the plans voted on by the panel, the crowd was boisterous. One opponent held a sign reading, “How dare you?” — and there were jeers to drown out testimony from those who spoke in support of charter schools.

The panel also approved locating two other charter schools, one of them also part of Ms. Moskowitz’s network, in buildings occupied by district schools in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, one of the city’s poorest.

Most of the opposition was staged against the Cobble Hill school, though. The building it will occupy, on Baltic Street, has a school for students with disabilities and two schools serving grades 6 through 12: the School for Global Studies and the School for International Studies. But, according to the city’s Department of Education, the building still has 700 available seats.

Jeff Tripp, a math and special education teacher at International Studies, disputed the department’s analysis, saying the building’s gym was so overused that high school students had a hard time meeting graduation requirements in physical education. Lunch in its sole cafeteria starts at 10:30 a.m., he said.

“Our students spend hours in the building and for many of them it’s home,” Mr. Tripp said. “What you’re proposing is a home invasion.”

Cobble Hill shares many similarities with the Upper West Side: It has desirable elementary schools at or near capacity, as well as million-dollar homes blocks from public housing developments. In an earlier interview, Ms. Moskowitz said [her network](#), Success Academy Charter Schools, meant to serve both.

The school is to open in August for about 190 students in kindergarten and first grade. It will eventually expand through eighth grade.

“While there are a lot of charter operators that may serve exclusively the most disadvantaged kids, I think there’s a value in having an integrated school, both racially and economically,” Ms. Moskowitz said. “Choice shouldn’t be just for poor families.”

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Advocates: Indiana school vouchers living up to expectations

Associated Press

By: Staff

December 14, 2011

<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20111214/news/712149789/>

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Nearly 4,000 students who formerly attended public schools are receiving tax money to help pay the cost of private school under Indiana’s school voucher program, which is believed to be the nation’s largest, officials say.

Advocates say the voucher program is meeting expectations in its first year, despite a late start due in part to a legal challenge. Although the program’s first-year cap of 7,500 was not reached, its proponents say that they’re pleased with the level of participation.

“We had only a short window to implement the program,” School Choice Indiana Executive Director Lindsey Brown told the [Evansville Courier & Press](#) for a story published Sunday. “We were never concerned we were going to hit the cap.”

Gov. Mitch Daniels and the GOP-led General Assembly this year gave Indiana the nation’s broadest private school voucher program in the country. Supporters say voucher programs give parents more choices about where to send their children and force public schools to be more competitive, but opponents say they drain funding from the public school system and wrongly divert public money to private religious institutions. A group of teachers and religious leaders is suing to overturn the law.

Under the new program, vouchers can cover up to 90 percent of the cost of tuition, depending on a family’s income. The actual value of the vouchers is less than the amount of tax money a public school would have received for that student. The maximum value for students in first through eighth grade is \$4,500.

School Choice Indiana says 85 percent of the students who have received vouchers qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch and 53 percent are minorities.

Sixty-nine percent of voucher recipients are from metropolitan areas, while 16 percent are from suburbs and 15 percent are from rural areas.

Several schools in the Catholic Diocese of Evansville have admitted students with vouchers, and so have Evansville Christian School, Evansville Day School and Evansville Lutheran School.

Official enrollment figures for the Evansville Vanderburgh school district and other local public schools have not been released. District officials say that they've lost some students to vouchers this year but also have accepted some transfer students from nonpublic schools.

"It wasn't that the public schools were bad, but they wanted a school that shared their values or met their needs in a certain way," said Paul Bair, director of Evansville Christian School, which has nine voucher students.

Annabel Ortiz-Lopez said she is grateful she received vouchers for her two children to attend second and fifth grades at Evansville Christian School this year,

"We liked where we were before in public school, but ECS expects more out of the kids," she said. She said she also appreciates the school's emphasis on Christianity.

Indiana's program will be limited to 7,500 students this coming school year and 15,000 next year, but then there will be no limit on the number of children who could enroll as long as their parents fall within income limits. Families of four currently earning up to about \$60,000 a year could receive them.

"We're not super-concerned about hitting the cap, but the longer the program is in place, the easier it will be to spread the word," Brown said. "I think you'll see it grow quite expansively."

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