

Heavily Impacted Indian Land Districts and AYP

A Study by the
National Association of
Federally Impacted Schools

Abstract:

Objective: Heavily Impacted districts that serve Indian land children were surveyed to determine the percentage of schools meeting AYP and the factors that allow some districts to meet standards while others do not. **Methods:** A survey created by NAFIS was sent to heavily impacted districts in ten states with high populations of students living on Indian land. Upon the return of the surveys, the data was quantified and analyzed. **Results:** While all districts surveyed faced similar socioeconomic challenges, a large number were still able to meet AYP in a majority of their schools. **Conclusions:** Based on the answers provided by the surveyed districts, good, qualified teachers who have been in their districts for a considerable length of time have a considerable effect on the school's ability to meet AYP. Districts with many new, inexperienced teachers were less likely to meet AYP than districts with veteran teachers.

A Brief Overview of No Child Left Behind:

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, better known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), was signed into law on January 8, 2002. The educational reform program, originally a bipartisan piece of legislation, has four major provisions: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and districts, an emphasis on programs proven to work and more choices for parents. Achievement is measured through the use of standardized tests, administered each year to the same grade levels in reading and math. The scores of students from one year are then compared to the scores of the next year's students in the same grade. The scores are expected to rise, comparatively, each year. The expected rise in scores accounts for the school's Annual Yearly Progress, or AYP.

With time, the support for the Act has faded as it has not proven to be as effective as once hoped. The original intent of NCLB was to bridge the achievement gap between America's most, and least, affluent students, making sure "no child is left behind." Based on the Act's mandatory, state-wide, standardized tests and their subsequent scores, the Bush administration, as well as the Department of Education, still stands behind NCLB.

I believe the No Child Left Behind Act needs to be reauthorized because it's working. It's a piece of legislation which believes in setting high standards and using accountability to make sure that every single child gets a good education.

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C.
April 12, 2007

Unfortunately, few others have the President's faith in the Act. Many believe that NCLB will not be reauthorized during the 110th Congress, as originally intended. The educational community has found the Act unacceptable, standing firmly against its reliance on standardized test scores as the only measure of accountability, as well as many other provisions of the legislation. In addition, there is bipartisan discontent concerning NCLB in both chambers of Congress. While all would like to see changes be made, there are disagreements over what should be done to reform the Act. On Friday, November 2, 2007, Representative George Miller (D-CA), the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, announced that NCLB will not be reauthorized during the current session of Congress; whether it will be reauthorized in the second session, beginning in January 2008, remains to be seen.

The Purpose of this Study:

In the Fall of 2006, NAFIS conducted a survey of its member school districts to determine trends in, and attitudes about, No Child Left Behind. Based on the survey, it was found that the schools having the most difficult time meeting their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) were those serving Indian land children. Many schools that teach these children face many of the same barriers:

- ◆ The school districts are located in rural, often isolated, areas;
- ◆ They have a hard time attracting qualified and, more importantly, effective teachers;
- ◆ They tend to face difficulty in retaining effective teachers;
- ◆ They serve children from low-income families;
- ◆ They often face cultural and, sometimes, language issues and barriers.

While the above characteristics were found to be fairly common among most Indian Land districts, the Fall 2006 survey found a number of such districts were still meeting AYP, while many were not.

The purpose of this survey is to draw some conclusions as to why, if they face many of the same barriers, some Indian Land schools consistently meet AYP while many others do not. A survey was sent to 100 school districts that are considered to be “highly impacted,” meaning each had a LOT percentage calculated at 80% or above. Of those, 36 responded by returning a completed survey. All schools surveyed were from the states of Arizona, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming. These states were chosen because of the large number of Indian Land schools, in addition to the answers they provided in the last survey. The information they provided was then analyzed and now presented.

Sample Questions from Survey:

The following are excerpts of questions from the survey sent to districts. Overall, the survey questions gauged the educational environment of these districts, including the physical quality of the schools, teacher turn-over rate, teacher quality and other socio-economic factors that may effect education.

- 1 What percent of students in your school district live on Indian lands?
- 2 What percent of your schools met AYP last year (2005-2006)?

Less than 50%	Approximately 50%	More than 50%
---------------	-------------------	---------------
- 3 What percent of your students qualify for free/reduced lunch?

0-10%	10-25%	35%-50%	50%-75%	75%+
-------	--------	---------	---------	------
- 4 How many new teachers were employed in the last five years?
- 5 What is the average length of employment for new teachers?

1-2 years	3-5 years	5 years +
-----------	-----------	-----------
- 6 a) Can someone teach (full-time) in your district without a teaching certificate?

Yes	No
-----	----

b) If so, what percent of teachers do not hold teaching certificates?

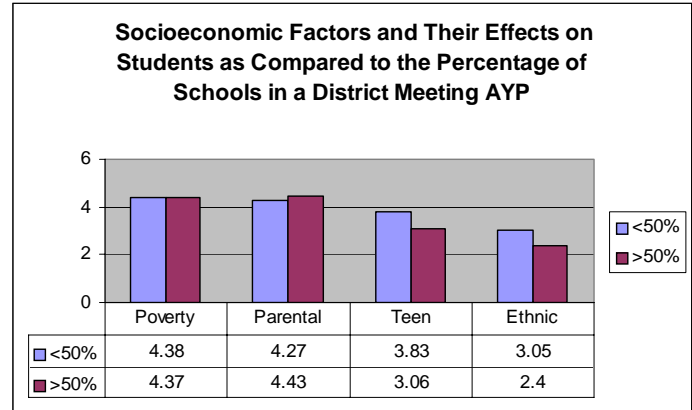
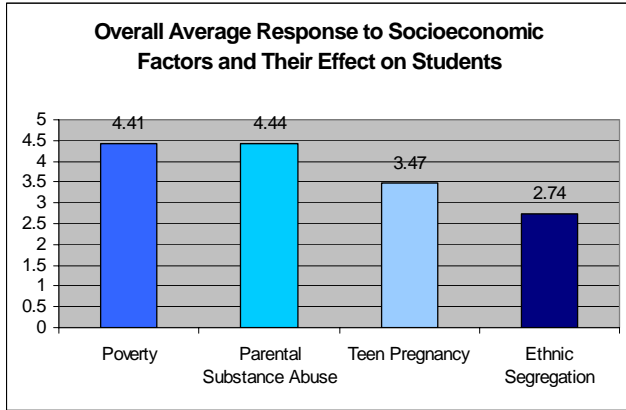
c) What percent of teachers hold a graduate degree?
- 7 To what degree do you feel the following factors impact students at your school? 1=Not at all

2=Somewhat	3=Neutral	4=Moderately	5=Very
------------	-----------	--------------	--------

Poverty	1	2	3	4	5
Parental Substance Abuse	1	2	3	4	5
Teen Pregnancy	1	2	3	4	5
Ethnic Segregation	1	2	3	4	5

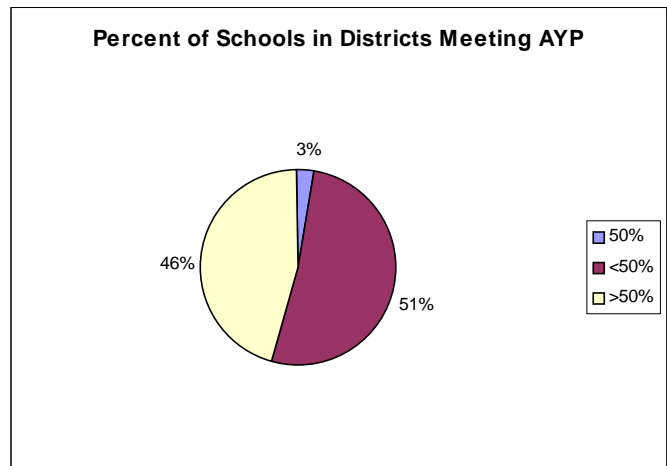
Addition questions asked, and used, will be explained throughout the analysis.

General Survey Results:



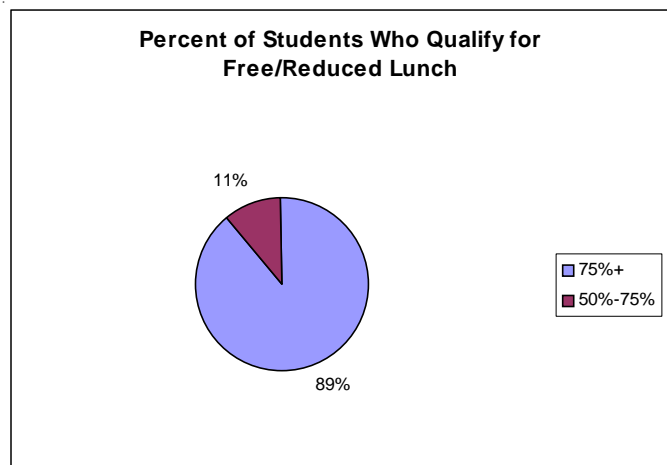
Demographics:

- ◆ 16 of the 36 (44.4%) districts who responded had over 50% of the schools within their district meet AYP;
- ◆ One district met AYP in 100% of its schools;
- ◆ All districts reported Black, Hispanic, and Asian students accounted for less than 10% of the district's population;
- ◆ Four districts had between 10%-25% Caucasian students—3/4 of these districts met AYP in 50%+ of their schools;
- ◆ 32 out of 36 districts reported Caucasian populations accounting for less than 10% of the district's population;



Socioeconomic Factors

- ◆ 100% of applicable districts had 50%+ students qualify for free/reduced lunch;
- ◆ 89% of districts had 75%+ of their students qualify for free/reduced lunch;
- ◆ 86% of the districts stated poverty and parental substance abuse as strong factors impacting students at their schools;

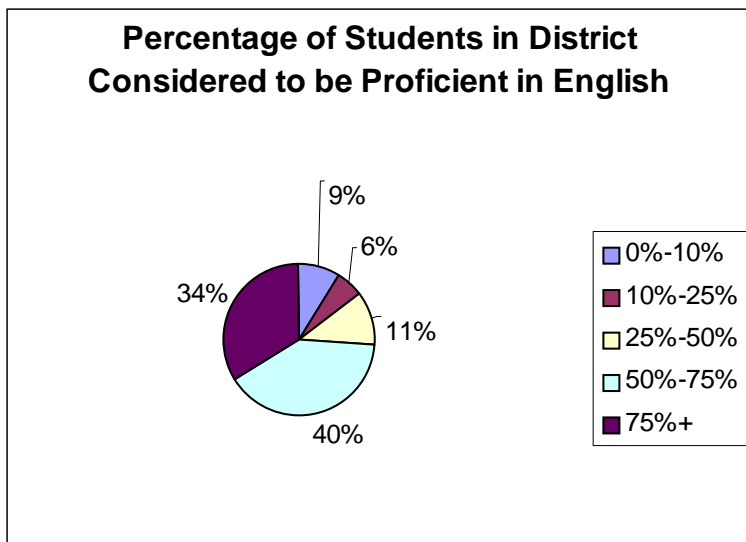


Socio-economic, ethnic and drug/alcohol issues make parent involvement almost non-existent. Students are at a real disadvantage because they have little support at home.
Harlem Public School, Harlem, MT

Parental support for behavior and attitude of kids must improve to make and sustain good educational partnerships with the school, based on trust.
Eagle Butte School District 20-1, Eagle Butte, SD

Educational Factors

- ◆ No correlation was drawn between class size and AYP;
- ◆ Six districts reported at least 90% of teachers held graduate degrees—five of these districts were meeting 50%+ AYP within their schools;
- ◆ 40% of districts reported none of their teachers held graduate degrees;



- ◆ 34% of districts considered over 75% of their students to be proficient in English;
- ◆ 100% of districts reported their teachers and administrators have access to in-service training;

This year, 2007-2008, implementing and assessing a Standard-Base curriculum is the emphasis of our District-wide professional development plan. School sites have data-driven professional development to determine areas of improvement as well as using Arizona AIMS test results, AYP determinations and AZ LEARNS achievement profile information.

Tuba City Unified School District #15, Tuba City, AZ

Statistics of Districts Where More than 50% of Schools Meeting AYP

- ◆ 75% of these districts have 75% or more Native American students;
- ◆ 50% of these districts **do not** have a PTA or other parental organization;
- ◆ 87% of these districts reported new teachers stayed with the district for at least three years, 56% had new teachers stay with the district for at least five years;
- ◆ 68% of these districts felt they have adequate materials (proper facilities, enough books, supplies, etc.);
- ◆ All of the districts in which only 50%-75% of students qualified for free/reduced lunch met more than 50% AYP in their schools;
- ◆ 69% of these districts teach a Native language to their students.

Statistics of Districts Where Less than 50% of Schools Meeting AYP

- ◆ 85% of these districts have 75% or more Native American students;
- ◆ 100% of these districts have 75% or more of their students who qualify for free/reduced lunch;
- ◆ 55% of these districts **do not** have a PTA or other parental organization;
- ◆ 75% of these districts reported that new teachers stayed with the district for at least three years. 25% of these districts reported that new teachers stay for at least five years;

NCLB has caused a problem for remote schools because teachers are difficult if not impossible to find.

Peach Springs USD #8, Peach Spring, AZ

We have been unable to find a Culture teacher and have been looking for one for the past three years. We have experienced declining enrollment at our school and it has impacted us in many areas. We were unable to fund summer school 2007 because of lack of funds. These students need to learn that they are very intelligent and are just as good or better than anyone else. They need to learn to make better choices even though they face obstacles and learn that they can overcome obstacles. They need to finish high school and continue on to college.

Casa Blanca Middle School, Bapchule, AZ

- ◆ In these districts, the percent of teachers with graduate degrees ranged from 0%-100%;
- ◆ 70% of these districts felt as if they have adequate materials;
- ◆ 75% of these districts teach a Native language;

CONCLUSION:

This NAFIS survey found that all schools serving Indian Lands children face similar socioeconomic boundaries to education, whether they are meeting AYP or not. While some of the districts in which the majority of schools are meeting AYP seemed to have marginally favorable socioeconomic conditions (fewer students who qualified for free or reduced lunch, more parental involvement, etc.), the major differences between passing and failing seemed to come back to the teachers in the schools. Districts where more than 50% of all schools were meeting AYP tended to have more teachers with graduate degrees and a lower teacher turnover rate, which means that students are learning from experienced teachers who have some background in the district.

In addition, fewer of these schools reported having adequate materials as compared to districts where less than 50% of schools are meeting AYP; this further demonstrates that it is less the school or the students, but the teachers themselves, who make the difference. Appropriate, modern materials are not as valuable as a good educator. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a lack of funding and supplies will ultimately have an effect on education. As one district reported:

As fuel prices go up, we are facing a real challenge because our rural Native American communities re spread out and require a major effort in transportation.

Painted Desert/The STAR School, Flagstaff, AZ

If there is not enough funding to transport children from Indian reservations to public schools, then there is an obvious barrier to their education. This is only made worse if the teacher's in the school are ineffective.

Conversely, while teachers cannot change their students' home lives or the socioeconomic barriers they face, they do have the chance to make a positive impact while the children are in school. Based on this survey, it seems as if qualified, dedicated teachers make a notable difference in Indian Land schools. It is clear that the districts themselves realize this as well:

Smaller schools that are primarily Native American students can be a bit of a challenge. We do our best to provide adequate means of teaching to our students. We offer our 5th and 6th grade students a typing program; we have three computers in the library for all students to research and learn typing on. All you can do is provide them with the tools and wish for the best. It is a different culture that suffers from poverty, drug and alcohol abuse. The best advice is to be positive role models to the students and encourage them as much as you can.

Valentine Elementary School District #22, Truxton, AZ

We often used the excuse of our socio-economic position for low AYP. We demand more from our students than average and more from our teachers.

Solen/Cannon Ball School District 3, Solen, ND

Once again, we would like to thank all the districts who participated by returning the survey. It should be noted that only 36 percent of surveys were returned; we realize that with the small sample size our conclusions are limited.

Compiled and Written by
Lauren Goldberg and Kenza Hadj-Moussa
NAFIS Fall 2007 Interns



NAFIS

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

444 N. Capitol Street, NW

Suite 419

Washington, DC 20001

P. 202.624.5455

F. 202.624.5468

W. www.nafisdc.org