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Summary

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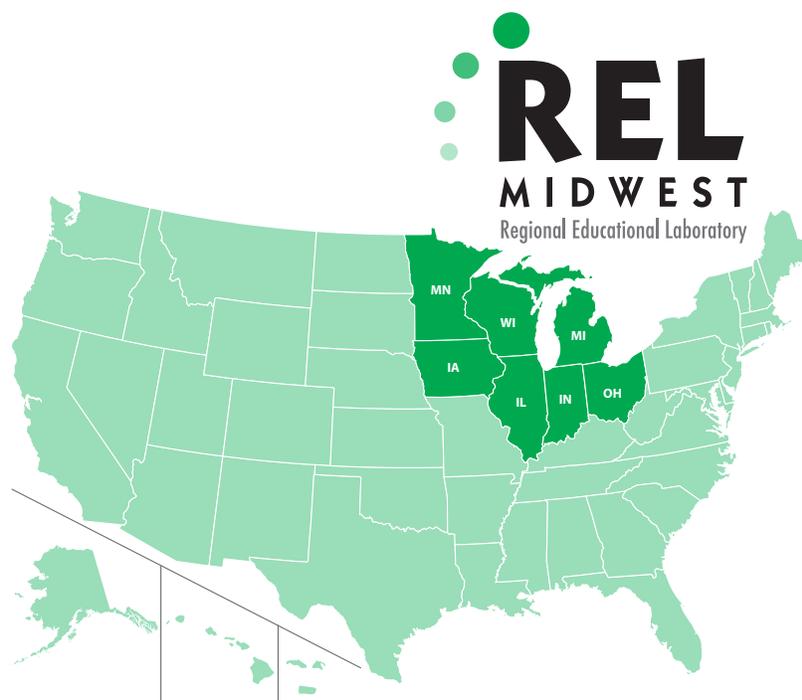
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Characteristics of Midwest Region school districts identified for improvement

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.
- 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.

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).
- 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.

References

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