



Parent involvement activities in school improvement plans in the Northwest Region



Institute of Education Sciences
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Parent involvement activities in school improvement plans in the Northwest Region

Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 spells out parent involvement requirements for schools in need of improvement, the majority (54 percent) of the 84 percent of Northwest Region school improvement plans reviewed failed to include such provisions. Many schools rely on communication as the primary way to involve parents—despite the wide range of parent involvement practices discussed in the literature.

All Title I schools designated as in need of improvement are required to submit a two-year school improvement plan to their state education agency. The plan must address the academic issues that led to the improvement status and must describe strategies for increasing student achievement. As part of the school improvement plan schools must implement at least three components of parent involvement: notify parents of the school's improvement status, collaborate and communicate with parents (provide opportunities for parents to be involved in developing and approving the school improvement plan), and include "effective" parent involvement activities in the plan. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 views parent involvement as a key intervention for raising student achievement and bringing schools out of improvement status.

This study explores how the improvement plans of Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region align with the parent involvement requirements of the NCLB Act. The study analyzed 2006/07 school improvement plans for 308 Title I schools, covering 84 percent of schools in improvement in the Northwest Region states. In addition to examining whether the plans contained parent involvement activities as required by NCLB section 1116, the study identified and looked for parent involvement activities as outlined in section 1118 and activities that section 1116 refers to as "effective" but does not define and so were identified from the literature as "potentially effective" strategies (because the studies on which they were based were mainly correlational).

A team of five researchers independently coded 4,926 parent involvement activities identified from the 308 school improvement plans, with 91 percent interrater reliability. The analysis revealed that a majority (54 percent) of school improvement plans did not include the three parent involvement components required by section 1116 of the NCLB Act. Other findings include:

1. Despite the wide range of parent involvement practices discussed in legislation and in the literature, the school improvement

plans mentioned primarily nonacademic and academic communication and parent-teacher conferences.

2. The number of section 1116 parent involvement requirements addressed in the plans decreased as the school level increased from elementary to middle to high school.
3. Even though 75 percent of the schools in improvement served English language

learner students, only 33 percent of the school improvement plans included activities for communicating with parents in a language they could understand.

4. The schools that did include all requirements of section 1116 were primarily in states or districts that provided schools with a template for completing their school improvement plans.

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Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 spells out parent involvement requirements for schools in need of improvement, the majority (54 percent) of the 84 percent of Northwest Region school improvement plans reviewed failed to include such provisions. Many schools rely on communication as the primary way to involve parents—despite the wide range of parent involvement practices discussed in the literature.

WHY THIS STUDY?

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is an accountability system. Its objective is to create high-performing schools by challenging states to have 100 percent of their public school students proficient in reading and math by 2014 (Owens 2006). The act requires states to define adequate yearly progress (based on student scores on state assessments plus graduation rates for high schools and at least one other indicator for elementary and middle schools) to measure schools' progress in raising student achievement. Any Title I school that does not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years is identified as in need of improvement. Once identified, a school must meet the adequate yearly progress standard for two consecutive years before being removed from improvement status.

Schools in improvement face a set of sanctions (student choice of schools, supplemental educational services, or restructuring) based on how many years they have not made adequate yearly progress. All schools in improvement must submit a two-year school improvement plan that describes strategies for increasing student proficiency. The plan must contain details on teacher mentoring, professional development of school staff, and parent involvement.

The NCLB Act views parent involvement as central to raising student achievement and lifting schools out of improvement status—the act mentions parents more than 300 times. Section 1116 of the act requires schools in improvement to involve parents in education services (box 1).

Educators in the Northwest Region have a strong interest in parent involvement. “Improving community and family support for learning” was rated as needing more effort by a higher percentage of educators (superintendents, principals, and teachers) in the five Northwest Region states than any other item on recent Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory surveys (Barnett and Greenough 2002, 2004). Teachers and principals

BOX 1

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and parent involvement in schools in improvement**Section 1116**

Section 1116 of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act details how schools in improvement should address parent involvement (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 2002). Schools must notify parents in writing of the school's improvement status and must collaborate with parents to develop and implement an improvement plan in which parents, school staff, and students share responsibility for improving academic achievement. A parent involvement policy

must include parents in regular, reciprocal, and meaningful communication about student learning and other school activities. It further states that local education agencies “shall promptly provide to a parent or parents (in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand) of each student enrolled in an elementary school or a secondary school identified for school improvement” information about section 1116 requirements. In addition, schools are required to include strategies that promote “effective” parent involvement, though “effective” strategies are not defined.

Section 1118

Section 1118 of the NCLB Act provides voluntary guidance on developing parent involvement policies. It recommends involving parents in decisionmaking (for example, by participating in advisory committees), increasing their understanding of topics such as standards and monitoring of their child's progress, and helping them work with educators to improve achievement. It also recommends educating teachers and school personnel on the value of parent contributions, coordinating parent involvement activities with other programs, and identifying resources for parent involvement.

responded that a lack of parent involvement was a major obstacle to improving student learning. State education agencies, which are charged with supporting schools in developing their improvement plans, are concerned with helping schools incorporate effective parent involvement in those plans. Four of the five Northwest Region state education agency Title I school coordinators interviewed for this study reported that school improvement plans are weakest in parent involvement.

While the NCLB Act requires schools to develop strategies that promote “effective” parent involvement, it does not define “effective” strategies. Thus, a literature review was conducted to identify possibly effective strategies. Most of the studies found are correlational: they establish that some parent involvement activities are associated with higher student achievement, but they cannot establish that the activities caused those outcomes because the studies could not control for all other variables potentially correlated with both the activities and student achievement. So, the activities identified from the literature review can be described only as “potentially effective”

practices. While longitudinal studies can support stronger conclusions, most of those available on parent involvement used the same dataset—the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2008)—so they cannot be counted as independent studies. And most parent involvement studies examined the outcomes of multiple involvement activities, making it impossible to assess the relative impact of individual activities.

What the research says

Studies show that certain parent-initiated interactions with children at home are associated with increased student achievement. These interactions include high parent expectations for their child to succeed in school and to attend postsecondary education and activities that encourage learning and structure at home. In a meta-analysis Fan and Chen (1999) find that parents' aspirations for their child are associated with higher student achievement. Other studies find that high parent expectations are linked to earning more credits, achieving higher grade point averages, and scoring higher on

standardized tests (Catsambis 1998; Clark 1993; Flowers and Flowers 2008; Keith and Keith 1993; Lee and Bowen 2006; Williams 1998). Studies by Catsambis (1998) and Simon (2000) suggest that students earn more credits and better grades when their parents help them plan for postsecondary education or training. Finally, parent interactions that encourage learning and structure at home, such as family rules that limit television time and encourage students to keep up grades, complete homework, and participate in education activities, are associated with increased student achievement (Bailey 2004; Bailey et al. 2004; Izzo et al. 1999; Keith and Keith 1993; McWayne et al. 2004; Steinberg et al. 1992; Trusty 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001; Williams 1998).

The literature shows that several school-initiated actions that are focused on helping parents assist their child academically are also associated with student achievement. Studies by Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (1997), Shaver and Walls (1998), and Van Voorhis (2001) find that programs and workshops that encourage and help parents be involved in their child's homework are associated with higher reading and math scores. School-initiated activities for parent involvement that are linked to specific academic areas or goals are also associated with increased academic achievement (Clark 2002; Dryfoos 2000; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas 1997; Van Voorhis 2001). For example, a study by Epstein and Sanders (2000) suggests that programs helping parents read to their child at home are associated with increased student reading achievement.

Teacher outreach to parents is also associated with increased student achievement. Beneficial outreach practices include meeting with parents, sending learning materials home, and keeping in touch about academic progress (Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001). Studies suggest that parent-teacher conferences are linked to higher grades, improved student achievement in reading and math, more grade advancement, and better social skills (Marcon 1999; Miedel and Reynolds 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).

According to Hackmann (1996) student-led parent-teacher conferences generate higher parent attendance rates than traditional conferences. Practices such as sending materials home, providing workshops on how parents can help with homework, and offering structured education activities are also associated with higher grades in math and reading and higher scores on language tests (Jordan, Snow, and Porche 2000; Van Voorhis 2001; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001). Studies suggest that teachers who regularly phone or send letters home to parents about student progress tend to have students who earn higher grades and score better on standardized tests (Simon 2000; Sirvani 2007; Trusty 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).

According to several studies, home visits by teachers or other school staff (such as a parent involvement coordinator) are associated with improved student achievement. Home visits in which school staff model lessons are linked to higher reading and math scores and better classroom adaptation (Baker, Piotrowski, and Brooks-Gunn 1998; Marcon 1999; Miedel and Reynolds 1999). Studies by Fan and Chen (1999) and Trusty (1999) suggest that nonacademic communications with parents (for example, newsletters and phone calls unrelated to student progress) are also effective practices, associated with higher grade point averages and postsecondary education plans for students.

Beneficial parent involvement activities are found to vary with students' age and grade level. Families with young children are more apt than are families with high school-age children to benefit from home visits (Baker, Piotrowski, and Brooks-Gunn 1998; Marcon 1999) and from materials and resources that help build skills at home (Jordan, Snow, and Porche 2000; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001). In addition, research shows that interactive homework (between parents and

The literature shows that several school-initiated actions that are focused on helping parents assist their child academically are also associated with student achievement

children) is more likely to benefit families with elementary and middle school students (Epstein, Simon, and Salinas 1997; Van Voorhis 2001) than those with high school students, who are more likely to benefit from receiving information about graduation requirements and postsecondary options (Henderson and Berla 1994; Henderson and Mapp 2002).

The literature shows that many parent involvement activities are associated with increased student learning activities and achievement. But because almost all of the studies examined correlations between activities and student achievement, the results should not be interpreted as scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of the activities. More detailed assessment of the quality of the evidence in these studies was beyond the scope of this study, however.

What the study examined

Because of the importance placed on parent involvement by researchers, the NCLB Act, and Northwest Region educators, this study sought to determine whether—and how—the school improvement plans of Northwest Region schools in need of improvement complied with the parent involvement requirements of the NCLB Act. To do that, it looked at four questions:

1. How well do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region align with NCLB section 1116 requirements—notification to parents

of the school's improvement status, collaboration and communication with parents (involvement in developing and approving the school improvement plan), and strategies that promote effective parent involvement?

2. To what extent do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region include activities specified in NCLB section 1118 (involving parents in decisionmaking, assisting parents, educating teachers and school personnel on the value of parents' contributions, coordinating parent involvement activities with other programs, and identifying resources for parent involvement)?
3. Are other parent involvement activities included in Northwest Region school improvement plans that are not specified under NCLB sections 1116 and 1118?
4. Do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region detail how information will be provided to parents in a language they can understand?

These questions examine the activities described in school improvement plans, which may differ from practice. To answer these questions, interviews were conducted with all five Northwest Region state education agency Title I school coordinators, who were also requested to supply school improvement plans for their Title I schools in improvement (see box 2 and appendix A on

BOX 2

Data collection and analysis

Data collection

Interviews were conducted with all five Northwest Region state education agency Title I school coordinators (see appendix A for interview questions). The interviews provided contextual information on the school improvement

planning process and insights into its strengths and challenges. The Title I school coordinators facilitated the collection of school improvement plans, which were received from 308 of the 365 (84 percent) Title I schools in need of improvement during the 2006/07 school year (see table). Sixteen percent of the plans were missing for a variety of reasons (see appendix A for details).

Identification of parent involvement activities

Parent involvement activities were identified from the NCLB Act, a review of the literature, and a sample of 20 school improvement plans. To answer the first research question, the requirements of NCLB section 1116 were reviewed. Section 1116 defines notification and involvement, but to

(CONTINUED)

BOX 2 (CONTINUED)

Data collection and analysis

define “effective” involvement, a literature review was conducted. Researchers searched the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory database, major education information databases (including the Education Resources Information Center database and Education Abstracts), and bibliographies and reference lists from relevant studies.

Fifty-one studies were identified. Of these, 30 met the following criteria: included quantitative data; had experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational designs; had a sample size of at least 20; were published in 1993 or later; and addressed the relationship between specific parent involvement activities and student achievement. Most of the 21 excluded studies used qualitative data or a case study design. In the 30 retained studies activities that were correlated with increased achievement in two or more studies were considered “potentially effective.” Only two studies used an experimental design. Thus most of the potentially effective activities are

identified from correlational studies that do not provide reliable evidence for the effects of the activities.

For the second research question the study used NCLB section 1118, with its additional details on parent involvement. For the third question the study reviewed a random sample of 20 school improvement plans to identify additional parent involvement activities that were not described in the federal legislation or found to be potentially effective in the literature review. A new code was created if an additional activity emerged in at least two plans. The study identified and coded a total of 29 activities (see table 1 in text and checklist in table B1 in appendix B).

Analysis

The study analyzed parent involvement in the school improvement plans based on the coded activities. Two researchers independently reviewed each school improvement plan and categorized each parent

involvement activity as specified in the checklist. Of the 4,926 activities identified and categorized, the researchers agreed on 4,469 (91 percent reliability). For the 457 activities that were coded differently by the paired researchers, a third researcher made the final determination.

For the first research question researchers calculated the percentage of school improvement plans that included at least one activity in each of the three section 1116 requirement categories (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level), the percentage of school improvement plans that identified at least one parent who assisted in developing the plan, the percentage of school improvement plans that included and those that did not include the three section 1116 requirements (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level), and the percentage of plans that included the 11 potentially effective parent involvement activities (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level). For the second question researchers calculated the percentage of plans that included the seven activities delineated in section 1118 of the NCLB Act. For the third question they calculated the percentage of plans that included the six other frequently used parent involvement activities identified from the random sample of 20 school improvement plans. And for the fourth question they calculated the percentage of plans that included providing information in a language that parents could understand.

Number of Northwest Region schools in need of improvement during 2006/07 and number of school improvement plans received

State	Number of Title I schools	Number of schools in need of improvement	Number of school plans received	Percent of plans received
Alaska	287	113	113	100
Idaho	368	98	85	87
Montana ^a	670	47	22	47
Oregon	578	40	34	85
Washington	1,067	67	54	81
Northwest Region	2,970	365	308	84

a. The share of plans received from Montana schools is well below that received from other states. See appendix A for details on the numbers and percentages of Montana plans received from various groups of schools.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from interviews with state education agency Title I school coordinators and reviews of school improvement plans and state education agency web sites.

TABLE 1

Parent involvement activities identified and coded by the study and assessment criteria, 2006/07

Research question	How assessed	Parent involvement activity
1. How well do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region align with NCLB section 1116 requirements—notification to parents of the school's improvement status, collaboration and communication with parents (involvement in developing and approving the school improvement plan), and strategies that promote effective parent involvement?	<p>Activities federally legislated by NCLB section 1116</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notification: parents informed of the requirements of the plan and of their rights to be involved and receive timely notification of rights^a Collaboration and communication: parents involved in developing and approving the school improvement plan^b <p>Effective involvement: effective activities, mentioned but not specified in section 1116, identified by a literature review and considered “potentially effective” because of the correlational nature of the studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents informed of the requirements of the plan and of their rights to be involved (through meetings, letters, newsletters, conferences, radio, newspaper, phone calls, online, or other means) Parents receive timely notification of rights (school choice, supplementary educational services, curriculum explanation, assessments used to measure student progress, expected proficiency levels, and school improvement and adequate yearly progress status) Parents involved in developing the school improvement plan Parents involved in approving the school improvement plan Nonacademic communication with parents (newsletters, phone calls, and so on) Regular communications with parents about their child's education progress (report cards, online grades, phone calls, and web site) Parent-teacher conferences Student-led conferences Home visits by a teacher, parent-involvement coordinator, or other school staff Materials and training to help parents work with their child to improve achievement (literacy training, instruction in technology use) Activities that help parents encourage learning at home (such as workshops) Parent involvement activities that are linked to major school academic goals (improving literacy, increasing graduation rates) Activities that help parents have high expectations for their child (such as reviewing the school's academic and behavioral standards or standardized test expectations with parents) Activities that help parents make their child's extracurricular activities constructive (providing materials that inform parents of extracurricular activities or that help parents create more structure at home, or offering workshops and trainings on parenting skills) Activities that help parents plan with their child for postgraduation opportunities (college or trade school)

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)

Parent involvement activities identified and coded by the study and assessment criteria, 2006/07

Research question	How assessed	Parent involvement activity
2. To what extent do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region include activities specified in NCLB section 1118 (involving parents in decisionmaking, assisting parents, educating teachers and school personnel on the value of parents' contributions, coordinating parent involvement activities with other programs, and identifying resources for parent involvement)?	Section 1118 provisions of the NCLB Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of parents in advisory committee • Involvement of parents in decisionmaking • Development of parent compacts • Assistance to parents (for example, in understanding standards, monitoring their child's progress, or working with educators to improve achievement) • Education of teachers and school personnel in the value of contributions from parents • Budget identification of resources for parent involvement • Coordination of parent involvement activities with other programs (for example, Head Start, Early Reading First, Parents as Teachers)
3. Are other parent involvement activities included in Northwest Region school improvement plans that are not specified under NCLB sections 1116 and 1118?	Other frequently used activities from a review of 20 randomly selected school improvement plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of parent volunteers • Parents surveys to inform decisions • Activities that build relationships between parents and school (for example, open houses and back-to-school nights) • Use of a parent coordinator for outreach • Parent-teacher associations • Activities that increase the cultural competency of staff
4. Do school improvement plans in the Northwest Region detail how information will be provided to parents in a language they can understand?	Section 1116 provision stipulating that information on school improvement plans be provided to parents in a language they can understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information provided to parents in a language they can understand (translated into at least one language)

a. The two requirements of section 1116—parents informed of rights and received timely notification—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

b. The two requirements of section 1116—developing and approving school improvement plan—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from No Child Left Behind Act (2002), literature review, and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

methodology). School improvement plans were collected from 84 percent (308 of 365) of the Title I schools in improvement during the 2006/07 school year.

Parent involvement activities were identified from the federal legislation, a review of the literature, and a sample of 20 school improvement plans. Researchers identified and coded 29 activities that were compared with the NCLB section 1116

requirements, including the “potentially effective” activities (that are mentioned but not defined by the legislation) identified in the literature; with the NCLB section 1118 guidelines; and with other frequently used activities identified from a sample of school improvement plans, and according to whether the information was supplied to parents in a language they can understand, also as mandated by section 1116 (see table 1 and checklist B1 in appendix B).

HOW WELL DO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION ALIGN WITH NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND SECTION 1116 REQUIREMENTS?

The percentage of school improvement plans that included each of the three federally required components—notification to parents of the school’s improvement status, collaboration and communication with parents (involvement of parents in developing and approving school improvement plans), and strategies that promote effective parent involvement—are presented in table 2. Alaska (95 percent) and Idaho (85 percent) had the highest rates of parent involvement in the development of school improvement plans. These states required schools to complete a school improvement plan template as part of the school’s submission packet. The first page of the template asked schools to list parents who were involved in the process.

Most schools (85 percent) were able to meet the requirement of including effective parent involvement strategies because the study protocol required them to list only 1 of the 11 potentially effective activities. All the state education agencies’

planning templates or processes asked school personnel to include strategies they would use to improve academic achievement. (Determining whether schools were actually implementing the strategies was beyond the scope of this study.)

The number of potentially effective activities in each school improvement plan varied:

- More than a quarter (27 percent) of Alaska plans did not include a potentially effective parent involvement activity, and more than half (52 percent) included one or two activities. The range of activities was zero to five.
- Four percent of Idaho’s plans did not include any activities, and 70 percent listed three to five activities. Four schools listed seven activities.
- Half the Montana plans included one or two potentially effective activities, while 32 percent did not include any activities. These findings may not adequately represent all Montana school plans because only 47 percent of the plans were submitted for this study.

TABLE 2

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included No Child Left Behind section 1116 required parent involvement activities, by Northwest Region state

Section 1116 requirement	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
Notification: parents informed of the requirements of the plan and of their rights to be involved and receive timely notification of rights ^a	95	47	18	53	43	62
Collaboration and communication: parents involved in developing and approving the school improvement plan ^b	95	85	5	62	56	75
Effective involvement: school improvement plan includes at least one potentially effective parent involvement activity	73	96	68	94	98	85

a. The two requirements of section 1116—parents informed of rights and received timely notification—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

b. The two requirements of section 1116—developing and approving school improvement plans—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

Source: Authors’ analysis based on data from No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

Submission rates were particularly low for middle and high schools in corrective action and for schools on American Indian reservations (see appendix A).

- Sixty-two percent of Oregon plans included four to six potentially effective activities, while 6 percent did not include any activities. Twenty-nine percent of the plans included four activities.
- One school in Washington did not include any potentially effective activities in its school improvement plan, and 58 percent included four to six activities.

School improvement plans that reported at least one parent involved in its development are presented in table 3.

- One of the 22 Montana school improvement plans reviewed reported that a parent was involved in its development.
- Slightly more than half of the plans in Oregon (59 percent) and Washington (52 percent) reported that at least one parent assisted with the development. The number of involved parents ranged from one to eight in Oregon and one to six in Washington.
- Sixty-two percent of the Idaho plans reviewed reported one or two parents assisting with

development, 19 percent reported more than two parents, while the remaining 19 percent reported no parents.

- Ninety-five percent of the Alaska plans reviewed reported at least one parent as being a part of the team that developed the school improvement plan. The number of parents involved ranged from 1 to 17.

The percentages of schools that included the three federally required parent involvement activities in their school improvement plans are presented in table 4. Overall for the Northwest Region,

Overall for the Northwest Region, 46 percent of the school improvement plans reviewed included all three parent involvement activities required by section 1116 of the NCLB Act

TABLE 3

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that reported at least one parent involved in its development, by Northwest Region state

State	Percent of school improvement plans
Alaska (n = 113)	95
Idaho (n = 85)	62
Montana (n = 22)	5
Oregon (n = 34)	59
Washington (n = 54)	52
Northwest Region (n = 308)	55

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from school improvement plans; see text for details.

TABLE 4

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included the No Child Left Behind section 1116 requirements, by Northwest Region state and number of requirements included

Number of requirements	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
0	1	1	32	3	2	4
1	1	12	50	27	32	16
2	34	46	14	29	35	35
3	65	41	5	41	32	46

Note: The three federal requirements are: notification to parents of their school's improvement status, collaboration and communication with parents (involvement in developing and approving the school improvement plan), and effective parent involvement in the plan.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

46 percent of the school improvement plans reviewed included all three parent involvement activities required by section 1116 of the NCLB Act, and 81 percent included two or three. Sixty-seven percent or more of the plans from each state except Montana included two or three of the required components.

The percentages of improvement plans that included each of the 11 potentially effective parent involvement activities are presented in table 5. Communication (nonacademic and academic), materials, parent-teacher conferences, and training sessions that helped parents work with their children were most often included in the improvement plans.

Adherence to No Child Left Behind section 1116 requirements specific to school level

The number of school improvement plans received, by state and school level, is presented in table 6.

The percentages of school improvement plans that included each of the three federally required parent involvement activities, by school level, are presented in table 7. As the school level rises, the percentage of schools reporting whether and how they would notify parents about their improvement status and of schools with parents involved in the development of the

TABLE 5

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included potentially effective parent involvement activities, by Northwest Region state

Activity	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
Nonacademic communications with parents	16	81	18	67	80	51
Regular communications with parents about their child's educational progress	21	78	27	65	78	52
Parent-teacher conferences	37	74	41	56	74	56
Student-led conferences	2	13	0	21	30	12
Home visits	6	13	0	9	32	12
Materials and training to help parents work with their child to improve achievement	22	53	32	59	72	44
Activities that help parents encourage learning at home	15	26	18	35	41	25
Parent involvement activities that are linked to major school academic goals	27	35	27	65	74	42
Activities that help parents have high expectations for their child	2	6	0	6	6	4
Activities that help parents make their child's extracurricular activities constructive	0	4	0	6	2	2
Activities that help parents plan with their child for postgraduation opportunities (college, trade school)	3	9	0	12	7	6

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), literature review, and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

TABLE 6

Number of 2006/07 school improvement plans received, by Northwest Region state and school level

School level	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Northwest Region
Elementary schools	14	41	10	8	20	93
Middle schools	2	29	3	19	21	74
High schools	4	7	3	3	11	28
K–12 schools	88	0	4	2	0	94
Total ^a	108	77	20	32	52	289

a. Nineteen plans for Title I schools in improvement are not included because they are mixed grade level schools, such as K–8 or 6–12 schools, and were too few in number to provide meaningful results.

Source: Authors’ analysis based on review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

TABLE 7

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included three No Child Left Behind section 1116 requirements, by Northwest Region state and requirement and school level

Requirement and school level	Alaska (n = 108)	Idaho (n = 77)	Montana (n = 20)	Oregon (n = 32)	Washington (n = 52)	Northwest Region (n = 289)
Notification: parents informed of the requirements of the plan and of their rights to be involved and receive timely notification of rights^a						
Elementary schools	100	51	20	100	50	59
Middle schools	100	48	33	42	52	49
High schools	100	29	0	33	9	29
K–12 schools	94	na	25	50	na	90
Collaboration and communication: parents involved in developing and approving the school improvement plan^b						
Elementary schools	100	93	10	88	50	75
Middle schools	100	86	0	58	57	68
High schools	100	71	0	0	64	57
K–12 schools	93	na	0	50	na	88
Effective involvement: school improvement plan includes at least one potentially effective parent involvement activity						
Elementary schools	93	93	80	100	95	93
Middle schools	100	100	67	95	100	97
High schools	50	100	67	67	100	86
K–12 schools	72	na	25	100	na	70

na indicates not applicable because there are no schools at this level.

a. The two requirements of section 1116—parents informed of rights and received timely notification—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

b. The two requirements of section 1116—developing and approving school improvement plan—were aggregated, and plans received credit if either requirement was met.

Source: Authors’ analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), literature review, and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

school improvement plan decreases. Whereas 59 percent of elementary school plans reported that they would notify parents, that share drops to 49 percent for middle schools and 29 percent for high schools. Similarly, whereas 75 percent

of elementary schools reported that parents were involved in the development of the school improvement plan, that share drops to 68 percent for middle schools and 57 percent for high schools.

At all levels most schools included at least one potentially effective activity in their improvement plans: 93 percent of elementary schools, 97 percent of middle schools, and 86 percent of high schools. A substantially larger share of school improvement plans for K–12 schools (90 percent) than for elementary, middle, and high schools indicated whether and how they would notify parents. But only 70 percent of plans for K–12 schools included at least one potentially effective involvement strategy, a smaller percentage than for elementary, middle, and high schools.

The percentages of schools that included the three federally required parent involvement activities in their school improvement plans, by school level, are reported in table 8. As the

school level rises, the percentage of schools that included all three required activities decreases. Whereas 54 percent of the elementary schools included all three activities, that share drops to 39 percent for middle schools and 14 percent for high schools. For K–12 schools the share is 59 percent.

Potentially effective parent involvement activities in school improvement plans by school level

The percentages of plans that included potentially effective parent involvement activities by school level are presented in table 9. Overall, school improvement plans for Washington schools in improvement included more of the potentially effective activities than those of other states.

TABLE 8

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included three No Child Left Behind section 1116 requirements, by Northwest Region state and number of requirements and school level

Number of requirements met and school level	Alaska (n = 108)	Idaho (n = 77)	Montana (n = 20)	Oregon (n = 32)	Washington (n = 52)	Northwest Region (n = 289)
Zero requirements						
Elementary schools	2	2	20	0	5	5
Middle schools	0	0	33	0	0	1
High schools	0	0	33	33	0	7
K–12 schools	na	na	75	0	na	4
One requirement						
Elementary schools	0	10	60	0	25	15
Middle schools	0	7	33	37	33	23
High schools	0	14	67	33	36	29
K–12 schools	0	na	0	50	na	1
Two requirements						
Elementary schools	37	37	10	13	40	28
Middle schools	52	52	33	32	24	37
High schools	71	71	0	33	55	50
K–12 schools	na	na	25	0	na	36
Three requirements						
Elementary schools	93	51	10	88	30	54
Middle schools	100	41	0	32	43	39
High schools	50	14	0	0	9	14
K–12 schools	62	na	0	50	na	59

na indicates not applicable because there are no schools at this level.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

TABLE 9

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included potentially effective activities, by Northwest Region state and activity and school level

Potentially effective activity and school level	Alaska (n = 108)	Idaho (n = 77)	Montana (n = 20)	Oregon (n = 32)	Washington (n = 52)	Northwest Region (n = 289)
Activities that help parents encourage learning at home						
Elementary schools	36	34	20	63	70	43
Middle schools	0	24	67	26	24	26
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	14	na ^b	0	0	na ^b	13
Parent-teacher conferences						
Elementary schools	36	71	50	63	80	65
Middle schools	50	79	33	42	86	69
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	39	na ^b	25	100	na ^b	39
Regular communication with parents about their child's educational progress						
Elementary schools	21	68	20	50	70	55
Middle schools	0	90	33	68	81	77
High schools	0	86	0	33	82	57
K-12 schools	23	na ^b	25	100	na ^b	25
Materials and training to help parents work with their child to improve achievement						
Elementary schools	36	30	30	75	75	58
Middle schools	100	67	67	81	81	60
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	21	0	0	na ^b	na ^b	20
Parent involvement activities that are linked to major school academic goals						
Elementary schools	49	49	30	75	85	59
Middle schools	28	28	67	63	81	54
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	na ^b	na ^b	0	0	na ^b	21
Home visits by teacher or parent-involvement coordinator						
Elementary schools	14	17	0	13	35	18
Middle schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	6	na ^b	0	0	na ^b	5
Activities that increase the cultural competency of staff						
Elementary schools	21	15	30	0	30	19
Middle schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
High schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
K-12 schools	11	na ^a	25	0	na ^b	12

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 9 (CONTINUED)

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included potentially effective activities, by Northwest Region state and activity and school level

Potentially effective activity and school level	Alaska (n = 108)	Idaho (n = 77)	Montana (n = 20)	Oregon (n = 32)	Washington (n = 52)	Northwest Region (n = 289)
Activities that help parents make their child's extracurricular activities constructive						
Elementary schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
Middle schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
High schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
K-12 schools	0	na ^b	0	0	na ^b	0
Activities that help parents plan with their child for postgraduation opportunities						
Elementary schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
Middle schools	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a	na ^a
High schools	25	43	0	0	9	18
K-12 schools	2	na ^b	0	0	na ^b	2

a. Indicates not applicable because this activity is not identified as potentially effective at this school level.

b. Indicates not applicable because there are no schools at this level.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), literature review, and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

For the Northwest Region as a whole parent-teacher conferences were listed frequently in both elementary (65 percent) and middle school plans (69 percent). Home visits (18 percent) and activities to increase cultural competency in staff (19 percent) were seldom included in elementary school improvement plans. Seventy-four percent of middle school plans did not include activities that help parents encourage learning at home. Except the Idaho and Washington plans, which included information about regular communication, few high school plans included potentially effective activities.

school, such as participating on a parent advisory committee or site council. Other frequently included activities were providing assistance to parents (26 percent), involving parents in decision-making (23 percent), budgeting resources for parent involvement (23 percent), and developing parent compacts (21 percent).

TO WHAT EXTENT DO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION INCLUDE ACTIVITIES SPECIFIED IN NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND SECTION 1118?

The seven parent involvement activities specified in section 1118 of the NCLB Act and the percentage of school improvement plans that included each of the activities are presented in table 10. Overall, 28 percent of all school improvement plans reviewed in the Northwest Region included activities for parents having an advisory role at the

ARE OTHER PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN NORTHWEST REGION SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS THAT ARE NOT SPECIFIED UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND SECTIONS 1116 AND 1118?

Many school improvement plans included parent involvement activities that were not required by sections 1116 or 1118 of the NCLB Act. The six most common activities described in 20 randomly selected school improvement plans are presented in table 11. Seventy-four percent of all the Washington school improvement plans reviewed reported using surveys to gain information from parents and provide it to them. The school improvement web site of the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction provides sample surveys that schools can use to support

TABLE 10

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included activities detailed in No Child Left Behind section 1118, by Northwest Region state and activity

Activity	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
Involvement of parents in advisory committees	19	35	23	38	32	28
Involvement of parents in decisionmaking	15	33	5	24	33	23
Development of parent compacts	3	29	0	24	50	21
Assistance to parents (for example, in understanding state standards)	4	46	14	21	50	26
Education of teacher and school personnel in the value of contributions from parents	0	20	9	15	41	15
Budget identification of resources for parent involvement	0	41	5	44	39	23
Coordination of parent involvement activities with other programs (for example, Head Start, Parents as Teachers)	3	13	5	18	26	11

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

TABLE 11

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that included other frequently used activities, by Northwest Region state and activity

Activity	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
Use of parent volunteers	12	53	5	32	61	34
Parent surveys inform decisions	16	69	18	47	74	45
Activities that build relationships between parents and school	26	73	50	62	89	56
Use of a parent coordinator for outreach	9	20	5	44	29	19
Parent-teacher association	8	46	0	27	43	26
Activities that increase the cultural competency of staff	12	15	27	15	28	17

Source: Authors' analysis based on review of school improvement plans; see text for details.

their improvement efforts (<http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AdequateYearlyProgress.aspx>), perhaps accounting for the popularity of this activity.

Fifty-six percent of the school improvement plans reviewed listed activities that build relationships between parents and schools. These activities were often described in the school improvement plans

as some variation of “We will have an open house at the beginning of the school year,” “We will have a barbecue for parents,” or “We will have a festival in the fall.” Although the school’s intention may be to include workshops for parents or provide content-specific information with these activities, they lacked enough detail to code them as potentially effective parent involvement activities.

DO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION DETAIL HOW INFORMATION WILL BE PROVIDED TO PARENTS IN A LANGUAGE THEY CAN UNDERSTAND?

Only 33 percent of all the reviewed school improvement plans in the Northwest Region described how information would be presented in an understandable way to parents (table 12). That is well below the 75 percent of schools that served populations of English language learner students. None of the Montana plans included information on how schools would communicate with families with limited English proficiency. The language of translation listed most often was Spanish, except in Alaska where Alaska Native languages were identified.

SUPPORT OFFERED BY STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

According to information gathered from interviews with the five Northwest Region state Title I coordinators (see appendix A for interview questions and protocol) and from state education agency web sites (see references), states varied in the type and intensity of support and technical assistance provided to districts and schools. While all states notified schools about their improvement status and provided written guidance on developing school improvement plans, states differed in the additional support provided. For example, Alaska and Idaho had a specific school

improvement plan form for schools to complete. All schools followed the required template in completing their plans. Montana, Oregon, and Washington had a process for schools to follow when developing their improvement plan. But because Montana, Oregon, and Washington state education agencies did not require schools to use a specific template, their plans varied in format and detail.

Alaska held one workshop on school improvement planning at its annual NCLB conference, while Idaho provided several workshops for developing improvement plans. All the regional state education agencies offered ongoing technical assistance by telephone or email to help schools develop their plans. Additional resources were available on state education agency web sites, including examples of letters to parents describing the improvement status of the school, parent surveys, and strategies to analyze achievement data and involve parents at the school.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be taken into account in interpreting the results. The results do not provide a complete picture of parent involvement activities in school improvement plans in the Northwest Region. School improvement plans could not be obtained from 16 percent of schools in improvement in the region. In particular, because plans for Montana schools were

TABLE 12

Percentage of 2006/07 school improvement plans that mentioned presenting information to parents in a language they could understand and schools that served English language learner students, by Northwest Region state

Activity	Alaska (n = 113)	Idaho (n = 85)	Montana (n = 22)	Oregon (n = 34)	Washington (n = 54)	Northwest Region (n = 308)
Information provided to parents in a language they can understand	3	58	0	50	61	33
Percent of schools that served English language learner students	80	47	95	77	96	75

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and review of school improvement plans and state education web sites; see text for details.

obtained from an unrepresentative 47 percent of schools in improvement, data for Montana may present a biased picture of school improvement plans for Montana schools and may skew the regional data.

The study presents data about parent involvement activities included in school improvement plans, not about actual implementation of the activities. The NCLB Act places ultimate responsibility for ensuring that school improvement plans meet federal requirements, including parent involvement, on state education agencies, but only the Alaska state education agency had copies of all the plans. And although districts are responsible for providing technical assistance to schools in completing and monitoring the plans, some districts did not have the plans. These findings suggest that at least some state education agencies and districts do not systematically monitor implementation of the plans of schools in improvement. If the plans are not systematically monitored, the schools may not be implementing the plans as required.

Section 1116 of the NCLB Act also requires school improvement plans to include effective parent involvement activities but does not define or identify effective strategies. So, for this study 11 activities were identified from a literature review. Because few studies investigated the effects of parent involvement activities using an experimental or quasi-experimental design, almost all of the 11 activities were identified from correlational studies that cannot establish causality. Activities were defined as potentially effective if they showed positive correlations with student achievement in at least two studies. No effort was made, however, to assess whether and in how many studies those activities showed no or negative correlations with student achievement. Furthermore, many of the studies were conducted with student samples in a specific range of ages or grades, and the results could not be generalized to other students (see table 9).

In short, no implications can be drawn from this study about the quality of the school improvement

plans. The results simply provide information about the degree of compliance of school improvement plans with various requirements of NCLB sections 1116 and 1118.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Of 11 potentially effective parent involvement activities only 3 were included in at least half the plans: nonacademic communication, academic communication, and parent-teacher conferences. One state education agency Title I coordinator interviewed for this study was not surprised by this finding. The coordinator pointed out that almost all schools—whether in improvement or not—send regular progress reports and homework strategies to parents in addition to holding parent-teacher conferences. The same state education agency Title I coordinator said that most schools also hold literacy or math nights throughout the school year.

Many schools in improvement did not include additional parent involvement activities in their school improvement plans, even though the literature discusses a range of activities. Twenty-five percent of school improvement plans included activities to help parents encourage learning at home, and only 4 percent included activities to raise parents' expectations for their children.

Section 1116 of the NCLB Act requires schools to include three parent involvement components in the school improvement plans. Less than half (46 percent) of the Northwest Region schools in need of improvement reviewed for this study had plans that included all three components. And even though three of the five Northwest Region state education agency Title I coordinators

Some state education agencies and districts may not systematically monitor implementation of the plans of schools in improvement. If the plans are not systematically monitored, the schools may not be implementing the plans as required

In three of the five Northwest Region states less than half of the plans reported that schools would notify parents about their improvement status

interviewed reported that they had back-and-forth communication with schools and districts to complete and improve plans, the school improvement plans still lacked detail and, in many instances, did not include the NCLB requirements.

In three of the five Northwest Region states less than half of the plans reported that schools would notify parents about their improvement status. Two of the five state education agency Title I coordinators interviewed suggested that although schools send letters to parents, the plans do not specify how schools meet this required NCLB activity. Ninety-five percent of the plans reviewed from Alaska met this requirement, most likely because the state-provided planning template had schools describe the process.

The study found that as the school level rises, the number of NCLB section 1116 parent involvement activities falls (see tables 7 and 8). Some state education agencies and districts do not have copies of all school improvement plans, making it difficult to help schools in improvement develop improvement plans and monitor their implementation, as required. Policymakers may want to ensure that both state education agencies and districts have a copy of all school improvement plans and that they monitor their implementation by the schools.

Although the seven parent involvement activities described in NCLB section 1118 are not required to be included in school improvement plans, more than 20 percent of school improvement plans included five of the activities. As one state education agency Title I coordinator reported, state education agency staff members work with schools to align their school improvement plans with their Title I plans, and as a result, much of the same information is included in both plans.

From 1998 to 2003 enrollment of English language learner students in Northwest Region schools rose

45 percent (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition 2006), and 75 percent of the schools in this study provided services to English language learner students. Despite this, and the NCLB mandate that all information provided to parents be written in a language that parents can understand, only 33 percent of Northwest Region school improvement plans reviewed included details on how information would be provided in a language parents can understand (translated into another language).

While the NCLB Act requires states and districts to provide technical assistance to schools in developing their improvement plans, the type of assistance is not well specified. Evidence from this study suggests there are ways that state education agencies and districts can support schools in developing more comprehensive improvement plans to better ensure that the federally required parent involvement components are included. The state education agencies for Alaska and Idaho required schools to complete a template when developing plans. The Alaska template required schools to include the names of parents who were involved in developing the plan and to specify how the school notified parents about the requirements of the plan and their rights. As a result, 95 percent of Alaska plans indicated that parents were involved in the development of the plan, and 95 percent provided a method for notifying parents about the requirements and their rights. Idaho's template also required schools to indicate who was involved in developing the plan, and 85 percent of Idaho plans contained that information.

Although the templates provided guidance to schools in completing pieces of the school improvement plan, they were less clear in describing how schools should implement effective parent involvement activities. Eighty-one percent of the plans for the Northwest Region schools in improvement included at least two of the three NCLB section 1116 required parent involvement activities, but there were few details about how they would implement the activities. Three of the

five state education agency Title I coordinators indicated that they monitored the plans primarily for compliance with federal legislation and not necessarily for quality. One Title I coordinator stated: “Remember, my job was to look for compliance, not quality.” Title I coordinators indicated that the plans needed more detail on how the school would implement the activities and on methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the activities. And four of the five state education agency Title I coordinators did not have copies of all the school improvement plans.

Thus, future studies could investigate how state education agencies and districts monitor implementation of the parent involvement activities in the school improvement plans and whether the activities described in the improvement plans are actually implemented.

Eighty-one percent of the plans for the Northwest Region schools in improvement included at least two of the three NCLB section 1116 required parent involvement activities, but there were few details about how they would implement the activities

APPENDIX A METHODOLOGY

This appendix describes the data collection and analysis for the study and presents the parent involvement activities required or recommended under sections 1116 and 1118 of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, those identified in a review of the literature, and those identified from a sample of school improvement plans.

Data collection

The study questions were addressed by examining 2006/07 school improvement plans for schools in need of improvement in the five Northwest Region states (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington). A list of schools that were identified as in need of improvement in fall 2005—and thus required to submit school improvement plans for 2006/07—was obtained from each state education agency web site.

Interviews with state Title I coordinators. Telephone calls were made to each Northwest Region state Title I coordinator to collect school improvement plans and conduct an interview. The interview consisted of the following questions:

1. How many schools are represented in the state education agency's assistance process?
2. How does the state education agency assist schools in improvement in developing their plans?
3. What review process does the state education agency use for school improvement plans?
4. Are there sanctions if the state education agency does not approve of a school improvement plan?
5. What expectations does the state education agency have of the parent involvement component of the school improvement plans?

6. Are these expectations congruent with federal guidelines?
7. If not, how do they differ and why?
8. Are state education agency officials seeing differences or common themes in the parent involvement component of the school improvement plans they receive?
9. If so, what are they?
10. What is your overall perception of the quality of the parent involvement section of the school improvement plans?
11. What are some overall challenges in the development or implementation of the parent involvement sections of the school improvement plans?
12. What seems to be working with the parent involvement sections of the school improvement plans?
13. Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?

Collection of school improvement plans. The state education agency Title I coordinator for Alaska emailed electronic copies to the researchers. Idaho's state education agency provided access to an online database of school improvement plans. The Title I coordinators for Montana and Washington mailed paper copies of their school improvement plans to the researchers. Researchers visited the Oregon Department of Education and photocopied the available school improvement plans.

Data analysis

To assess the representativeness of the sample of collected plans, schools that provided improvement plans were compared with those that did not. For Idaho, Oregon, and Washington no differences were found for the level of school (elementary,

middle, and high school), stage of school improvement, or size and location of school district. For Montana, however, differences were found for all three of these characteristics. School improvement plans were provided by 83 percent (10/12) of elementary schools, 67 percent (4/6) of K–12 schools, and 25 percent (7/28) of middle and high schools; 63 percent (5/8) of schools in years one or two of improvement, 50 percent (16/32) of schools in restructuring, and 25 percent (1/4) of schools in corrective action; and 64 percent (7/11) of schools in improvement outside of an American Indian reservation and 42 percent (16/37) on a reservation. These data indicate that several types of schools in improvement are underrepresented in this study: middle and high schools, schools in corrective action, and schools on American Indian reservations.

Next, each school improvement plan was coded based on the activities described in the Checklist for Review of Parent Involvement Activities in Northwest School Improvement Plans (table B1 in appendix B). Five researchers worked on the coding. Four of the researchers are employees of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, which operates the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, and one is an independent researcher. Each researcher has experience in schools, a working knowledge of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and expertise in qualitative research methods.

The lead researcher trained the other four in the study methodology, providing information on coding procedures, describing each of the 29 parent involvement activities and how they were derived, and reviewing the coding checklist. A sample of seven school improvement plans was then coded independently by the four researchers to determine interrater reliability. Reliability was 91 percent.

Parent involvement activities in the school improvement plans were then identified and coded following the content analysis methods of Patton (1980). First, a researcher reviewed the plans line

by line and highlighted and sequentially numbered each parent involvement activity. Next, two researchers independently coded each numbered activity for the best fit with the checklist. The lead researcher examined the two completed coded activities for each plan.

A total of 4,926 parent involvement activities for school improvement plans were coded across the five Northwest Region states. There was coding agreement on 4,469 activities, resulting in 91 percent reliability. For the 457 parent involvement activities that researchers coded differently, the lead researcher made the final determination. For activities that were coded by the lead researcher and a second researcher and on which there were disagreements, a third researcher who had not coded the plan determined the final scoring. Finally, 99 percent of the parent involvement activities fit within an activity on the checklist. Those that did not fit were generally too vague to determine the intent of the activity (for example, parent groups).

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics were used to address each of the four research questions. For the first research question researchers calculated the percentage of school improvement plans that included at least one activity in each of the three section 1116 requirement categories (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level), the percentage of school improvement plans that identified at least one parent who assisted in developing the plan, the percentage of school improvement plans that included and those that did not include the three section 1116 requirements (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level), and the percentage of plans that included the 11 potentially effective parent involvement activities (for all Title I schools in improvement in the Northwest Region and by school level). For the second question researchers calculated the percentage of plans that included the seven activities delineated in section 1118 of the NCLB Act. For the third question they

calculated the percentage of plans that included the six other frequently used parent involvement activities. And for the fourth question they calculated the percentage of plans that included information in a language that parents could understand.

Parent involvement activities specified in sections 1116 and 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act

The parent involvement activities on the checklist in table B1 were drawn from the NCLB Act, a review of the research literature on potentially effective practices, and a sample of school improvement plans. First, NCLB section 1116 was reviewed to identify the federally required parent involvement activities of Title I schools in improvement. Title I schools in improvement are required to notify parents of their rights under the NCLB Act (collaborate and communicate with parents, involvement of parents in planning a school improvement plan), and include effective parent involvement activities in the plan. While notification and parent involvement in the development of the planning process are defined in section 1116, the requirements for effective parent involvement are not.

Members of the study team surveyed the research literature to identify effective parent involvement activities. Fifty-one studies were identified. Of these, 30 met the following criteria: included quantitative data; had experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational designs; had a sample size of at least 20; were published in 1993 or later; and addressed the relationship between specific parent involvement activities and student achievement. Most of the 21 excluded studies used qualitative data or a case study design. In the 30 retained studies, activities that were correlated with increased achievement in two or more studies were considered “potentially effective.” Only two studies used an experimental design. Thus, most of the potentially effective activities are identified from correlational studies that do not provide reliable evidence for the effects of the activities.

The section 1116 notification requirement activities on the checklist include the following:

- School informs parents of the requirements of the plan and of parents’ rights to be involved (through meetings, letters, newsletters, conferences, radio, newspaper, phone calls, online, or other means).
- School gives parents timely notification of rights (school choice, supplementary educational services, curriculum explanation, assessments to measure student progress, expected proficiency levels and school improvement, and adequate yearly progress status).

For the analysis the two notification requirements were aggregated as a single variable. If a school improvement plan included either requirement, the plan received credit for meeting the requirement to notify parents about their right to be involved.

The section 1116 requirements on the checklist for involving parents in the development of the school improvement plan include the following:

- Parents involved in developing the school improvement plan.
- Parents involved in approving the school improvement plan.

These two variables were also aggregated into one variable. Specifically, if a school described either requirement, the plan received credit for meeting the requirement of involving parents in the development of the improvement plan.

The effective parent involvement activities on the checklist that are required but not delineated in section 1116 include the following (they are derived from the literature review and referred to as “potentially effective” throughout the study):

- Nonacademic communications with parents, such as newsletters and phone calls (Fan and Chen 1999; Trusty 1999).

- Regular communications with parents about their child’s educational progress, such as report cards, online grades, phone calls, and web site (Simon 2000; Sirvani 2007; Trusty 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).
- Parent-teacher conferences, both teacher-led and student-led (Hackmann 1996; Marcon 1999; Miedel and Reynolds 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).
- Home visits by a teacher, parent-involvement coordinator, or other school staff (Baker, Piotrowski, and Brooks-Gunn 1998; Marcon 1999; Miedel and Reynolds 1999).
- Materials and training to help parents work with their child to improve achievement, such as literacy training or the use of technology (Jordan, Snow, and Porche 2000; Van Voorhis 2001; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).
- Activities that help parents encourage learning at home, such as workshops (Bailey 2004; Bailey et al. 2004; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas 1997; McWayne et al. 2004; Shaver and Walls 1998; Van Voorhis 2001; Westat and Policy Studies Associates 2001).
- Parent involvement activities that are linked to major school academic goals, such as improving literacy or increasing graduation rates (Clark 2002; Dryfoos 2000; Epstein and Sanders 2000; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas 1997; Van Voorhis 2001).
- Activities that help parents raise their expectations for their children, such as reviewing academic and behavioral standards of the school or standardized test expectations with parents (Fan and Chen 1999; Catsambis 1998; Clark 1993; Flowers and Flowers 2008; Keith and Keith 1993; Lee and Bowen 2006; Williams 1998).
- Activities that help parents make their child’s extracurricular activities constructive, such as providing materials that inform parents of extracurricular activities or that help parents create more structure at home, or offering workshops and trainings on parenting skills (Izzo et al. 1999; Keith and Keith 1993; Steinberg et al. 1992; Trusty 1999; Williams 1998).
- Activities that help parents plan with their child for postgraduation, such as college or trade school (Catsambis 1998; Simon 2000).

The Section 1118 parent involvement activities on the checklist include the following:

- Involvement of parents in advisory committee.
- Involvement of parents in decisionmaking.
- Development of parent compacts.
- Assistance to parents (for example, in understanding standards, monitoring their child’s progress, or working with educators to improve achievement).
- Education of teachers and school personnel in the value of contributions from parents.
- Budget identification of resources for parent involvement.
- Coordination of parent involvement activities with other programs (for example, Head Start, Early Reading First, Parents as Teachers).

Additional activities identified from a sample of school improvement plans

A random sample of 20 school improvement plans (approximately 5 percent of plans) was also reviewed to identify additional parent involvement activities frequently described in plans but not included in the NCLB Act or in the research

base. Additional codes were created if researchers identified a new activity in at least two of the school improvement plans. The review of the 20 randomly selected plans brought the addition of the following six activities:

- Use of parent volunteers.
- Parent surveys to inform decisions.
- Activities that build relationships between parents and schools (for example, open houses, back-to-school nights).
- Use of a parent coordinator for outreach.
- Parent-teacher associations.
- Activities that increase the cultural competency of staff.

**APPENDIX B
CHECKLIST FOR REVIEW OF PARENT
INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES IN NORTHWEST
REGION STATE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

School _____

Rater _____

District _____

Date _____

Note: Each activity should be coded only once. Remember to score the activity in terms of “purpose” rather than “method.”

Parent involvement activity	Yes	List specified activities/comments (identify requirement number)
1. Parents involved in the development of school improvement plans Number of parents identified _____		
2. Parents involved in the approval of improvement plans		
3. Parents involved in advisory committees		
4. Parents involved in decisionmaking		
5. School informs parents about the requirements of the plan and the rights of parents to be involved		
6. Timely notification of rights under NCLB		
7. Nonacademic communications with parents		
8. Regular communications with parents about their child’s educational progress		
9. Home visits		
10. Provide materials, training, and workshops to help parents work with their children to improve achievement (e.g., literacy training or use of technology)		
11. Parent-teacher conferences		

Parent involvement activity	Yes	List specified activities/comments (identify requirement number)
12. Student-led conferences		
13. Parent compact(s) (check identified components below) <input type="checkbox"/> Requirement of school to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Ways parents are responsible for student learning (e.g., monitoring attendance, homework completion, volunteering) <input type="checkbox"/> Annual parent-teacher conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent reports on student progress <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable access to staff <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to observe classroom activities		
14. Assistance to parents (check types of assistance below) <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding topics such as standards <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring their child's progress <input type="checkbox"/> Working with educators to improve achievement		
15. Education of teacher and school personnel in the value and utility of contributions from parents—professional development around parent involvement		
16. Activities that help parents encourage learning at home (e.g., workshops)		
17. Coordination of parent involvement activities with other programs (e.g., Head Start, Early Reading First, Parents as Teachers)		
18. Parent involvement activities that are linked to major school academic goals (e.g., improving literacy, increasing graduation rates, math night)		
19. Activities that help parents have high expectations for their child		
20. Activities that help parents make their child's extracurricular activities constructive (for example, providing materials that inform parents of extracurricular activities or that help parents create more structure at home, or offering workshops and training on parenting skills).		
21. Activities that help parents plan with their child for post-graduation opportunities (college, trade)		

Parent involvement activity	Yes	List specified activities/comments (identify requirement number)
22. Use of parent volunteers		
23. Parent surveys to inform decisions		
24. Activities that build relationships between parents and school (open houses, back-to-school nights)		
25. Budget identification of resources for parent involvement		
26. Information provided to parents in a language they can understand (translated into at least one language)		
27. Use of a parent coordinator for outreach		
28. Parent-teacher associations / Parent-teacher organizations		
29. Activities that increase the cultural competency of staff		
List other specific (and clearly defined) parent involvement activities provided by this school not included in the requirements above.		
List other nonspecific (e.g., parent groups) parent involvement activities provided by this school not included in the requirements above.		

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