

**Early Implementation of State Differentiated
Accountability Plans Under the
*No Child Left Behind Act***



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Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
Policy and Program Studies Service

2012

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. ED-04-CO-0036/0002. The project monitor was Erica Lee in the Policy and Program Studies Service. The views expressed herein are those of the contractor. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred. The mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations in this report does not imply endorsements by the U.S. government. This publication also contains URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. This information is provided for the reader's convenience. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for controlling or guaranteeing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of this information. Further, the inclusion of information or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.

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March 2012

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This report is available on the Department's website at
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opeed/ppss/reports.html>.

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Executive Summary

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) launched a differentiated accountability pilot to allow states to distinguish between those schools identified for improvement in need of substantial help and those closer to meeting achievement goals. Differentiated accountability is intended to allow states to vary the intensity and types of interventions to better match the academic reasons leading to a school's identification and to target resources and assistance to those schools most in need of intensive interventions and significant reform. Under Title I, Part A, of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, states have been required to set targets for school and district performance leading to the goal of all students achieving proficiency on state reading and mathematics assessments by the 2013–14 school year. Schools and districts not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward this goal for two or more consecutive years are identified as in need of improvement and are subject to increasing levels of interventions designed to improve their performance.

In July 2008 and January 2009, the Department approved waivers to give nine states the flexibility to implement differentiated accountability pilot plans creating more nuanced systems for identifying and assisting Title I schools identified for Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring. Under this pilot, participating states could change the structure of the school improvement categories used for schools that have missed AYP based on the lengths of time and reasons for missing AYP. In addition, each state was expected to clearly define its system of interventions to be applied to schools in each category or stage of school improvement, including interventions for the lowest-performing schools in the state. The Department approved waivers through the 2011–12 school year for Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, and Ohio in July 2008, and through the 2012–13 school year for Arkansas, Louisiana, and New York in January 2009.

This report describes the early implementation of differentiated accountability in the nine pilot states, based on interviews at the state and local levels and on review of extant documents. The study was designed to address three central issues:

- How have states used their waivers to change their school improvement categories?
- How have states responded to their waivers in terms of proposed plans for school interventions?
- What challenges are states, districts, schools, and school support providers experiencing in implementing differentiated accountability?

Study Design and Limitations

This report examines how the pilot states planned and began to implement differentiated accountability, both in terms of changing the school improvement categories and in terms of changing states' strategies for helping improve performance in targeted schools. This study gathered information on the implementation of the differentiated accountability pilot through interviews at the state and local levels and through review of extant documents, such as states' differentiated accountability plans, and other public documents. Staff interviewed in each state

included the state Title I director, a state support provider, a district Title I director, and an elementary or middle school principal.¹

The study reflects an early stage of implementation of states' differentiated accountability plans: 18 months at most (and, in some cases, much less). This report is based on interviews with a small number of purposively selected individuals in the pilot states (four per state). Many of the findings are based on self-reports from the state agency staff responsible for implementing the differentiated accountability plans, and there was often little supporting documentation for the information they reported (aside from the plans themselves). Although the study also conducted interviews with local educators in districts and schools that were affected by the differentiated accountability plans, in many cases the plans were in a relatively early stage of implementation, and local educators had limited experience with the new approaches being implemented under differentiated accountability. In addition, local educators often did not have a clear understanding of what state actions and changes were part of the state's differentiated accountability plan, particularly because these plans often sought to coordinate with and use resources from other programs.

Key Findings

Key findings of this short-term study include the following:

- ***Under the differentiated accountability pilot, eight of the nine participating states determined school improvement status based on both the percentage of AYP indicators the school had met and the number of years the school had been under an improvement plan.*** Under ESEA, each Title I district is required to identify for school improvement any Title I school not making AYP for two consecutive years, based on missing any of a number of indicators. Most of the pilot states added tiers within school improvement levels to distinguish between schools missing few AYP indicators and those missing many indicators.
- ***Although most changes enacted were allowable prior to the waiver, state respondents reported that the differentiated accountability pilot provided an impetus for their states to implement strategies intended to better coordinate, target, and expand their technical assistance services.*** State respondents said that the waiver provided an opportunity to rethink and improve their approaches to supporting Schools in Need of Improvement. Strategies that states reported implementing under differentiated accountability included aligning technical assistance services with newly designated improvement tiers, expanding leadership institutes, designing more professional development regarding the use of data, and increasing on-site assistance for schools from state, regional, and district service providers. States with regional service centers reported taking steps to coordinate state education agency and regional service center support activities in order to avoid overlap, and one state created a new regional support system to assist the state in delivering support services.

¹ In a number of cases, however, school principals were at their schools for less than a year, making it difficult for them to make pre-post comparisons.

- ***Implementation of the differentiated accountability plans varied across the pilot states.*** Most pilot states reported that they had implemented differentiated accountability as scheduled and proposed in their plans. A few reported a variety of circumstances, ranging from short implementation time lines to shifting priorities to changes in leadership, as reasons to modify or delay the implementation of their differentiated accountability plans.

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Introduction

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) launched a differentiated accountability pilot to allow states to distinguish between those schools identified for improvement that were in need of substantial help and those schools that were closer to meeting achievement goals. Differentiated accountability is intended to allow states to vary the intensity and types of interventions to better match the academic reasons leading to a school's identification and to target resources and assistance to those schools most in need of intensive interventions and significant reform.

Under Title I, Part A, of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, as reauthorized under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, states must annually determine whether schools and districts are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the goal of all students reaching the proficient level on state reading and mathematics assessments by 2014. To make AYP, each school and district must meet annual measureable objectives (AMOs) for each key student subgroup—including students from low-income families, major racial and ethnic subgroups, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient (LEP) students—as well as for the school or district as a whole. Schools and districts that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years are identified as needing improvement and are subject to increasing levels of interventions designed to improve their performance and to provide students with additional options. In Title I schools identified for improvement, districts must offer students the option to transfer to another school. If an identified school misses AYP for a third year, low-income students in the school must be offered the option to receive supplemental educational services (SES) from a state-approved provider. If an identified school misses AYP for a fourth year, the district must take one of a set of Corrective Actions specified in the law, and if the school misses AYP for a fifth and sixth year, the district must develop and then implement a plan for Restructuring the governance of the school.

Under the differentiated accountability pilot, participating states received waivers permitting them to change the structure of the school improvement categories used for schools that have missed AYP, based on the lengths of time that schools missed AYP and the numbers or types of AYP targets that were missed. Pilot states were required to maintain their current practice for determining AYP and identifying schools as in need of improvement. In addition, they were required to clearly identify their proposed process for categorizing schools, system of interventions, and interventions to be used in the lowest-performing schools.

In July 2008 and January 2009, using the authority in section 9401 of the *ESEA*, the Department approved applications for waivers from nine states to implement differentiated accountability pilot plans (see Appendix A) that allowed them to vary the intensity and type of interventions provided in Title I schools identified for improvement. The Department approved waivers for Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, and Ohio in July 2008 and for Arkansas, Louisiana, and New York in January 2009. Each participating state implemented differentiated accountability through a flexibility agreement between the Department and the state education agency (SEA), permitting the state to include its differentiated accountability model as part of its state system of interventions under section 1116 of the *ESEA* for up to four years, unless the

upcoming reauthorization of the *ESEA* changes the requirements on which the state model is based.

This report describes the early implementation of differentiated accountability in the nine pilot states, based on interviews at the state and local levels and review of extant documents. The study was designed to examine three central issues:

- How have states used their waivers to change their school improvement categories?
- What school interventions did states plan to use in low-performing schools under their differentiated accountability plan?
- What challenges are states, districts, schools, and school support providers experiencing in implementing differentiated accountability?

In addition to the summary findings presented in the main body of this report, more detailed information on each pilot state's differentiated accountability plan is provided in Appendix A.

Previous Research

Although there has been little research conducted to date on the implementation of the Differentiated Accountability Pilot program, a set of reports produced by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) has described lessons learned based on four of the pilot states: Georgia, Maryland, New York, and Ohio. Although the findings across the four states were mixed, a set of common themes emerged from CEP's review of these states' efforts. CEP reported that all four states developed accountability plans that differed from their original *NCLB* accountability systems. These states also reported the adopting of new labels for struggling schools, with three of the states (Georgia, Maryland, and New York) also developing a set of secondary labels within each category to differentiate schools based on their severity of need and supports required. In addition, the four states all reported the need for decisions on school improvement to be made based on state-developed needs assessment tools (CEP 2009b).

Study Methods

This report synthesizes information gathered from public documents, state websites, and interviews over a seven-week period from November 2009 to January 2010. Staff interviewed in each state included the state Title I director; a state department representative responsible for providing support services to schools and districts; a district Title I director; and an elementary or middle school principal (see Appendix B).

Each state superintendent and Title I director in the nine pilot states received an information packet requesting an interview for the purposes of this evaluation. During follow-up contacts via phone and email, the state Title I directors identified state service providers and district Title I directors to be interviewed, and the district directors selected the principals. Separate interview protocols were developed for each of the four categories of interviewees, based on their roles as providers or recipients of support services.

Study Limitations

The study reflects an early stage of implementation of states' differentiated accountability plans: 18 months at most—and, in some cases, much less. Three of the pilot states received their waivers in January 2009, six months after the initial group of pilot states was approved in July 2008, and thus had had less time to implement their differentiated accountability plans at the time this study's data collection was conducted (November 2009–January 2010). One of these three states (New York) indicated that it was in the preliminary stages of implementation at the time the study interviews were conducted and that changes had not yet been implemented in the affected schools. In addition, one of the states approved in the first cohort used the 2008–09 school year to plan for implementation of its differentiated accountability model (Illinois) and so had less experience with actual implementation than the other five states in the first cohort.

This report is based on interviews with a small number of purposively selected individuals in the pilot states (four per state). Many of the findings are based on self-reports from the state agency staff responsible for implementing the differentiated accountability plans, and there was often little supporting documentation for the information they reported (aside from the plans themselves). Although the study also conducted interviews with local educators in districts and schools that were affected by the differentiated accountability plans, in many cases the plans were in a relatively early stage of implementation, and local educators had limited experience with the new approaches being implemented under differentiated accountability. In addition, local educators often did not have a clear understanding of what state actions and changes were part of the state's differentiated accountability plan, particularly because these plans often sought to coordinate with and use resources from other programs.

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Early Implementation of Differentiated Accountability Across the Nine States

The nine states participating in the Department’s differentiated accountability pilot and in this study described a variety of ways in which they modified their accountability systems to better distinguish interventions for schools that missed targets for a few student subgroups versus for schools that have more systemic problems with low achievement. Participating states also reported that the pilot provided an impetus for them to develop and implement plans to expand and better coordinate the support systems that they use to improve instruction and achievement in low-performing schools and to realign resources in order to implement earlier interventions and more comprehensive services for the schools most in need of assistance. It should be noted that many of these changes were allowable prior to the waiver; however, the waiver provided states an impetus to modify accountability systems.

States differed in the extent to which they implemented their proposed differentiated accountability plans. However, although the three states that received waivers through the Department’s differentiated accountability pilot in January 2009 have implemented differentiated accountability for a shorter period of time, the findings based on their representatives’ responses did not differ greatly from those in states that received the waiver in July 2008. Therefore, this report presents the following findings from the aggregated responses from all state and district representatives.

Modified School Improvement Categories

Title I of *ESEA* requires each state to have an accountability system that is effective in ensuring that all schools and districts make AYP toward the goal of 100 percent proficiency in at least reading and mathematics by 2014. To make AYP, a school or district must meet the AMOs set by the state; annual targets representing the percentage of students (overall and for specified subgroups) that must perform at the state’s proficient level or above on state reading and mathematics assessments. The AMOs are measured not only for each school and district as a whole but for each of certain specified subgroups—including students from major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, English Learners (ELs), and students with disabilities (i.e., for each group that meets the state’s minimum “*n* size” or minimum number of students sufficient to yield statistically reliable information). Each school and district, and each subgroup within each school and district, must meet all of its AMOs in both reading and mathematics in order to make AYP. In addition to meeting its AMOs, to make AYP, a school or district, and each of its subgroups, also must meet the 95 percent participation rate requirement on state assessments and meet the state’s other academic indicator, which is graduation rate at the high school level and some other indicator at the elementary and middle school level (e.g., attendance rate). Under section 1111 of the *ESEA*, for a school to make AYP, each subgroup of students in the school must meet all of these indicators (in total, as many as 40 or more indicators per school).

Under *ESEA*, each Title I district must identify for school improvement any Title I school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years. A school that continues not to make AYP progresses along the school improvement continuum of categories, as described in the statute:

School Improvement (schools missing AYP for two and three consecutive years); Corrective Action (schools missing AYP for four and five consecutive years); and Restructuring (schools missing AYP for six years or more). A school must implement increasingly rigorous interventions for each additional year the school remains in improvement status. Examples of early interventions include increased professional development or assistance from content coaches, while interventions in the later stages of improvement include the replacement of the teaching staff or the principal. For the 2008–09 school year, the percentage of Title I schools in each school improvement category varied across the nine pilot states due, in part, to differences in how individual states defined their AMOs and differences in testing instruments and procedures.

The Department notified the first six pilot states that their differentiated accountability applications had been approved in July 2008 and notified an additional three states in January 2009. In the first step of implementation of their plans, state leaders categorized schools with their new labels and passed that information on to school district Title I directors and principals, who were, in turn, expected to inform teachers about any changes in school improvement status as a result of differentiated accountability. District Title I directors and principals noted that a change in improvement status often required modifications to a school’s improvement plan, professional development schedule, or planned interventions.

Most pilot states (eight of the nine states) reported that they added tiers within school improvement levels to differentiate schools based on the number of AYP indicators not successfully met.

Through their differentiated accountability models, states added tiers within the school improvement categories required under the *NCLB* statute in order to distinguish between schools needing more focused, targeted improvement due to missing AYP based on the performance of a limited number of subgroups and those schools needing more comprehensive, schoolwide improvement based on the performance of most or all subgroups. Rather than basing school improvement status solely on the number of years a school had been in improvement, pilot states developed models that considered both the percentage of AYP indicators a school met and the number of years the school has been in improvement. Eight of the nine pilot states developed additional categories or tiers of school improvement status, but they varied in the specific categories that were added and the rules that they defined to determine which category a specific school would fall under (see Appendix C). Consistent with that aspect of differentiated accountability implementation, CEP found that all four states in its study of restructuring under *NCLB* decided that additional secondary labels within the original Title I restructuring categories were needed to effectively differentiate schools based on the severity of their needs and the supports required to address them (CEP 2009a).

Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the various approaches taken by states to develop their differentiated accountability tiers, using AYP indicators, performance on AMOs, a combination of both, or neither. The structure of each of the pilot states’ differentiated accountability plans is explained in detail in the individual state sections of this report.

Exhibit 1
Criteria for measures of differentiated accountability tiers, by states in pilot program

Criteria	AR ^a	FL ^b	GA ^b	IL ^b	IN ^b	LA ^a	MD ^b	NY ^a	OH ^b
Percentage of AYP indicators missed	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Performance on AMOs	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Index using both AYP and AMO	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
No additional tiers proposed	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

Exhibit reads: Florida, Illinois, New York, and Ohio developed tiers in their differentiated accountability plans based on a school's achievement of its AYP indicators.

^a ED approved states' differentiated accountability plans in January 2009.

^b ED approved states' differentiated accountability plans in July 2008.

NOTE: AMO = annual measurable objective; AYP = adequate yearly progress.

SOURCE: State differentiated accountability applications submitted to ED in 2008.

With the exception of Louisiana, the pilot states opted to define tiers within the Title I improvement categories to distinguish among their low-performing schools. States used terms such as “targeted” or “focused” for schools that missed AYP based on the performance of a small number of subgroups and words like “comprehensive” for schools with more widespread problems. Each state’s differentiated accountability plan, with a complete discussion of the new categories, the criteria for each category, and the related interventions for each pilot state, is found in the state section of this report (see Appendix A), but several examples are presented below.

Four states used an approach based on AYP indicators. Two states used the percentage of AYP indicators missed as the basis for establishing new school improvement categories. Both Florida and Ohio separated schools in improvement that met 80 percent of their AYP indicators from schools that did not. In Florida, schools meeting 80 percent of their AYP indicators were classified as Category I schools, and those meeting less than 80 percent were labeled Category II and were considered the more severe cases. The Florida state Title I director commented that the new system allowed the state to “differentiate the support and strategies based on the needs of the school, specifically based on the reasons the school did not make AYP.” In Ohio, schools missing less than 20 percent of their AYP indicators were labeled Low Support and were considered in need of fewer interventions than schools missing higher percentages. As a modified approach, Illinois and New York used AYP to create Focused and Comprehensive school improvement tiers, based on whether schools met or missed AYP in the All Students category.

In contrast, Arkansas, Georgia, and Maryland used AMOs to develop their tiers, each using a different approach. AMOs are performance targets set by each state that represent the percentage of students that must reach the proficient or advanced levels each year for a school, the district, and the state to make AYP. A school has to meet the AMOs set by the state for every grade and subject in all of the student subgroups for a school to make AYP. Arkansas developed tiers based on both the number and percentage of subgroups that missed their AMOs and how long a school had been in improvement. Georgia defined three tiers within *ESEA*’s Corrective Action category, based on how far a school was from reaching its AMOs, while Maryland based its tiers solely on how many student subgroups missed the AMOs in reading or mathematics.

The Arkansas differentiated accountability model (see Exhibit 2) is representative of the tiered approach used by eight pilot states. Arkansas created four school improvement categories: Targeted Improvement, Intensive Targeted Improvement, Whole-School Improvement, and Intensive Whole-School Improvement. The table illustrates how the Title I categories map onto the new categories designated in the Arkansas differentiated accountability model. With the addition of these new tiers, an Arkansas school in the first year of improvement can now be further identified as needing Targeted Improvement, Intensive Targeted Improvement, or Whole-School Improvement, and services can be based on needs.

Exhibit 2
Arkansas differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Achieving Schools	•					
Targeted Improvement		•	•	•		
Intensive Targeted Improvement		•	•	•		
Whole-School Improvement		•	•	•		
Intensive Whole-School Improvement				•	•	•

Exhibit reads: In Arkansas, Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Targeted Improvement, Intensive Targeted Improvement, or Whole-School Improvement.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Arkansas' differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Arkansas differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 and January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://arkansased.org/smart_accountability.html).

In a combined approach, Indiana developed a formula-driven indexed rating system based on a combination of number and percentage of subgroups missing any AYP indicators and the distance from AMOs in language arts and mathematics. With differentiated accountability, Indiana added two tiers within each year of school improvement to distinguish between schools with an index rating below 60.95 (Focused) and those with a rating ranging from 60.95 to 149.70 (Comprehensive). Focused schools missed AYP based on the performance of a few subgroups, and Comprehensive schools missed AYP based on the performance of many. For the 82 schools in Indiana in Year 1 of improvement in school year 2008–09, the state used a combination of school AYP and AMO data to identify 68 schools needing Focused services and 14 schools needing Comprehensive services (see Exhibit 3). Schools remained in their *ESEA* category but were further subdivided into Focused and Comprehensive tiers. Schools in Year 4 (i.e., restructuring) and beyond were further distinguished as Focused Intensive and Comprehensive Intensive.

Exhibit 3
Number of Title I schools in Indiana’s differentiated accountability tiers (Focused vs. Comprehensive), by school improvement year

Improvement year	Title I system	Differentiated accountability system: Focused	Differentiated accountability system: Comprehensive
Year 1	82	68	14
Year 2	69	62	7
Year 3	38	24	14
Year 4	17	13	4
Year 5+	14	3	11

Exhibit reads: Of the 82 Indiana schools in Year 1 of improvement status, 68 schools are labeled Focused, and 14 schools are labeled Comprehensive.

NOTE: ED approved Indiana’s differentiated accountability plan in July 2008.

SOURCE: Indiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008.

Five of these eight states added tiers within selected years on the *ESEA* continuum. Georgia added tiers in the Corrective Action years—Schools in Need of Improvement, Years 3 and 4 (SINI 3 and SINI 4), while Florida added two tiers in the first three years of improvement and three tiers in Years 4–6. Illinois and Indiana added two tiers, Focused and Comprehensive, in every *ESEA* category, and Ohio added three—Low Support, Medium Support and High Support. The Illinois state Title I director summed up the rationale for developing tiers within the *ESEA* categories by explaining that “differentiated accountability acknowledged what we in the field intuitively were seeing, that there is a difference between a school that had the *all* group not meeting AYP and a [school with] one subgroup, maybe even a small subgroup, not meeting AYP.”

With differentiated accountability, New York reduced the number of school improvement categories to four by consolidating some of the Title I categories. For example, a school initially labeled as a Corrective Action school under Title I became an Improvement school under differentiated accountability (see Exhibit 4). In the New York state accountability system, a school can be labeled as a School Under Registration Review (SURR) in any year of improvement. The label is not dependent on the number of years a school has been in improvement but on the severity of performance issues at the school.

Exhibit 4
**Percentages of schools in New York’s differentiated accountability categories,
as compared to percentages in previous school improvement categories**

Differentiated accountability categories	% of schools	Previous school improvement categories
Improvement	41%	SINI 1 (22%) SINI 2 (11%) Corrective Action (10%)
Corrective Action	22%	Restructuring Planning (8%) Restructuring Years 1–2 (13%)
Restructuring	28%	Restructuring Years 3–4 (14%) Schools Requiring Academic Progress Years 1–3 (12%)
Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)	9%	Schools Requiring Academic Progress Years 4–7 (10%)

Exhibit reads: New York combined the first three years of school improvement status (formerly SINI 1, SINI 2, and Corrective Action) into a single category labeled as Improvement under Differentiated Accountability.

^a Schools Requiring Academic Progress (SRAP) was a non–Title I designation that New York had used to indicate schools farthest from reaching state standards and most in need of improvement.

NOTE: SINI = Schools in Need of Improvement. Percentages were rounded, so totals in each differentiated accountability category may not match sum of Title I categories. ED approved New York’s differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: New York differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008.

Unlike the other eight pilot states, Louisiana did not include tiers for identifying schools in its differentiated accountability model (see Exhibit 5). The state opted to rename the *ESEA* categories (e.g., renaming schools in the second year of school improvement as Secondary Support schools) but did not differentiate further within the *ESEA* categories. Louisiana did, however, make use of the waiver it received from the Department in other ways. For example, it created tiers for interventions within categories based on what percentage of the total school enrollment the subgroup(s) missing one or more AYP indicators represented. In addition, Louisiana used the flexibility provided by differentiated accountability to retain its state system of accountability as defined by school performance scores (SPS). SPS is calculated via a formula using assessment scores, attendance, drop-out, and graduation data, and the state continued to assign schools with performance and growth labels. (For further details, see state discussion in Appendix A.)

Exhibit 5
Louisiana differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Pre-Identification	•					
Initial Support		•				
Secondary Support			•			
Continued Support 1				•		
Continued Support 2				•		
Vital Support 1					•	
Vital Support 2						•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Initial Support.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Louisiana’s differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Louisiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, November 2009–January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/understanding_acct.html).

Two pilot states added a Pre-Identification category for schools missing AYP for the first time.

Schools that have not missed AYP or have missed it only one year are not in school improvement, and states are not required by federal law to provide support to these schools through their accountability systems. With differentiated accountability, however, two states included a Pre-Identification category for schools missing AYP for the first time. The state Title I directors from Louisiana and Maryland provided similar explanations about their respective state’s decision to include this category.

Louisiana added a Pre-Identification category, and Maryland added an Achieving Schools designation in order to provide early interventions and hopefully prevent schools from sliding into Year 1 of improvement. Each state included a set of early intervention strategies to assist schools that were in danger of entering improvement in identifying their weaknesses and develop their school improvement plans to address their specific needs. The state directors felt that providing this type of support early would help schools use their student performance data to plan targeted interventions.

Coordinated Services

By creating new school improvement categories or defining tiers within categories, states intended to reposition schools for support services and interventions that were more aligned with their specific needs. Such efforts also were possible under *ESEA* before differentiated accountability, and, yet, the availability of differentiated accountability waivers appears to have encouraged pilot states to implement school improvement strategies that state leaders had been considering for some time.

To provide schools and districts with more customized services focused on needs and to coordinate the efforts of statewide agencies, states reported that they aligned a variety of technical assistance services with their newly designated tiers. States sought to reduce overlap of services by defining roles and responsibilities with other service providers and filled voids by working with the providers to expand leadership institutes, design more professional development opportunities, and increase on-site assistance for schools from state, regional, and district service providers. With the flexibility to include more targeted levels of improvement in their differentiated accountability models, the pilot states redirected services based on distinctions between schools with fewer problem areas and those with more widespread issues.

State respondents reported that the differentiated accountability pilot provided an impetus for their states to implement strategies intended to better coordinate, target, and expand their technical assistance services.

Prior to implementing differentiated accountability, districts and schools in the pilot states had access to a variety of service providers, including regional service centers, private companies and consultants, and state departments of education personnel. The array of services available included content and leadership academies, on-site mentoring and coaching, workshops and professional development opportunities targeting specific student needs, and training on the use of diagnostic tools to facilitate data analysis. State Title I directors felt that the process of developing their differentiated accountability applications provided an opportunity to examine these available services and consider options to better coordinate these efforts and decrease the duplication of services.

Some states coordinated existing services by assigning specific stages or tiers of school improvement status to specific service providers in order to reduce duplication of services. State-level Title I directors and support providers in the pilot states reported that they had access to existing state services that were either well established or newly emerging and that they felt they could develop a coherent range of services for their differentiated accountability plans by coordinating these services with the state agency. For example, five states had regional service centers that provided an array of services to area schools that were not always coordinated with state services. In Georgia and New York, the state departments redirected the departments' direct services to the lowest-performing schools and used the regional centers to provide technical assistance to less-needy schools; state respondents believed that this strategic division of labor resulted in a reduced duplication of services and clarified for schools and districts the responsibilities of the various service providers so that they would have a clearer understanding of which agency to contact for specific services. In Ohio, a design team from the state department coordinated professional development for regional providers to improve consistency in the services provided to districts.

Generally speaking, under differentiated accountability, schools missing AYP based on the performance of only one subgroup were offered targeted support, while those missing most of their AYP indicators were provided with more intensive, comprehensive support. For example, Indiana provided a broader menu of supports and interventions for its Comprehensive schools in each stage of improvement. For schools in Year 1 of improvement, for example, Comprehensive schools were offered a number of additional interventions, such as whole-school use of state reading and mathematics diagnostic assessments (Wireless Generation and Acuity); a full-time,

on-site literacy or mathematics coach; and expanded SES for non-proficient students from low-income families (including open enrollment, on-site services, and transportation home).

Georgia's differentiated accountability model collapsed the Corrective Action and Restructuring Planning years under Title I into one category and then added tiers within this new Corrective Action category using a formula to distinguish the top-performing quintile (Tier 1), the middle three quintiles (Tier 2), and the lowest-performing quintile (Tier 3). Schools in Tier 2 were then required to select and implement an additional intervention from the Title I list, and schools in Tier 3 were required to implement an additional intervention to be selected by the state. Under differentiated accountability, Georgia expanded the roles of the 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). Prior to differentiated accountability, the RESAs served schools in Years 1 and 2 of improvement; now, with the addition of state-funded school improvement specialists to the RESA staff, RESAs also serve all schools in the newly designated Corrective Action tiers, made possible by additional federal funds for school improvement appropriated under section 1003(g) of Title I law. The state also has provided coordinated professional development for all RESA-based school improvement specialists to ensure that services are consistent across districts and schools. The CEP report similarly documents a more intensive and uniform intervention for schools in the Restructuring Implementation phase (CEP 2009a).

In Arkansas, the state Title I director explained that, prior to differentiated accountability, Arkansas contracted with America's Choice, an external service provider, to implement the provider's comprehensive turnaround model of school reform in the state's lowest-performing schools, while the state department of education provided assistance to all other schools in school improvement status. To support the implementation of differentiated accountability, the state opened the service provider's trainings to schools in the earlier stages of improvement but focused more intensive services on schools in Year 3 of improvement and beyond. These services ranged from more intensive use of state support teams and professional development to offering technical assistance to schools in writing up their school improvement plans. The state support provider also reported that her office expanded its services to include training for school leadership teams and assistance to schools in implementing instructional coaching models, conducting classroom observations, and analyzing classroom walk-through data.² The state department and external service provider worked together to provide support to schools in Years 1 and 2 of improvement through such options as the Leadership Academy and America's Choice workshops.

Arkansas also expanded the role of its regional education service centers, using them to provide professional development directly aligned with the interventions available under the state's differentiated accountability model. Before implementing differentiated accountability, the statewide system of support included state support teams comprising math, literacy, science, special education, and English Learner (EL) specialists, but under differentiated accountability, the state integrated the support teams into its new service model to expand and coordinate their services to reach more schools while still targeting more intensive services to the subset of schools most in need. Arkansas also increased the capacity of its Leadership Academy, a state-funded program that trains superintendents, principals, and teachers to build capacity at the local

² In the practice of classroom walk-throughs, principals and other instructional leaders spend only minutes observing classroom practices to form opinions about the quality of teaching and learning occurring.

level, by adding a regional training facility that provides leadership training to build capacity at the school level.

Maryland expanded its existing menu of intervention tools and resources and made some options—such as comprehensive planning; curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development with accountability; leadership; organizational structure and resources; and school culture and climate—more easily accessible by offering them through the newly created Breakthrough Center. This center assisted schools in the most-intense level of improvement with training modules and professional development focused on co-teaching strategies for special education students in regular classrooms.

Most pilot states shifted some interventions to earlier school improvement status.

In their waiver applications, seven states proposed to provide SES to students earlier than Year 2 of improvement, as is required by *ESEA*, either by shifting the option to Year 1 or by reversing the order of SES and public school choice, a Year 1 requirement in *ESEA* that allows students to transfer to a school that is not identified for improvement. *ESEA* requires that after a school misses AYP for three years, a district must offer eligible students in the school SES, such as tutoring and other supplemental academic enrichment activities, in addition to instruction provided during the regular school day. A state approves SES providers and monitors their services, and a district must cover the costs of both SES and transportation for public school choice, up to an amount equal to 20 percent of its Title I, Part A, allocation. The seven pilot states that proposed to offer SES one year earlier than required under Title I have not implemented this flexibility uniformly: five states mandated that districts offer SES one year earlier, while the other two allowed districts the option of offering SES earlier (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6
Changes to availability of supplemental educational services (SES) in nine pilot states

State	State reversed order of SES and school choice	State offered SES one year earlier	Mandatory or optional for districts to offer SES earlier
Arkansas ^a	No	Yes	Mandatory
Florida ^b	Yes	No	Mandatory
Georgia ^b	Yes	No	Optional
Illinois ^b	Yes	No	Optional
Indiana ^b	No	Yes	Mandatory
Louisiana ^a	Yes	No	Mandatory
Maryland ^b	No	No	†
New York ^a	Yes	No	Mandatory
Ohio ^b	No	No	†

Exhibit reads: Arkansas made SES available to students in schools identified for improvement one year earlier than required under Title I and made this change mandatory for its districts.

† Not applicable.

^a ED approved states' differentiated accountability plans in January 2009.

^b ED approved states' differentiated accountability plans in July 2008.

SOURCE: State differentiated accountability applications submitted to ED in 2008; November 2009–January 2010 interviews.

States receiving approval of their differentiated accountability plans in July 2008 submitted SES participation data to the Department comparing SES participation in school year 2007–08 with participation in school year 2008–09. Of the six states in this first cohort, Florida and Indiana mandated that SES be offered one year earlier, and Georgia and Illinois left the option to districts with newly-designated schools entering improvement status in school year 2008–09. In Illinois, only three out of 102 districts elected to offer SES one year earlier to their students, and only 21 out of 50 districts in Georgia exercised this option in school year 2008–09. Maryland and Ohio chose not to offer SES earlier than required by *ESEA*. With the exception of Ohio, the states in the first cohort reported increased student participation in SES. State Title I directors in the five states that reported an increase felt that offering SES earlier contributed to increased participation in SES. Additionally, Indiana’s state Title I director thought that offering SES at school buildings, implementing ongoing enrollment, and providing transportation home also contributed to the increase in participation rates.

Under Georgia’s differentiated accountability model, schools entered the contract monitoring stage of restructuring in Year 5, which was two years earlier than they would have under Title I, with the receipt of direct, on-site support daily from a school-based state director. Illinois and Indiana opted to begin Corrective Action interventions one year earlier than is required under *ESEA*. By adding a Pre-Improvement category to identify schools missing AYP for the first time, Louisiana and Maryland provided support services to schools the first time they missed AYP rather than waiting until schools entered *ESEA* improvement status after missing AYP for two consecutive years. Services offered to Maryland and Louisiana schools in the Pre-Improvement category under differentiated accountability included training on the use of data analysis tools; the completion of data analysis of AYP results and school performance data for each school; and the support of a district assistance team, which helped schools with developing their school improvement plans and conducted classroom observations to provide feedback on the implementation of those plans. Maryland also shifted reforms used in Years 5 and 6 of improvement to Year 4 to provide support to schools earlier in the improvement process, such as adopting a new curriculum, extending the length of the school year or school day, replacing school staff, decreasing school-level management authority, appointing an outside expert to advise the school, and restructuring the school’s internal organization. The findings from CEP dovetail with the findings reported here, especially in terms of states accelerating the process through which consequences and supports are applied and extended to schools struggling to make their AYP targets (CEP 2009b).

Some states used federal funds, such as Title I or School Improvement Grants, or state funding to establish new positions and additional services to support the implementation of differentiated accountability.

In addition to federal funding provided to Title I schools under section 1003(a) of the *ESEA*, the Department provides additional funds called School Improvement Grants (SIGs; *ESEA* section 1003(g)) for Title I schools in Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring. States receive funding from the Department based on a formula. At the time the differentiated accountability pilot began, states had discretion as to whether they awarded SIG funds to their districts based on a formula or competition. Since the publication of final requirements for the SIG program in December 2009, however, states have been required to award SIG funds through a competition.

States that are awarded SIG funds may retain 5 percent of the funds for administrative needs and technical assistance.

With its differentiated accountability model, Georgia reported using 1003(g) funds to place a state director in all SINI 5 and above schools (43 schools as of December 2009). State directors provided daily, on-site technical assistance, assisting with mentoring and coaching, data collection and analysis, and the ongoing implementation of interventions. State directors were directly involved in all school improvement and restructuring processes, including the replacing of staff and providing classroom support for teachers and administrative guidance to the principal. The state Title I director explained that the goal with the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) review was to ensure that a school would have in place the elements necessary for sustaining its improvement once it exited improvement status. GAPSS is a system of online surveys, classroom observations of teachers, and on-site interviews by which schools can determine their performance on school standards, such as curriculum; instruction; assessment; planning and organization; student, family, and community support; professional learning; leadership; and school culture.

Florida used differentiated accountability to create new regional support centers to house teams of specialists who worked in the lowest-performing schools conducting instructional reviews and reviewing school improvement plans and district intervention assistance plans. The regional support teams provided technical assistance to all schools in improvement status on data collection and targeted professional development addressing academic areas and subgroup needs. The director of support services at the state department of education explained that the staff from the five regional support centers provided direct support to schools in the Intervene category and to the lowest-performing Category II schools (i.e., schools meeting 80 percent of their AYP indicators) and that the state supported the centers through Title I funding and *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* funds. Schools designated for less intensive interventions—Prevent I and Correct I schools (i.e., schools meeting less than 80 percent of their AYP indicators)—also received services, though the support from the regional centers was indirect. One district Title I director stated that her district also used its Title I and *IDEA* funds to support the addition of math, science, and reading coaches at all Correct I and II schools (full-time employees at each school) and Prevent I and II schools (shared among schools).

Similar to Florida and Georgia, Arkansas established new types of positions to work directly in schools providing classroom support and monitoring compliance. To support its differentiated accountability plan, the state used 1003(a) funds to create three new types of positions to intensify support services for schools in improvement: instructional facilitators to provide classroom support; school improvement specialists to provide building-level support by monitoring compliance, coordinating school improvement strategies, and facilitating research-based instructional practices; and school improvement directors (provided by the state or district) to work with state-directed schools.

Maryland created its Breakthrough Center in 2008 specifically to support its differentiated accountability model. According to the state service provider's director, the newly established Breakthrough Center was created in anticipation of approval of the state's differentiated accountability waiver. Officials wanted to have a mechanism in place to begin providing services in July and August 2008 to support the start of the 2008–09 school year and the implementation

of differentiated accountability. In addition to offering direct services to schools and districts in the areas of strategic planning, curriculum alignment, and leadership development, the center functions as a broker of services. The center assists districts in integrating available public and private services by maintaining a network of specialized service providers that can develop customized services for schools. In collaboration with school districts, the center develops partnership agreements to support low-performing schools in various ways, including the targeting of professional development for teachers in reading/English language arts and the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in schools and at the district level.

Maryland initially funded the Breakthrough Center with Title I and Title II funds and State School Improvement Grants (SSIGs), funded by the Maryland General Assembly.³ Budget cuts reduced this funding, but the state used a grant from the National Governors’ Association to direct additional funds to the center. The state legislature also approved the use of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds—a program of the Department providing funding for renovating school buildings, purchasing equipment, developing curricula, and training school personnel—for the development of the center. The center was also eligible for special education funds because it provided professional development and support services to teachers of students with disabilities.

With the support of additional federal and state funding, states proposed an array of services in their differentiated accountability applications and incorporated or expanded a number of services already in place in their statewide accountability systems to support low-performing schools. They also outlined ideas for new services to enhance those already in place; where services were modified or improved, respondents found it difficult to separate with certainty new services from enhanced services. Exhibit 7 summarizes the data reviewed from state applications and interviews, specifying, by state, the various state support services that were either newly established or coordinated with existing services to support the implementation of differentiated accountability.

Exhibit 7
Selected support services newly established or coordinated
to support implementation of differentiated accountability, by state

Selected support services	AR^a	FL^b	GA^b	IL^b	IN^b	LA^a	MD^b	NY^a	OH^b
Regional/state service centers	—	N	C	C	—	C	N	C	C
Statewide leadership academies	C	—	C	—	N	—	—	—	—
Statewide curriculum academies	—	—	—	—	N	—	—	—	—
On-site support positions	N	N	N	—	—	—	—	C	—
State/regional/district support teams	C	N	N	—	C	C	—	—	C

Exhibit reads: Florida and Maryland created new service centers, while Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, and Ohio coordinated the services of existing service centers.

— Not applicable.

^a ED approved states’ differentiated accountability plans in January 2009.

^b ED approved states’ differentiated accountability plans in July 2008.

NOTE: C = coordinated services; N = newly established services.

SOURCE: State differentiated accountability applications submitted to ED in 2008; November 2009–January 2010 interviews.

³ Title II contains funding for teacher and principal training and recruitment efforts at the state and local level, as well as teacher training at institutions of higher education.

Changes in Implementation of Differentiated Accountability Plans

State respondents reported that although they tried to adhere to the differentiated accountability plans laid out in their state's original proposal, a variety of circumstances led them to deviate from these plans. This section summarizes these changes and the reported reasons behind the changes.

Implementation of the differentiated accountability plans varied across the pilot states.

Some states reported a variety of circumstances—including short implementation time lines, shifting priorities and budget issues, and changes in leadership—as reasons to modify or delay the implementation of their differentiated accountability plans. For example, two states, Illinois and New York, had delayed full implementation of differentiated accountability while they reconsidered their models and the states' capacity for providing direct support. State officials in Illinois cited budget issues as the reason for delays with fully implementing differentiated accountability, explaining that they have the new school improvement categories in place, but little else. One state support provider in New York explained that the state had not fully initiated differentiated accountability at the time of this study but that his office has conducted school quality reviews for schools in Improvement Years 1 and 2 and was assisting with curriculum audits for schools in Corrective Action.

The New York state Title I director reported that technical assistance services had not been maximized and that support services had not expanded much in the past year due to the state's fiscal crisis. The regional centers were in the final year of their contract, and the state was concerned that, facing uncertainty, many regional center staff had begun to look for work elsewhere. Financial concerns limited the state's efforts to move forward with full implementation of its plan to get school districts engaged in differentiated accountability. The Title I director agreed, however, with one state service provider, who expressed satisfaction that differentiated accountability was driving the way schools and districts are identified and guiding service efforts. He recommended the tiered approach because, by knowing whether a school needs “focused, basic, or comprehensive triage for one specific [subpopulation] or . . . the entire school,” his staff can determine how to target their efforts.

Illinois state officials also reported that, because of funding cuts, plans to integrate differentiated accountability into school improvement plans had been put on hold. The only differentiated accountability modifications in place thus far were the renaming of the school improvement categories and the switching of SES and school choice, which only a small number of districts had opted to do. Illinois officials also mentioned that shifting state priorities required less emphasis on differentiated accountability. Since submitting its differentiated accountability application, Illinois turned its attention to its participation in the Partnership Zone, a public-private partnership with five other states (including Louisiana and New York) to develop long-term reform strategies for their lowest-performing schools, such as placing turnaround leaders directly in the schools.

In Indiana, the implementation of differentiated accountability coincided with a change of leadership in the state superintendent's office. The new state leadership was tasked with

developing and implementing a theory of action aligned with Indiana’s differentiated accountability plan. In response, the Office of Title I Academic Support in the Indiana Department of Education developed a theory of action model on transforming high-poverty districts to high-performing districts based on seven research-based components, culled from a review of the research on school turnaround efforts (AIR 2005; Barr and Parrett 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2008; Mass Insight Education and Research Institute 2007; Resnick and Glennan 2002). These components are high expectations, leadership, instruction, curriculum, formative assessments, professional development, and community partnerships.

The state Title I director in Indiana indicated that the goal of her staff was to offer supporting activities for schools corresponding to the seven components. The state Title I staff provides training to district representatives on implementing these components in their district plans; for example, the office has hosted a summer conference and created online modules focused on subgroup performance (that a district facilitator can lead), developed diagnostic tools and trained local data coaches on the use of the tools, and helped districts hire mentors for promising principals. One district’s Title I director felt that the alignment of state and local differentiated accountability goals was critical to the success in implementing differentiated accountability. With input from the new superintendent, Indiana opted to offer both SES and school choice in Year 1 of school improvement, rather than reverse them, as indicated in Indiana’s originally approved application.

Maryland also had undergone budget cuts resulting in a reduced state department staff and state-mandated furloughs. To alleviate financial burdens for districts, the state Title I director explained that the state “softened its expectations” for districts to conduct a “nationally recognized” school climate survey and instead allowed districts to use any reliable instrument to conduct the survey.

Most pilot states (seven out of nine) felt they did not have enough time between the approval of their differentiated accountability application and the start of the next school year to put all the pieces in place to support full implementation.

Title I directors from seven pilot states discussed the short time line between notification of approval of their waivers and the start of the next school year. States notified in June 2008 for a fall 2008 start and those notified in January 2009 for a fall 2009 start expressed the same thoughts—neither cohort felt it had enough time to prepare for implementation of its differentiated accountability plans. The state Title I director from Arkansas emphasized that, if differentiated accountability is offered again, “other states would appreciate having a longer time line.”

Along with new improvement categories, pilot states proposed new services and, in some cases, new positions to support their differentiated accountability plans. Putting it all in place proved challenging, and states reported that logistics were a problem. The Arkansas Title I director mentioned the difficulty in providing the training necessary for new state facilitators, and the Florida director mentioned last-minute staffing changes that had to occur due to the new school classification system.

In Georgia, schools and districts had already sent parent notification letters regarding options for school choice and SES, which required follow-up notifications with new guidelines. One rural elementary school principal said that he had a very short time in which to prepare his faculty for their new state-directed label. One Indiana principal reported that, with such “a time frame crunch,” he first concentrated on offering workshops to help the parents in his community understand the impact of the changes on the school and their children.

Title I directors in Georgia and Louisiana both reported that they were able to implement their differentiated accountability plans, but that they felt they did not have enough time to prepare districts fully for the changes that accompanied differentiated accountability. The New York Title I director said the state was still in a planning phase, though the state had informed schools of the new school improvement categories, especially in cases where schools shifted into new categories.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Study participants in eight pilot states indicated that they would recommend differentiated accountability to other states interested in the flexibility it offers. Illinois was not as enthusiastic as other pilot states because of state budget constraints and competing priorities. Illinois had not fully implemented differentiated accountability but was encouraging regional service provider organizations and school districts to work directly with schools in lieu of state involvement in order to deliver services to the over 800 districts in the state.

While most of the actions and improvements attributed to differentiated accountability were already permissible under *ESEA*, participants felt that focusing on differentiated accountability provided the impetus or renewed enthusiasm to coordinate state and federal accountability plans. From their experiences implementing differentiated accountability, the study participants offered the following recommendations for undertaking any sweeping change in practice and policy: seek buy-in from all stakeholders, including staff at both the state and local levels, and be prepared to provide and accept assistance from external service providers.

State and local administrators reported challenges in garnering buy-in regarding the implementation of differentiated accountability.

In Arkansas, the Title I director and an elementary school principal from one district explained that the local school board had initiated districtwide change when it was directed by the state to adopt America's Choice as the district's K–12 school improvement initiative, a move for which teachers were unprepared. They both confirmed that they were meeting more often with district and building staff to gather input and ensure their staffs that they would be participating in site-based decision making throughout the ongoing implementation process. The principal mentioned having the support of cluster leaders and instructional facilitators in her building to assist her in meeting with teachers and assuring them of the supports available to them. She reported that when she encouraged her teachers to set up their own professional learning communities, the teachers appreciated the control they had in designing their own professional development.

One Florida district Title I director explained that one of her greatest challenges was the lack of receptiveness of some school and district leaders to differentiated accountability. She commented that, to ensure district buy-in, the district established a curriculum team so that decisions about instruction and interventions included input from the district reading specialist, the mathematics specialist, the director for high schools, the director for middle schools, and the technology team. She felt that this approach allowed the district to take a more comprehensive view of districtwide issues and coordinate the support provided to schools.

In New York, district staff suggested that it was too early in the process to assess the impact of differentiated accountability but confirmed that it had been a challenge eliciting buy-in from principals when differentiated accountability prompted a shift of many schools from one improvement category to another. The Title I director in Ohio commented that the state's greatest challenge was changing districts' mind-sets but felt that the state garnered district buy-in when local educators realized that the district was not only accountable for district outcomes but also for developing the strategies for achieving those outcomes.

State and local administrators reported having to defuse resistance to technical assistance in order to implement new services.

Instructional specialists from the Florida regional support centers encountered initial resistance in the low-performing schools, but this resistance lessened as the school staff came to recognize the skills and expertise of these individuals. One state support provider related that teachers began to accept the on-site specialists as partners rather than adversaries, but it took one year to develop that trust.

One Georgia school principal advised other principals dealing with staff resistance to study the federal and state models in order to explain the process clearly and confidently when introducing differentiated accountability to staff. His school had a state director on-site daily, and many of his teachers were new to the process of restructuring and resisted the differentiated accountability interventions. The state support provider in Georgia confirmed this situation, explaining that “not everyone welcomes us with open arms,” but the support of the principal can have a positive influence on the attitude of the faculty. The principal recognized the advantage of the on-site support and explained that having a state director assigned to his school provided him with daily mentoring, guidance, and monitoring of his school improvement plan.

In Ohio, state and local study participants supported the state’s decision to implement differentiated accountability and align school improvement interventions with school needs. One school principal explained that differentiated accountability is “a road map that has shown us exactly where we need to go, and has provided us with the tools that we need to get there. So it’s the ‘where’ and the ‘how’.” She was referring to the fact that differentiated accountability in Ohio did not mandate a step-by-step protocol but instead continued set performance goals for schools and showed schools how to use their own data to propose appropriate interventions for school improvement. One state support provider added that this represented a shift of responsibility for interventions from the state to the districts, so that schools viewed the state as a partner rather than a monitor.

Pilot states focused on building capacity at the local level.

Pilot states created or expanded a number of academies and institutes that focused on developing leadership skills and content knowledge of teachers and administrators at the local level. Several state leaders mentioned the importance of investing in human capital, and the pilot states provided an array of professional development opportunities that demonstrated their commitment to this idea.

The Title I director in Arkansas described the state’s differentiated accountability application as being “heavily embedded with leadership opportunities for superintendents, principals, and teachers.” The Arkansas general assembly appropriated funds for the Arkansas Leadership Academy prior to differentiated accountability, but, in an effort to maximize capacity, the state created a second academy using a train-the-trainers model that operated within schools providing on-site, ongoing leadership training.

Indiana’s Leadership Institute paired a principal from one of the 20 lowest-performing schools in the state with a principal from a high-performing, high-poverty school, who served as a mentor. One principal who participated in the institute credited the experience with extending his

personal and professional growth and improving his effectiveness as a principal. The state Title I director said that district superintendents requested involving more schools in the institute and reported that they see their schools being transformed by principals who have attended the institute. Georgia also offered two leadership academies for staff in low-performing schools, and Maryland indicated it is planning to build leadership capacity across the state through its Breakthrough Center.

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Conclusions

Interviews conducted in the nine pilot states found that these states reported using the flexibility provided under differentiated accountability to modify their accountability models to distinguish between low- and high-performing schools. State respondents also reported that their states expanded, realigned, or created support structures in order to implement earlier interventions and more comprehensive services. States took different approaches to implementing differentiated accountability; most created new school improvement categories, while one state opted to simply rename the existing *ESEA* categories. Many states reported focusing on building capacity at the local level to assist districts and schools in ongoing school improvement planning.

Differentiated accountability was not implemented evenly across the participating states. Some reasons are logistical. Maryland, for example, has only 24 school districts, and the state superintendent hosts a weekly conference call with all local superintendents. New York, on the other hand, has 836 local districts with which to communicate, and for that state, dissemination of information in a timely manner is challenging. Some states, such as Georgia and Ohio, had regional service centers in place prior to differentiated accountability and were able to coordinate state and regional activities necessary to support differentiated accountability and prevent overlap. Seeing such a need, Florida created a regional support system to assist the state in delivering services. Still others, like New York and Illinois, reported a lack of commitment and interest in continuing to implement differentiated accountability as they first proposed.

Most changes made under differentiated accountability were allowable prior to the waiver. The only significant exception was that differentiated accountability allowed states to offer supplemental educational services one year earlier and to count the costs of doing so toward a district's "20 percent obligation," an option selected by seven of the nine states.⁴ The waiver did not provide additional funding, nor did it grant permission for states to use new approaches in determining AYP. Nonetheless, state respondents reported that implementing differentiated accountability encouraged them to employ new strategies for promoting and supporting school improvement and to target more intensive services to schools with the greatest needs.

⁴ The "20 percent obligation" represents the amount of unspent Title I funding during a given school year that a school district must spend in a subsequent school year on public school choice-related transportation and supplemental educational services.

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Appendix A: State Differentiated Accountability Models

Under differentiated accountability, the school improvement categories and related interventions were intertwined, and each pilot state's efforts were different. To provide a coherent picture of how differentiated accountability was implemented in each state, this section details each state's differentiated accountability implementation progress and how the key findings were illustrated in each state's approach.

Arkansas

In 2006, Arkansas developed the Arkansas scholastic audit to analyze strengths and limitations of a school's instructional and organizational effectiveness and make specific recommendations to improve teaching and learning. The audit served as the foundation for Arkansas's proposal for the differentiated accountability model, which expanded participation in the audit and aligned a matrix of interventions to the audit standards. To coordinate responsibilities and utilize local expertise, Arkansas assigned schools and districts with the responsibility of conducting and monitoring their own audits for schools in the lowest three tiers of improvement, which needed assistance the least, and required schools in the more intensive improvement levels to develop school improvement plans with support from regional teams or state specialists.

At the time Arkansas submitted its request for a differentiated accountability waiver, 30 percent of Arkansas's schools were in some level of improvement for reasons that varied from one subgroup missing a single adequate yearly progress (AYP) indicator to most subgroups missing a number of indicators. Arkansas proposed a model to distinguish between these schools by applying different labels and different consequences to schools appropriate to their actual school improvement status (see Exhibit A.1). Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), through SINI 3 were categorized as Targeted Improvement, Intensive Targeted Improvement, or Whole-School Improvement, respectively.

In its differentiation model, Arkansas compared the number of subgroups missing AYP indicators with the total number of subgroups measured using a measure called the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)* performance ratio, which indicates the ratio of subgroups missed to the number of subgroups eligible. Arkansas selected a performance ratio of 75 percent to distinguish schools in its differentiated accountability model. The model incorporated the Arkansas benchmark exam scores from the state NCLB accountability plan on file and categorized schools based on both the number of years and the extent of the reasons they did not make AYP. The improvement category for each school in the state was noted on the state website, with links to subgroup and intervention information specific to the categories. Exhibit A.2 provides a summary of Arkansas's new improvement categories and related interventions.

Exhibit A.1
Arkansas differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I: designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I: designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I: designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I: designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I: designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I: designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Achieving Schools	•					
Targeted Improvement		•	•	•		
Intensive Targeted Improvement		•	•	•		
Whole-School Improvement		•	•	•		
Intensive Whole-School Improvement				•	•	•

Exhibit reads: In Arkansas, Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled either Targeted Improvement, Intensive Targeted Improvement, or Whole-School Improvement.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Arkansas' differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Arkansas differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 and January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://arkansased.org/smart_accountability.html).

In addition to required interventions outlined in the Arkansas differentiated accountability plan, schools in the Targeted and Intensive Targeted Improvement categories selected one additional intervention from a state-designated list, updated and revised for the pilot. Schools in Intensive Whole-School Improvement selected one additional restructuring action from a state-designated list available in the Arkansas differentiated accountability resource guide. Additional interventions included such actions as scheduling a scholastic audit, providing preschool options, extending learning time for students lacking sufficient progress in mathematics and literacy, and subcontracting with recognized educators to assist with data analysis, observations, and mentoring. The resource guide is an online tool that provides a comprehensive review of Arkansas's differentiated accountability model, including descriptions of the new differentiated accountability labels and differentiation, interventions, and available support and resources appropriate to schools in the new school improvement status categories.

The state matched its improvement labels to a tiered system of both previously used and new research-based interventions, and focused on providing services to students and building the capacity of schools and districts. Through an approach based on standards of effective schools, the most-intensive efforts occurred at those schools that had remained in school improvement for four years or more.

Exhibit A.2
Arkansas differentiated accountability categories, by determination and corresponding intervention(s)

School categories	Determination	Interventions
Achieving	Schools meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) and continue to work toward having all students proficient by school year 2013–14.	None.
Targeted Improvement	Schools have 75 percent or greater of subpopulations meeting annual measurable objectives (AMOs) but have one or more subpopulations not meeting AMOs for two to four consecutive years.	Schools develop their own plans to address student needs and access support, professional development, and monitoring from the state.
Intensive Targeted Improvement	Schools have 75 percent or greater of subpopulations meeting AMOs and one or more subpopulations not meeting AMOs for four or more consecutive years.	Schools develop a three-year school improvement plan that must include professional development to increase the intensity of their core reading and math instruction. All schools that feed into a targeted improvement school must participate in the same interventions.
Whole-School Improvement	Schools have either the All Students group not meeting AMOs or less than 75 percent of subpopulations meeting AMOs and one to three years of school improvement status.	Schools are self-directed but must work in collaboration with regional teams to develop a three-year school improvement plan to address areas of deficiencies. The district is responsible for conducting a school audit, and a regional team monitors the progress of the plan and provides technical support for implementation. All feeder schools participate in the same intervention.
Intensive Whole-School Improvement	Schools have the All Students group not meeting AMOs and/or less than 75 percent of subpopulations meeting AMOs and four or more years of school improvement status.	Schools work with a state-approved provider and follow more prescriptive guidelines regarding organizational structure, professional development, curriculum and instruction, and use of resources to address growth needs noted in the state audit. The state uses formative and summative assessments of student progress to monitor these schools for fidelity of the alignment of the instructional curriculum to the state frameworks document.

Exhibit reads: Achieving Schools meet AYP and continue to work toward having all students proficient by school year 2013–14. They have no assigned interventions.

NOTE: ED approved Arkansas' differentiated accountability plan in January 2009.

SOURCE: Arkansas differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008.

Under differentiated accountability, the state created three new types of positions to intensify support services for schools in improvement: instructional facilitators to provide classroom support; school improvement specialists to provide building-level support by monitoring compliance, coordinating school improvement strategies, and facilitating research-based instructional practices; and school improvement directors (provided by the state or district) to work with state-directed schools. The state also expanded the role of its regional education

service centers, using them to provide professional development directly aligned with the interventions available under the state's differentiated accountability model. Before implementing differentiated accountability, the statewide system of support included state support teams comprising math, literacy, science, special education, and English Learner (EL) specialists, but under differentiated accountability, the state integrated the support teams into its new service model to expand and coordinate their services to more schools. The state also increased the capacity of its Leadership Academy by adding a regional training facility that provided leadership training to build capacity at the school level.

To support state reform efforts, Arkansas contracted with America's Choice, a for-profit provider of comprehensive school and instructional design services, technical assistance, and teacher professional development. Before Arkansas implemented differentiated accountability, America's Choice operated only in low-performing schools, but after implementing differentiated accountability, the state opened America's Choice trainings and workshops to all schools in the state. Schools in the early stages of improvement, with just a few subgroups missing one or more AYP indicators, then had access to training in the use of data and assessment, leadership, best practices, and research-based school improvement strategies.

Florida

Under differentiated accountability, Florida consolidated its state accountability model with the federal model to create new improvement categories (see Exhibit A.3). Florida's state accountability system, School Grades, assigns points to schools based on demonstrated student proficiency in four subject areas (math, reading, writing, science) and student-learning gains in four component areas (two for math and two for reading). Florida uses the results to assign letter grades A–F to schools. The state model does not address subgroup performance. The differentiated accountability model consolidated Title I schools in need of improvement into two groups, separating schools in SINI 1–3 from those in SINI 4 and beyond and differentiating schools in these two groups based on a combination of School Grades performance and percentage of AYP criteria met.

To determine its differentiated accountability categories, Florida first categorized schools based on performance (Category I or II). Schools in Category I were A-, B-, and C-graded schools that met at least 80 percent of the AYP performance criteria. Category II included schools that met less than 80 percent of AYP criteria, as well as all D- and F-graded schools. Once categorized, schools were further labeled Prevent, Correct, or Intervene. Schools in Prevent I or Prevent II were in SINI 1–3, schools labeled Correct I, Correct II or Intervene were the most critical, in SINI 4 and beyond. In 2007, the state identified 24 Intervene schools as the worst-performing schools since 2003 based on school grades and continued poor performance in reading and mathematics.

Exhibit A.3
Florida differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Prevent I		•	•	•		
Correct I				•	•	•
Prevent II		•	•	•		
Correct II				•	•	•
Intervene				•	•	•

Exhibit reads: In Florida, Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Prevent I or Prevent II schools.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Florida's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Florida differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, November and December 2009 interviews, and state website (<http://flbsi.org/DA/>).

In Florida, Category I schools required interventions for subgroups, and Category II schools required schoolwide interventions. Initiated under differentiated accountability, these new categories assisted schools in identifying their needs in Year 1 of missing AYP and planning interventions earlier. This included implementing Response to Intervention (RtI), an instructional approach that identifies students with disabilities and provides early intervening services to struggling students.

Under the School Grades system, Florida did not rate schools based on subgroup performance; in contrast, the Title I AYP requirements under NCLB measuring subgroup performance resulted in very different school ratings. For the first time, some schools that had earned a letter grade of A learned that they did not make AYP under the new guidelines, often due to the performance of a single subgroup. Using differentiated accountability labels, this was evident from the data for subgroups in Category I schools (see Exhibit A.4a and Exhibit A.4b), showing that students with disabilities represented the highest percentage of subgroups missing AYP in Category I schools. One trend of note in Florida is that, while the percentage of student enrollment in the low-income subgroup was fairly consistent across all school improvement categories, the performance of this subgroup was not.

Exhibit A.4a
Percentage of Florida schools, by select student subgroups
that did not make AYP in reading

Differentiated accountability categories	Total	All students	Low-income	EL	SWD	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Multi
Prevent I ^a	205	11%	13%	6%	33%	0%	19%	5%	—	—	—
Correct I	519	23%	26%	12%	35%	3%	31%	10%	—	—	—
Prevent II	29	90%	90%	48%	59%	28%	79%	55%	—	—	—
Correct II	253	93%	92%	42%	70%	15%	79%	45%	—	—	—
Intervene	11	91%	91%	9%	64%	9%	100%	18%	—	—	—

Exhibit reads: In 2008–09 in Florida, the All Students subgroup missed adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading in 11 percent of the 205 Prevent I schools.

— Not available.

^a Of the 205 schools in Prevent 1, some are in this category for reasons other than reading AYP (e.g., attendance or graduation rates).

NOTE: EL = English Learner; Multi = multiracial; SWD = students with disabilities. ED approved Florida's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Data extracted from state report submitted to ED in December 2009. (Pilots awarded in 2008 were required to submit a report to ED in December 2009 detailing how schools were labeled under the new system developed for differentiated accountability.)

Exhibit A.4b
Percentage of Florida schools, by select student subgroups
that did not make AYP in math

Differentiated accountability categories	Total	All students	Low-income	EL	SWD	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Multi
Prevent I ^a	205	20%	34%	9%	36%	6%	26%	8%	—	—	—
Correct I	519	39%	44%	13%	35%	8%	36%	16%	—	—	—
Prevent II	29	100%	93%	48%	55%	31%	72%	55%	—	—	—
Correct II	253	96%	94%	42%	69%	22%	77%	48%	—	—	—
Intervene	11	82%	82%	9%	64%	18%	82%	18%	—	—	—

Exhibit reads: In 2008–09 in Florida, the All Students subgroup missed adequate yearly progress (AYP) in math in 20 percent of the 205 Prevent I schools.

— Not available.

^a Of the 205 schools in Prevent 1, some are in this category for reasons other than math AYP (e.g., attendance or graduation rates).

NOTE: EL = English Learner; Multi = multiracial; SWD = students with disabilities. ED approved Florida's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Data extracted from state report submitted to ED in December 2009. (Pilots awarded in 2008 were required to submit a report to ED in December 2009 detailing how schools were labeled under the new system developed for differentiated accountability.)

For each improvement classification in Florida, the state defined a program of support services and interventions that included specific interventions for attaining the benchmarks and executing the school improvement plan; roles for the school, district, and state in preparing, directing, implementing, and monitoring the plan and reporting progress; measurable benchmarks for determining the progress of the plan; and consequences for noncompliance with requirements.

Under differentiated accountability, Florida created regional support centers housing teams of specialists who work in the lowest-performing schools, conduct instructional reviews, and review school improvement plans and district intervention assistance plans. The regional support

teams provided technical assistance to all schools in improvement status on data collection and targeted professional development, addressing academic areas and subgroup needs. The teams comprised regional leaders, school improvement facilitators, and connecting partners. Regional leaders were change agents with a prior success record of improving student performance in demographically similar schools. They supported school improvement efforts in the region, built district capacity, provided and brokered professional development, and coached and mentored school principals and the school and district leadership teams. School improvement facilitators were experts in primary and secondary curricula and pedagogy and had content-area knowledge. Facilitators supported the development and evaluation of district and school improvement plans, monitored the implementation of interventions, and provided other school improvement support services. Connecting partners brokered services and supports already in place to districts and schools, such as Reading First and RtI. Schools designated for less intensive interventions—Prevent I and Correct I schools—also received services, though the support was indirect. The regional centers worked with the districts to build local capacity to help these schools.

According to the state Title I director, implementing differentiated accountability was a factor in allowing the state to widen the sources of support offered to schools. For example, whereas the state Title I office was the only source of school improvement support prior to differentiated accountability, schools were now able to receive this kind of support through the five regional centers. As a result, instead of having to go through the state office, school districts were now able to directly contact the five regional offices for services. In addition, as opposed to the past, school improvement interventions for schools labeled as A, B, or C were specifically targeted as described above. Finally, whereas in the past, State facilitators performed only a monitoring function in schools and did not provide direct support, regional centers were now able to provide instructional specialists to work directly in schools, for example, through the training of reading and math coaches.

The state Title I director felt that establishing the five regional centers and staffing them with regional directors and instructional specialists helped the Florida Department of Education move services closer to the schools. School districts were able to request services from centers close to them that are staffed with specialists who could respond more quickly than could the limited staff of the state.

The roles of the school, district, and state were defined separately for each differentiated accountability classification of schools (see Exhibit A.5). The authority and responsibility to direct support and intervention shifted from the school to the district and then to the state as school classifications moved from Category I to Category II and from Prevent to Correct status.

Exhibit A.5

Florida school, district, and state support roles, by differentiated accountability categories

Differentiated accountability categories	School role	District role	State role
Prevent, Category I	School directs intervention.	District provides assistance.	State reviews progress (monitors and reports).
Correct, Category I	School complies with district-determined measures.	District directs intervention and provides assistance.	State reviews progress (monitors and reports).
Prevent, Category II	School complies with district-determined measures.	District directs intervention and provides planning and assistance.	State provides assistance, monitors, and reports.
Correct, Category II	School complies with district-directed interventions.	District complies with state-directed interventions.	State directs intervention through the district, monitors, and reports.
Intervene	School complies with district-directed interventions.	District complies with state-directed interventions.	State directs intervention through the district, monitors, and reports.

Exhibit reads: For Florida schools in the Prevent I category, the school directs its intervention, the district provides assistance in implementing the intervention, and the state reviews the progress of the implementation.

NOTE: ED approved Florida's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Florida differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008; November and December 2009 interviews.

Georgia

In its differentiated accountability application, Georgia reversed the years in which supplemental education services (SES) and school choice were first offered, and developed three tiers within the Corrective Action category (SINI 3) in order to better match interventions to specific identified needs in these schools. For schools in this category, the state determined a school's distance from the state's annual measurable objectives (AMOs) and then placed the highest-performing 20 percent of schools in Tier 1, the middle 60 percent in Tier 2, and the bottom 20 percent in Tier 3. Schools in SINI 1 and SINI 2 remained in improvement, while schools in SINI 4 and beyond were labeled State-Directed (see Exhibit A.6).

Concurrent with filing its request for differentiated accountability, Georgia was updating its single statewide accountability system (SSAS) to collapse its consequence and intervention structure in order to reach schools sooner and resolve outstanding deficiencies more quickly, a decision in line with the goals of differentiated accountability. As part of this effort, the state involved itself more directly in local decision-making and governance issues as early as the Corrective Action stage of school improvement.

Exhibit A.6
Georgia differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Improvement		•	•			
Corrective Action Tier 1				•		
Corrective Action Tier 2				•		
Corrective Action Tier 3				•		
State-Directed					•	•

Exhibit reads: In Georgia, Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Improvement schools.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Georgia's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Georgia differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 and January 2010 interviews, and state website (<http://www.gadoe.org/Pages/Home.aspx>).

In addition to existing interventions for schools in improvement that required schools to notify parents of the school's status and develop improvement plans aligned with SSAS, the Georgia differentiated accountability model added the following interventions:

- All Title I schools in SINI 1 must offer either SES or school choice to their students, depending on the decision of the district.
- All Title I schools in SINI 2 must offer both SES and school choice to their students.

The state's differentiated accountability model extended requirements for schools in Improvement to schools in Corrective Action and added the following for those in Corrective Action:

- Tier 1 schools also must choose at least one additional intervention from the following list:
 - Extend the school year or school day for the school.
 - Restructure the internal organizational structure of the school.
 - Appoint an outside expert to advise the school on its progress toward making AYP, based on its improvement plan.
 - Convert the school to a charter school.
- Tier 2 schools also must choose at least one additional intervention from the Tier 1 list or the following:
 - Replace the school staff that are relevant to the failure to make AYP.
 - Significantly decrease management authority at the school level.

- Tier 3 schools will have Corrective Action chosen by the state from the Tier 1 list or the following:
 - Involve the state directly in decisions regarding the replacement of the school staff that are relevant to the failure to make AYP.
 - Significantly decrease management authority at the school level.

Districts with schools labeled State-Directed were required to enter into a contract with the state that included both mandated and customized expectations. Mandated provisions included the following:

- Assignment by the state of a state director to every state-directed school to be at the school full-time to provide direct supervision in the implementation of all school improvement actions.
- Participation in Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) review at levels SINI 5 and SINI 7.
- Participation in training, implementation, and monitoring of instructional strategies through Raising Standards Academies, a professional learning program developed by the Georgia Department of Education to provide strategies for teaching mathematics, English/language arts and science in a standards-based classroom.
- Hiring instructional coaches for specific content areas of need, based on AYP results.

In addition to the set of non-negotiable actions for schools labeled State-Directed, the state used recent school data to develop a set of customized expectations annually, with each school and school system to address the unique issues faced by that school.

Under differentiated accountability, Georgia moved Restructuring Implementation from SINI 7 to SINI 5, so schools received intensive “contract monitoring” support two years earlier. To facilitate this shift, the state moved its required use of the GAPSS analysis from SINI 7 to SINI 5. Using GAPSS—a system of online surveys, classroom observations of teachers, and on-site interviews—schools determined their performance on school standards, such as curriculum; instruction; assessment; planning and organization; student, family, and community support; professional learning; leadership; and school culture.

With its differentiated accountability model, Georgia introduced new support structures and leadership into the schools by placing a state director in all SINI 4 and above schools (43 schools as of December 2009). State directors provided daily, on-site technical assistance, assisting with mentoring and coaching, data collection and analysis, and the ongoing implementation of interventions. State directors also were directly involved in the school improvement and restructuring process, including the replacing of staff.

Under differentiated accountability, the state expanded the roles of the 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). Prior to differentiated accountability, the RESAs served SINI 1 and SINI 2 schools; and, with the addition of state-funded school improvement specialists, they also served all schools in the newly designated Corrective Action tiers. The state provided

coordinated professional development for all RESA-based school improvement specialists to ensure that the state’s school improvement support was consistent across districts and schools.

Illinois

Illinois used its differentiated accountability model to eliminate the Corrective Action category in the federal model and based new labels of Focused and Comprehensive on whether schools met or missed AYP based on performance of the All Students group (see Exhibit A.7). Under this model, schools in any stage or year of improvement were further distinguished as either Focused or Comprehensive.

Exhibit A.7
Illinois differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Focused Years 1–3		•	•	•		
Focused Restructuring Planning				•		
Focused Restructuring Implementation					•	
Focused Continued Restructuring Implementation						•
Comprehensive Years 1–3		•	•	•		
Comprehensive Restructuring Planning				•		
Comprehensive Restructuring Implementation					•	
Comprehensive Continued Restructuring Implementation						•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Focused or Comprehensive.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Illinois’ differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Illinois differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, November 2009–January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nclb/htmls/accountability_proposal.htm).

The model also created a new priority-school designation for the lowest-performing 3–5 percent of schools in the Comprehensive Restructuring Planning and Comprehensive Restructuring Implementation categories and infused *ESEA*’s Corrective Action strategies earlier in the improvement process. By removing the Corrective Action designation and requiring intensive interventions for schools in earlier stages of the improvement timeline, the state encouraged districts and schools to engage in long-term planning and implementation of needed supports.

Focused schools in Year 2 of improvement and beyond incorporated Corrective Action–type interventions from the following list in their school improvement plans:

- Restructure the internal organization of the school to focus instruction on the area of need (e.g., providing block scheduling and an aligned instructional program targeted to the subgroup[s] not meeting AYP).
- Replace or reassign the school staff that are deemed relevant to the school not making AYP.
- Appoint one or more outside experts to advise the school on how to revise, strengthen, and implement its improvement plan to better address the area of focus and on how to address the specific issues underlying the school’s inability to make AYP.

Comprehensive schools in Year 2 of improvement and beyond incorporated corrective interventions from the following list in their school improvement plans:

- Institute a new curriculum aligned to state standards, with necessary professional development to support its implementation.
- Develop and implement frequent formative assessments permitting immediate analysis, feedback, and instruction.
- Create an extended-day program for all students or for all underperforming students.
- Implement a Response to Intervention model that emphasizes data-driven decision making, team planning, and coordinated professional development, coupled with personalized student instruction and interventions.
- For high schools, establish joint instructional and assessment programs involving feeder elementary school districts and dual credit/concurrent enrollment programs with postsecondary institutions.
- Implement a comprehensive school reform program with the assistance and advice of one or more outside experts.

In Illinois, a Regional Service Provider System, which was established prior to implementation of its differentiated accountability model, provides support services to schools and districts. Services include ongoing monitoring and assistance developing and implementing school improvement plans and ensuring plans are data-driven and effective. The state intended to use differentiated accountability to expand the support available to districts and schools through the regional agencies. The state had intended for regional service agencies to provide programs and processes that targeted the specific academic deficiencies in Focused schools and to assist Comprehensive schools in the following areas: implementation of a comprehensive data-gathering system and methods of data analysis; school-wide implementation of standards-aligned curriculum and instruction; principal mentoring and support; and improvements to student, family, and community support systems. However, as Illinois was still largely in the planning phases of its differentiated accountability plan during this evaluation, it was unclear whether this had occurred. State officials reported that they do not monitor the requests for and delivery of services between schools and service centers and do not maintain data on how schools implement their school improvement plans. The state also did not have its system of Focused and

Comprehensive interventions, as outlined in its differentiated accountability plan, in place at the time of this study.

After submitting its differentiated accountability application, Illinois turned its attention to its participation in the Partnership Zone, a public-private partnership with five other states to develop long-term reform strategies for their lowest-performing schools. Two other pilot states, Louisiana and New York, were selected for this Partnership Zone initiative, led by a nonprofit organization, which involved putting turnaround leaders in low-performing schools.

Indiana

Indiana’s differentiated accountability model incorporated an indexed rating system to identify high-need Title I schools, based on English and mathematics proficiency, and to prioritize deployment of resources for assistance. The formula distinguished between those schools considered the neediest (i.e., Comprehensive) and those closest (i.e., Focused) to meeting AYP. In 2008–09, a total of 220 schools were in improvement in Indiana. By applying the index rating formula, 170 schools were labeled for Focused Improvement, and 50 schools were labeled for Comprehensive Improvement. The plan further labeled Focused schools in Year 8 of improvement or beyond as Focused Intensive, and it labeled the 20 lowest Comprehensive schools as Comprehensive Intensive (see Exhibit A.8).

Exhibit A.8
Indiana differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Focused		•	•	•	•	•
Focused Intensive						In Year 8
Comprehensive Support		•	•	•		
Comprehensive		•	•	•	•	•
Comprehensive Intensive		•	•	•	•	•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Focused, Comprehensive Support, Comprehensive, or Comprehensive Intensive.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Indiana’s differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Indiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, November and December 2009 interviews, and state website (<http://www.doe.in.gov/improvement/turnaround/differentiated-accountability>).

According to the state Title I director, Comprehensive schools that showed improvement moved into the Comprehensive Support category, which allowed them to delay planning for restructuring while they continued to focus on their improvements.

To implement differentiated accountability, Indiana added interventions and modified existing ones and applied them to schools based on schools’ Focused or Comprehensive needs. Under *ESEA*, for example, schools developed Corrective Action plans in Year 3 and submitted them to the district for approval. Under differentiated accountability, schools labeled Focused

implemented Corrective Action plans at Year 5 and underwent review and approval by a multidisciplinary panel at Year 8, while schools labeled as Comprehensive began implementing Corrective Action strategies in Year 3. The state inserted teacher training opportunities at Year 3 to provide more support to teachers in Focused schools and potentially avert the need for Corrective Action.

In spring 2008, Indiana established three new support services, which the state included in its differentiated accountability plan. To address the needs of high-poverty, low-performing urban schools, Indiana developed the Institute for School Leadership Teams in April 2008 for school principals and leadership teams. The institute developed a two-year program based on research-based results from high-poverty, high-performing urban schools and recruited highly distinguished principals to mentor principals in low-performing schools with similar needs and demographics. In June 2008, the state established the Indiana Teacher Reading Academies and, in conjunction with differentiated accountability, required the participation of all K–3 teachers and principals in Comprehensive schools at Year 3 or higher. Also in June 2008, the state piloted the Math Now Academy and embedded this initiative into its differentiated accountability model as part of the Indiana Teacher Reading and Math Academies, beginning in school year 2009–10.

Under differentiated accountability, Indiana implemented the use of two diagnostic tools for student assessments, one for grades K–2 to provide formative assessment in reading and math, and one for grades 3–8 to provide formative assessment in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Indiana required Comprehensive schools to hire data coaches to facilitate making decisions regarding instruction. After being trained by the state department of education in the use of the diagnostic tools, the data coaches worked in districts to help teachers better understand how to use assessment data to inform instruction and to assist principals and teachers in understanding and utilizing their school data to determine appropriate interventions and assessments for gauging and improving student performance. See Exhibit A.9 for greater detail on the state interventions for Focused and Comprehensive schools.

To assist schools in the Focused and Comprehensive Intensive categories, the state required that these schools receive services from state support teams. Support teams analyzed school operations and instructional programs, evaluated the effectiveness of school personnel, and submitted recommendations and monthly reports to the state. To monitor the progress of the schools, the state hosted regular conference calls with support teams, which reported on their services and school responses.

In order to increase the number of students receiving SES, the state required schools in Focused Year 4 and higher to maintain rolling enrollment for SES and allow providers to offer instruction on the school building premises after school. All schools in any Comprehensive category must maintain rolling enrollment for SES, allow SES providers to instruct in the school building, and offer student transportation for SES tutoring.

Exhibit A.9

Indiana differentiated accountability interventions for Focused and Comprehensive schools

Year of improvement	Focused^a (required unless noted otherwise)	Comprehensive^b (required unless noted otherwise)
1–2	Supplemental educational services (SES) and school choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School choice • Required use of reading and/or math diagnostic tools • Coaches (literacy and math) • SES rolling enrollment, school site access for private providers, and transportation provided
3	Regional teacher training workshops and online training modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indiana reading academy • Indiana algebra initiative • Implement Corrective Action (schools must select one): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Replace staff responsible for continued failure to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) – Replace principal or appoint outside mentor – Hire English Learner specialist – Sufficiently extend school day or year
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SES rolling enrollment and school site access for private providers • Plan Corrective Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan restructuring • Sustain Corrective Action
5–7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Corrective Action (schools must select one): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Replace staff responsible for continued failure to make AYP – Hire full-time literacy or math coach – Hire English Learner specialist (minimum of 0.5 full-time equivalent) – Sufficiently extend school day or year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement restructuring (schools must select one): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Replace principal if leader has remained the same during sustained failure to make AYP and replace all staff responsible for failure to make AYP – Close the school – Reopen school as a charter school – Contract with a private management company with demonstrated effectiveness to run the school
8–Intensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required diagnostic tools • State support teams • Submit Corrective Action plan for state review and approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State support teams • Institute for school leadership teams • Superintendent must resubmit and publicly defend school's Restructuring Plan before a state panel

Exhibit reads: In Years 1 and 2 of improvement, Focused schools are required to offer SES and school choice.

^a Focused schools defined as those closest to meeting AYP.

^b Comprehensive schools defined as those neediest in terms of meeting AYP.

SOURCE: Indiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008; November and December 2009 interviews.

Louisiana

Prior to the 2001 reauthorization of *ESEA*, Louisiana had developed an accountability system based on school performance scores (SPS), calculated with a formula using assessment scores, attendance, drop-out, and graduation data. The formula produces scale scores ranging from 0 to 200, and under differentiated accountability, the state continued to assign a performance score of one to five stars to schools using these SPS calculations (see Exhibit A.10). Based on a school's annual SPS, the state sets its growth target for the next year. Growth targets represent the amount of progress a school must make every year to reach the state's SPS goal of 120 by 2014 to comply with current *ESEA* requirements.

Exhibit A.10
Louisiana school performance score ranges, by corresponding labels

Performance labels	SPS ranges
Five stars	140.0–200.0
Four stars	120.0–139.9
Three stars	100.0–119.9
Two stars	80.0–99.9
One star	60.0–79.9
Academically unacceptable	Below 60.0

Exhibit reads: A school is awarded five stars if its school performance scores fall between 140 and 200.

NOTE: SPS = school performance scores.

SOURCE: Louisiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008.

Louisiana used the flexibility provided by differentiated accountability to retain its state system of accountability and continued to assign schools performance and growth labels; it also renamed the current *ESEA* school improvement categories and added a Pre-Identification label for schools that missed AYP for the first time (see Exhibit A.11). The state’s differentiated accountability model continued to determine school improvement categories according to subgroup AYP performance as defined by *ESEA* but did not merge its state system with *ESEA*. This means that the state maintained parallel systems, determining SPS and *ESEA* performance separately, and required schools to meet AYP under both systems.

Exhibit A.11
Louisiana differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Pre-Identification	•					
Initial Support		•				
Secondary Support			•			
Continued Support 1				•		
Continued Support 2				•		
Vital Support 1					•	
Vital Support 2						•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Initial Support.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Louisiana’s differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Louisiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, November 2009–January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/understanding_acct.html).

While Louisiana did not create new identification tiers within *ESEA* categories, it did create tiers for interventions within categories based on what percentage of the total school enrollment the subgroup(s) missing one or more AYP indicators represented. By requiring one or two interventions, the state allowed schools with specific low-performing subgroups to select from a state menu of previously approved interventions. For schools that did not make AYP in the All Students category, the state assigned specific interventions to each category. Schools were

responsible for developing their school improvement plans using these interventions and were required to submit the plans to the state for approval.

In Louisiana, the differentiated accountability model focused on the specific problems of the specific groups of students who were struggling. Under differentiated accountability, the state directed interventions to those student groups with the greatest need and increased services for those schools with larger proportions of low-performing students and those in need for longer periods of time. State officials felt that the benefit of differentiated accountability was that they could offer more choices from among approved interventions and facilitate buy-in by allowing schools and districts to select some of their own interventions.

As schools moved up in school improvement categories, they implemented all of the interventions from the previous category plus those added in the subsequent category. In addition to interventions required by the state, schools selected as noted from the state menu of interventions (see Exhibit A.12).

Exhibit A.12

Louisiana state menu of interventions from which schools could create school improvement plans

Interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire highly qualified teachers• Provide professional development addressing specific subgroup needs• Hire “specialist” or “lead teacher” with experience in research-based approach for specific subgroups• Hire general academic specialists (as administrators)• Extend the school year or school day• Implement academic or operational program—Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) approach• Replace staff• Enter agreement with Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) for a Distinguished Educator• Enter agreement with LDE for Turnaround Specialist Project• Offer targeted or schoolwide supplemental educational services (SES)• Offer targeted or schoolwide school choice• Analyze and redraw attendance zones and feeder patterns• Conduct external comprehensive needs assessment• Conduct external implementation checks• Contract an outside expert• Restructure• Reconstitution• Decrease management authority• Submit quarterly or monthly implementation reports• Submit to state takeover<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Direct operation by state or state awarded charter– Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LDE to contract with a provider to operate failing academic MOU to complete implementation of major Restructuring Plan

SOURCE: Louisiana differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008; November 2009–January 2010 interviews.

To support differentiated accountability, the state continued to require districts to assign district assistance teams to schools in improvement to provide additional intensive support and conduct classroom observations to identify specific areas of need. Assistance team members were district employees trained by the state. The team was responsible not only for leading the needs

assessment, but also for collaborating with the school improvement team in implementing and evaluating improvement activities.

Louisiana used differentiated accountability to strengthen its state accountability system and reinforce existing practices, so little is new in its differentiated accountability model. In reinforcing its existing system, Louisiana focused on coordinating services with its regional education service centers. The centers provided a structure for establishing a shared partnership between the state and the districts, which facilitated a coherent delivery of menu-driven services. Under differentiated accountability, the primary role of the regional centers was to implement state-mandated programs that impact student achievement; staff members also assisted districts with school improvement planning, the state accountability system, instructional strategies, and school culture and climate.

The Louisiana state Title I director reported that Louisiana appreciated that differentiated accountability allowed the state to restructure school improvement categories, reorder categories to match state needs, and apply interventions based on state-established criteria. She felt that having a strong state accountability system in place prior to differentiated accountability was important in the state's ability to support the implementation of differentiated accountability because it provided the foundation on which to build the differentiated accountability model and extend and enhance school support services.

Maryland

With differentiated accountability, Maryland classified schools in two improvement categories, Developing (schools in the first three years of school improvement status under Title I) and Priority (schools in Year 2 of Corrective Action or Restructuring Planning under Title I) and further differentiated within each category between schools with focused needs and schools with comprehensive needs (see Exhibit A.13). All schools entered school improvement through the Developing Schools stage and were classified as either Developing Focused schools or Developing Comprehensive schools. In Developing Focused schools, the All Students group met its AMOs, and fewer than three subgroups did not make the state's AMOs in reading or mathematics. Also included as Developing Focused schools were those that did not meet other academic indicators in the Maryland School Assessments (science in elementary, middle, and high school; government in high school) and those with a 100 percent special services population that missed AYP for the first two years. In schools in the Developing Comprehensive category, the All Students group missed the state's AMOs for reading or mathematics, or three or more subgroups missed the AMOs in reading or mathematics. Schools unable to change long-term performance patterns moved to the Priority stage if they had not achieved AYP for four consecutive years.

Exhibit A.13
Maryland differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring Implementation (SINI 5+)
Achieving Schools	•					
Developing Focused		•	•	•		
Developing Comprehensive		•	•	•		
Priority Focused				•	•	•
Priority Comprehensive				•	•	•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Developing Focused or Developing Comprehensive.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Maryland's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Maryland differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 interviews, and state website (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/esea/>).

To address the needs of schools earlier than the Title I designation process, Maryland created the Achieving Schools status for schools missing AYP for the first time. Achieving Schools must undergo a local school system evaluation to determine the causes of their decline and take Corrective Action the next school year. By insisting on Corrective Actions early, the state hoped to limit the number of schools entering improvement status and maintain focus on those in greater need.

The state assumed that schools labeled as Developing Focused struggled in a very narrow area or with very few students and intervened with two requirements:

- The state must review local school improvement plans but will leave responsibility for implementation at the district level.
- The district must assure the state that the evaluation objectives for state and federal school improvement funds are aligned with the school improvement goals.

For Developing Comprehensive schools, the state determined interventions addressing capacity issues in leadership and available resources and added the following interventions to those required for focused-needs schools:

- The school must administer a previously validated school climate survey and use the results to develop, with district oversight, three to five priorities for improving the school's climate in its improvement plan.
- The district and school leadership must consult with the Breakthrough Center to receive assistance in analyzing needs, recommending and prioritizing actions, and targeting professional development on persistent needs areas.
- Local leadership must determine which of the six traditional Corrective Action steps should be pursued.

Maryland considered Priority Focused schools to have a persistent, focused problem requiring an evaluation of the effectiveness of the leadership and the teaching staff. In these schools, the state implemented all interventions used with developing schools but replaced the Corrective Action requirement with one requiring the schools to submit their school improvement plans to the state for approval by the Maryland State Board of Education.

Maryland intervened with greatest intensity in Priority Comprehensive schools, considering that in these schools the knowledge and skills needed to improve were underdeveloped or lacking and that the need for capacity building was the greatest. For these schools, the state required all interventions applied to other categories and added the following:

- The school system and school must select to reopen the school as a public charter school; contract with a private management company; and replace all or most of the school staff, including the principal, or appoint or employ a distinguished principal, along with replacing the staff relevant to the school's failure to make AYP. Once the school system and school select the alternative governance, the state requires the school to develop and submit for state approval an individual improvement plan.
- The local school system superintendent must hold two community meetings in the school zone to discuss the best alternative governance arrangements for the school with the community and parents, and the results of the community meetings and the selection of the alternative governance arrangement must be included in the school improvement plan.

With its differentiated accountability plan, Maryland also realigned its existing intervention tools and resources and provided additional options—such as comprehensive planning; curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development with accountability; leadership; organizational structure and resources; and school culture and climate—to better match critical aspects of school improvement planning. Schools selected interventions that varied in intensity and could be customized to the needs and the culture of each school (see Exhibit A.14).

Exhibit A.14

Maryland state menu of interventions from which schools could create school improvement plan

Interventions

- Comprehensive needs assessment
 - Master plan update
 - School improvement technical assistance (SITA) program
 - Climate survey
 - Teacher capacity needs assessment (TCNA)
 - Development of comprehensive school improvement plan
 - Breakthrough Center
 - Low-performing schools' principals' academy
 - Online principal mentoring
 - Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reading/math professional development program
 - Positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) training
 - Priority hiring of highly qualified teachers
 - Teacher mentors
 - Voluntary state curriculum
 - District-provided technical assistance
 - District-provided leadership/coaching
 - District-provided instructional supervisor to coach, monitor, and evaluate
 - Collaborative planning time
 - Extended learning opportunities for low-performing students (before/during/after school, Saturday, summer school)
 - School leadership teams
 - Student support teams
 - Progress monitoring by district
 - Instructional walk-throughs with school department chairs
-

SOURCE: Maryland differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008; December 2009 interviews.

To assist schools in building capacity, Maryland used differentiated accountability to establish the Breakthrough Center in 2008 and positioned it as the state's primary conduit to support schools needing specific interventions to address the identified priorities. For example, in 2008, students with disabilities missed AYP in reading in 76 of the 85 Comprehensive Priority schools (89 percent) and missed AYP in mathematics in 87 percent of these same schools (see Exhibit A.15). The Breakthrough Center assisted these schools in the most-intense level of improvement with training modules and professional development focused on co-teaching strategies for special education students in regular classrooms.

Exhibit A.15

Number of schools and percentage of subgroups not making AYP, by Maryland differentiated accountability improvement categories: School year 2008–09

Differentiated accountability categories	Total no. of schools	All students	Low-income	EL	SWD	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
Developing Focused ^a	45	2%	13%	0%	36%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Developing Comprehensive	47	70%	74%	11%	74%	4%	77%	9%	0%	4%
Priority Focused	23	9%	4%	0%	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Priority Comprehensive	85	73%	69%	13%	89%	6%	74%	11%	0%	0%
Developing Focused	45	0%	11%	2%	20%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Developing Comprehensive	47	53%	68%	13%	66%	4%	55%	6%	0%	0%
Priority Focused	23	9%	9%	4%	22%	4%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Priority Comprehensive	85	76%	74%	14%	87%	1%	73%	11%	1%	1%

Exhibit reads: In 2008–09 in Maryland, the All Students subgroup missed adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2 percent of the 45 Developing Focused schools.

^a Of the 45 schools in the Developing Focused category, some are in this category for reasons other than reading and math AYP (e.g., attendance or graduation rates).

NOTE: EL = English Learner; SWD = students with disabilities.

SOURCE: Data extracted from state report submitted to ED in December 2009.

In 2003, Maryland passed the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act*, legislation that established many of the processes in place for school improvement. This law required all 24 districts in the state to participate in an annual master planning process in which district officials report to a master plan review panel on the performance of the school system and schools and detail the measures that are taken locally to remedy low performance. Under differentiated accountability, Maryland shifted interventions one year earlier, requiring districts to work with schools after missing AYP for the first year and moving reforms used in Years 5 and 6 of missing AYP to Year 4. In doing so, the state relied on the master planning process to work in tandem with its differentiated accountability model to identify schools eligible for earlier interventions.

New York

The U.S. Department of Education approved New York’s differentiated accountability waiver application in January 2009, and state officials indicated that, at the time of the interviews in December 2009, the state was still in the earliest stages of implementing its plan. New York used differentiated accountability to reduce the current number of school accountability categories from 17 to 8 by eliminating dual Title I and non–Title I streams of improvement, to integrate federal and state accountability systems, to collapse identifications for improvement into three simplified phases, and to provide schools with diagnostic tools, planning strategies, supports, and interventions specific to that phase in the improvement process and the school’s category of need. The state retained its Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) category for schools in any differentiated accountability category that were the farthest from state standards. SURR schools were at risk of losing their license and were automatically placed in restructuring.

New York’s differentiated accountability model retained *ESEA*’s school improvement categories but added tiers of differentiation within each: Basic, Focused, and Comprehensive (see Exhibit A.16).

Exhibit A.16
New York differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
No consequence	•					
Improvement Basic		•	•			
Improvement Focused		•	•			
Improvement Comprehensive		•	•			
Corrective Action Focused				•		
Corrective Action Comprehensive				•		
Restructuring Focused					•	•
Restructuring Comprehensive					•	•
Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)		•	•	•	•	•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Improvement Basic, Improvement Focused, Improvement Comprehensive, or Schools Under Registration Review (SURR).

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved New York’s differentiated accountability plan in January 2009; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories

SOURCE: New York differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 and January 2010 interviews, and state website (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/APA/Differentiated_Accountability/DA_home.html).

Each category was determined by the degree to which there was systemic failure of groups of students to make the state’s AMOs or other academic indicators:

- Basic (improvement phase only): Schools identified based on low performance of a single student group on a single accountability measure.
- Focused: Schools identified based on low performance of two or more student subgroups but not the All Students group.
- Comprehensive: Schools identified based on low performance of the All Students group or all student groups except the All Student group.

Under differentiated accountability, the depth, scope, and comprehensiveness of the interventions as well as the primary provider of support, oversight, and assistance varied by phase of improvement and category. The plan shifted responsibility to the state to provide persistently low-performing schools with experts who can partner with districts to guide and direct improvement strategies and empowered districts to take primary responsibility for developing and implementing improvement strategies in schools that were not persistently

failing to make AYP with large groups of students. In such instances, districts had considerable flexibility to work with schools to design improvement plans that were tailored to the specific circumstances of the school. Further, for schools missing AYP based on the performance of a single group of students, New York’s differentiated accountability model allowed schools to assess their needs and develop their own improvement plans and shifted responsibility to the district to ensure the plan is implemented successfully. The state believed that, by giving districts greater latitude and more responsibility for addressing these two groups of schools, the state and the district could better concentrate resources on those schools that needed more comprehensive interventions in order to ensure improvements in student performance.

To provide needed services earlier in the improvement process and establish a continuum of increased intensity of services, the state realigned a number of existing diagnostic, implementation, and oversight resources to match school improvement categories explicitly (see Exhibit A.17).

Exhibit A.17
New York required diagnostic, implementation, and oversight interventions
under differentiated accountability, by school improvement categories: School year 2008–09

School improvement categories	Required diagnostic intervention	Required implementation intervention	Required oversight and support intervention
Improvement	Schools must conduct a school quality review	Schools must develop a school improvement plan	Districts must take primary responsibility for developing and implementing improvement plans
Corrective Action	Schools must conduct a curriculum audit	Schools must implement the curriculum audit and develop a Corrective Action plan	State must provide technical assistance to districts to implement improvement plans
Restructuring	Schools must receive assistance from Joint Intervention Teams and Distinguished Educators	Schools must receive external assistance to implement improvement plan or phase out	State and its agents must work in direct partnership with the district to implement improvement plan or phase out

Exhibit reads: Schools in improvement must conduct a school quality review, develop a school improvement plan, and should receive support from their districts in developing and implementing their plans.

SOURCE: New York differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008.

The state service provider reported that the assistant commissioner for school improvement was still considering establishing turnaround centers to provide services to low-performing schools with joint intervention teams and distinguished educators. In the meantime, the state continued to utilize its existing supports to implement differentiated accountability while planning and developing a new system of services. School liaisons at the state department of education worked with districts and schools to provide guidance and resources based on the needs of districts, and the state relied on its existing regional school support centers to provide on-site strategic assistance to help schools increase student achievement in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

New York allocated additional improvement funding to the neediest schools and monitors them heavily. The state used state school liaisons to conduct site visits and provide technical assistance in such areas as leadership, teaching and learning, assessment, professional development, or use of data for restructuring schools and schools under registration review. For example, one district had three school liaisons working with 24 schools in various stages of improvement. In addition, the New York state service provider said that he directed the services provided by his office to the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in the state.

Ohio

Ohio developed its differentiated accountability model around the key elements of accountability, differentiation, and interventions to better define the degree of complexity necessary for targeting intervention to schools and districts that have been identified for school improvement. The Ohio differentiated accountability model categorized districts and schools as needing Low, Medium, or High Support (see Exhibit A.18) based on the aggregate percentage of student subgroups that did not meet AYP in reading and mathematics. Districts and schools were labeled Low Support if they missed less than 20 percent of their AYP indicators, Medium Support if they missed 20–29 percent of AYP indicators, and High Support if they missed 30 percent or more of their AYP indicators. Thus, a school in any year of improvement could be categorized as Low, Medium, or High Support. A High Support Year 1 school could access intensive support quickly and could access additional options if it continued not to make AYP. In 2007, Ohio received permission from the Department to pilot a growth model, which reduced the number of schools identified for improvement. Under the growth model, students who missed proficiency targets were counted as having met the targets if they made significant gains.

Exhibit A.18
Ohio differentiated accountability model categories, by Title I designation

State differentiated accountability categories	Title I designation: missed AYP zero or one year	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1)	Title I designation: Improvement, Year 2 (SINI 2)	Title I designation: Corrective Action (SINI 3)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Planning (SINI 4)	Title I designation: Restructuring, Implementation (SINI 5+)
Low Support		•	•	•	•	•
Medium Support		•	•	•	•	•
High Support		•	•	•	•	•

Exhibit reads: Schools in Need of Improvement, Year 1 (SINI 1), under Title I are now labeled Low Support, Medium Support, or High Support.

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress. ED approved Ohio's differentiated accountability plan in July 2008; Appendix C contains explanations of differentiated accountability categories.

SOURCE: Ohio differentiated accountability application submitted to ED in 2008, December 2009 interviews, and state website (<http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=129&ContentID=47348&Content=117373>).

Ohio proposed to provide schools and districts that missed AYP with new options for interventions, in addition to those required by federal and state law. Some options existed prior to differentiated accountability, but the state assigned them to lower improvement categories to intensify state efforts earlier in the improvement process. Interventions newly aligned with each of the three categories included the following:

- In addition to existing state and federal requirements, schools designated as Low Support schools may opt to develop and implement a district leadership team and school building leadership teams to implement recommendations in the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council framework.⁵
- Districts and schools identified as needing Medium Support must select one or more of the following options:
 - Have an on-site review by a state-approved diagnostic team with implementation of at least two critical items associated with the reasons the schools and/or district were identified for improvement.
 - Replace the building staff relevant to the issues.
 - Institute and fully implement a new curriculum, including professional development for teachers.
 - Significantly decrease management authority at the building level.
 - Appoint an outside expert to advise the building on its progress.
 - Extend the school year or school day for the building.
 - Restructure the internal organizational structure of the building.
- Districts and schools identified as needing High Support selected one or more of the following options:
 - Have an on-site review by a state-approved diagnostic team with aggressive implementation of critical items associated with the reasons the schools and/or district were identified for improvement.
 - Have the district/buildings implement their improvement plans under the oversight of the state support team.
 - Reopen the school as a public charter school.
 - Replace all or most of the building staff (which may include the principal).
 - Enter into a contract with an entity to operate the public school.

For High Support districts failing to provide consistent oversight of the school improvement efforts or failing to demonstrate significant district improvement, the state selected additional interventions. These interventions included adjustments to funding; new requirements for curriculum and professional development; replacement of staff; and alternative governance and supervision arrangements, including replacing the superintendent and appointing a receiver or trustee to administer the affairs of the district in place of the superintendent and the local school board.

Ohio’s goal was to improve the outcomes of the district system—the district and schools—by instituting consistent improvement processes across the district. The state used differentiated accountability to implement the Ohio Improvement Process plan, a policy that required a district and its schools in improvement status to move through the improvement process as a unit. This

⁵ The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council represents a large group of stakeholders convened by the Ohio Department of Education, in partnership with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators to identify the essential practices needed to be implemented by staff at all levels of the education system to ensure improvement in student performance.

meant that a district not in improvement status, but with buildings in improvement status, was required to implement the basic treatments at the district level as if it had been identified. Districts and schools remaining in the same category and not making significant progress were required to add an additional intervention once every three years. By unifying the treatments within a district, the state focused its limited capacity on districts and their associated schools with the most severe problems.

Under differentiated accountability, the state added a requirement that schools in improvement form district and school leadership teams to plan, monitor, and implement school improvement plans. This action was an option for Low Support schools but a mandate for schools in Medium or High Support status.

To support differentiated accountability, Ohio leveraged existing state diagnostic team leaders by increasing their role in the district and school implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process plan. Prior to differentiated accountability, the state diagnostic team conducted local school and district assessments, debriefed the superintendent, and moved on to the next district. Under differentiated accountability, the state diagnostic team leader returned to the district to align the diagnostic review with the decision framework and served as an ongoing resource for districts as they created their focused school improvement plan. These teams absorbed much of the responsibility of the existing state support teams housed in the Education Service Centers, freeing them to focus on the neediest schools. The state service provider explained that this process was evolving prior to differentiated accountability, but that the waiver provided leverage and support for a preventative approach.

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Appendix B: State and Local Respondents Interviewed in the Nine Pilot States

**Exhibit B.1
Interview subjects, by the nine pilot states**

State	State Title I director	State service provider	District Title I director	School principal
AR	Director for two years	Project Manager for nine months; previously a field service provider	Director in small, rural district for two and a half years	Principal for three years; school in restructuring status
FL	Director for two years; involved with differentiated accountability from beginning	Director for one year; oversees state support to schools for differentiated accountability. Former turn-around principal in Miami	Director in large, coastal, suburban district for four years	Principal for five years; school made AYP in 2008–09 for first time in five years
GA	Program Manager for Title I for two years; Division Director of Title I for four years	Program Manager in Analysis and Planning Division	Director in small, rural district for six years	Principal for less than one year; assistant principal for two years; Teacher for 11 years in same school; school in restructuring
IL	Director for four months; with state department of education for two years; involved with differentiated accountability from beginning	Director for 16 years; involved with differentiated accountability from beginning	Director in large urban district for seven years	Principal for six months; school reopened with new principal/staff in 2009
IN	Director of Differentiated Learners for four and a half years	Title I Specialist for less than one year; with Indiana Department of Education for three years	Director in large, urban district for 15 years	Principal for four years; school in restructuring
LA	Director for two years	School Improvement Supervisor for two years	SES Coordinator in large, rural district for seven years	Principal for less than one year; school in restructuring
MD	Director for three years	Executive Director of the Breakthrough Center for two years	Director of School Improvement and Accountability in large, suburban district for 10 years	Principal for five years; school in restructuring
NY	Director for six years; involved with differentiated accountability since beginning	Research Specialist for five years on state's Office of Accountability School Improvement Team	Acting Director	Principal for nine years; school missing AYP in EL and SWD student subgroups
OH	Director for six years; involved with differentiated accountability from beginning	Director for six years; manages district requests for services	Director in mid-size city district for one and a half years; with district for 42 years	Principal for four years; school reopened with new principal/staff in 2005

NOTE: AYP = adequate yearly progress; EL = English Learner; SES = supplemental educational services; SWD = students with disabilities.

SOURCE: November 2009–January 2010 interviews.

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Appendix C: Summary of Methods States Used to Distinguish Tiers in Pilot Differentiated Accountability Models

States used a variety of approaches to distinguish between schools needing help with a limited number of subgroups and schools having more comprehensive needs.

Arkansas

Arkansas selected 75 percent as the performance target to distinguish tiers. School categories under differentiated accountability and how they are assigned are as follows:

- Targeted Improvement schools are those in which 75 percent or greater of the subpopulations meet standards and one or more subpopulations failed to meet annual measurable objectives (AMOs).
- Intensive Targeted Improvement schools are those in which 75 percent or greater of the subpopulations meet standards and one or more subpopulations failed to meet AMOs for five or more years consecutively in the same subject.
- Whole-School Improvement schools are those in which the combined populations did not meet AMOs and/or less than 75 percent of subpopulations meet AMOs and are in Year 1, Year 2, or Year 3 of school improvement.
- Intensive Whole-School Improvement schools have the same criteria as Whole School but have been in improvement for four or more years.

Florida

Florida developed its differentiated accountability categories based on school grades earned in combination with whether schools met 80 percent of their adequate yearly progress (AYP) indicators and their number of years in improvement. School categories under differentiated accountability and how they are assigned are as follows:

- Prevent I schools are those that have earned an A, B, or C in the Florida School Grades system, have met 80 percent of their AYP indicators, and are in Year 1, Year 2, or Year 3 of school improvement.
- Correct I schools are those that have earned an A, B, or C in the Florida School Grades system, have met fewer than 80 percent of their AYP indicators, and are in Year 4 or beyond in school improvement.
- Prevent II schools are those that have earned a D or F in the Florida School Grades system, have met 80 percent of their AYP indicators, and are in Year 1, Year 2, or Year 3 of school improvement.
- Correct II schools are those that have earned a D or F in the Florida School Grades system, have met fewer than 80 percent of their AYP indicators, and are in Year 4 or beyond in school improvement.

Georgia

Georgia added three tiers within the Corrective Action category. Using the schools in Corrective Action, the state calculated quintiles based on a school's distance from its AMOs to develop the three tiers and used the quintiles as follows:

- Tier I schools are those in the top 20 percent.
- Tier II schools are those in the middle 60 percent.
- Tier III schools are those in the bottom 20 percent.

Illinois

Illinois renamed *ESEA* categories of Schools in Need of Improvement for Years 1–3 (SINI 1–3) as either Focused 1–3 or Comprehensive 1–3, and continued to use Restructuring labels for SINI 4–5+, but added Focused and Comprehensive distinctions. Focused schools met AYP in the All Students category, and Comprehensive schools did not.

Indiana

Indiana revised a formula-driven indexed rating system used prior to differentiated accountability and used an index cut-off score of 60.95 to distinguish between Focused and Comprehensive schools.

Louisiana

Louisiana did not add tiers to its state accountability model to distinguish within SINI categories but did rename the current SINI categories to:

- Pre-Identification: Newly created category for schools that missed AYP for the first time.
- Initial Support: Former Title I year 1 improvement designation.
- Secondary Support: Former Title I year 1 improvement designation.
- Continued Support 1/Support 2: Former Title I corrective action designation.
- Vital Support 1: Former Title I restructuring/planning designation.
- Vital Support 2: Former Title I restructuring/implementation designation.

Maryland

Maryland separated schools into two stages based on their Title I SINI categories—Developing schools are those in SINI 1, SINI 2, or Year 1 of Corrective Action; Priority schools are those in Year 2 of Corrective Action or Restructuring. The state then added two tiers to each stage—Focused and Comprehensive.

- Focused schools are those that fail to achieve the AMOs for reading and/or mathematics for no more than two subgroups and that achieve all AMOs for the All Students group in reading and mathematics.

- Comprehensive schools are those that fail to achieve the AMO for the All Students group for reading or mathematics or that fail to achieve the AMO for three or more AYP subgroups for reading and/or mathematics.

New York

New York reduced the school improvement categories to three—Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring—and added tiers within each category.

- Basic schools are those identified for one accountability measure and one student group but not the All Student group.
- Focused schools are those identified for more than one accountability measure or more than one student group within an accountability measure but not the All Student group.
- Comprehensive schools are those identified for one or more accountability measures and the All Student group.

Ohio

Ohio created three tiers within each SINI category based on the percentage of AYP indicators missed.

- Low Support schools are those missing fewer than 20 percent of their AYP indicators.
- Medium Support schools are those missing between 20 percent and 29 percent of their AYP indicators.
- High Support schools are those missing 30 percent or more of their AYP indicators.



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