



Highlights of [GAO-07-140](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA) designates federal funds to support the education of students with limited English proficiency and provides for formula-based grants to states. This report describes the data the Education Department used to distribute Title III funds and the implications of data measurement issues for the two allowable sources of data— American Community Survey (ACS) and state assessment data—for allocating funds across states. In addition, the report describes changes in federal funding to support these students under NCLBA and how states and school districts used these funds as well as Education's Title III oversight and support to states. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed documentation on ACS and state data, interviewed federal and state officials, and collected data from 12 states, 11 districts, and 6 schools.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Education provide clear instructions to states on how and where to provide data specified in NCLBA on the number of students with limited English proficiency, develop and implement a methodology for determining which is the more accurate of the two allowable sources of data, and seek authority to use statistical methodologies to reduce the volatility associated with ACS data. Education generally agreed with GAO's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-140.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-7215 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

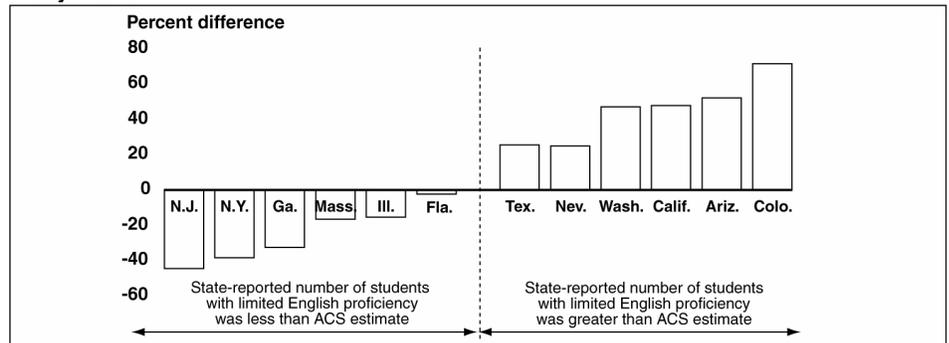
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

EDUCATION'S DATA IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS COULD STRENGTHEN THE BASIS FOR DISTRIBUTING TITLE III FUNDS

What GAO Found

Education used ACS data to distribute Title III funds, but measurement issues with both ACS and state data could result in funding differences. Education used ACS data primarily because state data were incomplete. In September, Education officials told us they were developing plans to clarify instructions for state data submissions to address identified inconsistencies. While Education officials expected their efforts to improve the quality of the data, they told us that they had not established criteria or a methodology to determine the relative accuracy of the two data sources. State data represent the number of students with limited English proficiency assessed annually for English proficiency, and ACS data are based in part on responses to subjective English ability questions from a sample of the population. ACS data showed large increases and decreases in numbers of these students from 2003 to 2004 in part due to sample size. ACS data and state counts of students with limited English proficiency for the 12 study states differed (see graph). GAO's simulation of the distribution of Title III funds for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 based on these numbers showed that there would be differences in how much funding states would receive.

Percentage Differences between State-Reported Data (2004-05) and 2004 ACS Data in 12 Study States



Source: GAO analysis of state and ACS data.

In fiscal year 2006, Congress authorized over \$650 million in Title III funding for students with limited English proficiency—an increase of over \$200 million since fiscal year 2001 under NCLBA. This increase in funding as well as the change in how funds are distributed—from a primarily discretionary grant program to a formula grant program—contributed to more districts receiving federal funding to support students with limited English proficiency since the enactment of NCLBA. States and school districts used Title III funds to support programs and activities including language instruction and professional development. Education provided oversight and support to states. Officials from 5 of the 12 study states reported overall satisfaction with the support from Education. However, some officials indicated that they needed more guidance in certain areas, such as developing English language proficiency assessments that meet NCLBA's requirements. Education is taking steps to address issues states identified.