



Supplemental educational services and implementation challenges in the Northwest Region states



Institute of Education Sciences

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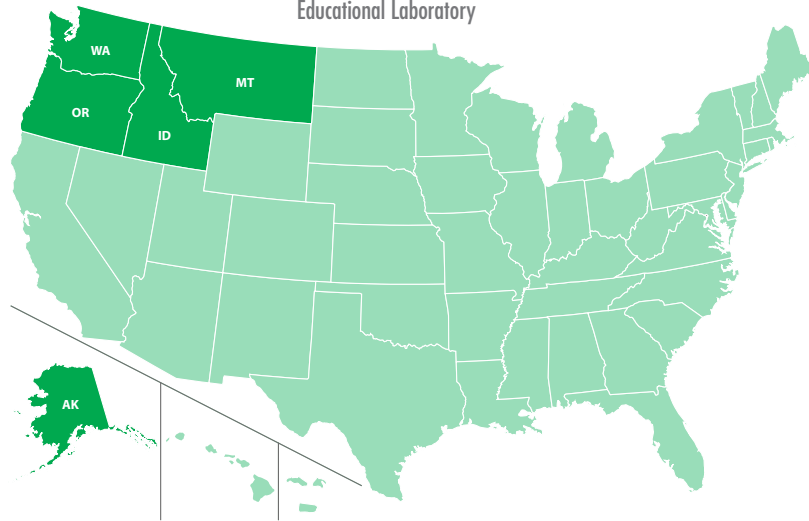
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory



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Summary

Supplemental educational services and implementation challenges in the Northwest Region states

Participation in supplemental educational services in the Northwest Region is about one-third the national rate. Among the challenges to improving services for all eligible children are recruiting, monitoring, and evaluating service providers; communicating effectively at all levels, from parents to the state; and weak data systems, with data both difficult to access and often conflicting.

This report describes the initial efforts and current status of implementing supplemental educational services (SES) in the Northwest Region states, identifies information gaps and areas of further inquiry, and delineates concerns and challenges for the states. It is an exploratory effort to identify issues for deeper examination in follow-up work that will include direct inquiry in districts, schools, and providers. Specifically, it seeks to answer two questions about supplemental educational services, which are tutoring services available to students in Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress against established targets for three consecutive years:

- What are the supplemental educational services usage rates in the Northwest Region states, and how do those rates compare with usage rates nationally and regionally?

- What are some of the challenges for state education agencies in providing supplemental educational services with respect to participation, access to providers, monitoring and evaluation, and communication?

Of the Northwest Region states Oregon had the highest SES usage rate and Montana the lowest in 2004/05, the year for which the most complete and accurate data were available. All states except Oregon were below the regional and national averages. The regional usage rate is about one-third the national rate. While the SES participation rate increased nationally from 12 percent in 2003/04 to 19 percent in 2004/05, it increased from 4.3 percent to 6.5 percent in the Northwest Region, which left the region further behind the national average.

Each state education agency faces different challenges with supplemental educational services. These challenges are based on differences in the numbers of schools required to offer supplemental services, the numbers of schools in remote or rural areas, the person-hours and resources that state education agencies must devote to the effort, the skills of staff in charge of the effort, the availability of SES providers, the quality of providers, and many more factors. Several state SES coordinators indicated that the cost-benefit ratios of the services are currently unfavorable.

While improvements have been made in providing services, significant common challenges remain for optimizing supplemental educational services for the students in the Northwest Region:

- *Increasing participation rates.* Although usage rates are low throughout the country, they are significantly lower in the Northwest Region because of the rural nature of the region and the lack of resources (personnel and funds) to adequately support and enforce the effort.
- *Adequately evaluating and monitoring SES providers.* Systems for tracking services by school and district are lacking or disorganized. No state in the region has an adequate evaluation system in place. The rigor necessary to evaluate a provider with enough certainty to determine whether to retain or remove it from the approved list requires a level of resources and expertise that no state education agency seems willing or able to provide.
- *Working more effectively with SES providers.* State education agencies struggle with formulating policies and procedures for providers that will meet the needs of schools, students, parents, and providers. Examples include when and how often to allow providers to apply for inclusion on

the approved list and whether to allow providers to offer incentives to entice students and parents to use their services.

- *Improving communication.* Timely communication among states, districts, schools, providers, parents, and students is a great challenge. Often, districts and schools do not get enough advance notice of their failure to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act and so are unable to notify parents, contract with providers, and set up programs before the school year is well under way. Also needing attention is the flow of information between teachers and providers about curriculum approaches, teaching strategies, and student progress.

A key finding of the investigation is that the state education agency data systems are in great need of improvement. Most state SES coordinators had difficulty getting accurate numbers—whether on schools required to offer supplemental services, on eligible students, or on students served. Often, district-level information differed from state-level information, and data tables on state education agency web sites had conflicting information. This made collecting reliable data on usage rates and providers difficult.

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Participation in supplemental educational services in the Northwest Region is about one-third the national rate. Among the challenges to improving services for all eligible children are recruiting, monitoring, and evaluating service providers; communicating effectively at all levels, from parents to the state; and weak data systems, with data both difficult to access and often conflicting.

OVERVIEW

This report describes the initial efforts and current status of implementing supplemental educational services (SES) in the Northwest Region states, identifies information gaps and areas of further inquiry, and delineates concerns and challenges for the state education agencies. It is an exploratory effort to identify issues for deeper examination in follow-up work that will include direct inquiry in districts, schools, and providers. The objective is to present findings that can help states optimize implementation of supplemental educational services and ultimately improve academic achievement for students who qualify for supplemental educational services under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Children from low-income families attending Title I schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress targets for three consecutive years are entitled to free tutoring known as supplemental educational services (box 1).

Data were sought for the 2003/04, 2004/05, and 2005/06 school years from state education agencies, local education agencies, and school databases in the five Northwest Region states (box 2) to address two key questions related to supplemental educational services and usage:

- What are the supplemental educational services usage rates in the Northwest Region states, and how do these rates compare with usage rates nationally and regionally?
- What are some of the challenges for state education agencies in providing supplemental educational services with respect to participation, access to providers, monitoring and evaluation, and communication?

Of the Northwest Region states Oregon had the highest SES usage rate and Montana the lowest in 2004/05, the year for which the most complete and accurate data were available. All states except Oregon were below the regional and national averages. The regional usage rate is about one-third the national rate. While the SES participation rate

BOX 1

The No Child Left Behind Act and supplemental educational services

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stipulates that children from low-income families who attend a Title I school that has not met adequate yearly progress for at least three years are entitled to free academic tutoring, called supplemental educational services. Offered outside the regular school day, supplemental educational services are intended to help students meet state academic achievement standards in reading, language arts, and math.

States identify qualifying schools, and school districts determine which students qualify for supplemental educational services (children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level). The district notifies parents of the availability of free tutoring, and parents can choose from a list of providers approved by the state under an application process in which providers have indicated an interest in working in the particular district. Tutoring must be high-quality, research-based, and consistent with the state's academic content standards. Once parents select a provider, the district contracts with the provider to pay for the service.

After that, it is intended that the school, parents, and provider meet to determine the student's performance goals. The state education agency is to monitor and evaluate each provider to ensure that the tutoring leads to improvements in academic achievement.

In most states supplemental educational services were first available in 2002/03, the year after No Child Left Behind was signed into law, but not all states began contracting for supplemental services at that time. Alaska, Montana, and Washington did not start until the 2003/04 school year. Idaho, which received a federal waiver, began contracting during the 2005/06 school year.

BOX 2

Data collection and limitations of the data

Data collection. The data gathered for this report focused on the following key questions:

- What are the SES usage rates in the Northwest Region, and how do they compare nationally and across Northwest Region states?
- Which districts and schools are required to provide supplemental educational services?
- How many children are eligible for supplemental educational services?
- How many eligible children have received supplemental educational services?
- Who is providing supplemental educational services in the Northwest Region, and how are those services delivered?

- What is the system for evaluating providers?
- What is the type of service: individual or group?
- How is the service provided: web only, on-site only, or as a combination?
- What is the place of service: school, off-site, or in the child's home?
- When is the service provided: after school, before school, during the summer, or all of these?
- How often is the service provided (number of days per week and hours per day/session)?
- What is the cost of service per child?

Regional data were collected primarily from meetings and interviews with the Northwest Region state SES coordinators, reviews of state

education agency documents and databases, and information gathered during a topical forum held in Portland, Oregon, on September 21, 2006. The forum was convened to identify critical issues and challenges facing the Northwest Region states in implementing supplemental educational services. The primary informants at the forum were the Northwest Region state SES coordinators (with the exception of Oregon's). Other attendees included a representative of the Portland Public Schools, an Alaskan SES provider, five staff from the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center, and two researchers from the Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis (who are evaluating five statewide SES programs). With representation by just one provider and one district staff member, this information cannot be viewed as representative of providers and districts across the region.

(CONTINUED)

The main sources of information for this report were the data obtained by state education agencies from their districts, schools, and state education agency lead staff. National data were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (2006a, b) and reports by the Government Accountability Office (2006), the Institute for Education Sciences (Stullich, Eisner, McCrary, & Roney, 2006), and the U.S. Department of Education (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005).

Limitations of the data. In addition to the small sample size the data have other limitations. First, the data collection efforts of each state education agency varied by type of data, method of collecting and keeping data, and amount of data. Because Idaho schools did not begin providing supplemental educational services until the 2005/06 school year, there are no common data across

the region during the main two-year focus of this study. Additionally, the only common data provided across the other four Northwest states were for the 2004/05 school year, and those data were limited to the number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services, number of students eligible for supplemental services, number of students served, and the approved providers.

Second, some of the data may be inaccurate. In some cases district-level data differed from state-level data (for example, in number of eligible students). Also, for some states data from one part of the state education agency (for example, the fiscal department or the evaluation department) differed from data reported by the state education agency's SES coordinator. An example is the number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services.

Efforts were made to reconcile such differences with state education agency staff, but inconsistencies in the data may remain.

Finally, because of the limited data set, the analyses of overall provider impacts for each Northwest Region state and across states could not be conducted. And because state education agencies did not have student outcome data, impacts could not be disaggregated by school location (for example, rural versus urban), student characteristics (grade level, gender, ethnicity, English language learner status, attendance rate), provider orientation (one-on-one, small group, online, tutoring location), or specific provider. Because of the diversity of the region and the large number of limited English proficiency students, it is important to determine the effectiveness of supplemental educational services for this population.

increased nationally from 12 percent in 2003/04 to 19 percent in 2004/05, it increased from 4.3 percent to 6.5 percent in the Northwest Region, which left the region further behind the national average.

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While improvements have been made in providing services, significant common challenges remain

for optimizing supplemental educational services for the students in the Northwest Region:

- *Increasing participation rates.* Although usage rates are low throughout the country, they are significantly lower in the Northwest Region because of the rural nature of the region and the lack of resources (personnel and funds) to adequately support and enforce the effort.
- *Adequately evaluating and monitoring SES providers.* Systems for tracking services by school and district are lacking or disorganized. No state in the region has an adequate evaluation system in place. The rigor necessary to evaluate a provider with enough certainty to determine whether to retain or remove it from the approved list requires a level of resources and expertise that no state education agency seems willing or able to provide.

- *Working more effectively with SES providers.* State education agencies struggle with formulating policies and procedures for providers that will meet the needs of schools, students, parents, and providers. Examples include when and how often to allow providers to apply for inclusion on the approved list and whether to allow providers to offer incentives to entice students and parents to use their services.
- *Improving communication.* Timely communication among states, districts, schools, providers, parents, and students is a great challenge. Often, districts and schools do not get enough advance notice of their failure to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act and so are unable to notify parents, contract with providers, and set up programs before the school year is well under way. Also needing attention is the flow of information between teachers and providers about curriculum approaches, teaching strategies, and student progress.

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mental services, on eligible students, or on students served. Often, district-level information differed from state-level information, and data tables on state education agency web sites had conflicting information. This made collecting reliable data on usage rates and providers difficult.

WHAT ARE THE USAGE RATES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES?

This investigation examined SES usage rates in the Northwest Region states and how the states compare regionally and nationally. A major goal was to determine what quantitative and

demographic data were available for the past three school years on SES providers, the number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services, the number of eligible students, and the number and percentage of students served, as well as how data were being collected and what gaps existed.

Regional context: a heavily rural region with rising enrollment of English language learners

Nearly 50 percent of all schools in the Northwest Region, serving one in four students, are in rural locales—defined here as places of fewer than 2,500 people (Barnett & Greenough, 2004). Both rates are substantially higher than national rates: nationally, 30 percent of schools, serving one in five students, are in rural locales. Fifty-eight percent of Alaska's schools and 76 percent of Montana's schools are in rural locales.

Thirty-seven percent of Northwest Region students receive free or reduced-price lunches, the same as the national rate (table 1). In small towns and rural areas 41 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Fifty-seven percent of Northwest Region schools are Title I–eligible, nearly the same as the national rate (56 percent). Regionally, 84 percent of school districts with a high school have only one high school, compared with 77 percent nationally (Stullich, Eisner, McCrary, & Roney, 2006).

TABLE 1

Percentages of rural schools and students, students receiving free or reduced price lunch, and Title I–eligible schools in the Northwest Region and nationally

Characteristic	Northwest Region	Nation
Rural schools	50	30
Rural students	25	20
Students receiving free or reduced-price lunch	37	37
Title I–eligible schools	57	56

Source: Sable & Hill, 2006.

In the fall of 2003 nearly 9 percent of students living in the Northwest Region were English language learners, which was close to the national average of 10.5 percent (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006). Alaska had the highest percentage of limited English proficiency students, at more than 14 percent of its student population, while Montana had the lowest percentage, at 4 percent. Roughly 70 percent of English language learners in Alaska speak a Native language, including Central Yup'ik (42 percent) and Inupiaq (20 percent). Montana's English language learner population is also mostly Native-speaking, including Crow, Blackfeet, Dakota, and Salish. Spanish is the most common first language of English language learners in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Each year more English language learners enroll in Northwest schools. From 1998 to 2003 the enrollment of English language learners increased 5 percent annually. From 1998 to 2003 Oregon's enrollment of English language learners increased by 49 percent, while Idaho's increased by 55 percent. Montana's enrollment of English language learners decreased by 2 percent, in part due to a more than

7 percent drop in total student enrollment. The influx of English language learners presents numerous challenges for schools in meeting the academic needs of students and in closing achievement gaps. During the 2003/04 school year achievement gaps between all students and English language learner students on state standard assessments in the Northwest Region ranged from 29 to 53 percentage points in reading and 21 to 47 percentage points in math. (Data aggregated from annual statewide assessment reports from Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2006; Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2006; Oregon Department of Education, 2006a; Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006).

Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services, number of eligible students, and number and rate of students served

While efforts were made to obtain data for school years 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06, and 2006/07, the most complete and accurate data were available only for 2004/05 (table 2). No data are available for Idaho for that year, however, because it received a federal waiver and did not have to provide

TABLE 2

Supplemental educational services in four Northwest Region states and nationally, 2004/05

Item	Alaska	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Region	Nation ^a
Number of Title I schools required to provide supplemental educational services	121	39	4	66	230	na
Number of eligible students	9,653	4,319	2,135	10,581	26,688	2,275,000
Percentage of students eligible for supplemental educational services ^b	7.3	2.9	0.4	1.0	1.4	4.7
Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	513	23	991	212	1,739	430,000
Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	5.3	0.5	46.4	2.0	6.5	19.0

na is not available.

Note: Idaho received a federal waiver for 2004/05 and so was not required to provide supplemental educational services that year.

a. National data are from the Government Accountability Office (2006), which does not include data from New Jersey or New York other than New York City.

b. Data from National Center for Education Statistics (2006a,b)

Source: See notes a and b; Northwest Region state education agency lead staff on supplemental educational services.

supplemental educational services for the year. More than half the schools in the region required to provide supplemental educational services in 2004/05 were in Alaska, although Washington had more eligible students. Many of the low-performing schools in Alaska are very small and are in remote areas.

State, regional, and national comparisons. Oregon had the highest percentage of eligible children receiving supplemental educational services in 2004/05 and Montana the lowest (figure 1). All states except Oregon were below the regional and national average usage rates. The Northwest Region usage rate is about one-third the national rate and falling further behind. While the national participation rate increased from 12 percent to 19 percent from 2003/04 to 2004/05 (Government Accountability Office, 2006), the regional participation rate increased from 4.3 percent to 6.5 percent, further behind the national average. (There is more discussion of the low usage rate of the Northwest Region later in the report.)

Trends in usage rates. Because of missing data it is difficult to identify definitive trends in the

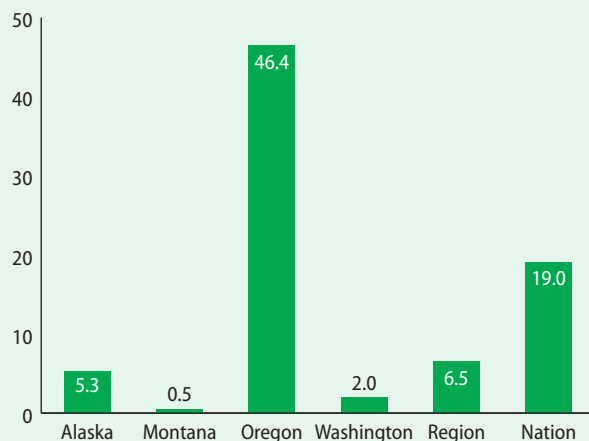
Northwest Region states in the number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services, eligible students, and the number and rate of students served for four years (table 3). There is an assumption that the number of schools and eligible students will increase each year, given the requirement that a rising percentage of children meet state benchmarks each year (or over a set of years), culminating in 100 percent of students meeting benchmarks by 2012/13. However, these preliminary data do not show a clear trend in that direction. More complete data will help to more accurately establish trends. The preliminary data for four of the five states indicate rising usage rates for two consecutive years, suggesting that rates will increase each year as states and districts improve their systems for linking providers with students. However, the sharp decrease in the percentage of eligible children served in Oregon from 2004/05 to 2005/06 confounds the notion of a uniform positive trend toward higher usage rates.

Usage rates by urban and rural location. The only demographic variable with adequate data for analysis is urban and rural location. This is a salient demographic feature of the Northwest Region as its rural nature is likely the main cause of low usage for supplemental educational services. To test this, data were analyzed to determine whether there was variance within the region based on its urban-rural status, but the findings are not conclusive because of the very small sample size.

Oregon is the only state for which district-level data were available, although only for 2005/06. Oregon had five districts with schools required to provide supplemental educational services: three urban districts with an average usage rate of 22.9 percent (the largest urban district had an average usage rate of 24.5 percent), and two rural districts with average usage rate of 14.2 percent (figure 2).

Two relatively more urban states (Oregon and Washington) were also compared with two more rural states (Alaska and Montana), with the usage rate aggregated across two years (2003/04 and 2004/05). The urban states had an aggregate usage

FIGURE 1
Supplemental educational services usage rates in Northwest Region states and nationally, 2004/05 (percent)



Source: Northwest Region state education agency lead staff on supplemental educational services and Government Accountability Office (2006), which does not include data from New Jersey or New York other than New York City.

TABLE 3

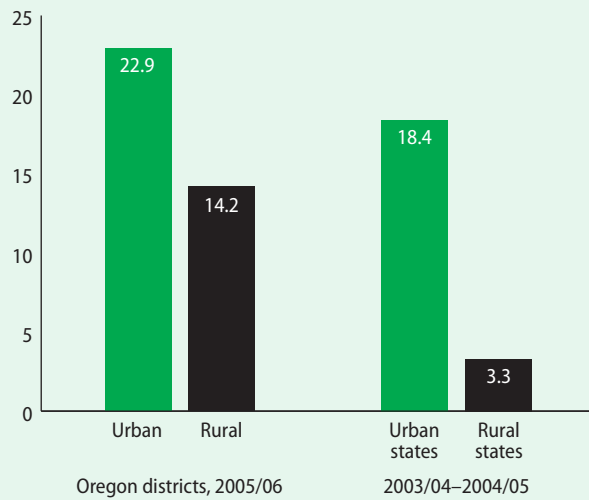
Trends in supplemental educational services in the Northwest Region states, 2004/05 to 2006/07

State	Measure	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Alaska	Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services	66	121	119	113
	Number of students eligible for supplemental educational services	6,492	9,653	uk	uk
	Students eligible for supplemental educational services as a percentage of total students	4.8	7.3	uk	uk
	Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	474	513	uk	uk
	Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	7.3	5.3	uk	uk
Idaho	Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services	None	None	53	uk
	Number of students eligible for supplemental educational services	None	None	5,295	uk
	Students eligible for supplemental educational services as a percentage of total students	na	na	2.1	uk
	Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	None	None	uk	uk
	Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	None	None	uk	uk
Montana	Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services	uk	39	uk	uk
	Number of students eligible for supplemental educational services	5,482	4,319	uk	uk
	Students eligible for supplemental educational services as a percentage of total students	3.7	2.9	uk	uk
	Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	10	23	uk	uk
	Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	0.2	0.5	uk	uk
Oregon	Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services	5	4	15	uk
	Number of students eligible for supplemental educational services	2,271	2,135	7,251	uk
	Students eligible for supplemental educational services as a percentage of total students	0.4	0.4	0.2	uk
	Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	537	991	1,331	uk
	Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	23.6	46.4	18.4	uk
Washington	Number of schools required to provide supplemental educational services	29	66	46	49
	Number of students eligible for supplemental educational services	15,401	10,581	uk	uk
	Students eligible for supplemental educational services as a percentage of total students	1.5	1	uk	uk
	Number of students receiving supplemental educational services	250	212	uk	uk
	Percentage of eligible students receiving supplemental educational services	1.6	2	uk	uk

na is not available; uk is unknown.

Source: Northwest Region state education agency lead staff on supplemental educational services.

FIGURE 2

Supplemental educational services usage rates in the Northwest Region by urban-rural status (percent)

Note: Urban states are Oregon and Washington; rural states are Alaska and Montana.

Source: Northwest Region state education agency lead staff on supplemental educational services.

rate of 18.4 percent, while the two rural states had a rate of 3.3 percent (see figure 2). These results are consistent with national findings that a greater share of urban districts contract for supplemental educational services than do suburban or rural districts (Center on Education Policy, 2006). The Government Accountability Office (2006) reported that the majority of the 20 percent of the districts required to provide supplemental educational services that did not do so were rural.

Other possible reasons for low usage rates. Several participants in the topical forum on supplemental educational services—including an SES provider, a state coordinator, and a district representative—believed that it was more difficult to motivate high school students to attend tutoring sessions than elementary or middle school students. Recent studies (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005; Government Accountability Office, 2006) have also reported that participation at the middle and high school levels remains a challenge. Further investigations should compare usage rates by student level (elementary, middle, and high school), across providers, and by the same providers to determine whether there

are differences across levels and whether eligible high school students are significantly underserved compared with elementary and middle school students.

Several participants at the topical forum indicated that the school principal may be critical for increasing usage rates. They believe that when the principal is actively involved with supplemental educational services, more students are served because of greater involvement by parents. In at least one school in the region the principal invites the SES providers to attend staff training sessions, thus potentially affecting the quality and impact of the services. These theories will be tested in a follow-on study next year, as more district- and school-level data are obtained.

There were also suggestions at the topical forum that providing incentives to students (gifts for signing up, rewards for attendance) could increase participation rates. However, there is some evidence that incentives have little effect on participation (Ascher, 2006). Additionally, one state SES coordinator indicated that the state was hesitant to use incentives because families might pick programs with the best incentives rather than programs that are best for their children.

The state SES coordinators who participated in the topical forum agreed that the way to increase participation rates is to do more outreach with providers; develop better communication among the state, district, school, and providers; and make it known that supplemental educational services are a state priority. As one state SES coordinator indicated, “I don’t have a number [participation rate] in mind. I just want to get out of a situation where schools and districts do everything they can do and then there is no provider willing to work with them.”

What types of supplemental educational services providers were available, and what types of services did they offer?

At the beginning of the 2005/06 school year there were about 1,860 SES providers approved

nationally, with an average of 52 providers per state (Education Industry Association, 2005). One recent study (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005) reported that only 45 percent of providers were actually selected. For the Northwest Region states this information is available only for Oregon, where 8 providers were selected of the 28 available, most serving more than one district and all providing face-to-face tutoring. Two for-profit providers served 65 percent of all participating students in the state, and a local education agency served an additional 13 percent of students.

The most complete data on providers were available for the 2005/06 school year, but data on schools and students are scarce for that year, making it difficult to link providers with services. There was not much variance among states in any provider data category (table 4). Regionally, there was a nearly even split between local providers (whose service areas range from a single community to an entire state) and national providers. However, the vast majority provided on-site services, and in Oregon, for example, all of the chosen providers (8 of the 28 available) provided on-site services (Oregon Department of Education, 2006b). National data suggest that slightly more than half of providers offer on-site services (Education Industry Association, 2005).

The average cost in the Northwest Region was about \$39 an hour. The average annual cost nationally was \$1,400 per student in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). It is not possible to estimate average annual costs per child for the region with accuracy because of the way the data are compiled. However, average costs in the Northwest Region appear to be slightly lower than at the national level. Ascher (2006) suggests that because of the 20 percent cap on Title I funds, districts estimate that they can serve only about a fifth of eligible children. This has not presented a problem for many districts because of the low participation rates (Center on Education Policy, 2006).

All five states have an approved list of providers that is available online. (Providers are approved by the state under an application process in which they have indicated an interest in working in a particular district.) While highly populated states and districts have a large number of providers to choose from, choices are limited in geographically isolated districts (Supplemental Educational Services Quality Center, 2004). States with more rural populations have fewer approved providers than more populous states (Education Industry Association, 2005). Thus, in 2005/06 Washington had 46 providers on its list while Idaho had 13 and Alaska had 15. And

TABLE 4

Data on supplemental educational services providers in the Northwest Region for the 2005/06 school year

	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Regional total ^a
Number of providers	15	13	15	28	46	88
Local providers	4 (27)	5 (38)	0 (0)	13 (46)	30 (65)	52 (59)
National providers	11 (73)	8 (62)	15 (100)	15 (54)	16 (35)	36 (41)
Number providing on-site services	11 (73)	10 (77)	8 (53)	25 (89)	38 (83)	72 (82)
Number providing online/distance services	4 (27)	3 (23)	7 (47)	3 (11)	8 (17)	16 (18)
Average cost of services	\$45/hr	\$36/hr	\$28/hr	\$1,000/ child	\$36/hr	\$36/hr ^b

Note: Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

a. Nonduplicated count.

b. Regional average is weighted by number of providers.

Source: Provider applications to the states and provider profiles posted by the state education agencies and confirmed by state education agency staff.

providers do not necessarily provide services in every community. According to state SES coordinators, providers are especially reluctant to contract for services in small, rural districts because of the small number of students eligible for services.

State SES coordinators indicate that districts sometimes contract with a provider only to find that the provider is unable to hire local tutors (usually teachers). As one coordinator noted during the topical forum, “The small-district teachers are already doing four to five jobs and don’t have time for anything more.” Another coordinator commented that the teachers in the state’s small, rural schools live 40–50 miles away and want to get home at the end of the school day, and so they are not available to provide after-school tutoring. A third coordinator said that “getting people is easy in metropolitan areas but much harder in rural districts. Those teachers are doing a lot already.”

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FOR STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES IN PROVIDING SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES?

The Northwest Region’s state education agencies have identified many challenges in providing effective supplemental educational services. At the district and school levels these challenges include serving all eligible children and ensuring adequate

attendance. At the state level they include obtaining the services of a sufficient number of qualified providers to serve rural areas; evaluating service providers, including through state assessments and parent-satisfaction surveys; analyzing existing data; and ensuring methodological continuity across districts. Determining the reasons for low usage rates is an essential first step in refining the system to better meet the needs of schools, parents, and children.

Challenges in providing effective supplemental educational services at the state level include obtaining the services of qualified providers to serve rural areas, evaluating service providers, analyzing data, and ensuring methodological continuity

Low participation rates seem to be related to access to providers

Topical forum participants believe that low student participation in supplemental educational services is directly affected by lack of providers in rural settings. As one state coordinator reported, “It is easy to get people to be SES providers in metropolitan areas. It is much more difficult in rural areas.” In Oregon one of the four districts required to provide supplemental educational services last year received a waiver because no providers were willing to contract with the rural district. Participants at the topical forum thought that districts should be allowed to provide tutoring if no providers were willing to offer on-site services. An SES coordinator from a rural state suggested that, “If they were going to change something about SES, it would be to extend the waiver in rural states for the districts themselves to provide SES even though the district or school is in need of improvement.” However, as another state coordinator suggested, “It would be a good idea to have districts be allowed to be providers, but there are questions of whether district personnel had the qualifications/expertise to provide the service.”

In a study of supplemental educational services 67 percent of states surveyed indicated that it was a challenge to ensure that providers met the needs of local students (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005). The same study indicated that only 32 percent of providers were able to meet the needs of English language learner students. This is particularly relevant in the Northwest Region states, where Native languages present a major barrier to tutoring. Because of English language learner issues and the lack of quality providers in rural areas, Alaska, Montana, and Washington are trying to identify agencies (such as tribal councils and faith-based organizations) in which providers resemble the clients. The Washington SES coordinator has visited several organizations to “let them know that they can apply to be providers. A large number of my kids don’t speak English, and parents will not participate in things like SES for cultural reasons. A huge step was finding providers who look like the kids, speak the Native language, and

are willing to get into this. By trying to go out and grow local providers, we are putting communities back together and empowering adults within the community and getting the disenfranchised parents back in touch with the schools.”

Another report identified problems limiting participation in supplemental educational services in rural areas, such as the lack of well qualified providers, transportation problems, technology issues (lack of Internet access), and unwillingness of providers (for-profit providers, especially) to travel to rural areas and provide services (Education Industry Association, 2005). These problems were confirmed by state SES coordinators during the topical forum. While the Government Accountability Office (2006) recommends the use of online providers to increase participation rates, this recommendation raised concerns for a number of the Northwest Region state SES coordinators. While agreeing that they would consider online services if that were the only viable service, they cited a preference for face-to-face tutoring because of “trust” issues among participants; technology issues in rural areas, including lack of computers in homes; and supervision issues. As one participant at the topical forum stated, “There is no buy-in or relationship with a provider on the phone or online. This is not a solution. Local is best.”

Northwest Region states varied in such practices as whether they held provider fairs at schools, whether application rolls were open or closed (they close on certain dates in Oregon and Washington, for example), when services started, how rigorous the application process was, and whether state technical assistance was offered to providers. Dr. Steven Ross (2005) has suggested that states develop some policies about expectations of providers, such as mandatory start dates, limits on incentives, how and when to conduct provider fairs, and how providers should develop student goals.

Difficulties with monitoring and evaluation

According to the No Child Left Behind Act, states must remove SES providers from their approved provider list if they fail to increase student

achievement for two consecutive years (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). However, recent studies by the U.S. Department of Education (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005) and the Government Accountability Office (2006) have shown that the states’ monitoring and evaluation of SES providers are limited at best. In the study by Anderson & Laguarda (2005), 75 percent of the states reported that monitoring and evaluating providers was a challenge. Additionally, 75 percent of the states said it was a moderate to serious challenge to determine whether providers were effective in raising student achievement, and 73 percent said it was a challenge to determine whether the supplemental educational services were of “high quality.” While 63 percent of the states reported that they had a monitoring system in place, the type and sophistication of monitoring and evaluation systems varied widely. In most states monitoring and evaluation of SES providers and services were still in the planning stages.

Some states, including Illinois, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia, are conducting quasi-experimental studies on the effectiveness of their SES providers. The Northwest Region states, by contrast, are still collecting only minimal data on services. They are collecting and reporting on the number of eligible students, the number of students served, the costs associated with the services, and the providers that are contracted by the districts. As a result, the states have little idea whether tutoring is effective or what type of tutoring works best.

During the topical forum the state SES coordinators suggested that responsibility for monitoring lies with the district. Yet, while the districts may

States’ monitoring and evaluation of supplemental educational services providers are limited at best; 75 percent of states reported that monitoring and evaluating providers was a challenge and that it was a moderate to serious challenge to determine whether providers were effective in raising student achievement

be collecting and analyzing student achievement data, the states were not using (or in some cases collecting) these data. A district staff member reported: “Monitoring is put on the district. All the paperwork, the compliance work, etc. The state doesn’t do it, the district does. I’m not sure what the state does with the information.” Furthermore, while many states—75 percent according to the Government Accountability Office (2006)—have begun on-site reviews, none of the Northwest Region states systematically monitors providers through on-site reviews. The Northwest SES coordinators reported during the topical forum that their monitoring and evaluation of providers are limited by lack of time, money, and expertise. As one coordinator noted, “[Our state] has a very small staff. It was difficult to meet the increased [No Child Left Behind] requirements of states without additional staff.”

Once supplemental educational services providers have been approved there is no mechanism, other than programmatic noncompliance, to remove them from a state’s list

Because no Northwest Region state has evaluated the success of providers in improving student achievement scores, no providers have been removed from the approved state provider lists for failing to improve student academic achievement. Sunderman (2006) notes that states continue to expand their provider lists despite lack of program effective-

ness, a finding confirmed by a state SES coordinator who said, “We have no rational way right now to remove providers. We have a lot more providers than we could ever use.” The Northwest Region states rely on effectiveness data supplied by the providers to determine eligibility. Once providers have been approved there is no mechanism, other than programmatic noncompliance, to remove them from a state’s list.

All state SES coordinators indicated during the topical forum that they need assistance—from local or national technical assistance providers or evaluation experts—in developing and conducting evaluations of the SES providers to be certain of complying with No Child Left Behind. One state

coordinator commented, “The writing is on the wall that we need to do a better job at working with the districts on what needs to be done and how to evaluate providers.”

Breakdowns in communication

There was consensus among the participants at the topical forum that communication at and between all levels—state, district, school, providers, and parents—must improve to increase participation in supplemental educational services and to better serve students. Specific pieces of information need to be conveyed throughout the SES system if it is to function properly. For example, the state must provide the district with the names of the schools eligible to participate in supplemental educational services and the names of SES providers. The district must then work with the providers and schools to communicate with parents about the services available. At each of these points information needs to be shared among multiple parties in a timely manner. Often, there is a breakdown in communication instead.

The distribution of responsibilities and tasks between state and districts is problematic, particularly for parents and students, who need time to review the services and qualifications of various providers to make an informed decision. Districts complain of not receiving the names of the schools in need of improvement prior to the start of the school year (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005). Forty-nine percent of the districts surveyed reported that more timely information from the states would help in providing services. Data from the Government Accountability Office (2006) suggest that nearly half the districts do not inform parents early enough because they do not receive information early enough from the states. One Northwest Region state SES coordinator reported trying to get the names of the schools to the district in a more timely manner. In the past, the school list had not been provided until after the school year had started. That delayed the process of getting families signed up, ultimately delaying services for three to four months.

One study reported that 90 percent of the districts provided written information to parents, held meetings with parents, and encouraged school staff to talk with parents (Government Accountability Office, 2006). However, 70 percent of the state coordinators interviewed said that communication among providers, schools, and districts was a challenge. Providers did not contact teachers in 40 percent of the districts and did not contact 30 percent of parents. One study (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005) found that while most districts thought they were doing a good job of informing parents, providers, teachers, and principals disagreed, stating that parents were often confused about the services available to them. Another study reported that families receive limited, confusing, or no information about supplemental educational services from the districts. As a result, parents have a difficult time choosing the best option for their children, and participation rates suffer (Supplemental Educational Services Quality Center, 2004). An SES coordinator from a rural state reported: “That’s the ball game . . . communication! In some cases, parents thought they could just pick [any provider] they wanted [and] . . . have the school district provide transportation . . . There is still a problem with districts providing adequate information about what SES are available. In the first few years there was miscommunication of what SES was. Parents didn’t understand. The biggest problem is getting information from district to parents so the parent can make a reasonable decision to have kids participate.”

Ascher (2006) reported that providers accuse districts of obstructionist tactics (withholding information from parents, using bureaucratic language to tell parents about supplemental educational services, making it difficult for providers to work in schools) that affect participation rates. One Northwest Region SES provider stated that his company hears about requirements from the district and that it “would be nice to hear about it from the state.” The provider said there should be better communication among the state, district, and provider about service requirements, types of data to collect, and service expectations.

One Northwest state education agency attempts to work closely with providers. According to that state’s SES coordinator, the state conducts three videoconferences a year with providers to ensure that providers understand the state’s expectations, to give providers regular access to the state, to review the SES school list, and to review reporting requirements and expectations. The SES coordinator provides them with the information they need to work in a manner consistent with the goals of the schools. The coordinator also shares ideas on how to navigate the schools’ communication systems, such as working with parent-teacher associations, to give parents more direct access to information about providers. The coordinator asserted that posting information on a web site and sending letters home are not as effective. A district representative from Oregon suggested that the state, districts, and providers should get as much information as possible out to the public because parents need to see the information more than once to fully understand it.

State SES coordinators agreed that schools are generally not included in the SES conversation and that until schools become part of the conversation, participation rates will likely remain low. Participants suggested that the states have not marketed supplemental educational services well. As a result, school principals are unaware of how much service supplemental educational services could benefit their students. Additionally, participants suggested that districts need to share their experiences about specific providers, ways to communicate with parents, and ways to collect data.

Ascher (2006) suggests there is no mechanism for teachers to let providers know what will help their students. According to comments by state education agency lead staff, communication between providers and school staff varies among the

Communication at and between all levels—state, district, school, providers, and parents—must improve to increase participation in supplemental educational services and to better serve students

Northwest Region states. Oregon requires providers to meet with school staff to review curricula. Although it is an additional burden for staff to develop goals and align curricula with the providers, staff are given extra time to do so. The four other Northwest Region states have no similar requirements.

Thus, except in Oregon, the SES coordinators do not know whether the SES curricula are aligned with state standards, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. As one SES coordinator stated, “The providers can spew EALRs [Essential Academic Learning Requirements—the term used in Washington for their state standards] as evidence of alignment but really don’t know if their curriculum is aligned.” There was consensus among the SES coordinators, however, that aligning the SES curriculum with state-level academic content standards was “overrated.” It was suggested that school-level alignment is more important. State education agency staff members stated that supplemental educational services are more about getting kids to read, providing instruction that is age appropriate, and delivering the services. They believe that teachers need to tell providers what classroom strategies they are using and providers need to align the supplemental educational services with the school curriculum; the tutoring should reinforce what is taught during the school day.

Inadequate state support and resources

The Government Accountability Office (2006) report suggests that several education agencies monitor and support supplemental educational services through written guidance and technical assistance. States cite the need for additional support, assistance, and flexibility, however. The information and support provided by the Office of Innovation and Improvement and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education have met with mixed responses by the SES coordinators in the Northwest

Region. Several coordinators indicated that the information provided by the U.S. Department of Education has limited application in remote, rural schools. As one coordinator indicated, “They [the U.S. Department of Education] can’t talk about one idea that covers both high-populated and isolated schools; they are two very different things.”

In addition, state education agency staff reported that federal monitoring of state compliance with Title I, in particular with the rules on supplemental educational services, is weak. Monitoring reports indicate that most Northwest Region states are out of compliance in at least one area related to supplemental educational services, but neither support nor consequences have followed. One federal monitoring report, although finding that the state education agency was not in compliance with a number of SES requirements, merely recommended that the state education agency collect data throughout the year rather than at a single point at the end of the school year. Several state education agency lead SES staff stated that stronger consequences for noncompliance would make superintendents much more likely to put additional resources into supplemental educational services.

Sunderman (2006) noted that No Child Left Behind does not provide additional money to support the administration and evaluation of supplemental educational services. As a result, coordinating supplemental educational services at the state level is not given full attention—except in Washington, where it is the primary responsibility of a Title I employee who devotes more than 50 percent of his time to the task. As noted by the Montana SES coordinator, “There are so few Title I staff at the Montana Office of Public Instruction, they must share the responsibility of SES oversight.”

REMAINING CHALLENGES

A major finding of this investigation of the status of supplemental educational services in the Northwest Region is that state education agency

Most Northwest Region states are out of compliance in at least one area related to supplemental educational services, but neither support nor consequences have followed

data systems are in great need of improvement. Most state SES coordinators had difficulty getting accurate numbers—whether on schools required to offer supplemental educational services, eligible students, or students served. Often, district-level information differed from state-level information, and data tables on state education agency web sites had conflicting information.

While the five state education agencies in the Northwest Region share many of the same challenges with supplemental educational services, differences in many characteristics also shape these challenges in various ways. These include differences in the numbers of schools required to provide supplemental educational services; the numbers of these schools that are in remote or rural areas; the person-hours, resources, and staff skills in the state education agencies devoted to the effort; the availability of SES providers; the quality of providers; and many other factors. Several SES coordinators observed that at this stage supplemental educational services are not “getting the bang for the buck.” One state coordinator reported that the quality of services and the amount of money paid to get a minimal number of students served are problematic and thinks that the state could be using the money more wisely. Many other studies have identified similar challenges to the implementation of supplemental educational services (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005; Education Industry Association, 2005; Government Accountability Office, 2006; Supplemental Educational Services Quality Center, 2004).

While gains have been made in providing supplemental educational services, significant common challenges remain to optimizing supplemental educational services.

Increasing participation rates

Although usage rates are low throughout the country, they are significantly lower in the Northwest Region. There seem to be two interrelated reasons: the rural nature of the region and the lack

of resources (personnel and funds) to adequately support and enforce the effort. Although lack of resources is a challenge across the nation, rural states with fewer schools and students tend to get less Title I money than states with large urban centers.

The difficulty of drawing providers to rural areas and solving transportation and other logistical issues endemic to rural areas appears to be the main reason for low usage rates in the Northwest Region. The lack of time and funds for state and district personnel to support and enforce the effort exacerbates the problem. Only Washington, the most populated and least rural state in the region, has a full-time staff person in the state education agency dedicated to supplemental educational services. Yet usage rates are still very low in Washington, because vast areas of the state are rural. Of the 46 schools required to provide supplemental educational services in 2005/06, only 8 were urban schools.

The difficulty of drawing providers to rural areas and solving transportation and other logistical issues appears to be the main reason for low usage rates in the Northwest Region

Evaluating and monitoring supplemental educational services providers

Systems for tracking the services by school and district are either lacking or disorganized. Some states rely on information in paper rather than digital form, making it difficult to compile data. In most states that track information, there is little consistency across districts because of unclear directions or lack of specificity on what data to record and how to compile them. This makes comparisons across districts difficult. Comparisons across states are even more problematic. Evaluation systems, where they exist, are weak, relying largely on these spotty monitoring systems to make determinations on provider effectiveness. No state in the region has an adequate evaluation system in place. The rigor necessary to evaluate a provider with enough certainty to decide

whether it should be retained or removed from the approved list requires a level of resources and expertise that no state education agency seems willing to provide.

Working with supplemental educational services providers

In addition to the provider recruitment problems state education agencies struggle with formulating policies for providers to meet the needs of schools, students, parents, and providers. One

issue is application deadlines. A rolling process with no deadlines may yield more providers, but it adds to the workload of state education agency staff and creates uncertainty for schools about how many and which providers are available at any given time. Another issue is whether to allow providers to give incentives (and what types of incentives) to entice students and parents to choose them. If an online-only

service provider gives participants free computers or free Internet access, its tutoring is more likely to be used than that of another online provider. While this could help the state, district, and school meet their goals of high participation and attendance, the free computer may also bias students and parents to choose that provider over one that uses more intensive and effective face-to-face services.

Evaluation systems, where they exist, are weak, relying largely on spotty monitoring systems to make determinations on provider effectiveness. No state in the region has an adequate evaluation system in place

Communicating within and across all levels

Timely communication among states, districts, schools, providers, parents, and students remains a great challenge. Often districts and schools do not get enough advance notice to contract with providers, notify parents, and set up programs, so that instruction is delayed until well into the school year. Systems for sharing information between teachers and providers about curriculum approaches and teaching strategies and on student progress are also inadequate.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGES IN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The following considerations for changes in policies and practice relate to the U.S. Department of Education, state education agencies, districts, schools, and providers.

U.S. Department of Education

- Target resources and technical assistance to states and districts specifically for the administration of supplemental educational services and evaluation of providers.
- Recommend strategies (based on broad input from experts and practitioners) to increase usage rates, particularly in rural areas.
- Sponsor a review of the research on tutoring to determine the knowledge base on best practices, addressing such issues as the differential impacts of intensity levels and duration, characteristics of providers, and difference between online services and in-person services or a combination of the two.
- Permit districts and schools to provide services if no outside provider can be found.
- Include clear and strong expectations for increasing usage rates and effective evaluations of providers when monitoring states for Title I compliance.
- Provide an option for districts or local education agencies to approve and evaluate providers (and earmark funds accordingly); allow small school districts in the same area of the state the option to do this collaboratively.

State education agencies

- Devote more personnel and resources to supplemental educational services.

- Make school determinations on failure to make adequate yearly progress as defined under the No Child Left Behind Act before the start of the school year.
- Have the approved provider list available before the start of the school year.
- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance to district staff.
- Digitize all reporting and tracking forms and provide clear instructions.
- If evaluation expertise is not available or staff do not have the time, contract for evaluations of providers.
- Seek input from districts on ways to improve services.
- Support innovative approaches, such as summer programs.

Districts

- If resources permit, provide a full-time staff person to oversee supplemental educational services in larger districts and a part-time person in smaller districts.
- Focus training and technical assistance for implementation of supplemental educational services on school principals.
- Ask for training, support, and assistance from the state education agency and make sure that instructions on tracking and reporting forms are clear.
- Give input to the state education agency on how to make systems more effective and efficient.
- Seek input from principals, teachers, providers, parents, and students on ways to improve services.

Schools

- Assign the principal, in collaboration with the parent-teacher association, a leadership role in ensuring good communication and providing effective and efficient services.
- Recruit a parent or staff volunteer to assist with logistics and act as liaison between the school and the providers.
- Create a process for ongoing communication among teachers, providers, and parents on curricular strategies and student progress.
- Provide adequate space and support for providers, including inviting them to staff meetings and training.
- Have the parent-teacher association, with the principal, review available providers and create a table summarizing services and comparing benefits and weaknesses.

Providers

- Voluntarily agree to sign off on the Education Industry Association code of ethical conduct for tutors.
- Ask for regular meetings with the principal and teachers to share curricular strategies and student progress.
- If a system and forms are not provided by the district or state, carefully track (electronically) student attendance, areas of assistance, and progress.

The foremost challenge for state education agencies to improve their program of supplemental educational services is the ability to obtain and track accurate data in a timely manner

Next steps

Some formidable challenges remain for state education agencies to improve their program

of supplemental educational services. Foremost among these is the ability to obtain and track accurate data in a timely manner. Efforts to provide basic supplemental educational services and to understand their impacts as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the system are greatly hampered by these weak data systems. The logical next step in investigating supplemental educational services is to work with the Northwest Region states to improve their data collection systems. This would entail converting paper-based systems to electronic systems, ensuring that data are being collected in all critical areas, clarifying issues such as attendance and compliance, and developing effective provider evaluation protocols, among others.

A planned follow-up report will identify key representative school districts and schools and work directly with them to obtain data. These efforts should yield the critical quantitative data on such variables as student demographics, attendance rates, and SES providers needed to determine whether relationships exist among the variables. Observations and interviews will be used to collect qualitative data about such issues as how district staff administer and monitor programs, how they work with schools and providers, what role principals have in ensuring implementation of supplemental educational services, and what experiences teachers, parents, and students have with supplemental educational services. Such a study would further the understanding of supplemental educational services use in the Northwest Region.

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