

Spellings Says
Data Are "Evidence That
No Child Left Behind
Is Working"

Nation's Report Card Results Show Progress

The latest results on the Nation's Report Card show that students have made significant gains since the enactment of *No Child Left Behind* and, in some cases, in the history of the assessment program, which began charting educational progress in 1971 in reading and 1973 in mathematics.

Released in July by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, data from the 2004 long-term National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed:

> On average, nine-year-old students scored higher in both subjects in 2004 than in any previous assessment year, with substantial increases occurring since the last assessment in 1999.



> Thirteen-year-old students scored higher in math in 2004 than in any previous assessment year, with considerable increases occurring since 1999. But reading scores for this cohort remain unchanged from the last assessment.

> Overall performance of 17-year-old students in both subjects remained unchanged; however, black and Hispanic students in this age group made progress since the initial assessment.

> Many of the differences in achievement between black or Hispanic students and their white counterparts have narrowed, as the average scores for minority student groups have increased over time.

"Today's report card," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, "is evidence that *No Child*

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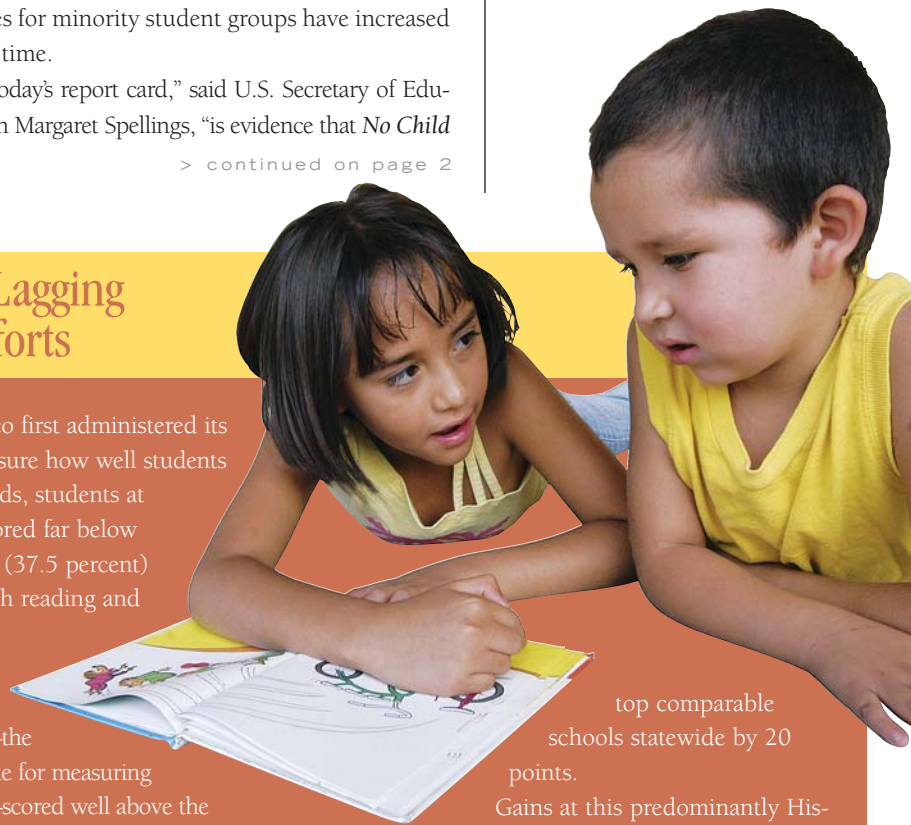
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"Choosing the Best Apple"

New Mexico School Turns Around Lagging Scores With Schoolwide Reform Efforts

Two years ago when New Mexico first administered its criterion-referenced tests to measure how well students were faring against state standards, students at Chimayo Elementary School scored far below average. Just a little over a third (37.5 percent) demonstrated proficiency in both reading and mathematics.

But by the following year, in 2004, the school had made dramatic increases. Fourth-graders—the benchmark initially set by the state for measuring elementary school achievement—scored well above the norm: 75 percent proved mastery of reading, and 87.5 percent of math, overall doubling the average from the previous year. Chimayo's scores outranked those of



top comparable schools statewide by 20 points.

Gains at this predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged school were so dramatic that it attracted the attention of Just for the Kids, a program of the National Center for

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We want
to represent
ourselves in
a positive
... way.

Left Behind is working—it is helping to raise the achievement of young students of every race and from every type of family background. And the achievement gap that has persisted for decades in the younger years between minorities and whites has shrunk to its smallest size in history.”

Although there is reason for celebration,

Spellings said, there remains room for growth: “We are at the beginning of the journey and certainly have room for improvement, particularly at the high school level. We must support older students with the same can-do attitude that helped their younger brothers and sisters.”

Based on a representative sample of students aged nine, 13 and 17, results on the

long-term trend report are described by gender, race/ethnicity and parents’ highest level of education. The “main” NAEP, the other basic type of the report that tests by grade rather than by age and includes state results, will be released later this fall.

For the full results of the 2004 report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov> and scroll down the menu to “Nation’s Report Card.”

Spellings Addresses PTA Convention

In a speech given early this summer at the annual National PTA Convention in Columbus, Ohio, Secretary Spellings spoke about bridging the divide between parents and their children’s schools. Below is an excerpt of her remarks.

... I know how hard it is to compete for attention in the high-speed, interconnected, I-Pod-loving, 24-7 media-rich world in which we are raising our children. ... It’s not easy to stay involved in your child’s school, especially if you’re a single parent like I was, or a parent who doesn’t speak English, or a working mom. The PTA is the bridge between the crazy, over-scheduled life we all now lead and the highly confusing, often intimidating school system.

... Once you enter the schoolhouse doors, it can be like walking into a wall of “edu-speak.” I can understand why parents get frustrated. It sometimes feels like we’re all speaking a different language. ...

... And it’s our job to make sure parents understand what [the jargon] means. ...

No Child Left Behind gives parents information about their school’s performance; gives parents options if their local school isn’t serving their needs; and provides parents free tutoring for their children who are struggling. In fact, the word



Photo courtesy of National PTA

“parents” is mentioned 651 times in *No Child Left Behind*. The law puts parents front and center! ...

I recently encountered a mother who told me that her school

“had some of those Nickleby kids.” ... It was a reference to *No Child Left Behind* kids.

NCLB. It was said in a derogatory way, like the school was being dragged down because of these children.

So who are these “Nickleby” kids? The voiceless ones who slipped through the system because they were someone else’s problem.

They were in someone else’s school. But you know what? They weren’t. And aren’t. They are in almost every school. Your child’s school. My daughters’ schools. And they are gifted young people with much to offer our communities, our country and our world. ...

Did You Know?
 Approximately 250,000 students last year took advantage of free tutoring or school choice options under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

So we have a double duty: to advocate for all children, not just our own; and to make our communities care about all children as well. ... How do we make people care about something they don’t consider to be their problem? ... At some point in the future, if 40 percent of Americans don’t have the skills to hold a job, we’ll see crime, hopelessness and despair on the rise. ...

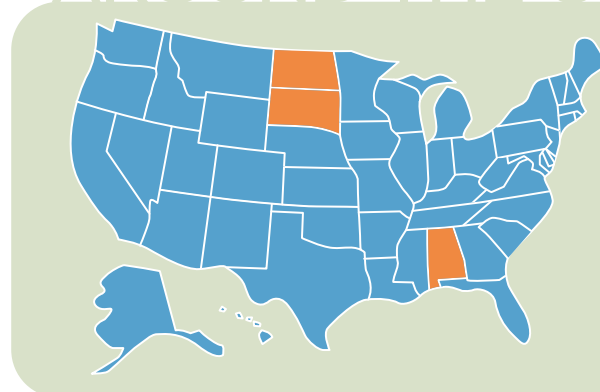
The good news is that three years into this law, we are making real progress, not only in attitudes but also in results. ...

... In New York, the achievement gap in fourth-grade English continues to close. African-American and Hispanic students especially continue to make significant gains. For the first time, a majority achieved all the standards, including over 57 percent of Hispanic students, up from 26 percent in 1999. We’ve seen similar gains in Maryland and Georgia as well. ...

Nationally, students are taking advantage of what the law has to offer. For instance, in 2003–04, 220,000 students across the nation got free tutoring because of *No Child Left Behind*. And at least 30,000 students have enrolled in new schools. That number continues to rise. As soon as more parents take advantage of *No Child Left Behind*, achievement is going to go up even more. ...

For the full speech, visit www.ed.gov and click on “Speeches” for the June 24, 2005, remarks.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

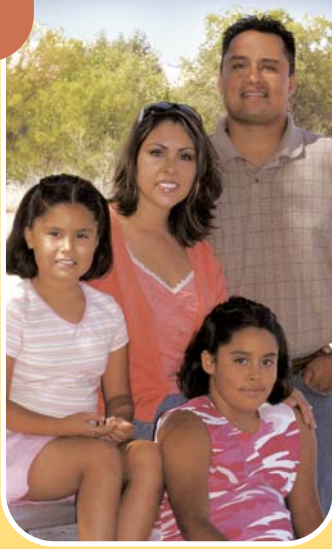


ALABAMA—Fourth-through 12th-graders in Alabama can get the homework help they need seven days a week, from 3 p.m. to midnight, by logging on to a free online tutoring service. Students receive live assistance from trained professionals in math,

Educational Accountability, which held an honors ceremony this summer for Chimayo and four other New Mexico schools. Just for the Kids recognizes consistently high-performing schools that stand head and shoulders above their demographic counterparts.

According to the state's 2005 adequate yearly progress (AYP) report released in August, Chimayo has met AYP goals for the second year in a row. This accomplishment comes in the face of higher standards and more students—in grades three through six—being examined this year. (2005 test score results were not available at the time this article was written.)

"It's no coincidence," said Suzanne Coriz, who serves on Chimayo's Parent Advisory Council. "A lot of work has been put into this by the staff, the principal, the parents. Everyone is getting involved, and I think that's why it's improved."



The work to which Coriz refers largely began in the 2003–04 school year with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education that helped to put into place several initiatives for a schoolwide reform. The funding allowed the school to buy new math and reading curricula materials, including a computer program that tracked student progress; provide teacher training for the new curricula; and hire a

behavioral specialist to help cut down on discipline issues that would detract from learning.

The decisionmaking process for school improvement, describes Principal Ruben Salazar, who joined Chimayo two years ago when its principal retired, is "a basket of apples, and it's just choosing the best apple that's going to benefit your school."

He also credits two after-school programs by Para Los Niños and the Boys & Girls Club, which has a building adjoined to the school's gymnasium.

Located in an outlying area with urban neighbor Sante Fe more than 20 miles away, Chimayo depends on the support of these organizations along with another community partner, the Chimayo Youth Corps, to help provide tutoring and enrichment activities for its children at risk. The need for such

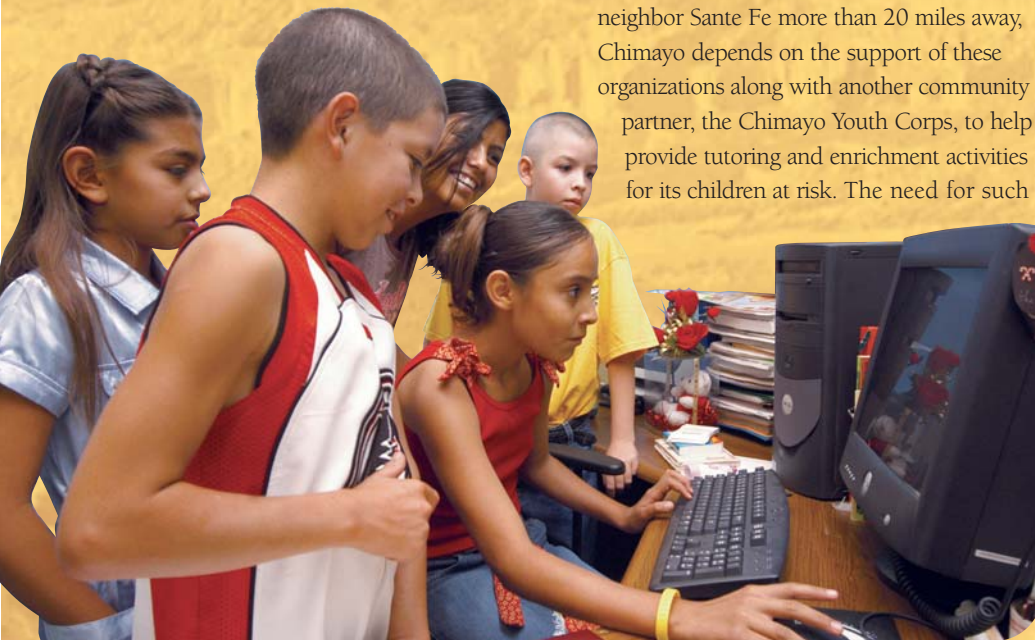
programs is especially acute because local drug use and unemployment are at high levels, sources say.

Coriz, who was born and raised in Chimayo and has two daughters at the elementary school, considers the school-community partnership a necessary



marriage for a healthy population. "We work very hard and we want to represent ourselves in a positive rather than a negative way," she said. "So now we're just kind of all saying 'No more. It's time that we better the community by putting more effort into the schooling.'"

Coriz and her husband have served on Chimayo's Parent Advisory Council for the past four years since it started. The 10-member council addresses every school-related issue, from safety to special education, and it recently organized a "lunch-buddy" system that enlists parent volunteers as mentors during lunchtime.



Chimayo

science, social studies and English. The service is also available to students enrolled in college preparatory classes and trying to earn their GED. The program, which began in 2002 in 10 libraries, will expand to all 219 public libraries this school year, thanks to a pledge from the Alabama Public Library System.

NORTH & SOUTH DAKOTA—Students in grades K–12 along the North Dakota-South Dakota border will be able to attend schools in either state, due to a new cross-border enrollment program that allows students living in a border school district to attend a school in the neighboring state's bordering district. North Dakota already maintains a similar agreement with Montana and

Minnesota. Some students live closer to the state border than to their current schools, traveling in one county, for instance, as far as 40 miles to their district schools. For financial purposes, each state will count the other's students as if they are state residents, and the district will receive state aid for those students. Districts that lose students will no longer need to negotiate out-of-state tuition rates.



Clockwise, from the top: Principal Salazar; first-grader Jasmin and fifth-grader Christopher; teacher Melanie Martinez (center, background) with students; the Coriz family; and students Santiago and Cherish. On page 1, Jasmin and cousin Jeremiah. Photos by Debora Falco.



Parent involvement had been the number-three concern in 2003 on Chimayo's school-wide plan identifying 30 areas for improvement.

Number one on the list was another need common to schools across the country, especially to rural and disadvantaged ones like Chimayo: technology.

"There's a demand for students to know a lot more than there used to be," said veteran teacher Janet Malcolm, who has taught at Chimayo for the past 27 years. "There's so much technology and other things that students need to learn at an earlier age."

To bridge the digital divide, with federal and private support, Chimayo added a computer lab, installed at least three computers in every classroom, provided laptops to teachers, designated one faculty member as the technology coordinator, and purchased software to help with grading and lesson planning.

Malcolm said the computer program has been a valuable supplemental tool for instruction because it identifies a student's learning level, selects assignments accordingly and tracks achievement. She admits that it was

challenging at first to move from group to individualized instruction but is thankful for the teacher support—number two on the improvement plan—for easing the shift.

"You just have to learn to work with it because you find that after a while the old methods are not necessarily working," Malcolm added.

Teacher support also included training on the new reading and math curricula, which Principal Salazar considers more rigorous and better aligned with their objectives. He requires every teacher at the end of each day to assess students' knowledge of the materials. Constant testing, he believes, offers a two-way benefit: "It cuts down on test anxiety. ... We also get an assessment of the child's level—that way, parents, students and the administrators are informed as to where the child is."

Salazar plans to purchase additional programs, including one for science learning, that develop critical thinking skills. His struggle is a constant search for resources that will improve learning and meet ever-increasing demands.

Having seen some progress in her children's performances, Coriz agrees that there is much more road to tread in Chimayo's journey toward student achievement.

"I know we can still improve," she said. "But we're moving there. We're moving down the right path."

—BY NICOLE ASHBY



Chimayo Elementary School



- > **Grade Span:** K-6
- > **Locale:** Small town
- > **Total Students:** 239
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 98% Hispanic, 2% white
- > **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 100%
- > **English Language Learners:** 85%
- > **Special Education Students:** 7%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In mathematics, 87.5%; in reading, 75% (based on fourth-graders assessed on the 2004 state exam).
- > **Interesting Fact:** In math, student scores jumped 50 percentage points in just one year of school reform efforts.

September 17

Constitution and Citizenship Day, a new observance legislated by Congress this past May. Education institutions receiving federal funds are required to “hold an educational program pertaining to the U.S. Constitution on September 17 of each year,” the new law states. Among other resources, the FREE Web site—www.ed.gov/free—offers a special page of federal resources for teaching and learning about the 1787 document that shaped America’s democratic government.

September 24

National Book Festival, sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by First Lady Laura Bush on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Famous guests include authors Tom Clancy, David McCullough and R.L. Stine. For details, visit www.loc.gov and click on “National Book Festival,” or call (888) 714-4696.

October 20

Lights On Afterschool!, a nationwide event saluting afterschool programs. For information on hosting a local event along with suggested ideas and supporting materials, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org or call (202) 347-1002.

October 16–22

National Character Counts! Week, a celebration of the importance of developing good character in youths. To receive free resources for conducting local activities, visit www.charactercounts.org or call (800) 711-2670.

Q & A GLOSSARY

What if my child’s school does not make adequate yearly progress?

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, by the start of the school year parents should be notified as to whether their child’s school has made adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Schools that have not made AYP for two consecutive school years are identified for improvement. While school officials must develop a plan to turn around the school, every student in a school receiving Title I funds must be given the option to transfer to another public school in the district that has not been identified as needing improvement. The district must provide transportation

up to certain spending limits. Parents should be notified about their choices “not later than the first day of the school year following such identification,” the law requires.

If the school does not make AYP for three years, the district must offer students from low-income families supplemental educational services—free tutoring and other academic services outside of the regular school day.

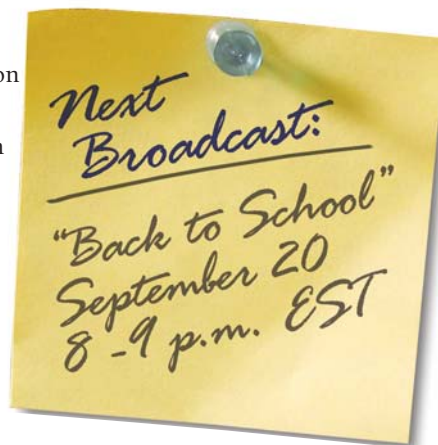
Schools that remain “in improvement” for additional years are subject to corrective action and restructuring.

AYP adequate yearly progress: the annual level of improvement, as measured on student assessments and other academic indicators, set by each state that a school must achieve.

News Show Offers Back-to-School Tips

The Department’s monthly television program begins the 2004–05 season with a special “Back-to-School” edition that focuses on high school learning. The September show of *Education News Parents Can Use* will offer parents of middle and high school-aged students tips on course selection; questions to ask teachers and principals; and advice for keeping students on track.

The broadcast will showcase teachers and administrators from schools that are successfully applying the *No Child Left Behind* principles of high standards for all students and evidence-based approaches to learning. It will also highlight such programs as State Scholars, Advanced Placement, Community



College Access/Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate and other promising initiatives designed to increase the rigor and relevance of the high school years.

Each month, *Education News Parents Can Use* showcases schools and school districts from across the country; conversations with school officials, parents and education experts; and advice and free resources for parents and educators.



To learn about viewing options, including webcasts, visit www.ed.gov and click on “Press Room,” then “Audio & Video,” or call toll-free (800) USA-LEARN.



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The Facts About K-12 Education Funding

The cost of funding education in America's public elementary and secondary schools is the topic of a recently revised publication from the Education Department.

10 Facts About K-12 Education Funding provides an overview of how kindergarten through 12th-grade education is funded in the United States. This full-color brochure includes an explanation of each fact along

with a graph to illustrate it. For instance, one graph breaks down the amount of funding provided for education by federal, state and local levels.

According to the brochure,

in the 2004-05 school year, 83 cents out of every dollar spent on education is estimated to come from state and local contributions. The federal government's share is 8.3 percent, which has risen by more than one-third since 1990-91, when it was 5.7 percent.

The brochure also specifies the funding levels under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which has increased every year since it was enacted in January 2002—from \$22 billion to the \$25.3 billion proposed for fiscal year 2006. Federal dollars under *NCLB* are sent to states and school districts through a variety of programs, as described briefly in the publication, including Title I (for high-poverty schools), Reading First, Improving Teacher Quality Grants, and English Language Acquisition.

For other facts about funding public education, download a copy of *10 Facts About K-12 Education Funding* at www.ed.gov, or order it toll-free at (877) 4ED-PUBS with identification number EA 0484B.



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