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# THE ACHIEVER

November 1, 2002 • Vol. 1, No. 4

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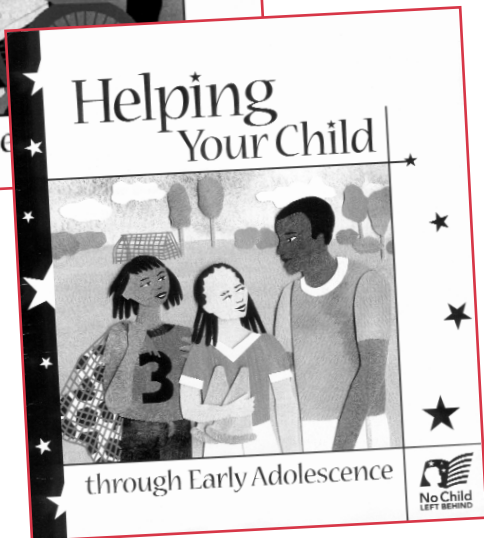
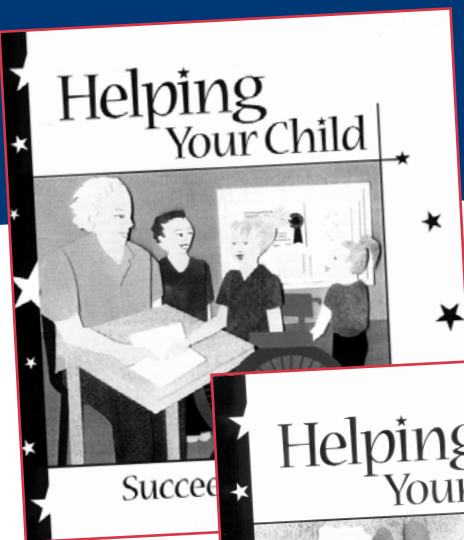
**FIRST CLASS**



"When it comes to  
the education of our  
children...failure is  
not an option."

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

## **NOW AVAILABLE!** **Helping Your Child Additions**



**T**he U.S. Department of Education just released two new titles of the popular *Helping Your Child* publication series. *Helping Your Child through Early Adolescence* focuses on how parents and families can greatly influence the growth and development of their children at what can be a challenging time—from the years 10 through 14. Building on the latest research, the 88-page booklet offers tips on how to respond to physical, emotional and cognitive changes; how much independence to give; how to help them resist harmful peer pressure; and how to identify problems such as alcohol or drug use, eating disorders and depression.

Another new release, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, provides activities for ages 5 through 11 that parents can share with their children to help them master reading, understand the value of homework and develop other skills necessary to achieve. The booklet also includes tips on test taking.

English and Spanish versions of these titles may be ordered, while supplies last, through the Department's publication center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS, or downloaded from [www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/hyc.html).



# THE ACHIEVER

www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov • November 1, 2002 • Vol. 1, No. 4

## \$23.8 Million Given to Support Public School Choice

Three states—Arkansas, Florida and Minnesota—and 10 school districts and partnerships in California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Hampshire, New York and Oregon, will benefit from \$23.8 million in new grants to help school districts and states establish or expand public school choice programs, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced last month.

The grants come under the new Voluntary Public School Choice Program authorized by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

The competitive program supports five-year projects that offer the widest variety of choices to students in

participating schools, including options that allow students to transfer from low-performing schools to higher performing schools.

Grantees develop the program with parental and community involvement, in concert with those who will carry out the program, including teachers, administrators and other staff.

For the list of grantees, visit [www.ed.gov/PressReleases/10-2002/10042002.html](http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/10-2002/10042002.html) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

## Pairing Science with Reading for Results

By Katherine Mitchell, Montgomery, Ala.

Sound research and old-fashioned hard work by dedicated, energized educators are driving the progress we are making in the state of Alabama. Since the 1998–99 school year, I have had the privilege of leading the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), which now has skyrocketed in participation from 16 to 450 schools.

For three continuous years, reading scores of students at ARI schools have shown more improvement than at non-ARI schools with similar demographics. In reading initiative schools, the percentage of students classified as struggling readers is decreasing; discipline referrals are down significantly; and special education referrals are reduced.

By beating the odds, Alabama Reading Initiative schools are demonstrating that scientifically based reading instruction yields results. For example, at Merritt Elementary—a school with a population that is 97 percent minority and 81 percent living in poverty—third-graders outperformed their counterparts with similar demographics by 22 percentile points on the Stanford 9

*“Scientifically based reading instruction makes it crystal clear where our focus should be and from that we can expect miracles,” said Mitchell.*



Photography by Tommy Giles

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## U.S. Department of Education

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test. At North Sumter Elementary, in just two years

third-graders (96 percent minority and 62 percent poverty) more than doubled their Stanford 9 scores, moving from the 30th percentile in 2000 to the 70th percentile in 2002.

These kinds of results are not miracles resulting from magic formulas; rather, they follow a statewide commitment to specific actions:

- Teach teachers and their leaders how to implement scientifically based reading research;
- Monitor carefully the progress of each school;
- Highlight successes and support adjustments in schools that are not progressing rapidly enough; and
- Stay the course!

What has proven miraculous is the increase in optimism, energy and hope among teachers and administrators who have experienced improved reading achievement firsthand.

The increases in student aptitude and teacher attitude are due in part to Alabama's equal emphasis on *ongoing* as well as *initial* teacher professional development. Last fall, when I visited a school where the staff received initial training in 1999 but also where the reading scores continued to decline for the next two years, I realized immediately why it was not making progress. The school was *not* implementing its intervention plan to address the needs of struggling readers, *not* providing ongoing professional development, *not* monitoring the progress of their students through ongoing assessment, and *not* implementing small-group instruction.

A meeting with the teachers along with monthly support from a regional reading coach helped to refocus the faculty's commitment to implementing proven instructional practices. Their efforts were rewarded with the school making the third highest gains among the 65 schools in its cohort.

In Alabama, our commitment to having all of our students read well has been strengthened by President Bush's new initiative, Reading First. The additional resources we received this July through a Reading First grant will help us to provide textbooks to schools that have not had a new reading program for almost 18 years, place a reading coach in every targeted school, and substantially increase ongoing professional development and technical assistance in 36 school districts that face the greatest challenges.

In the short time of our reforms, we have reached 17,000 teachers with sound research on which methods help every child learn to read. Scientifically based reading instruction makes it crystal clear where our focus should be and from that we can expect miracles.

*Katherine Mitchell is the director of the Alabama Reading Initiative. Her start with wide-scale reading reform efforts dates back to 1971 in the Bronx, N.Y. Since 1978, she has worked in the Alabama Department of Education in the areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment.*

*The Alabama Reading Initiative has reached 17,000 state teachers with sound research on which methods help every child learn to read.*





"[R]eading is the new civil right. It's a part of making sure our students are free citizens."

*President Bush, during a discussion with several state educators on the implementation of No Child Left Behind.*

**Close-Up:**



## No Child Left Behind

### Measuring Adequate Yearly Progress

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires "adequate yearly progress," the minimum level of improvement school districts and schools must achieve every year. In technical terms, adequate yearly progress (AYP) refers to the growth rate in the percentage of students who achieve the state's definition of academic proficiency. Each state will set the AYP gains every school must meet to reach 100 percent proficiency at the end of 12 years.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, "adequate yearly progress" measures are steps toward our nation's bipartisan goal of closing the achievement gap and ensuring that every child is proficient in math and reading by the school year 2013–14.

By testing every child, parents and teachers will know the academic achievement of each group of students and can work together to ensure that no child will be left behind. This is why test scores will be broken out into the following sub-groups: **economic background, race and ethnicity, English proficiency** and **disability**.

Defining adequate yearly progress ensures that every school improves every year so that every child—regardless of race, parent's income or family background—learns and excels. Tracking this progress yearly will help recognize great schools making great strides in teaching all children. And by following AYP gains at schools where children are not learning, parents and education officials will know which schools need to improve.

In order to publicize this information, parents will receive annual report cards on the following:

- comparison of students at basic, proficient and advanced levels of academic achievement,
- graduation rates,
- professional qualifications of teachers,
- percentages of students not tested,
- and identification of schools in need of improvement.

The information that comes from measuring the yearly progress of schools is also the basis to give parents new options and choices for helping their children when they fall behind.



**November 19**  
**8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. E.T.**

*Education News Parents Can Use* monthly broadcast will focus on math and science education. Visit <http://registerevent.ed.gov> or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

**December 12**  
**Philadelphia, Pa.**

White House Regional Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; information on federal funding opportunities, grant-writing techniques and promising practices will be offered. The conference is free but preregistration is required. Visit [www.fbc.gov](http://www.fbc.gov) or call 202-209-1746.

## Did You Know?

Fourth-grade students who read for fun every day scored highest on the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress. They scored higher than students who read for fun once or twice a week, once or twice a month, or never or hardly ever.

Source: *The Nation's Report Card: Fourth-Grade Reading 2000*, National Center for Education Statistics.