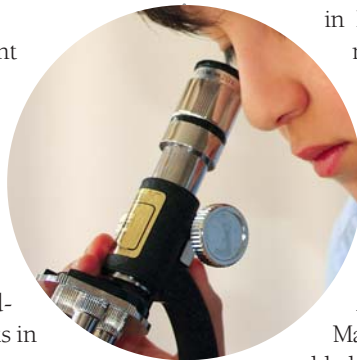


Younger Students Show Highest Achievement Over Last Decade

The latest results on the Nation's Report Card show that students at the elementary school level have made remarkable progress in science compared to those in the upper grades.

The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tested the science skills of a representative sample of more than 300,000 students in grades 4, 8 and 12. Released in May of this year by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, national findings since the previous assessments in 1996 and 2000 revealed:

- > Fourth-grade students scored higher than in either previous year, and lower-performing students made the largest gains since 2000.
- > Eighth-graders' overall performance remained unchanged from either previous year; gains by



lower-income students narrowed the achievement gap since 2000.

- > Scores for 12th-graders remained unchanged since the last assessment, but are lower than in 1996. However, the gap in achievement between black and white students has widened since 2000.

"These NAEP results provide further evidence that accountability and assessments are working to raise achievement levels, even in subjects not directly tested under the *No Child Left Behind Act*," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Furthermore, she added that the results prove the need to expand those accountability provisions more in the nation's high schools.

The report also presents state results for grades 4 and 8. Although most states showed no improvement in these grades, five of the

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Plugging Into the World

Technology School Introduces World Studies Program to Help Prepare Florida Students for New Global Era

Now we have something to link [the technology] to.

Lee Academy of World Studies has taken its students on a trip around the world—without them ever having to leave their desks. With the help of the Internet and an array of high-tech gadgets, its children have discovered over the past year that the world is far bigger than their Tampa, Fla., neighborhood.

The 2005–06 school year was the first for the world studies curriculum. After more than a decade of serving as a technology magnet school, Lee broadened its K–5 program by globalizing the social studies curriculum and adding foreign language studies. "Downloading information about countries and studying them is so much easier than saying, 'Okay, let's talk about technology,'" explained Principal Mamie Buzzetti. "Now we have something to link it to."

> continued on page 3



37 participating states—California, Hawaii, Kentucky, South Carolina and Virginia—did improve between 2000 and 2005 in both grades.

In addition, in grades 4 and 8, minority

students showed improvement, with the average score for black students increasing by seven points, and for Hispanic students by 11 points since 2000. At grade 8, blacks were the only racial-ethnic group to show progress

since 1996, and no racial-ethnic group showed improvement since 2000.

For the full results of the 2005 science report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov> and scroll down the menu to “Nation’s Report Card.”

Spellings Gives Texas Tech Commencement Speech

In May, Secretary Spellings delivered the commencement address to the Texas Tech University class of 2006. Following is an excerpt of her remarks.

... Today, something very precious is coming to an end.

... To succeed you’ve got to have focus: the ability to see the big picture, the courage to dig in and persevere so that when life throws you a curve you don’t get derailed. ...

Sometimes the road stretches straight ahead. Sometimes you’re stuck in 5 o’clock traffic. Sometimes you’re just trying to find the nearest exit.

And one thing you’ll discover is that more often than not what at first appear to be roadblocks and setbacks are the very things that’ll get you where you were meant to be.

So, as best you can, have fun, put on some good music ... and don’t let anything or anyone narrow your dreams for the future. ...

Because the greatest obstacle in life isn’t failure, it’s fear. Fear keeps you on the sidelines playing it safe, convincing you risks are for daredevils and great-

ness is reserved for

others. Yet, the reality is when you play it safe the only guarantee you get is that you’ll live with regret. ...

Our fellow Texan, Lance Armstrong, has a saying inspired by his mom: “Pain is temporary, but quitting is forever.” Anything worth anything takes some

doing; it takes sacrifice. To seize life and live fully invites the potential for pain and disappointment. But that’s the risk you take so that you can stand proud knowing you’ve lived and you’ve played, while countless others never got off the bench. ...

As I tell my [daughters], “If all you ever do is all you’ve ever done, then all you’ll ever get is all you’ve ever got.” ...

Take time to pause and make sure that you’re living life and life isn’t living you. Have a plan, but don’t be afraid to improvise. Get off the beaten path. Explore the detours and back roads. Don’t be in such a hurry to get where you’re going that you miss some amazing scenery along the way. ...

... [But] no matter what you do in life, I want to encourage all of you to find some way to give back. The impact of that choice will not only improve the lives of others, it will enlarge and enrich yours as well. ...

Live your life so that when you look back on this day it will stand out not as an ending, but as the beginning of a wild ride, a great adventure, a life lived well and with purpose. ...

Visit www.ed.gov and click on “Speeches” for the complete May 13, 2006, remarks.



Photo courtesy of Texas Tech University

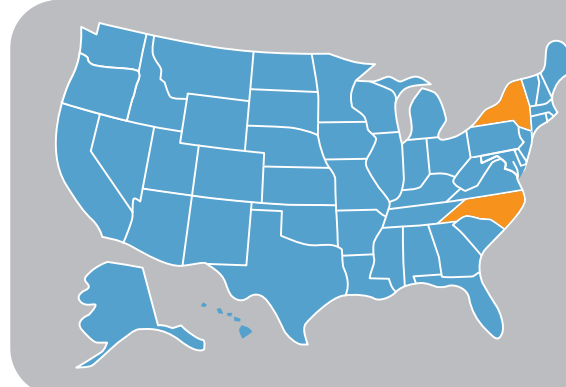
THE XX FACTOR

On May 15, Secretary Spellings and Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation Kathie Olsen welcomed to Washington, D.C., more than 100 female entrepreneurs, explorers and scientists for the first-ever National Summit on the Advancement of Girls in Math and Science. Spellings spoke about female underrepresentation in critical fields related to math and science. For instance, in high school Advanced Placement classes, girls account for only one-third of physics students and only 15 percent of computer science students; at the college level, less than 20 percent of engineering majors are women, and the number of women with computer science degrees has dropped 25 percent since 1985. “Our country cannot afford to lose half of our potential innovators, especially in this ever-flattening, iPod-loving, TiVo-watching world,” she said. To address this issue, the secretary announced that the U.S. Department of Education will be conducting a comprehensive review of research on why girls are turning away from these fields of the future. She also announced the Department’s new partnership with the Girls Scouts of the USA and the Ad Council.

You’re saying goodbye to friends, thanking teachers who inspired you, thinking back on many fond memories and leaving a place that’s been your home for four years—maybe a little longer for some of you.

But today, you’re also starting out on a new beginning, an incredible journey, one that stretches further and wider than anything you’ve ever known. ... You’re embarking on life, and it’s very simply what you make it. ...

AROUND THE COUNTRY



NEW YORK—The New York City Department of Education is hoping its new housing support program will attract at least 100 newly hired math, science and special education teachers to some of its high-need middle and high schools by September. The program was negotiated with Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s administration

In 1993, Lee became the first elementary magnet school in Hillsborough County to be a part of the district's diversity plan. At the time, remembers superintendent MaryEllen Elia, the idea of a technology school received a skeptical welcome. "Now when you look back, it's almost amazing to see how far we've come," she said.

After a while, however, many of the students who were making the nearly two-hour bus ride to Lee because of its technology were finding that they could receive computer instruction right in their neighborhood schools. That's when the staff realized they needed another draw for their magnet school population. Just as Lee's leadership thought a technology program would help to prepare students for a digital world, they also believed a world studies focus in an evolving global era would further strengthen students' academic preparation.

Such a program promises a more prosperous future for the children, especially at a school where approximately three-fourths of the students qualify

Principal Buzzetti peers into the microscope "Big Blue," while Jonathan and Jada examine its findings on the monitor. On the cover, third-graders Rachel and Teoprepio construct models.



Reading from the projector.

Third-graders Dyaamond and Tina in the Spectrum Lab.

for federally subsidized meals. "Parents want to find what's best for their children, and when they see all of our accomplishments and that every child can learn, they are convinced of the school's potential," said Buzzetti, who came to Lee in 1974 as a teacher.

For the past four years,

Lee has achieved Florida's adequate yearly progress goals, with about 70 percent of its students meeting high standards in both reading and math last year. During this time span, the school has earned nothing short of a "B" grade based on the state's accountability system.

Buzzetti is also proud of the school's small class sizes of 20 students per teacher and of its diversity: roughly one-third are black; another one-third are Hispanic; and the remaining one-third are white, multiracial and Asian. Furthermore, considering the fact that Lee is an inner-city school (located one mile from downtown Tampa) whose population is made up of children from all over the district, these accomplishments are no small feat. Acclaims Elia, "Lee has a dedicated staff, from the custodian to the principal, who have done some incredibly innovative things with students."

It is this innovation that in 2005 earned Lee one of 20 Schools of Distinction awards from Intel Corporation and Scholastic out of a national pool of more than 3,000 participating schools. Within the same year, it also received a Blue Ribbon Lighthouse School Award from Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Inc., in partnership with NASA. And this year, Lee won a Magnet School of Distinction Award from Magnet Schools of America. Buzzetti believes the stream of recognition is a credit to their hard work over the years to fine-



Lee Aca

and the city's teachers union to address teacher shortages in these subject areas. Candidates must have a minimum of two years of classroom experience and pass a rigorous selection process. Eligible teachers will receive an initial payment of up to \$5,000 for housing-related expenses along with a \$400 monthly stipend for two years in exchange for a three-year commitment of service.

NORTH CAROLINA—This fall, a group of Mecklenburg County parents will begin a two-year training program to learn how to become activists for improving public education for all children. Through its Parent Leadership Network, the nonprofit organization Charlotte Advocates for Education trains parents to partner with schools to improve student achievement. Participants

engage other parents in a variety of school initiatives, from helping Hispanic students learn to read to helping school leadership teams incorporate writing as a core subject. The program is supported by the Public Education Network and is modeled after a project by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a Kentucky-based advocacy group for school reform.

tune the program: “We knew exactly where we were going and just basically reached where we needed to be.”

In another pioneering project, Lee was the first in the district to set up the Spectrum Lab, which offers a hands-on approach to problem-solving by encouraging students to use scientific reasoning in various experiments that examine electricity, hydraulics, insects and the weather.

From the outside, few would guess this century-old, redbrick



Second-graders Yian and Demonee research online.

school building crowned with a monumental dome is the home of a multimedia enterprise. When Lee was converted to a technology school, the building constructed in 1906 by a grassroots team of laborers underwent an intensive retrofitting process, in which the ceiling, walls and hardwood floors were almost completely peeled back to accommodate new wiring and prepare for nearly 100 boxes of computer equipment.

Recently, thanks to the Intel and Scholastic award winnings worth \$10,000 in cash and \$500,000 in equipment, Lee expanded its electronic stock to include: laptop computers; digital projectors that beam classroom lessons

in high definition; document cameras that magnify three-dimensional objects; interactive whiteboards that allow teachers to colorfully inscribe their notes on the projected images; and handheld instructional devices that allow students to learn at their own pace through multiple-choice interaction. In addition, an order of flat screen televisions is expected to arrive by the fall to help support Lee’s video broadcasts.

“The grant was the best thing that could ever have happened because I’ve been dying for a projector, and I wanted my own laptop,” said Devin Qureshi, who is in her fourth year of teaching. “It’s made my job easier.”

By integrating this technology into the curriculum, teachers are engaging students of all learning styles, from the visual to the auditory to the kinesthetic learners. “It’s almost like the technology has become a pen or pencil,” said Elia. “It’s fascinating.”

For example, in these digitally controlled classrooms, teachers can take their students on a virtual tour of Africa at the touch of a button. Students can watch exotic animals drinking from a watering hole in the desert via a live camera feed through National Geographic’s Web site.

Also, in establishing a globally conscious learning environment, last year Lee implemented foreign language classes as a complement to its world studies program. Twice a week, students in every grade attend the foreign language lab to learn Spanish. Although the community is predominantly Hispanic, Lee teaches the language with an emphasis on Latin and assigns native Spanish speakers more challenging activities.

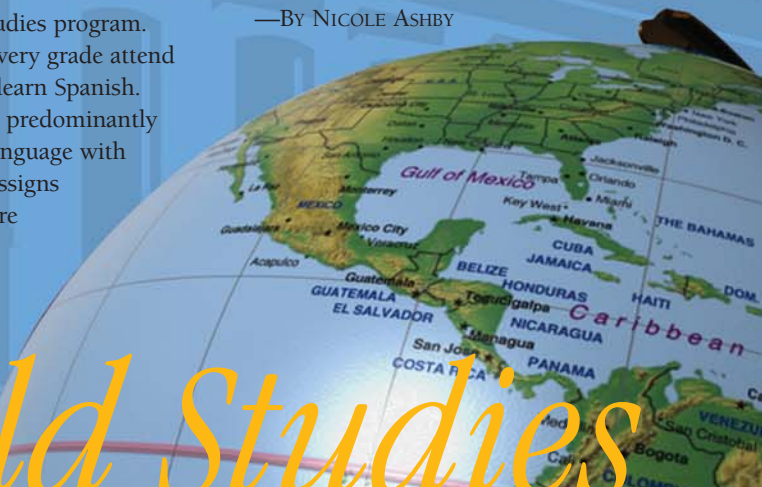
For Angela Bowling, the language studies help

Jonathan teams up with Cameron.



children not only to better communicate with their Latino classmates but provide a practical link to higher learning. “I’ve used it to teach them math skills when we’re talking about a quadrilateral,” she said. “We talk about the Latin roots of the word—*quadri*, meaning ‘four,’ and *later*, meaning ‘sides.’ I show them how the language can help them in math, reading and writing—and in what they’re doing right now and in what they’ll do in the future.”

—BY NICOLE ASHBY



Academy of World Studies



- > **Grade Span:** K–5
- > **Locale:** Large central city
- > **Total Students:** 373
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 36% black, 31% Hispanic, 24% white, 7% multiracial, 2% Asian
- > **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 73%
- > **English Language Learners:** 36%
- > **Special Education Students:** 3%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In math, 71%; in reading, 70% (based on third- through fifth-graders assessed on the 2005 state exams)
- > **Interesting Fact:** Built in 1906, Lee was retrofitted with a new wiring system in 1993 when it was converted to a technology magnet school.

July 25

White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference, Austin, Texas, sponsored by a consortium of federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education. This regional meeting for grassroots leaders will provide information about federal grant opportunities. Registration deadline is July 19. For more information, visit www.fbc.gov or call 202-456-6718.

September

Library Card Sign-Up Month, sponsored by the American Library Association. Launched in 1987, this observance brings national attention to using the local library as a source of lifetime learning. Visit www.ala.org and click on "Events and Conferences," or call toll-free 1-800-545-2433.

September 8

International Literacy Day, sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. With nearly 775 million people over the age of 15 who are illiterate, of whom two-thirds are women, this observance highlights the importance of literacy worldwide. Visit <http://portal.unesco.org> and click on "Education."

Q & A GLOSSARY

What federal grants are available for college students?

To meet the growing need for improved math and science instruction, President George W. Bush recently signed into law two new grant programs for college students: the Academic Competitiveness Grant and the Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grant. The president has budgeted \$790 million for the 2006–07 academic year, and \$4.5 billion over five years, to provide financial aid to college students who are: 1) eligible for federal Pell grants; 2) United States citizens; and 3) enrolled full-time.

Academic Competitiveness grants will be awarded to first- and second-year college students who have completed a rigorous secondary school program. Qualifying students would receive up to \$750 for the first year of study and up to \$1,300 for the second year. First-year students must not have

been previously enrolled in a program of undergraduate education; second-year students must have had at least a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) during their first year of college. Based on information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, potentially eligible students will be contacted by July 1.

For upper-level students, SMART grants of up to \$4,000 will be awarded to third- and fourth-year college students who major in mathematics, science, technology, engineering or critical foreign languages at a four-year degree-granting institution. Students must have at least a cumulative 3.0 GPA in college.

Visit www.ed.gov and click on "About ED," then "Priorities," for more information about student eligibility for the American Competitiveness Initiative grant programs.

pell grant: a federal grant that provides funds to undergraduate students based on financial need.

News Show Looks Back on Spring Season

Education News Parents Can Use, the U.S. Department of Education's monthly television program, wrapped up the spring season with its June edition, "Child Health and Nutrition," which highlighted national and local programs that encourage children to eat right and exercise. The show also discussed nutrition guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new food pyramid and featured a pilot program in Wisconsin that is spreading throughout the Appleton Area School District with the help of a physical education program grant from the Education Department.

Other editions of the monthly news show were: "Helping America's Youth: Engaging At-Risk Students," "Inspiring Excellence: Great Teachers, Great Principals," and "New Tools for Parents: Getting Informed and Getting Involved."

The March edition focused on a youth development initiative led by first lady Laura Bush and similar programs nationwide that are providing at-risk youths with the tools, community support and role models

necessary for them to grow into healthy, productive adults.

In April, the focus shifted to another topic of particular interest to America's families. The show examined how excellence in teaching is at the core of the nation's long-term competitiveness, with a videotaped story of IBM's Transition to Teaching program and conversations with the 2006 National Association of Secondary School Principals of the Year.

May's show highlighted best practices of school choice in California and Florida and a compelling story of a grandmother-activist from Washington, D.C., whose nephew is benefiting from the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.

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 view past broadcasts, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Parents," then "News Parents Can Use," or call toll-free 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Teaching, Assessing Students With Disabilities

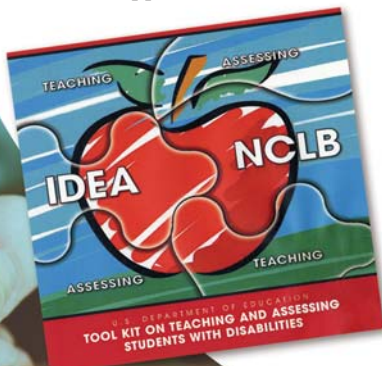
In striving to help all students achieve to high standards, the U.S. Department of Education recently released a new tool kit to assist school leaders in fully implementing the accountability provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* for students with disabilities as well as those of the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act*.

The *Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities* provides up-to-date guidance on assessing the achievement and progress of special education students. It also includes a series of technical assistance products that offer practical, research-based approaches

to the challenges schools are facing in instruction, assessment, accommodations and behavioral interventions. This colorful publication—replete with charts, tables and illustrations—includes:

- > Testimonials by educators who have successfully used alternate assessments;
- > Sound practices for systematically monitoring student progress;
- > Tips for parents on developing children's reading skills;
- > Tangible symbols for communicating with severely disabled individuals;
- > A schoolwide model for promoting positive behavior; and
- > A manual on appropriate accommodations for instructing and assessing students with disabilities in regular classes.

The *Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities* is a joint effort of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Free copies may be downloaded at www.osepideasthatwork.org and ordered on CD-ROM by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS with identification number EHE0110C, while supplies last.



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