

President Calls for
Streamlining in Education
Spending in 2007

Budget Proposal Advances NCLB, Introduces Competitiveness Initiative

In February, President George W. Bush unveiled a budget request for 2007 that reaffirms his commitment to close the achievement gap among the nation's students and provide a quality education for every child. The request increases funding for the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* to \$24.4 billion, up 4.6 percent from 2006, and up 40 percent since the law was enacted in 2001. Support for economically disadvantaged schools through Title I grants remains strong at \$12.7 billion, an increase of 45 percent since 2001.

In an effort to support what works and cut the federal budget deficit, the education budget also eliminates underperforming and lower-priority programs while increasing resources for initiatives that promise improvement in student outcomes. President Bush requests \$54.4 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Education, a decrease

of \$3.1 billion, or 5.5 percent, from 2006. Much of that decrease is calculated against funding inflated by one-time costs for Hurricane Katrina relief. Even with the proposed reduction, discretionary funding for education would be up more than \$12 billion, or 29 percent, since 2001.

"This budget request soundly targets resources where they are needed most and working best," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

The increase in *NCLB* spending includes \$380 million under the American Competitiveness Initiative to promote stronger instruction in math, science and critical foreign languages in high schools to give America's students the skills needed to compete in the global workforce.

Furthermore, to bring high standards and accountability to our nation's high schools, the president proposes \$1.475 billion for the High School Reform Initiative designed to focus more



INSIDE

2 Spellings Addresses
Girl Scouts Leaders

Around the Country—
Oklahoma and Virginia

5 Calendar

Q&A—Tax-Deductible
College Expenses

Education News Parents
Can Use

6 New Resources at the
FREE Web Site

> continued on page 2

'Outside the Book'

Rigorous Curriculum Puts South Texas Students on Track for High-Tech Careers

The Science Academy of South Texas puts a slightly different spin on the popular adage "Think outside the box," but the school's adaptation conveys the same principle: Ideas are not developed within a vacuum.

Its motto "Think outside the *book*" is the creation of the school's district leaders. The South Texas Independent School District is an all-magnet school district—the only one in the state—whose mission is to demonstrate the life application of classroom knowledge.

“Learning
takes place
in many
arenas.”

> continued on page 3



attention on at-risk students struggling to reach grade level in reading and math. The effort calls for reading and math assessments in two additional high school grades to give educators better data to keep all students on track towards graduation.

Such comprehensive data have led to the early identification of schools and districts in need of improvement. To help turn around such schools, as well as those identified in need of corrective action or restructuring, the president proposes

\$200 million for the Title I School Improvement Grant Program.

For additional highlights from the president's education budget request, visit www.ed.gov.

Spellings Addresses Girl Scouts Leaders

Last month, Secretary Spellings (pictured at right with Lizzie Dement of the Girl Scouts of Citrus Council, Orlando, Fla.) addressed leaders of the Girl Scouts of the USA at its annual work session for board chairs and CEOs in Orlando, Fla. An excerpt of her speech follows.

... The Girl Scouts also taught me a lot about serving others, and I'm proud and honored to continue that tradition by working for a president who believes, as we do, that every child can learn and every child

previous three decades combined. ...

We started with the basics: ensuring every child is reading and doing math at grade level by 2014. The next step is to make sure they're also learning the problem-solving skills that are essential for 21st-century jobs.

You know as well as I do that our children are not living in the same world we grew up in—let alone the world our parents grew up in. When your organization was founded in 1912,

Girl Scouts were working on badges like Matron Housekeeper, which focused



Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of the USA

Across our country, girls currently make up only one-third of Advanced Placement physics classes, and only 15 percent of AP computer science classes. And at the college level, less than 20 percent of engineering majors are women. ...

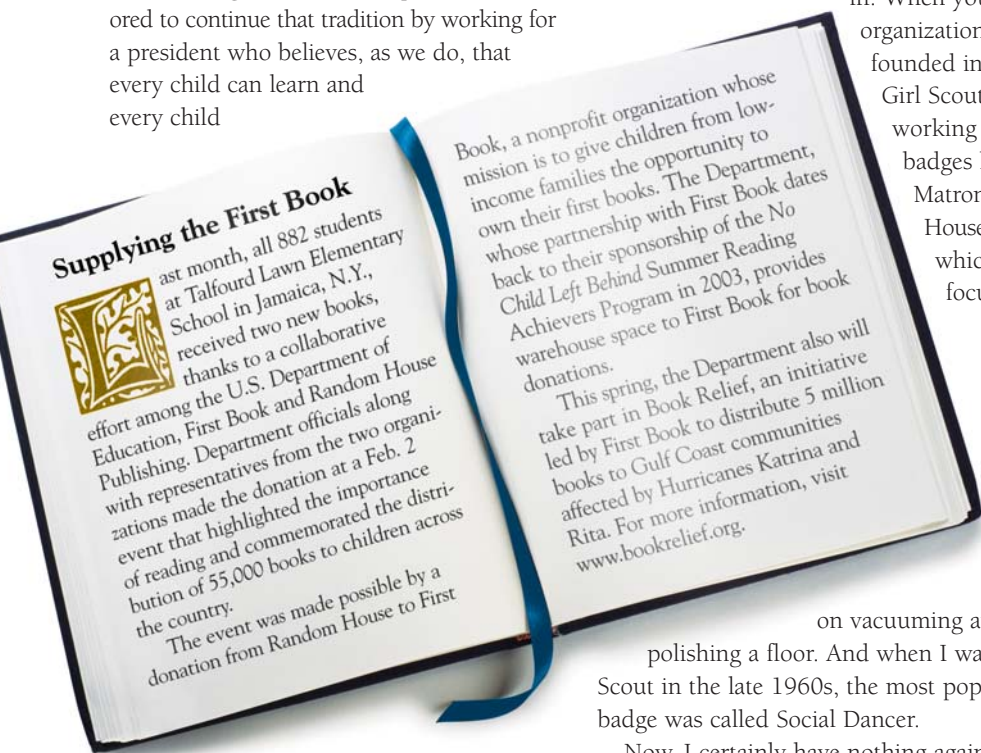
... Math teaches problem solving. Science teaches how to investigate our world. These are essential skills in every field, and we must make sure our children are learning them—especially our girls. That's certainly what I want for my two daughters! ...

... As your public service announcement shows, we must help girls go from *Charlotte's Web* to Charlotte's Web site. And every day, you're showing us how to get there. ...

That's why I'm pleased to announce that, later this year, the Department of Education will host the first-ever national summit on math and science for girls. We will bring together our best and brightest women leaders to develop a national strategy to help more girls and their parents get excited about math and science.

... When educators get together with women astronauts, scientists, engineers, business leaders and, of course, the Girl Scouts, it all adds up to higher achievement for girls and for our nation. ...

For the full speech, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Speeches" for the Feb. 28, 2006, remarks.



Supplying the First Book



Last month, all 882 students at Talfourd Lawn Elementary School in Jamaica, N.Y., received two new books, thanks to a collaborative effort among the U.S. Department of Education, First Book and Random House Publishing. Department officials along with representatives from the two organizations made the donation at a Feb. 2 event that highlighted the importance of reading and commemorated the distribution of 55,000 books to children across the country. The event was made possible by a donation from Random House to First

Book, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to give children from low-income families the opportunity to own their first books. The Department, whose partnership with First Book dates back to their sponsorship of the No Child Left Behind Summer Reading Achievers Program in 2003, provides warehouse space to First Book for book donations. This spring, the Department also will take part in Book Relief, an initiative led by First Book to distribute 5 million books to Gulf Coast communities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For more information, visit www.bookrelief.org.

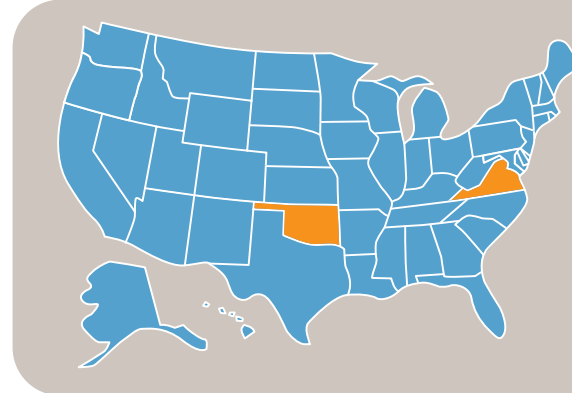
on vacuuming and polishing a floor. And when I was a Girl Scout in the late 1960s, the most popular badge was called Social Dancer.

Now, I certainly have nothing against a well-kept home, and who doesn't like to dance? But all of us know that today girls need more advanced skills to succeed. ...

deserves a chance to succeed. Our primary federal education policy, known as *No Child Left Behind*, is all about making sure that we're providing every student—regardless of race, background, or ZIP Code—with a high-quality education. And across our country, schools are showing it can be done.

In the last two years, the number of fourth-graders in our country who learned their fundamental math skills increased by 235,000 kids, enough to fill 500 elementary schools. According to the national education report card released last summer, over the last five years, more reading progress was made among nine-year-olds than in the

AROUND THE COUNTRY



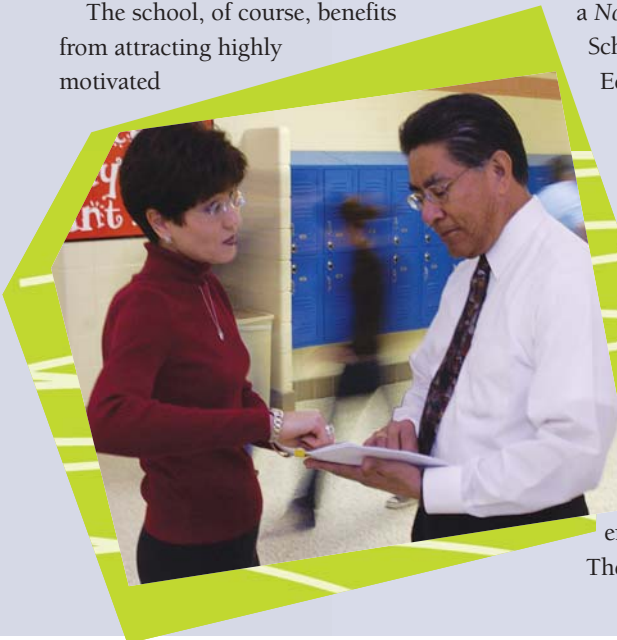
OKLAHOMA—In an effort to boost economic development and improve per capita income, the Oklahoma Senate recently authorized legislation to strengthen the state's education system. If approved by House members, Oklahoma teachers will receive the largest pay increase in seven years with a \$3,000 raise. In addition, teachers earning National

As Edward Argueta, principal of the Science Academy, explained, “A book doesn’t have the key to instruction. Learning takes place in many arenas.”

The Science Academy is one of four magnet schools in a district that stretches across three counties in the Rio Grande Valley and that offers junior and senior high school students a rigorous education to prepare them for a career in the 21st century. Located in Mercedes, a small town just 10 miles from the Texas-Mexico border, the Science Academy focuses specifically on professions in architecture, engineering and computer science.

Enrollment is open to any student residing in the tri-county area, with the only requirement being that new registrants start at the ninth or 10th grade. The students, a number of whom live as far as 45 miles away, understand that learning at the Science Academy will be demanding. “That’s impressive to me, when you’re in the eighth grade [and you] make a decision to come to a school like this,” said teacher Mark Schroll, who helped to launch the school 17 years ago. “You don’t want to let kids like that down.”

The school, of course, benefits from attracting highly motivated



students as well as from having a small learning environment with a low student-to-teacher ratio of 13 students for every teacher. At the same time, as a high-poverty, multicultural school serving students from nearly 30 districts who have varying skill levels, the Science Academy faces the same challenges as many of the nation’s richly diverse high schools.

Created to prepare minority youths for higher education, the Science Academy started as a school-within-a-school at its sister campus for health professions across the street. Schroll was one of the original teachers who developed the curriculum, attracting the support of partners Rice University and Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, the area’s largest urban neighbor.

From its humble beginnings of six teachers and 89 students, the school has grown into a monumental figure for advanced learning. For the past 11 years, it has held the title of “Texas Exemplary Campus” based on student passing rates exceeding 90 percent on state tests. In addition to being ranked eighth by *Newsweek* in 2003 among the 100 top public high schools in the country, the school last year was named a *No Child Left Behind*—Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Science Academy students surpass state averages on many academic measures. For instance, approximately 93 percent of the class of 2004 graduated, compared to 85 percent statewide.

Furthermore, because the curriculum puts students on track for careers that require additional schooling, 96 percent of the graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions. The college preparatory program at the



Science Academy requires four years of math and science each, a year more than the state’s requirement. The scale for rigor ranges from introductory classes, mostly for freshmen, to Advanced Placement (AP) classes and other course work earning college credit. There are various levels of math (algebra, geometry and calculus) and science (biology, chemistry and physics), but the expectation is for all students to complete courses for which they will receive college credit.

In addition to the AP courses, the school’s dual-credit program allows many students to graduate with over 20 hours of college credit. Taught by Science Academy teachers, most of whom have master’s degrees, dual-enrollment courses offer both high school and college credit, which is

Science A

Board Certification will see an annual salary increase from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The state Senate also approved legislation for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program to raise the income cap for eligibility, which would expand the scholarship program to 75 percent of high school students in the state.

VIRGINIA—This April, Prince William County Public Schools will host its 10th annual Closing the Gap Summit as a professional development opportunity for teachers and administrators in the school district as well as in the surrounding area. The summit will include presentations by education researchers who have explored the issue of learning among diverse populations and

will feature over 15 workshops on instructional strategies, particularly in math, that were developed to reach all students. The district serves approximately 68,000 students, of whom African-American and Hispanic students comprise 22 percent each. Its scores rank among the highest in Virginia, with more than 80 percent testing proficient in reading and math.

transferable to any state university in Texas.

Some graduates have earned as many as 47 credit hours. One year, the mother of one of these students wrote the school a thank-you letter exclaiming, "You've literally saved us



thousands of dollars!" Argueta points out another benefit of earning college credit in high school: With most freshmen courses completed by enrollment, students have a jumpstart to begin focusing on their college major.

Staff believe that these advanced courses have a practical application. "In learning physics," said Scott Wiley, who made the foray into teaching six years ago after working as a computer consultant, "the students become problem solvers."

Schroll, who teaches a digital electronics course, added, "Tearing apart a problem, looking at its individual pieces, and then trying to be innovative about how you approach those things works in any job."

Schroll's course is one of six "required" electives comprising a program that has catapulted the school's already rigorous curriculum to higher levels of scholarship. Project Lead the Way, which the school implemented in 2000, is a national technology program whose engineering courses have provided a platform for

From left to right: Science teacher Betty Warrington with Principal Edward Argueta; physics teacher Scott Wiley with seniors Blas Quiroga, III, and Luis Larraga; technology teacher Mark Schroll; and senior Alex Hilmy. On the cover, junior Flor Rodriguez programs a robot. Photos by Gabe Hernandez.

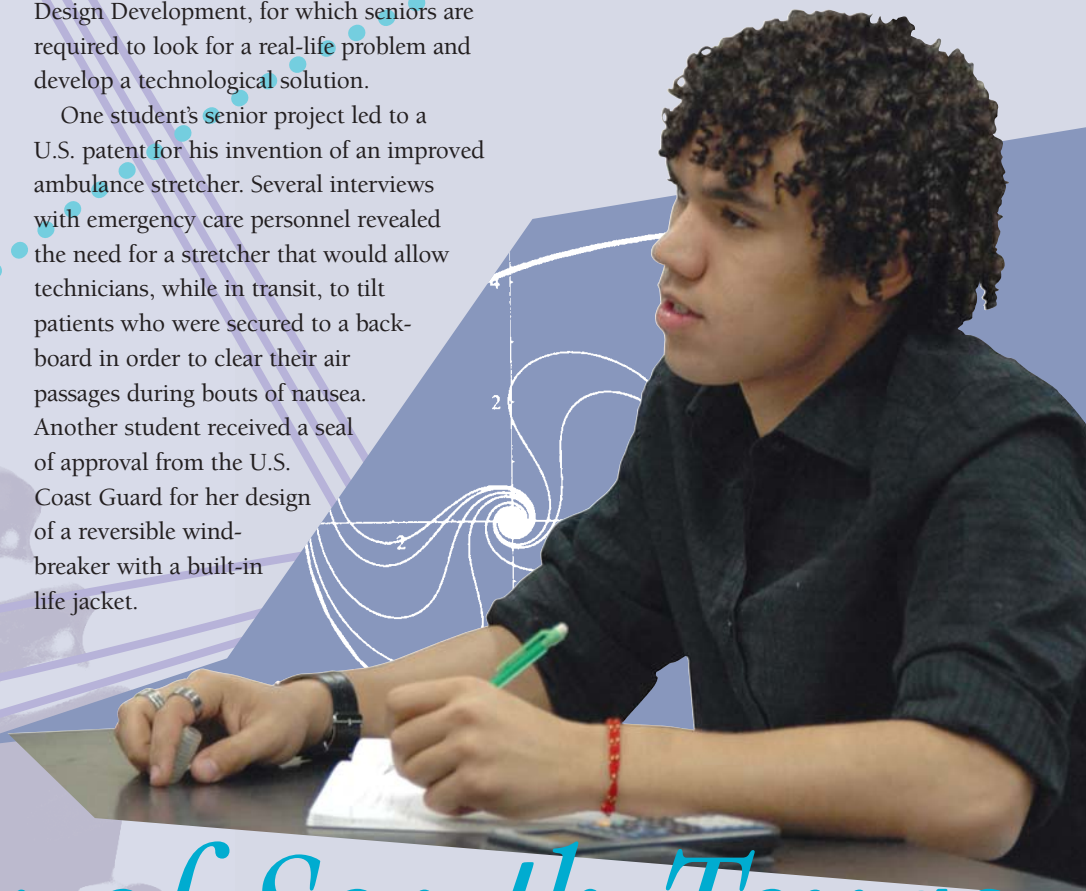
integrating other math and science classes at the Science Academy and has given students an enormous pathway for hands-on learning. Piloted in upstate New York, the nonprofit program was created by an engineer in search of a curriculum that prepares students for the rigors of a college engineering education.

Project Lead the Way requires students to take one course each year from a roster of offerings, most of which offer college credit through its partner, Rochester Institute of Technology. The four-year sequence of courses culminates with Engineering and Design Development, for which seniors are required to look for a real-life problem and develop a technological solution.

One student's senior project led to a U.S. patent for his invention of an improved ambulance stretcher. Several interviews with emergency care personnel revealed the need for a stretcher that would allow technicians, while in transit, to tilt patients who were secured to a backboard in order to clear their air passages during bouts of nausea. Another student received a seal of approval from the U.S. Coast Guard for her design of a reversible wind-breaker with a built-in life jacket.

From this project-based learning, senior Alex Hilmy feels he is getting the most out of his education. With 27 college credits already under his belt, Hilmy, who plans to pursue a career in either medicine or mechanical engineering, said, "I never felt like I was doing busy work at the Science Academy. I never felt like the teacher said, 'Here's a textbook, take a quiz on it.' I actually benefited from what I was learning ... because the staff here know what they're talking about—they're not just regurgitating something they've read."

—BY NICOLE ASHBY



Academy of South Texas



- > **Grade Span:** 9–12
- > **Locale:** Small city
- > **Total Students:** 623
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 66% Hispanic, 25% white, 8% Asian, 1% black
- > **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 41%
- > **English Language Learners:** 2%
- > **Special Education Students:** 6%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In English, 95%; in math, 94% (based on 2005 state exam results).
- > **Interesting Fact:** A former Science Academy student received a patent for his senior class project, a tiltable stretcher that allows the secure movement of emergency care patients.

April 2–8

National Library Week, an observance sponsored by the American Library Association since 1958. This year's theme, "Change Your World @ Your Library," is part of a public awareness campaign to promote the value of libraries and their staffs in the 21st century. For programming ideas, visit www.ala.org or call toll-free (800) 545-2433.

April 12

White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference, Jacksonville, Fla., sponsored by a consortium of federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education. Part of a series of regional conferences being held around the country, this meeting for grassroots leaders will provide information about federal grant opportunities. For more information, visit www.fbc.gov or call (202) 456-6718.

On the Horizon

This summer, the U.S. Department of Education will host a series of free professional development workshops for teachers across the country. As part of its Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, the Department will partner with TechNet, a group of technology companies, to develop training opportunities that focus on math, science and technology. In addition, future workshops will focus on foreign languages, including Mandarin Chinese. To receive announcements on dates and locations, register for "Teacher Updates" at www.ed.gov by selecting the link "Teacher" and then "Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative."

Q & A GLOSSARY

Are my college expenses tax-deductible?

As the 2005 tax-filing season draws to a close on April 17, a record number of students attending college, including those receiving financial aid, are looking into the tax breaks available to make higher education more affordable. Following is a summary of some of these benefits.

> **Tax credits.** The Hope Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit reduce federal income taxes based on qualifying education expenses, which include tuition and fees less any grants and scholarships received. The Hope Credit is available for only the first two years up to \$1,500 per student, while the Lifetime Learning Credit is unlimited in years for up to \$2,000 per tax return.

> **Tuition and fees deduction.** This deduction, capped at \$4,000, is based on qualified education expenses, including student activity fees and costs for supplies and

equipment, that must be paid to a postsecondary institution as a condition of attendance or enrollment. A student who does not qualify for either the Hope or Lifetime Learning credits because of his or her income level may take this deduction.

> **Student loan interest deductions.** The interest paid on student loans—Federal Stafford, PLUS and Perkins loans; federal and direct consolidation loans; federal loans for health care professionals; and private education loans issued by schools, banks and nonprofit associations—may be tax-deductible up to \$2,500.

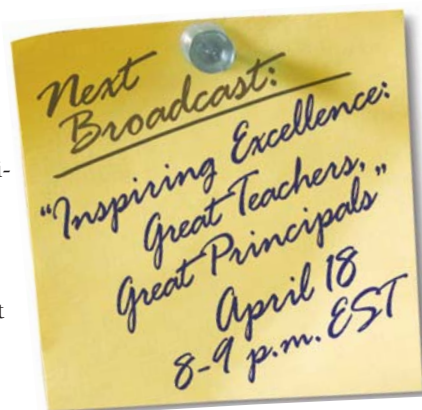
For more information about these tax benefits, visit www.irs.gov or call (800) 829-1040 for a copy of the Internal Revenue Service's *Publication 970: Tax Benefits for Education*.

tax-deductible: an item or expense subtracted from adjusted gross income to reduce the amount of income subject to tax.

News Shows: At-Risk Youths, Great Leaders

The March edition of *Education News Parents Can Use*, the U.S. Department of Education's monthly television program, focused on Helping America's Youth, a national initiative led by First Lady Laura Bush that encourages youths to take action in three key areas: family, school and community. The show featured best practices in positive youth development and tips for parents on keeping children safe and on the right track.

In April, the broadcast will showcase exceptional teachers and principals and examine the ways in which innovative routes to teaching, school leadership and compensation systems impact student achievement. The show will also explore



recent Department efforts to expand the number of highly qualified teachers—especially in critical foreign languages, math and science—along with tips to assist parents in identifying effective teachers and principals.

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

To learn about viewing options, including live and archived webcasts, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Parents," then "News Parents Can Use," or call toll-free (800) USA-LEARN.



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New Resources at the FREE Web Site

The human cell, the stock exchange and the environment are among the topics of new resources just added to the federally supported Web site www.ed.gov/free. A one-stop shop for hundreds of teaching and learning resources from more than 35 federal organizations, the FREE (Federal Resources for Educational Excellence) site includes the following additions, which focus on math and science literacy:

- > **Inside the Cell**, an 84-page booklet from the National Institutes of Health, provides an illustrative tour of the roles that cells play in the human body, such as covering the skeletal frame, purging

the body of toxins, enabling learning and producing hormones.

- > **U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission: Teachers and Students** is a Web site that includes a guide for educators and parents to help young people learn about saving and investing, as well as an interactive quiz that tests one's "money smarts."
- > **Exploring the Environment**, funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is an online program featuring modules and activities that put students in problem-based learning scenarios to investigate such topics as population growth, water pollution and global warming.
- > **Five Lessons: A Taste of the Future**, Today is a Web site that offers interactive software for students to explore key math and science concepts, such as a lesson on designing molecules and watching them self-assemble, created by the Concord Consortium, with support from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation.



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