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FIRST CLASS



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



JUST ADDED! New Resources at FREE Web Site

The federal government's premiere Web site for free educational resources—www.ed.gov/free—recently added to its online collection a few links to projects that will encourage students to further explore the sciences or hone their mathematical skills and that offer parents ideas for learning activities at home. The following can be accessed from the “New Resources” selection on the home page:

- From the Global Change Research Information Office, **Ask Dr. Global Change** offers a searchable collection of answers to questions about global warming, ozone depletion, greenhouse gases and other issues related to climate change.
- The Department of Energy's **Science Education at Jefferson Lab** offers 16 hands-on activities to answer questions such as: How do scientists measure the size of an atom? What kind of coat will keep you the warmest—one made from cotton, steel wool or air? Flash cards, matching games and crossword puzzles can help students learn the periodic table of elements and other science information.
- **Create a Graph**, a project of the Department of Education, invites students to illustrate complicated information by creating their own bar graph, line graph, area graph or pie chart.

The FREE Web site is the work of more than 30 federal agencies whose contributions range from subjects in the arts to educational technology.



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Teacher Quality Guide Supports Parents' Right to Know

The U.S. Education Department recently released an updated version of its guidance on the Improving Teacher Quality Program, including standards for highly qualified teachers, to help states and schools comply with the new provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* Act. The updated guidance also clarifies the parents' right to know about the quality of their children's teachers.

The new teacher quality provisions, which took effect for new hires at the start of the school year, require all educators in core academic areas to be licensed by the state, hold a bachelor's degree, and demonstrate competence in their subject area by the end of the 2005–06 school year.

At the beginning of each school year, school districts

must notify parents of children attending Title I schools that they can request information regarding their children's teachers, including, at a minimum, information on (1) completion of state requirements for licensure and certification; (2) emergency or other provisional status; (3) educational background; and (4) whether paraprofessionals are serving the child and, if so, the paraprofessionals' qualifications.

The law states that school districts must "notify the parents of each student" attending a Title I school of the parents' right to request such information, and that merely posting this information on the Internet does not suffice.

The guidance is available at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SIP/TitleIguidance2002.doc.

"Teachable Moments"

How can all parents, regardless of circumstances, help their children learn? This discussion was the focus of a recent broadcast of Education News Parents Can Use, the Education Department's monthly television series. The show, "Science and Mathematics: Gateway to the Future," which aired in November, included a roundtable discussion with Maria Santos, vice president of programs at Achieve, Inc., who is leading efforts to improve the teaching and testing of middle school math; Jose Hernandez, president of The Society of Mexican-American Engineers and Scientists; and Tory Bobo, a computer scientist working with school and community groups to increase minority student participation in math and science careers. An excerpt of their conversation follows:

Moderator: . . . How do achievement problems translate into low rates of college access and completion for minority students?

Santos: It is all about preparation and access to quality education. And as a student progresses through school with less



"It is very important that parents get involved in monitoring what courses students are taking, the kind of homework kids are getting, and access to a rigorous curriculum . . ." advised Santos, on preparing children for higher learning. From left to right are Santos, Hernandez and Bobo.

continued on page 2

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access to quality educational programs, the doors start closing for those college preparatory courses that are so important to get kids into college. It is very important that parents get involved in monitoring what courses students are taking, the kind of homework kids are getting, and access to a rigorous curriculum so that they are well prepared to take the challenging academic courses which we heard about earlier that make a difference for kids. . . .

Moderator: [Turning to Jose Hernandez] What was your personal experience with learning math and science subjects? After all, you are a rocket scientist. . . .

Hernandez: That's an interesting story. . . . I'm a first-generation Mexican American and so our family was a traditional migrant farm-working family. My parents only had a first- and third-[grade] elementary school education. So the real role models—the real push that I received was from my teachers. I had several excellent teachers. Another thing that I want to credit my parents with was with respect to expectations. My parents set the expectations—even though they did not have the opportunity [to go to college]—when conversations around the dinner table were with respect to our future. It wasn't, "If you go to college and you become this . . ." It was "when you go to college you will become this . . . and you will be able to help out the family." . . .

Moderator: . . . [I]n what ways can all parents, even if they weren't comfortable with math and science, support their child's efforts at school and with their homework?

Santos: I think parents can encourage questions and really promote inquiry and ask questions and encourage your child to ask why. And even if you don't know the answer,

pursue those questions with your child. Let's go find out together. Let's go figure out how this works and what this means and what it means within our world. . . .

Hernandez: I think you also have to incorporate it in your everyday activities. When we go on short trips and we have the kids in the back of the car, usually my wife takes flashcards—and I have kids from third grade all the way to kindergarten . . . [E]ach one of them takes their turns in doing multiplication or addition and subtraction. When we go to the store, for example, and I'm with my son, and we are going to buy something that's \$50 and the sales tax is 6 percent, I [ask] him, "Well, do I need \$50 or do I need more?" Obviously, he says more. "How much more?" And then we play the game of let's see how close we are when we go and pay for it.

Moderator: Teachable moments.

Hernandez: Exactly.

Moderator: Tory?

Bobo: You live math and science every day—and exposure once again is the key to me: if you take them to science museums and these different places where they can get exposed to it. I love the home mathematics when you are clicking and measuring, teaching them fractions and various things like that. It's so important. . . . I don't want them to be spooked by the word "science" because [they] live it every day. . . .

Education News *airs the third Tuesday of each month during the school year. For more information about live and archived Web casts, as well as future topics, visit www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/television or call 1-800-USA-LEARN. For a VHS tape of the November 19 broadcast on science and math, visit www.ed.gov/about/ordering.jsp or call 1-877-4ED-PUBS with item number EK0479V.*

A group of parents and their children, with moderator Doris McMillon, discuss strategies for developing math and science skills at home.

" . . . [T]he time for excuse-making has come to an end. With the *No Child Left Behind Act*, we have committed the nation to higher standards for every single public school. And we've committed the resources to help the students achieve those standards."

President George W. Bush, in his remarks at the one-year anniversary of the signing of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind Mathematics and Science Partnerships

High-quality teaching is crucial to improving mathematics and science achievement for all students. Under the Title II provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001—which focus on preparing, training and recruiting high quality educators—the Mathematics and Science Partnerships program (Part B of this section of the law) is designed to improve student achievement in mathematics and science through enhanced training for teachers and recruitment of high-quality math and science teachers. Grants are targeted to partnerships of high-need school districts and to science, mathematics and engineering schools within universities, giving districts and universities joint responsibility for training and educating math and science teachers.

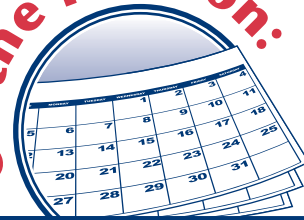
This new discretionary grant program will support partnerships that:

- Bring together mathematics and science teachers with scientists, mathematicians and engineers to expand teachers' subject matter knowledge of and research in science and mathematics.
- Provide opportunities for advanced and ongoing professional development activities, such as workshops directly related to the curriculum and subject area in which teachers provide instruction.
- Use funds to recruit mathematics, engineering and science majors to teaching through the use of signing and performance incentives, stipends to teachers for certification through alternative routes, and scholarships for teachers to pursue advanced course work.

Other activities carried out under the grants include efforts to align mathematics and science curricula with state and local standards as well as postsecondary standards and efforts to develop an accountability and evaluation plan with measurable objectives.

Each year that the program is funded for less than \$100 million, the U.S. Department of Education will award competitive grants directly to eligible partnerships consisting of at least (1) a state education agency; (2) an engineering, mathematics or science department at an institution of higher education; and (3) a high-need local education agency. In years that the program receives more than \$100 million in funding, the Department will allocate funds directly to states by formula so that they can award subgrants to eligible partnerships.

On the Horizon:



**February 18
8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. E.T.**

Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will focus on character, service and volunteerism, as well as the meaning of patriotism. Visit www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/television or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Did You Know?

According to the *1999 Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat*—a successor to the highly acclaimed 1995 study—U.S. 8th-grade students were less likely than their international peers to be taught math by teachers with a major or main area of study in math.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.