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FIRST CLASS



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



NEW RESOURCE! What Works in Scientifically Based Research

How do we create better schools? How can we make sure that all children can read? The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) will help education decision-makers answer such questions. A project of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, the What Works Clearinghouse was recently established to put solid evidence from high-quality scientific research into

the hands of educators, policy-makers and the public so they may make better choices about programs and practices. The *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 calls for the use of scientifically based research as the foundation for many programs and for classroom instruction. In response, the WWC is presently developing standards and other tools needed to conduct reviews of existing research and will synthesize its findings in evidence reports for an online database.

To receive e-mail updates, subscribe to *WWCUpdate* on the Web at www.w-w-c.org. Also, contact the What Works Clearinghouse at 2277 Research Boulevard, 6M, Rockville, MD 20850, or at 1-866-WWC-9799.



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\$17 Million Awarded to States for Developing Assessments

In February, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced \$17 million in new grants to fund projects that will help improve the quality of assessment instruments and systems used by states to measure the achievement of all students—especially students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency—under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001. Funding for these grants was included in the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) fiscal year 2002 appropriation.

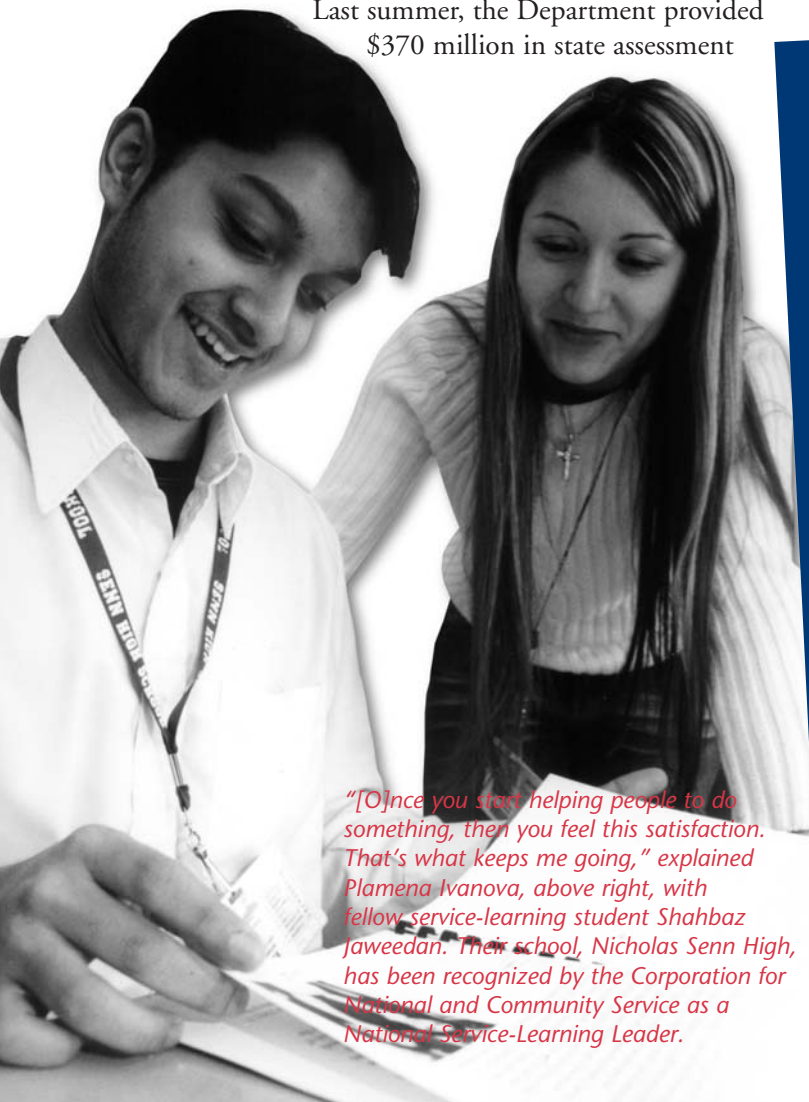
Because of the critical importance of state assessments for gauging state, school district, school and student progress toward meeting state standards, the Department is providing substantial funding to cover the costs of testing, Paige said.

Last summer, the Department provided \$370 million in state assessment

formula grants to all state education agencies, and approximately \$387 million has been appropriated for 2003. President Bush has requested \$390 million for assessments for FY 2004. All told, by FY 2004, states and other entities will have received nearly \$1.2 billion of support for assessments.

Under *NCLB*, states design and adopt their own assessments, which must be aligned with state standards. The assessments provide parents and educators with information about how well each child is doing in school and whether schools are making adequate yearly progress toward state standards.

For more information, please visit www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-2003/02122003a.html.



"[O]nce you start helping people to do something, then you feel this satisfaction. That's what keeps me going," explained Plamena Ivanova, above right, with fellow service-learning student Shahbaz Jaweedan. Their school, Nicholas Senn High, has been recognized by the Corporation for National and Community Service as a National Service-Learning Leader.

Gaining Knowledge through Giving to Others

Last year, the Corporation for National and Community Service recognized Nicholas Senn High School in Chicago as a National Service-Learning Leader, honoring the more than 37,000 volunteer hours that Senn's students have given their community in the past six years. Although there continues to be a great need for more research that identifies the relationship between service learning and improvements in attendance and discipline, Senn High School has enjoyed an improvement in school culture in recent years. The Achiever spoke with three students at Senn about their involvement:

Plamena Ivanova, a senior, volunteers at Red Cross, leads book group discussions for fifth-graders through the Great Books Foundation, and tutors new arrivals at the Newcomer Center at Senn.

Shahbaz Jaweedan, a senior, tutors younger children at Chicago's Indo-American Center. He also has volunteered at after-school programs, a senior citizens center and a local church.

continued on page 2

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The Achiever contains news and information about public and private organizations for the reader's information. Inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any products or services offered or views expressed.

Rafiq Huda, a junior, performs services at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago and refurbishes computers for community donations as part of Senn's Youth Technology Corps. In addition, he is helping to implement a schoolwide battery recycling project.

Achiever: What motivated you to volunteer your time?

Plamena: At the beginning, it was very hard to get involved. ... You don't know if you're going to have fun or feel good about doing this. But once you start helping people to do something, then you feel this satisfaction. That's what keeps me going.

Achiever: How has your involvement in service learning projects helped you develop?

Shahbaz: I was quite a shy person. ... But when I started this project, communicating with people, trying to get to know them, it made a lot of difference in me. It improved my speaking skills. It helped me to get to know people, what they're like, how they behave.

Achiever: How has your involvement helped you develop academically?

Rafiq: It happened in sort of a weird cycle in that I developed a special interest in my biology class almost at the same time I started volunteering at the nature museum. ... At the museum I had the opportunity to break down that knowledge and interpret it for people who could not understand the textbooks.

Achiever: In addition to your class load, how do you find time to be involved in these projects?

Plamena: I think that's one of the things I got out of doing community service projects: I learned how to manage my time. Before I got involved in any projects, I would have the whole day on my own and still wouldn't do as much as I probably do right now.

Achiever: What do your fellow students think about community service?

Plamena: There's always this group of students who are like, "I don't want to do that. How's this going to make me smarter? How's this going to help me?" ... Sometimes I see students who have to just go and do a project because of the 40-hours requirement, but then they start enjoying it and getting into it. So people change. I think that our school has proven that people are involved here, that people care about the community.

Achiever: Does community service help make you a better student?

Rafiq: Personally, for my battery project I have to do research on my own so that makes me research and get knowledge. For my museum project, when I'm about to do exhibits or Webcasts, I have to do research beforehand on the topic that I'm going to explain. And for my computer project, I'm actually learning how to build computers.

For more information about Senn High School's service learning projects, contact Sara Leven at 773-534-2801 or at sleven25@yahoo.com.



Rafiq Huda, along with Senn teacher Manali Sheth, prepares boxes for a battery-recycling project they are implementing schoolwide.

“Fred Rogers was an American icon who taught all of us, as parents, important lessons about nurturing and loving our children. He was a compassionate role model who loved America’s children unconditionally. He was their best advocate, always listening, always on their side.”

Secretary Paige in his remarks on the death of Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood on Feb. 27, 2003.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind State Flexibility Authority

The State Flexibility Authority program under the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 will give up to seven states increased flexibility to demonstrate the different ways that certain federal funds may be used to raise student academic achievement and close the achievement gaps between groups of students. For a five-year period, this program allows states—and between four and 10 districts within those states—to use certain federal funds in ways that they deem most productive. The “State-Flex” program, which is part of the law’s Title VI provisions focusing on flexibility and accountability, was created because states and communities are often in the best position to make decisions about how to target educational resources. This program—

Focuses on what works: Each state must explain how the proposed uses of funds will increase the state’s capacity to make adequate yearly progress and meet the state’s educational goals.

Reduces bureaucracy and increases flexibility: State-Flex permits state education agencies to combine state-level funds across programs and specify how all districts in the state must use certain Title V Innovative Programs state grants if doing so will help the state raise student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps. At least half of the four to 10 districts selected within each state must be high-poverty districts.

Increases accountability for student performance: States that fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years will lose flexibility authority.

Empowers parents: All state education agencies with State-Flex authority are required to widely disseminate to parents and the public an annual report that describes how the state and the districts with which the state has performance agreements use the consolidated funds to make adequate yearly progress and advance the education priorities of the state and districts.

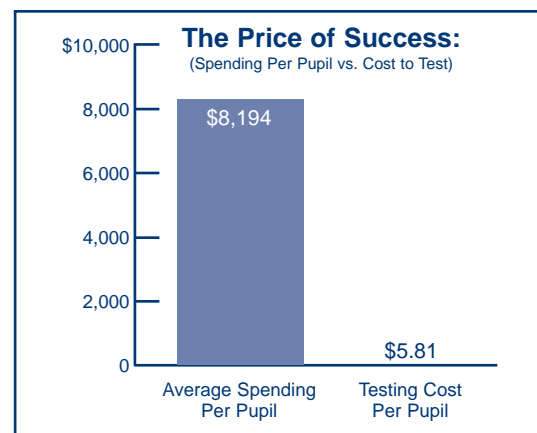
For more information, call 202-401-0039 or visit www.ed.gov/GrantApps/#stateflex.

Tips for Parents



Schools give teacher-made and standardized tests for many reasons: to measure how children are doing and to identify problems children may be having; to cover classroom material; and to meet standardized and proficiency standards required by the school district or state. Consider asking your child’s school:

- What tests will my child be given during the school year?
- Is there a schedule available?
- Will someone be available to explain the meaning of test results if I have questions?
- How important are test scores in my child’s grade? Do you consider other measures such as class projects, essays and participation?
- Do you review tests and test results with the children? Will my child have a chance to understand why an answer was wrong?
- Does the school require proficiency testing in order to move from one grade level to the next or to graduate?



Source: National Bureau of Economic Research, “The Cost of Accountability,” April 2002.