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THE ACHIEVER

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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! **Questions Parents Ask About Schools**

Parents wanting to know more about how they can help their children excel in school can find the answers to those frequently asked questions in a new publication *Questions Parents Ask About Schools*.

In 16 reader-friendly pages, this booklet provides research-based tips that cover a range of topics for parents or caregivers with elementary and middle school children, including:

- preparing your child for school;
- knowing what to expect from your child's kindergarten teacher;
- monitoring school work;
- working with schools and teachers effectively;
- helping your child with reading and homework; and
- ensuring that your child's school is safe and drug free.

Questions Parents Ask About Schools, which has been compiled in one single text with both the English and Spanish translations, is available online at www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/Questions. For a paper copy, please call the Department of Education's publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS with identification number EKH0124P, while supplies last. One order per customer please.





THE ACHIEVER

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Paige Unveils Summer Reading Pilot Program

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige on March 20 joined Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue, Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall, students, educators and other community partners to kick off the *No Child Left Behind* Summer Reading Achievers program for students in Atlanta Public Schools.

The new program encourages school children in grades K–8 to read actively during the summer months and avoid the loss of reading skills that often occurs during summer vacation. If successful, the program will expand next year to schools nationwide.

“Reading is the one skill upon which all others depend and making sure that every child in our schools learns to read is a mission of the president’s and mine,” Secretary Paige said.

The Atlanta Public School system was chosen as the pilot site because the schools have posted gains over the past several years. These improvements include a significant increase in the percentage of fourth-graders meeting or exceeding the standard in reading as

measured by the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

To participate in the program, students will be expected to read 10 age-appropriate books (about one a week) during the summer. Students will be required to describe briefly the books they have read by completing a simple form.

Program participants will receive a certificate signed by Secretary Paige and Superintendent Hall.

Target stores, Scholastic, Inc., the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta and the Atlanta Metro Chamber of Commerce are among a host of partners in the Atlanta region supporting the reading campaign.

For more program details, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit www.ed.gov/PressReleases/03-2003/03202003.html.

Filling the Information Gap Among Latino Parents

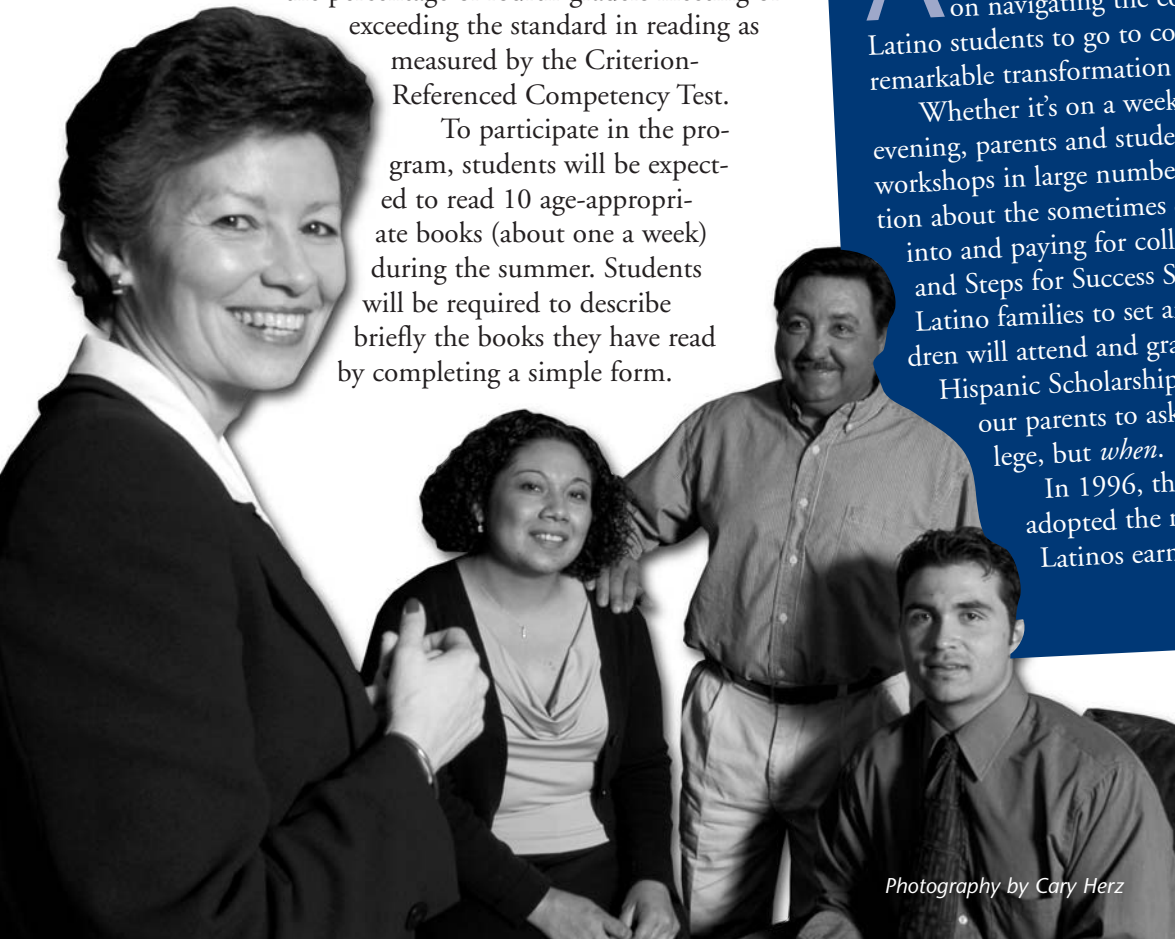
By Sara Martinez Tucker

As the Hispanic Scholarship Fund’s outreach team travels across the country providing workshops on navigating the college process to inspire Latino students to go to college, we are witnessing a remarkable transformation in the Latino community.

Whether it’s on a weekend morning or weekday evening, parents and students are attending our bilingual workshops in large numbers, eager to receive information about the sometimes daunting process of getting into and paying for college. Our town hall meetings and Steps for Success Saturday workshops empower Latino families to set an expectation that their children will attend and graduate from college. At the Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF), we do not want our parents to ask *if* their children will go to college, but *when*.

In 1996, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund adopted the mission of doubling the rate of Latinos earning their college degrees to

continued on page 2



Photography by Cary Herz

“[W]e are witnessing a remarkable transformation in the Latino community,” said Tucker, pictured far left, about the impact of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund’s efforts on increasing Hispanic participation in higher education.

U.S. Department of Education

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18 percent by 2010. And, as the *No Child Left Behind Act* holds our schools accountable for delivering quality education for all of America's children, our Partnership for Excellence in Latino Higher Education proposal, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, seeks to increase parental involvement in forming their child's educational destiny.

Research has shown that parental involvement plays a key role in children's academic achievement and that an effective method for engaging Latino parents is to provide them with the information and tools necessary for them to play an active role in their children's education. Although an array of educational materials exists, many are not user friendly, culturally appropriate, or distributed and used effectively.

Through the feedback we've gathered from the more than 5,000 parents and students HSF has served in the last year through its workshops, we are finding a significant difference in the level of knowledge about higher education among students and their parents. As expected, Latino students are more familiar with the topics discussed than their parents. In addition, we are reassured of the increasing need to provide meaningful information in a way that respects the values of the Latino family and its high regard for education, while acknowledging the language, cultural and generational differences that may impact how parents receive, understand and process information.

These dynamics have led to an information gap between Latino parents' education aspirations for their children and their children's academic achievement, due in significant part to

the failure to integrate Latino families into the educational process, as well as a lack of familiarity with the U.S. education system among immigrant families. Coupled with the booming Latino population and consistently low education attainment rates in the Latino community, we know that creating a pipeline of college-ready Latino students will require a broader approach.

For almost 30 years, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund has been guided by a student-centric, solutions-oriented model, providing financial resources directly to our students to make their dreams to participate in higher education a reality. Now, we are complementing this strategy by expanding our model and playing a role in filling the information gap among Latino parents.

To achieve our mission, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and its sister organization, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund Institute, will work collaboratively to assess how and what is being communicated, develop materials and points of delivery that are culturally relevant, and effectively deliver information to Latino parents in a way that will empower them to ensure their children's success—in order to create a national infrastructure that is sustainable over time.

Sara Martinez Tucker is president of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, the nation's leading organization supporting higher education for Hispanics. During its 27-year history, HSF has awarded nearly 54,000 scholarships worth more than \$89 million.

Tucker speaks with award recipients of the New Mexico Celebration of Achievement: (left to right) Maribel Valenzuela, Andres Padilla and Bridget Lujan.



“Make no mistake that it will take time, creativity and constant attention by government and university officials to pursue effective race-neutral policies. However, as Americans, we owe it to our heritage and to our children to meet those challenges head on, rather than looking for shortcuts that divide us by race and betray the nation’s fundamental principles.”

Secretary Paige, in his remarks on the March 28, 2003, release of the report *Race-Neutral Alternatives in Postsecondary Education: Innovative Approaches to Diversity*.



May 20

8:00–9:00 p.m. E.T.

Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will focus on special education. Visit www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/television or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Did You Know?

There are now 2,695 charter schools in 36 states and the District of Columbia, a huge expansion from the first one that opened just a decade ago.

Source: Center for Education Reform, *National Charter School Directory*, 2003.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind Charter School Guidance

On March 25, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance on the impact of the new Title I requirements on charter schools. The 12-page document provides general information on how the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) impacts charter schools, including details on accountability requirements; public school choice; supplemental educational services; and teacher and paraprofessional qualifications. The department also will issue soon new guidance on the Public Charter Schools Grant Program, which is provided for under Title V of the law promoting informed parental choice and innovative programs.

Some of the questions the guidance answers are—

- **How does the new law define a highly qualified charter school teacher?**
- **Are charter schools required to make adequate yearly progress like other public schools?**
- **Must parents be notified if a charter school is identified as in need of improvement?**

While charter schools are held to the same rigorous standards as other public schools, NCLB also respects the freedom and autonomy that the schools enjoy under state law.

Charter schools operate with a contract—or charter—from a public agency, according to individual state charter laws. They are created by groups of parents, teachers, school administrators and others who want to provide educational alternatives. They are free of cost to parents and open to all students, but exempted from most statutory and regulatory requirements in exchange for performance-based accountability. They must meet standards set forth in their charters for students and the school as a whole, or else the chartering agency can close the school.

Research suggests that charter schools can boost performance particularly among disadvantaged children.

To access the guidance, visit www.ed.gov/offices/OII/choice/charterguidance03.doc.