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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 LOOK! ED.gov Gets Facelift

The Department of Education's Web site—www.ed.gov—has been completely revamped with a great new look. The site, which debuted in September, has been visually enhanced with more graphics and photos and includes new features and streamlined information, thus putting ED

news, events and resources at your fingertips.

The new ed.gov now includes the *No Child Left Behind* site (formerly www.nclb.gov), giving readers a one-stop home page that leads to annotated resources, including a new virtual press room of news releases, photos, audio clips and video, as well as five information centers that cover financial aid, grants and contracts, policy, programs, and research and statistics. And with program information easier to find, ed.gov visitors can sort programs by title, subject, assistance type or eligibility. In addition, each program listing outlines purpose, funding status, eligibility, regulations, guidance and contacts. The new site retains some categories of the former site, such as the ED budget, organization structure and job openings. The A-Z Index continues to offer ED topics in an alphabetical listing and the Cross-Site Index continues to extend to all ED-funded Web sites, including ERIC clearinghouses, regional labs, research centers, special education and rehabilitative services organizations—and hundreds more.



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Education Department, ABC Radio Partner to Close Achievement Gap

The Department of Education and ABC Radio Networks have joined forces on a national radio campaign to inform the African-American community about *No Child Left Behind* and the achievement gap that exists among students from different ethnic backgrounds.

The campaign, "Closing the Educational Achievement Gap," will air on all 240 of ABC Radio's Urban Advantage Network affiliates in the U.S. during the back-to-school period.

"We have an education emergency in the United States

of America," Secretary Paige said. "Nationally, blacks score lower on reading and math tests than their white peers. But it doesn't have to be that way. We need to collectively focus our attention on this problem."

The campaign will air detailed messages about bridging the achievement gap and also give parents tips on what steps to take to ensure their child is making academic progress. The radio spots will feature Secretary Paige in a 30-second message emphasizing the importance of this problem and how some parents may be eligible for free, government-sponsored tutoring or other extra help.

To help eliminate the achievement gap, *No Child Left Behind* requires schools to monitor the performance of students from different ethnic and racial backgrounds and also students from low-income families. Each subgroup within a school and local school district must make academic progress as defined by the state. The school or local school district is considered to be "in need of improvement" after two consecutive years of not making progress. The goal is 100 percent proficiency on state standards for all subgroups in math and reading by the 2013-14 school year.

For more information, visit www.ed.gov and select the link for *No Child Left Behind*. To hear the radio spot, visit www.ed.gov/news/av/audio/index.html and select the link "Education is a Civil Right."

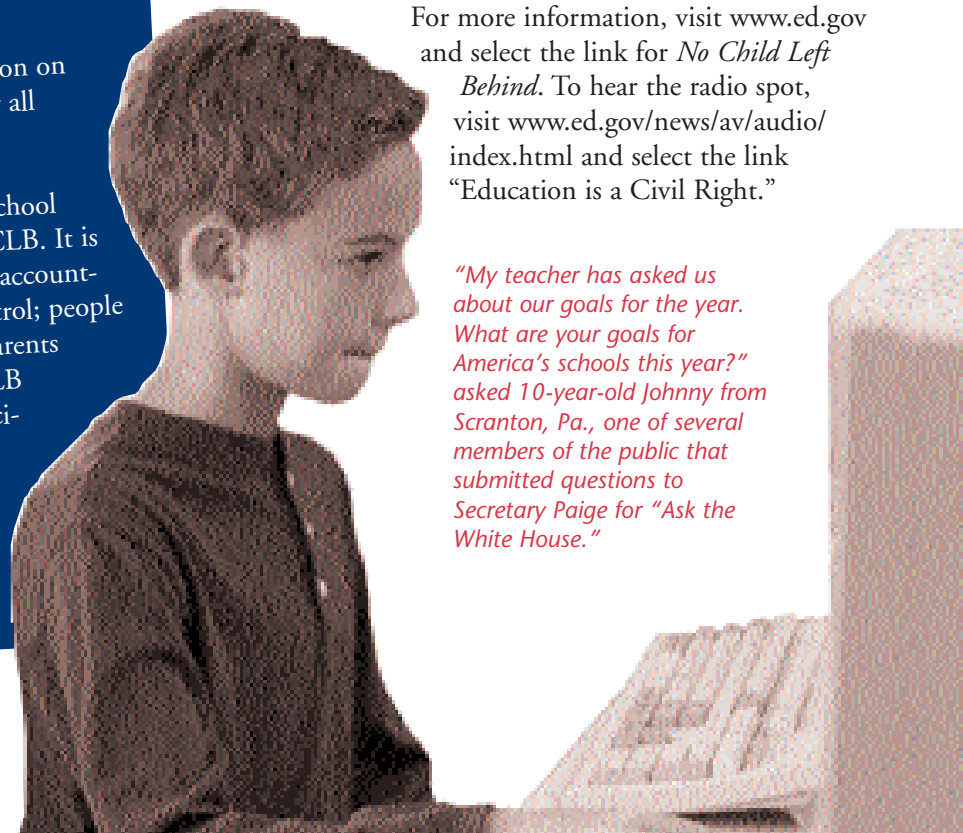
Ask the White House Online Chat Lets Public Learn More about Nation's Education Policies

Secretary Paige recently hosted "Ask the White House," an online, interactive forum for the public to ask questions of key Bush Administration officials. The following are excerpts from the secretary's chat:

Stephen from Scottsville, Ky.: What is your opinion on the NCLB Act and do you believe it is possible for all school systems to follow?

Paige: I strongly believe that it is possible for all school systems in America to follow the guidelines of NCLB. It is simple in terms of its principles. Schools must be accountable. The second point is flexibility and local control; people at the local level should make decisions. Third, parents should have options for their children. Last, NCLB makes sure that teaching methods are based on science. This is not complicated. All schools can do this. It is going to require hard work and it is going to require us to do things differently, but all schools can do it.

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"My teacher has asked us about our goals for the year. What are your goals for America's schools this year?" asked 10-year-old Johnny from Scranton, Pa., one of several members of the public that submitted questions to Secretary Paige for "Ask the White House."



The Achiever is published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, U.S.

Department of Education (ED). Rod Paige, Secretary.

For questions and comments, contact: Nicole Ashby, Editor, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Room 5E217, Washington, DC 20202, 202-205-0676 (fax), NoChildLeftBehind@ed.gov.

For address changes and subscriptions, contact: ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794, 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827), edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

For information on ED programs, resources and events, contact: Information Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202, 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), usa_learn@ed.gov.

Disclaimer: 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.

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Abigail from Iowa:

Tuition prices keep rising, while class hours stay the same, meaning I can only work so many hours per day and still keep the A. Students like myself are driving themselves very quickly into debt. Is this administration doing anything to keep education affordable?

Paige: The president is a champion for providing increased funding for worthy and eligible students to attend the universities and colleges of their choice. For example, Pell grant funding is up to \$12.7 billion, a 45 percent increase over 2001 funding. Student aid is up by 36 percent over when the president first took office. So the president is very aggressive in protecting America's education investment,

and that is investing in our future leaders who are going to universities and colleges now.

Johnny from Scranton, Pa.: I'm 10 years old. My teacher has asked us about our goals for the year. What are your goals for America's schools this year?

Paige: I congratulate you for being involved in education policy at a young age. Our goal for America's schools this year is lots of success in bringing school systems into compliance with the *No Child Left Behind Act* [by increasing] the number of highly qualified teachers in schools [as well as] assuring that our teaching methods are based on science and that they work. ... Our ultimate goal is that students like Johnny learn.

Teresa from Little Rock, Ark.: What national efforts, suggestions or policy will your office make to help children and teachers regarding the major problem with bullying in our public schools?

Paige: This is a very important issue. When I was superintendent in Houston, our number one core value was safety

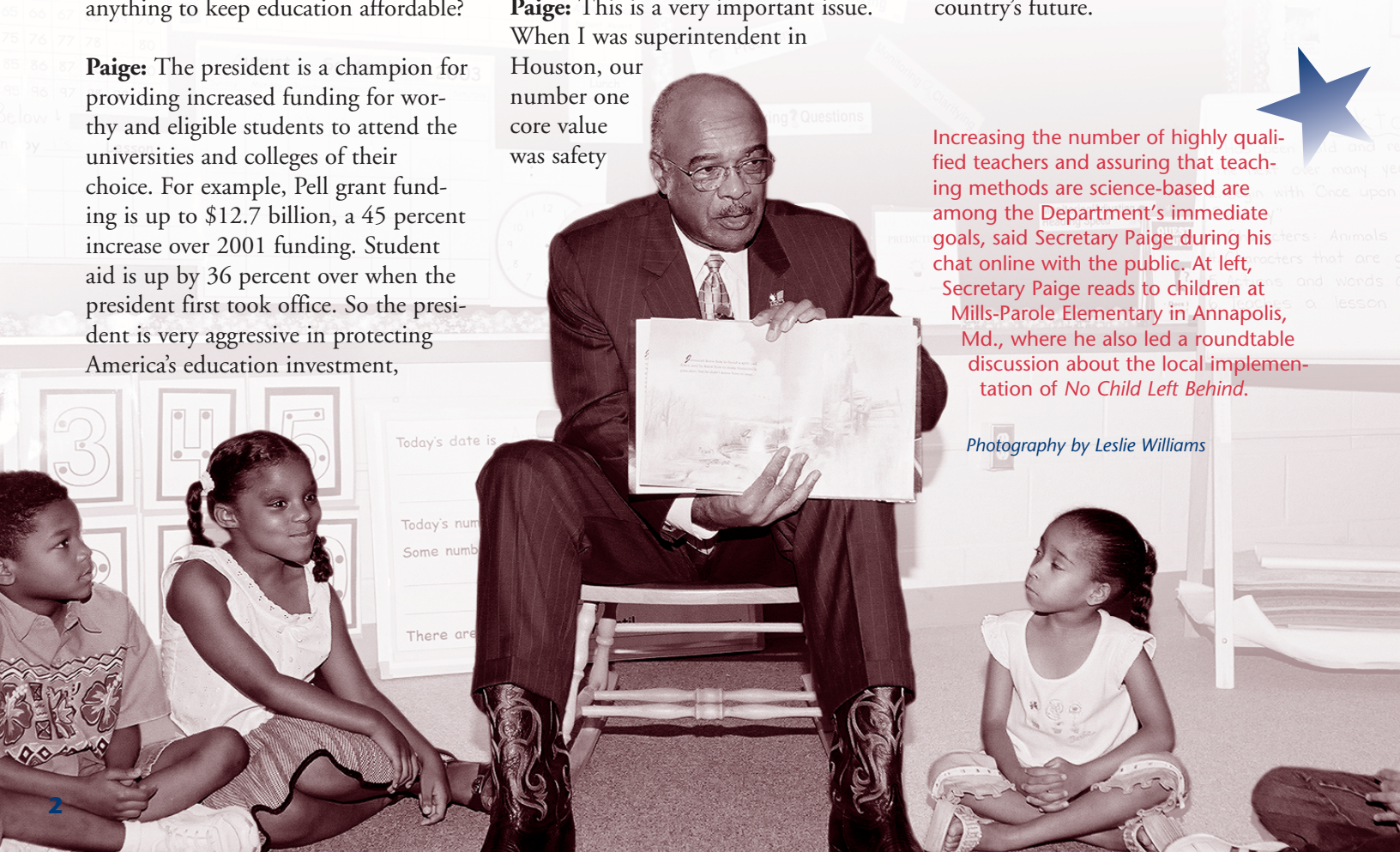
above all else. I feel it is imperative for us to provide a safe environment for students. ... We have created a division in the Department called the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. We have charged them with helping to make schools safe, and bullying is one of those issues; we have held conferences on this issue, we have offered training to teachers and have published literature on the issue of bullying.

Roberta from Idaho: What's the one piece of advice you often find yourself giving to teachers and parents?

Paige: Let me begin by saying to teachers, thank you for your commitment to America's children. I want to tell parents that we need your help. You are your child's first teacher. I say to all of America that the president wants our nation to be better. There are many things we must do in order to be better and stronger, but the one thing we must do is to be better in education. The president is dedicated to improving education for our young Americans who are our country's future.

Increasing the number of highly qualified teachers and assuring that teaching methods are science-based are among the Department's immediate goals, said Secretary Paige during his chat online with the public. At left, Secretary Paige reads to children at Mills-Parole Elementary in Annapolis, Md., where he also led a roundtable discussion about the local implementation of *No Child Left Behind*.

Photography by Leslie Williams



"In past years, these back-to-school articles often focused on bus schedules, lunch menus and homeroom assignments. This year, the focus is on performance, results and plans for helping students who historically have been left behind. It will take all of us, working together, to continue to spread the word and to make the goals of the law a reality in communities across America."

Secretary Paige, in response to a recent poll about public attitudes about public education.



October 21
8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.

Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will focus on keeping children safe at home and in school. Visit www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/schedule.html or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

October 27-29
Washington, D.C.

Department of Education sponsors "Meeting the Challenge: The Science and Practice of Safe and Drug-Free Schools." Visit www.OSDFSNationalConference.org or call Amalia Cuervo at 202-205-2855.

Close-Up:



Brown v. Board of Education

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*—the unanimous Supreme Court ruling that outlawed schools segregated on the basis of race.

To mark the anniversary of this landmark decision, Congress created the *Brown v. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary Commission to plan and coordinate public activities surrounding the anniversary, including public lectures, writing contests and public awareness campaigns.

President Bush worked with congressional leaders to select distinguished Americans to serve as commissioners.

Commissioners include representatives from the states that played a role in the *Brown* litigation, as well as college faculty and leaders from government and the NAACP.

The 50th anniversary of *Brown* is May 17, 2004. More information about the commission and *Brown* commemoration events will follow in future issues of *The Achiever*.

For more information, visit www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/brownvboard50th/index.html?exp=0.



ACT Scores Remain Steady

Despite the record number of high school graduates (nearly 1.2 million) who took the ACT in 2003, scores remained flat on this test, which is one of the nation's leading college entrance exams.

Secretary Paige said: "It is encouraging to see a greater percentage of young people taking the ACT and planning to go to college in pursuit of solid, productive careers with promising futures. At the same time, it is discouraging that the ACT test scores remain stagnant and that far too many young

people are entering college without the skills to succeed in freshman-level courses, particularly in the vital areas of math and science."

Out of a possible 36 points, only a fourth of 2003 graduates earned a score of 24 or higher on the science test, while just four in 10 earned a score of 22 or higher on the math portion.

However, for the first time since 1997, scores rose slightly for all racial/ethnic minority groups: Asian-American students led the roster with

Did You Know?

The decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* actually involved four related cases brought by plaintiffs in four states: *Gebhart et al v. Belton et al* in Delaware, *Brown et al v. Board of Education* in Kansas, *Briggs et al v. Elliott et al* in South Carolina, and *Davis et al v. School Board of Prince Edward County et al* in Virginia. On the same day as the decision in the *Brown* case, the Supreme Court also decided another related case in *Bolling et al v. Sharpe et al*, a case from the District of Columbia.

a score of 21.8 (up by 0.2 points), followed by Puerto Rican/Hispanic students with an average composite score of 19.0 (up by 0.2), American Indians/Alaska Natives at 18.7 (up by 0.1), Mexican-American/Chicano students at 18.3 (up by 0.1), and African-American students at 16.9 (up by 0.1).