



ED REVIEW

July 15, 2005

...a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders



NCLB UPDATE (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>)

Department staff have been busy reviewing requested changes to *No Child Left Behind* accountability plans. (The deadline for states to submit amendments was moved from April 1 to June 1 so states could apply for an additional two percent flexibility for testing students with "persistent academic disabilities." That policy was announced in May.) According to the latest data, as of July 12, decision letters had been sent to 17 states approving some of their requested changes. The most commonly approved amendments are:

- using a "confidence interval" to ensure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions are valid and reliable;
- averaging results across years to look at long-term trends in student achievement;
- identifying districts for improvement only when they do not make AYP in the very same subject for two consecutive years in elementary, middle, and high school; and
- adjusting the percentage of proficient students with disabilities within schools that did not make AYP based solely on their special education subgroup.

Letters for another 30 states are pending, though many have received oral approvals or denials. Indeed, of the 42 states that applied for the special education flexibility cited earlier, 29 have received approval. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/letters/>. (The Department does not post rejected proposals.)

On July 13, at the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) annual meeting in Denver, Deputy Secretary Ray Simon discussed high school reform, starting with the need for better graduation rate data to make high schools more accountable and to help prevent students from dropping out. And, as a first step, he announced the Department will be

calculating an "Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate" for all states, to be published alongside states' currently reported graduation rates. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2005/07/07132005.html>.



TITLE I ALLOCATIONS

To aid in some key calculations, the Department has published Fiscal Year 2005 Title I allocations by school district. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, school districts must spend up to 20 percent of their Title I, Part A allocation to cover school choice-related transportation costs and pay for supplemental educational services. Districts have some discretion to determine the allocation of funds between transportation and supplemental services, but districts must spend at least one-quarter (five percent) of the 20 percent "reservation" on each activity if there is demand for both. Moreover, for supplemental services, districts are required to pay the lesser of the actual cost or an amount equal to the district's Title I, Part A allocation divided by poor students in the district, as determined by Census Bureau estimates. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy05/>. (Note that the actual amounts received by school districts will be smaller than shown due to state-level adjustments.)



NAEP TRENDS

Yesterday, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released new long-term National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. This unique source of information (separate from the main assessment programs) reports on national trends in reading since 1971 and in math science 1973. Among the findings:

- On average, American nine-year-olds scored higher in reading and math in 2004 than in any previous assessment year. Also, more than half the progress in reading by nine-year-olds has been made in the last five years.
- American 13-year-olds scored higher in math in 2004 than in any previous assessment year. However, reading scores remain unchanged from the last assessment.

- The scores of American 17-year-olds remain unchanged from the last assessment. However, African-American and Hispanic 17-year-olds made progress in comparison to the first assessment year.
- Many of the differences in achievement between African-American or Hispanic students and their white peers have narrowed. For example, the achievement gap between white and African-American nine-year-olds in reading is the smallest it has ever been. Also, over the last five years, African-American and Hispanic 13-year-olds have made significant gains in math.

Other findings: more nine- and 13-year-olds said they are reading more than 20 pages a day for school, and a higher percentage of 13-year-olds were enrolled in algebra than in any previous assessment year. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ltr/>. (Secretary Spellings' ECS speech, regarding the data, is available at

<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2005/07/07142005.html>. A statement is posted at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/07/07142005.html>.)



DRUG TESTING GRANTS

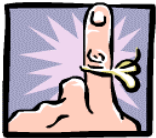
The Education Department and Office of National Drug Control Policy are actively soliciting applications for federal grants for student drug testing programs in schools. This \$10 million initiative provides grants to support schools in the design and implementation of programs to randomly screen selected students and to intervene with students whose test results indicate they have used illicit drugs. "Student drug testing, like testing for tuberculosis in schools, saves our children's lives and their futures," said John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "Drug use is down 17 percent over the past three years, but we still have a long way to go, and student drug testing can be an effective tool for local communities." Applications are due on August 16, and grants will be awarded on September 29. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/drugtesting/>.

Note: To obtain more information about random student drug testing, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has developed "What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools" (http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/drug_testing/) and "What You Need to Know about Starting a Student Drug Testing Program" (http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/student_drug_testing/).



END LOAN RECYCLING!

On July 8, Secretary Spellings joined House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner in calling on Congress to end a practice, known as recycling, which allows lenders to use the income from loans that receive a 9.5 percent subsidy to then make new loans that also receive the subsidy. At the time the provision was created, access to loans was a significant issue for borrowers; but, today, the market is highly competitive, and the 9.5 percent floor is no longer necessary to ensure access for students. "The President has long supported strengthening protections for student loan borrowers and taxpayers," the Secretary emphasized. "Eliminating these excessive payments on new loans will generate savings that can be used to support 'enhanced benefits for students.'" Specifically, the Secretary and the Chairman called for expansion of the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004, which curbed the growth of loans that received the 9.5 percent subsidy by eliminating the subsidy on new loans stemming from new refinancing of pre-1993 obligations. However, the law did not affect recycling of proceeds from the pre-1993 obligations. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/07/07082005.html>.



BRIEF INTERRUPTION

For the first time since I began publishing in September 1999 -- excepting the transition between administrations in 2001 -- I am breaking *ED Review's* two week cycle for a vacation. In the interim, I strongly encourage you to visit <http://www.ed.gov/> and check the headlines. Also, watch for the August 12 issue of *ED Review*, which will cover the major activities of the previous month.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"Three years ago, our country made a commitment that no child would be left behind. Today's [NAEP] Report Card is proof that *No Child Left Behind* is working. It is helping to raise the achievement of young students of every race and from every type of family background. And the achievement gap that has persisted for decades in the

younger years between minorities and whites has shrunk to its smallest size in history. Over half of the progress in reading during the Report Card's entire history has been made in the last five years. It is not a coincidence that progress accelerated so dramatically during this time period. The results are a tribute to students, parents, teachers, principals, school administrators, and state and national policymakers."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (7/14/05)



UPCOMING EVENTS

On July 20 (1:00-3:00 p.m. ET), the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) and Harvard University's Government Innovators Network will co-host a web conference titled "Measuring Teacher Success: Innovative Developments in Assessing Teacher Performance." Guest speakers include Alan Bersin, California's Secretary of Education; professor Ted Hershberg of the University of Pennsylvania; teacher Brad Jupp of Denver Public Schools; Gaynor McCown, executive director of The Teaching Commission; and Lewis Solmon, president of the Santa Monica, California-based Teacher Advancement Program Foundation. To RSVP, send your name, title, organization, and email address to oii.rsvp@ed.gov.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs with any questions:

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