



## ED REVIEW

December 1, 2006

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

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### HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

Back from her tour of East Asia

(<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/international/asia-tour/>), promoting the U.S. as a premier destination for study abroad, Secretary Spellings renewed her efforts to strengthen the U.S. higher education system. On November 28, she delivered remarks to around 3,300 participants attending the 2006 Federal Student Aid (FSA) conference in Las Vegas. "Being here in Las Vegas, we know one thing: we cannot afford to gamble on our children's future," the Secretary said. "Sixty percent of Americans have no postsecondary credentials at all. Where we once were leaders, now other nations educate more of their young adults to more advanced levels than we do. And, to reclaim the top spot, we need to help an additional nine million Americans earn degrees." In response, the Secretary announced a new public service campaign to spread the message that the U.S. aspires to help every qualified student who wants a degree to attain one. She also outlined her proposals to address the issues of accessibility, affordability, and accountability raised by the bipartisan Commission on the Future of Higher Education. More than 10 million Americans -- over half of all higher education students -- receive federal student aid annually. FSA oversees more than \$80 billion in aid (<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/11/11282006.html>). On November 29, the Secretary convened representatives of accrediting agencies to discuss strategies that place a greater emphasis on student learning outcomes. "For more than 100 years, accreditation has been the main tool we've used to assure higher education quality to the people," she said. "Now is the time to take a hard look at the system and see how we can improve it to better meet the new demands of U.S. families in the 21st century" (<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/11/11292006.html>). Meanwhile, the Department has established a negotiating committee to tackle Title IV loan issues. That committee will begin meeting this month (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2007/nr.html>). A separate

committee, targeting the Academic Competitiveness and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) grant programs, will begin meeting in January.

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## HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

Just how prepared for college are Americans? A new report by the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) offers information about the level of academic preparation of the high school graduating class of 2004. The report provides an examination of the coursetaking patterns of graduates, with a particular focus on participation in math, science, and Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. Also, the report links these patterns with test achievement in math, grade point averages, and expectations for future educational attainment. Among the notable findings:

- The Class of 2004 earned an average of 4.3 English credits, 3.6 math credits, 3.3 science credits, 3.9 social studies credits, 2.0 fine arts credits, and 2.0 credits in non-English language courses.
- About 30 percent of the Class of 2004 earned credit in AP or IB courses.
- In math, five percent of graduates got no further than basic math or pre-algebra; 45 percent completed at least Algebra I or II; 36 percent completed at least trigonometry, statistics, or pre-calculus coursework; and 14 percent completed calculus. (Seniors who got no further than basic math or pre-algebra had an overall GPA of 2.3, while seniors who completed calculus had an overall GPA of 3.5.)
- Class of 2004 students expecting to get a graduate or professional degree earned 21 academic credits, while students expecting to have some college experience (but not get a degree) earned 17 credits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007316>.

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## SCHOOL CHOICE TRENDS

Another new NCES report, "Trends in the Use of School Choice: 1993 to 2003," presents data on the use and users of public schools, private schools, and home-schools. The percentage of students enrolled in their assigned public school decreased from

80 percent in 1993 to 74 percent in 2003, essentially mirroring an increase in chosen public school enrollment from 11 to 15 percent. During this same period, enrollment in church-related private schools remained stable (eight percent), while enrollment in non-church-related private schools increased from 1.6 percent to 2.4 percent. This trend away from assigned public schools generally held for students across sex, grade level, poverty categories, parent education levels, family types, regions, and community types. It also held for black and white students but was not significant for Hispanic students. Nevertheless, there were differences across groups with respect to the percentage of students enrolled in different school types. For example, in 2003, black students were more likely than white students to be enrolled in chosen public schools. Approximately one-half of all students have parents who reported public school choice was available in their community. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007045>.

Also: The latest "Innovations in Education" guide (to be released this month) focuses on charter high schools. The schools highlighted in the guide were selected in 2005 from over 400 charter high schools that are meeting *No Child Left Behind* academic goals and narrowing achievement gaps. Although the schools are unique, six characteristics unite them. The schools are mission-driven; focus on college preparation; teach for mastery; provide support; value professional development; and hold themselves accountable. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/pubs/intro/innovations.html>.



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

A new cycle of on-site monitoring visits is underway, part of the Department's three-year Title I monitoring cycle. As a result of monitoring, the agency is able to gather accurate data about state and local needs and use that data to design national leadership activities and technical assistance initiatives. Thus, monitoring serves not only as a vehicle for helping states achieve high quality implementation of educational programs, it also helps the agency be a better partner with states in that effort. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/monitoring/>.

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## GRANTS FORECAST

Be sure to review the FY 2007 Grants Forecast (as of November 22) at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forecast.html>, which lists virtually all programs and competitions under which the Department has invited or expects to invite applications for awards and provides actual or estimated dates for the transmittal of applications under these programs. The lists are in the form of charts -- organized according to principal program offices -- and will be updated regularly through July 2007. (Note: This document is advisory only and is not an official application notice of the Department of Education.)

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## ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

NCES' "Internet Access in U.S. Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994-2005" presents 11 years of data on Internet access in U.S. public schools by key school characteristics. In 2005, nearly 100 percent of U.S. public schools had access to the Internet, compared to 35 percent in 1994. Moreover, in 2005, there were no differences in school Internet access by any school characteristics. (There have been no differences in school Internet access by any school characteristics since 1999.) In addition, in 2005, 94 percent of public school classrooms had Internet access, versus three percent in 1994. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007020>. (Note: An earlier report, "Computer and Internet Use by Students in 2003" [<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006065>], found that schools help bridge the digital divide.)

Also: The Department's Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) web site, with some 1,500 federally supported teaching and learning resources from dozens of agencies, recently underwent a sharp make-over. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://free.ed.gov/>.

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## QUOTE TO NOTE

"[Foreign students] are hungry to learn, and they desire to compete with us as never before in the global marketplace. It is this hunger...as well as the focus on competitiveness that is driving Asia's education explosion. It is clear we must recreate our own culture that instills within our children and young adults the importance of higher education. As Tom Friedman says in *The World is Flat*, when it comes to education, other countries are working to replicate the system that we have now -- and I've seen firsthand that they're succeeding. The question is, what are we going to do in the future?"  
-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (11/28/06),  
addressing financial aid officers and others in Las Vegas

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

The National Mathematics Advisory Panel's fifth meeting is planned for January 10 and 11 in New Orleans. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/mathpanel/>.

Coming Up Taller Awards (<http://www.cominguptaller.org/>), jointly sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, focus national attention on exemplary programs currently fostering the creative and intellectual development of America's children/youth. Fifteen awards of \$10,000 are presented each year, providing project recognition and contributing to continued work. All applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2007.

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