



## ED REVIEW

June 16, 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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### NCLB UPDATE (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>)

On June 13, testifying before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Deputy Secretary Ray Simon clearly addressed the recent criticism that the *No Child Left Behind Act* allows states to exclude groups of students from school test scores. To ensure accuracy and avoid distortions when "the number of students in a category is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information," the law does permit states to set a minimum number in defining a student subgroup, called an "N-size." But, "Even when only four Hispanic students are enrolled in a school, those students' test scores may be counted in a second, third, or fourth subgroup -- such as Limited English Proficient or economically disadvantaged -- that exceeds the N-size minimum. Their scores are also counted toward the district's performance in that subgroup. And, most importantly... their scores are reviewed individually by teachers." He added that the Department has taken a firm stance against calls to increase N-sizes, approving just one state's request this year, and will host a national technical assistance conference later this year to maximize the inclusion of students in all subgroups. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2006/06/06132006.html>.

Around the same time, education leaders, juvenile justice advocates, mental health and wellness experts, and drug and law enforcement officials from across the country came together for the first meeting of the newly formed Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee. This committee, appointed by Secretary Spellings, is charged with evaluating three areas: (1) the *No Child Left Behind Act's* provisions on Persistently Dangerous Schools and Unsafe School Choice, (2) the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools' State Grants program, and (3) data requirements. Approximately 12 meetings will take place between now and June 30, 2007, when the committee is to submit a written report of its findings to the Secretary. FOR MORE INFORMATION, <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/06/06142006.html>.

On June 20, the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will publish data on the "Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate" for public high school students for school years 2002-03 and 2003-04. This calculation provides an estimate of the percentage of students who graduate "on time." Comparing graduation rates from the Class of 2003 with the Class of 2004, 32 states and the District of Columbia experienced increases, one state experienced no change, and 15 states experienced declines. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

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HURRICANE RELIEF (<http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/>)

Earlier this week, with the new hurricane season now underway, Secretary Spellings was in south Louisiana, announcing a three-year, \$23.9 million grant to help the state plan, develop, and initially implement new charter schools. This *No Child Left Behind* grant is in addition to the \$20.9 million grant Louisiana received in September 2005 to reopen charter schools damaged by the hurricanes, create 10 new charter schools, and expand existing charter schools to accommodate displaced students. The Secretary also presented free books via the Gulf Coast Summer Reading Initiative, a joint effort between the Department and First Book designed to help replenish reading materials in schools, community libraries, and homes in hurricane-affected communities in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. First Book "secured" the donation of 250,000 books from a Massachusetts wholesaler (Strictly-By-The-Book) and two publishing companies (Simon & Schuster and Townsend Press); the Department will handle distribution across the five states. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/06/06122006.html> AND <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/06/06122006a.html>.

Note: To date, the agency has approved requests from five states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas) to create a separate *No Child Left Behind* subgroup for displaced students for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/letters/5-states.html>.

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## STUDYING THE PAST

History is definitely in the air. Consider a few examples from last week:

- On June 5, Save Our History, the History Channel's national initiative to promote history education and historical preservation, recognized students and teachers for their outstanding contributions to local history. Details regarding their projects are available on the web site, along with monthly lesson plans (from exploration to International Studies). FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.saveourhistory.com/>.
  - A day later, the Department announced 124 grants, totaling more than \$118 million, to school districts in 38 states to boost the quality of American history education. The Teaching American History program supports three-year projects to improve teachers' appreciation for and knowledge of traditional American history through intensive, on-going professional development. All grantees must work in partnership with one or more organizations that have extensive knowledge of American history, including libraries, museums, non-profit history or humanities organizations, and/or higher education institutions. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/>. (History is a core academic subject under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.)
  - Also on June 6, the Washington, D.C.-based Thomas B. Fordham Foundation unveiled its latest report on state academic standards, in this case focusing on world history. While eight states earned an "A," two-thirds earned a "D" or an "F." Ironically, with the national debate on immigration raging in Congress, most states earned their lowest marks for Latin American history. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/global/log.cfm?main=150>.
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## INTEREST RATE CHANGE

Attention borrowers! On July 1, the federal student loan interest rate will increase by 1.84 percent. That means the new rate for students repaying Stafford loans issued after July 1998 will be 7.14 percent (up from 5.3 percent), while the revised rate for parents repaying PLUS loans since July 1998 will be 7.94 percent (up from 6.1 percent). (For those students who are still in school, within the six month grace period, or in deferment, the new rate will be 6.54 percent, up from 4.70 percent.) Borrowers can

contact their lender/loan servicer by June 30 to explore financial options, such as consolidation, to lock in lower interest rates. The Department has released a thorough consolidation checklist

(<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/loanchecklist.jsp?tab=repaying>) to guide borrowers through the decision-making process. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>. (If you are uncertain of your current lender/loan servicer, see <http://www.nsls.ed.gov/>.)

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## PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES

Interested in the evolution of school-business partnerships -- from traditional "adopt-a-school" efforts to mutually beneficial initiatives -- the Daniels Fund researched why some partnerships are more effective than others. A team interviewed 40 educators, business leaders, and partnership experts; reviewed more than 40 web sites; and conducted focus groups of principals, district stakeholders, and business representatives in Denver, where the fund is headquartered. The result was seven strategies: (1) ensure student learning and achievement are the focus of every partnership; (2) develop a well-defined and well-managed program that supports school-based partnerships; (3) make strategic matches between entities that advance a school's improvement goals; (4) set clear expectations for schools and businesses; (5) provide training for school staff and business employees; (6) create a meaningful process for communicating about the program and recognizing the contributions of business partners; and (7) regularly monitor each partnership and the overall program. Ideas are provided for each strategy. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.danielsfund.org/sevenstrategies/strategies/>.

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## VOLUNTEER SERVICE

According to "Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings," the most statistically significant study of volunteering ever conducted in the U.S., 65.4 million adults, or 28.8 percent, volunteered in 2005 -- an increase of nearly six million volunteers since 2002. In fact, adults spent a median of 50 hours per year volunteering, giving a total of 8.2 billion hours of service. Using an estimate of the dollar value of a volunteer's time, volunteering equated to \$147.6 billion in 2005. Of course, states vary widely on how,

when, and what percentage of their citizens volunteer, yet, in every state, women volunteer at a higher rate than men, and both women with children and women who work have higher volunteer rates than other women. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/volunteering/>.

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#### QUOTE TO NOTE

"As children face greater dangers, they often have fewer people to turn to for help.... And research shows us the risks are especially great for boys. Boys are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to go to college. More boys than girls abuse drugs, join gangs, and engage in violent behavior. Almost three-quarters of youth arrested are boys. The challenges facing America's youth are great. But...greater still is our love for our young people, our hope for our young people, and the dedication of millions of Americans to helping young people succeed."

-- First Lady Laura Bush (6/6/06),  
at the regional HAY conference in Indianapolis

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS

June 28 and 29, the National Mathematics Advisory Panel will hold its second meeting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. On the second day, the public is invited to comment on elements of the panel's work. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/mathpanel/>.

The Education Industry Association's annual conference, EDVentures 2006, will be held July 18-20 at the Marriott Center City in downtown Denver. This year's unique theme is "Education Entrepreneurs and Their Parents Lead the Way!," and Charles Hokanson of the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) will be part of the opening plenary. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.educationindustry.org/>.

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