



## ED REVIEW

April 8, 2005

...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/>)

Yesterday, at George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, Secretary Spellings announced a bold new approach to implementing the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Under this approach, which is outlined in great detail in "Raising Achievement: A New Path for *No Child Left Behind*" (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/raising/new-path-long.html>), the Department is "willing to consider requests [for flexibility], as long as the results for students are there and the principles of the law are followed" -- what the Secretary refers to as the "bright lines" of the statute (e.g., assessing all students annually in grades 3-8, reporting results by student subgroups, improving the quality of teachers, etc.). As an example, the Secretary proposed giving some states more freedom in how they test students with disabilities. Previously, the Department only allowed states to test one percent of students -- those with the most significant cognitive disabilities -- at their instructional level, rather than their grade level. Now, some states will be allowed to give alternate tests to an additional two percent of students -- those with persistent academic disabilities. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/04/04072005.html>. (Note the resources available in the right-hand column, like the Secretary's *Wall Street Journal* op-ed from that morning.)

At the same event, the Secretary announced \$14 million in immediate support for students with disabilities, including a tool kit to help identify and assess those with special needs. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/raising/disability-alt-assess.html>.

Separately, in an April 2 *Washington Post* op-ed, Secretary Spellings restated the case for expanding the *No Child Left Behind Act* into high schools. FOR MORE

INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://www.ed.gov/news/opeds/edit/2005/04022005.html>.

Special note: As the Department's reorganization continues to move forward, Christina Culver has been named Acting Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs.

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SCHOOLMATTERS.COM

On March 29, the National Education Data Partnership (a collaboration among Achieve, the Council of Chief State School Officers, Standard & Poor's, and the CELT Corporation, financed by the Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) unveiled [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com), a web-based service that provides in-depth information and analysis about public schools, school districts, and state education agencies. Online, users will find:

- **Student proficiency results** on state reading and math tests, disaggregated by grades and student subgroups, for every school, district, and state;
- **Student demographic information**, including socioeconomic, English language learner, and special education populations at the school, district, and state levels;
- **District and state financial data** like revenue streams, spending allocations, and staff compensation;
- **Community demographic data**, such as income levels, household parental status, and adult educational attainment rates; and
- **Standard & Poor's unique ratios** that examine academic and financial performance in demographic context.

Also, the web site features research tools that allow users to compare student achievement across districts, track schools' and districts' progress in attaining goals established under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and identify schools and districts that may be outperforming others.

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## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The next "Education News Parents Can Use" broadcast (April 19, 8:00-9:00 p.m. ET) will focus on the years from birth through age five as a time of extraordinary growth and change. Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that children's successes in school and throughout life are tied to their ability to read. However, children do not automatically learn the skills they need to begin reading -- they need help and practice. Indeed, children need learning environments rich in sounds and spoken language, with lots of opportunities to learn about books, letters, and numbers. Consequently, the broadcast's panel of experts will discuss, among other items, what activities parents can do -- in and out of the home -- to help lay the foundation for reading; what quality preschool and early literacy programs look like; and what resources are available for parents, grandparents, child care providers, and pre-kindergarten teachers to prepare children to be successful in school. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/>. (You can watch live and archived webcasts at <http://www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/>.)

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## IDEA MEETINGS

In January and February, the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) received comments and recommendations for developing regulations based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Now, with the Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) expected to be published this spring, the same office has announced a series of meetings in June and July to solicit feedback on the proposed regulations. The public meetings will be held 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in San Antonio, TX (6/6), Nashville, TN (6/17), Sacramento, CA (6/22), Las Vegas, NV (6/24), New York, NY (6/27), Chicago, IL (6/29), and Washington, DC (7/12). OSERS will supply specific location information through the NPRM. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/idea/public-meetings.html>.

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## BEATING THE ODDS

The Council of the Great City Schools' annual *Beating the Odds* report compares 2002, 2003, and 2004 test scores in 65 urban districts from 38 states. In both fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math, students improved:

- In fourth-grade reading, 51.0 percent of urban school students scored at or above proficient, a 7.9 percentage point increase from 2002.
- The percentage of students at or above proficient in fourth-grade math went from 44.1 percent to 55.3 percent, an 11.2 percent increase from 2002.
- Students also improved in eighth-grade reading (37.2 percent to 39.9 percent) and math (36.5 percent to 43.8 percent) but at slower rates.

More importantly, 63.8 percent of all grades tested narrowed the size of the gap between white and black students in reading, and 57.5 percent closed the gap in math. Similarly, 53.2 percent of all grades narrowed the size of the gap between white and Hispanic students in reading, and 54.7 percent closed the gap in math. Meanwhile, for all grades tested, 15 to 20 percent of the districts showed greater improvement than their statewide average. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.cgcs.org/pdfs/BTOVFINALFULLCOPY3.30.05.pdf>. (Secretary Spellings' statement is available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/03/03282005.html>.)

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## DUAL CREDIT AND ENROLLMENT

Perfect timing! With the President promoting a new \$125 million program to help at-risk high school students earn college credits, the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently released two reports on dual credit and enrollment. The first, "Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-03," provides national estimates of the number of public high schools that offered dual credit or exam-based courses, including Advance Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, and overall enrollments in those courses. The second, "Dual Enrollment of High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2002-03," specifies the prevalence of college coursetaking by high school students during the 12-month academic year, both within and outside of formal programs. FOR

MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005009> AND  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005008>.

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#### QUOTE TO NOTE

"If states are raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap -- which we will only be able to see if they regularly assess their students and report results by student subgroup -- then, in exchange, we will apply a more sensible, workable approach on the other aspects of the [*No Child Left Behind*] law. In other words, it is the results that truly matter, not the bureaucratic way you get there."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (4/7/05)

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Today, at 3:45 p.m. ET, NetDay's new Student Voices Resource Center (SVRC) will host a conversation with Susan Patrick, national director of Department's Office of Educational Technology. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.netday.org/SVRC/>.

Remember! Next week is Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education (ESTEME) Week. Also, be on the lookout for Newspapers in Education's special print supplement on ESTEME Week; introduced by President Bush, it is being published in several regional newspapers and delivered to partner schools for classroom use. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.esteme.org/>.

On April 21, the Department's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives will host a workshop in Phoenix to assist faith-based and community organizations applying to become approved supplemental educational service providers. The workshop is free, although pre-registration is required. The deadline for registration is March 19. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/fbci/suppserv-workshops.html>.

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

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