



ED REVIEW

February 24, 2006

...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/>)

In a February 21 letter to Chief State School Officers (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/060221.html>), Secretary Spellings re-emphasized the *No Child Left Behind Act's* assessment requirements and provided more information on the growth model pilot project. "While I understand the demands on your time and the challenges of leading a state's education efforts," she said, "I remind you that, in order to remain in compliance with the law and to be eligible for additional flexibility, your state must meet the assessment requirements of NCLB and administer that system this school year." To date, nearly 40 of the 50 states have completed an initial review of their standards and assessments systems (see below); the remaining states are scheduled for review in May. A majority of the states that have gone through peer review must submit additional information or make adjustments before receiving final approval.

As for state proposals for growth-based accountability models (20 states submitted proposals by the deadline -- 14 for the current school year, and six more for the 2006-07 school year), the Secretary outlined a deliberative process: (1) an initial review by Department staff, including how well states are implementing core principles of the law; (only those proposals that meet the prerequisites will be advanced to the next stage); (2) a peer review by members of academia, private organizations, and state and local education agencies; (3) a conference call between each state and the peer reviewers, so as to give peer reviewers the opportunity to ask clarifying questions; (4) a discussion among peer reviewers to build consensus and develop recommendations; and (5) selection by the Secretary. The Secretary has asked to receive peer reviewer recommendations by May. Up to 10 states will be permitted to make changes in assessing this year's test results. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/peer-review.html>.

Meanwhile, Alaska and Oregon have now joined the growing list of states (Alabama, Idaho, Maryland, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and West Virginia) that have received feedback on their standards and assessments under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and South Carolina became the first state in the nation to have its assessment system approved! (Reviewers do not look at the standards and assessments themselves, but at documents showing that they meet the law's mandates.) For comparison, their review letters are posted online. It is anticipated each state will receive more than one review letter over the next year or so. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbfinalassess/>.



TOOLBOX REVISITED

According to a new Department study, "The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College," completing academically challenging courses in high school dramatically increases the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree. Indeed, the academic intensity of a high school curriculum is the strongest indicator of postsecondary degree completion, regardless of a student's major course of study. (At the highest level, students take math after Algebra II and at least three years of laboratory science.) "The Toolbox Revisited" studies the Class of 1992, as it moves from high school to higher education, and includes comparisons to a previous report, "Answers in the Toolbox," which followed the Class of 1982 and had similar findings. "The President's proposed American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) would promote stronger instruction in key subjects such as math and science," the Secretary noted. "As the scientific data in this study shows, strengthening curriculum now will pay dividends well into the future." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/>. (Note: ACI materials are compiled at <http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/competitiveness/>, with a new fact sheet on "key things" businesses, community groups, and foundations can do to make sure American students are prepared for the 21st Century.)

Also: Already through high school? The study cites several postsecondary factors that contribute to degree completion: entering college directly from high school, remaining continuously enrolled, and earning more than 20 credits, or seven courses, by the end of the first 12 months of enrollment. And, studying math remains important: 71 percent of

students who eventually earned a bachelor's degree had earned some credits in college-level math, compared with just 38 percent of those who did not earn a degree.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MEDALS

At a February 13 ceremony, President Bush presented the 2005 National Medals of Science and Technology, the highest award a President can bestow for achievement in these fields. He used the occasion to promote his American Competitiveness Initiative, stressing, "We can't be the leading country in the world in science and technology unless we educate young mathematicians and scientists. So, as part of the initiative, I'm going to work with the Congress to make sure we extend the same high standards in the *No Child Left Behind Act* that we apply to reading and math." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060213.html>.



ED TECH DIRECTOR

Secretary Spellings has announced the appointment of Timothy Magner as Director of the Office of Educational Technology. As the director, he will coordinate the development and implementation of the agency's educational technology policies. Magner, who holds a B.A. in government from the College of William and Mary (VA) and a M.A. in education from Harvard University, served as the Department's deputy director for educational technology from April 2004 to June 2005. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/02/02222006a.html>.



GRANTS FORECAST

Be sure to review the FY 2006 Grants Forecast (as of February 17) 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.)

Also: A couple of new opportunities to whet your appetite? The Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Grant Program (notice of intent: 3/8, deadline: 4/7) funds efforts to integrate arts education into elementary and middle school curricula, strengthen arts education in these grades, and bolster student skills in creating, performing, and responding to the arts. The Improving Literacy Through School Libraries Program (deadline: 4/11) seeks to improve reading skills by providing students with up-to-date school library materials, well-equipped school libraries and media centers, and certified school library and media specialists. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/>. (Note: New budget fact sheets, by state, are available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statefactsheets/>.)



FEDERAL STUDENT AID

The Department's Federal Student Aid (FSA) web site (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>) has undergone some changes, part of an evolving program to make FSA's online presence more consistent and -- ultimately -- easier to use. Of special note, a "New Programs" sub-page details the Academic Competitiveness and National SMART grants. You will see similar changes in FSA's print publications over the next few months.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"Of course, just offering students more advanced math and science courses isn't enough. We have to change the way students look at these courses as well. One recent study found that 84 percent of middle school students would rather clean their rooms, take out the garbage, or go to the dentist than do their math homework. And their parents aren't much better. A study last week found that 70 percent of high school parents say their children already get enough math and science in school. You and I

know why this matters, and we must work together to make sure parents and students do too."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2/22/06),
addressing business and education leaders in New Jersey



UPCOMING EVENTS

On March 20, the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education will hold a public hearing in Boston, MA. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/>.

The Department's next "Education News Parents Can Use" broadcast, on mentoring, is scheduled for March 21. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/>.

March 2 -- the birthday of beloved children's author Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) -- is also the National Education Association's ninth annual Read Across America Day. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.nea.org/readacross/>.

The National Conference on Aviation and Space Education (NCASE) is fast approaching: October 19-21 at the Crystal City Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, VA. Don't miss this unique opportunity to interact with educators, aviation and space personalities, and industry representatives. The National Science Teachers Association will be conducting five breakout sessions and providing exhibit hall surprises, and educators will be eligible to earn one graduation credit. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ncase.info/>.

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