



ED REVIEW

December 16, 2005 (Happy Holidays!)

...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/>)

This week (December 14), at Guilford Elementary School in Columbia, Maryland, Secretary Spellings announced proposed regulations on the testing of students with disabilities. Already, the Department permits states to test one percent of students -- those with the most significant cognitive disabilities -- at their instruction level (versus their grade level) and count their "proficient" scores in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations. Then, in April, the Secretary announced a new policy to permit states to test an additional two percent of students -- those who are able to reach grade level, although not at the same speed as their peers -- using modified assessments and count their "proficient" scores in AYP determinations; 31 states used interim measures to adjust their test scores for the 2004-05 school year. The proposed regulations spell out a process for all states to develop modified academic standards and assessments aligned to those standards for the long-term. Meanwhile, to cover the period of time when the public is commenting on the proposed rule and the agency is issuing a final version, the Secretary stated she would extend interim measures for the 2005-06 school year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/12/12142005a.html>. (Note: A toolkit of technical assistance materials, including the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, is available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/speced/toolkit/>.)

The Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement has released a new brochure on public school choice. "School Choice for Student Success," written specifically for parents, addresses student eligibility, transportation, and how to get more information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/choice/schools/success/>. (Note: Free copies, in English and Spanish, may be ordered from ED PUBS at <http://www.edpubs.org/>.)

Idaho and South Dakota have now joined the list of states (Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia) that have received feedback on their standards and assessments under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. (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 expected 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/>.



ADULT LITERACY

Yesterday (December 15), the Department's National Center for Education Statistics unveiled initial findings from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), the first national findings on adult literacy since 1992. The quantitative literacy of adults (the ability to identify and perform computations using numbers in text, such as comparing the cost per ounce of food items) has improved, with those scoring "basic" or above rising from 75 to 79 percent. However, neither prose literacy (the ability to understand continuous text, such as newspapers) nor document literacy (the ability to understand non-continuous text, such as prescription drug labels) has changed from 1992. Also, while African-American and Asian adults showed considerable improvement across all three literacy scales, closing the "literacy gap" with their white peers, literacy among Hispanic adults has declined sharply as the nation has become more diverse. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>.

Note: To better serve adult needs, the Department is convening a task force of experts, planning a national symposium of noteworthy policies and best practices, and resolving to coordinate adult education across multiple federal agencies. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/reading/adultliteracy.html>.



GRANTS UPDATE

Congress is still in the process of finalizing the Department's Fiscal Year 2006 budget (<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/news.html#06action>), but, in anticipation of

an agreement, the agency has updated (as of November 28) its popular "Forecast for Funding Opportunities," which lists virtually all programs and competitions under which it has invited or expects to invite applications for new awards and provides actual or estimated dates for the transmittal of applications under these programs. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forecast.html>.

And how about a grant opportunity? The Teaching American History Grant Program -- which requires e-Application -- supports projects to raise student achievement by improving teachers' appreciation and understanding of traditional American history. Grant awards assist school districts, in partnership with entities that have extensive content expertise (such as colleges and universities, libraries, and museums), to design, implement, and demonstrate "effective, research-based professional development programs." A notice of intent to apply is due January 6. The application is due February 3. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/>.



COMPETITIVENESS SUMMIT

On December 6, Secretary Spellings and other Cabinet officials joined corporate CEOs, university presidents, and noted scientists from around the country to discuss bolstering research and development funding, improving science education, and reforming immigration laws to attract the world's most talented scientists and engineers. Among the recommendations for education: doubling the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to U.S. students in math, science, and engineering by 2015; increasing the number of those students who become K-12 teachers; and providing incentives for the creation of public-private partnerships to encourage U.S. students at all levels to pursue studies and/or careers in math, science, engineering, and technology. Just another report? "The purpose of this summit is not to produce another report," National Association of Manufacturers President John Engler informed the audience of 300, admitting America's competitive struggles are well documented in recent years. "It's to draw from those existing reports and focus on an action program." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.usinnovation.org/>.



NOTABLE REPORTS

Speaking of reports, the previous month witnessed a number of insightful studies, far too many to properly summarize but many of which deserve mention. Among them:

- American Institutes for Research, "Reassessing U.S. International Math Performance: New Findings from the 2003 TIMSS and PISA" (http://www.air.org/news/documents/TIMSS_PISA%20math%20study.pdf) and "Report on Elementary Comprehensive School Reform Models" (<http://www.air.org/news/documents/ES%20CSRQ%20Report%20-%20Full.pdf>)
 - Education Trust, "Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground: How Some High Schools Accelerate Learning for Struggling Students" and "Power to Change: High Schools that Help All Students Achieve" (<http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Press+Room/High+School+2005.htm>)
 - National Center for Education Statistics, "Student Achievement in Private Schools: Results from NAEP 2000-05" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006459>)
 - National Institute for Early Education Research, "The Effects of State Pre-Kindergarten on Young Children's School Readiness in Five States" (<http://nieer.org/resources/research/multistate/fullreport.pdf>)
 - Pre-K Now, "Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2006" (http://www.preknow.com/documents/LegislativeReport_Nov2005.pdf)
 - RAND, "The Role of Districts in Fostering Instructional Improvement: Lessons from Three Urban Districts Partnered with the Institute for Learning" (<http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9142/>)
 - Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, various presentations and testimony (<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/meetings.html>)
 - Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, "The State of State Science Standards" (<http://www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/publication.cfm?id=352>)
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BARNEY CAM IV

Earlier this month, the White House unveiled "Barney Cam: A Very Beazley Christmas," the fourth installment of "Barney Cam," which features the President and First Lady's

Scottish terriers touring the White House to provide viewers with a dog's eye view of the holiday decorations. This year, Barney is incensed by the tremendous popularity of his sister, Miss Beazley, and goes about hiding her Christmas presents. After a talk with the President (Miss Beazley is told to stop being a "media hound!"), the dogs unite for more traditional holiday fun. The video features cameos by Cabinet secretaries, senior White House officials, and Willie the cat. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.whitehouse.gov/holiday/>.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"Special education is no longer a peripheral issue. *IDEA* and *NCLB* have put the needs of students with disabilities front and center. We've torn down the final barrier between general and special education. Now everyone in the system has a stake in ensuring students with disabilities achieve high standards. At the same time, we know not all students learn the same way. We want to give states the flexibility to design assessments that match the needs of their students. We're committed to using the best research to make sure students with disabilities are learning and taking tests that are meaningful to them."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (12/14/05)



UPCOMING EVENTS

On January 12, the White House and several Cabinet agencies will host a conference in Kansas City, Missouri, to help faith-based and other community organizations learn more about the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative. The conference is free, but pre-registration is required. Please register by January 6. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.fbcigov/>.

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

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