



## NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



### *INCREASING AMERICA'S COMPETITIVENESS*

March 2006

*"In 1970, half of the people in the world who held science and engineering doctorates were Americans, but by 2010 projections show that figure will have dropped to 15 percent. To keep America strong, we need our young people to take us to the next level of innovation. President Bush and the Congress are committed to ensuring America's high school graduates are ready for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."*

*-- Secretary Margaret Spellings*

America's rapidly changing economy requires an education system that is producing graduates with the skills they need to be successful in post-secondary education and the workforce. America's high schools need to become more competitive to ensure that graduating students have the skills needed to compete for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Student performance is not just an education issue; it's an economic issue, a civic issue, a social issue, and a national security issue.

- **Most jobs in today's economy require post-secondary training.**
  - Approximately 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs will require some postsecondary education.
  - Only one in five graduates now in the workforce say they were adequately challenged by their coursework.
- **High school results are stagnant.**
  - The recent Nation's Report Card (NAEP) has shown no progress for high school students in 30 years.
  - For 17-year-olds, reading and math scores have remained flat since the early 1970s.
  - Among ninth-graders, five out of 10 minority students fail to finish high school on time. Overall, three out of 10 ninth-graders don't finish on time.
  - Twelfth-grade exit exams typically measure 9<sup>th</sup>-and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade skills, leading colleges and employers to discount results.
  - 40 percent of high schools nationally offer no Advanced Placement courses.
- **Internationally, U.S. Education needs to do better.**
  - The U.S. is ninth in the world in high school graduation rates among 25-34-year-olds.
  - Studies show less than half of those who do graduate are ready for college-level math and science.
  - In 2004, India's colleges produced 350,000 engineering graduates, compared to 70,000 in America. The elite 10 percent of India's youngest engineers outnumbers America's top 50 percent.
  - Although U.S. fourth graders score well against international competition, they fall near the bottom or dead last by 12<sup>th</sup> grade in mathematics and science, respectively.
  - On a recent international assessment of 15-year-olds' math problem-solving skills, the U.S. has the smallest percentage of top performers and the largest percentage of low performers compared to the other participating countries.
- **The cost to our Nation if we do nothing is high.**
  - The one million students who drop out of high school each year cost our nation more than \$260 billion in lost wages, lost taxes, and lost productivity over their lifetimes.
  - A high school dropout earns about \$260,000 less over a lifetime (present value in current dollars) than a high school graduate and pays about \$60,000 less in taxes.
  - Because high school graduates are less likely to commit crimes, increasing the high school completion rate by just 1% for all men ages 20 to 60 would reduce costs in the criminal justice system by as much as \$1.4 billion per year.
  - A one-year increase in average years of schooling for dropouts would reduce murder and assault by almost 30%, motor vehicle theft by 20%, arson by 13%, and burglary and larceny by about 6%.