

# Archived Information



## ED REVIEW

October 6, 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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### HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

On September 26, at the National Press Club, Secretary Spellings announced her plans to improve the American higher education system, based on the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education (<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/>). "We know higher education is the key to our children's future. We want more than anything to provide it," she said. "Yet, it's becoming difficult to do so and still make ends meet. And like many parents, I'm wondering, 'Will my daughter graduate equipped with the skills for a career, or is she going to move back home with me?'" The Secretary's immediate proposals address accessibility, affordability, and accountability.

#### Accessibility

- continue to strengthen K-12 preparation, align high school standards with college expectations, and increase access to college-prep classes such as Advanced Placement;
- work with Congress to expand the successful principles of the *No Child Left Behind Act* to high schools;
- rework the twelfth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test to provide state-level estimates of college and workforce readiness; and
- develop a federal research agenda for adult literacy to identify model programs and strategies.

#### Affordability

- partner with states to use existing income and tax data to help students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in half the time and notify students of their estimated package before spring of their high school senior year;
- work with Congress to provide new funds for need-based aid;
- commission an independent consultant review of the federal student aid system; and
- encourage organizations that report annual college data to devise consistent affordability measures.

## Accountability

- work with a consortium of states to build upon and link together 40 existing, privacy-protected higher education information systems;
- explore incentives for states and institutions that amass and report student learning outcome data;
- assemble members of the accreditation community to recommend changes that will place a greater emphasis on results; and
- redesign the Department's college search web site to allow consumers to weigh and compare institutions based on individual interest and needs.

This spring, the Secretary will convene a summit to discuss the full slate of recommendations, the agency's progress, and responsibilities moving forward. "Let me be clear," she concluded. "At the end of this we neither envision nor want a national system of higher education. On the contrary, one of the greatest assets of our system is its diversity. Our aim is simply to ensure the opportunities a college education provides is a reality for every American who chooses to pursue it." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/09/09262006.html>.

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## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The next "Education News Parents Can Use" (October 17, 8:00-9:00 ET) broadcast will discuss steps schools and families can take to help keep children safe and secure in the event of a health crisis or other emergency. Scientists say the world is due for an influenza pandemic -- a global outbreak from a new strain of flu -- that would have a dramatic impact on our society. Indeed, history reminds us that such pandemics are a reality: in the past century, alone, three flu pandemics caused widespread loss of life. A flu outbreak today similar to the one that occurred in 1918 could kill millions and profoundly affect institutions like schools, as children are expected to have high rates of infection and are much more likely to spread the illness than adults. The good news is the Department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other agencies are collaborating with state and local governments to assist school districts in developing pandemic flu plans and to ensure that -- in the case of an outbreak -- our children will be as protected as possible. Experts are spotlighting exemplary emergency preparedness programs; answering questions about the different strains of flu; updating an expanding body of resources for schools

(<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/>); and providing user-friendly tips for parents. 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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## NCLB UPDATE (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>)

Yesterday (October 5), before touring a District charter school, President Bush visited the Department, asserting reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act* is a "priority of this administration" because it is working. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061005-4.html>.

Several other items of note:

- With the addition of Alaska and Michigan, 12 states have received full approval of their standards and assessment systems under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbfinalassess/>.
- The Department has received revised growth model proposals from five states that were initially rejected. Other states have been invited to submit proposals by November 1. Up to 10 plans may be approved. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/>.
- At the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) conference, Secretary Spellings released the revised "Toolkit for Hispanic Families." The product was developed with guidance from over 1,800 Hispanic parents. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/2006toolkit/>.
- Handouts and PowerPoint presentations from the 14 Teacher-to-Teacher workshops the agency conducted this summer are available online. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.t2tweb.us/workshops/sessions.asp>.

Also: Congratulations to Boston Public Schools, winner of the 2006 Broad Prize for Urban Education. The system bested four finalists: Bridgeport (CT), Jersey City, Miami-Dade County, and New York City. Boston will receive \$500,000 in college scholarships. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.broadprize.org/>.

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## IG REPORT: READING FIRST

Last month, the Department's Office of Inspector General issued a report critical of the Reading First program's grant application process (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/aireports/i13f0017.pdf>). Below are excerpts from the Secretary's statement regarding the report.

"Reading First is one of the very best tools we have to achieve the goal of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of every student in America reading at grade level by 2014. While the Reading First program is still in its early years, I am encouraged by its success in helping students achieve gains in literacy all over this nation."

"I am committed to the highest levels of integrity and ethics for the Department of Education and all its programs.... I am concerned about these actions and committed to addressing and resolving them. I am, therefore, moving swiftly to enact all of the Inspector General's recommendations."

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## NCES REPORTS

More insight from the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

- Projections of Education Statistics to 2015 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006084>)
- Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the U.S., 2003-04 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006329>)
- School and Parent Interaction by Household Language and Poverty Status, 2002-03 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006086>)
- U.S. High School Sophomores: A Twenty-Two Year Comparison, 1980-2002 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006327>)

Also: On October 10, NCES will release Part II of its national survey on the condition of education for American Indian/Alaska Native students in the U.S. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/NIES/>.

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## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) is a source of free educational materials for students who are visually impaired. Founded after World War II at the request of blinded veterans who asked for recordings of textbooks in order to go to college under the GI Bill, this non-profit organization distributed 260,000 titles to 141,660 members in 2005. The recordings cover a wide array of subjects, from literature and history to math and the sciences, at all academic levels, from kindergarten through post-graduate. RFB&D has received a Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) grant. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 1-866-RFBD-585.

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## QUOTE TO NOTE

"Our colleges are known as the best in the world. A lot of people will tell you things are just fine. But when 90 percent of our fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education, are we satisfied with 'just fine?' Is it 'fine' that college tuition has outpaced inflation, even doubling the cost of health care? Is it 'fine' that only half of our students graduate on-time? Is it 'fine' that students often graduate so saddled with debt they can't buy a home or start a family? None of this seems 'fine' to me."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (9/26/06),  
presenting her Action Plan for Higher Education

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Planning is underway for the Department's seventh annual International Education Week (November 13-17, coinciding with American Education Week). Individuals and institutions are encouraged to join the IEW listserv and submit a report on activities. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://iew.state.gov/>.

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