

A CHIEVER



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Study Finds Majority of Sophomores Plan to Go to College

A baseline look at the expectations of the nation's 10th-graders in 2002, shows that most (72 percent) planned to get a bachelor's degree or higher, and most (83 percent) rated getting a good education as "very important," according to *A Profile of the American High School Sophomore in 2002*, released last month by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The majority of those sophomores also placed a premium on getting good grades, and more than half considered challenging courses instrumental in motivating them to attend school.

However, the report revealed that sophomores' expectations for their future education were not completely aligned with their high school preparation. Just under two-thirds (65 percent) of whites who planned to complete a four-year degree were proficient at reading level 2 (simple inference),

compared to less than a third of blacks (31 percent) and just over a third (35 percent) of Hispanics. At mathematics level 4 (intermediate concepts), only 6 percent of blacks and 12 percent of Hispanics—contrasted to 33 percent of whites—were considered proficient.

"This report shows that we as a society have done an excellent job of selling the dream of attending college," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. "But we have to make sure that we are preparing high school students to succeed once they get in the door. That's why President Bush has proposed an initiative to expand the tried and tested principles of *No Child Left Behind*—accountability for achievement, educational options, research-based practice and flexibility—to the nation's high schools."

For a copy of the report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov>, or call 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827) with identification number ERN3808P for the paper version, while supplies last.

Parent Support: Not Same Way, But Some Way

By Durwood Baucum, Carriere, Miss.

As a student, I had a positive mindset toward education. My attitude was shaped early on by my mother's strong influence. Although she believed that her eighth-grade education was inadequate to be of much assistance to me in my educational endeavors, her passion and praise helped me develop the strong self-esteem I needed in order to learn. I know that I could not have been successful without her.

Today, as a junior high school teacher and a parent, I am very much aware of the impact—as well as the challenges—of parental involvement.

My school is located in a rural district where many of the parents commute some 65 miles to jobs outside our community. In 2002, my district ranked 148 out of 149 in the state of Mississippi for per-pupil spending. In addition, more than half of our 500 students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Meeting these challenges requires a concerted effort among the community, students, teachers and, certainly, parents.

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"When parents take an active interest in their children's education, some profound results can emerge," says teacher Durwood Baucum, pictured below, center, with parent Brenda Strong and her son Justin at Pearl River Central Junior High School.

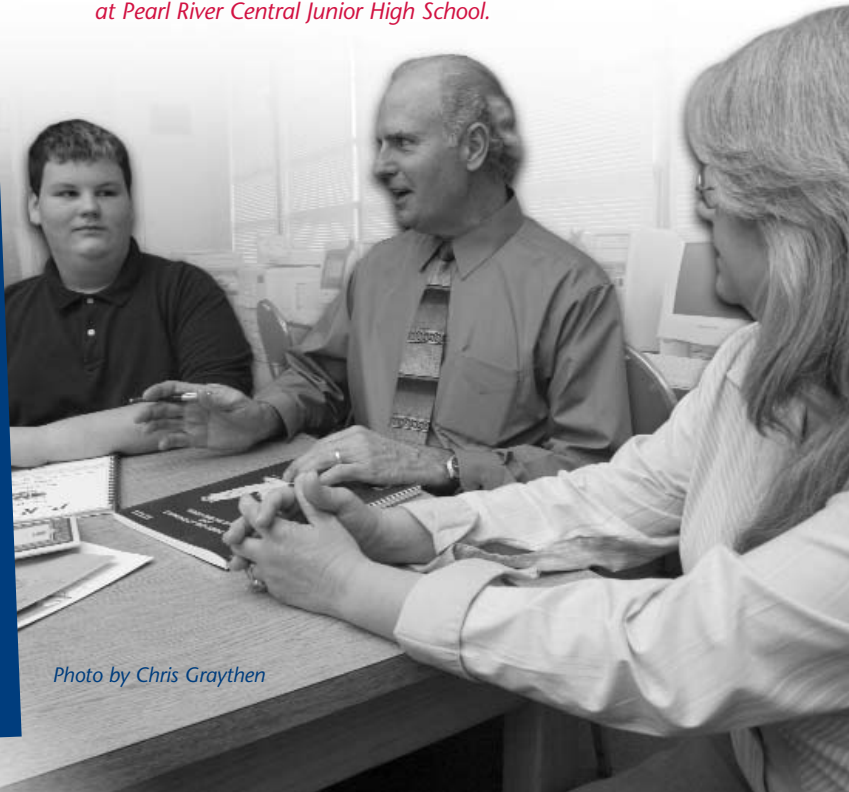


Photo by Chris Graythen



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For information on ED programs, resources and events, contact: Information Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202, (800) USA-LEARN (800-872-5327), usa_learn@ed.gov.

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When parents take an active interest in their children's education, some profound results can emerge: increased achievement, improved attendance, decreased dropout rates and decreased delinquency. Parents, after all, are their children's first teachers. They may not support their children in the same way, but they need to support them in *some* way.

Those of us who teach at the middle school level know all too well that as children grow older, the level of parental support typically declines. Parents are generally very involved in their children's education at the elementary school level; however, for a variety of reasons, that level of support often becomes slight to non-existent in the higher grades. That lack of involvement

may be due in part to:

—*Negative contact between schools and parents:* communication is limited merely to contacting parents for discipline or academic problems;

—*Differing ideas among teachers and parents as to what constitutes parental support:* parental involvement is perceived simply as helping children with homework or chaperoning a field trip;

—*Socioeconomic and job pressures:* parents fear missing work to attend school meetings will jeopardize their jobs, or they are unsure about their abilities to confer with teachers; and

—*Time constraints:* parents working full-time jobs outside the home have very little time for involvement.

Schools must find methods to break down such barriers so that children can be effectively educated. For example, my school uses many traditional ways to engage parents. We distribute handbooks, calendars, progress reports and announcements to keep parents informed of policies, school events and student progress. We also have a few other approaches that are fairly new to us, and we are quite pleased with their successes.

The voluntary contract, mutually signed by our students, teachers and parents, contains a list of actions that each party checks in pledge of his or her support. This establishes some clear goals that all are willing to work toward and fosters a unified front for achieving those goals.

Through our Web site, we provide students and parents with convenient and easily accessible information about our school. Many of our teachers also use the class-specific feature of

the Web site to list lesson plans and assignments. Parents check these sites to learn of homework requirements for specific subjects, which helps them to monitor their children's progress.

Technology has also allowed many of our parents to keep in contact through the e-mail service our school provides. This has become my favorite way of communicating with many parents. The ease, speed and non-intrusive manner with which teachers can reply online to parents make this method a favorite among our faculty.

Our school newspaper is another medium that has become quite popular among students and parents. The students help publish the newsletter, providing a large portion of its content. Included are pictures, coverage of projects, students and sporting events, and announcements of events and awards. Students are proud to show it to family members, who read the articles, look at the samples of student achievement and take note of upcoming events.

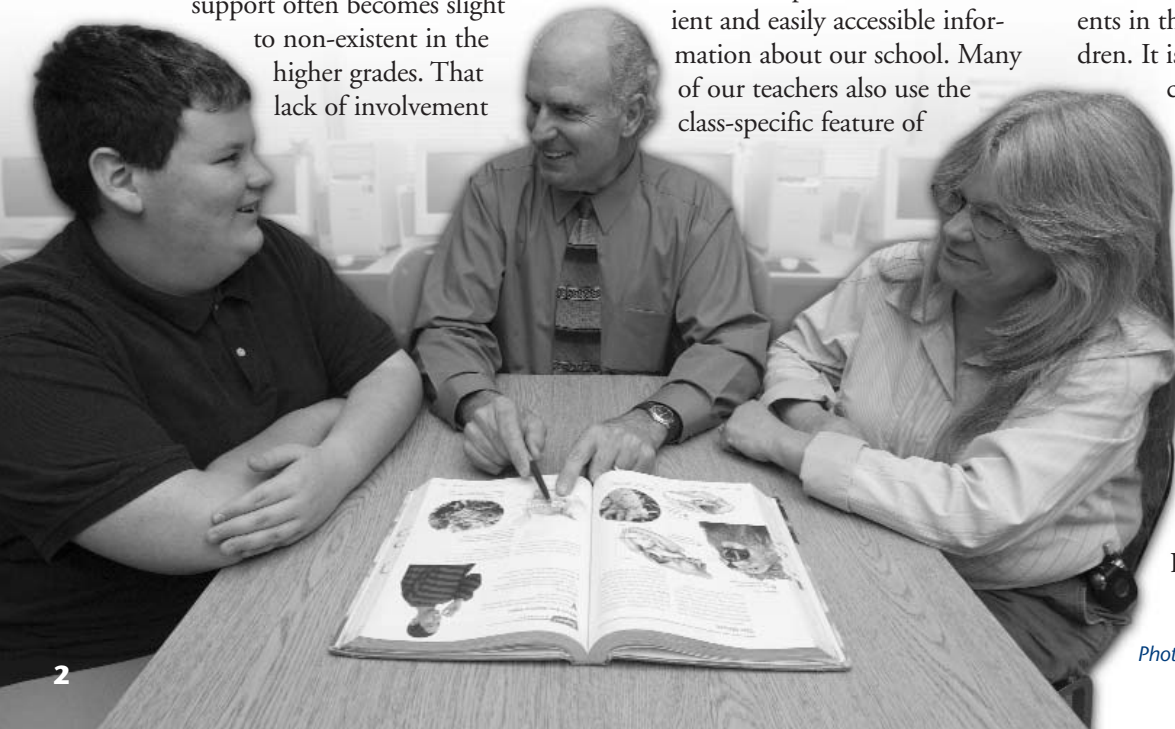
Recognition of outstanding support is also a way that we foster strong parental involvement. Each school term we select a Parent-of-the-Year whom we honor at an award ceremony.

In addition, parents and students alike help with various school-sponsored charity events to generate revenue for campus improvements. We collect toys for tots, coats for kids, pennies for patients, food for the needy, provisions for soldiers and contributions for medical patients.

There are many ways to involve parents in the educational process of children. It is not likely that any one school can implement all available programs, but, as educators, our resolve should be to encourage, nurture and support parents as we ask them to encourage, nurture and support their children.

Durwood Baucum is in his 13th year at Pearl River Central Junior High School in Carriere, Miss., where he teaches eighth-grade science. Last year, the school was honored as a National Title I Distinguished School and a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School.

Photo by Chris Graythen



"If we've learned anything in the last three years, it's that what gets measured gets done."

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings on the need for annual assessments and disaggregation of data, in her remarks at the Council of the Great City Schools Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 13, 2005, in Washington, D.C.



May 1-7

Sixth Annual National Charter Schools Week. For resources and ideas for celebration, visit www.ncsc.info or call (866) 954-1414.

Close-Up: **No Child Left Behind** Serving Students With Limited English Proficiency



For the first time, all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have developed and implemented standards and assessments for English language learners as required by *No Child Left Behind*, according to a new report from the U.S. Department of Education.

The 503-page *Biennial Evaluation Report to Congress on the Implementation of the State Formula Grant Program* is the first in-depth study of its kind since *NCLB* was enacted in 2002. It contains data on the English language acquisition and academic achievement of limited English proficient students (LEPs). These data provide information on approximately four million LEP students nationwide served through the law's Title III program in 2002-04.

With the passage of *NCLB*, Title III replaced Title VII, which changed the program from competitive, discretionary grants to performance-based, formula grants. The additional funds provided for the new formula grants have allowed more LEP students to receive support.

The goal of Title III is to ensure that LEP students attain proficiency in English and meet the same standards for academic achievement as all students. Title III funds are awarded to states, who in turn make subgrants to local education agencies (LEAs) by allocating funds based on the LEP and immigrant populations served in those LEAs. For next year's budget, President Bush is proposing \$676 million to continue funding English Language Acquisition state grants under Title III.

Among the report's findings, 35 states and the District of Columbia reported that 378,903 students transitioned out of language instruction programs into mainstream classrooms in 2002-03. For the following school year, 43 states and the District of Columbia reported 444,451 students transitioned out of such programs.

For a copy of the report, visit www.nclb.gov/oela/biennial05/index.htm.



We will resume publication with our May 1, 2005, issue.

Earning College Credit

High school students are taking advantage of programs to earn college credits, according to two new reports by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

"The results in these reports underscore the significance of President Bush's \$125 million proposal to increase access to dual enrollment for at-risk students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Dual Enrollment of High School Students at Postsecondary

Institutions: 2002-03 found that more than half of all colleges and universities in the nation enrolled high school students in courses for college credit, commonly called "dual enrollment," during the 2002-03 academic year, which translates to about 813,000 or 5 percent of high school students.

The second report, *Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-03*,



found that 71 percent of public high schools offered programs in which students earned credit at both the high school and college levels for the same course, known as "dual credit." In addition, 67 percent of public high schools offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses, while 2 percent offered International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. During the 2002-03 school year, there were an estimated 1.2 million enrollments in courses for dual credit, 1.8 million enrollments in AP courses, and 165,000 enrollments in IB courses.

For a copy of these reports, visit <http://nces.ed.gov>, or call (877) 4ED-PUBS (877-433-7827) for the paper version.

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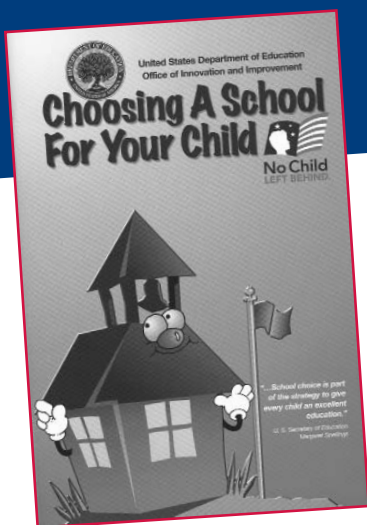
**PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS**



**"When it comes to
the education of our
children ... failure is
not an option."**

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

NEW GUIDE! **Choosing a School for Your Child**



The enactment of the landmark *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*; the rapid growth of the charter school movement; the increasing number of states enacting voucher, scholarship and tax credit programs; the expansion of privately funded scholarship programs for low-income children; and the growing acceptance of homeschooling have all increased educational choices available to families.

To help parents navigate the process of choosing a school for their children, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement just released ***Choosing a School for Your Child***, a reader-friendly booklet that explains some of the public school choices—from charter to virtual schools—as well as the private school options available. The guide outlines four steps for selecting a school and includes questions that parents may consider when going through the process.

In addition, the booklet highlights new options for parents provided in the law. *No Child Left Behind* allows parents whose children are in public schools that need improvement or are unsafe to choose other public schools and, in the case of low-income students, to take advantage of free tutoring or other academic support.

Finally, the book concludes with a list of resources, including Web sites and organizations that provide information to parents. For a copy of *Choosing a School for Your Child*, call the Department's publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS with identification number EU0121P for the English version, and EU0122P for the Spanish version, or visit www.ed.gov/parents/schools/find/choose/index.html for an online copy.