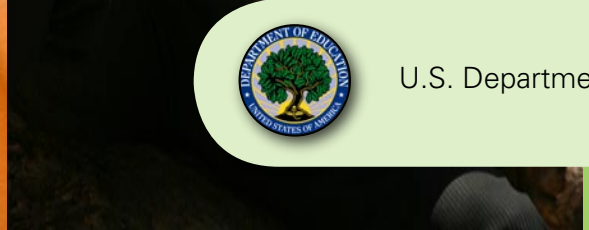
Great Expectations

Holding Ourselves and Our Schools Accountable For Results



U.S. Department of Education

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Holding Ourselves and Our Schools Accountable For Results

January 2009

Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education
Margaret Spellings
Secretary

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Executive Summary

Children receive an education, but adults are responsible for it. This makes education one of the most unique and important of all public trusts.

As public officials—and as taxpayers and parents—we must not be afraid to ask hard questions. We should expect the best from our schools. Are we getting it?

Finding the answer means taking an honest look at the people who shaped public education, the forces that changed it, and the reforms that will save it.

Great Expectations, named for the common denominator of all successful schools, provides this look.

In these pages, you will read about education's evolution in America from a privilege for a few to a necessity for all. You will learn about the people working to promote high standards and accountability in the classroom. And you will see how our universities and colleges are rising to the challenge to innovate and compete in a "flat," fast-paced world.

A History of Expectations traces the history of the public school in America and its shift in the 20th century away from academic achievement.

The Search for Accountability focuses on our nation's response to declining test scores and a widening achievement gap, and the growing coalition of parents and business and community leaders demanding change.

Education as a Civil Right describes the bipartisan passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and how it is helping at-risk students realize their potential.

Doing What Works shows how annual testing and data-based accountability are helping us identify what works and fix what does not.

Recognizing and Rewarding Teachers outlines our support for qualified and effective teachers, the key to academic achievement.

Higher Education That Aims Higher details efforts to ensure college students are prepared to learn from day one and our universities and colleges are accessible, affordable, and accountable.

New Choices for a New Century looks at how charter schools, choice, and other innovative options are giving kids a lifeline and driving schools to improve.

What's Next? A Future of Reform and Results offers a vision of a brighter, opportunity-filled future for our children and a roadmap to get us there.

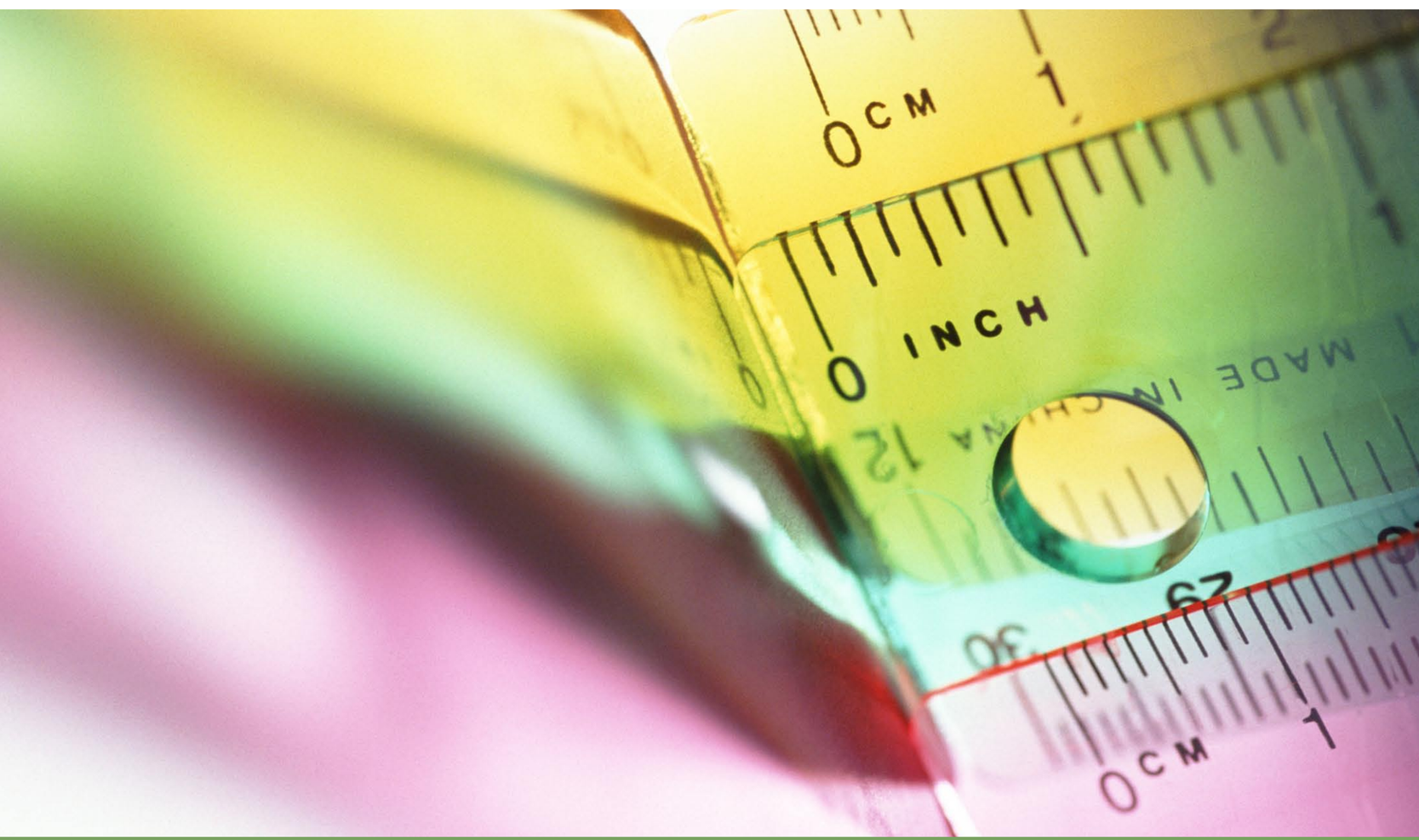
A quality education is never more valuable than in uncertain times. As the world becomes more competitive, our public school systems must become more rigorous and responsive. We have invested a record amount of federal dollars in our schools. We must insist on more accountability, not less.

The past eight years have been a consequential time, filled with action and accomplishments. We made a promise that no other nation has made: to provide a quality education to every one of our citizens. And we are doing our level best to keep that promise.

The next few years will determine whether reform is more than just a passing phase. They will determine whether we listen to the bipartisan coalition for reform and build a public school system that is ready to lead in the 21st century.

A decade ago, then-Governor George W. Bush decried the "soft bigotry of low expectations." We have raised those expectations. Dedicated teachers and principals are turning around schools and lives. But we have not yet reached our goal of grade-level proficiency for everyone.

We cannot turn back or slow down; in fact, we must pick up the pace. That's what *Great Expectations* is all about.



Introduction

Our public education system has long been a model for the world. It has lifted millions out of poverty, unlocking the doors to the American Dream and powering the 20th century.

But as we headed into a new century, a closer look revealed that all was not well.

Test scores were flat or falling.

High schools could not solve their dropout problem—or even determine how great the problem was.

While schools rightly celebrated diversity, a sizable "achievement gap" between minority and white students stubbornly persisted.

Many students were "socially promoted" to the next grade without knowing the material, producing graduates who were not prepared for entry-level employment.

Universities and employers resorted to expensive, time-consuming remedial courses and training.

Millions of children suffered silently from the "soft bigotry of low expectations."

Parents and policymakers demanded change. But barriers stood in the way: a lack of accessible and reliable data; massive, slow-moving bureaucracies; and few choices and alternatives for those dissatisfied with the education system. Within that system, little was expected, and so little changed.

Meanwhile, the world was busy learning from our mistakes. Other nations have abandoned the old six-hours-a-day, 180-days-a-year industrial-age model of education. Not surprisingly, many foreign countries outscore the U.S. in international tests.

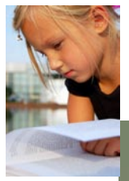
The rising demands of the global economy and rapidly shifting demographics require us to educate a greater number of students to a higher level than ever before.

Can public education keep up with the demand? Can we go from a system based on aspiration to one based on accountability and achievement?

Can more be done to ensure a brighter future for *all* children, no matter who they are or where they live?

The answer is "yes." But it will take real change—starting with changed expectations—of ourselves, our schools, and our students.

A History of Expectations



How did we get here? How were expectations allowed to fall so far?

Public education in America began with lofty ideals. One of its founding fathers, Horace Mann of Massachusetts, advocated a system of free schools open to everyone. He rejected the idea that "men are divided into classes," instead believing that "all are to have an equal chance for earning, and equal security in the enjoyment of what they earn."

In 1853, Massachusetts passed the nation's first compulsory education law.

Other states soon followed. Still, many young people left school early to work in the fields or factories.

A complete secondary school and college education was viewed as a luxury reserved for the elite.

> "Not every child has to read, figure, write, and spell. … We shall some day accept the thought that it is just as illogical to assume that every boy must be able to read as it is that each one must be able to perform on a violin."
>
> A.H. Lauchner, junior high school principal, Urbana, Ill., 1951

"Every Pupil Treated Alike"

That elite view of education would change. After the Civil War, African-Americans freed from slavery eagerly sought the education that was once off-limits to them. "Schools, both day and night, were filled to overflowing with people of all ages and conditions, some being as far along in age as sixty and seventy years," wrote educator and author Booker T. Washington.

A massive influx of immigrants, coupled with reforms such as child labor laws, further boosted enrollment in public and private schools.

Dozens of new land-grant universities were founded, opening up the world of higher education to the emerging middle class.

In the 1890s, about 6 percent of children aged 14 to 17 attended secondary school. By 1930, over half did.

Attempts were made to set standards. In 1892, the Committee of Ten was formed, chaired by Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, with U.S. Commissioner of Education William T. Harris as a member. The committee endorsed an academic curriculum familiar to us today, including English, mathematics (including geometry and algebra), physics, chemistry, Latin, history, and geography.

Equally important was *how* students were to be taught. Students "should all be treated alike," the committee emphasized. "Every subject should be taught in the same way and to the same extent to every pupil … no matter what the probable destination of the pupil may be."

Relaxed Standards

Not everyone in the education establishment agreed. What some saw as egalitarian, others saw as unrealistic.

In 1918, the National Education Association (NEA), which represented teachers, principals, and administrators, released its Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. The seven principles de-emphasized academics in favor of vocational and "life skills" classes. Not one of the principles mentioned academic achievement.

Leading educators rebelled against the academic requirements of colleges and universities. In 1942, a study by the Progressive Education Association was published that analyzed college students from high schools with experimental curricula. The so-called Eight-Year Study concluded that "units, grades, rankings, and diplomas" were mere "outworn symbols," and that college preparation should not depend on "the study of certain prescribed subjects in the secondary school."

This attitude culminated in 1945 with "life adjustment education," a movement launched by educator Charles Prosser, who claimed that most students—60 percent—should expect a future without higher education or employment in "desirable skilled occupations."

Prosser's theory was embraced by dozens of states and the U.S. Office of Education.

But it was a direct rebuke to Horace Mann's vision.

"Teachers found that far too many of their students were having trouble with traditional school subjects," recounted the National Education Association of the United States and the American Association of School Administrators Educational Policies Commission in 1944, and so the high school "gradually and perhaps unconsciously relax[ed] its academic standards."

Fads or Phonics

The timing could not have been worse for this lowering of expectations. The post-war baby boom was packing classrooms. New immigrants continued to arrive, seeking to learn English and assimilate.

And in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision rejected the "separate but equal" doctrine, eventually enabling millions of African-American children to attend their neighborhood schools.

Many of these new students were greeted by an experiment in reading instruction. Prior to World War I, reading instruction had been largely based on phonics, the decoding of sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet.

But in the post-war era, a theory called "meaning emphasis" caught on with educators.

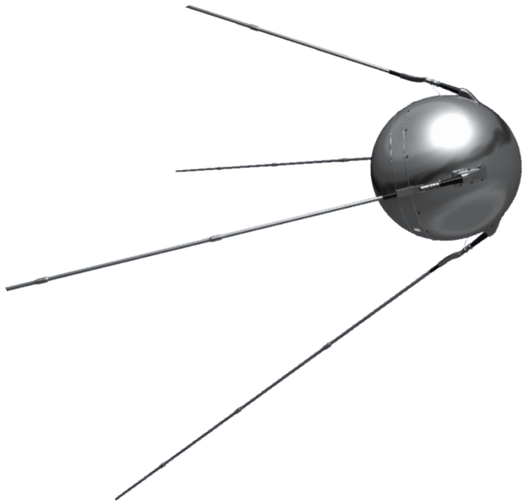
Children who could not read were taught to "guess" or identify unknown words based on their contexts.

The fad swept public school classrooms, despite research showing that phonics instruction was more effective in the early grades, particularly for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In 1955, concerned parents made the pro-phonics book *Why Johnny Can't Read* a nationwide best seller.

Frustrated teachers hid traditional reading and spelling books from watchful administrators' eyes.

The anti-phonics movement proved difficult to stop. In the 1980s, a wholesale switch to "whole language" instruction helped sink California's reading scores to the bottom of the nation, ahead of only Mississippi and Guam.



Mathematics, too, fell victim to lowered expectations. One of its most influential voices belonged to William Heard Kilpatrick, a professor at Columbia University's Teachers College. He decried the traditional teaching of math and suggested that algebra and geometry no longer be universally taught.

Math "had little in it to serve the needs and interests of children, or for that matter grownups," he said.

Kilpatrick got his wish. Student enrollment in high school algebra declined from 56.9 percent in 1909-10 to 24.8 percent in 1954-55, while enrollment in geometry classes fell from 30.9 percent to 11.4 percent during the same period.

In 1955, the College Entrance Examination Board's Commission on Mathematics urged K–12 schools to adopt a more rigorous curriculum.

Little was done, however, until the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik I satellite in 1957.

The following year, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the *National Defense Education Act* into law, strengthening science, mathematics, and foreign language curricula, increasing support for student loans and graduate school fellowships, and boosting education research. He termed it "an emergency undertaking" whose purpose was "to bring American education to levels consistent with the needs of our society."

The education establishment was undeterred, however. In the 1960s, the New Math curriculum was introduced to classrooms, gaining widespread notoriety.

In 1989, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) proposed national standards that would downplay "long division," "paper-and-pencil fraction computation," "written practice," and "finding exact forms of answers."

The NCTM would update and strengthen its math standards in 2000 and 2006. Still, recovery would not happen overnight. By 2003, American high school students ranked 28th out of 40 countries in mathematics.

Curiously, however, our schools did not seem to notice. Seventy-two percent of U.S. students said they got good grades in mathematics, compared to 25 percent of students in top performer Hong Kong.

The Search for Accountability

How could we have tolerated this lowering of expectations?

There were few tools to hold public schools accountable. For decades, tests measuring academic achievement—results—were eclipsed by tests measuring aptitude—*assumed* potential.

Administrators separated students into different learning tracks, which had a disproportionately adverse effect on poor and minority children.

"Black students are more often tracked into lower ability groups involving general education and vocational education," wrote the authors of *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males*.

Social promotion—the practice of passing a student on to the next grade-level whether he or she had learned the material of the current grade level—also hurt students, especially low-income and minority students.

"Social promotion has been a cancer on public education," said former Chicago schools chief Paul Vallas. He noted that 96 percent of Chicago public school graduates who attended city colleges in 1995 had to take remedial reading and math.

"I have great expectations of what this law will mean for all of our young people. ... I believe deeply no law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America."

President Johnson, signing the *ESEA* into law, April 11, 1965

Washington Responds

As standards declined, an achievement gap grew between minority and low-income students and their peers.

Washington did respond. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* into law. It was designed to "provide financial assistance" to meet the "special educational needs of children of low-income families."

While the law was being considered, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-NY) led the call to introduce accountability measures into it. He proposed periodically reporting to communities student progress based on test scores. But his effort did not succeed.

ESEA would become the most far-reaching—and most expensive—education law in history. Despite vast increases in spending, however, the achievement gap failed to close. "Educational needs" were still not being met.

In 1969, the accountability movement received a boost from a young presidential aide and future senator named Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He proposed the creation of a National Institute of Education (NIE), a precursor to the Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), established in 2002. The NIE would, in Moynihan's words, "develop the art and science of education to the point that equality of educational opportunity results in a satisfactory equivalence of educational achievement."

Also in 1969, a new test—the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card—began to measure performance for students in reading, mathematics, and science at the national level, with scores disaggregated by student group.

In the coming years, Congress would pass several major pieces of legislation affecting schoolchildren, including *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (later called the *Individuals with Disabilities Education* Act (*IDEA)*) in 1975, and legislation to create the U.S. Department of Education in 1979.

But the expanding federal footprint hid the fact that accountability for results was still largely absent.

"Risk" and "Results"

In the 1980s, a number of studies were released advocating standards-based reform.

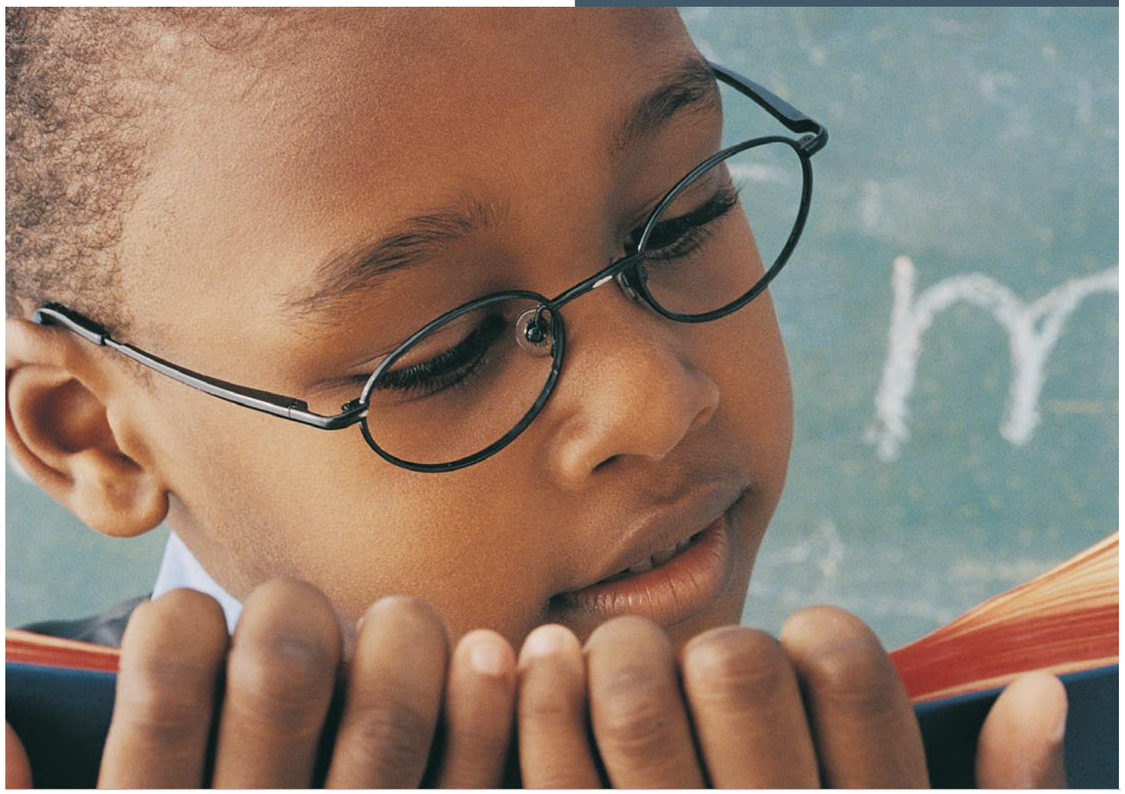
In 1983, the landmark *A Nation At Risk* report was published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a blue-ribbon panel convened by the U.S. secretary of education. It captured national headlines with its charge of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in our schools.

The report warned that, due to declining academic performance, "our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world."

More important than its rhetoric was its prescription for education reform. "Standardized tests of achievement (not to be confused with aptitude tests) should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another and particularly from high school to college or work," the report stated, adding that they should be "part of a nationwide (but not Federal) system."

"The school has again but one way, and that is, first and last, to teach them to read, write and count."

W.E.B. DuBois, civil rights advocate, 1935



A Nation At Risk recommended that high school graduation requirements be strengthened, "more rigorous and measurable standards" be adopted, teacher salaries be "performance-based," and the school day or year be lengthened.

The nation's governors had also watched the decline of their public schools with alarm. In 1986, the bipartisan National Governors Association published *Time for Results*. The report advocated fewer regulations and more freedom for schools in exchange for clear goals and accountability for results.

It recommended testing to "identify student strengths and weaknesses relative to achievement."

"School personnel must be taught how to use data to assess effectiveness of instructional programs," the report added.

Three years later, at the Charlottesville (Virginia) Education Summit, the nation's governors agreed to a set of "clear, national performance goals" that included "improvement of academic performance, especially among at-risk students," and improvements on international achievement tests, "especially in math and science."

They also pledged a greater effort at accountability, including regular reports on schools' progress.

Coalition for Reform

A unique and growing grassroots coalition of educators, parents, and business and civil rights leaders embraced these recommendations.

They made the moral and economic case for education reform. And their voices began to reach the ears of policymakers, who proceeded with reform—slowly.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education began ranking states by their education performance using the limited statistical data available, such as ACT and SAT scores (state-by-state assessments in the NAEP did not begin until 1990).

In 1988, Congress passed the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments, authorizing state-level trial assessments based on NAEP standards in math and reading.

Participation, however, was voluntary.

The 1994 reauthorization of the *ESEA*, the *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)*, went further, calling for "improv[ed] accountability" through the use of "State assessment systems" and "challenging State student performance standards."

"Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education."

President John F. Kennedy, 1961

Education as a Civil Right: The *No Child Left Behind Act*

> "The work begun in 1965 is not complete. It will never be complete—as long as one child in America is denied equal educational opportunity."
>
> Mary Hatwood Futrell, former president, National Education Association
> (*NEA Today*, June 1, 1985)

However, states were not required to administer assessments meeting the law's standards until 2000, and then only for three different grade levels. The *IASA* also did not call for full grade-level proficiency by a certain date and did not require student subgroups to make yearly progress.

Meanwhile, many in the education community fought against these changes. "The Association believes that there should be no single or statewide accountability system," the NEA stated in 1992.

By the end of the Clinton Administration, only 11 states had fully approved standards and assessment plans in place under *IASA*.

Eighteen states required students to take a basic competency or skills test or exit exam—just seven more than in 1983.

Academic standards varied widely, and few were aligned with workforce or college readiness.

And three decades after its creation, nine states still did not participate in the Nation's Report Card.

Years of fads, goals, and voluntary measures had not significantly raised achievement levels or narrowed the achievement gap. By the year 2000, just 12 percent of black fourth-graders were able to read at a proficient level, compared to 40 percent of white students.

In 1998, in high-poverty schools (defined as schools in which at least three-fourths of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches), 68 percent of all fourth-graders could not read at the most "basic" level.

Too often, children were not learning, schools were not teaching, and public officials were not adequately addressing or even measuring the problem.

"More and more, we are divided into two nations, separate and unequal," then-Governor George W. Bush said in 1999. "One that reads, and one that can't. One that dreams, and one that doesn't."

"All children can learn," he added, "and no child should be left behind."

America could no longer ignore declining test scores or the growing achievement gap.

This was not just an education issue, but also a civil rights issue. Decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*, a quality public education was still being denied to many Americans who were largely disadvantaged, minority, or living in inner cities.

"Some say that schools can't be expected to teach, because there are too many broken families, too many immigrants, too much diversity," said then-Governor George W. Bush in 1999. "That myth is disproved by good schools every day. Excuse-making must end before learning can begin."

The grassroots coalition demanded action. From different perspectives, its members all saw that something was wrong that would soon affect this country's economy and future.

There is a "widespread propensity of school officials to maintain and tolerate a permanent underclass of low-achieving students who are disproportionately poor and minority," charged the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights.

Our schools preserve "the routines, culture, and operations of an obsolete 1930s manufacturing plant," stated the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

"I'm a huge proponent [of *No Child Left Behind*]. The most important thing is that it has set up an accountability system for students, and it emphasizes teacher quality."

Michelle Rhee, Chancellor, D.C. Public Schools, 2008

No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* into law. The law was designed to hold schools accountable for teaching all students to the highest standards.

The law provided for accountability through annual testing, investment in proven instructional methods, new choices and options for parents, and flexibility for states and school districts. States would have the freedom to institute standards, choose tests, and spend federal funds in exchange for showing results.

"I believe it (*NCLB*) is not just an education law," U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings told the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 2007. "It's a civil rights law, designed to make America's promise a reality for all its citizens."

A bipartisan majority in Congress had come together behind the president's plan, passing it by an overwhelming margin.

"This is a serious effort about turning around the educational experience of poor minority children in this country," said Rep. George Miller (D-CA).

"These reforms will bring purpose to a federal law that has lost its focus and never met its promise," said Rep. John Boehner (R-OH).

"If the child is failing in school, help is on the way," said Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA).

Perhaps most heartening was the response from the civil rights community, which saw the goal of equality as inseparable from the promise of a quality education.

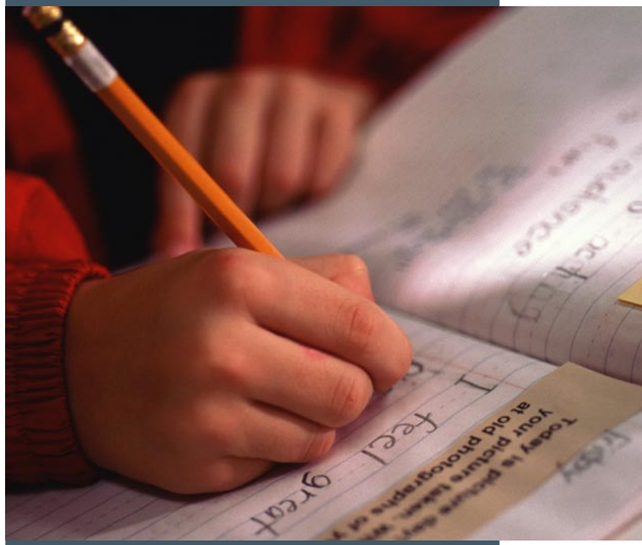
"My husband believed that expanding educational opportunity was essential for social and economic progress for all of Americans," said Coretta Scott King, widow of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "So I want to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your leadership in securing a bipartisan consensus for educational reforms."

Accountability is built into the *No Child Left Behind Act*. For the first time, all 50 states and the District of Columbia:

- have state-designed accountability plans in place;
- test their public school students annually (in grades 3-8 and once in high school) to determine if improvements have been made in grade-level proficiency, called adequate yearly progress (AYP);
- disaggregate data so that the progress of all children can be measured, compared, and improved; and
- participate in the Nation's Report Card.

An achievement standard is "a radical notion that is not radical anywhere else in the world."

Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, 1994



"Since enactment of the *No Child Left Behind* law, students from poor families in the Washington [D.C.] area have made major gains on reading and math tests and are starting to catch up with those from middle-class and affluent backgrounds."

Needy Students Closing Test Gap Under 'No Child,' *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 2008

Closing the Achievement Gap

A major purpose of *NCLB* is to close the nation's pernicious achievement gap. The law shines a needed spotlight on the level of achievement of several categories of historically underserved students, including minority children, children from low-income families, limited English proficient (LEP) children, and children with disabilities.

In the past, many of these students were hidden by the averages, their academic needs undiagnosed and unmet as they fell through the cracks.

Many dropped out of school or graduated without the skills to succeed in the workforce or higher education.

Under *NCLB*, they are invisible no longer. "This law finally puts muscle behind the attempt to close that gap," said New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein. "We can no longer mask the deficiencies of some students with outsized gains by others."

Today, gains are being made across the board.

Reading scores for fourth-graders in 2007 were the highest in the history of the Nation's Report Card (NAEP).

According to the NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment, among nine-year-olds, more reading progress was made in five years (1999–2004) than in the previous three decades.

Writing skills have also improved. The 2007 NAEP Writing Assessment found that scores for eighth-graders in writing improved by 3 points over 2002 levels and 6 points over 1998 levels. Scores for 12th-graders rose by 5 and 3 points, respectively. A higher percentage of both groups of students performed at or above the "basic" level compared to 2002.

The story for mathematics is even better. Scores for fourth- and eighth-graders rose to record highs in 2007, according to NAEP.

The improvement among fourth-graders between 2003 and 2007 added up to the equivalent of an extra half-year of instruction.

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia either improved or held steady in all academic categories.

The emphasis on fundamental skills may be improving performance in other subjects as well. According to NAEP's 2006 U.S. history assessment, scores in history improved in all three grade levels tested—fourth, eighth, and 12th.

Driving the academic improvements has been the performance of boys and girls once left behind.

Average reading scores for fourth-grade students with disabilities improved by 23 points between 2000 and 2007.

Some of the largest gains in the 2007 Nation's Report Card came from Hispanic and African-American students.

And children in large urban school districts have generally made faster gains in reading and math than have students in the nation as a whole.

This is especially important at a time when Hispanics are the fastest-growing population in America and when minorities are expected to make up a majority of Americans by 2050.

Having inspired its creation, the civil rights community has given its support to *No Child Left Behind*.

"The civil rights community has been consistent and clear in its support of *NCLB*," a coalition of civil rights groups, including the NAACP and the National Council of La Raza, wrote in a letter to Congress on June 13, 2008. The law is "designed to ensure that all students receive the academic preparation necessary to pursue higher education and become productive members of the workforce," the groups added.

"Now is not the time to turn back the clock on accountability for results in education," said Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. "Access to quality education is a fundamental civil right that should be guaranteed by the federal government for all children, regardless of their race, national origin, economic status, or disability—and since 2002, *NCLB* has been the primary federal law for ensuring that right."

FALL ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Selected statistic	Fall 1960	Fall 1980		Fall 1990		Fall 2000	Fall 2005	Fall 2017 (projected)
Enrollment, total	42,181,000	46,208,000		46,864,900		53,373,000	55,187,000	60,443,000
Public schools	36,281,000	40,877,000		41,217,000		47,204,000	49,113,000	54,087,000
Private schools	5,900,000	5,331,000		5,648,000		6,169,000	6,073,000	6,356,000
Percentage distribution of public school enrollment, by race/ethnicity, total	---	---		100.0	\1\	100.0	100.0	---
White	---	---		67.4	\1\	61.2	57.1	---
Black	---	---		16.4	\1\	17.2	17.2	---
Hispanic	---	---		11.8	\1\	16.3	19.8	---
Asian/Pacific								
Islander	---	---		3.4	\1\	4.1	4.6	---
American Indian/Alaska Native	---	---		1.0	\1\	1.2	1.2	---
Students with disabilities	---	4,144,000		4,710,000		6,296,000	6,713,000	---
Federal reduced-price lunch (FRP)	---	---		---		---	20,333,000	---
Limited English proficient (LEP)\2\	---	1,300,000 (1979)	\3\	1,800,000	\4\	2,900,000	2,800,000	---
Teachers, total	1,600,000	2,485,000		2,759,000		3,366,000	3,593,000	4,244,000
Public schools	1,408,000	2,184,000		2,398,000		2,941,000	3,143,000	3,704,000
Private schools	192,000	301,000		361,000		424,000	450,000	540,000
Pupil/teacher ratio, public schools	25.8	18.7		17.2		16.0	15.6	14.6
Pupil/teacher ratio, private schools	30.7	17.7		15.6		14.5	13.5	11.8

EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Statistic	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2005-06	2017-18 (projected)
Current expenditure per student in public elementary/ secondary schools in constant 2006-07 dollars	$4,328	$5,438	$7,472	$8,604	$9,391	$11,882
Percentage distribution of revenues for public elementary/ secondary schools, by source of funds	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	---
Federal	8.4	9.2	6.2	7.3	9.1	---
State	39.1	47.4	47.2	49.7	46.5	---
Local	52.5	43.4	46.7	43.0	44.4	---

FALL ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

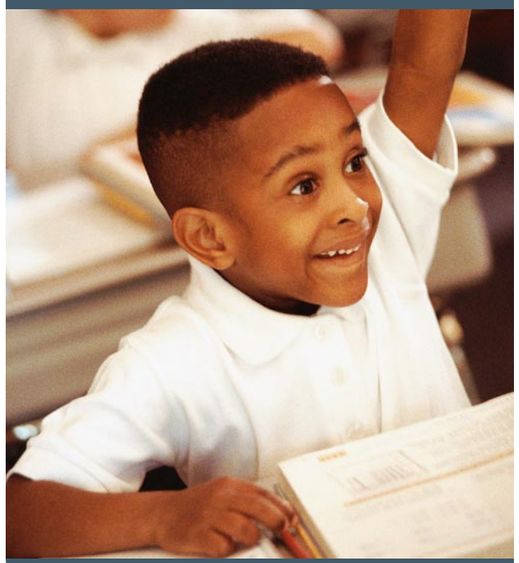
Statistic	Fall 1980	Fall 1990	Fall 2000	Fall 2005	Fall 2008 (projected)	Fall 2017 (projected)
Total enrollment	12,097,000	13,819,000	15,312,000	17,487,000	18,200,000	20,080,000
Percentage distribution, by race/ethnicity, total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	81.4	77.6	68.3	65.7	64.6	60.6
African American	9.2	9.0	11.3	12.7	12.9	14.3
Hispanic	3.9	5.7	9.5	10.8	11.5	13.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.4	4.1	6.4	6.5	6.6	7.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2
Nonresident alien	2.5	2.8	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.0
Percentage of students in public colleges	74.9	78.2	78.5	76.8	74.5	74.4
Percentage of high school graduates going to college	51.7	49.3	60.1	63.3	68.6	---

--- Not available.
\1\ Data are for fall 2001.
\2\ Data for the number of 5- to 17-year-olds who spoke English with difficulty.
\3\ Data are for fall 1979.
\4\ Data are for fall 1989.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007* (NCES 2008-022), *Condition of Education, 2008* (NCES 2008-031); and *Projections of Education Statistics to 2017* (NCES 2008-078).

SPOTLIGHT

In the 2004–05 school year, the Garden Grove (Calif.) School District experienced newfound success. All but two of the district's schools met or exceeded their AYP goals. Three-fourths of the district's students did not speak English as their first language, and nearly six in 10 were from low-income families. "We use the data behind *No Child Left Behind* to set the targets we want to hit," said Superintendent Laura Schwalm. "We align all our actions and resources to hit those targets. And our teachers believe the kids can do it."



"We should not render the nation's commitment to achievement for all students meaningless by eviscerating accountability," Michael Wotorson, director of the Campaign for High School Equity, wrote in the *New York Times*. "Instead, a stronger, reauthorized *No Child Left Behind Act* must include higher standards of accountability and clear, consistent requirements for reporting graduation rates and student progress."

There is still much more work to be done to close the gap. For example, African-American 17-year-olds read, on average, at the proficiency level of 13-year-old white students.

Simply measuring the performance of students is not good enough. We must work to get students once left behind the resources, attention, and intervention they need to surge ahead.

Limited English Proficiency Partnership

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols* that public schools must provide assistance to limited English proficient students so they can learn English and receive a quality education.

Carrying out this responsibility has never been more important. LEP students are expected to make up one of every four students by 2025.

States must be prepared to help them learn English and other core subjects.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, schools must teach LEP children to "meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet."

What are the results? Reading scores for LEP fourth-graders increased by 20 points from 2000 to 2005, more than three times better than their non-LEP classmates performed.

LEP fourth- and eighth-graders achieved higher math scores than in any previous year.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education formed the **LEP Partnership** to provide technical assistance to states seeking to improve their standards and assessments for educating English language learners.

States are now able to compare their accountability frameworks with the partnership's own draft framework in order to improve them.

Helping Students With Disabilities

The *No Child Left Behind Act* has been especially beneficial to the nation's 6.5 million students with disabilities, providing them with more classroom time and attention than ever before and putting their educational needs at the forefront.

As a result, students with disabilities have posted some of the greatest academic gains in the country.

"We went through a period where we didn't acknowledge that our special education students weren't doing well, but *No Child Left Behind* helped us focus," said former principal Cynthia Kuhlman of Centennial Place Elementary School in Atlanta, Ga. "We made sure that students with disabilities had access to all the programs and enrichment that other students have. And we made sure that classroom teachers and special education teachers had enough time to plan and consult together."

"*No Child Left Behind* made it much easier to secure a high-quality education" for her son, Stephen, said Ricki Sabia of the National Down Syndrome Society. "His teachers and principals have been more invested in his academic performance, and the assessments show that he is mastering far more grade-level content than anyone could have imagined."

In 2004, President Bush signed into law the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*.

It revised the three-decades-old *IDEA* law and aligned it with the goals and purpose of *No Child Left Behind*.

The Department has also provided new flexibility and incentives to enable states to develop appropriate assessments that better serve students with disabilities.

This is intended to ensure that they are fairly included in state accountability systems, not left behind.

"If *NCLB* is gone, America's poor kids will again be forgotten."

Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), 2006

SPOTLIGHT

M. Hall Stanton Elementary School in Philadelphia has a student body that is nearly 100 percent African-American and over 90 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In 2002, it was plagued with truancy and discipline problems. Of its fifth-graders, just 13 percent were at grade-level in reading and 20 percent were at grade-level in math in 2003. By 2006, those numbers had risen to 70 and 83 percent, respectively. Principal Barbara Adderley, who started in 2002, believes that "all children can learn at high levels," and her teachers and students believe it, too. Said one parent: "The kids can't wait to get to school now."

What Makes *No Child Left Behind* Different?

NCLB is the latest reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. What makes it different from previous versions?

Annual Testing: Schools test all children in reading or language arts and mathematics annually in each of grades 3–8 and once more in high school, and are held accountable for making adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools also test children in science once in each of three grade spans.

Choices: Parents with children in underperforming schools may choose to send them to another public or public charter school in the school district, with transportation costs paid by the district.

Disaggregated Data: Test scores are broken down by student groups, and schools are held accountable for improving the academic performance of all groups.

Flexibility: States and districts have unprecedented flexibility to invest funds in areas of greatest need, such as teacher training, reading instruction, classroom technology, and school safety grants, among others.

Funding: School districts and states are receiving more money than ever before to implement these reforms—including $500 million in FY 2008 to help fix schools in "improvement status."

Grade-level Goal: Schools must educate all students to grade-level or better in reading and math by 2014. Schools must show annual improvements until they reach this goal.

NAEP: To compare progress, states agree to participate in testing and state-level comparisons for fourth- and eighth-graders in reading and math through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or Nation's Report Card.

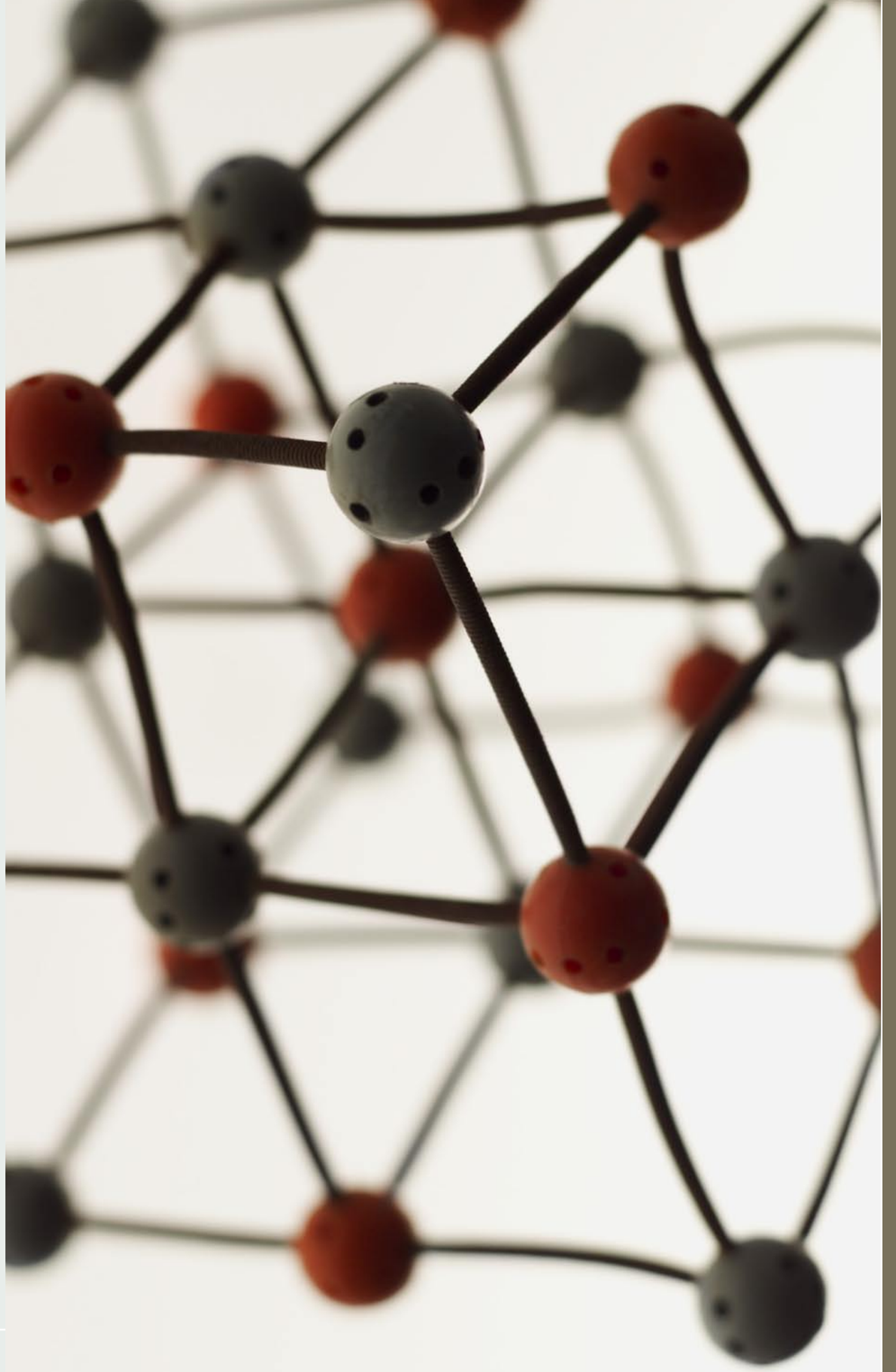
Report Cards: States and districts must issue annual report cards so parents and others can see which schools are succeeding and which are falling behind.

School Restructuring: A school that repeatedly does not make AYP may be restructured. It may reopen as a charter school, replace its staff, undergo state takeover, or face another fundamental management reform.

Teachers: All teachers who teach core academic subjects must be highly qualified, with a bachelor's degree or better, state certification, and subject matter competency.

Tutoring: Children from low-income families in underperforming schools may qualify for free tutoring or after-school help (also known as Supplemental Educational Services, or SES).

What Works: Federal funds are focused on research-based, scientifically proven methods of instruction.



Doing What Works

More children than ever before are learning at higher levels.

We know this because the *No Child Left Behind Act* has lifted the veil from public education. Data collected from test scores are used to measure performance. Research-based practices are used to improve performance. Parents are given report cards, not just for their children but also for their schools, districts, and states.

It is a dynamic and systemic change from education based on aspiration—"teach, test, and hope for the best"—to education based on accountability—"what gets measured gets done."

Accountability is a popular concept. It has been embraced by many members of the education establishment. At times, it has also been co-opted, redefined, watered down, and hollowed out.

Accountability under the *No Child Left Behind Act* means establishing high standards, assessing student performance, disaggregating the test score data, and basing policies on the results.

The bottom line is that accountability works. Teachers and principals now use the wealth of new data to customize and improve instruction. States and districts that enacted accountability principles the earliest have shown some of the greatest academic gains.

"Now we're moving from 'I taught it' to 'they learned it,'" said Thomas Rogers, executive director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents.

Data-based accountability is reforming a system that in the past hid problems rather than solved them. Research has revolutionized fields such as energy, medicine, and business, enabling decisions to be based on evidence rather than on fashion or fad. Now education is being revolutionized by data and research, too.

The Need for Leadership

It was a long time coming. Public education in the 20th century was greatly influenced by the theories of progressive educators such as John Dewey. Dewey appeared to reject assessment-based accountability.

"The practice of progressive education differs from that of the traditional schools," he wrote. Traditional schools "set great store by tests and measurements … marks, grading, classes, and promotions are important," he said.

This leads to complacency, Dewey argued. He dismissed traditional schools' "attempt to determine objectives and select subject-matter of studies by wide collection and accurate measurement of data."

As traditional standards were lowered, it became easier for students to get a diploma—but harder for them to compete at the next level. Remedial course work in both high school and college exploded. SAT scores fell 90 points from 1963 to 1980.

The College Entrance Examination Board examined the causes for this decline and found homework levels cut in half, grade inflation, and social promotion.

Thirty-five states required one year of math instruction and 36 states one year of science to earn a high school diploma, according to a 1980 survey. Further, students could choose electives for 50 percent or more of their high school graduation requirements in 13 states.

"Existing standards do not challenge students, and they have no consequences attached to them," Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), said in 1994. "We give students no incentive to do well in school, and so they don't."

Change From the Ground Up

The accountability movement did not begin in Washington, D.C., but in states and school districts across the country.

In response to declining performance, states began to toughen academic standards and strengthen curriculum. A few went even further. Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas were among the first to develop true accountability-based systems relying on standards and assessments.

Their rate of improvement on the Nation's Report Card in the 1990s usually far exceeded that of states without strong accountability systems.

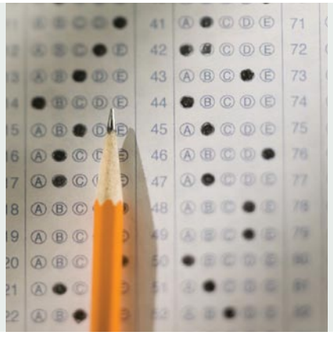
Much of the nation did not share in the progress, however. Most citizens remained in the dark about the condition of their schools. Information was spotty, and data were often not disaggregated. It was extremely difficult to gauge the need for comprehensive change.

Leadership was needed at the national level. It would come in the form of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Assessments Work

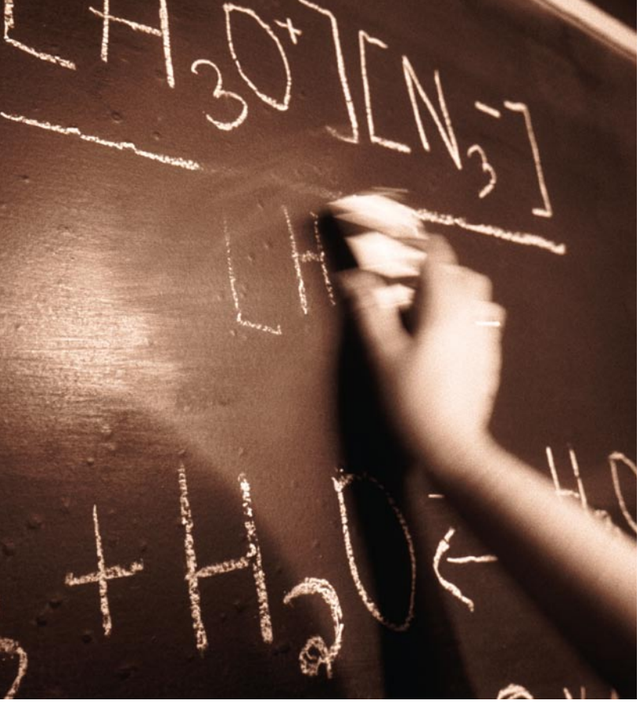
The law recognized the need to measure student progress every year. Under the law, state assessments are required for all children annually in grades 3–8, and once more in high school, in both reading and math. The goal is to see improvement every year toward full, grade-level proficiency by 2014.

This has proven controversial with some in the education establishment, who, echoing John Dewey, find testing and accountability problematic. "The fact is that real learning often can't be quantified, and a corporate-style preoccupation with 'data' turns schooling into something shallow and lifeless," wrote education author Alfie Kohn in *Education Week*.



"Standardized tests are now believed to be one of the most powerful levers that elected officials and other policymakers have for influencing what happens in local schools and classrooms."

"Lessons Learned About Testing," National Academies, 2006



Support for Testing

Many educators, however, see assessment as a valuable tool for improving learning.

"Right now, testing is the best way we have," said Suellen Reed, Indiana superintendent for public instruction, noting that *No Child Left Behind* has enabled teachers to identify and help students in trouble.

"Teachers, once largely on their own, often work in teams to improve and fine-tune lessons and brainstorm ways to help students," reported the *Washington Post*. "Many schools have added periodic mini-tests that help provide an instructional road map. When a few kids stumble, they often get extra help. When an entire class misses questions, the teacher is likely to tackle the lesson again."

"I was a tremendous skeptic at first, and I've been won over over the years because this sets a standard," Miles Bond, a teacher at Lake Taylor (Va.) High School, told CNN in 2005. "You know that in every classroom certain things are supposed to be taught. And I think if those things are taught correctly, the students don't have a big problem passing the tests."

No Child Left Behind calls for consistent, valid, and reliable assessments across the full range of student groups. The U.S. Department of Education has awarded more than $3 billion to help states strengthen their assessments.

In addition, the **Grants for Enhanced Assessment Instruments** program funds collaborative efforts among states, higher education institutions, and research facilities to improve tests, especially those given to students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency.

Federal funds also have been provided to help states administer modified assessments for a small subset of students with disabilities (up to 2 percent of all students) identified as capable of achieving under high standards in a different time frame from that of their peers.

Additional federal funds are provided for alternate assessments for students with severe cognitive disabilities (up to 1 percent of the entire student population).

Rigorous Course Work

In keeping with their traditional leadership role in education, states and localities have the primary responsibility for developing standards and aligning their assessments to them under *No Child Left Behind*. They work with the U.S. Department of Education as partners.

Twenty states and Washington, D.C., now mandate the completion of a "college- and career-ready curriculum" for graduation, up from 2 in 2005.

A recent study by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found that 24 states have strong math standards and 22 have strong science standards, even measured against "new, more rigorous criteria."

Still, educators and policymakers must remain vigilant. The AFT study found that only eight states have strong English standards. In addition, NAEP found a "strong negative correlation" between the percentages of students meeting state proficiency standards and the NAEP score equivalents, suggesting "differences in the stringency of their standards."

To promote higher state academic standards, President Bush called on states to "report the proficiency rates for state and NAEP assessments on the same public report card."

In October 2008, the U.S. Department of Education announced **new regulations** to do just that.

In addition, the Department's **State Scholars Initiative (SSI)** is working to strengthen course work across the country. It invites business and education leaders to develop strategies to encourage middle and high school students to complete a rigorous course of study.

Studies show that even a small improvement can yield significant results. According to SSI, students who took four years of English scored an average of 46 points higher on the SAT verbal test than those who completed only three years.

Twenty-four states currently participate in SSI.

Helping Schools Improve

Assigning consequences for performance, both good and bad, is vital to accountability. "Simply publishing results appears insufficient for progress," writes the Hoover Institution's Herbert J. Walberg. "People and groups responsible for accountability should be able to offer incentives and sanctions for performance."

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Title I schools that do not meet their adequate yearly progress goals receive technical assistance, teacher training, and support from instructional specialists at the state or district level. They may also qualify for assistance from the Department's $500 million **School Improvement Fund**, designed to help schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under *NCLB*. Low-achieving school districts that show the greatest need and the strongest commitment to help students meet the goals for improvement are given priority.

Title I schools that miss their AYP goals for two consecutive years must allow students to transfer to another public school if they so choose. After three consecutive misses, they must provide supplemental educational services (SES), which typically consist of tutoring and after-school help.

Beyond that point, underperforming schools must undergo corrective action and, finally, restructuring, which may consist of new school governance, conversion to a charter school, the replacement of principals and other staff, or takeover by the state.

Schools are using data to improve instruction and turn around their performance. By 2004, nearly every state had developed a support system for schools in need of improvement.

In 2006–07, 10,676 schools were identified for improvement out of approximately 98,000 schools nationwide—just 11 percent of all public schools.

Some critics contend that being held accountable for the academic performance of one group of at-risk students risks "dragging down" the rest of the school.

The data suggest this is not the case. In 2005–06, 56 percent of schools identified for improvement missed AYP in the "all students" category. Just 14 percent of schools were identified due to the poor performance of a single subgroup.

Approving Quality

The Department has insisted that states meet the "bright line" goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, including annual assessments, disaggregated data, improved teacher quality, information provided to parents in a timely manner, and progress toward full grade-level proficiency.

The Department of Education has peer reviewed and approved accountability plans for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Thirty-two states had been recognized for having implemented high-quality standards and assessment systems as of June 2008.

Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement. Forty states expected less than 75 percent of their students to be proficient in at least one core subject in 2008. Five states expected fewer than half to be on grade-level.

Some states have requested even *more* exceptions:

- One state asked to calculate AYP every two years, instead of annually;
- One state proposed excluding 95 more schools from being held accountable for the performance of low-income children; and
- One state wanted to "wipe the slate clean" and have all schools identified as "in need of improvement" start over again.

Data "can basically take us out of the dark ages of just kinda teaching and hoping, which is what a lot of folks have done for a very long time."

Kati Haycock, director, Education Trust, 2006

Growth Models

Flexibilities that adhere to accountability principles have a better chance at approval.

Growth models, for instance, are used to give schools credit for improvement over time by tracking individual student achievement from year to year.

Many states have requested approval to use growth models. However, the tracking of longitudinal growth was not possible in most cases with the infrastructure as it existed in 2002. The data revolution spurred by *NCLB* since then has made the effective use of growth models possible.

In November 2005, the Department announced a pilot **growth model** program. Tennessee and North Carolina were approved to participate for the 2005–06 school year, with Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, and Iowa joining them the following year.

Several other states have since joined the program, which is now open to all states on the condition that they adhere to *NCLB's* "bright line" goals and provide data on the program's effectiveness so best practices can be shared.

In March 2008, the Department announced a program enabling states to offer innovative solutions to help the neediest students and schools meet their academic goals. This **differentiated accountability pilot** program allows states to distinguish between schools that need intensive intervention to get back on track and those that are much closer to meeting AYP.

States are then better able to focus the greatest resources on schools with the greatest needs.

To date, six states have been approved to participate in the pilot: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, and Ohio. As data are collected and best practices are shared, more states should be able to join.

The Importance of Data

The blueprint for building a quality education system is sound data. Thanks to annual testing and disaggregation of results, we now have more complete, accurate, and timely information about schools and students than ever before. However, many state systems for collecting and reporting education data are still being built.

The **Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant Program** is helping states design and implement systems to track student progress over time and drive academic improvement. According to the Education Commission of the States, these systems "provide the most accurate information for both policy decisions and decisions at the district and school levels." All states are eligible for the grants, which are awarded by the Department's Institute of Education Sciences.

To monitor the effectiveness of the largest stream of federal funds for K–12 education, the Department is conducting a **longitudinal study of Title I schools**, as well as a **National Assessment of Title I**. The studies have found that Title I funds currently go to 93 percent of school districts and 56 percent of public schools, and that the number of students able to receive Title I funds has tripled in a decade, from 6.7 million in 1994–95 to 20 million in 2004–05.

One problem hindering data collection and analysis has been a lack of consistent formats and common definitions. The Department's **EDFacts** program provides one unified process to consolidate and coordinate data on the performance of federal formula programs as well as on the K–12 education system.

Sometimes the sheer volume of data can be daunting for parents or teachers, who want answers to their questions quickly.

In January 2008, the Department launched its national dashboard, **Mapping Educational Progress**, a one-stop Web site showing how states are doing on key indicators, such as high school graduation rates, achievement trends, the percentage of highly qualified teachers, and the number of schools meeting their AYP goals.

States are beginning to engage in similar efforts. The new California School Finder Web site, for instance, compares schools side-by-side on various measures. "There has been a tradition here of withholding information so that people have a difficult time comparing [schools]," said Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. "But the fact of the matter is there are many choices and we want the parents to have the choices."

Research-based Learning

Reliable data can do more than help parents learn about the quality of their schools. It can help teachers improve the quality of their instruction.

The Department supports scientifically based research to identify best practices and to improve achievement.

The Institute of Education Sciences leads the way by conducting scientific research activities, analyzing statistics, and disseminating data to improve teaching and learning. Its four centers, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), provide rigorous evidence on which to ground education policy and practice.

In 2002, the Department established the **What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)** to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and materials. To date, the WWC has reviewed nearly 500 education interventions, identifying 80 of them as showing evidence of effectiveness. The WWC also publishes user-friendly practice guides and provides a registry of researchers for educators and school districts to use.

The Department's **Doing What Works** Web site (dww.ed.gov) connects researchers with practitioners in the field, providing real-world examples of applying research-based practices to improve classroom instruction.

Reading First

One of the most pressing needs for research has been in the teaching of reading. Over the years, well-intentioned but misguided instructional fads left some teachers without critical tools necessary to pass on this vital skill.

NCLB funds instructional methods that are proven by scientific research to be effective. The vehicle for this effort has been the **Reading First** initiative.

Reading First builds on decades of research compiled by the National Reading Panel at the request of Congress. Analyzing over 100,000 studies, the panel found five components to be essential to a successful reading program: phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension.

Reading First funds professional development and instructional programs using research-based methods so children can learn to read by the third grade. Reading First students receive on average about 110 extra minutes of reading instruction per week, including screening and diagnostic tests, compared to other students.

"The core idea of Reading First is a sound one, and I hope Congress will understand it. It has taught thousands of teachers and hundreds of principals about research-based instruction. They've learned how data can drive teaching and learning."

Edward Moscovitch, chairman, Bay State Reading Institute, 2008

> "Well-designed tests can provide an objective measure of how well students are doing, and consequences attached to these tests provide children with a strong incentive to study hard and do well."
>
> American Federation of Teachers, www.aft.org

More than 100,000 teachers and 1.8 million children in grades K–3, many from low-income families, have been aided.

State education agencies have received over $6 billion in Reading First grants to date.

States and local communities are granted the flexibility to determine reading programs so long as they are grounded in scientifically based research.

The companion **Early Reading First** program provides reading materials and sound instruction to pre-school children. Many are from low-income families that may not have an abundance of reading materials at home, a critical factor in establishing early literacy.

Students who fall behind in reading often find themselves unable to catch up to their peers in the fast-paced later grades, when advanced texts are used. The president's **Striving Readers** program focuses on this problem, providing intensive intervention to students in grades 6–12 struggling to reach grade-level in reading or language arts and at risk of dropping out of school. Grants, which are awarded to Title I-eligible schools, may fund a wide array of research-based literacy programs and instructional strategies.

Reading Results

In many states, Reading First students have shown impressive results. *The Reading First Implementation Evaluation Final Report*, released by the Department in October 2008, found that third- and fourth-graders in Reading First schools "improved their reading performance over time more quickly" than did other Title I students.

Another study of state-by-state Reading First data found gains in proficiency in nearly every grade and subgroup from 2004-06:

- In grade one, 88 percent of state education agencies (SEAs) reported increases in the percentage of students proficient in reading comprehension (62 percent by five or more percentage points);
- In grade two, 75 percent of SEAs reported improvement (36 percent by five or more points); and
- In grade three, 77 percent of SEAs reported improvement (43 percent by five or more points).

In addition, the Center on Education Policy found that 97 percent of all participating school districts that saw increases in achievement cited Reading First's instructional program as an important factor in their improvements.

The Reading First Advisory Committee notes that it will take time to evaluate the data on the program. Nevertheless, Reading First principles are starting to be adopted by districts beyond their original schools.

Collaboration between Reading First and special education programs is "becoming ingrained in the culture of the schools," according to interviews conducted by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

"Reading First is a successful and effective program in the classroom. It is extremely important to teachers and to disadvantaged students," said Antonia Cortese, executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, in 2006.

And Alabama State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton called Reading First "the most effective federal program in history."

In November 2008, the IES *Reading First Final Impact Study* was released. While this evaluation found no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension, Reading First had a significant impact on students' decoding, phonics, and fluency skills - three of the five basic components of reading. Scores of students in Reading First schools were higher by the equivalent of three months of a nine-month school year.

The Department has promoted reading in other ways. Its **Improving Literacy Through School Libraries** grants are helping schools increase the number of books and holdings, improve technological capabilities, expand library hours, and provide professional development.

National Math Panel

Another urgent need is to improve math instruction.

Math-related occupations are growing at three times the rate of other jobs.

And yet, the average 17-year-old lacks the basic math skills needed to work on the production line of a modern automobile plant.

What explains this discrepancy? When it comes to the teaching of math, the numbers do not add up. In 2007, school districts across the country were asked which highly qualified subject-specialist teachers they had the hardest time recruiting. The top two answers were science teachers, at 65 percent, and math teachers, at 60 percent.

It is unfair to blame a lack of qualified teachers alone. Attitudes affect achievement. A survey by the Raytheon Company in 2005 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.

The National Mathematics Advisory Panel was created in 2006 by executive order to review the best available scientific research on the teaching and learning of math. After hearing over 100 testimonials and examining more than 16,000 research papers and policy reports, the Math Panel concluded that "Algebra is a demonstrable gateway to later achievement," a clear dividing line between success and stagnation in high school and college.

> "NCTM challenges the notion that mathematics is for only the select few. On the contrary, everyone needs to understand mathematics."
>
> National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*, 2000

> "I know from my experience in Houston that when two schools in the same neighborhood produced very different results—one excellent and the other poor—one school was doing something right, and the other one had no more excuses."
>
> Rod Paige, former U.S. Secretary of Education, 2002

Its final report, containing 45 findings and recommendations, was unanimously approved and presented in March 2008. The report determined that children are "ready to learn" at a younger age than is commonly thought and that effort, not just inherent ability, contributes to success in mathematics.

It recommended teaching a critical body of mathematics that includes proficiency with whole numbers, elements of geometry, and especially fractions in their various forms, starting in the earliest grades. This will prepare students to take algebra as early as eighth grade.

The **Mathematics and Science Partnerships** program works to improve teachers' content knowledge and teaching skills. It funds professional development and unites math and science teachers with scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. It has awarded more than $800 million in grants to states since 2002.

In 2007, the president signed the *America COMPETES Act* into law, creating the **Math Now** program, which would prepare teachers and students in grades K–7 to master the rigorous math course work they will face in middle and high school. Congress has yet to approve the president's proposal to fund Math Now.

The Doing What Works Web site contains a section called "Critical Foundations for Algebra." It gives practical examples of how to apply the Math Panel's findings to the classroom, including sample exercises and lesson plans.

Finally, DWW has put the new "Encouraging Girls in Math and Science" practice guide online under the "Math and Science" section. Published by IES, it promotes strategies and ideas to help convince girls (and boys) to take these subjects in school and consider careers in math and science.

Holding Ourselves Accountable

In asking states and schools to become more accountable, the Department of Education must set a good example.

Chaired by Secretary Spellings, the **Academic Competitiveness Council** had as its mission evaluating the effectiveness of, and eliminating duplication in, federal math and science programs. The council identified more than 100 programs and practices totaling $3.12 billion spread across 13 agencies, and called for integrating and coordinating them. It also made recommendations on adopting common standards, objectives, and evaluation methodologies.

The Department has taken management reform seriously throughout the agency, from top to bottom. The Department received a clean audit opinion from an independent auditor for Fiscal Year 2002, an important indicator of sound management. It was only the second clean audit in 22 years. Since then, the Department has received six straight years of clean audit opinions.

The Department also became the first Cabinet department to achieve the highest level (green) for financial performance on the President's Management Agenda (PMA). The PMA promotes a government that is citizen-centered, innovative, competitive, and results-oriented.

SPOTLIGHT

Standards-Based Accountability: Gaining Momentum

A 2007 survey by the Educational Testing Service found that 48 percent of K-12 parents held favorable views about the *No Child Left Behind Act* (40 percent were unfavorable).

- When the law was described to parents, support jumped to 59 percent. Among all adults, 56 percent supported the law when it was described.
- Fifty-seven percent of adults believed states should not be allowed to opt out of standards and testing if they are receiving federal funds.
- Sixty-two percent of adults believed that annual assessments assist in identifying schools and students that need help.
- Sixty-one percent of adults believed that state standards are an important step toward "educational excellence" and "competing in the global economy."

A 2008 survey by Education Next and Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) found that 50 percent of Americans favored reauthorizing *NCLB* as is or with only minimal changes. Support was stronger among African-American (52 percent) and Hispanic (57 percent) respondents.

- Support for reauthorization rose to 57 percent overall (and 63 percent among African-Americans) when the law was described but not named.
- When asked to grade the public schools in their local communities, 44 percent of white respondents gave them an "A" or a "B," compared to only 24 percent of African-American respondents.
- Thirty-two percent of African-Americans gave a grade of "D" or lower to their local schools, compared to 22 percent of whites.

"All, regardless of race or class, or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost."

A Nation At Risk, 1983

A Nation Accountable

Twenty-five years ago, Americans learned what lowered expectations and standards had done to their schools. That is when the *A Nation At Risk* report was released.

It landed like a bombshell. It found that one in eight 17-year-olds was functionally illiterate, that SAT scores were dropping, and that college students were forced to take expensive remedial courses. The nation had "lost sight" of "high expectations and disciplined effort" in the classroom, and stood by as other nations began "matching and surpassing" us.

A Nation At Risk prescribed a number of solutions. Twenty-five years later, progress has been made toward implementing them—but work remains to be done.

NATION AT RISK SOLUTION	PROGRESS
More rigorous and measurable academic standards Higher expectations for K–12 schools and colleges	Passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* 50 states have reading and math content standards 50 states test students annually in reading and math (grades 3–8 plus once in high school) Science tests were in place by end of 2007–08 school year
"New Basics" high school curriculum: 4 years English, 3 years math, 3 years science, 3 years social studies (plus foreign language)	Percentage of high school graduates who took the "New Basics" curriculum: in 1982, 14.3 percent; in 2005, 64.7 percent Nearly half the states joined the State Scholars Initiative to strengthen high school curriculum
Longer school day and school year, with time devoted to learning the basics	Length of school day nearly the same in 2004 as in 1983 Time spent on academics has risen slightly Many industrialized nations still have longer school days and years
Teachers should demonstrate subject matter competence and aptitude Superior teachers should be rewarded financially	*No Child Left Behind* calls for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom New Teacher Incentive Fund helps states and districts implement merit pay and incentive pay

Recognizing and Rewarding Teachers

One of the most important factors in improving student achievement is a knowledgeable, effective, and caring teacher.

A recent survey indicated that the nation's parents believe that "getting and keeping good teachers" is a very serious issue in schools today.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires a highly qualified teacher—one with at least a bachelor's degree, state certification or licensure, and demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter—in classrooms where core academic subjects are taught. The U.S. Department of Education provides nearly $3 billion annually to help states meet those requirements.

The share of classes taught by a highly qualified teacher rose from 87 percent in 2003–04 to 94 percent in 2006–07.

But if 94 percent of the teachers are qualified, why do only half the students in some schools graduate on time?

The fact is, the best teachers often do not wind up where they are needed most: in classrooms with the most disadvantaged students. One-third of new teachers leave the field after three years, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). Highly qualified teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools are more likely to have three or fewer years of experience than teachers in low-poverty and low-minority schools. Many low-performing, high-poverty schools "struggle to close the student achievement gap because they never close the teaching quality gap – they are constantly rebuilding their staff," writes the NCTAF.

"*NCLB* has helped by setting very clear, very high achievement targets for all students. I think that's an incredibly positive step in American public education."

Washington, D.C., public school teacher Jason Kamras,
2005 National Teacher of the Year, 2006

Studies show that teachers in high-poverty schools are far less likely than other teachers to have significant classroom experience or a degree in the subject taught. The least prepared teachers are left to do the hardest work in the most challenging environments. And they are rarely rewarded for getting results in the classroom.

The answer, say reformers, is to reward teachers for achieving results—to place more emphasis on a teacher's track record and less on his or her seniority—and to provide alternative routes to certification to fill the teaching pipeline with new talent.

Such policies will help good teachers get the credit they deserve for the great work they do.

Qualified and Effective Teachers

A highly qualified teacher on paper is one thing. A highly *effective* teacher in a classroom is another.

Effective teaching begins with knowledge of the subject matter, required under *No Child Left Behind*. In 2003, a Department report, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, revealed that many new teachers lacked solid content knowledge of the subjects they will teach.

The 2004 report *Teaching at Risk*, by the Teaching Commission, found that states needed to raise the bar on teacher subject-matter knowledge.

"If teaching remains a second-rate profession," commission Chairman Lou Gerstner said, "America's economy will be driven by second-rate skills."

NCLB and other reforms are making a difference. Today, all 50 states have indicators of teacher knowledge and skills, up from 46 in 2002.

As of 2004, 44 of 54 states and territories required successful completion of assessments for teacher certification or licensure.

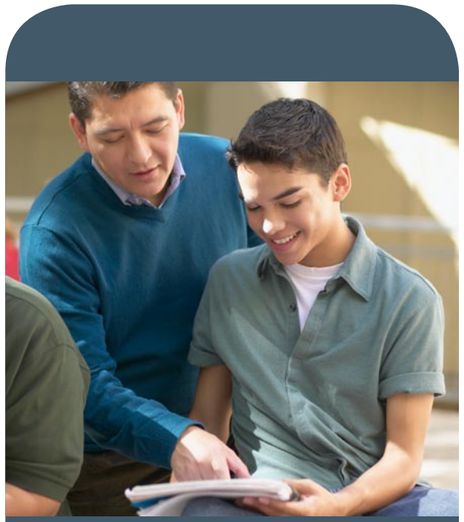
Alternative Certification

The Department's **Improving Teacher Quality State Grants** enable states and school districts to conduct a wide range of activities related to teacher quality, from professional development and mentoring to alternative certification and performance pay.

In 1983, just eight states were implementing alternative certification routes; today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have them.

Between 2000–01 and 2003–04, the number of people completing alternative routes to certification increased by 169 percent.

Increasingly, states are reporting that they have aligned their policies with *NCLB* to ensure that teacher preparation is standards-based and that certification and licensure processes require teachers to have subject-area competence. Today, 44 states have policies aligning or coordinating teacher certification requirements with state content standards for students, an increase from 41 states in 2002.



"The magic ingredient in any child's education is the quality of our teachers and, at least in the United States, the kids with greatest needs don't remotely get their fair share of the highest quality teachers."

Joel Klein, New York City Schools Chancellor, 2008

Filling the Need

Groups such as Teach for America, funded in part by the U.S. Department of Education, and the New Teacher Project are recruiting eager and accomplished young college graduates and professionals to fill the teaching vacuum in our inner cities.

Urban leaders such as New Orleans Schools Superintendent Paul Vallas, New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, and D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee—a founder of the New Teacher Project—are welcoming such recruitment efforts in order to fill the need and increase student achievement.

A study of Teach for America teachers found that students taught by nontraditionally credentialed teachers made greater gains in math achievement and kept pace in reading achievement.

"The few studies of alternative certification that have been done find that students of such teachers perform at least as well as students of conventionally licensed teachers," wrote former Assistant Secretary of Education Chester Finn, Jr., and Marcie Kastoroom.

Hiring the Best Teachers

Exacerbating the shortage of good teachers in many cases are inflexible teacher tenure policies and collective bargaining agreements. They often make hiring the best teachers and replacing ineffective ones a costly and time-consuming process.

In New York City, just eight teachers out of 55,000 were fired for incompetence in the 2006–07 school year. Each firing cost the taxpayers $225,000.

And in Detroit, dozens of ineffective teachers were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to leave the classroom between 2003 and 2007. "School officials defend the buyouts as cheaper than trying to fire a tenured teacher," reported the *Detroit Free Press*.

Surveys between 1999 and 2001 by the nonpartisan Public Agenda found that nearly all superintendents and principals, and a clear majority of public school teachers, favored making it easier to remove bad teachers with tenure.

Support for Teachers

The Department is working to help districts meet the need for qualified and effective teachers in hard-to-fill positions.

In 2006, President Bush proposed the creation of the **Adjunct Teacher Corps** to encourage thousands of qualified professionals in math, science, and other fields to join the teaching profession as adjunct high school teachers. In August 2008, Congress approved the Adjunct Teacher Corps as part of the reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act*. Congress must now take the next step and fund the program.

The Department's **Troops-To-Teachers (TTT)** program provides funds to recruit and prepare former members of the U.S. military to teach in high-poverty schools. More than 11,400 teachers currently serve in the program, with nearly 7,000 more seeking employment by a school.

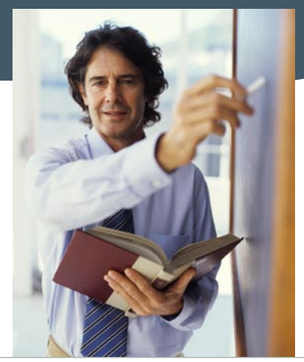
The **Transition to Teaching** program supports the recruitment and retention of qualified professionals in mid-career who wish to teach in high-need schools but need an alternative path to certification. Recent college graduates who were not education majors, as well as paraprofessionals who are still working on their college degrees, also participate in the grant program.

SPOTLIGHT

Thanks to a Teacher Incentive Fund grant, teachers at Edward W. Brooke Charter School in Roslindale, Mass., are eligible for annual bonuses of as much as $5,000. Principals' bonuses range from $5,400 for the middle school to $10,000 for the elementary school.

The teacher incentive structure is tied to achievement gains at the individual and classroom levels. Bonuses for principals are based solely on schoolwide achievement gains.

"We all want the profession to be recognized for what it takes to be good—intellect, energy and stamina, and skills in leading," said Jon Clark, executive director and middle school principal of Edward W. Brooke Charter School. "The performance bonus, as long as it is fair and transparent, is recognition for achievement in a very challenging profession."



The **TEACH Grant** program helps college students pay for their education if they agree to teach for at least four years after graduation. The program requires students to teach in a high-need field like math or science in a low-income school.

Loan forgiveness for teachers has been expanded from $5,000 to $17,500. Highly qualified math, science, and special education teachers who choose to work in high-poverty communities may qualify for the relief.

The Teach for America program also placed 6,200 recent college graduates in 2008 as teachers in urban and rural high-need schools, where they are working to raise test scores and close the achievement gap.

A Shift to Students

To determine teacher effectiveness, one must look at student academic outcomes—such as improved achievement levels and graduation rates—not just educator inputs—such as the number of degrees earned by the teacher.

Reviewing 1,200 education schools and departments, Arthur Levine, president emeritus of Teachers College at Columbia University, found that the quality of most preparation programs for school leaders ranged from "inadequate to appalling." Nearly nine of 10 program alumni said graduates with degrees in education were inadequately prepared for the realities of the classroom.

Making the problem worse, the study concluded, was the trend of rewarding teachers for taking irrelevant and non-rigorous courses. "Universities must conduct clear-eyed evaluations of teacher-education programs instead of treating them as cash cows," Levine said.

This focus on teacher quality is critical. Data from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) and the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project showed that teacher quality had a greater impact on Tennessee students' performance than income levels, class sizes, or the school attended. Being taught by a highly effective teacher had a more positive effect on low-income and minority students than their peers.

"What economists have found is that only one thing tells us how much a teacher will boost his students' test scores next year," wrote economist Ray Fisman. "The amount he raised test scores in previous years."

"In education, many times the battle is all about what is best for the adults, not what is best for the kids."

Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, 2006

Rewarding Results

A majority of Americans favor a teacher compensation system that takes into account factors such as service in high-poverty schools, filling in-demand subjects such as math and science, and success in improving student achievement.

An increasing number of policymakers and school officials agree.

Today, at least 36 states plus the District of Columbia have some form of alternative compensation system in place.

Florida, Chicago, New York City, Denver, and Houston are among the states and cities now paying teachers for performance, including bonuses for higher student test scores.

The Department is working with state and school officials to determine the best ways to implement performance pay.

"We believe that teachers really do see the advantages of this," said D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee. "They really believe this is going to be in the best interests of students and teachers in the long run."

Teacher Incentive Fund

Teachers who make great strides in improving student achievement or closing the achievement gap in challenging circumstances deserve to be rewarded.

President Bush's **Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)** is the nation's first federally funded program specifically geared toward performance pay.

The program supports states and school districts that provide financial incentives for teachers and principals who show results in high-need schools.

A total of 34 grantees in 19 states, including non-profit groups, have received funding under TIF, which also helps align teacher hiring with the academic achievement goals of *No Child Left Behind*. "We want to get the best teachers into the schools that need the most help. This is going to help achieve that," said Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan. His district received a $27.5 million TIF grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2006.

Other Support for Teachers

The **Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative**, created *by* teachers *for* teachers, enables educators from around the country to participate in summer workshops with the Department of Education. All 50 states and the District of Columbia grant professional development credit for participation in the program.

Hundreds of thousands of teachers have been trained through the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, learning effective strategies for raising student achievement. Many were aided by the Department's companion **e-Learning** professional development Web site.

Dozens of digital, online workshops are available on a number of subjects. The Department's Web site has a searchable database of over 1,500 free teaching resources and lesson plans.

Teacher-to-Teacher has recently collaborated with the technology consortium TechNet to create urban teacher workshops focused on teaching math, science, and technology.

Safer Schools

Every teacher deserves to work in a safe, orderly classroom free from crime, violence and drugs. And every student deserves to learn in one. A school should be an oasis of learning and character building, no matter where it is located or what community it serves.

School violence has declined significantly in America. In 1992, the nonfatal violent crime rate for students in school aged 12–18 was 48 per 1,000. In 2005, it was 24 per 1,000. In 2003–04, 7 percent of teachers reported threats of violence from students, compared to 12 percent in 1993–94.

Still, numerous troubling incidents across the nation—such as a West Baltimore school having to change its uniform colors because of gang fights between the "Crips" and "Bloods"—shock the conscience.

The U.S. Department of Education is working to make schools safer through a variety of initiatives, including support for drug and violence prevention activities, emergency management strategies, and character education programs.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires that states, in conjunction with a representative sample of local school districts, develop a definition of "persistently dangerous" schools. Students attending schools so designated must be offered the opportunity to transfer to a safer public or public charter school in their district. Students who are victims of violent crime at the school they attend are also eligible to transfer.

In practice, however, the definition of "persistently dangerous" has been weakened so badly that only a handful of states identify any schools that fit that category. This removes pressure to improve school safety, and puts millions of students and teachers at greater risk.

The **Safe Schools-Healthy Students Initiative**, a collaborative program jointly funded and administered by the U.S. departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services, provides grants to local education agencies to create safe and drug-free learning environments in conjunction with law enforcement, juvenile justice, and public mental health officials.

Character Education

The **Partnerships in Character Education** program awards grants for up to four years to state and local education agencies to design for the classroom character education programs that teach students civic virtue, citizenship, responsibility, and respect for themselves and others. Grantees must involve parents and community members in the effort.

The Department's **What Works Clearinghouse** works to identify effective, research-based practices in character education. The Department also supports the Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (CETAC), which helps school officials implement high-quality character education and civic engagement strategies.

Emergency Planning

The Department's **Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Grant Program (REMS)** helps local education agencies develop and improve plans to respond to emergencies or crises. Each grantee must assess school vulnerabilities and address the four phases of effective emergency management planning: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

To provide rapid assistance to school districts experiencing crisis situations, the Department implemented **Project School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV)**. Project SERV has assisted districts impacted by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It has helped restore learning environments in the Gulf Coast region damaged by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. And it has helped districts recover from school shootings such as those at Minnesota's Red Lake High School in 2005, and at Colorado's Platte Canyon High School in 2006.

In response to the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech University in 2007, the Department developed the **Emergency Management for Higher Education** grant program to help colleges and universities improve emergency management plans and procedures. The Department also awarded nearly $1 million to Virginia Tech to assist with recovery and support effective models for assessing and responding to at-risk student behavior.

These models will inform the efforts of other institutions of higher education.

Schools Leading the Way

While some people write off underperforming schools, others are working hard to turn them around. The following schools are among those that believe that every child can succeed and have put that belief into action.

Passing the Test

Harvard, Princeton, and Stanford. Those are some of the names of classrooms in Ralph J. Bunche Elementary School in the Compton (Calif.) Unified School District, where the children think about college—and their future in it—all the time.

Former Principal Mikara Solomon Davis took a school in the lowest 10 percent academically and changed its focus until it reached near-total proficiency.

How? Through testing. "Every Friday, we assess," she told National Public Radio. "It's not only an assessment of how you're doing as a student, but it's an assessment of how I'm doing as a teacher."

The school—half Latino, half African-American, and nearly all qualified for free or reduced-price lunches—has attracted a corps of young, aggressive teachers.

Said Solomon Davis: "If you love your kids and you put that first, you will always do the right thing."

"Failure Isn't an Option"

No, it is not just a line from a movie. These are the words of former principal Jerry Hoyle of the award-winning East Elementary School in Kings Mountain, N.C.

In 2007, the school received the highest proficiency scores—97.8 percent in reading, and 94.6 percent in math—in the Cleveland County Schools.

What's the secret? No frills, just "high expectations," Hoyle said. "We involve the parents. And we make sure the students know they are here to learn and are expected to behave."

Another factor is a strong working relationship with the teachers, which led to the school receiving North Carolina's coveted Real D.E.A.L. (Dedicated Educators, Administrators and Learners) award.

"We Clap for 100"

Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond, Va., earned a 2008 Title I Distinguished School award, scoring above the 60th percentile in both math and reading.

A culture of achievement in this high-poverty school is the reason why. "When someone gets a 100, we all clap out," fifth-grade teacher Ellen Sailes told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "We don't clap for a 96."

Still, the fact that 97 percent of the school's students passed Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) writing test in 2007 deserves applause.

Principal Irene L. Williams credited "a dedicated staff, frequent practice tests, and the careful examination of data," according to the newspaper. In January 2008, Fairfield Court received the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence.

Brave Change

At Sequoyah Middle School in Doraville, Ga., three-fourths of the students were born outside of the U.S., and students speak 22 different languages at home.

A desire to do well unifies them. After five straight years of not meeting state standards, Sequoyah was restructured, as required by *NCLB*. A new principal, Trenton Arnold, and new teachers were hired. A College Board-developed curriculum was adopted. And in 2006, the Sequoyah Braves reached their goal. "Starting over from scratch hasn't been easy," said Secretary Margaret Spellings, who visited the school. But "with a strong leader … it can yield impressive results."

That Aims Higher

Higher Education T

Americans look to higher education to help them build a better life and a greater nation.

Our universities, meritocratic and independent, have embodied the American ideal and are a steppingstone to the American Dream.

But, to keep pace, higher education faces twin challenges. One is from a K–12 public school system that does not prepare all of its students for success in college or the global economy. Colleges and universities are forced to do the jobs of our high schools, investing billions of dollars in remedial education.

Too many high school graduates have not developed the skills they need to be ready for college or the workforce.

The other challenge comes from within. A system that is deservedly praised as the "best in the world" threatens to succumb to complacency. Tuition continues to skyrocket. A lack of transparency feeds a loss of accountability. It has become increasingly difficult to determine if students are getting what they (or their parents) paid for.

Parents and students have a real stake in reform. So do *all* taxpayers, with federal spending making up nearly one-third of the total investment in higher education.

Change is needed. But it must not sacrifice higher education's unique stature and independence. Americans must work together to leverage the nation's resources and commitment to reform. And our schools must lead the way.

Meeting Challenges Through Higher Education

Historically, Americans have turned to higher education when faced with a major challenge:

At the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the *Morrill Act* into law, leading to the creation of more than 70 institutions of higher education, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

After World War II, nearly 10 million veterans attended college under the GI Bill, producing 450,000 new engineers, 238,000 teachers, 91,000 scientists, and 67,000 doctors.

After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I in 1957, Congress passed the *National Defense Education Act* in 1958, which strengthened math and science curricula in high schools and provided loans to more than 1.5 million college students. Within a decade, the number of science and engineering doctorates awarded annually in the U.S. tripled.

Expecting More

Today, however, the country does not have the luxury of waiting for another crisis to spur action.

"We have no single awakening event, such as Sputnik," wrote the authors of *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, published in 2005 by the National Academies Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy. "The United States is instead facing problems that are developing slowly but surely, each like a tile in a mosaic."

More and more, higher education is seen as essential for advancement in the global economy. Ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education or training.

Studies show that a four-year college graduate stands to earn about $800,000 more than a high school graduate over his or her lifetime.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that by 2012, there will be 3 million more jobs requiring a bachelor's degree. But there may not be enough graduates to fill them.

Between 1962 and 1972, America was first in the world in college completion rates.

In 2005, it was 10th among 25- to 34-year-olds—despite a tripling of federal funding for higher education.

To keep up with global competition, an estimated 20 million more Americans must earn a college degree by 2025.

Ready From Day One?

One of the best ways to help colleges and universities meet this need is to give them freshman students ready to learn. High school graduates must receive a meaningful diploma.

Unfortunately, many students have been ill-prepared for the rigors of higher education. Only 4 percent of low-income students—and three in 10 of all students—complete a college-preparatory curriculum. Less than 9 percent of low-income students earn a bachelor's degree by age 24.

It is not because college is not a desired destination. On the contrary: the competition to gain admission is fierce, and not just among the affluent. A record number of high school seniors in 2007 took the ACT college admissions test, 9 percent more than the year before.

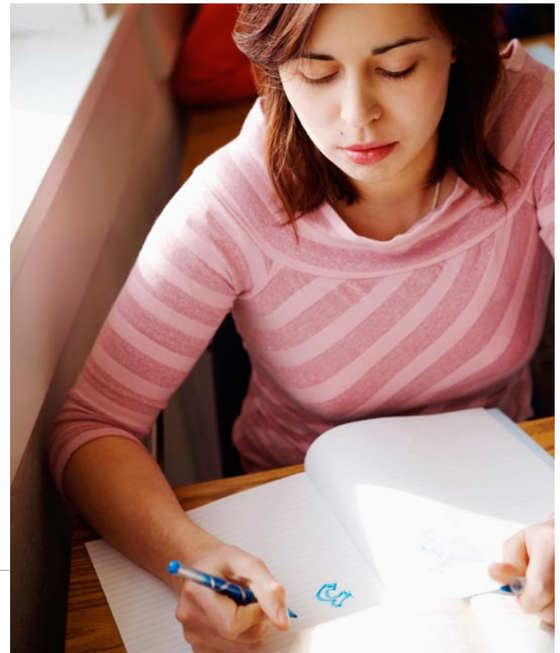
In 1980, less than one-fifth of students from low-income families aspired to earn a four-year degree. In 2002, more than half did.

Increasingly, colleges must teach what high schools could not or would not teach. More than a third of high school students who go on to college need to take remedial courses in order to acquire basic academic skills.

The need is especially critical in math and science, the two most in-demand subjects in the global economy.

Fifty-seven percent of high school graduates who took the ACT test in 2007 were not prepared to take an entry-level college algebra course.

"Student learning in mathematics appears to regress in high school," reports ACT.



> "Each year's class of dropouts is costing state taxpayers about $42 million per year, each and every year, in increased governmental expenditures and reduced taxes. We really need to begin to get this under control."
>
> Christopher Summers, president, Maryland Public Policy Institute, 2008

Rationing Rigor

One of the best predictors of success in college is completing advanced placement coursework. A high school student who passes AP exams is three times more likely to earn a college degree than his or her peers.

Since 2000, the percentage of students who have taken and passed AP courses has risen in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, according to the College Board.

But in many schools, especially those in poor and urban neighborhoods, rigor is rationed. Some high schools offer no advanced placement courses, while students a few miles away can choose from dozens.

The U.S. Department of Education addressed this problem by awarding a record amount of grant funding last year, $32 million, for the **Advanced Placement Incentive Program**. The program trains teachers to lead AP and International Baccalaureate math, science, and critical-need foreign language courses in high-need schools.

Two new Departmental grant programs are encouraging students, particularly from low-income families, to take college-track course work and to study the in-demand STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics):

- **Academic Competitiveness (AC) Grants** are awarded to Pell Grant-eligible college freshmen and sophomores who took challenging course work in high school. Up to $750 is awarded to first-year students who maintain good grades, and up to $1,300 to second-year students, in addition to their Pell Grants.
- **National SMART (Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent) Grants** of up to $4,000 a year are awarded to Pell-eligible college juniors and seniors who are getting good grades in the STEM majors or in critical-need foreign language majors.

More than $400 million in AC and National SMART grants were awarded in 2007, benefiting 360,000 students in the program's first year. To date, more than 500,000 students have received grants.

Regrettably, the Department had to send back to the U.S. Treasury more than $500 million in FY 2008 because not enough students had been offered or had taken the rigorous course work needed to qualify for an AC or SMART grant.

Solving the Dropout Crisis

Many children do not make it far enough through the K–12 public school system to even consider their college options. Every year approximately 1 million American students drop out of high school.

Today, according to the Education Trust, the U.S. is the only industrialized nation whose young people are less likely than their parents to earn a high school diploma—a shocking finding to those who believe in the American Dream.

The costs to the individual are profound. Reports show the United States has the most severe income gap between high school graduates and dropouts in the world.

An adult who dropped out is 41 percent more likely to be unemployed, 51 percent less likely to vote, and 57 percent more likely to receive food stamps.

The problem is concentrated in a number of troubled schools, the so-called "dropout factories." Fifteen percent of public high schools produce about half of the nation's dropouts.

A 2008 report by America's Promise Alliance found that just 52 percent of high school students in the 50 largest cities earn a diploma within four years. In Detroit, the figure is 25 percent.

Graduation Compact

To solve the problem, it must first be measured. But a crazy-quilt approach to calculating graduation rates has hindered that effort. In some districts, a person who pledges to earn a GED at a later date is counted as a "graduate."

In others, a student must register as a dropout before being counted as one.

Most states have not had systems in place to track students across districts, leaving officials unable to determine if students who left their schools had continued their education elsewhere.

The Department has encouraged states to disaggregate graduation rate data and demonstrate continuous improvement in meeting their graduation targets.

In 2004, the Department recommended that each state develop a system to provide a single, more accurate method of calculating four-year graduation rates.

In 2005, governors from all 50 states agreed to adopt a uniform graduation rate definition.

But by October 2008, only 16 states had fully developed the capacity to implement that definition.

In October 2008, the Department announced **final Title I regulations** requiring that by 2010, all states use the same accurate and honest formula to calculate graduation and dropout rates. Data from this "four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate" will be disaggregated and made public so educators and parents can hold their schools accountable and compare them to others across the nation.

Priced Out

A lack of preparation is one barrier to higher education. Another is rising costs.

From 1995 to 2005, average tuition and fees rose 51 percent at public four-year colleges and universities, 36 percent at private four-year institutions, and 30 percent at community colleges (after adjustment for inflation).

Tuition has risen faster than inflation, family income, and health care costs.

The bottom line? Private school graduates leave college $20,000 in median debt.

One in 10 graduates carries a $40,000 debt.

It is getting harder to make up the difference between grant aid and college costs. In 1975–76, the maximum federal Pell Grant covered 84 percent of the cost of attending a public four-year college; in 2000–01, it covered just 40 percent.

The rest of the world, meanwhile, is beating a path to our university doors. The number of foreign students in the U.S. increased seven percent last year to nearly 624,000, an all-time record.

Young people from abroad are rushing to fill the critical STEM fields. In 2004, more than half of all Ph.D. engineering students in American universities were born outside the U.S.

In many cases, their innovation and expertise will return home with them.

Other nations are finding out that they can "cut out the middleman" by improving their own systems of higher education. In China, for example, the number of college students has exploded from 6.3 million in 1998 to 14 million in 2005.

Commission on the Future of Higher Education

To retain the title of "best in the world," Americans must turn to their colleges and universities and say, "We expect more."

In 2005, Secretary Spellings formed the **Commission on the Future of Higher Education**, launching a national dialogue on how to strengthen colleges and universities. It was chaired by Charles Miller, former chairman of the University of Texas Board of Regents, and was comprised of leaders from academia, business, and government.

Its final report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, indicated that America's system of higher education must become better prepared for the challenges of an increasingly diverse student population and a highly competitive global economy. It found that one of the biggest barriers to ensuring the value of a college education is "substandard high school preparation compounded by poor alignment between ... what colleges require and what high schools produce."

SPOTLIGHT

The College Try

The higher education community has an important role to play in teaching at-risk children about the importance of staying in school and earning a meaningful high school diploma. Many institutions have taken up the challenge:

- The American Council on Education has launched *Know How To Go*, a major public service campaign to encourage low-income, first-generation students to prepare for college;
- The Lumina Foundation for Education created *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, to help at-risk students overcome barriers to staying in school; and
- The National Association of System Heads developed the Access to Success initiative to work with K–12 schools to improve student preparation for college.

States, too, have joined the fight:

- Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels launched a college outreach campaign targeting low-income students called "Learn More Indiana";
- Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick signed an executive order in 2007 extending secondary school for two years and aligning high school curricula with higher education and workforce needs;
- Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed "Promise Zones" in cities with high rates of poverty to provide extra funds for higher education;
- New York's Higher Education Commission has recommended guaranteeing free college tuition for 7th- and 8th-graders in high-need school districts who meet academic requirements; and
- North Carolina is creating 70 new "early college" high schools where students can take college-level classes.

"Many students who do earn degrees have not actually mastered the reading, writing, and thinking skills we expect of college graduates," the commission reported. "Employers report repeatedly that many new graduates they hire are not prepared to work."

The commission was charged with examining how colleges and universities could become more *accessible*, *affordable*, and *accountable*. It found that:

Access, particularly for low-income and minority students, is "unduly limited" by "inadequate preparation, lack of information about college opportunities, and persistent financial barriers."

Affordability is hindered by a lack of transparency and a financial aid system that is "confusing, complex, inefficient, and duplicative." Red tape keeps some low-income college students from even applying for federal aid.

Accountability is made difficult by a "lack of clear, reliable information about the cost and quality of postsecondary institutions," "limited and inadequate" data systems, and a "remarkable absence of accountability mechanisms."

The commission concluded that "higher education must change from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance."

Action Plan for Higher Education

Building on the commission's work, in September 2006, the Department of Education launched its **Action Plan for Higher Education**.

It proposed a number of reforms, including aligning high school standards with college expectations; using the Internet to help families compare schools and navigate the financial aid system; and working with states to modernize their information systems and share data without compromising student privacy.

Two years later, progress has been made on each of the commission's major goals.

Access

The *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)* has been called more perplexing than the IRS 1040 tax form. It is six pages long and requires more than 100 questions to be answered. The commission recommended that the application process be "substantially streamlined," with a "much shorter and simpler application form."

In 2008, the Department outlined an example of a proposal for Congress to redesign the FAFSA, reducing the number of questions to 27. The redesign would enable families to learn how much aid they can expect to receive at a much earlier date.

While FAFSA simplification is still necessary, progress towards improved access has already begun. Of the 16 million FAFSAs expected to be processed in 2008, more than 95 percent will be submitted through FAFSA on the Web.

This will save taxpayers millions of dollars and improve the speed and accuracy of the process. At its peak, FAFSA on the Web processes over 200,000 applications per day.

"In this consumer-driven environment, students increasingly care little about the distinctions that sometimes preoccupy the academic establishment, from whether a college has for-profit or nonprofit status to whether its classes are offered online or in brick-and-mortar buildings. Instead, they care—as we do—about results."

A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, Commission on the Future of Higher Education, U.S. Department of Education, 2006

A companion Internet tool is the **FAFSA4caster**, which instantly calculates the federal financial aid that a student may be eligible to receive. Using the FAFSA4caster also saves time in completing the FAFSA. Over 80 percent of students and families that completed the FAFSA4caster in 2008 indicated they had a better understanding of federal student aid after visiting the site.

The Department launched two nationwide public service campaigns—**"Only a Dream"** and **"My Story"**—aimed at aspiring first-generation students. The commercial spots, which feature real students sharing their experiences, teach kids about the benefits of a college degree and what it takes to achieve one.

In 2008, the Department launched **college.gov**, an interactive Web site to show families new to the financial aid process how they can make the dream of higher education a reality.

College.gov has garnered rave reviews. "It is chock full of information and easy to navigate. As a counselor, this will help me communicate the message of why college is important to my students," said one user.

"It's very clear and easy to understand. It also has the answer to many important questions students would have," said another.

Affordability

The maximum Pell Grant award was increased from about $3,700 in 2001 to $4,731 for the 2008–09 school year, and funding for Pell Grants has nearly doubled in that time.

About 1.5 million more students are receiving Pell Grants.

President Bush has called on Congress to further increase the grant to a maximum of $5,400 over the next five years. He also asked Congress to make the grants available year-round to low-income students, which was accomplished in 2008.

Federal funding for the nation's **Historically Black Colleges and Universities** and **Hispanic-Serving Institutions** has been increased by **30 percent** since 2001, enabling schools to purchase books and equipment, renovate facilities, and improve teacher training and student outreach.

In 2008, the Department of Education and the Federal Trade Commission jointly published *Student Loans: Avoiding Deceptive Offers*, which advises consumers on ways to avoid scams and combat unscrupulous lenders when navigating the student loan process.

A free brochure in English and Spanish, *Federal Aid First*, explains the differences between various types of student loans, including those offered by banks and credit unions.

Accountability

Families are looking for more information about colleges and universities, starting with facts on admission, enrollment, and graduation rates. The Department redesigned its **College Navigator** Web site to make it easier for families to compare institutions of higher education. The redesigned site was named by *Money* magazine as "the best first screen" for researching colleges as well as "one of the simplest" to use.

Currently, about 40 states have higher education information systems in place that are privacy-protected.

The Department has proposed financial incentives to connect these islands of data and bring all states into the process. This would enable the Department to enhance its College Navigator and make it more responsive.

The **Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)** enables schools to develop accurate methods of measuring student achievement outcomes. The Department has awarded $2.45 million in FIPSE grants to three major higher education associations representing 1,600 public and private schools.

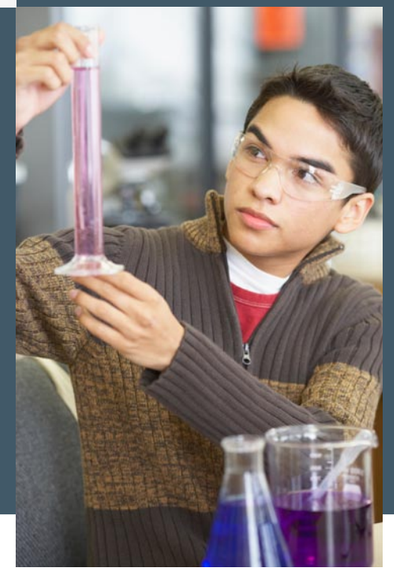
In November 2006, the Department convened a Forum on Accreditation, in which representatives from accrediting agencies, colleges and universities, and public and private organizations debated how to make student learning outcomes a core factor in determining accreditation.

About 60 percent of all college students transfer at least once before graduating, losing an average of one semester of course work due to denial of credit transfer. The Department has initiated a **transfer of credit** study to improve the experiences of Pell Grant recipients who transfer between eligible institutions.

The Department also has proposed **a multi-state demonstration** program to unite higher education institutions behind the goal of reforming transfer of credit policies.

"College gives you the opportunity to ... make a decision, an informed decision, an intelligent decision on what you want to do with the rest of your life and how you're going to live that life."

Jamal Taylor, student, Louisiana State University, 2007



College Support for the "Three As"

Many in the higher education community have embraced the reforms suggested by the commission:

The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) now provide information using a single, common reporting format.

The University of Nebraska partners with the Building Bright Futures initiative, which supports low-income and at-risk children with mentoring, academic support and college scholarships.

The University System of Maryland's Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiative helps schools cut costs while accommodating increases in student enrollment and maintaining current programs.

California State University, led by Chancellor Charles B. Reed, has embarked on a $2 million, five-year program to double the number of math and science teachers it prepares for the K–12 classroom. The university system also offers free retraining for math and English teachers.

"Rather than urge more government funds or suggest some shifts in academic focus, the Spellings panel proposed a direct challenge to some deeply cherished and longstanding ways in which colleges operate, calling on higher education to shed some of its mystery and fundamentally prove the value it delivers."

Paul Basken, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 2007

Community Colleges

With more students taking a non-traditional path to a degree, as the commission has noted, community colleges have become more vital than ever before.

They fill a real need for flexible, economical, and responsive learning. It is worth noting that tuition for two-year community colleges actually declined, when adjusted for inflation, in the 2008-09 school year.

Nearly half (46 percent) of all undergraduate students attend one of the nation's 1,200 two- and four-year community colleges.

Most seek the skills to succeed in the high-growth jobs of the global marketplace or to fill the urgent needs of the local economy. Many community college students make education their profession: about fifty percent of teachers working in U.S. schools passed through a community college at some point.

Recognizing their importance, the Department has expanded support for community college students. These students benefit from increases in the maximum Pell Grant award and changes allowing Pell Grants to be awarded year-round.

In addition, given that community college students often transfer to four-year institutions to complete their education, the Department's transfer of credit study can inform changes that will assist these students.

Finally, more than $375 million in federal funds have been invested in **Community-Based Job Training Grants** to help community colleges train new workers.

Adult Education

Higher education is not reserved for young high school graduates coming up through the system. It also serves adults coming back to earn the skills to succeed in the modern workplace.

In September 2007, President Bush signed an executive order strengthening adult education and establishing an **Interagency Adult Education Working Group**, chaired by the secretary of education. The order charges the government with strengthening literacy skills and improving opportunities for postsecondary education and employment.

More than one in five adults does not have the basic literacy skills needed to perform simple and everyday quantitative tasks, according to NCES's 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

The Department's **Ready for College: Adult Education Transitions Program** helps community college systems in four states collaborate with adult education programs to improve college readiness.

Since 2001, the Department has invested more than $10 million in scientifically based research to identify effective interventions for teaching adults.

Finally, the Department has expanded **Project IDEAL** to support distance-learning programs in every state.

Protecting Student Loans

In 2008, the nationwide financial crisis and economic slowdown constrained capital markets, posing serious challenges to college students who rely on federal student loans. As a result of the credit crunch, the loan marketplace was threatened with instability and a lack of readily available funds.

Some lenders suspended participation in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), which in 2007 was responsible for $50 billion in loans to 6.8 million borrowers.

This created uncertainty for families planning for college and put students at risk of losing access to federally guaranteed loans for the 2008–09 school year.

Building on legislation signed by the President *(HR 5715, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act)*, in May, Secretary Spellings and U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson announced a four-part plan to stabilize the federal student loan market.

The plan featured:

- Short-term relief for lenders to help open up funds for students;
- A commitment to continue working with the lending community to re-engage capital markets;
- A strengthened lender of last resort program; and
- Increased direct loan capacity.

As of October 2008, nearly $60 billion in federal student loans had been originated for the 2008–09 academic year.

Also in October, President Bush signed a one-year extension of the *Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act*.

With the extension, the Department announced the following goals:

- Ensure availability of federal student loans for the 2009–10 school year;
- Maintain the public/private partnership in the federal student loan program;
- Protect taxpayer interest by adding no net-cost to the federal government; and
- Provide the liquidity and support needed to stabilize the student loan marketplace.

Building on these goals, the Department announced the replication of student lending programs for academic year 2009–10 and its intention to provide liquidity support to one or more conforming Asset-Backed Commercial Paper conduits.

* * *

"It is no exaggeration to declare that higher education in the United States has become one of our greatest success stories," the Secretary's Commission on the Future of Higher Education found. However, the challenges of the 21st century are great, and demand that our colleges and universities aim even higher to meet them.

Responding to Crisis: The Virginia Tech Shootings

The entire nation mourned the losses of the shootings at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, and looked for ways to prevent such tragedies and protect students in the future.

Soon after the Virginia Tech tragedy, President Bush directed Secretary Margaret Spellings and other Cabinet secretaries to travel to communities across the nation to meet with educators, mental health experts, and law enforcement and state and local officials.

In June 2007, the *Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy* was released.

Its five key findings were:

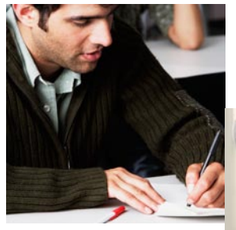
1. **Key personnel are not fully informed about when they can legally share private information about persons who may be a danger to themselves and others.**
2. **There is a lack of uniform, readily available information on persons restricted from possessing firearms.**
3. **Parents, teachers, and students may need help recognizing the warning signs of someone in need of professional care.**
4. **Effective coordination of community service providers is needed. They must be sensitive to the interests of safety, privacy, and provision of care.**
5. **Existing emergency preparedness and violence prevention plans must be taken off the shelf and fully implemented, communicated, and practiced by schools and communities.**

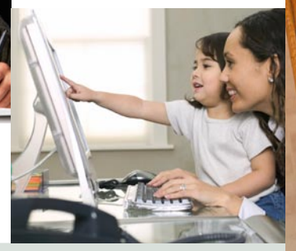
In July 2007, the Department of Education held an expert symposium on the Virginia Tech campus to discuss the issues surrounding the tragedy, including the availability of mental health services to students and the community.

In September 2007, the Department awarded the school a grant of nearly $1 million to assist recovery efforts and develop models for identifying and responding to at-risk behaviors.

In January 2007, the Department published *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. The revised guide directs schools through the four major aspects of crisis planning.

The Department also distributed guides to parents, educators, and college officials explaining the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* in order to help schools balance students' privacy rights with safety concerns.





The industrial-age world in which America's education system was created exists no more.

Today we live in a technology-driven global marketplace where ideas and innovation matter more than muscle and machines.

The information revolution has given us new tools with which to respond quickly to every opportunity and challenge. In this "flat" world of increasingly global competition, it is imperative that people everywhere know how and when to use them.

Is America's public education system taking full advantage of these new tools? Sadly, the answer is "no."

When the Internet enables children to learn at the click of a mouse from anywhere on earth, it does not make sense that "school is the least technologically interesting place that kids spend their day," according to John Chubb, managing director of the Edison Learning Institute.

When businesses survive by streamlining processes and improving customer service, it does not make sense that centrally planned rules and regulations strangle innovation in the classroom.

When adult Americans have more freedom to change their jobs and choose their destinies than ever before, it does not make sense that we fight to deny parents a choice of school.

The U.S. Department of Education has worked to give students and families more options and more chances to succeed. This includes promoting the expansion of charter schools, providing extra instructional help to at-risk kids, and advocating for opportunity scholarships in school districts where children are consistently denied a quality education. The Department also is working to promote technology as a learning tool so the modern classroom may become as plugged-in as its students.

The Rise of Charter Schools

Many educators are escaping their constraints by forming charter schools, which are freed from many central regulations and bureaucratic fiats.

Charter schools have built-in accountability: authorizers can close schools if they are not up to the task. Charters also fill a critical need to educate children stuck in poorly performing schools that refuse to do what is needed to meet academic standards. Because they take their cues from parents, charter schools are often more innovative, creative, and responsive to the community.

In 1991, Minnesota was the first state to pass a charter school law. Today, 40 states and the District of Columbia have laws allowing charter schools. An estimated 4,300-plus charter schools educate more than 1.2 million students across the country. More than 350 new charters opened for the 2008–09 school year.

The number of charter schools has more than doubled since 2000.

Charter schools are meeting the need to educate at-risk students. According to the Center for Education Reform, more than half of charter school students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. In some urban areas, charter schools serve over one-quarter of the district's students.

In New Orleans, more than half the schoolchildren attend charter schools, which came to the rescue following Hurricane Katrina.

A study by Caroline Hoxby of the National Bureau of Economic Research found that charters are more likely than traditional public schools in the same area to raise the achievement levels in reading and math. Low-income and Hispanic students were especially likely to be helped, the study showed.

Individual success stories bear this out:

- Amistad Academy in New Haven, Conn., performs better than the state average in reading and mathematics, with more than eight of 10 students passing the tests despite an 84 percent low-income middle school population.
- At Carl C. Icahn Charter School in the Bronx, 100 percent of the third- and fourth-graders—90 percent of whom are from low-income families—scored "proficient" or higher on the state math exam, compared to 61 percent of third-graders and 52 percent of fourth-graders in the district.

Many charter schools are dispensing with the old six-hours-a-day, 180-days-a-year model that was developed to conform to farmers' schedules in the 1800s. Today, institutions such as the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Academy are lengthening the school day, week, and year to reach students who need extra time and attention to master material.

Unfortunately, 26 states impose a cap on the number of charter schools or their students, resulting in long waiting lists to apply to and attend them.

And unlike traditional public schools, in nearly three-fourths of states, charter schools do not receive independent funding for facilities.

"When you walk into this institution, you know you're in a place of learning. It's very challenging, the days are long, and the work is hard. But my daughter is excited about it."

Yvonne Lee, parent, KIPP Gaston College Preparatory, Gaston, N.C., www.kipp.org

Supporting Charters

President Bush strongly supports the expansion of charter schools. More than $1.8 billion in start-up money for individual schools has been invested since 2001 through the Department's **Charter Schools Program**. Since 2001, nearly 1,900 schools have received funding, and about 30 states are home to current grantees.

States that have increased the number of high-quality charter schools, that periodically review and evaluate their performance, and that grant charters a high degree of autonomy have been given preference in the awarding of grants.

The Department's **Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program** has leveraged $739 million in financing for more than 200 charter schools, enabling them to acquire, construct, or renovate academic facilities.

To help charter schools thrive, the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance was formed in 2006. A public-private partnership, it provides information, tools, and technical assistance to improve charter school management and governance.

In May 2008, the Office of Innovation and Improvement hosted the National Charter School Policy Forum. The event brought together 100 of the nation's foremost leaders in the field to discuss how to develop strong charter systems, build strategic partnerships, and expand parental options.

Finally, the Department has awarded national leadership grants to grantees that are working to enhance and expand states' capacity to support high-quality charter schools, especially in urban and rural areas that may be home to many schools identified for improvement.

Choice and *No Child Left Behind*

The *No Child Left Behind Act* arms parents with information through student testing data and state and school district report cards so they have a greater ability to influence change.

"Information is essential. But reform also requires options," then-Governor George W. Bush said in 1999. "Competition is required to jolt a bureaucracy out of its lethargy."

Under *NCLB*, schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more years must give parents the option of transferring their student to another public school or public charter school that has made AYP within the district. The district must provide or pay for the student's transportation to the new school.

Data show that students choosing this option typically transferred from a school with below-average achievement levels to one with above-average achievement levels, and from less diverse schools to more diverse schools.

Nationwide, about 120,000 students took advantage of this option during the 2006–07 school year. The participation rate has more than doubled since the first year choice was offered. However, that figure represented only about 2 percent of eligible students.

Although districts are required to inform parents about the choice option, many do not notify them at an early enough stage to make the transfer possible. In 2004–05, less than one-third (29 percent) of districts required to offer school choice notified parents of eligible students before the beginning of the school year.

The Department is working with districts to improve notification so no eligible student is unwillingly left behind. In October 2008, **final Title I regulations** were announced, requiring that schools notify parents in a clear and timely way—a minimum of two weeks before the start of the school year—about their children's public school choice options.

SPOTLIGHT

Milestones in School Choice

In 1971, the nation's first public school choice program was sponsored in Alum Rock, Calif. It offered low-income parents the option of having their children attend another public school in the district through vouchers.

In 1974, East Harlem, N.Y., (District 4) created autonomous, innovative schools that students could choose to attend. After ranking last in the city in 1973, East Harlem saw its reading scores rise from 15.9 percent to 62.6 percent in 14 years.

In 1986, the National Governors Association's report, *Time for Results*, endorsed school choice programs for states.

In 1988, Minnesota became the first state to permit statewide inter-district open enrollment in public schools for all students.

In 1990, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson signed the nation's first urban school voucher bill into law, allowing students in Milwaukee Public Schools to attend any public or private school within the city.

In 1996, the state of Ohio launched the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program. It gave students in the troubled Cleveland Public Schools the option of attending another public school, a private school, or a new "Community School"—or to receive tutorial help in their current school.

In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* that the Cleveland voucher program permitted families "to exercise genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious." Therefore, it "does not offend the Establishment Clause," and is constitutional.

In 2004, the nation's first federally funded voucher program, the **D.C. Opportunity Scholarship** program, was signed into law by President Bush.

The Department is committed to other innovative forms of choice.

The **Voluntary Public School Choice** program offers grants to states and districts to develop innovative school choice programs, including magnet and charter schools and Internet-based education programs.

Supplemental Educational Services

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) is the term for tutoring, after-school help, and other programs designed to help children get back on track academically. Title I schools that have not made AYP for three or more years must provide eligible students with this option at no cost to their parents.

In the 2006–07 school year, 533,000 children received SES services. However, this represented just 14 percent of the 3.7 million students who were eligible.

Districts that notified parents earlier of the opportunity to receive SES had higher participation rates.

In an evaluation of Title I school choice and supplemental educational services conducted as part of the National Longitudinal Study of *No Child Left Behind*, researchers found positive effects on achievement for those students participating in SES for the first time. The effects were cumulative when students participated in SES multiple times.

The study also found that SES-enrolled students started at lower academic achievement levels on average than other students, suggesting that the services are reaching the children who need them the most. In the nine large urban districts surveyed, African-American, Hispanic, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities received SES at a higher rate than others.

To improve student participation, the Department initiated a series of **SES pilots** in selected states and districts.

In 2005–06, the Department began a pilot program in Virginia, allowing four school districts to offer SES to students at year one of improvement status—one year earlier than called for by *NCLB*. The program's success led to its expansion to Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Indiana. For the 2008–09 school year, the pilot was expanded further to Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah.

The pilots feature multiple or continuous enrollment periods, timely parental notification of eligibility, and improved access to SES providers through the Internet. Participating states have agreed to increase the number of eligible students participating in SES.

And they are working. In Newport News, Va., for example, 62 percent of students eligible for SES signed up in 2006, compared to 23 percent the previous year.

Another pilot enables districts "in need of improvement" to serve as SES providers, which is currently prohibited by Title I regulations.

In exchange, the districts agree to implement best practices aimed at increasing student participation in SES. Five districts are participating in this pilot in 2008-09: Anchorage School District, Boston Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Hillsborough Public Schools (Florida), and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina).

The Department's **final Title I regulations** require that states make more information available to the public about available tutoring providers, their approval status, and whether they have been effective in improving academic performance.

In 2004, the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) began publishing the Innovations in Education series of guidebooks to help parents make the best choices for their children.

D.C. Opportunity Scholarships

The demands of the global economy call for innovative solutions. Many nations that regularly outperform the U.S. in international tests, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, utilize school choice, vouchers, or their equivalent.

Children deserve a lifeline out of chronically underperforming schools. Washington, D.C.'s public schools rank near the bottom of the nation's schools in nearly every academic category—despite spending about $13,400 per child, the third-highest per-pupil expenditure in the nation. Their graduation rate hovers around 60 percent.

The groundbreaking D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program, signed into law in 2004, allows low-income families in Washington, D.C., to choose a private or religious school that better meets their children's needs. It is the nation's first federally funded K–12 voucher program.

The program offers parents scholarships of up to $7,500 towards tuition, fees, and transportation expenses at the D.C. private school of their choice. The average income level of participating families is just $1,500 above the federal poverty level for a family of four.

By the program's second year (2005–06), approximately 2,000 scholarships were being used. More than 7,000 students have applied.

For many students, this represents their first opportunity to receive a quality education. An independent study by the Institute of Education Sciences reported academic gains in reading by three student subgroups, totaling nearly 90 percent of all students in the program. They gained the equivalent of two to four extra months of learning.

The IES study found that parents of scholarship children were confident that they would be better educated and safer in their new schools. And a study by Georgetown University found increased parental involvement and student enthusiasm for learning among scholarship recipients.

Surveys show that nearly 70 percent of District residents support the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. Yet some in Congress have proposed discontinuing it. If scholarship recipients were forced to return to D.C. public schools, 86 percent of them would end up in underperforming schools (schools that did not meet their AYP goals in 2006–07).

This is clearly not a choice the students and parents would make. "I now no longer have to worry about fights breaking out in my classroom, or being threatened on a constant basis," said Carlos Battle, a scholarship recipient. "I know this scholarship means just as much, or even more, for other kids all over D.C."

Choice is not just a single-city need. As of 2006, more than 1,700 schools across the country had failed to meet state standards for five or six years in a row. Opportunity Scholarships should be given the opportunity to succeed in districts throughout the country.

That is why President Bush proposed a $300 million **Pell Grants for Kids scholarship** program to enable disadvantaged students to transfer to another school of their choice if their school did not meet its AYP goals for five or more years, or has a graduation rate of less than 60 percent. Modeled after the highly successful Pell Grants program, the program has yet to be enacted by Congress.

> "The time has come for Congress to stop playing political games and, instead, undertake a fair assessment of a program that gives D.C. families a say in their children's education."
>
> Editorial, *Washington Post*, August 10, 2008

> "Training the workforce of tomorrow with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today's computers on a 50-year-old mainframe."
>
> Bill Gates, co-chair, Gates Foundation, 2005

Innovative Education

It is no longer sufficient to simply fix 20th-century schools; America must create schools for the 21st century. But what does that entail?

Over the past eight years, the Department has listened to the views of hundreds of thousands of students and convened roundtable discussions with education, technology, and business experts to determine ways that technology can improve education.

Based on the feedback received from the roundtables, five key areas were identified where collaboration between federal, state, and local governments can help us build on the success of *NCLB* and accelerate reform:

- Online learning and virtual schools;
- Transforming data into knowledge and action;
- Broadband connectivity;
- Research efficacy and impact; and
- School leadership and professional preparation.

Investments in these strategic areas would be geared toward creating fundamental change in the education system, not merely new and disconnected islands of innovation.

Other Support for Technology

Under *No Child Left Behind*, states and school districts have unprecedented **flexibility** to transfer a significant portion of their federal funds toward technology.

In 2005, the Department released its **National Education Technology Plan**, providing a set of actions and recommendations for the nation's school systems as they use technology to transform learning.

The Department has provided funding to the **Partnership for 21st Century Skills**, uniting business, community, and education leaders to help students obtain critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communications skills. The Department also provided seed funding for the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) to help its members improve student academic achievement through technology.

Finally, the Department is working with states to ensure that a common technology standard is used so they can communicate and transmit data in real time.

There is a need for a common data standard across the K-12 data spectrum. The good news is that such a standard already exists in the form of the **Schools Interoperability Framework**, which is an open, impartial data standard now in operation in 43 states. Embracing a common measure, such as the Schools Interoperability Framework, could increase efficiency and reduce the costs of data reporting and sharing.

New Orleans: From Devastation to Innovation

When Hurricane Katrina battered the Gulf Coast in August 2005, New Orleans suffered enormously. Floodwaters submerged 80 percent of the city and devastated two-thirds of its 128 public schools. Over 150,000 students in the city were displaced.

The immediate goal of the U.S. Department of Education was to quickly enroll children in public and private schools to restore comfort and stability to their lives. With Congress' strong support, the Department mobilized $880 million in Emergency Impact Aid for Displaced Students.

It also sent $750 million to help repair, restock and reopen damaged schools.

Another $5 million was added to assist homeless children. And $30 million was delivered to Louisiana and Alabama to recruit, retain, and compensate teachers who agreed to work for three years in the disaster areas.

With the collapse of the traditional public school system, many education leaders looked to the charter model, in which greater freedom is granted in exchange for stricter accountability.

Nearly $21 million was sent to Louisiana to help the state plan, design, and open charter schools.

"The main difference is that most of the charters have the freedom to change, to get better, to hire the people they need to make the school better," said Jonathan Bertsch, director of operations for KIPP charter schools in New Orleans.

"Shame on us if we don't take advantage of this," said Leslie Jacobs of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The city now has the highest percentage of charter schools of any major city in the U.S.—nearly 60 percent—and serves as an education "laboratory" for other cities.

These schools are empowering students and families with more options and revitalizing the education landscape. The results are promising: In 2007, 17 of the 20 top-performing schools in New Orleans were charters.

Higher education suffered from the storms as well. About $200 million of aid was allocated to help reopen colleges and universities.

Unused federal campus-based student aid was redirected to affected schools, and special loan provisions were made for borrowers in federal student loan programs impacted by Katrina.

Working with the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Education also helped secure $60 million in foreign aid for the Gulf Coast region.

In partnership with the U.S. General Services Administration, more than 13,000 classroom items were obtained and delivered, including computers, printers, desks, and chairs. The online clearinghouse Hurricane Help for Schools resulted in 900 matching donations.

What's Next? A Future of Reform and Results

We know what it takes to provide a quality education. We see it every day from good schools and great teachers and principals.

There is no single or simple answer. But a commitment to certain guiding principles will help raise the odds that more children walk across the stage on graduation day holding a meaningful diploma valued by employers and college admissions officials.

A

B

C

D

E

The Principles:

A—Accountability. A culture of accountability has begun to take root in the classroom. Educators now use annual assessments to tailor their instruction. Parents are more informed. When we shined a spotlight on the performance of at-risk students, our schools responded.

The next president will face calls to dismantle or radically redefine accountability. He should resist them. Whether it goes by *No Child Left Behind* or another name, reform is still needed. The American people want their children educated to high standards and their schools held accountable for steady academic gains. Grade-level achievement for all by 2014 is not a pipe dream but a goal that must guide our progress.

B—Bipartisanship. The *No Child Left Behind Act* was approved overwhelmingly because it united Republicans and Democrats behind a cause greater than themselves. It is time for that same spirit of unity to motivate everyone involved in the public education system.

This means changing some old habits. Parents must choose to get involved. Teachers must see principals as allies, not adversaries. Taxpayers and the business community must view reform as good for the bottom line—because it is. Many people see education reform as a threat to vested interests. But a well-educated student is in everybody's interest.

C—Children. The needs of children must come before the convenience and comfort of adults. The world is changing, and our schools must change with it. Longer school days and years, more time spent on task, and a greater emphasis on teacher performance over seniority are not always popular. But they are essential.

We must also not fall into the trap of blaming poor academic performance on poverty or family circumstances. It is our responsibility to provide a quality education so children can overcome their hardships.

We must not forget another "C"—choice. Too much time has been spent challenging the decision to choose a public charter, private, or parochial school. Not enough time has been spent understanding why it was made. Students who suffer in silence in chronically underperforming schools must be offered a lifeline. Saving a child is more important than protecting a building or a job.

D—Data. It is not easy to get excited about data. But it is the blueprint for building a better school system. A parent who watches a delivery company track a package cannot understand how their school can lose track of its students. Without quality data and sound science to guide us, we risk making decisions based not on facts but assumptions. We have seen the tragic byproducts of this approach, from an overreliance on instructional fads to an inability to identify which students needed help before they fell through the cracks.

E—Expectations. The lesson of the last eight years is that if we expect more from our students, we will get it. President Bush believes that "every child can learn and must be taught." And that faith is being rewarded. National leadership has set the tone as our schools set the bar higher. When expectations rise, standards and test scores soon follow.

There is no letter "F"—because failure is not an option. We cannot fail as long as we have the will to sustain and strengthen reform. All Americans have a role to play. They should not be afraid to ask the hard questions. Just as "leading economic indicators" monitor the health of the economy, the following five questions are "leading education indicators" that can help us mark the progress of reform:

Do our kids know how to read and do math? Are we closing the achievement gap? Are more students graduating from high school on time? Are they prepared for college or work? And are college students earning the degrees they need to compete in a global marketplace?

All Americans are invited to closely follow our progress. They should hold public officials at all levels of government accountable for keeping their promise to provide a quality education to every single child—the only result that matters.

It is said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Let us remember the past by correcting our mistakes and charting a bold course for the future—our children's future.

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