

The Achiever

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President Seeks to Build On Law's Results

No Child Left Behind Up for Renewal This Fall

In September, congressional committees are expected to begin significant work on reauthorizing the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. Through continued bipartisan support, President George W. Bush is looking to improve on provisions of the law that have drawn concern while strengthening those measures that already have proven successful in the nation's schools over the last five years. According to recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, achievement gaps in reading and math between African-American and Hispanic nine-year-olds and their white peers have fallen to all-time lows.



"The economy is going to demand brain power as we head into the 21st century; there-

fore, now is the time to make sure that our fourth-graders can read, write, and add and subtract, that our eighth-graders are more proficient in math, and that when you graduate from high school, your diploma means something. The best place to start is to measure. And when you see a problem, fix it before it's too late," President Bush said at the American Legislative Exchange Council in July, referring to *NCLB's* requirements for annual testing in grades 3–8 and once at the high school level.

The president's reauthorization proposal, *Building on Results*, maintains the law's accountability system of state standards and assessments for working toward the goal of every child reading and doing math at grade level by 2014.

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Bridging the Gap

Ohio Charter School Surmounts Age, Achievement Barriers

"I was excited about my child's education in a way that I had not been since he started school."

Last fall, at the start of her son's third-grade year, Cheryl McArthur took "a leap of faith" by transferring him from a private school, where he had been since pre-kindergarten, to The Intergenerational School (TIS). She had been frustrated with the private school's lack of concern about his lagging performance, particularly in math, and feared he was reaching a critical age when boys "often don't catch up and become turned off to school. And I did not want that to happen to Jason," she said.

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Meanwhile, it would introduce a number of teacher and parent initiatives in response to concerns expressed since the original legislation was enacted in 2001, including: the Teacher Incentive Fund, which would seek to reward

educators who make progress in raising student achievement; and Promise scholarships to afford private school choice, inter-public school transfers or intensive tutoring for low-income families with students in schools undergoing restructuring.

The proposal also puts a greater emphasis

on high school graduation in response to the nation's high school dropout crisis, by requiring states to report a more accurate graduation rate and to work with colleges and businesses to better align the high school curriculum with the requirements of higher education and employers.

Secretary's Corner~

Photo by Bill Geiger



To kick off the back-to-school season, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will embark on a three-day bus tour, Sept. 19–21. It will begin in Cleveland, where she will visit several local schools along with the city's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. From there, she will travel to Dayton, Ohio, and Cincinnati before completing her tour in Indianapolis. In addition to school visits, the secretary will attend business roundtables as well as events for military families at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Among her travels this summer was a visit in July to the Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in Fairfax, Va., a five-day seminar designed to help third- through fifth-grade teachers from across the country motivate their students to pursue careers in math and science. While receiving putting lessons from professional golfer Phil Mickelson (with whom she and his wife Amy are photographed above), the secretary spoke with educators

about the critical need for advanced skills in today's global economy.

In June, Secretary Spellings delivered remarks at her regional higher education summit in Boston. It was the fourth of five regional higher education summits the U.S. Department of Education held nationwide to discuss the secretary's *Higher Education Act* reauthorization priorities as well as the importance of access, affordability and accountability in higher education.

"Our country's investment in higher education has yielded a tremendous return. Our colleges and universities have given generations of citizens the ability to pursue the American Dream and have long been the envy of the world," she said. "But recent data show we're in danger of losing that position. ...

"By age 24, 75 percent of students from the top income bracket have earned a degree. At the same age, less than nine percent of low-income students have earned one. ...

"Whether you're a business leader who needs talented workers, a state who needs an educated workforce, a parent who needs to figure out how you're going to pay for college, or a student who needs an education ... each and every one of you has a role to play in maintaining the strength of our colleges and universities."

In Honor of ...

The U.S. Department of Education's headquarters in Washington, D.C., is now the Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Federal Building, in honor of the 36th president who signed into law several key education bills, including the *Elementary and Secondary Education*

Act of 1965—the foundation of today's *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. A dedication ceremony will take place Sept. 17, on the building's plaza with Secretary Spellings and members of the Johnson family. During his presidency, 1963–69, Johnson supported more than 60 bills and programs benefiting education, particularly for disadvantaged students: the Head Start Program for preschoolers; the Title I Program for K–12 impoverished public schools; and the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, which funds grants, work-study opportunities and loans to offset college tuition costs. ■



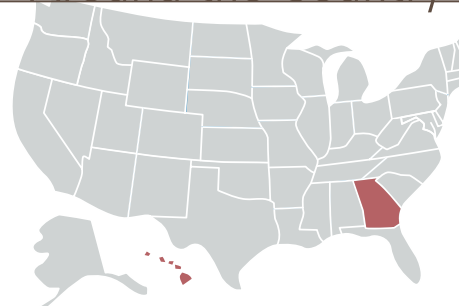
Up, Up and Away!

On Aug. 8, former teacher Barbara Morgan took her first flight into space with six other crew members aboard the space shuttle Endeavour. Having begun training with NASA more than 20 years ago through the Teacher in Space Project, she was chosen in 1998 as the first educator to become a mission specialist astronaut. During the 11-day mission of "STS-118" to the International Space Station, Morgan helped transfer several thousand pounds of supplies between the shuttle and space station, in addition

to operating the robot arm in support of mission objectives. As an educator astronaut, she also is helping NASA develop new ways to connect space exploration to the classroom and inspire the next generation of explorers. "There's no telling how many young lives Barbara will encourage with a lasting love for space and science," said Deputy Secretary of Education Ray Simon, who was at the shuttle's launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. ■



<< Around the Country >>



With one child just graduating from college and another on the way there, McArthur was in search of an affordable, quality education when she came across a local television news story about the Cleveland public charter school.

TIS, which is open to any resident of Ohio regardless of academic history, made headlines in 2006 as the only charter school in the state to be rated "excellent" for three consecutive years. Serving roughly 120 children in

kindergarten through seventh grade (TIS is expanding to eighth grade this year), it was also just one of 21 high-poverty schools statewide to be recognized as a "School of Promise" for having at least 75 percent of all students pass Ohio's standardized reading test. Its principal, a former psychologist who specialized in child development, cofounded TIS in 2000 on the belief that children should be taught according to their developmental learning stages. Classes are kept small and instruction individualized, which is enhanced by the longstanding support of volunteer senior citizens who mentor children one-on-one. And, with the school's strong emphasis on literacy, there is even a book club that involves both parents and children meeting together to discuss the assigned text.



Immediately following the news show's broadcast, McArthur called TIS with plans to enroll Jason for the 2006-07 school year. "I was excited about my child's education in a way that I had not been since he started school," she said.

Her faith was rewarded. On the state's 2007 exam, Jason proved proficient in math—a mastery that also was evident in his schoolwork, on his report cards and in a renewed devotion to learning the subject. (In fact, for the past two years, 100 percent of TIS' third-graders have

scored proficient or above in both math and reading.) McArthur admits that it took a lot of extra work to build up her son's skills, but points out that Jason is well-prepared this fall for the fourth grade—or, as the school qualifies it, the "refining" stage.

At TIS, classrooms are based on six stages of developmental learning that overlap traditional grade levels: emerging (K-1); beginning (1-2); developing (3); refining (4); applying (5-6); and leadership (7-8).

Students are grouped into multiage settings in which they are up to three years apart in age and may have the same teacher for more than one year. However, the school officially reports a grade for each child and defines each stage by a set of learning objectives that coincide with the state's standards. The curriculum, intended to graduate students who are ready for high school and aiming for college, was designed by Principal Cathy Whitehouse.

Prior to creating TIS, while working as a psychologist with children who had learning disabilities in Cleveland, Whitehouse realized, "although many children could still adjust and do okay, the children I was working with needed school to be much more geared toward the way they learned and what they needed."

She said the need for a learner-centered developmental education program—one that relies not on repetition of coursework for its struggling students but instead on continuous progression toward a new stage of understanding and knowledge—could not have been more apparent than on the day she opened TIS.

"When I have a five-year-old who walks in the door and doesn't know a single letter, doesn't know how to color or cut, doesn't recognize his name, that child is already two years behind."



GEORGIA—Starting this school year, Georgia is expanding options for parents who have students with disabilities. Through the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program, parents of special needs students in Georgia public schools who had an active Individualized Education Program during the 2006-07 school year may transfer their child to another public school with capacity or to a participating private

school. Scholarships toward private school tuition costs are based on the amount of state funding the public school system receives for the student in 2007-08. Since the bill was signed into law on May 18, more than 5,000 parents have filed an intent form expressing interest in the program.

By mastering the learning objectives, children progress from one stage to the next at any time, which is usually at the trimester mark when the school administers a round of assessments.

Teacher Silvia Kruger, who joined TIS six years ago, said developmental education may sound complicated but believes that it is simply an innovative approach to what many schools already face. "Especially in the inner city, you're going to have kids who are incredible readers and kids who can barely read. So developmentally, even though you shove them in one grade, they're all at different spectrums."

Consequently, the individualized instruction, which requires teachers to know the skill level of every child, has allowed the staff to address the individual needs of TIS' largely ethnic minority population, nearly two-thirds of whom come from low-income families. Small class sizes averaging 16 students per teacher guarantee that personal touch. (The ratio for one "emerging" class last year was 9 to 1.)

Overall, Whitehouse says the atmosphere at TIS feels like a family, especially with the participation of 30 senior citizen volunteers who work daily with the children one-on-one as mentors in reading and other subjects along with after-school activities that include museum visits. She envisions the school as a community hub for lifelong learning, remarking, "Age is not the relevant variable when it



comes to learning. Schools should be places where people of all different ages can come and participate together in learning activities that are of common interest to them."

Both Whitehouse and her husband, Peter, a geriatric neurologist who also specializes in cognitive disorders, founded TIS on the philosophy that "intergenerational learning creates a sharing of wisdom among the generations." It seemed, therefore, ideal to locate the school at his office building, the Fairhill Center, a nonprofit campus of services dedicated to successful aging. TIS leases nine rooms on the second floor, which has afforded them close connections to many of the center's patrons, particularly, as

Principal Whitehouse adds, a growing group of grandparents who have become caregivers for their grandchildren.

These relationships are so central to the mission of TIS that the school has developed partnerships with several nursing care facilities across Cleveland. Once a month, children read to senior residents, recite poems and collect oral histories, among other activities.

Maureen Weigeand, who transferred her granddaughter to TIS six years ago when she was in the second grade, feels the intergenerational programming has been an educational bonus because it teaches Kara to value people, regardless of age. "I'm crushed that we have to look for something else for her after eighth grade," she said, "because it's just been the best school experience we could have ever hoped for."

—By Nicole Ashby

The Intergenerational School



- > **Grade Span:** K–8
- > **Locale:** Urban
- > **Total Students:** 145
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 91% African-American, 4% white, 4% multiracial, 1% Asian
- > **Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 62%
- > **English Language Learners:** 0%
- > **Special Education Students:** 8%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In reading, 100%; in math, 100% (based on third-graders assessed on the 2007 state exam).
- > **Interesting Fact:** The Intergenerational School was the only charter school in 2006 to be rated "excellent" by the state of Ohio for three consecutive years.

Photos, clockwise: Principal Cathy Whitehouse; reading mentor Jim Wallace works with student Ryan, who is assigned to TIS' "refining" stage; and teacher Silvia Kruger with Jontez, who is in the "beginning" stage. On the cover, "refining" stage student Austin. Photos by John Gress.

HAWAII—Approximately \$3.5 million in grants were awarded by the U.S. Department of Education this summer to eight Honolulu-area organizations for innovative projects to improve education. Funded through *No Child Left Behind's* Native Hawaiian Education Program, these efforts range from beginning reading to gifted and talented programs. One project seeks to break the "culture of

poverty" among homeless families through a mobile preschool outreach designed to transition more than 700 children and adults into emergency shelters, which also will house family literacy services. In addition, the University of Hawaii at Hilo received a \$344,930 award from the Department to create a system of services promoting literacy and oral proficiency among students in grades K–3 at Hawaiian Language Immersion Program schools.

Sept. 17

Constitution and Citizenship Day, an observance commemorating the day the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787. The Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site—<http://www.free.ed.gov>—offers teaching and learning materials about the historical document that shaped America's democratic government.



Sept. 24

White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference on Youth and Education in the Hispanic Community, Washington, D.C., sponsored by a consortium of federal agencies for grassroots leaders interested in federal grant opportunities. To register online, visit <http://www.fbc.gov> or call 202-456-6708.

Oct. 18

Lights On Afterschool, a nationwide event saluting after-school programs, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance. To receive free resources for conducting local activities, visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org> or call 202-347-1002.

Oct. 21–27

National Character Counts! Week, a celebration of the importance of developing good character in youths, sponsored by the Josephson Institute of Ethics. To receive free resources for conducting local activities, visit <http://www.charactercounts.org> or call 1-800-711-2670.

Q&A

What benefits does *No Child Left Behind* offer parents of children in high-poverty schools?

Schools with high concentrations of children from low-income families receive what is called "Title I" support: federal funding to help students at risk of falling behind. More than half of all public schools (55 percent) come under this category. In exchange for these federal dollars, schools must meet certain requirements set forth in the *No Child Left Behind Act*, including giving parents information and choices about their children's education, as highlighted below.

> **Supplemental educational services (SES)** are free tutoring or other extra academic assistance outside the regular school day to students who: 1) qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; and 2) are enrolled in a Title I school that has not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three years or

longer. Parents of eligible children should receive annual notices about the availability of these services and a state-approved list of SES providers. (AYP is the annual level of improvement, as measured on student assessments and other academic indicators, set by each state that a school must achieve.)

> **Public school choice** allows parents to transfer their children to another higher-performing public school, which could be a public charter school or a school in another school district, if their children attend a Title I school that has not made AYP for two years or longer.

> **Local report cards**, prepared every year by school districts receiving Title I funds, include information on how students overall performed on state tests and thereby if schools achieved AYP goals. They not only tell how well the district is doing but also give a big picture of the performance of individual schools and different student groups, such as those with disabilities or with limited English proficiency. Districts must make the report cards easy to understand and available to parents.

Adapted from *Empowering Parents School Box: What Parents Need to Know*, U.S. Department of Education, 2007. To order, see back cover.

News Show Highlights Empowered Parents

As children return to school this fall, the ways in which parents and schools are working together under the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* to ensure a high-quality education will be the focus of the September edition of *Education News Parents Can Use*, the U.S. Department of Education's monthly television program.

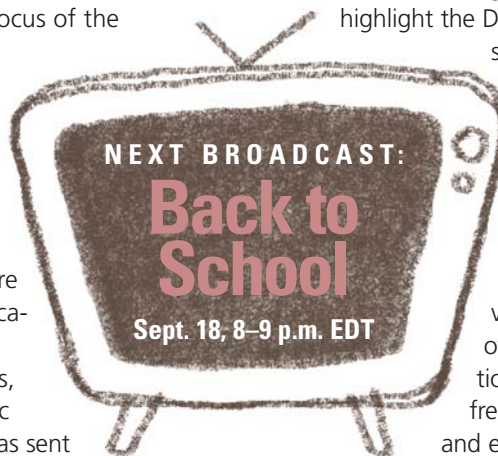
Giving parents more choices than ever before for their children's education—with magnet schools, charter schools, free tutoring and public school choice—*NCLB* has sent a strong message that results matter. Parents deserve timely information and better options, especially when their public schools do not live up to their promises. Guests on the September show will: discuss how these options work; provide tips for parents on

staying informed, getting involved and helping their children succeed in school; and report how the law is working to narrow the achievement gap. The show also will highlight the Department's work over the

summer and preview Secretary Spelling's back-to-school bus tour.

Each month, *Education News Parents Can Use* showcases: schools and school districts from across the country; conversations with school officials, parents and education experts; and advice and free resources for parents and educators.

To view the entire 2007–08 season schedule as well as learn about viewing options, including webcasts, visit <http://www.ed.gov> and click on "Parents," then "News Parents Can Use"; or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.



How are we doing?

Tell us how *The Achiever* is serving your needs!

Please complete a short customer survey by Sept. 15 at <http://www.ed.gov> (select "No Child Left Behind," then "The Achiever"). Your response is greatly appreciated.

Empowering Parents School Box

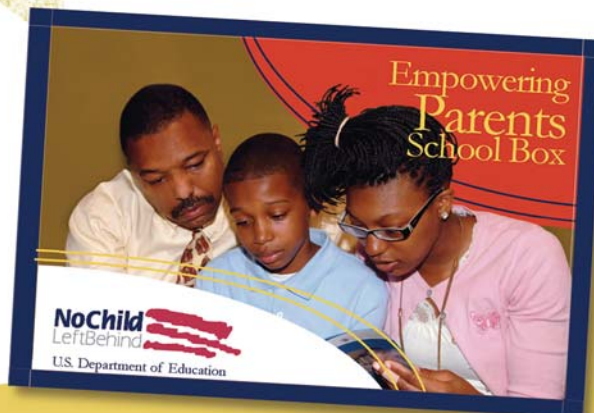
In light of the vital role parents play in their children's lives as their first teachers, the U.S. Department of Education will release this fall a new resource to equip parents with the information needed for advancing their children's education.

The *Empowering Parents School Box* is a colorful resource packed with brochures, bookmarks, a poster and a door hanger that covers such topics as:

- > Benefits available under *No Child Left Behind*;
- > Steps for selecting a high-quality school;
- > Tips on working with children from birth to high school;
- > Guidelines for taking advantage of free tutoring opportunities;
- > Ways to get involved in children's schools;
- > Information about financial aid and scholarships; and
- > Additional resources for improving learning.

Also included are success stories of schools where parent involvement made a difference, such as the story of one high-poverty, urban high school, where the achievement gap was cut considerably when only 30 percent of students passing the state exams in algebra and geometry tripled to approximately 92 percent six years later.

To place an advance order for a free copy of the school box, call 1-877-4ED-PUBS. For an online copy, visit <http://www.ed.gov> and select "Parents," then "Empowering Parents School Box."



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