




Archived Information



“When it comes to
the education of our
children . . . failure is
not an option.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



NEW! Web Site Gathers Recommendations on Disability Research Needs

A new Web site has been developed by the federal government’s Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) to gather comments and recommendations on research needs for Americans with disabilities.

The committee, chaired by Steven James Tingus, director of the Education Department’s National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, produced the site to help ensure that federal research efforts meet the needs of the disability community.

The site can be found at www.icdr.us.

Clicking the link “Send your comments to the ICDR” takes the reader to a comment form where individuals may offer their ideas about access to technology, education, employment, community life, health care and other needs.

Other links on the page cover topics such as:

- President Bush’s New Freedom Initiative to help people with disabilities;
- The ICDR statutory authority and mission;
- Membership of the committee; and
- Links to other disability sites.

The ICDR Web site will serve as a catalyst for information sharing and be a source for recommendations to the president and Congress on policy and priorities related to disability and rehabilitation research. The site will also increase awareness of federal disability research activities and make new research outcomes more available to the public.



THE ACHIEVER

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Paige Releases Principles for Reauthorizing Disabilities Act

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige recently released a set of principles to guide the Education Department in its work toward seeking reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the landmark statute that provides for the education of 6.5 million students with disabilities.

“Every child in America deserves the highest-quality education, including our children with disabilities,” Secretary Paige said. “Our goal is to align IDEA with the principles of *No Child Left Behind* by ensuring accountability, more flexibility, more options for parents and an emphasis on doing what works to improve student achievement. I look forward to working with Congress in the weeks and months ahead to achieve these goals.”

The act, which comes up for reauthorization before Congress this

year, guarantees a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities. At the time it was passed by Congress in 1975, more than a million students with disabilities were warehoused in institutions.

President Bush believes the recommendations offered by the Commission on Excellence in Special Education should serve as the starting point for reauthorization. After 13 meetings and hearings across the country since it began its work in 2001, the commission delivered to the president last July its recommendations in the report *A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families*.

For an outline of the principles referenced above, please visit www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-2003/02252003.html. Information about IDEA is available at www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP.

No Excuses

How a Cincinnati School Multiplied Parent Support and Teacher Commitment, and Tripled Its Test Scores

By Maggie Riechers

Sometimes starting over from scratch is the only way to reach success. Such is the case of the Parham School in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1999, the school hit rock bottom, placing among the lowest-achieving schools in the city. Now, a complete overhaul of the staff and instructional programs has turned things around, and today it is hailed as the number one neighborhood school in the district.

“Three years ago the school had very low achievement scores, high suspension and expulsion rates, poor attendance by both students and teachers, and virtually no parental support,” said principal Sherry Bell. “It was put in ‘redesign,’ and the school was closed.”

It reopened the following September with a new staff and a new approach. According to Bell, the keys to the school’s turnaround are commitment from teachers; an attitude toward learning that will not allow any excuses for poor performance from students; and a determination to get parents informed and involved.

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“We have raised the level of expectation,” said Bell, pictured with third-grader Harold Thomas. “Instead of working two or three levels down, we are working two or three up.”

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"We do not accept excuses from students," said Bell. "We don't care what environment the children come from. We have raised the level of expectation. Instead of working two or three levels down, we are working two or three up."

Parham is an inner-city school with a student population that is 99 percent African American. Eighty percent of students qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Despite the fact that many of Parham's families are economically disadvantaged, the students are making gains in achievement. In the 1999–2000 school year, only 23 percent of the students scored at the proficient level on the Ohio state proficiency test, but by 2002, 69 percent had. In math, the fourth-graders raised their proficiency rate much higher—from 16 percent in 2000 to 75 percent in 2002, thus meeting the state standard.

Besides the "no excuses" policy, Bell credits the teachers and the school's instructional program with the improvement. All teachers are required to sign a "Commitment to Excellence" contract. The contract stipulates that teachers accept a "willingness to work as part of a team with a shared accountability for student success," and that they establish "open communication with parents through both written and oral contacts." Teachers are asked to give up personal time at lunch to eat with their students, to forego recess, to work past the three o'clock dismissal time and to tutor students on Saturdays.

"I've been teaching for 28 years and always in economically deprived schools," said first-grade teacher Patricia Townsend. "The teachers here work together, the leadership guides us, everyone is on the same page.

This is the only school I've been where all the kids were ready at the end of the year for the assessment tests. Eighteen out of 22 in my class passed."

Teachers at Parham "teach to mastery" using a model that is a teacher-centered, phonics-based reading and language program under which no child is moved to the next lesson until he or she has mastered the one before. The school also uses supplemental reading materials to aid with comprehension.

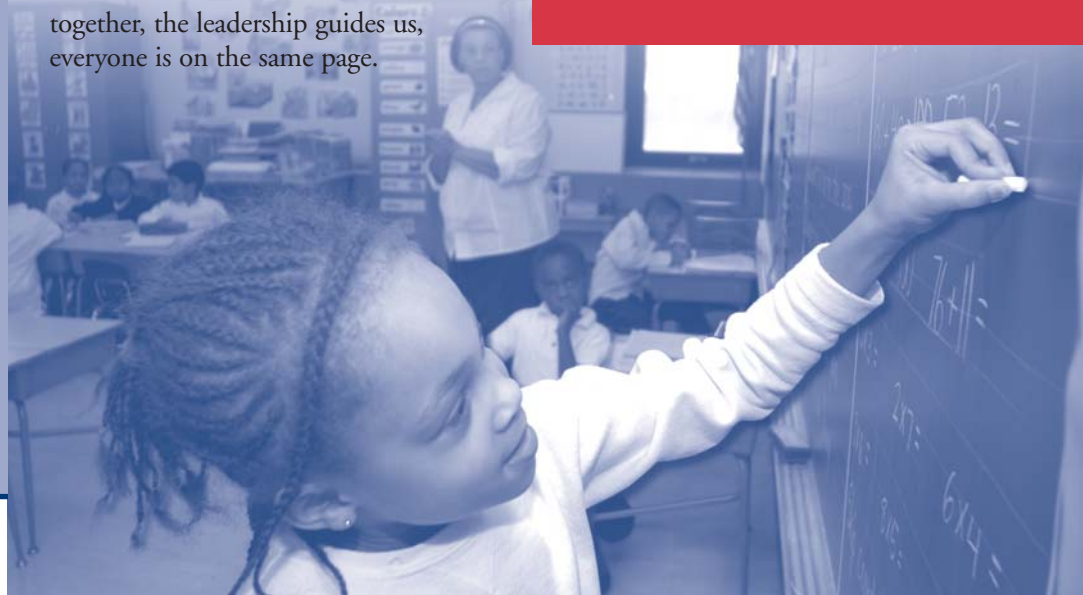
To further buoy student learning, Parham offers both after-school activities and Saturday morning tutoring sessions.

At Parham, students are required to wear uniforms, a white top and blue bottom, which the staff also wear not only to motivate the children to follow the policy but also to demonstrate that meeting these newly adopted standards is not just a student but a schoolwide goal.

Parent Monya Jones has seen many schools in Cincinnati in her job as a social worker. She placed her own child in "one of the best magnet schools in the district, offering a Montessori approach." After seeing Parham, Jones made a special request and had her daughter transferred in second grade. "I really liked the school structure and discipline," she said. "The school pushes to get the kids up to par and above."

For more information, call 513-872-7320 or visit <http://parham.cps-k12.org/pride.html>.

First-grader Dominique Lucas solves a math equation as teacher Patricia Townsend looks on.



"...The president and I believe in the bright potential of every child, and the research is clear: teachers' attitudes affect student achievement. Children—no matter their race, their family income or their zip code—show the greatest achievement gains with teachers who really believe they can learn."

Secretary Paige in his March 12, 2003, speech "Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations."



April 15
8:00–9:00 p.m. E.T.

Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will focus on teacher quality. This program was originally scheduled for March 18. Visit www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/ television or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

April 28–May 2

Fourth Annual National Charter Schools Week. For updates on events, visit www.edreform.com/info/events.htm.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind

Early Childhood Educator Professional Development

Research shows that children who receive high-quality early childhood education do better in school and in life. And one of the strongest characteristics of a high-quality early childhood education program is the preparation and pay of teachers, as well as their responsiveness and sensitivity to the children in their care. Yet the reality is that pay and preparation for early childhood educators remain low: in 2000, the average salary of child-care workers was \$15,430, and only in 20 states and the District of Columbia are teachers who work in public prekindergarten or preschool programs required to have a bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate in early childhood or elementary education.

To enhance the school readiness of young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development program under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* funds partnerships with the goal of improving the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators who work in communities with high concentrations of children living in poverty.

This competitive discretionary grant program is newly authorized under *No Child Left Behind*, although a somewhat similar grant program existed in 2001. The program will provide two-year grants to partnerships consisting of: (1) one or more institutions of higher education or another public or private entity that provides professional development for early childhood educators working with low-income children; (2) one or more local or state public agencies, Head Start agencies or private organizations; and (3) an entity that has demonstrated experience in providing training to educators in early childhood education programs in identifying and preventing behavior problems in children or working with children who are victims or suspected of being victims of abuse. State education agencies may apply as part of a partnership.

Partnerships must describe how they will train early childhood educators to provide developmentally appropriate school-readiness services—such as instruction in language, cognitive development and early reading skills—based on the best available research on early childhood pedagogy, child development and learning.

For details, visit www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/ecprofdev.html, or contact Patricia McKee at 202-260-0991 or Patricia.Mckee@ed.gov.

Did You Know?

Children living in families that are below poverty are less likely to participate in preschool education than children in families living at or above poverty (47 versus 59 percent, respectively).

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2002*, "Enrollment in Early Childhood Education Programs."