

Archived Information



ED REVIEW

July 16, 2004

...a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders



NCLB UPDATE (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>)

To date, the Education Department has given final, written approval to 20 of the approximately 45 states that submitted requests to amend their state accountability plan. (In February, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Ray Simon outlined the amendment process, <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/amproc.doc>, with an April 1 deadline for changes to apply to the current year's assessment results.) The most common amendments apply the flexibility Secretary Paige announced earlier this year on including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency in making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions and calculating test participation rates. Also, several states have asked to raise the minimum number of special education and limited English proficient students who must be tested before those groups count toward AYP. In addition, some states are adding a "confidence interval" to safe harbor requirements, which recognize dramatic improvement in schools and districts that miss their performance targets. In response to concerns that states are "ducking" accountability with such changes, Simon told *Education Week*, "I have to believe that any state's requests for amendments are done for the purpose of making a plan better and more defensible. I don't see any state trying to avoid accountability." Furthermore, the Department has denied some requests that are either not authorized under *No Child Left Behind* or lack supporting data. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON STATE REQUESTS, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/stateletters/>.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) has released a new report detailing state implementation activity on 40 unique *No Child Left Behind* indicators. As of March 2004, all but two states and the District of Columbia had met or were partially on track to meeting 75 percent of the indicators -- an impressive 109 percent increase from March 2003. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ecs.org/html/special/nclb/reporttothenation/reporttothenation.htm>.

With a grant from the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement, Greatschools.net recently launched a new feature for 30 U.S. states that allows parents, policymakers, and others to easily ascertain whether a school is "in need of improvement." If it is, the site offers a list of schools in the district not "in need of improvement," which parents can consult as they consider their school choice options.



VOCATIONAL STUDY

According to the "National Assessment of Vocational Education," the fourth such study since 1980 and the first since 1994, the proportion of vocational students taking a core high school academic curriculum has increased from 18.5 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2000. This is an encouraging sign, given that the administration's Perkins Act reauthorization blueprint calls for high schools to raise their academic standards. Nevertheless, vocational students continue to lag behind their peers in test scores (only 29 percent of twelfth-grade vocational students were proficient in reading on the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress test, compared to 44 percent of non-vocational students), vocational teachers score worse on state licensure exams than their colleagues, and current policy "offers a conflicted picture of federal priorities for vocational education improvement [between academic achievement and technical skill]...." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/nave/>.



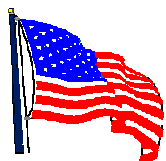
READING AT RISK

The National Endowment for the Arts' "Reading at Risk" presents results from a large-scale survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002. The assessment is bleak: for the first time in modern history, less than half of the adult population reads literature (defined as any novels, short stories, plays, or poetry, read in leisure time over the last 12 months). Moreover, reading in America is declining rapidly within every demographic (gender, race, education level, and age). Among the other findings:

- The 10 percentage point decline in literary reading (56.9% in 1982 to 46.7% in 2002) represents a loss of 20 million potential readers.

- Over the past 20 years, young adults (ages 18-34) have declined from the group most likely to read literature to the group least likely, with the exception of adults age 65 and older.
- Literary reading strongly correlates to other forms of active civic participation. Literary readers are more likely than non-literary readers to perform charity or volunteer work, visit art museums, and attend performing arts and sporting events.
- In 1990, book buying constituted 5.7% of total recreation spending, while spending on audio, video, computers, and software was 6%. By 2002, electronic spending had soared to 24%, while spending on books declined slightly to 5.6%.

"Reading is not a timeless, universal capability," Dana Gioia, chairman of the endowment, appeals in the study's preface. "As more Americans lose this capability, our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded. These are not qualities a free, innovative, or productive society can afford to lose." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.html>.



AMERICAN HISTORY

In honor of Independence Day, the Department awarded 122 American History Grants to 40 states and Puerto Rico. These grants, which have been awarded since 2001 under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, promote the teaching of traditional American history by supporting practical professional development. Among the activities, teachers will make "immersion visits" to historic sites in such cities as Boston and Philadelphia and receive intensive training in the use of technology to enhance history education. The grants may also be used for scholarships for books and fees for teachers who want to pursue graduate work in American history. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/>. (Abstracts of grantees are available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/awards.html>.)

The latest edition of the Department's *Helping Your Child* series is largely comprised of history-related activities that can be experienced at home or in the community for children in preschool through fifth-grade, yet features information about the "basics of history;" suggestions for how to work with teachers to help children succeed in school; and a list of federal resources, helpful web sites, and suggested books for parents and children. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html>.



21ST CENTURY SKILLS

A coalition of high-tech companies and non-profit organizations has issued a series of free tools to help teachers, administrators, and policymakers incorporate 21st century skills into the core curriculum. One of the new tools, "Route 21: An Interactive Guide to 21st Century Learning," takes education stakeholders through the process of creating "actionable plans" to integrate technology skills into subject areas like English, math, and geography. It will also help schools meet the 2006 *No Child Left Behind* deadline for ensuring that every eighth-grader is "technologically literate." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/>.



FROM THE INTERAGENCY STAFF...

On July 8, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham announced that his Cabinet agency and its national laboratories are launching an initiative to promote science literacy and help develop the next generation of engineers and scientists. Specifically, Abraham outlined a program known as Scientists Teaching and Reaching Students, or STARS, consisting of seven parts:

- piloting a three-year professional development program for 77 K-14 teachers at seven laboratories;
- upgrading and expanding the Argonne National Laboratory's Ask a Scientist web site, an online forum where more than 12,000 questions have been fielded by scientists since 1991;
- organizing and hosting the first of what is expected to become a yearly conference called What's Next?, where scientists and corporate innovators can demonstrate breakthrough technologies they expect to become commonplace in the near future;
- throughout the year, holding Science Appreciation Days that will offer a variety of activities to 1,000 fifth-graders and 1,000 eighth-graders in each laboratory zone;
- sponsoring Career Day programs, by sending scientists into local schools to conduct experiments and discuss employment opportunities;
- creating an Office of Science Education responsible for coordinating and implementing the Secretary's initiatives; and

- introducing the agency's scientific leaders -- including Nobel Laureates -- to inspire young scientists to continue their studies of math and science.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

http://www.science.doe.gov/Sub/Newsroom/News_Releases/DOE-SC/2004/Education-Initiative/Education-Initiative.htm.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"Technology provides new opportunities for 'affecting eternity.' It can be used for learning, for engaging students, and for connecting communities of teachers. Using these tools requires imagination and vision. But they are only tools. Technology only complements the teacher's instruction, which remains the greatest asset available for students. The teacher is the person who will lead the learning process and provide a continuity of message and content....Technology can be a remarkable asset in sharing information and expanding intellectual horizons. But our humanity will be learned from teachers and mentors, working with parents and others in the community."

-- Secretary of Education Rod Paige (7/12/04)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Reminder: the Education Industry Association's annual conference, EDVentures 2004, will be held August 4-6 outside of Chicago. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.educationindustry.org/edventures/2004/>.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs with any questions:

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