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ED REVIEW

August 26, 2005

...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/>)

On August 24, Secretary Spellings kicked-off her first Back-to-School season by visiting Capitol View Elementary School (a "90-90-90 school," meaning 90 percent of the students are minority, 90 percent are disadvantaged, and 90 percent are meeting state standards in reading and math) and speaking at the Atlanta Press Club in Atlanta, Georgia. "It's my first back-to-school as Secretary of Education," the Secretary told the Press Club audience, "but I've been doing these for well over a decade as a mom. It's a return to the school year routine. And that means putting away the video games, checking up on homework, talking to teachers, and, of course, asking lots and lots of questions. I always like to say that back-to-school isn't just for students and teachers. It's back-to-school for parents, too." Her message was one of progress. "The news is good. We've gotten assessment results from over half the states, and we're seeing higher reading and math scores in almost every one. In other words, more students are learning. The [student] achievement gap is starting to close. And *No Child Left Behind* is working." But, "We still have room for improvement," she noted. "It's no coincidence that nine- and 13-year-olds made the biggest gains on the Nation's Report Card (see <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/achieve/report-card.html>), and scores for 17-year-olds stayed pretty flat. The first round of *No Child Left Behind* reforms focused on younger students. We must extend the benefits of high standards and accountability into our high schools." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2005/08/08242005.html>.

During her address, the Secretary also announced the launch of a new Internet feature, called "Teachers Ask the Secretary." This site allows teachers to ask questions and read answers to questions that have already been posed. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/reform/teachersask/>.

Meanwhile, earlier this week, Standard & Poor's Evaluation Services unveiled a list of 203 school districts in 13 states (AZ, AR, CA, DE, IN, KS, KY, MA, NY, PA, SD, VA, and WA) that have significantly narrowed the achievement gap between African-American, Hispanic, or economically disadvantaged students and their high-performing classmates while simultaneously raising the average proficiency rates of the groups being compared (such as black and white students). FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO http://www.schoolmatters.com/App/SES/SPSServlet/StaticMenuRequest?Page=&MenuType=achievement_gap.shtml&MenuLevel=0&Advanced=false.



BTS: HIGH SCHOOLS

A special back-to-school edition of "Education News Parents Can Use" (September 20, 8:00-9:00 ET) will focus on high schools. With participation by Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Henry Johnson, the broadcast will feature back-to-school information for parents (i.e., advice for keeping students on track, questions to ask teachers and principals, tips on course selection, etc.); showcase teachers and administrators from high schools that are successfully applying *No Child Left Behind* principles of high standards for all students and evidence-based approaches to learning; and spotlight Advanced Placement, Community College Access/Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate, State Scholars, and other key initiatives designed to increase the rigor and relevance of high school. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/>. (You can watch live and archived webcasts at <http://www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/>.)

Also: To prepare for the new school year, the Department has released a checklist of questions and tips for parents, schools, and the community. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbchecklist.html>.



STRIVING READERS

The Department is accepting applications under the \$25 million Striving Readers program. The program seeks to raise the overall level of reading achievement in middle and high schools by enhancing the quality of literacy instruction across all subject areas,

providing intensive, targeted interventions for all struggling adolescent readers, and building a strong, scientific research base around specific strategies that improve adolescent literacy skills. To be eligible for a grant (the Department expects to make eight awards, ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million over a five-year period), school districts must have Title I schools of sixth-grade and above. A notice of intent to apply is due by September 14; full applications are due November 14. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/>. (Note: The Department will conduct a series of briefings on this competition via conference call to clarify the purposes of the program, the selection criteria, and the competition process. Check the web site above for dates and times of the pre-application meetings.)



VISIONS 2020.2

On August 21, NetDay, a national education technology group, released a new report, "Visions 2020.2: Student Views on Transforming Education and Training Through Advanced Technologies," developed in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Education. The report stems from NetDay's Speak Up Day for Students 2004, an annual online event where students across the country spoke out about technology for learning and their futures. A unique feature of the 2004 survey was an open-ended question: "In the future, you will be the inventors of new technologies. What would you like to see invented that you think will help kids learn in the future?" Over 55,000 K-12 students from all 50 states responded, and the Department of Commerce identified the following four themes:

- **Digital Devices**, particularly small, voice-activated, multi-functional devices.
- **Access to Computers and the Internet**, with each student having a computer with high-speed, wireless Internet access for his or her use in school and at home.
- **Intelligent Tutor**, providing help with homework, particularly math, as well as access to a single, all-knowing information resource.
- **Ways to Learn and Complete School Work Using Technology**, including e-books, online classes, digital teachers, virtual world experiences, and personalized learning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO
http://www.nationaledtechplan.org/documents/visions_20202.pdf.



ACT SCORES

The national average score for the ACT exam is 20.9 (on a scale of 1 through 36), unchanged from last year, despite a record-number of test takers and a sizable increase in minority test takers. (Since 2001, the number of ACT-tested students has increased 11 percent, with black students up 23 percent and Hispanic students up 40 percent.) At the same time, the scores indicate that "too many students" are not ready for college-level courses. In fact, just 41 percent earned a score of 22 or higher on the math test, while only one in four earned a score of 24 or higher on the science test. (Students who have these scores have a high probability -- 75 percent -- of earning a "C" or better and an even chance of earning a "B" or higher in college algebra and biology courses, respectively.) What is causing this disconnect? Graduates are still not taking the right courses in high school to prepare for college. In the Class of 2005, about half (54%) of test takers reported taking the recommended "core" curriculum, including four years of English and three years of math (algebra and higher), science, and social studies. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.act.org/news/releases/2005/8-17-05.html>. (Secretary Spellings' statement is available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/08/08182005.html>.)

Also: The second-annual High School Survey of Student Engagement, conducted by Indiana University, offers a detailed look at high school students' attitudes and expectations. A notable finding: only slightly more than half (53%) of the 80,000 respondents agreed that they put forth considerable effort in their school work. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.iub.edu/~nsse/hssse/>.



NEW LISTSERV

The Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has created a new listserv. Subscribers interested in education research, evaluation, and statistics will automatically receive periodic notification of information available on the IES web site. The listserv will focus on such topics as funding, recent publications, and facts and figures from the well-known National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/signupform.html>.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"It's a simple formula. Students rise to the challenge of high expectations. You get more when you expect more. What gets measured gets done.... We're hearing [success] stories all across the country. Schools are doing whatever it takes to leave no child behind -- from Saturday help sessions in Chatham County, NC, to free tutoring for struggling students at Mollie E. Ray Elementary School in Florida, to a longer school day in Sioux Falls, SD. Think about it. If it weren't for *No Child Left Behind*, I'm not sure we would even be talking about how to educate every child."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (8/24/05)



UPCOMING EVENTS

September is Library Card Sign-Up Month, sponsored by the American Library Association. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopresskits/librarycardsignupmonth2005/>.

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