

# Archived Information



## ED REVIEW

September 26, 2003

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

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

On September 17, Secretary Paige named over 210 public and private elementary and secondary schools, from 38 states and the District of Columbia, as the first *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools. The renewed program recognizes schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap (schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to a high level on state assessments or national norm-referenced assessments) or achieve at very high levels (schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent on state assessments). Also, of the schools submitted by each state, at least one-third must meet the significant progress criterion. Chief State School Officers nominate public schools and the Council for American Private Education nominates private schools. The winners will be honored at ceremony in Washington, D.C., on October 30-31. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbbs/>. (Note: Blue Ribbon winners must meet adequate yearly progress, as defined by their states. Several states will not learn which nominees won the award until October 1, after those states report on AYP.)

Yesterday, during a virtual town hall meeting, Secretary Paige highlighted rural communities in Iowa, Montana, New Mexico, and West Virginia that are harnessing the power of technology to meet the goals and requirements of *No Child Left Behind*. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ods/ruraled/>.

The Department is accepting public comment on proposed regulations intended to clarify the ground rules for the receipt of federal funding by religious groups. For example, organizations must not use government aid to support "inherently religious" activities, such as worship, religious instruction, and proselytization. On the other hand, organizations may retain their religious identity, including the display of icons and symbols and

the selection of board members on a religious basis. Comments are due 60 days from publication in the *Federal Register*, which is expected today. Faith-based organizations are eligible to receive federal funding for after-school services, mentoring programs, and tutoring and other supplemental services provided under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/09/09222003b.html>. (Note: Comments may be sent electronically to [faithandcommunity@ed.gov](mailto:faithandcommunity@ed.gov). Put the term "proposed rule" in the subject line of the message.)

Congratulations to the Long Beach Unified School District, winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education for 2003. Long Beach edged out four other finalists: Boston, Garden Grove (CA), Jefferson County (KY), and Norfolk. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.broadfoundation.org/med-news/2003-0922.shtml>.

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## BACK TO SCHOOL ADDRESS

Earlier this week, Secretary Paige delivered his annual Back to School Address, entitled "Education in America: The Complacency Must End." Laying out the reasons why "revolution" was necessary, the Secretary referred to the education circumstances of the majority of disadvantaged and low-income students as "a defacto system of apartheid." Indeed, he said, "we celebrate by overlooking disparities" (headlines just reported SAT scores at an all-time high, even as African-American scores remained flat and Hispanic scores declined) and "we have become complacent, self-satisfied, and often lacking the will to do better" (a new international report shows American students are being overtaken by students in other countries -- see below). Fortunately, the *No Child Left Behind Act* provides us "the tools we need to reform our education system." Then, the Secretary targeted the law's critics, asserting "it is the lack of accountability that has gotten us into this mess." In one rebuttal, he discussed contradictions in labeling. "It may surprise a lot of you that schools that get an 'A' from their state...are suddenly also on another list: schools that under *No Child Left Behind* are considered 'in need of improvement.' Parents more than likely react to this new fact with bewilderment. How can schools be on both lists, they ask? The answer is that some [state] evaluations use group averages, which can hide poorly performing students, while *No Child Left Behind* counts all students." Additional rebuttals were proffered for the law's ambitious goals, fiscal commitment, and testing emphasis. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2003/09/09242003.html>.

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## INTERNATIONAL REPORT

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's "Education at a Glance," which tracks 25 industrialized nations, no nation spends more public and private money to educate each student than the U.S. However, American 15-year-olds scored in the middle of the pack in international assessments in 2000, and the nation's high school graduation rate was below the world average in 2001. "This report documents how little we receive in return for our national investment," Secretary Paige said. This report also reminds us that we are battling two achievement gaps. One is between those being served well by our system and those being left behind. The other is between the U.S. and many of our higher achieving friends around the world. By closing the first gap, we will also close the second." One other finding: American teachers are among the hardest working. The average primary teacher spends 792 hours per year at school; teachers in New Zealand, Scotland, and the U.S. spend 950 hours or more. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO [http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_37455\\_13634484\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37455\\_00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en_2649_37455_13634484_1_1_1_37455_00.html).

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### AS A PARENT...

If you missed this month's "Education News Parents Can Use" broadcast on resources for helping your child succeed in school, be sure to visit the Department's Especially for Parents web site: <http://www.ed.gov/parents/>. The URL consolidates and categorizes helpful information about each step of education process -- from preparing a child for school through finding and paying for college -- and links to publications, like *No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide* and the six-volume *Helping Your Child* series.

A brochure by Parent Leadership Associates (<http://www.plassociates.org/twelve.html>) offers a list of "12 things you should know about and expect from your schools and yourself." The recommendations are built on the idea that "knowledgeable, engaged parents improve student achievement," a theme that resonates throughout *No Child Left Behind*. Consider #8, which states "Middle school is not too early to begin learning what kind of courses your child should be taking if he or she wants to leave high school ready for

college." In fact, the research shows students who take algebra in eighth-grade are much more likely to take advanced math in high school -- and then to go on to college.

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## ASSISTANT SECRETARY

President Bush has nominated Raymond Simon, Director of the Arkansas Department of Education, to be the new Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. Before being appointed the state's top education official in September 1997, Simon was a math teacher in the North Little Rock School District, superintendent for the Conway Public Schools, and Arkansas' Assistant Superintendent of Finance. He is a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education is responsible for directing, coordinating, and recommending policy for programs designed to: assist state and local education agencies to improve the achievement of students; ensure equal access to services leading to such improvement for all children, particularly children who are educationally disadvantaged; and provide financial assistance to state and local education agencies whose revenues are affected by "federal activities." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/09/09222003d.html>.

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## STUDENT LOAN DEFAULT RATE

The national student loan default rate has dropped to an all-time low of 5.4 percent, and, for the first time in history, all schools have default rates low enough to ensure they remain eligible for federal financial aid programs. The national default rate has dropped nearly every year since 1990, when it peaked at 22.4 percent. The FY 2001 rates represent the most current data available and include borrowers who attended 6,200 schools that participate in the Federal Family Education Loan and William Ford Federal Direct Loan programs. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/09/09162003.html>. (Individual school default rates are at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/defaultmanagement/cdr.html>.)

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## QUOTE TO NOTE

"Let us remember that education is the road out of poverty, the best weapon against racism, the best correlate to good health, and vital to the continued growth of our economy. Forty-one years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke at this podium about the need for greater accountability -- a guarantee that all Americans enjoyed a full measure of the promise of the American dream. The Civil Rights Act was a landmark in extending political and economic equality to all Americans. I believe that *No Child Left Behind* is the logical next step, for it extends educational equality to all Americans. The American Dream begins with, and demands, a meaningful, sound education."

-- Secretary of Education Rod Paige (9/24/03)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

The High School Leadership Summit's plenary session, featuring Secretary Paige and other high profile speakers, will be webcast live on October 8, beginning at 9:00 a.m. ET. The summit is being held to raise awareness about the state of American high schools and promote a more promising future for our high school students and graduates. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/>.

Remember, October 9 is *Lights On Afterschool!*, the only nationwide event celebrating afterschool programs. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa\\_2003/index.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2003/index.cfm). (Find an event in your area by searching at [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa\\_2003/find.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2003/find.cfm).)

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

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