

# ACHIEVER



www.ed.gov • May 1, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 8

## New Policy Issued for Calculating Participation Rates Under NCLB

To help states implement the accountability provisions in the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the U.S. Department of Education recently announced new flexibility for calculating the percentage of students who participate on state assessments in reading and mathematics. In order to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), schools and school districts must demonstrate that at least 95 percent of students, both in aggregate and as subgroups, participated in the state's assessment program.

The new flexibility allows a state to average data from the previous one or two years with data from the current year to determine participation rates. If this two- or three-

year average meets or exceeds 95 percent, the subgroup, school or district will meet the AYP requirement. For example, a school might find that its participation rate dropped to 94 percent for one year. If in the previous two years, the rates were 95 percent and 96 percent, then by averaging these three years the school would meet the 95-percent participation rate requirement.

In addition, students who are unable to take the test during either the testing or make-up "windows" due to a significant medical emergency will not count against the school's participation rate. This new policy allows schools to omit such students when calculating their participation rates so that schools whose averages might be affected by such situations will not be unduly identified for improvement.

For more information, visit [www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03292004.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03292004.html).

*Jennifer Whyman draws on her former experiences as a trader at the New York Stock Exchange to teach an enrichment class on the stock market to fourth- and fifth-graders at Mott Hall School.*

## Switching Bells

By Jennifer Whyman, New York City



Since leaving my job as a specialist trader at the New York Stock Exchange to teach in a New York City public school, many people have asked me, "Why did you leave? Don't you miss the money and excitement? Why would you want to spend hours in the hot classroom of a city school?"

They want to know how I segued from an established career in finance to embark on an uncharted journey in our nation's public schools. Would I miss being one of only 30 women among 1,336 traders who make a living executing orders worth millions of dollars? Most traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange stand from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.—without a rest. Most teachers in our nation's schools also stand all day amid equally exciting and frenetic activity. The difference is that, although teachers and traders both stand all day, teachers personally change lives; traders never do.

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**The Achiever** is published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, U.S.

Department of Education (ED). Rod Paige, Secretary.

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**For information on ED programs, resources and events,** contact: Information Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202, 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), usa\_learn@ed.gov.

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Some days when I left the floor of the New York Stock Exchange I made a lot of money. Some days I lost a lot of money. However, I never

felt like I made a difference in someone's life. But when I leave Mott Hall School at the end of the day, I know that I have made a difference. I can picture the children's faces as they have shared their favorite haiku poem or written their first memoir. It is not about something easily measured like shares of stock. It is measured in shares of someone's future growth as a talented, educated and ethical person in our community.

On the trading floor I met many accomplished CEOs, but I didn't meet future chess champions, musicians, writers, scientists and mathematicians. At Mott Hall, I collaborate with students who are stretching their minds and who are proud to be selected to attend this school.

Mott Hall is a magnet school for grades four through eight, located in an old convent in the middle of Harlem. Dr. Mirian Acosta-Sing, who became principal 18 years ago, has built the school into a stronghold of academic excellence. Known for its rigorous academic environment, Mott Hall attracts students from many different neighborhoods. It provides advanced studies and enrichment classes in subjects as varied as chess, robotics and the stock market, to name a few. Its recent test scores in mathematics and English were both in the 90th percentile of New York City schools, and it is the only school in the city to receive the 2003 *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon School Award.

But the question still remains: Why change careers to go into teaching? Something was missing despite all the money and prestige that came packaged with a career in finance. One day my three-year-old asked, "What do you do all day, Mommy? Run around like those little ants and toy soldiers I see on TV?" What was missing was the satisfaction of helping others in our society. When I lay my head down on my pillow at night, had I

made a difference in anyone else's life?

I wanted to share all I had learned with others. Could I teach about the powerful stock market that propels our nation and the exciting U.S. economy? Perhaps I could teach English literature, my major in college, and make meaningful points, like how *The Little Prince* is a story of life, ethics and beauty.

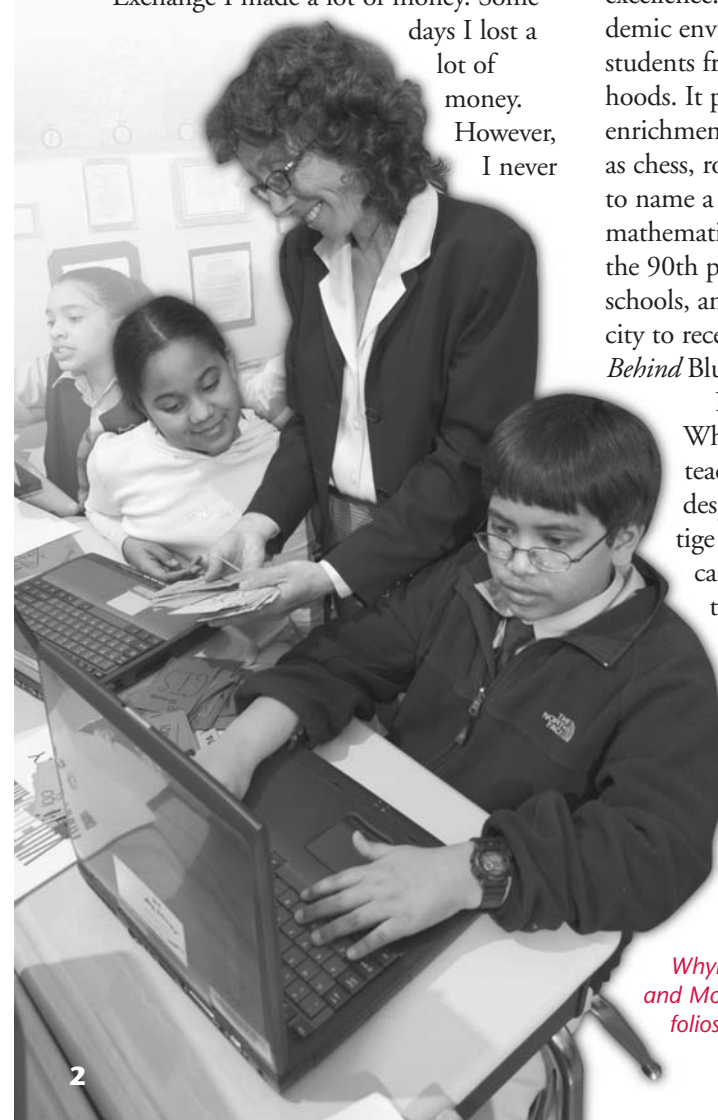
Another big question was: How could I make the change from trading to teaching? I decided to enroll at Teachers College at Columbia University to get a master's in teaching. My long-term goal was to teach economics and English. During my second phase of student teaching, I was lucky enough to be assigned to Mott Hall School. There, I found the students and teachers most inspiring and the freedom to devise my own curriculum on the stock market.

At our school, there is a spirit of learning that is highly charged by a belief in excellence and standards. Walking through the brightly decorated halls of Mott Hall is just as exciting as walking onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Glowing on the bulletin boards of Ms. Skea's classroom, for instance, are student projects exploring right angles. Up the corridor are eighth-graders in Ms. Boro's class pushing themselves to write high-school level essays about the individual versus society. In Ms. Einstein's literature class next door, students are giving oral presentations on the poetry of Langston Hughes.

To this day, at 9:30 a.m., when the opening bell rings on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, I look up at the clock on my classroom wall and think, "Time to start yelling 'Sold!' or 'I'll buy your stock!'" But when I look over and see that there are 26 smiling students looking at me, I realize then that I am satisfied, delirious with my good fortune at being surrounded by inquisitive young minds and friends.

*Jennifer Whyman is a first-year teacher at the Mott Hall School for Advanced Studies in Math, Science and Technology in New York City, where she teaches sixth-grade English and an enrichment course entitled "Our Nation's Economy and the Stock Market" to fourth- and fifth-graders.*

*Whyman assists fifth-graders Marielle and Monzu in charting their stock portfolios online.*



"I urge each of you to change the thinking in our education system, to promote the radical idea that all students can learn, to make advanced courses available to students who haven't had the opportunity before, and to take advanced courses to school settings that haven't been included in the past."

Remarks by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige at the Advanced Placement Conference, March 30, 2004.



**May 18**  
**8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.**

*Education News Parents Can Use* monthly broadcast will focus on American history, humanities and civics. Visit [www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv](http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

**June 16-18**  
**Miami Beach, Fla.**

*2004 National Charter Schools Conference*, "Push to 50: Getting the Final 10 States and Growing the Movement," sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, visit [www.conference-pros.com/conferences/charter/2004](http://www.conference-pros.com/conferences/charter/2004) or 1-800-522-0772, extension 1022.

**Close-Up:**



## No Child Left Behind Teacher Quality

The U.S. Department of Education announced last month a new initiative for engaging some of the nation's most successful teachers and education experts in sharing techniques for raising student achievement with other teachers from across the country. The Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative will also keep educators informed of the latest strategies and research on educational practices that work in the classroom. It features:

- Teacher roundtables scheduled for this spring and summer on professional development opportunities and other ways to advance the teaching profession;
- Summer workshops on closing the achievement gap;
- Research-to-Practice Summit, to be held this summer in Washington, D.C., on improving student learning through scientifically based research; and
- Teacher e-mail updates on the latest policy, research and developments.

The initiative also includes a new Web site—[www.teacherquality.us](http://www.teacherquality.us)—with information about promising practices and initiatives at the state and local levels and upcoming teacher-oriented events. Educators may apply for one of the summer workshops or register for the e-mail updates on the Web site.

These initiatives build on the work of the Teacher Assistance Corps (TAC), which the secretary formed last summer to support state efforts to implement the highly qualified teacher requirements of *No Child Left Behind*. Consisting of 45 teachers, district officials, leaders from higher education and national experts, along with professional staff from the Department of Education, the TAC has heard from educators nationwide, having visited all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. TAC also offers clarification on the law, guidance, technical assistance, feedback on state efforts and information-sharing about promising practices.

### Achieving Diversity

The various ways higher education institutions are using innovative, race-neutral approaches to achieve diversity on their campuses have been outlined in a new report released in March by the U.S. Department of Education.

Achieving Diversity: Race-Neutral Alternatives in American Education describes two categories of programs:

"Developmental approaches" are designed to diversify student enrollments by enriching the pipeline of applicants equipped to meet entry requirements and achieve academic success. "Admissions approaches" are designed to diversify student enrollment through admissions policies and procedures, such as socioe-



## Did You Know?

The number of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools increased 29 percent between 1988 and 2001; and is projected to increase 5 percent between 2001 and 2013.

Source: *Projections of Education Statistics to 2013*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003.

conomic criteria, class rankings and race-neutral lotteries to determine student admissions.

The report, which also includes information on approaches used in K-12 schools, is available at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-raceneutralreport2.htm](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-raceneutralreport2.htm).

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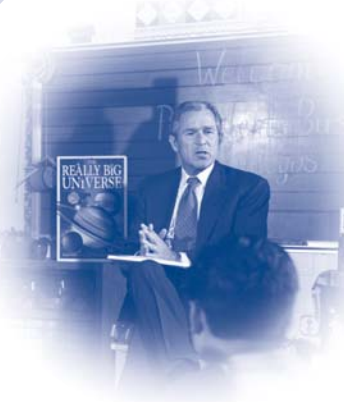


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May 1, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 8

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID  
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EDUCATION  
Permit NO. G-17

**FIRST CLASS**



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



## **SPANISH WEB SITE!** Online Catalog Offers ED Resources in Spanish

**T**he U.S. Department of Education (ED) recently updated the link on its home page ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)) for Spanish speakers and others interested in Spanish-language resources for their districts and schools. Developed by the Department's Information Resource Center (IRC), the Web site includes a range of education-related information—everything from resources for the student looking for college financial aid to the foreign teacher interested in teaching in the US.

Users can access the site through ED's home page by clicking "Recursos en español" or connect directly at [www.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es](http://www.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es).

Some of the Spanish-language resources included are:

- Popular ED publications, including *No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide*;
- The Department's *Declaration of Rights for Parents of English Language Learners Under No Child Left Behind*;
- Frequently asked questions on topics such as adult education, careers in education, federal student aid, applying to college and credentials evaluation of those with non-U.S. degrees;
- Contact information for ED offices, other federal agencies and non-profit organizations; and
- Information about resources available from the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities.

The Web page will be updated frequently with additional resources, including information on options for parents under NCLB. For more information, contact 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327); Spanish-speaking information specialists are available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. E.T.