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# THE ACHIEVER

November 1, 2003 • Vol. 2, No. 15

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**FIRST CLASS**

## Archived Information



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

## NEW RESOURCE! Celebrating Veterans Day in the Classroom



November 11 marks the 50th anniversary of Veterans Day, the day set aside each year to honor and thank the nation's living veterans who have served honorably in the military. To commemorate this historic occasion, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has a new resource guide to help elementary and high school teachers educate their students on the contributions the nation's 25 million living veterans have made toward ensuring our nation's freedom.

*Honoring All Who Served* is available online at [www.va.gov/vetsday](http://www.va.gov/vetsday) and

includes—

- The history of Veterans Day
- Suggested programs for celebrating this federal holiday (such as ideas for plays and skits, poster contests and library activities)
- Proper procedures for flying and folding the American flag
- Statistics on American wars

The Web page also offers a five-minute video that features actress Jennifer Love Hewitt, who describes ways students can help veterans, including volunteer opportunities with Veterans Service Organizations such as Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

*"Veterans deserve our utmost respect and admiration for the sacrifices they have made for each and every one of us," Hewitt says in the video. "I want to bring their stories to the attention of those who need to understand that freedom isn't free."*

Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs





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## High School Summit Tackles “Unrecognized Educational Crisis”

Secretary Paige joined more than 700 of the nation’s high school leaders for the National High School Leadership Summit on Oct. 8 in Washington, D.C., during which he unveiled a series of measures to promote educational excellence in secondary education.

“We are facing an unrecognized educational crisis in this country,” said Secretary Paige. “Our wide and sometimes growing achievement gap confirms that we live with a two-tiered educational system.”

Paige said that only one in six African-American seniors and one in five Hispanic seniors can read proficiently. On-time graduation rates at inner-city schools, he added, are “shockingly low,” with fewer than half of ninth-graders in the nation’s 35 largest cities graduating four years later.

To tackle these and other issues, Paige announced the following efforts:

- “Preparing America’s Future,” a high school improvement initiative.

- \$11 million in new grants for promising activities in grades 6-12 to increase the enrollment of students from low-income families in advanced courses.
- \$2.4 million in grants for the State Scholars Initiative, a community partnership to increase the percentage of students who complete challenging courses that will better prepare them for postsecondary education, the military and the workplace.

- A new Web tool—[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)—to guide parents and students through the college application and financial aid process.

For more on the summit, visit [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hsinit/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hsinit/index.html).

## Parent Participation: A Requisite for Success

By Don Ogden, Sacramento, Calif.

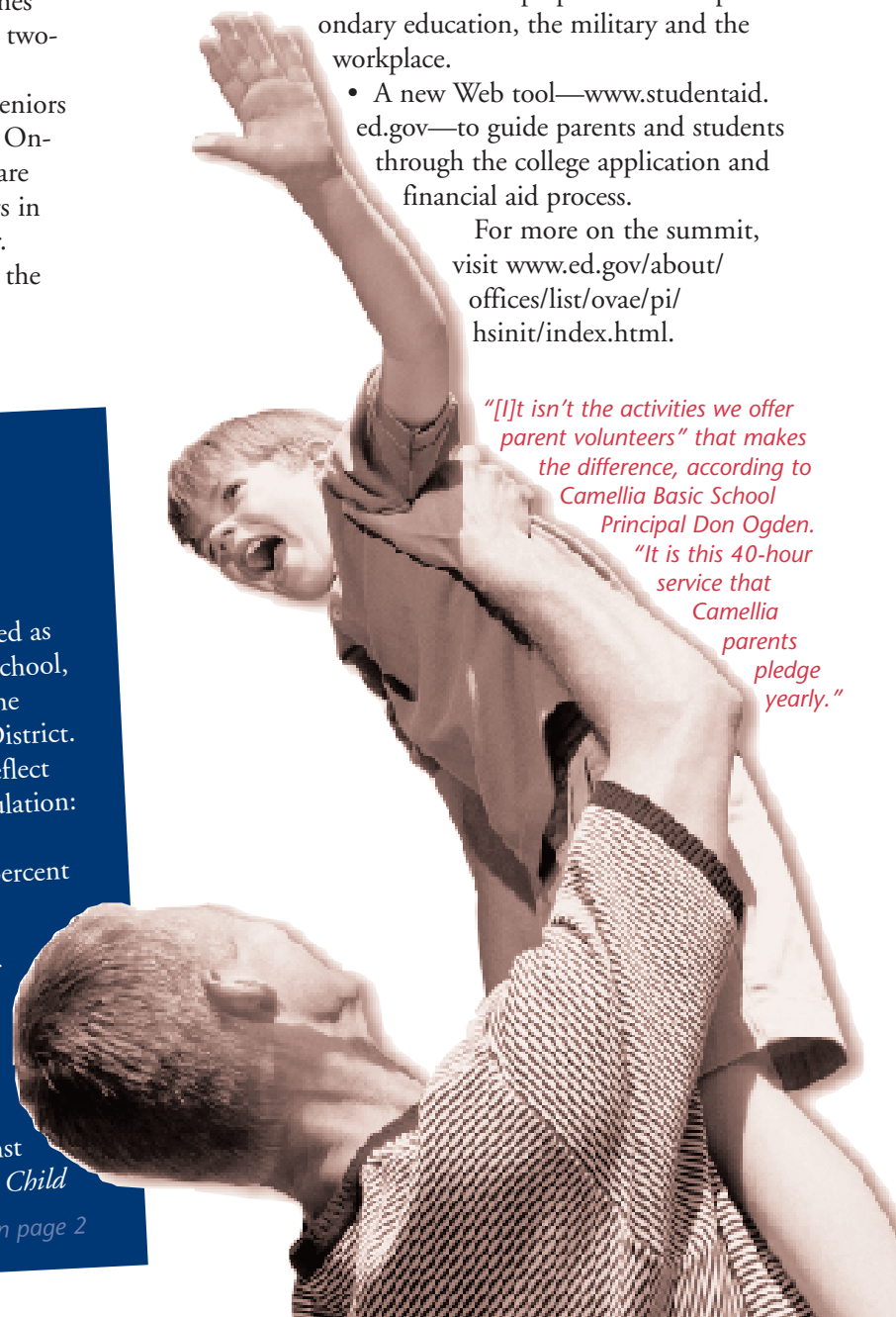


In the summer of 1998, I was hired as the principal of Camellia Basic School, a magnet elementary school in the Sacramento City Unified School District. The demographics of the school reflect the community’s very diverse population: Asian students of Cantonese and Vietnamese descent make up 39 percent

of the student body; Latino students are 22 percent; African-American students are 17 percent; and Caucasian students are 16 percent. More than half of the students speak a language other than English at home. A significant portion (66 percent) of our families participate in the free and reduced-price lunch program.

Yet these figures do not translate into odds against us. This year, Camellia Basic was recognized as a *No Child*

*continued on page 2*



*“[I]t isn’t the activities we offer parent volunteers” that makes the difference, according to Camellia Basic School Principal Don Ogden. “It is this 40-hour service that Camellia parents pledge yearly.”*



**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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ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794, 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827), edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

**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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continued from page 1

*Left Behind*-Blue Ribbon School. Last year, Camellia Basic was a California Achieving School and a National Achieving School, and in 2001 a California Distinguished School. In addition, for the last five years, Camellia Basic has been rated as an “exemplary school” (the highest possible ranking) by the Sacramento City School Board.

One of the greatest contributors to our success has been parent participation. Although our magnet program allows students throughout the city of Sacramento to enroll, we require parents to commit at least 40 hours of volunteer service during the school year—a commitment that has long been upheld. During my tenure, Camellia parents have volunteered over 100,000 hours of service.

My first day at Camellia Basic School taught me quite a bit about the true value of parent participation in

education. Upon entering the office for my first day as principal, the school secretary handed me a computer print-out and said, “You need to call these people and let them know that they need to complete their 40 volunteer hours.”

I proceeded to call the first parent, not sure what to expect. He explained to me that he knew he was short 20 hours and he wanted to make a donation to the Camellia Basic PTA so that he could honor his commitment; he asked if he could take care of it on Friday. When Friday approached, he came by the school and explained that he had been working as a roofer that week in the 100-degree Sacramento summer heat. He opened his wallet and proudly handed me a crisp \$100 dollar bill. I gave him a receipt and put the money in the PTA’s cash box.

We spoke for a few minutes and he emphasized that he knew his kids were getting a good education and how important it was for all parents—regardless of marital status—to honor their commitment. He was a single father honoring his. By the end of the next week, each of the families made a visit to the school and honored their commitment. “What an amazing place!” I told everyone who would listen.

That year, parents continued to astound me. I remember one of the parents called to let me know that a problem was occurring at the bus stop. Before I could provide a resolution, she let me know that she had already spoken to her husband and several neighbors. They were going to create a schedule to have parents monitor the bus stop. And if needed, they were willing to ride along on the bus to make sure that the problems didn’t escalate. Again, I was amazed and told

everyone who would listen.

Later in the year, several parents asked why we didn’t offer a music program. Within a few weeks, these same parents organized an after-school program that provided violin, viola and cello lessons for students in grades 4-6.

I have five years’ worth of amazing stories like these.

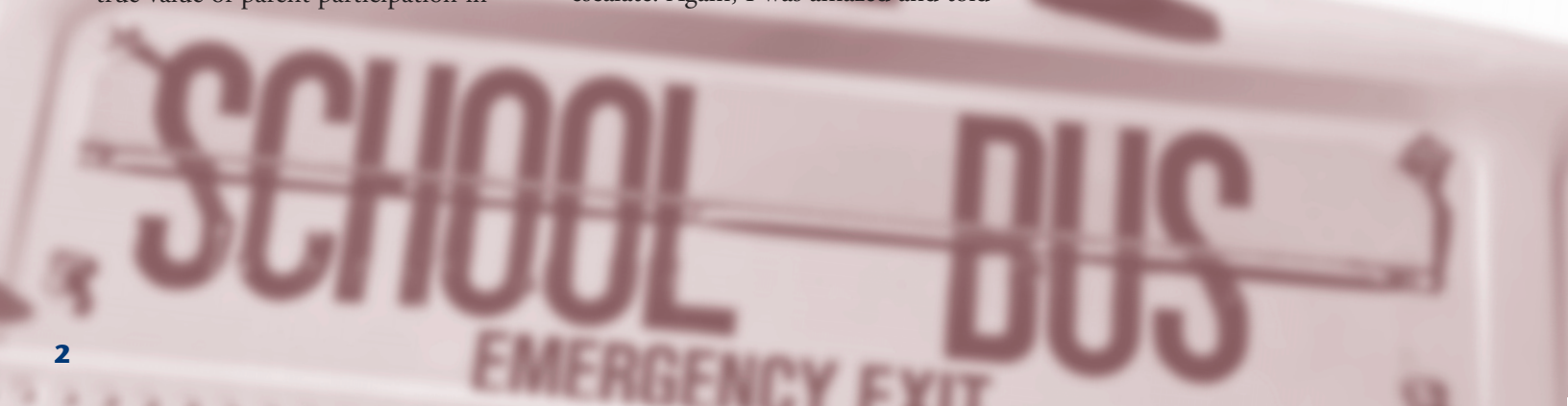
In my opinion, it isn’t the activities we offer parent volunteers that create our climate of commitment. Most schools have similar fundraisers and use parent volunteers as classroom helpers. The difference is the standard we set for quantifying and securing that commitment. It is this 40-hour service that Camellia parents pledge yearly that reflects the remarkable climate of volunteerism. Also, the need to fulfill this service sparks creativity among parents looking for innovative ways to assist the school.

At the beginning of each school year, I host a new parent orientation, describing the tradition of commitment to volunteering at Camellia. And each year, by their increasing demonstrations of support, parents have proven that their participation is a requirement for student success.

*Don Ogden is in his sixth year as principal at Camellia Basic School in the Sacramento City Unified School District. He was one of 100 educators in America honored with the Milken Outstanding Educator Award in 2002.*



*Camellia parents created a plan to monitor a bus stop in response to a safety concern. For the past five years parents have volunteered over 100,000 hours of service.*



“Education is the common denominator of all people, the road to emancipation and liberty, the way we find our humanity and discover our soul. There is no mission more important than providing an inclusive, quality education to all people, no endeavor more crucial.”

Secretary Paige, in his remarks at the 32nd General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on Oct. 3, in Paris.



### November 17-21

International Education Week, sponsored by the U.S. Departments of State and Education. For information on how to get involved, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/iiew> or call 202-205-2452.

### November 18 8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.

*Education News Parents Can Use* monthly broadcast will focus on getting ready for college academically and financially. Visit [www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/schedule.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/schedule.html) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

Close-Up:



## No Child Left Behind Indian Education

**N**o Child Left Behind includes programs that support efforts to meet the unique and related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Recently, the Department made

several announcements affecting Indian education:

- The Office of Indian Education has been elevated to the Office of the Under Secretary, to reflect the importance of the department's Indian education programs.
- Indian tribes, schools and agencies that serve Indian children will share more than \$105 million in grants to improve education opportunities. The grants include \$5 million for professional development, college preparation and early childhood education, and nearly \$100 million to help 1,200 local education agencies improve the educational opportunities for approximately 470,000 Indian students. More information about the grants is available at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/oie/contacts.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/oie/contacts.html).
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which serves approximately 48,000 Indian children, received \$9.4 million in federal reading grant funds to improve reading achievement using scientifically proven instruction methods. Over six years, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is set to receive \$30.4 million in Reading First funds.



### On the International Front

**A** new report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which tracks education in 30 industrialized nations, finds that while the United States is among the leaders in public and private educational spending, America's 15 year-olds only score average on international assessments of math, reading and science.

The latest edition of OECD's report, *Education at a Glance*, also

indicates that the U.S. high school graduation rate was below the world average in 2001. Nonetheless, the report reveals, American teachers are among the hardest working, spending 950 hours or more per year at school (compared to the international average of 792 hours).

In related news, after a 19-year absence, the U.S. rejoined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on

## Did You Know?

American Indian students continue to show gains on the SAT. In the past 10 years, American Indian and Alaska Native students have shown a 6-point gain on the math and 3-point gain on the verbal portions of the standardized test.

Source: *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, National Center for Education Statistics.

Oct. 1. Secretary Paige led the U.S. delegation, and First Lady Laura Bush helped raise the U.S. flag over UNESCO headquarters in Paris. In his remarks, Secretary Paige noted the consistency between No Child Left Behind and UNESCO's education initiative, "Education For All," which pledges to provide primary education for all children and massively reduce adult illiteracy by the end of the decade. Secretary Paige's remarks are available at [www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2003/10/10032003.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2003/10/10032003.html).