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# THE ACHIEVER

November 15, 2003 • Vol. 2, No. 16

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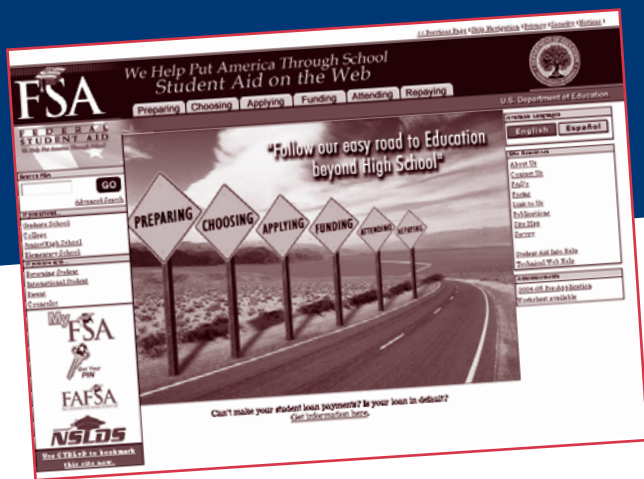
**FIRST CLASS**

## Archived Information



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



## NEW WEB SITE! Students, Families Get Facts About Applying to, Paying for College

The Department of Education's new Web site—[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)—is a great resource to help students and families get the facts they need to prepare for college.

The new site has free, online tools to help students and families access information about higher education and learn the facts about its affordability.

For example, the site offers:

- A student profile feature to assess career interests, highlight schools that offer degrees in those fields and offer job search strategies;
- A calculator to project education costs into the future and to develop a financing plan;
- Information about federal financial aid programs, tax credits and links to private scholarship sites;
- An online federal financial aid application;
- College admission application processes and standardized testing requirements for school admissions;
- A planning timeline to help students schedule their high school courses to meet academic requirements for the college of their choice; and
- Information on student and parent loan repayment options.



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## Thirty Years of Progress for Students with Disabilities

Millions of students with disabilities have seen doors of opportunity opened because of Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, which turned 30 on September 26. The groundbreaking civil rights statute laid the foundation for the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*.

Section 504 protects the rights of persons with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funds. The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights enforces the law at the nation's education institutions.

Three decades ago, more than a million school-aged children with disabilities received no educational services,

and only one in five of the students who did receive services was educated in a regular public school building. Today, more than six million children with disabilities receive special education and regular education with services—virtually all of them in regular school buildings.

In addition, studies of postsecondary education indicate that in the last two decades, college enrollment rates of students with disabilities have tripled, and these students complete their programs at a rate nearly as high as that of other students.

President Bush's New Freedom Initiative is the blueprint for federal policy to improve the education, employment and independent living outcomes for persons with disabilities. As part of this initiative, the Office for Civil Rights provides information to schools and parents to help students with disabilities prepare for and succeed in college and vocational education.

More information about Section 504 and the Office for Civil Rights is available at [www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr).

### Two Cultures, One Focus

#### New York City School Proves Academic Rigor a Global Goal

By Maggie Riechers

Families from around New York City are clamoring to get their children into Chinatown's P.S. 184, the only dual language school in the United States to focus on Mandarin Chinese.

Commonly called the Shuang Wen School, which means "dual culture" in Mandarin, P.S. 184 teaches students in both English and Mandarin Chinese. Students spend their mornings learning core subject areas in English, while afternoon classes are taught in Mandarin with a focus on language and Chinese culture. The free after-school program, which runs to nearly 6 p.m., is also taught in Mandarin. The school year is also longer than most public schools, ending in August.

"Shuang Wen is a choice school with students coming here from every borough of the city," says principal Ling-ling Chou. "The idea behind Shuang Wen is to present a global approach—to teach children to be world citizens by understanding both eastern and western cultures."

To accomplish this, the Title I school, with 70 percent of its students receiving free and reduced-price lunches,

*continued on page 2*

*"We combine the strengths of both cultures," says Shuang Wen's principal Ling-ling Chou (pictured below in background to far right) about her school's Chinese-American cultural program. Its rigorous curriculum has earned the school a ranking of eighth place for reading and fourth place for math among New York City public schools.*



Photography by Leslie Williams





**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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continued from page 1

demands a lot from its pupils. Students attend classes between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and are taught by specially trained teachers, all of whom have attained a master's degree in education. Homework is assigned every night to strengthen class lessons.

The results have been impressive. Last year, more than 90 percent of Shuang Wen's third- and fourth-graders met or exceeded performance standards in English on city and state assessments, making the school eighth in the city. The school ranked fourth in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards in math, with 93 percent of third- and fourth-graders at this level.

The school is successful, says Chou, because of its philosophy of hard work.

"We believe there is no shortcut to success," she says. And, as part of their dual culture education, the students are taught to be respectful. "Respectful of teachers, parents and each other," adds Chou, who greets students every morning and bids them farewell each evening.

Shuang Wen began in 1998 with two kindergarten classes and 42 students. The school now has 320 students and offers classes through fifth grade; 100 of the students are new immigrants.

Shuang Wen—which is approximately 80 percent Asian, 10 percent African American, and roughly five percent each white and Hispanic—requires a rigorous application process. Parents and children are interviewed for admission. All parents must agree with the school's dual language and culture approach and also agree to support their child's learning at home, as well as consent to some form of volunteerism each month.

To parent and PTA president Tina Ng, it is all worth it. "The children get a lot of attention," she says. "The teachers work very closely with them and are flexible in meeting their needs." Her three children travel an hour each morning to attend Shuang Wen, but she says they love school and are very happy there.

Shuang Wen has a school leadership team composed of six staff members and six parents who meet weekly to provide direction for the school. Each classroom has two parents who help during the school day, and there is a monthly mandatory parent meeting. Parents have responded enthusiastically, volunteering time, expertise, materials and funds to the school. More than ninety-five percent of parents attend monthly PTA meetings.

Parents also leave no stone

untuned in seeking private or public funds to help finance special programs. For example, the school benefits from a city government-funded program that provides Mandarin-speaking senior citizens to help in the school.

Shuang Wen has also applied for federal grants to provide workshops for parents that teach English to non-English speakers and Chinese to non-Chinese speakers. Although the majority of students are Asian and the bulk are from Chinese-speaking homes, most do not speak Mandarin. They speak a combination of other Chinese dialects, including Cantonese, Fuzhonese, Shanghainese and Wenzounese. The after-school program is used to reinforce the Mandarin learned during the school day.

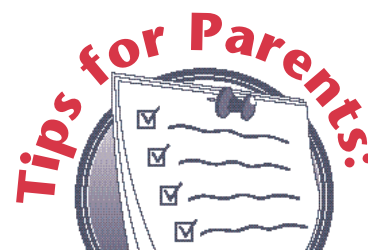
"We combine the strengths of both cultures," says Chou. "There are so many good qualities in the Chinese culture—humility, politeness and belief in hard work—and in the American culture—honesty, openness and also a hardworking attitude."

In just five years Shuang Wen has grown from 42 students in two kindergarten classes to 320 students in classes offered through fifth grade. Below, Education Secretary Rod Paige along with Chancellor of New York City Schools Joel Klein (third from left) greet students during a visit to Shuang Wen early this fall.



“We are fortunate that so many of our students form good character in school. Many, but not all. Millions of students are taught the wrong values, or no values at all. So, we have our work cut out for us. We live in a culture of callousness. The result: a staggering achievement gap, poor health status, overweight students, crime, violence, teenage pregnancy, tobacco use and alcohol use.”

Secretary Paige in his remarks at the Character Education Partnership’s 10th National Forum, Oct. 16, 2003.



**N**o Child Left Behind requires states and school districts that receive Title I funds (given to schools in high poverty areas with low-achieving students) to prepare and distribute annual report cards to parents and the public.

State report cards must include information about how students perform on state tests in at least reading/language arts and mathematics. These report cards must also include information about how the state’s students perform at each proficiency level (basic, proficient and advanced). Achievement data must be disaggregated, or broken out, by student subgroups according to race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status. Report cards must also include information about public school teachers, such as their professional qualifications, and the percentage of classes that are not taught by highly qualified teachers.

States are encouraged to distribute their report cards in multiple ways, such as posting them on the Web and distributing copies to local schools, libraries or community centers.

School district report cards must also include information, by subgroup, about student achievement on state assessment tests. District report cards also must include data about individual schools, including which schools have been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring, and include information on teacher quality. Districts can also report optional information such as school attendance rates; average class size in each grade; and incidences of school violence, drug abuse and student suspensions.

School districts must distribute their report cards to all schools in the district and all parents of students attending those schools, as well as to the community.

For more information on report cards, please visit [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) and click on the No Child Left Behind icon.

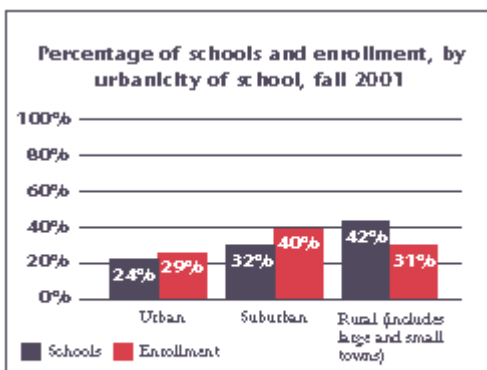


## No Child Left Behind Rural Education

**F**orty-three percent of the nation’s public schools are in rural communities, and nearly one-third of America’s school-aged children attend public schools in these areas. *No Child Left Behind* gives these districts unprecedented flexibility to improve student performance, including more flexibility in how they spend certain federal funds.

The Rural Education Task Force needs your help—the task force, formed to identify issues facing rural states with implementing *No Child Left Behind* wants to hear from rural educators, parents and citizens about the challenges their communities face and how they are meeting their community’s needs. Readers may send their comments to [ruraled@ed.gov](mailto:ruraled@ed.gov).

Secretary Paige recently hosted a virtual town hall meeting that focused on how rural communities are using technology to meet the goals of *No Child Left Behind*. Communities in Iowa, Montana, New Mexico and West Virginia were showcased during the discussion using videoconferencing technology. The event was also broadcast live over the Internet.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, fall 2001 special tabulation.

Paige also announced a five-year, \$35 million grant to the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence that will help teachers in small rural communities with no access to local college campuses.

The grant will enable the board, which offers the first national alternative route to full certification for teachers, to broaden the academic subject areas offered and develop new measures for assessing competency through its programs.

For a list of resources and data on rural education, visit the Education Department’s National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/>.