



President Bush Announces New Education Proposals

Building on the reforms of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, President Bush revealed last month his new education plan, which includes:

Improving early education by giving priority federal funding to states that have a coordinated early childhood plan comprising Head Start, pre-kindergarten and childcare services;

Improving K–12 education by requiring (as a condition for receiving federal funding) state assessments in grades 3 through 11, which would phase in two tests in high school over several years, the costs for which would be covered by \$250 million in annual federal funds;

Rewarding high-quality teachers by providing a \$500 million incentive fund to states and school districts that choose to reward effective teachers in high-need schools and in high-ranking schools that meet adequate yearly progress;

Increasing opportunities for online learning with an e-learning clearinghouse, which would allow students to search for specific courses based on various criteria, including price, schedule and type of provider (non-profit, for-profit and

higher education establishments); and

Broadening access to higher education by establishing a community college access grants fund at \$125 million to promote dual-enrollment programs that allow high school students to earn college credit and policies that make it easier for students to transfer community college credits to four-year institutions.

For a complete summary of the president's proposals, visit www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040902-3.html.

"Her love of reading continues," says Cari Sager about her daughter's progress following the tutoring she received through Toledo Public Schools' supplemental educational services program. Below, Sager's daughter Sarah reads to former tutor Michael Kuhn.

Supplementing My Child's Education

By Cari Sager, Westin, Ohio

When my daughter Sarah was starting fourth grade, I was a bit worried and uneasy. Sarah was not a very good reader. She was having difficulty sounding out words. As a result, she guessed at what words were instead of actually knowing them. When she would read to me, I would ask her questions about what she had just read and she would be confused. Not understanding what she was reading was affecting her in school as well. She didn't want to participate in classroom activities. It became very apparent to me when doing homework with Sarah how frustrated she was. Not knowing what she was reading not only in reading [lessons] but also in [subjects like] math brought Sarah easily to tears. Finally, understanding that her reading difficulties were affecting other subjects in school, my husband Tom and I decided to look into tutoring.

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Photo by Greg Wohlford



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

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We started contacting organizations that specialized in reading tutoring. We soon found out during our search how costly their fees were. We found out that it was going to cost hundreds—if not thousands—of dollars. These programs we found that could help our daughter would also greatly affect our household budget, so we became very concerned. Then one afternoon, while discussing the options available to us, Tom brought in the mail. In it, there was a letter from the *No Child Left Behind* office. I began reading the material. I could

not believe it! They were offering

tutoring—free of charge—to [eligible] students at Toledo Public Schools!

Not wanting to miss this great opportunity, I began filling out the questionnaire. I mailed it in that same afternoon. Tom and I were very relieved. All we had to do now was wait and hope that Sarah's application would be one of the first received so she could get the assistance she so greatly needed.

After a few days, I received a call from Cindy Kline, the director of the Title I *No Child Left Behind* office in Toledo. I was so excited, almost brought to tears. We made an appointment to meet at Sarah's school immediately. When we met the following week, I couldn't express enough how excited I was about the tutoring. At the same time, I realized I wasn't really sure of exactly what was being offered.

Ms. Kline began to explain to me how the tutoring was being funded and what organizations participated, offering hundreds of dollars of tutoring per student free of charge. I was amazed at the options available to us.

As Ms. Kline and I discussed the different options available, I chose the tutoring offered through the Toledo Public Schools. Sarah's tutoring sessions began the next month. Almost immediately, I began to notice the difference in her attitude. When I would pick her up from tutoring, she would talk non-stop all the way home. She was so excited that all she would talk about was Mr. [Michael] Kuhn, her tutor, and what they read that day. Often bringing home lessons from that day, she

would read them to me, her brother T.J. and her Dad.

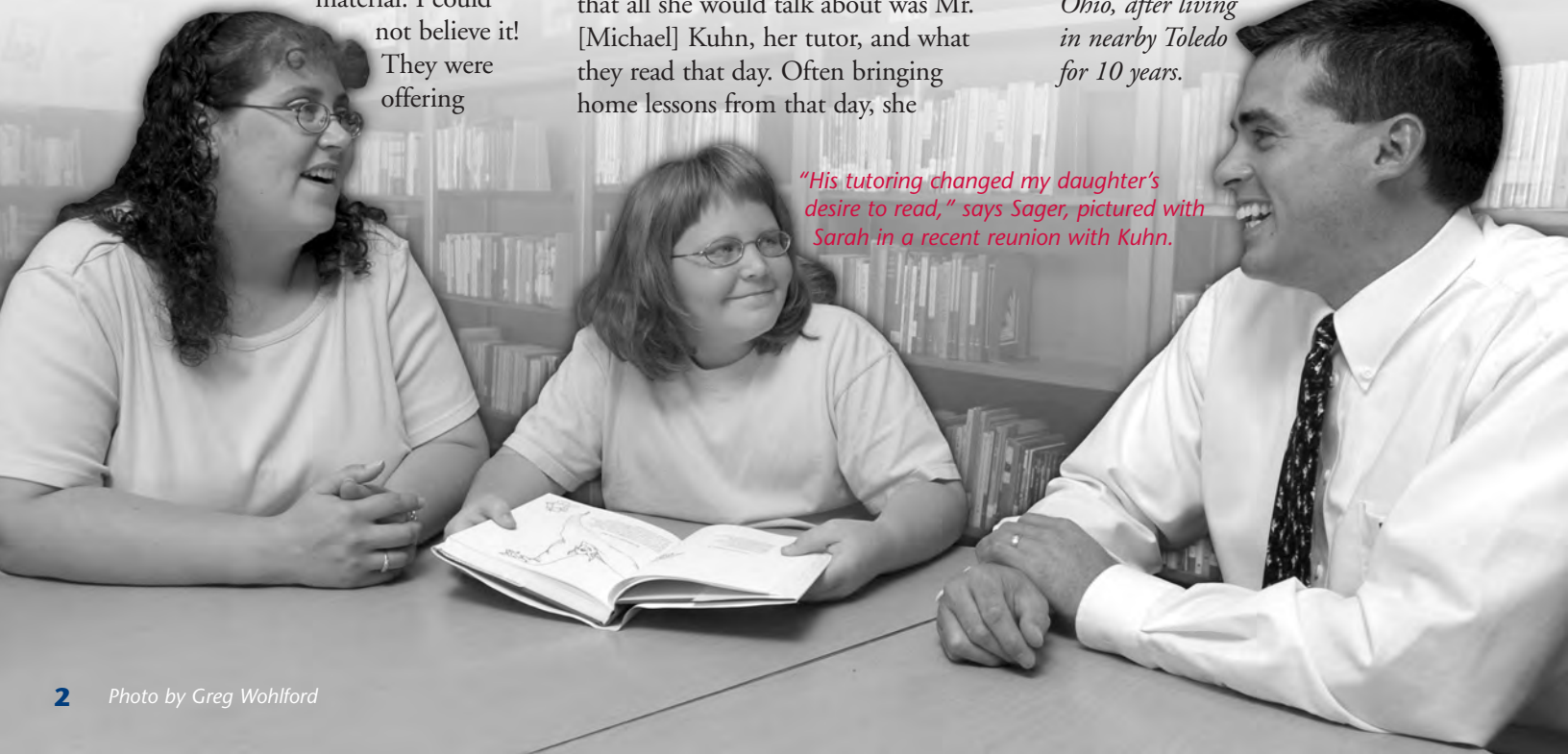
I also noticed a change in Sarah when we would be in the car. She would read aloud street signs, billboards and even business names. This was something she never did before. She asked one day if our biweekly trips to the public library could become weekly. Sarah also began to pick out chapter books as opposed to picture books or easy reading books.

I was just thrilled with Sarah's progress when the tutoring ended. I met with Mr. Kuhn to discuss Sarah's progress and what we needed to continue to do to help Sarah become a stronger reader. I expressed my appreciation to Mr. Kuhn—how his tutoring changed my daughter's desire to read, how it changed her academic future. He very humbly replied, "No problem. It was my pleasure helping her."

Her love of reading continues. At Christmas, Tom and I asked Sarah to make out a wish list. Number one on her list, in big bold letters, was the word "BOOKS!" Not toys, but "BOOKS!" I will never forget that moment and how proud I was of her, knowing that we will always have in common the desire to read—something she and I will share for the rest of our lives, just like my mother and I share.

Cari Sager is a mother of two, who recently moved to Westin, Ohio, after living in nearby Toledo for 10 years.

"His tutoring changed my daughter's desire to read," says Sager, pictured with Sarah in a recent reunion with Kuhn.



"No Child Left Behind represents a fundamental reform of our nation's education system. But it is really a very simple concept: it asks that children read and do math at grade level. ... And it makes the system accountable to parents and taxpayers. Schools are now measured on their progress so that we can see where the most help is needed."

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, in response to a question posted on "Ask the White House," an online interactive forum where the public can submit questions to administration officials, Aug. 24, 2004.



**October 19
8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.**

Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will focus on supplemental educational services. Visit www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind **Early Reading First**

Last month, the U.S. Department of Education awarded 32 Early Reading First grants, each averaging \$2.8 million, to eligible agencies and organizations across the country that were successful in a grant competition. The funding goes to help early childhood education programs prepare young children to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive and early reading skills, thus preventing reading difficulties and ensuring school success.

Part of the president's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative, Early Reading First is designed to transform existing early education programs into centers of excellence that provide high-quality, early education to young children, especially those from low-income families. The program was one of two reading programs created under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Its cohort, Reading First, targets K-3 students to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of the third grade.

Among its goals, the Early Reading First Program seeks to promote language and literacy activities developed from scientifically based reading research and that support the age-appropriate acquisition of oral language (vocabulary, expressive language, listening comprehension); phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, segmenting); print awareness; and alphabetic knowledge.

For more information, visit www.ed.gov/programs/earlyreading/index.html or call 202-260-4555.



New College Exam Results

The nation's most widely accepted college admission exams—the ACT and SAT—reported record results on this year's assessments.

For the first time since 1997, the national average score for the ACT exam increased—from 20.8 to 20.9, a statistically significant gain considering the growing number of test-takers. English, math, reading and science scores also rose one-tenth of a point over last year. At the same time, the scores indicate that an alarming number of graduates are not ready for col-

lege science and math courses. In fact, only 26 percent earned a score of 24 or higher on the science test, while just 40 percent earned a score of 22 or higher on the math test. The ACT exam, which is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, was taken by nearly 1.2 million graduates in the class of 2004. For more information, visit www.act.org/news/releases/2004/8-18-04.html.

On the SAT, a record 37 percent of the 1.4 million college-bound seniors who took the exam last school year

Did You Know?

The Southeast region of the United States offers the highest percentage (77 percent) by far of public elementary school full-day prekindergarten classes, compared to the Northeast (23 percent), West (23 percent) and Central (13 percent) regions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Prekindergarten in U.S. Public Schools: 2000-2001, 2003*.

were minorities—up from 31 percent in 1994—and the percentage of first-generation college-bound seniors grew to 38 percent of all test-takers. The average score, nonetheless, remained virtually unchanged from 2003: 1026 out of 1600. But a broader review of SAT scores over the past decade reveals increases among many test-takers. On the 2004 exam, white students scored 1059, 20 points higher than in 1994; African American students, 857 (+8); Mexican American students, 909 (+3); American Indian students, 971 (+28); and Asian American students, 1084, (+42), the best 10-year improvement. For more information, visit www.collegeboard.com/press/article/0,,37478,00.html.

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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



NEW GUIDE! **Implementing Effective School Choice Programs**

Public school choice—letting parents decide which public school is the best place for their child and enabling a transfer to that school—is the focus of a new guide from the U.S. Department of Education. Published by the Department’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, *Creating Strong District School Choice Programs* shares practical advice and concrete examples from five school districts that have been successful in creating and expanding public school choice initiatives. It also includes information on how to avoid some of the pitfalls that school districts may face in addressing the needs of all students.

Under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), school districts with Title I schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for at least two consecutive years and thus are deemed to be “in need of improvement” must allow parents to move their child to schools that are meeting state standards; districts must also provide transportation for these students, subject to certain cost limits.

Outlining four basic areas, the guide suggests the first steps to take and how to go deeper in launching a public school choice program: helping parents make informed choices, building school district infrastructure, supporting schools and improving programs over time. School districts, it advises, should start with implementing a multi-faceted communications strategy on the NCLB choice options. For example, the Milwaukee Public School System simplified the language in its letter to parents informing them of their options by deleting “legalese” that was in the previous year’s version. Milwaukee’s “Frequently Asked Questions” and “Parent Letter and NCLB Transfer Request Form” are both included in the guide as models for other districts to use.

For a free copy of *Creating Strong District School Choice Programs*, while supplies last, contact the Department’s publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS or www.edpubs.org/webstore/content/search.asp. Please include identification number EU0108P. Or visit www.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/choiceprograms/index.html for an online copy.