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ED REVIEW

March 26, 2004

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



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

As part of the Department's "common-sense" policies developed through conversations with state and local administrators, teachers, and parents, including flexibility for special education students (last December) and English language learners (February), Secretary Paige announced three new policies giving certain teachers greater flexibility in demonstrating that they are "highly qualified" under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. First, teachers in rural school districts who are "highly qualified" in at least one subject will have three years to become "highly qualified" in the additional subjects they teach. They must also be provided professional development, intense supervision, or structured mentoring to become competent in those other areas. Approximately 5,000, or one-third of all school districts in the U.S., are considered rural, and, frequently, teachers in these areas are required to teach more than one subject. Existing teachers will have until the end of the 2006-07 school year; new teachers will have three years from their hiring date. Second, based on their current certification requirements, states may permit science teachers to demonstrate that they are "highly qualified" either in "broad field" science or individual fields of science (biology, chemistry, physics). Third, states may streamline their High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) by developing a single process for current, multi-subject teachers to demonstrate that they are "highly qualified" in each of their subjects. HOUSSE recognizes, among other things, experience, expertise, and professional training garnered over time. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03152004.html>. (Next? The agency is now reviewing the law's participation rate requirements.)

Contrary to some reports that *No Child Left Behind* is narrowing the curriculum, a new publication by the Arts Education Partnership, titled "No Subject Left Behind," serves as a guide for arts education leaders seeking to learn more about *No Child Left Behind*

and the multiple opportunities for arts education. It offers an overview of the legislation, with specific references to the arts; a description of individual programs, with arts-specific examples that have received funding; and links to web sites for additional facts. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/NoSubjectLeftBehind.pdf>.



SCIENCE POLL

On March 16, during the nation's first Science Summit, the Department released a poll showing parents are overwhelmingly interested in their children's science education and understand its importance. Indeed, 94 percent of parents feel that a science education is important (with black and Hispanic parents more likely than white parents to consider science education "very important"), 85 percent are proactive about encouraging their children to take science classes, and 72 percent are comfortable helping their children with their science homework. However, just over half of parents (51 percent) felt that they had more science education than their children. "American academic performance in science is not matching up with parents' goals," the Secretary said. "This Summit on Science will set the stage for improving science instruction so that we can close the gap between expectations at home and execution at school." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03162004.html>.

Also: The White House recently recognized 95 teachers with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the nation's highest commendation for work in the classroom. Think science can't be fun? Consider just a few of the activities used by these award-winning teachers to spark the learning process: illuminating a pickle to illustrate electrochemical principles; computing the volume of stuffing inside Oreo Double Stuff cookies; analyzing the DNA from a mock classroom crime scene; videotaping basketball free throws to study projectile motion; and using a "Barbie" doll in a bungee-jump to test laws of motion. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.paemst.org/>.



BEATING THE ODDS

The Council of the *Great City Schools'* annual *Beating the Odds* report compares 2002 and 2003 state test scores in 61 urban school districts from 37 states. In both fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math, students improved:

- In fourth-grade reading, 47.8 percent of urban school students scored at or above proficient, a 4.9 percentage point increase from 2002.
- The percentage of students at or above proficient in fourth-grade math went from 44.2 percent to 51 percent, a 6.8 percent increase from 2002.
- Students improved somewhat in eighth-grade reading (36.8 percent to 37.9 percent) and math (36.4 percent to 39.4 percent) but at much lower rates.

More importantly, 73.1 percent of all fourth-grades tested narrowed the size of the gap between black and white students in reading, and 47.6 percent closed the gap in math. Similarly, about 60 percent of all fourth-grades narrowed the size of the gap between Hispanic and white students in reading, and 50 percent closed the gap in math. In fact, in some cases, big city schools are narrowing the achievement gap at a faster rate than their state. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO http://www.cgcs.org/reports/beat_the_oddsIV.html. (Secretary Paige's statement is available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03222004.html>.)



GRANTS FORECAST

Be sure to review the revised (as of March 19) FY 2004 Grants Forecast (<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forecast.html>), which lists virtually all programs and competitions under which the Department has invited or expects to invite applications for awards and provides actual or estimated dates for the transmittal of applications under these programs. The lists are in the form of charts -- organized by the Department's program offices -- and will be updated regularly through July 2004.

Also: School districts representing large high schools (with an enrollment of 1,000 or more students) are eligible to apply for planning or implementation grants through the Smaller Learning Communities Program. An estimated 90 planning grants are expected to be awarded; awards are based on the number of schools that it will serve and range

from \$25,000-\$50,000 for one school to \$250,000 for local education agencies applying on behalf of up to ten schools. An estimated 120 three-year implementation grants will be awarded; awards range from \$250,000-\$550,000 for one school to \$5.5 million. The deadline for applications is April 29. Applicants must focus on methods to improve reading and math skills for students who enter high school well below grade level. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/slcp/>.



CONTROLLING OBESITY

Fact: nearly 15 percent of children and adolescents, ages six to 19, are overweight -- almost double the rate two decades ago. In turn, the Food and Drug Administration's striking "Calories Count" study (<http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/obesity/>) calls for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish relationships with youth-oriented organizations, including the Girl Scouts, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, and the 4-H program, to educate Americans about obesity and leading healthier lives through better nutrition. "While *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) puts the focus on academics -- where it should be -- I am disturbed by reports I hear about schools doing away with recess and sports," Secretary Paige added. "NCLB certainly does not encourage these kinds of severe measures. Studies show that dedicating increased time to physical activity during the school day does not detract from academics; it in fact improves academic performance."



ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION

The National Center for Alternative Certification, launched in February and supported by a \$2.25 million grant from the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement, is a one-stop clearinghouse of information for prospective teachers looking for non-traditional routes to certification. Eventually, there will be descriptions of all alternative certification programs in the country; for example, every district in Florida is required to develop its own program, and these individual programs will be part of the database. There will also be a search engine to match one's background and interests with appropriate programs. In addition, the center has a toll-free call number to walk

parties through the "stages" of alternative certification. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.teach-now.org/>.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"No area of our lives is untouched by the march of science.... We must expand educational opportunities to strengthen our economic future. It is my hope that our nation will respond with even more enthusiasm than it did following the 1957 launch of *Sputnik*. Our response then prepared our nation to put a man on the moon. It shaped the world we live today. Now, we must prepare a new generation to choose its destiny. We do so knowing that education is emancipation and science the source of dreams."

-- Secretary of Education Rod Paige (3/16/04)



UPCOMING EVENTS

The U.S. Department of Education's 2004 National Charter Schools Conference, "Push to 50 -- Getting the Final 10 States and Growing the Movement," is scheduled for June 16-18 in Miami Beach, Florida. The conference is an opportunity for individuals involved with charter schools to come together to share their knowledge and experiences. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.conferencepros.com/conferences/charter/2004/>.

The Department's National Center for Education Statistics has announced a slate of training seminars to take place May-August 2004. Sessions will be conducted on many prominent databases and are open to advanced graduate students and faculty members from colleges and universities, as well as researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/conferences/>.

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