

Archived Information



ED REVIEW

December 3, 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/>)

According to a new Department study, many of the academic achievement advantages once held by males over females either have been eliminated or have been reversed. Indeed, on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), female fourth-graders outperformed their male peers on reading (2003) and writing (2002) tests, and female twelfth-graders expanded their reading achievement over males from 10 points in 1992 to 16 points in 2002. (Gender differences in mathematics achievement remain small, fluctuating slightly between 1990 and 2003.) Also, females are more likely than their male counterparts to graduate from college within six years. Other key findings: females are less likely to repeat a grade and to dropout of high school; differences based on gender in math and science course-taking appear to be shrinking; and females have made substantial progress at the graduate level, although they still earn less than half of the degrees in many fields. "It is clear that girls are taking education seriously and that they have made tremendous strides," Secretary Paige said in response. "The issue now is that boys seem to be falling behind. We need to spend some time researching the problem -- so that we can give boys the support to succeed academically." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005016>.

After an exhaustive review of more than 800 studies of math programs in grades 6-9, the What Works Clearinghouse (<http://whatworks.ed.gov/>) identified 11 evaluations that met the Department's new standards of evidence, which call for randomized trials in which exposure to a curriculum is determined through a lottery or well-designed comparisons in which students in a control group are statistically matched against students using the curriculum. The 11 evaluations examined five commercial math programs; only two of those programs were "associated" with scientific evidence of effectiveness.

(Note: The absence of scientific evidence of effectiveness does not mean a curriculum is ineffective. Rather, it means that how well the curriculum works is still unknown.)

On November 19, the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) unveiled the fifth of six booklets on promising practices to be released this year. "Innovations in Education: Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification"

(<http://www.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/recruit/altroutes/>) offers practical advice and concrete examples from six alternative route programs, all of which have an established track record of three or more years and use promising practices to train their teachers, such as tailored, field-based programming and strong mentor support.



IDEA REAUTHORIZATION

Late last month, Congress approved the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act, which would make changes in several areas of education, including:

- **Highly Qualified Teachers.** Special education teachers must be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-06 school year, even if they are teaching multiple subjects. However, new special education teachers would have extra time to become certified in different subjects, as long as they were highly qualified in at least one.
- **Student Discipline.** Schools would have more freedom to remove disruptive students from the classroom, if their behavior was not related to their disabilities.
- **Paperwork Reduction.** Minor changes to a student's individual education plan (IEP) could be made in a conference call or by letter. Also, 15 states would be chosen for a paperwork reduction pilot project.
- **Complaints.** A two-year statute of limitation would be placed on a parent's ability to file a special needs complaint, with a 90-day limit for appeals. Hearing officers would focus on whether a child was denied an appropriate education (versus procedural mistakes), and lawyers could be held liable for filing complaints judged frivolous.

The bill does not include funding commitments, although lawmakers agreed in principle to pay 40 percent of the average national cost of educating a special education student by 2011. The President is expected to sign the bill. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/education/idea/idea.htm>.



HIGH SCHOOL INDICATORS

As detailed in the previous issue, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been working with field experts to improve the agency's high school dropout, completion, and graduation indicators. The final report of that task force is now available, and it makes a number of recommendations -- from providing specifications for indicators for several rates, such as an on-time graduation rate, to encouraging NCES to conduct more frequent longitudinal studies following students into adulthood.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005105>.



SCHOOL CRIME AND SAFETY

"Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2004" shows that most types of school crime dropped between 1992 and 2002, with the proportion of students saying they were victims of crimes dropping from 10 percent to five percent. Also, between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of high school students who reported being in a fight declined from 16 percent to 13 percent, while students who reported carrying a weapon during the previous 30 days dropped by half from 12 percent to six percent. However, in 2003, seven percent of students reported being bullied at school during the last six months, up from five percent in 1999, and 12 percent reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them. This is the seventh year of the report; in every year to date, students were more likely to be victims of serious crime away from school than at school. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005002>. (This publication is issued jointly by NCES and the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics.)

**Charter
Schools**

FINAL EVALUATION

The final report of the Evaluation of the Public Charter Schools Program (PCSP), prepared by SRI International, documents charter school and charter authorizer

characteristics, accountability relationships, flexibility, and support received from external agencies. Among the findings:

- PCSP money is the most prevalent source of start-up funding currently available to charter schools. Nearly two-thirds have received PCSP funds during their start-up phase.
- Charter schools are more likely to serve low-income and minority students than traditional public schools but less likely to serve students in special education.
- By design, charter schools have greater autonomy over their budgets, curriculums, educational philosophies, and teaching staff than traditional public schools. Furthermore, because some state charter school laws allow flexibility in hiring practices, charter schools as a whole are less likely than traditional public schools to employ teachers meeting state certification requirements.
- In five case study states (CO, IL, MA, NC, and TX), charter schools are less likely to meet state performance standards than traditional public schools. However, it is impossible to know from this study whether that is because of the performance of the schools, the prior achievement of the students, or some other factor.
- Charter schools rarely face formal sanctions, and authorizing bodies usually impose sanctions because of problems related to school finance and regulations rather than student performance.
- Little difference exists between the accountability requirements for charter schools and traditional public schools.

Since 1998, SRI has been conducting the a national evaluation of the agency's program. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/choice/pcsp-final/>. (Deputy Secretary Gene Hickok's statement is available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/11/11192004.html>.)



ED REPORT CARD

The Education Department's Fiscal Year 2004 Performance and Accountability Report, Secretary Paige's fourth such report to Congress and the American people, "represents a measure of the Department's progress toward achieving its vision to ensure no child is left behind and presents the audited financial statements, which fairly state the financial status of the Department." More specifically, the report contains a variety of charts and figures on the agency's financial, managerial, and performance highlights.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO
<http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/2004report/>.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"[L]et us never forget the people behind the policy papers and statistics: the children.... They're the ones who need us to be steadfast on behalf of change, even if it runs counter to 'the way things used to be' for us. They're the ones who need us to make the connection between what we know is wrong and what we do to make it right. We can and must engage them in this 'dialogue' for change. I am confident you will keep them foremost in your thoughts, as do I."

-- Secretary of Education Rod Paige (12/2/04)



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Department's next "Education News Parents Can Use" broadcast, commemorating the third anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, is booked for January 18, 2005. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/>.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs with any questions:

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