

# ACHIEVER



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## New Policies Help English-Language Learners

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced recently two new policies under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) that will give states and school districts greater flexibility with respect to students with limited English proficiency. The secretary intends to implement these policies through regulations that will be proposed in the near future.

Under NCLB, states, districts and schools must include the academic achievement results of all students, including limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, in determinations that measure adequate yearly progress (AYP). Due to language barriers, it is often difficult for LEP students to demonstrate proficiency in reading/language arts in their first year of enrollment.

The first new policy allows states to choose whether to assess only English-language proficiency during a student's first

year in a U.S. school or to assess both proficiency and reading competency. This English-language proficiency test does not count toward the AYP goals for the school, district or state. Students who take only an English-language proficiency test do, however, still count toward the NCLB requirement that 95 percent of students in each student group participate in English-language arts assessments.

The second new policy addresses the difficulty states may encounter in demonstrating improvement on state assessments for LEP students who have attained English proficiency. In the past, these students were no longer considered part of the LEP subgroup for AYP measurements. The new flexibility would, however, allow schools and districts to get credit for them as part of the LEP subgroup in AYP calculations for two additional years after they have become English-proficient.

*Barton Elementary School Principal Norm Mishelow, greeting kindergartner Aundrea, credits his staff's teamwork in implementing a successful, new reading program.*

## How Success Can Spring From a Grassroots Effort

By Norm Mishelow, Milwaukee, Wis.

As the principal of Barton Elementary, an urban school in Milwaukee with a high-poverty population (78 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch), I believed we had been doing a pretty good job of educating our children. Our scores were above the district average, and most of our children were on



grade level. However, we were not satisfied with "pretty good." Our school mission is to prepare our students to be responsible citizens of the future—all of our students. Therefore, our job as educators is clear: Each child must become a confident, literate, mathematically functional lifelong learner.

Just as in the business world, we must become more efficient, effective and accountable. *No Child Left Behind* asked us to close the achievement gaps between diverse student populations. No longer could we debate methods of instruction according to what teachers felt to be good teaching. We needed to

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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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look at the research and determine which programs would produce student success. With a shared vision, we evaluated the data to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our program. Then we used that information to effect changes within the building.

Our first identified area of weakness was math. There had been a huge decline in math scores across our entire district. Our school community decided to think “out of the box” and adopt our own math program. We found a research-based program that included both computational competency as well as extensive problem-solving skill development. Within a year, our test scores had jumped through the roof! Our fourth-graders’ scores increased 40 points. Our teachers were delighted with the program that they had chosen, the parents understood what the students were being asked to do, and the children were learning math.

Another program change took place when one of our teachers who had an exceptionally challenging group of students heard about a research-based reading program in one of her graduate school classes. She contacted the company

and received some materials on a pilot basis, which she planned to use with her lowest-level students. Within months, the structured nature of the program brought fifth-graders who were non-readers to a second-grade level. One young man who used disruptive classroom behavior to hide his inability to read became a cooperative student, proudly walking down the hall and reading to anyone who would listen. Word spread like wildfire and other teachers started demanding “in” on the program. A grassroots effort throughout the building brought this program into all classrooms within a year. The resulting rise in student achievement was amazing. Over the last three years of implementation, student test scores have risen dramatically: Students whose reading skills were proficient and above rose from 68 percent in 2002 to 90 percent this year.

Orchestrating reform within our school has not been the responsibility of one person. By empowering the teachers to make responsible decisions regarding the education of our children, the impetus for programmatic change came from the front-line players.

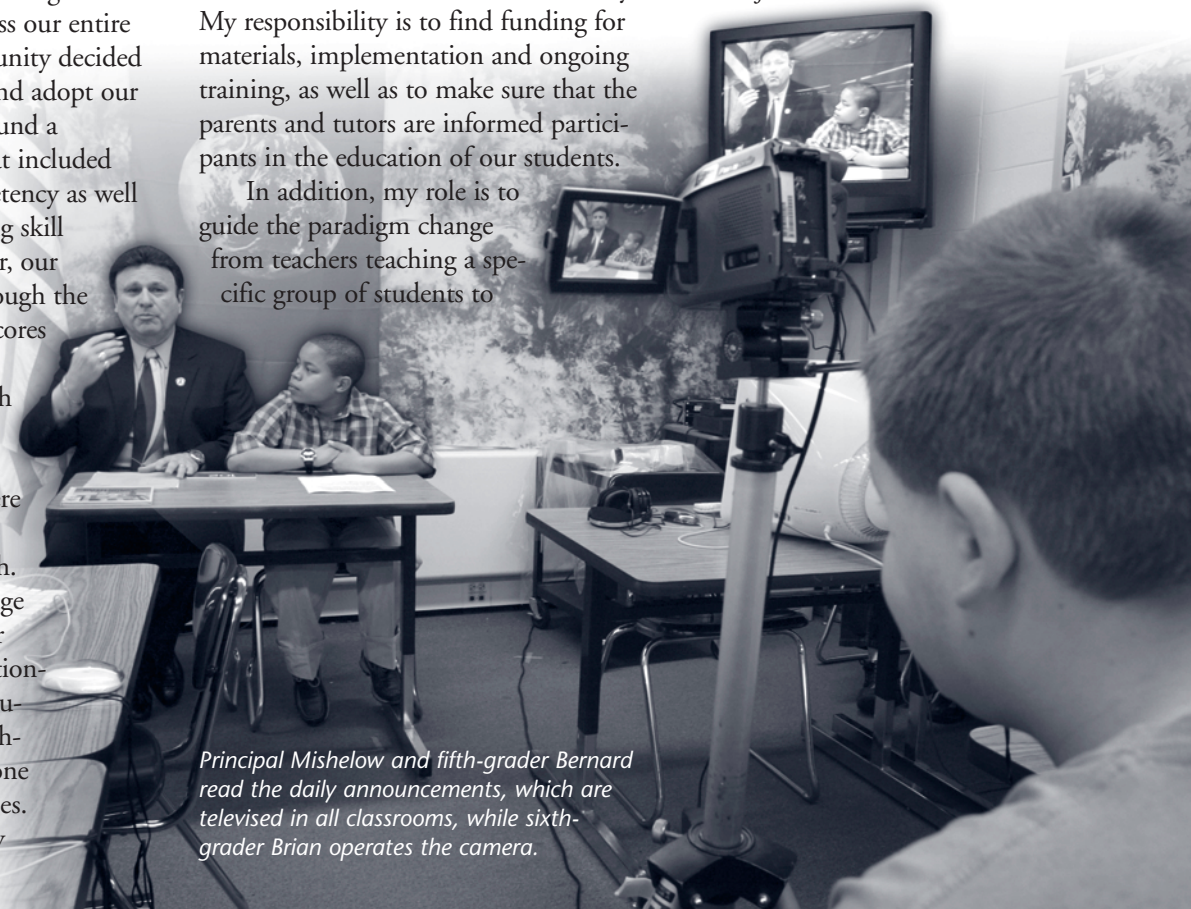
As principal, I see myself as a resource, a facilitator, a supporter and a mentor for the total Barton community. My responsibility is to find funding for materials, implementation and ongoing training, as well as to make sure that the parents and tutors are informed participants in the education of our students.

In addition, my role is to guide the paradigm change from teachers teaching a specific group of students to

teachers cooperating in the education of the Barton student body. For the reading block, children are placed into groups based upon their exact instructional level, according to the strict criteria of the program. As children progress, they are re-evaluated and reassigned based upon continuous information gathered by classroom-based assessments. All children, including those identified with special needs, are part of this cross-class, cross-grade-level grouping. This requires the highest levels of cooperation among teachers, specialists, assistants and tutors. Due to the teachers’ ownership of the program, teamwork in its implementation continues to be exemplary.

Gone are the days when we can hide behind lists of excuses as to why our children cannot learn. Now we must step up to the plate to hit educational homeruns for each and every child in order to truly leave no child behind. To do anything less is educational bigotry.

*Norm Mishelow has been an educator in Milwaukee Public Schools for the past 32 years, of which the last 16 years have been as the principal at Barton Elementary School. Barton was recently named a 2003 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School, the only one in the state of Wisconsin.*



*Principal Mishelow and fifth-grader Bernard read the daily announcements, which are televised in all classrooms, while sixth-grader Brian operates the camera.*

"My parents understood the great gifts required for outstanding teaching: knowledge of subject; the ability to communicate, make magic in the classroom, inspire and empathize with students; and the generosity to make the many sacrifices needed to give the gift of education. ... We used to say that a Teacher of the Year was a synthesis of the two Alberts: Einstein and Schweitzer."

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige in his remarks at a Washington, D.C. meeting of State Teachers of the Year, March 1, 2004.

Close-Up:



## No Child Left Behind Charter School Facilities

The U.S. Department of Education announced last month a new grant program that will further enhance the school-choice options under *No Child Left Behind* by helping states with their charter-school facilities costs.

The first State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program competition, announced recently in the Federal Register, is designed to encourage states to develop and expand "per-pupil facilities aid programs" and to share in the costs related to the management and operation of charter schools.

A per-pupil facilities aid program is one in which a state makes payments to charter schools to provide them with funding for school management and operations. The payments are based on a formula that takes into account the number of pupils in the charter school.

For a state to be eligible to receive a grant, its program must be specified in state law and provide annual matching funds on a per-pupil basis for charter school facilities. States with existing programs are eligible to receive a grant only if they increase the funding level of per-pupil facilities aid programs for charter schools.

July 1 is the deadline for submitting applications. This year, the Department expects to award five grants, averaging about \$3.7 million per grant.

The development of charter schools began in the early 1990s as a way to offer increased local control of education, to allow educators the flexibility to innovate, and to provide students increased education options within the public school system.

To access the *Federal Register* notice about the State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program, visit [www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2004-1/022304a.html](http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2004-1/022304a.html).

### A Call to Teachers

The U.S. Department of Education has developed a new online resource specifically designed for classroom teachers. This electronic news bulletin aims to make those on education's front line among the first to receive information.

Subscribers will receive timely updates on education policy, promising practices and professional development opportunities in a reader-friendly format designed to



### April 18-24

*National Library Week*. For more information, visit the American Library Association's Web site at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).

### April 20

8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.

*Education News Parents Can Use* monthly broadcast will focus on reforming high schools and career and technical education. Visit [www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv](http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

### May 2-8

*Teacher Appreciation Week*. For more information, visit the National PTA's Web site at [www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/teacher](http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/teacher).

## Did You Know?

While financiers generally believe that charter schools should not commit more than 12-15 percent of their per-pupil revenue to debt service, many charter schools spend an average of 20-25 percent of their instructional revenue on lease payments or repaying loans and bonds, and a few report debt repayment costs as high as one-third of their per-pupil revenue.

Source: *The Finance Gap: Charter Schools and Their Facilities*, New York University, Institute for Education and Social Policy, 2004, [www.lisnet.org](http://www.lisnet.org).

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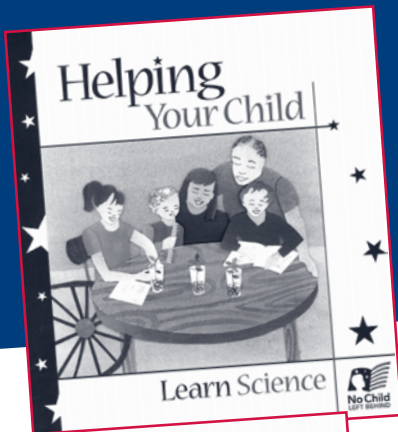
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**FIRST CLASS**



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



## **JUST RELEASED!** **Helping Your Child Learn Science, Mathematics**

**T**he latest two editions of the U.S. Department of Education's *Helping Your Child* publication series will help parents and caregivers prepare children to become critical and scientific thinkers in an increasingly technological world.

*Helping Your Child Learn Science* helps parents to address those often-asked-but-hard-to-answer questions that spring from a child's curiosity: Why is the sky blue? Why do things fall to the ground? How do seeds grow? Drawing from everyday experiences, this booklet illustrates to parents of children ages 3 through 10 how together they can explore and learn about the world around them—without the need for expensive chemistry sets or books. It suggests enjoyable activities that can be done at home and in the community as well as book titles that cover various science fields from archaeology to astronomy; tips for selecting science toys; and contact information for science camps.

Equally important for helping to develop children's analytical skills, *Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics* examines what it means to reason and communicate mathematically. The booklet demystifies the notion that math is a “hard” subject that only a few can master, illustrating daily opportunities for learning mathematical concepts. It includes creative activities for exploring mathematics in the home, at the grocery store and on the go—such as license plate riddles that can be

used during a road trip—for parents with children from preschool age through grade 5. It also offers tips and other resources for strengthening children's math skills and building strong positive attitudes toward math.

For a copy of these free publications, while supplies last, contact the Department's publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS or download a copy from [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html).