

# Community Update

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Education

## Changing the American High School to Fit Modern Times

*Editor's Note: U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley used his annual back-to-school address to open a national dialogue on the American high school experience. Following are excerpts from his speech. The full text can be found at <http://ed.gov/Speeches/09-1999/990915.html>.*

**T**here are several reasons why we need to put the spotlight on high school.... The first is simply demographics. In the next ten years, we will educate an additional 1.3 million high schools students.... A second reason is what young people are telling us themselves. Several weeks ago, I released a poll of over 1,000 high school students — the Shell Poll. This poll told us that the great majority of America's high school students are optimistic, ambitious and have very good values. They want to go to college. They are thinking seriously about the future. But teenagers will tell you that growing up isn't easy. The poll also told us that about 20 percent of our nation's high school students—that's about 2.7 million teenagers—are being challenged by a host of problems such as drugs and alcohol, staying in school, or a troubled family life. While the majority of students gave their high schools good marks, they also told us that they were bored and that many of them were willing just to get by....

Fifty years ago, one-third of the students were being prepared for college, one-third drifted through high school but eventually got decent jobs, and one-third were tagged as low achievers and expected to drop out.

Years ago this assumption could prevail because we lived in an industrial era. Muscle power mattered as much as brain power when it came to making a living....But those times are over and the old factory model of thinking needs to be left behind as well. Yet today, we still seem to be using America's high schools as "sorting machines," tagging and labeling young people as successful, run of the mill, or low achievers....

It seems to me that we need to go in a new direction. The American high school needs a purpose that is more than just helping students get

**"Today, we still seem to be using America's high schools as 'sorting machines,' tagging and labeling young people as successful, run of the mill, or low achievers."**

**Special Insert on Family Involvement**  
(See inside)



*Celebrating America Goes Back to School, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley toured through five states — Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina — from August 31-September 2. At the Chattanooga, Tenn., airport, Secretary Riley, Mayor Jon Kinsey and Governor Don Sundquist kicked-off the "Success Express" bus tour.*

through it. Yes, many of our high schools do a very fine job of preparing young people for college. At the other extreme, some high schools are little more than a way station for young people who already know that life is very unfair....

So where can we improve?

First, we need to accelerate learning. For six years now, I have been talking continuously about ending the tyranny of low expectations. This can only happen if our nation's high schools end the practice of putting some students into low-achieving or dead-end courses that tell these young people

*continued on page 2*

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that we have just about given up on them....

If a student is struggling, the answer has to be an intense intervention effort—some combination of tutoring, after-school, Saturday schooling and summer school—to help that student meet high standards. ...

I believe that every high school in America should be offering Advanced Placement (AP) or other advanced courses in the core subjects within the next two years, and a fuller range of AP courses within the next three to five years. Today, only 49 percent of our high schools offer AP courses and only 10 percent of our students take these demanding courses. ...

Building a new foundation for America's high schools has to begin and end with good teaching.... High school teachers, and for that matter all teachers, have to be given the opportunity to raise their professional standards. They have to be masters of their field whether it is history, physics, technology or music....

I also believe that we need to find ways to create small, supportive learning environments that give students a sense of connection. That's hard to do when we are building high schools the size of shopping malls. Size matters.... We can create schools-within-schools, academic houses, and make sure that every high school student has an advisor for all four years that the student can count on all the time. ...

I believe that schools should set a real goal that every student has some adult to turn to for advice and support. It may be a counselor, a mentor, a coach or a teacher. But the key is to make sure that every teenager has that sense of security about knowing whom to turn to when he or she is struggling....

We can also do more to create new pathways to learning and to adulthood. In a world exploding with knowledge, with teenagers hooked on the Internet as never before, the traditional seven-periods-a-day way of learning may not be the best or the only way to educate our young people. Senior year should be a well thought-out transition into adulthood with students being given increasing responsibility...

I believe in America's young people. They are optimistic and ambitious and they are looking for direction. If you don't know a high school student, go out and meet one.

The high school student you meet will be full of possibilities and bored at the same time; extraordinarily creative and, at times, absolutely clueless. High school students will be full of themselves, and scared to death about what people are thinking about them. They are our children and grandchildren. And in a few years, when all of us are in our rocking chairs, they will be our leaders. **CU**

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## **October Town Meeting Emphasizes Educational Technology's Revolutionizing Power**

**I**maginative principals, teachers and community leaders know that today's technology doesn't just help schools to do better what they are doing already, rather, it can transform learning completely, changing every aspect of the school.

October's Satellite Town Meeting will focus on the new opportunities offered by online technologies, the World Wide Web, e-mail, and other technologies. The program will look at how students are using technology to interact with real-world experts and scholars, conduct original research, collaborate with other students around the world, and create new types of knowledge.

The program will explore the tremendous power of technology at schools such as the Kayenta Unified School District, Navajo Indian Reservation. Kayenta resides in an isolated corner of Arizona where the public school is 100 miles from the nearest public library and 150 miles from the nearest museum. Recently, teachers and students have found increased access, via email and the Internet, to sources of professional development, research for lesson plans, class projects and assignments.

This free, live, interactive teleconference can help communities and schools begin the discussion about using technology for children's learning. Consider planning a local meeting around the event, broadcast the program on your local cable station, or tape the discussion for future use. Just provide these coordinates to your technical coordinator:

**Ku-band:** SBS-6; Transponder 4; Downlink Frequency 11798 MHz; Orbital Location 74 degrees; Vertical Polarity; Audio 6.2 and 6.8.

**C-band:** Galaxy 3; Transponder 15; Downlink Frequency 4000 MHz; Orbital Location 95 degrees; Horizontal Polarity; Audio 6.2 and 6.8.

For more information about this and other programs in the Satellite Town Meeting series, call 1-800-USA-LEARN, or visit [www.ed.gov/inits/stm](http://www.ed.gov/inits/stm) You can also subscribe to STM-List, a free, read-only information service providing the most up-to-date information about the satellite teleconferences, at [Satellite\\_Town\\_Meeting@ed.gov](mailto:Satellite_Town_Meeting@ed.gov)

The Satellite Town Meeting is produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance for Business with support from the Bayer Foundation, the Proctor & Gamble Fund and Target Stores. **CU**



# Partnership for Family Involvement in Education

## Floating the Apple

**H**ow do you mix history, science, conservation, recreation, construction, and leadership? One successful way is through the program called *Floating the Apple*. In New York City, students from Hell's Kitchen, Harlem, the Bronx, and other points in inner city New York, work through the winter to build rowing/sailing boats after school. They plan and host boating activities: races, historical reenactments and the study of the East and Hudson Rivers and shorelines. The boats, built according to historical maritime plans, are maintained communally and stored in community boathouses within walking distance of five New York City neighborhoods.

A host of partners support, mentor, and participate in this after school project. Their volunteer efforts are putting local access to New York City's

*New York City Teens launch the boat "Rachel Carson."*

waterways within everyone's reach. Boat builders, teachers, engineers, business owners, museums, government services, and private individuals have worked to make this community effort a model for water cities and towns worldwide. For more information contact voice mail/info line 212-564-5412 or e-mail <floapple@aol.com> **CU**

## Fathers Matter!

**F**athers—all fathers, no matter what their income or cultural background – can play a critical role in their children's education. Research shows that when fathers are involved, their children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior. Even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact.

Fathers Matter!, a two-hour, national satellite event, will offer ideas and strategies for teachers, school principals, child care providers and others—giving them the tools they need to successfully involve fathers in children's learning, including readiness to learn at school, at home, and in the community.

Hosted by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, the teleconference will feature panel discussions, innovative programs, and viewer call-ins. This live, interactive event is free. All you need is access to a satellite dish to create your own event with parents, educators, students, and community leaders.

Many schools, churches, businesses and municipal buildings have satellite dishes available. Or, call your local cable access station to request that they downlink the program. The program will be available on both C- and Ku-band satellites. For the most up-to-date information, visit [www.ed.gov/satelliteevent/](http://www.ed.gov/satelliteevent/) or call 1-800 USA LEARN. **CU**

# Calendar

## October 13—17

The National Rural Education Association's 91st Annual Convention "Youth/Adult Partnerships in Rural America," Doubletree Hotel, Colorado Springs, Co. For more information, call (970) 491-7022.

## October 15

The CHOICES Mentoring Program Managers meeting for new participants will take place in Newark, NJ. CHOICES is an interactive, school-based seminar designed to help middle school students understand how their current academic decisions can increase their career and life opportunities. Contact Shelley Huestis at 1-800-343-8816, ext 5, or email her at [shuestis@choicesedgroup.org](mailto:shuestis@choicesedgroup.org) or visit [www.choicesedgroup.org](http://www.choicesedgroup.org).

## November 8—12

The National Association of Partners in Education will hold its 1999 Symposium on Partnerships in Education, entitled "Student Success: The Business of Partnerships," at the Crystal Gateway Marriott, in Arlington, Va.

## November 12

Newport News Public Schools and the Newport News Educational Foundation are co-sponsoring the Business/Education Summit at Newport News Shipbuilding, Newport News, Va. Contact Patrick Finneran at (757) 591-4505.

## October 6—8 , Tampa, Fla.

## November 8—10, Salt Lake City, Ut.

## December 15—17, Chicago, Ill.

1999 Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools. This is an opportunity to learn about new programs and address the issues and challenges facing education in your region. Call 1-800-203-5494, visit [www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences](http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences) or e-mail [IAS\\_conference@ed.gov](mailto:IAS_conference@ed.gov).

## December 1—4

National Community Education Association's (NCEA) 34th Annual National Conference, The Spirit of Education-Building Learning Communities, at the Hyatt Orlando, Fla. This is an opportunity to hear prominent speakers and attend workshops on significant issues affecting community education. Visit [www.ncea.com](http://www.ncea.com) or e-mail: [ncea@ncea.com](mailto:ncea@ncea.com).

Nova Southeastern University recently signed on to the Partnership. Secretary's Regional Representative Stanley Williams joins Nova President Ray Ferrero, Director Ken Dose, and Dean Norma M. Goonen.

## Partnership Notes

More than 5,000 partners have signed on to the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. Thirty years of research show that greater family involvement in children's learning is critical to achieving a high quality education for every student. Join the Partnership in its efforts to link employers, educators, families, religious groups, and community organizations to improve schools and raise student achievement. For more information, visit the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education website at <http://pfie.ed.gov>.

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## Did you know?

- Children do better in school when their fathers are involved, regardless of whether their fathers live with them or whether their mothers are also involved.
- Students perform better academically, have fewer discipline problems and become more well-rounded adults when their parents become actively involved in their schools.

# Broad American Support for Improving Public Schools

Education is the top national priority, according to recent surveys of American voters. As students prepare to begin the first school year of the 21st century, Americans are focusing on the growing importance of teaching our children well and are strongly supporting greater federal investments in improving education.

One survey found that “improving education and the schools” will be “very important” to 79 percent of Americans when choosing a president next year, more than any other issue ABC News, Sept. 7, 1999). Only 44 percent say “cutting taxes” is very important.

Another poll found that 73 percent of Americans favor more federal spending on education, more than for any of the other 19 areas polled (University of Chicago, Aug. 17, 1999). Only 73 percent wanted a cut in federal spending on education.

A large majority of Americans support across-the-board investments in education according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll (Sept. 7, 1999). To pay for these investments, 75 percent were willing to pay \$200 more in taxes each year—and 55 percent were willing to pay \$500 more in taxes.

At least three-quarters of Americans support five education priorities, including paying teachers more, equipping classrooms with more computers, reducing class size, fixing run-down schools and adding more school security.

## “Very Important” Issues in 2000 Vote

79%

74%

74%

71%

68%

54%

44%

Source: ABC News/Washington Post Poll (Sept. 7, 1999)

Given the public’s priority on education, President Clinton has asked the Congress to make serious investments in education in Fiscal Year 2000. The President’s proposed budget would significantly increase funds for improving teacher quality, reducing class size, expanding technology, expanding after-school programs, fixing and modernizing schools, and increasing programs such as GEAR UP, which prepares young people for college. As this edition of Community Update goes to press, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate are debating the President’s proposals.

## Soundbites

“Rethinking American High Schools” was the topic last month when the *Satellite Town Meeting* opened its 1999-2000 season with a live broadcast from Seattle, Washington’s Nathan Hale High School. Here’s a sample of the discussion:

**Lee Alvoid, principal of Newman Smith High School, Carrollton, Texas:** “High school reform is difficult. That’s why so many people haven’t done it. Parents fantasize about their days in high school and they want it to be replicated whatever glorified image they may recall. These kids are not going into the same kind of world that we went into coming out of high school.”

**Charlotte Bryant, teacher, Michael E. DeBakey High School for the Health Professions, Houston, Texas:** “Whether you have a large school or a small school, you need to address students where they are within a small setting. That student wants to know that you are caring for him. And that you not only hold him responsible today, but to make something of himself tomorrow.”

**Assistant Secretary of Education Patricia McNeil:** “We need to make learning more interesting. We need to make it more relevant. We need to help students think about their future and the fact that what they’re doing in school links to what they’re going to be doing in the future.”

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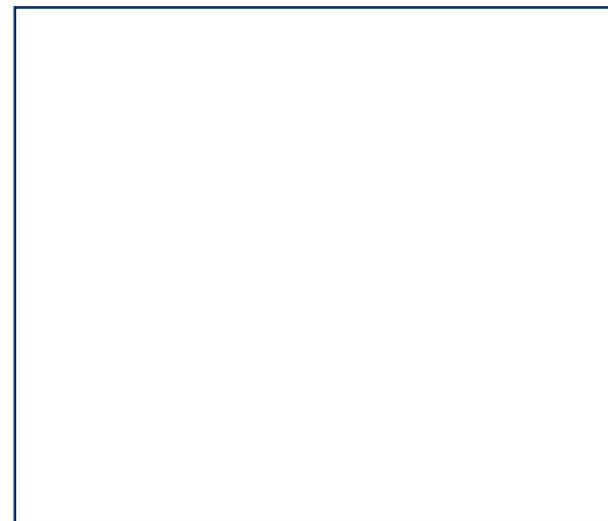
**FIRST CLASS**

## Introducing the Afterschool Alliance

As many as 15 million American children have nowhere to go once the 3 o'clock dismissal bell rings. These latchkey children are at significant risk for getting poor grades, being victims of crime, or participating in antisocial behaviors that have grave consequences and high costs for themselves and society. They are also missing out on tremendous opportunities to learn and grow.

These statistics are startling when one considers that 92 percent of registered voters believe that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go every day after school, according to a new Mott/JCPenney afterschool poll. Realizing that this issue will only intensify in the future, a new alliance has been formed to support and promote afterschool programs across the country. This Afterschool Alliance—made up of a diverse group of public, private and nonprofit organizations—is working to ensure that every child in America has access to quality afterschool programs by the year 2010.

At Centennial Park in Atlanta, Georgia, Secretary Riley formally announced the Afterschool Alliance as part of his annual America Goes Back to School effort. Founding partners in the Alliance are: The C. S. Mott Foundation, which is contributing \$83 million to the after-school effort over six years and has provided the leadership for this alliance; JCPenney, the founding corporate partner has pledged \$30 million over three years; the U.S. Department of Education, which already supports many after-school programs; and The Entertainment Industry Foundation, the Creative Artists



*Centennial Park in Atlanta, Ga., provided the backdrop for the announcement of the Afterschool Alliance. Secretary Riley added a hand to the community sign-on to the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.*

Agency Foundation, People Magazine, and the Advertising Council. Each partner has committed to help build awareness and expand resources for the afterschool hours through projects, promotions and ongoing public education.

Together, the unique talents, resources and expertise of the Afterschool Alliance will make afterschool learning an everyday reality for our kids. Their goal is to ensure that every child in America has access to quality afterschool programs by 2010. For copies of the Mott/JCPenney poll, visit the Mott Web site at [www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org). **CU**

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