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No Child LEFT BEHIND

THE ACHIEVER

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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!
New Guide Helps Schools Plan for Crises

As part of its continuing efforts to help keep our teachers and students safe, the U.S. Department of Education recently released a new guide to assist schools in planning for any emergency, including natural disasters, violent incidents and terrorist acts.

Using key concepts of good crisis planning, ***Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*** lists four areas of crisis management that all school crisis plans should address:

1. Mitigation-Prevention, which addresses what schools and districts can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property;
2. Preparedness, which focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario;
3. Response, which is devoted to the steps to take during a crisis; and
4. Recovery, which deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis.

Because districts have different needs and face a variety of hazards, the guide also describes how several districts across the country have approached crisis planning. Some districts are likely to face tornados or severe weather, while others must address the hazards posed by being close to a nuclear power plant or railroad tracks.

This past spring, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige joined U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge to unveil a new section on the Department of Education's Web site—www.ed.gov/emergencyplan—designed to be a one-stop shop to help school officials plan for any emergency. The new guide is available on this site.

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Seattle's Flexibility Plan First to Win Approval

Last month the Seattle Public School District became the first in the nation to win approval of its plan to use an unprecedented flexibility provision of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The law's Local Flexibility Demonstration Program (Local-Flex) allows approved school districts to consolidate certain federal formula grant funds for use in meeting local priorities in exchange for increased accountability for student academic progress.

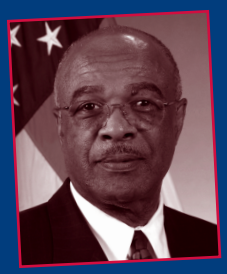
To be eligible for the program, local school districts must submit an application that consists of a five-year plan that shows how the district would consolidate funds to improve student achievement and make continued academic progress as defined by the state. The application must also show how the district would narrow achievement gaps among students.

Seattle's Local-Flex plan seeks to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress and in those that may have met adequate yearly progress but still failed to meet the needs of the lowest performing, underserved students.

The plan's strategies include improving teacher knowledge and skills in research-based practices and strategies; using data to improve instruction; improving teacher quality; and enhancing the use of technology in instruction. These activities will translate into additional services for the targeted schools, such as expert coaching for teachers in reading and mathematics and mentors for beginning teachers.

It's Not About the Money

By U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige



The following is adapted from an op-ed piece by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige that appeared in the Oct. 29, 2003, edition of The Wall Street Journal:

Typical of Washington's Beltwayspeak, a cry has gone up, saying that the *No Child Left Behind* education reform bill is "underfunded." Nothing could be further from the truth.

President Bush has increased K-12 education spending by 40 percent since he took office. In raw terms, this president has increased education spending by $11 billion. As a nation, we now spend $470 billion dollars a year on K-12 education locally and federally—more than on national defense.

What is "underfunded" about that?

The educational establishment in favor of the status quo says that the law is underfunded because it was appropriated at a level below what was "authorized." As someone who is not a creature of Washington politics, let me translate this into plain English: An authorization is usually a "limiting" number—the legal maximum level of funding. To use a highway metaphor, it is a guardrail that keeps wildly spending appropriators from driving the federal budget over the cliff. Only those reckless enough to grind against the guardrail would want to reach those levels. The appropria-

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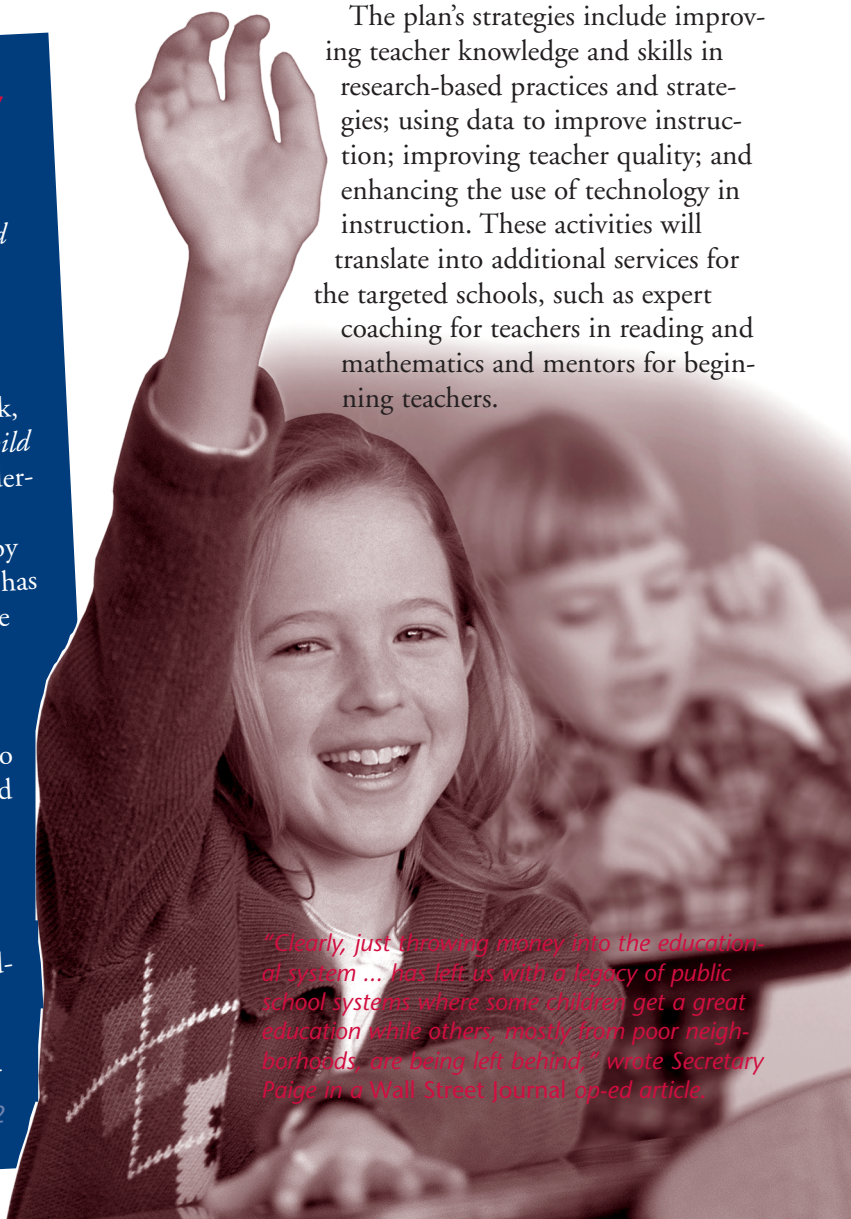

"Clearly, just throwing money into the educational system ... has left us with a legacy of public school systems where some children get a great education while others, mostly from poor neighborhoods, are being left behind," wrote Secretary Paige in a Wall Street Journal op-ed article.

The Achiever *is published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, U.S. 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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tion is usually a number that is closer to the median of the road, the realistic figure needed to do the job. Appropriations are rarely anywhere close to authorization levels, and that is true across the entire federal government.

For example, back in 1994 (the last time the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* was up for renewal), the bill had a fiscal year 1995 authorization level of $7.4 billion for Title I (for at-risk students living in high-poverty areas). Congress appropriated just under $6.7 billion. Where was the Greek chorus of "underfunders" back then?

Education should not be a spending race. Clearly, just throwing money into the educational system—the modus operandi for three decades—has left us with a legacy of public school systems where some children get a great education while others, mostly from poor neighborhoods, are being left behind. A recent report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows that the U.S. is one of the top spenders in the world in education, yet our 15-year-olds rate merely average versus their international peers on tests of reading, math and science.

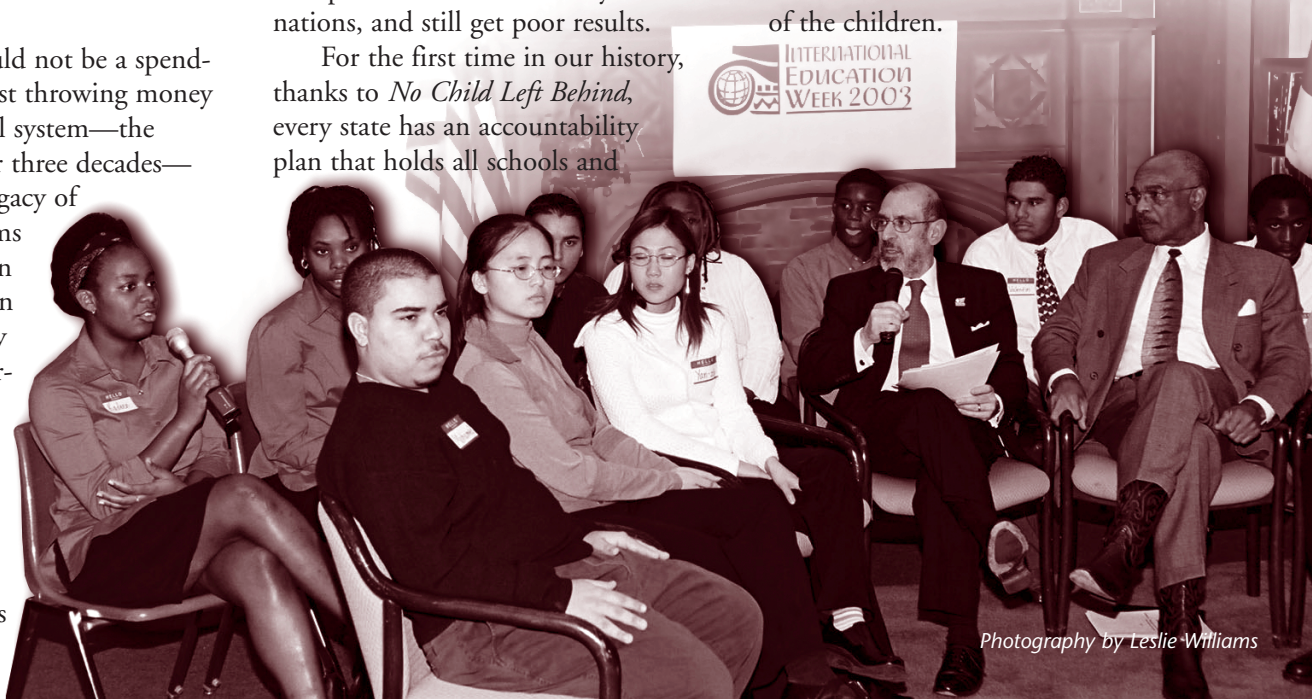
If money spent were the main indicator of a good education, we would see areas with the highest per-pupil expenditures record the highest test scores. The Jersey City school district (which overspends the U.S. average by $5,000 and the New Jersey state average by $2,000) participated in a Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study recently that compared eighth-graders across the world in a number of subjects. Jersey City students' scores in science, for example, are close to the bottom—comparable to students in Iran, Indonesia, Jordan, Turkey and Tunisia. Jersey City kids also have double the dropout rate compared to kids in the rest of New Jersey.

Looking closer to home in terms of comparisons, the District of Columbia, which spends near the top on its K-12 students, has the dubious distinction of having the lowest scores in the nation—including U.S. territories like Guam and Puerto Rico—in reading and math. Thus, if money were the answer to getting a solid education, most students in Jersey City and D.C. would all be admitted to Harvard or Stanford. Don't be duped; it's not that we don't spend enough. We spend enough for better results. We spend more than virtually all other nations, and still get poor results.

For the first time in our history, thanks to *No Child Left Behind*, every state has an accountability plan that holds all schools and students to high standards. Schools and teachers now have detailed information about their students' achievement so that they can adapt their lessons and better serve all their students. Parents are also getting information about how well their school is performing and about the qualifications of their child's teacher. And parents of students attending high-need schools will receive a letter telling them they have options if their child's school hasn't made sufficient progress over the last couple years. Armed with information and options, parents are forcing change in the schools, just as schools will be forced to change by law.

Below, Secretary Paige joins students at Washington, D.C.'s Cardozo High School to kick off the celebration of International Education Week, Nov. 17-21. Students and education ministry representatives from Egypt, Mexico, South Africa and the United States were connected via a digital videoconference.

This is a time to join together, not play semantic games for political posturing. We should all work to solve the educational inequities in this country. Education should not fall prey to partisan bickering and diversionary gamesmanship. The future of our children and our nation is too important for division and sparring by policy makers. Thanks to the president and the Congress we have the right tools for the job. Now, let's replace vitriol with vision, and wisecracks with wisdom—for the sake of the children.



Photography by Leslie Williams

"A hopeful America is an America in which each child can read and write and add and subtract. A hopeful America is where children say 'I'm going to get an education early and I'm going to go to college.' A hopeful America is where people can dream and realize their dreams because the education system is fulfilling its promise."

President Bush, in a speech about *No Child Left Behind* during his visit to Hyde Park Elementary in Jacksonville, Fla., in Sept. 2003.

On the Horizon:

January 20
8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.
Education News Parents Can Use monthly broadcast will celebrate the second anniversary of *No Child Left Behind*. Visit www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/03-04-schedule.html or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

Close-Up:

No Child Left Behind

Adequate Yearly Progress

The accountability provisions of *No Child Left Behind* require school districts and schools to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP), the minimum level of improvement that must be met every year. In technical terms, AYP refers to the percentage of students who must reach the state's definition of academic proficiency each year in order for all students to be proficient by 2013-14. States must specify annual objectives to measure the progress of all students, including specific subgroups of students—defined by poverty, race and ethnicity, disability and limited English proficiency—in order to ensure that every child reaches proficiency in reading and math by 2013-14.

This year, for the first time, every state is required to publicly report which schools have not made AYP. In light of this milestone, The Education Trust, a nonprofit organization, recently released a report describing the effects of the law's AYP requirement on school systems across the country. "The message is clear," the report's authors write, "schools and districts will no longer be considered successful unless they successfully teach all groups of students. Ask parents and voters, and they'll tell you that's just how they want it."

The report concludes that *No Child Left Behind* "is having positive effects by focusing attention on the goal of holding all schools within a state to the same standards of student achievement."

The 10-page report, *What New "AYP" Information Tells Us About Schools, States, and Public Education*, presents case studies of schools in Florida, Virginia, Washington, Maryland and Ohio.

For a complete text, visit The Education Trust's Web site at www.edtrust.org; select the link "Reports and Publications" and then choose "No Child Left Behind."

Did You Know?

Under the safe harbor provision of the adequate yearly progress (AYP) formula, schools can make AYP if they reduce the percentage of students who are not proficient by 10 percent from the previous year, even if the achievement level of the students is below the state target.

Studying Tech's Impact

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced last month that nine states will share $15 million in grants to conduct evaluations of how technology affects student achievement in elementary and secondary education. The evaluations, in turn, will assist other states and school districts in evaluating their own education technology programs.

The competitive, three-year grants are part of the No Child Left Behind Act's *Enhancing Education Through Technology (Ed Tech) program, and are intended to increase states' ability to design, conduct and acquire high-quality evaluations of education technology.*

Grant recipients are required to plan and conduct an evaluation of how their education program uses technology to increase student achievement in one or more core academic subjects; to test and document the methods, practices and instruments used to assess the impact of the technology on student achievement; and to share this information with other states.

A complete list of grant recipients and program descriptions is available at www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/11/11102003.html.