

Archived Information



ED REVIEW

January 2, 2004 (Happy New Year!)

...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/>)

In response to concerns about the quality and usability of statistics on high school completions and dropouts, the Department is financing the convening of a group of experts to review reporting methods. The team, selected by the National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS), includes government officials, policy researchers, and statisticians. "There is no question that we must focus our efforts on helping students graduate from high school," Secretary Paige acknowledged. "One of the first things we need to do is look at the varying definitions, standards, and tracking systems throughout the country to gain a better understanding of the problem so that we can tackle it head-on." An interim report is expected in the spring of 2004. The work will be supplemented by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the agency's research arm. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/12/12192003.html>.

On December 22, Acting Deputy Secretary Gene Hickok issued a statement strongly disagreeing with the conclusions of Education Trust's two recent reports: "Telling the Whole Truth (or Not) About High School Graduation" and "Telling the Whole Truth (or Not) About Highly Qualified Teachers. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/12/12222003.html>. (The reports are available at <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/product+catalog/special+reports>.)

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators have announced a joint effort to boost schooling for disadvantaged children. The campaign, starting in Arizona, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Texas, will emphasize (1) improving the "classroom experience" by advocating smaller class sizes, challenging curricula for all, and increased literacy and (2) attracting experienced teachers to high-poverty schools with better recruitment, salary, and

training opportunities. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO http://www.agentk-12.edweek.org/edweek_article.cfm?slug=15Gap.h23&sec=employers/.



CLOSING THE GAP

The next "Education News Parents Can Use" broadcast (January 20, 8:00-9:00 ET), marking the second anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, will discuss the magnitude of the country's student achievement gap and, more importantly, strategies for closing that gap. Specifically, the show will highlight steps the Education Department is taking at the national level, as well as unique approaches in two large school districts and two smaller school districts -- one urban, one rural. In addition, the show will profile the *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which, by definition, increasingly honors schools that demonstrate a dramatic narrowing of the achievement gap. Winners may serve as catalysts for similar improvement in schools regionally or statewide. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://registerevent.ed.gov/downlink/event-flyer.asp?intEventID=172>. (Note: As before, you can watch live and archived webcasts of each show by going to <http://www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/>.)



READING RESEARCH

Recognizing that reading begins at home, the Partnership for Reading (which brings together the Department, National Institute for Literacy, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) is offering two booklets that use findings from scientifically based research to suggest how parents and caregivers can help their young children become strong readers. The first "A Child Becomes a Reader" booklet (http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/parent_guides/birth_to_pre.html) covers birth to preschool, detailing, for example, what children should be able to do by age 3 and 5 and what to look for in a day care center or preschool. The second booklet (http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/parent_guides/k-3.html) covers kindergarten through third-grade, expounding on what children should be able to do by the end of each grade level and what to look for in each grades' classroom. Both booklets contain helpful terms, suggested reading, and additional resources.

Also: Separate brochures are offered for policymakers and school administrators. The former reviews the components of effective reading instruction and offers guidelines to ensure that it is used in schools. The latter provides an overview of instructional priorities related to reading. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/>.



INNOVATION GRANTS

The Department's year-old Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) administers some 25 discretionary grant programs that foster education innovation at the state and local levels. Two are currently open to competition. The Charter Schools Program (<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/2004/84282.html>) seeks to increase national understanding of the charter school model and to expand the number of high-quality charter schools by providing financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools and for evaluating the schools' impact. State are eligible to compete for grants if they have a charter school law in place. If an eligible state does not participate, charter schools from the state may apply directly. The deadline for applications is February 19. The Teaching American History Grant Program (<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/2004/84215x.html>) supports projects to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of traditional American history. Grant awards assist school districts, in partnership with entities that have extensive content expertise (such as colleges and universities, libraries, and museums) to design, implement, and demonstrate "effective, research-based professional development programs." Applications must be received by March 2.



HIGH SCHOOLS

Looking for an update on the Department's high school initiative? A new web site, <http://www.ed.gov/highschool/>, consolidates all pertinent materials, from the October 8 summit's plenary session webcast and various PowerPoint presentations to the latest facts on high schools and secondary students. Also, the agency is planning a series of regional summits to help state and local leaders address the most pressing high school

issues. More information will be posted on the web site as soon as it becomes available.



QUOTE TO NOTE

"The U.S. Department of Education recognizes the importance of data collection because it impacts how accountable the education system is to its customers -- the students and parents of America. Thanks to the *No Child Left Behind Act*, a light is being shined upon every state in the nation about the quality of every child's education, including the qualifications of every teacher. Thanks to the vigorous data collection efforts in this Department, parents now know whether their child's teacher is highly qualified.... This simple concept is actually quite revolutionary. Prior to *No Child Left Behind*, parents merely assumed that all teachers were qualified."

-- Acting Deputy Secretary Gene Hickok (12/22/03)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Just a reminder: the President's State of the Union address is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20. And, on February 2, the President will release his FY 2005 budget request.

On February 12, in Phoenix, Arizona, the White House and the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor are hosting a conference to help faith-based and community organizations learn more about President Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.fbc.gov/>. (February 6 is the deadline for registration.)



LOOSE ENDS...

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

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