



ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Straight A's:

An Update on Public Education: Policy and Progress

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WELCOME BACK: Record Numbers of Students and New Federal Regulations Await Teachers and Administrators in New School Year

For the seventh consecutive year, record numbers of students are expected to enroll in public and private elementary and secondary schools this fall. This year, 53.6 million students, an increase of 197,000, will walk through the double doors of our nation's schools. In addition to the challenge of educating these students, teachers and administrators must grapple with new requirements mandated by the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

One of the first challenges many schools will face is providing public school choice. In July, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that more than 8,600 schools, serving as many as 3.5 million students, will have to offer public school choice this fall. However, due to several factors, including already overcrowded schools, lack of timely guidance and parents who aren't fully aware of their options, the number of students who will actually be able to transfer will be far fewer.

The prevalence of failing schools combined with overcrowding issues often limited the number of transfers available. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, only 29,000 of the city of Chicago's 124,000 eligible students were offered a chance to transfer. While 2,400 of this total asked to be moved, fewer than 1,200 were ultimately allowed to transfer.

Meanwhile, more than 2,400 families in Colorado Springs, Colo. received notice that their children could transfer to two nearby public schools rather than continuing to attend a school labeled "failing." However, according to *Education Week*, less than two percent of qualified students are expected to make this move.

Chicago and Colorado Springs are but two examples of the nationwide reaction to public school choice—either school districts are unable to provide public school choice to all students who qualify, or parents and students hesitate to leave their neighborhood school. **U.S. Undersecretary of Education Eugene W. Hickok** predicted that larger numbers of students are likely to transfer in the future. "This year is probably a small indicator of what we're going to see next year," he told *Education Week*. "With more information available and heightened awareness, more families will exercise school choice."

States Struggle to Meet the “Highly Qualified” Challenge

Another challenge many school districts are facing is the “highly qualified” teacher requirement in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. (See box below.) While schools have until the end of the 2005-06 school year before all teachers must be highly qualified, all newly hired teachers in Title I schools must be highly qualified beginning this fall.

A new report released by **Education Trust**—*All Talk, No Action: Putting an End to Out-of-Field Teaching*—suggests that we have a long way to go to meet these requirements. Based on an analysis of data on teacher qualifications and assignments, classes in majority non-white schools are more than 40 percent more likely to be assigned to an out-of-field teacher and classes in high-poverty schools are 77 percent more likely to be taught by out-of-field teachers. Even when qualified teachers are available, disadvantaged schools are far more likely than schools in middle-class communities to assign teachers to teach a subject in which they have little academic preparation.

Although out-of-field teaching is far too common an occurrence at the high school level, the Education Trust report found it to be even more pervasive in middle schools. Nationally, 44 percent of middle-grade core subject classes and nearly 24 percent of high school core classes are taught by someone lacking an undergraduate or graduate major in the field.

To read the complete report, visit: <http://www.edtrust.org/main/documents/AllTalk.pdf>

What is a Highly Qualified Teacher?

- Elementary school teacher:
 - Holds a bachelor’s degree
 - Has demonstrated mastery by passing a rigorous test in reading, writing, math and other areas of the curriculum

- Middle or High School Teacher:
 - Holds a bachelor’s degree
 - Has demonstrated competency in subject area taught by passing a rigorous state test, or through completion of an academic major, graduate degree, or comparable coursework



RUNNING OUT OF OPTIONS: Cincinnati School District Turns to Small Schools

In addition to the new mandates of *No Child Left Behind*, West Clermont School District in Cincinnati, Ohio is converting both of its large high schools into five smaller schools within schools.

Considering West Clermont’s statistics from the 2000-01 school year, which were reported in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, the reason for the decision to move to small schools is clear. The school’s graduation rate was 80.9 percent, and 36 percent of the freshman class failed one or more classes. Student behavior was also a concern: 1,075

suspendable incidents resulted in students missing 2,012 days. Communication between parents and teachers was also a problem with 58 percent of parents reporting that teachers do not contact them with news about their child’s progress—or lack thereof.

Teachers and administrators are convinced that smaller schools will improve student achievement. In general, small schools personalize and contextualize students’ educational experience and facilitate the implementation of other effective strategies. These schools are successful not only *because* of their small size, but because small size allows for the implementation of positive changes. For example, in the two Ohio high schools, Glen Este and Amelia, a team of teachers teach the same students throughout high school. In addition, students will have fewer classmates—fewer than 300 in each small school—compared to over 1,400 before the conversion.

The Cincinnati Enquirer article:
http://enquirer.com/editions/2002/09/01/loc_radical_school.html

| High School Enrollment Increases for the 12th Straight Year | | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|-------------|-------------------|
| According to <i>Projections of Education Statistics to 2012</i> , released by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, 53.6 million students will enter K-12 classrooms this fall. | | | | |
| The number of high school students in 2002 is projected to increase for the 12 th straight year to 13.86 million. The number of high school graduates is projected to reach 2.9 million. | | | | |
| Year | Enrollment | | Year | Enrollment |
| 1990 | 11,338,000 | | 1997 | 13,054,000 |
| 1991 | 11,541,000 | | 1998 | 13,193,000 |
| 1992 | 11,735,000 | | 1999 | 13,369,000 |
| 1993 | 11,961,000 | | 2000 | 13,514,000 |
| 1994 | 12,213,000 | | Year | Projected |
| 1995 | 12,500,000 | | 2001 | 13,678,000 |
| 1996 | 12,847,000 | | 2002 | 13,857,000 |
| Note: Enrollments for 2001 and 2002 are projections. | | | | |
| The 31st edition of <i>Projections of Education Statistics to 2012</i> is available online at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002030 | | | | |



HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE APPROVES \$17,500 LOAN-FORGIVENESS BILL FOR TEACHERS

Last week, the House Education and the Workforce Committee unanimously passed a new discretionary loan-forgiveness program that would provide up to \$17,500 in loan forgiveness for qualified teachers who teach five years in a Title I school. The bill would increase the loan forgiveness level found in current law (\$5,000) by \$12,500.

Sponsored by **Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, the bill originally included only special education teachers as a priority for loan forgiveness. The committee added other amendments that expanded eligibility to other teachers. **Rep. George Miller's (D-CA)** amendment targets teachers in high needs schools in districts which are identified by the states as having the most difficulty meeting the highly qualified teacher requirement in *No Child Left Behind*. An amendment by **Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ)** extends eligibility to math and science teachers.

The next step for this bill will be the House floor. While no comparable bill has yet been acted upon in the Senate, the issue is likely to be dealt with in the next Congress.



SENATOR DODD AND REPRESENTATIVE FATTAH INTRODUCE THE STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS ACT OF 2002

On Sept. 5, **Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT)** and **Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA)** announced the introduction of The Student Bill of Rights Act of 2002. The act builds on the *No Child Left Behind Act* and addresses inadequate resources in the nation's public schools by holding states accountable for providing all students with access to the "fundamentals of educational opportunity" necessary to achieve high standards.

"The quality of a child's education shouldn't be determined by the digits of their zip code," said Sen. Dodd. "This measure corrects that inequity by ensuring that each and every child's school has the resources to provide them with a decent education, and in turn, an equal opportunity for a successful future."

The bill sets forth seven fundamentals of educational opportunity: (1) highly qualified teachers, principals and academic support personnel (including additional academic support in reading or language arts); (2) rigorous academic standards, curricula and methods of instruction; (3) small class sizes; (4) quality textbooks and materials; (5) up-to-date library resources; (6) quality school facilities and computers; and (7) quality guidance counselors.

Under the legislation, states must establish three levels of access for the fundamentals of education ("basic," "adequate," and "ideal") and define adequate yearly progress for each fundamental. States must report to the Secretary of Education on each school district and on each school's access to fundamentals. Within 12 years, all schools must have at least adequate access to each fundamental.

States risk losing portions of their federal administrative funds if their public school systems do not meet the “adequate” level. A state demonstrates that it has met the bill’s requirements if it: (1) provides adequate access to each fundamental; (2) provides comparable educational services among Title I and non-Title I school districts; and (3) complies with court orders in matters concerning resource adequacy and equity. The bill also includes a provision that requires the U.S. Department of Education (in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences) to issue a report on the costs of ensuring that each state maintains a public school system that meets these provisions.

Importantly, the bill also provides students and parents a cause of action for declaratory and injunctive relief to enforce the legislation’s requirements. Monetary damages are not available under the bill.

“After almost 50 years of lawsuits, presidential commissions, research studies, and countless news stories, poor children in every state are still the least likely to get a quality education,” Rep. Fattah said. “The Student Bill of Rights asserts that this national scandal to deprive poor children of a decent education must end today.”



PRESIDENT’S EDUCATION BUDGET TAKES A BEATING: House Republican Moderates Seek Additional Funding

A flurry of action on education spending began in the House last week and pitted Republican moderates against hard-line conservatives with the spending total for the Labor-HHS-Education spending bill hanging in the balance. With the November elections looming large, both sides are looking to shore up support among their constituents.

In the House, Republican moderates are hesitant to support the President’s modest 2.8 percent requested increase for fear of alienating voters in their districts, many of whom favor increases in popular domestic programs like education. **Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE)**, a leading Republican moderate, spoke out against the President’s budget, saying that moderates will not support the bill without “additional funding.” Castle’s comments echo those of many Republicans in the House who are frustrated by what they see as a bare-bones bill and want the House to move more in the direction of the Senate, which is operating with \$9 billion more than the President’s budget request. Republican conservatives, meanwhile, want to hold the President’s line to show fiscal responsibility and appeal to the GOP voting base.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has already unanimously approved a \$4.2 billion increase for education over last year and \$2.8 billion more than the President’s budget for fiscal 2003. At the same time, a growing coalition of senators is trying to add an additional \$3 to \$4 billion for Title I, special education, Pell Grants and other student aid. **Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD)** has said that the Senate will not consider further appropriations bills until after the House has acted on them. Such a decision would put off Senate floor consideration of the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill until at least the week of Sept. 16.



NEW PARTNERSHIP TO ENCOURAGE MORE RIGOROUS COURSE SELECTION AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Appearing at a high school in Little Rock, Ark., **President Bush** and **U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige** announced a new partnership in five states to encourage students to take more rigorous courses in an effort to prepare them for postsecondary education and work. The **State Scholars Program** is a partnership between the business community and educators that challenges students to complete courses of study beyond the minimum requirements for high school graduation. The program also targets students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are less likely to qualify for college admission or to enroll in college by the fall following high school graduation.

Business plays a vital role in the program by working directly with students to reinforce the value of the Scholars Course of Study. Local businesses help schools promote the program and help provide scholarships and other rewards for those completing the program. The Scholars Core Academic Course of Study includes at least four years of English, three years of math (algebra I and II and geometry), three years of lab science (biology, chemistry and physics), three and a half years of social studies and two years of a foreign language.

The program is designed to reduce the number of college freshman who need to take remedial courses. Currently that number accounts for nearly half (49 percent) of all college freshmen. More than 20 percent of four-year college students and 40 percent of two-year college students drop out after their freshman year—many because they are unprepared academically.

The U.S. Department of Education will award a grant to the Center for State Scholars, based in Austin, Texas. The center will partner with the Business Roundtable and other business organizations to select states that want to increase the level of rigor to prepare students for the new economy. Four other states in addition to Arkansas will be chosen by Oct. 15. Up to \$2.4 million is available to help implement this program.

More information on the State Scholars Program: <http://www.centerforstatescholars.org/>



SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH FINDS A HOME: Department Awards “What Works Clearinghouse” Contract

The U.S. Department of Education’s search for a contractor for its *What Works Clearinghouse* has finally come to a close. In early August, the Department awarded the Campbell Corporation of Philadelphia and the American Institutes for Research of Washington, D.C., a five-year, \$18.5 million contract to develop and maintain the clearinghouse, which will summarize evidence on the effectiveness of educational programs, products and strategies.

This clearinghouse will help schools and educators better comply with the scientifically based requirements in *No Child Left Behind*. “By providing educators with ready access to the best available scientific research evidence, the clearinghouse will be an important resource for enhancing the quality of local decision-making and improving program effectiveness,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. “And it will help transform education into an evidence-based field.”

U.S. Department of Education press release:
<http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/08-2002/08072002a.html>

Articles of Note:

Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement

A new study by **The Council of the Great City Schools** examined five urban school districts that are making the fastest improvements, both overall and in narrowing differences among racial groups. *Foundations for Success* “looks at the similarities among urban school systems that are boosting performance citywide - rather than in pockets of schools - and contrasts their practices with systems that have not seen major gains yet.”

The study found that the individual histories of these faster-improving urban school districts suggest that “political and organizational stability over a prolonged period and consensus on educational reform strategies are necessary prerequisites to meaningful change.” Some reform strategies included a focus on student achievement, a set schedule with defined consequences, aligned curricula with state standards and a focus on the lowest-performing schools. Successful school districts also provided intensive instruction in reading and math to middle and high school students, even if it came at the expense of other subjects.

The complete report recommendations are available at: <http://www.cgcs.org/reports/Foundations.html>

Tassels on the Cheap, *Education Next*

With a subtitle that reads: “Treating the GED as a high-school diploma masks a declining graduation rate,” Duncan Chaplin’s article for *Education Next* challenges the way graduation rates are reported and calls for the return of the degree ratio as the measuring stick.

The degree ratio is the number of high school diplomas awarded in a given year divided by the number of individuals aged 17. According to the article, “The evidence of a falling graduation rate since 1970 would have become a national scandal by now had it not been disguised by the fact that the degree ratio is not the yardstick of choice.” If the degree ratio were used to measure the 2000 graduation rate, only 70 percent of high school seniors graduated. However, the National Education Goals Panel opted for a method that counts an equivalent degree (General Education Development—GED) and leads to a graduation rate that has held steady at 86 percent over the last decade.

The article can be found in the most recent issue of *Education Next* at:
<http://www.educationnext.org/20023/24.html>

Straight A’s: An Update on Public Education is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, D.C., and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a non-profit organization working to make it possible for America’s 6 million at-risk middle and high school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.