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# THE ACHIEVER

February 1, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 2

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EDUCATION  
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**FIRST CLASS**



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



## **NEW WEB SITE!** **Students Urged to Protect Their Identity**

**T**he U.S. Department of Education is taking several action steps to help combat the growing problem of identity theft, which can threaten thousands of college students. One of the fastest growing crimes, identity theft affected nearly 10 million people and cost victims more than \$5 billion last year.

“Victims of identity theft can spend months or even years clearing the damage caused to their reputations and credit records,” said Secretary of Education Rod Paige. “During the time it takes them to resolve these issues, they can possibly miss out on job opportunities and be refused student loans, a mortgage or car loans. We want to help students prevent those headaches.”

The Department has launched a new Web resource—[www.ed.gov/misused](http://www.ed.gov/misused)—that includes tips for students and families for protecting their identity, such as their Social Security numbers and driver’s license information, along with advice on how they can detect identity theft. Credit card offers, dormitory burglaries, inexperience in financial management and even the way many professors post grades make students extremely exposed to identity theft.

For example, a recent national survey found that 48 percent of respondents stated that they keep personal financial information in their dormitory room, and 31 percent said their room or a room in their building had been burglarized, risking both their personal information and belongings to theft.

The Department also has a hotline—1-800-MISUSED—for anyone who suspects student loan fraud. And soon the student loan billing statements will include tips for protecting against identity theft.



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## Expert Panel to Review High School Dropout, Graduation Rates

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige last month announced a contract to the National Institute of Statistical Sciences to convene a group of experts to review methods for reporting high school dropouts and on-time graduates. The work will be supported by the National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the Department. An interim report is expected from the panel this spring.

One issue challenging the quality and usability of statistics on high school dropouts and completions is the comparison of disparate populations, for example, the comparison of *diplomas* awarded to *12th-graders* and the *high school credentials* of the larger *18-24 year-old* cohort. The number of diplomas awarded represents only about two-thirds of the ninth-graders who entered public schools four years earlier, yet approximately 85 percent of the 18- to 24-year-old population has a high school credential. Another issue is that there

may be substantial differences among states in the definition used to determine whether a child has dropped out, is chronically truant or has moved to another state.

Provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* require that public high schools and school districts be held accountable for graduating students on time. Schools and districts are required to report graduation data disaggregated by subgroup. Currently, data collection and reporting systems are not in place in most states to track students directly through their grade-to-grade progression or their movement in and out of schools. In some states, different calculations have been developed that rely on data not designed for this purpose.

For a list of group members, visit [www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/12/12192003.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/12/12192003.html).

*"At Meadowland [Elementary], we do not believe that building a child's self-esteem will result in higher achievement. We believe that achievement will result in higher self-esteem," says Principal Dennis Young, pictured at right visiting a fifth-grade class.*

### Seeing Behind the Averages

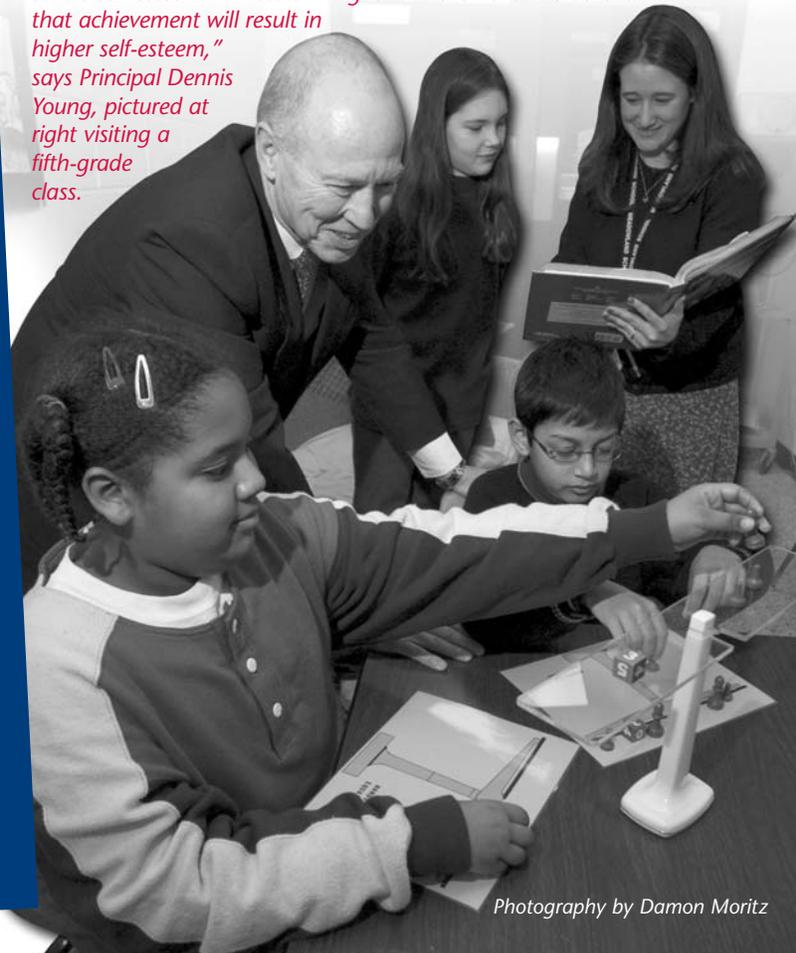
By Dennis Young, Sterling, Va.



Significant changes have marked my 25 years as principal of Meadowland Elementary in Sterling, Va. Our instructional strength was once our students—students who came to school well prepared and had supportive parents. For example, during our first year in 1979, 15 of the 22 students in one class scored 88 percent or higher on standardized exams; only one student scored below 50 percent. At first predominately white, our school in recent years has become 40-percent ethnic minority. Average test scores remain high, but the accountability requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* have compelled us to look for additional ways to help *all* of our students—particularly those whose scores have been eclipsed by higher averages.

During recent years, we have achieved success in creating a community of learners where all students are engaged. We do not believe that building a child's self-esteem will result in higher achievement. We believe that achievement will result

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Photography by Damon Moritz



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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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in higher self-esteem. Therefore, we have created a variety of programs allowing our students in grades K-5 to enjoy success.

We create the expectation that all students will participate and earn rewards in these programs. As children earn incentives—which vary from souvenirs to an invitation to a special event—and are engaged in these programs, they develop ownership of their success. This success, coupled with the understanding that effort is needed to be successful, is hopefully transferred to their daily efforts in the classroom. Student helpers, parents, certified staff and middle and high school volunteers help carry out these programs. It is not expected that every child will participate in every program. But we have so many programs that a climate has developed, where participation and success are expected. A guiding strategy as we design these programs was best voiced by philosopher and economist John Stewart Mill, who said “The pupil who is never required to do what he cannot do, will never do what he can do.”

One of our programs is Poetry Masters. It has

various rewards and goals for the students to reach by memorizing poems. There is a poem-of-the-month and, if the child takes the initiative, additional poems to memorize to reach higher goals in the program.

Another program that reflects how we have made adjustments to encourage all students to participate is Running with Math. Students who participate in this program are given a weekly worksheet with math problems in addition to their regular homework. Originally, the incentives were based on the number of problems the child got correct. Only strong math students usually participated. Since we feel students don't discuss math enough, we changed the format of the program so that a child will get credit for doing the worksheet if a parent or someone at home discusses how he or she would solve the problem with which the child had difficulty. Currently, more than 50 percent of the students earn the various incentives associated with this program. For a few of the students who have the interest but not the support at home, we provide adult and student helpers to keep them involved.

These programs have helped our students to develop a “can do” attitude that has enabled them to be successful on recent state assessments. On the 2002-03 exam, 97 percent of our students passed in math with more than 50 percent of the students earning advanced scores.

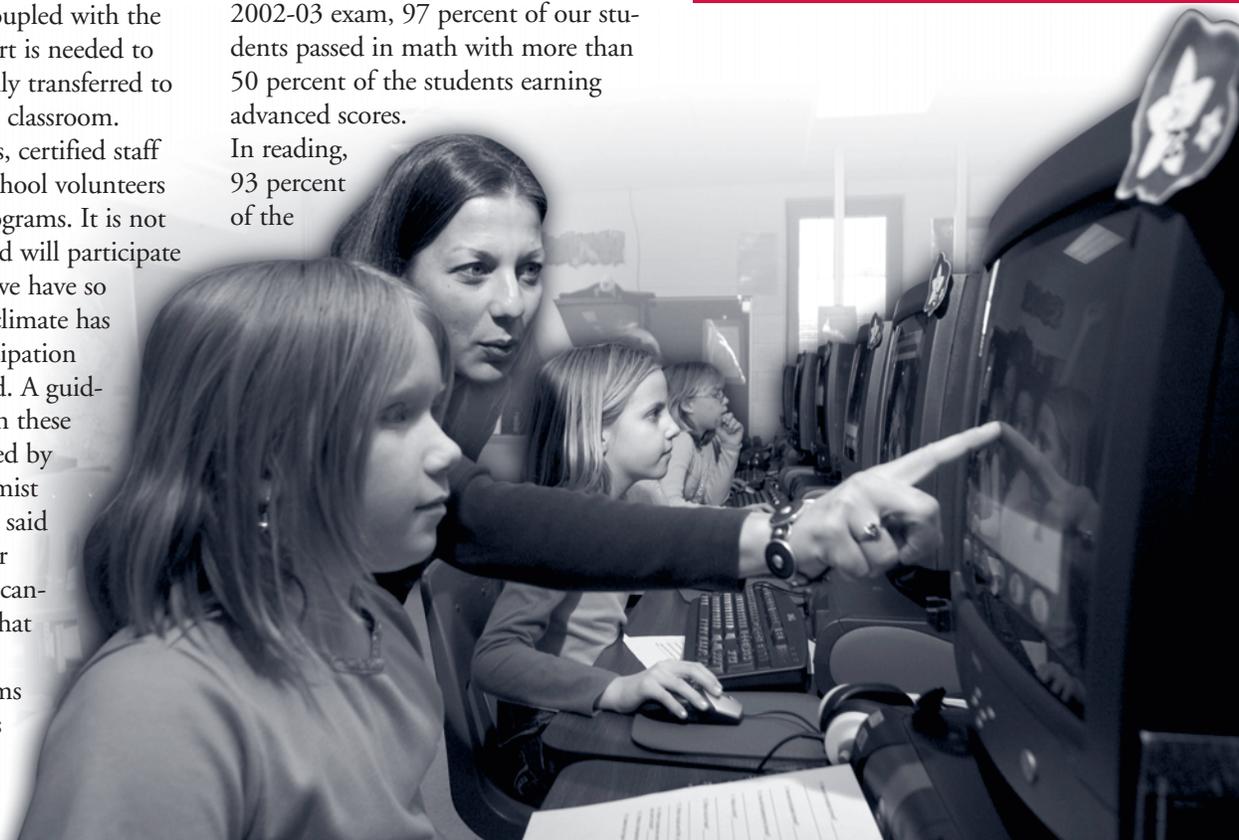
In reading, 93 percent of the

students passed.

This year, our school started a diversity awareness committee that helps us to monitor school activities for their inclusion of all students. The committee attempts to bring to our attention problems in this area that might otherwise go unnoticed. For example, it shares with teachers how many students from each population subgroup are participating in Running with Math. It gives us information as to whether the books displayed in the library and classroom represent a range of people and cultures. This will help our teachers see behind the averages to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity not only to learn but also to gain a sense of achievement through our school.

*Dennis Young has been principal of Meadowland Elementary School in Sterling, Va., since the school opened in 1979. He has been an educator in Loudoun County Public Schools (Va.) for 37 years. Young is a recipient of the 1991 Washington Post Outstanding Principal Award.*

*On last year's state test, 97 percent of Meadowland students passed in math and 93 percent passed in reading. Below, fourth-grade teacher Rebecca Roemer instructs her math class in the school's computer lab.*



*"No Child Left Behind promises a more just, equitable society—one in which all our nation's students will be given the attention they deserve, regardless of their skin color, accent or zip code."*

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, in a statement celebrating the two-year anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Jan. 8, 2004.



**February 17  
8:00-9:00 p.m. E.T.**

*Education News Parents Can Use* monthly broadcast will focus on charter schools and school choice. Visit [www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/03-04-schedule.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/03-04-schedule.html) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for details.

**March 15-20**

Excellence in Science, Technology and Math Education (ESTME) Week. Among the week's activities, the U.S. Department of Education will partner with the National Science Foundation for a science summit on March 16 in Washington, D.C. Visit [www.ESME.org](http://www.ESME.org).

**Close-Up:**



## **No Child Left Behind Scientifically Based Research**

The federal K-12 grant programs under the *No Child Left Behind Act* require state and local education officials to use scientifically based research to guide their decisions about which programs and strategies to implement. However, they must sort through a myriad of claims to decide which interventions merit consideration for their schools and classrooms.

To assist educators in finding and using strategies that have been validated in rigorous studies, the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) recently released the user-friendly guide *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence*. The 19-page publication offers evaluation factors to help determine the effectiveness of an educational intervention—such as a reading or mathematics curriculum, schoolwide reform programs, after-school programs and new educational technologies—that claim to be able to improve educational outcomes and be supported by evidence.

This guide supports the Department's goal of transforming education into an evidence-based field. It was developed for IES by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government, with the mission to advance government policy based on rigorous evidence of program effectiveness.

An online copy is available at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/news.html#guide](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/news.html#guide).

### **Remedial Ed in Higher Ed**

Forty-two percent of entering freshmen at public two-year colleges and about one out of five (20 percent) entering freshmen at four-year public institutions enrolled in at least one remedial course in fall 2000, according to Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000, a new report by the Department's National Center for Education Statistics.

Virtually all (98 percent) of public two-year colleges and 80 percent of public four-year institutions offered at

least one remedial reading, writing or mathematics course in fall 2000. The report also found that the proportion of students who spent an average of one year in remediation increased from 28 to 35 percent from 1995 to 2000 while the number who spent less than one year in remediation dropped from 67 to 60 percent.

"My hope is that through No Child Left Behind, we can strengthen



## **Did You Know?**

Evidence-based interventions can spark major improvements in education. For example, studies suggest that one-on-one tutoring by qualified tutors for at-risk readers in grades 1-3 results in the average tutored student reading more proficiently than approximately 75 percent of the untutored students in the control group.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2003.

our nation's primary and secondary education so that all students enter the postsecondary world as prepared as possible," said Secretary Paige.

The study can be downloaded at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004010>.