



THE ACHIEVER

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Letter to Superintendents Offers Guidance, Funding for the Arts

Secretary of Education Rod Paige recently sent a letter to the nation's superintendents reminding them that the arts are core academic subjects under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) and that the law provides funding and flexibility to improve art education.

"For both the important knowledge and skills they impart and the ways in which they help students to succeed in school and in life, the arts are an important part of a complete education," Secretary Paige wrote. "The arts, perhaps more than any other subjects, help students to understand themselves and others."

Recognizing this significant role, the law, he emphasized,

includes the arts as core academic subjects: "*No Child Left Behind* expects teachers of the arts to be highly qualified, just as it does teachers of English, math, science and history."

The letter cites research that shows the arts serve as a "critical link" to help students develop crucial thinking skills and become motivated to achieve at higher levels. It offers a summary of these and other findings, along with resources for developing arts education programs.

In addition, Secretary Paige points out in his guidance to school chiefs the funding sources available through NCLB to support the arts, including Title I funds to improve the academic achievement of the neediest students, and Title II grants to provide professional development for teachers. For example, Arizona utilized \$4 million in Comprehensive School Reform (Title I, Part F) funds to support arts education at 43 schools throughout the state.

The letter is available at www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/040701.html.

Filling the Summer Gap

No Child Left Behind Reading Program Builds Student Skills, Community Partnerships to Raise Achievement

Instead of turning in their books at the end of the school year, elementary and middle school students in Gainesville, Fla., received books of their own to read over the summer as part of the *No Child Left Behind* Summer Reading Achievers Program.

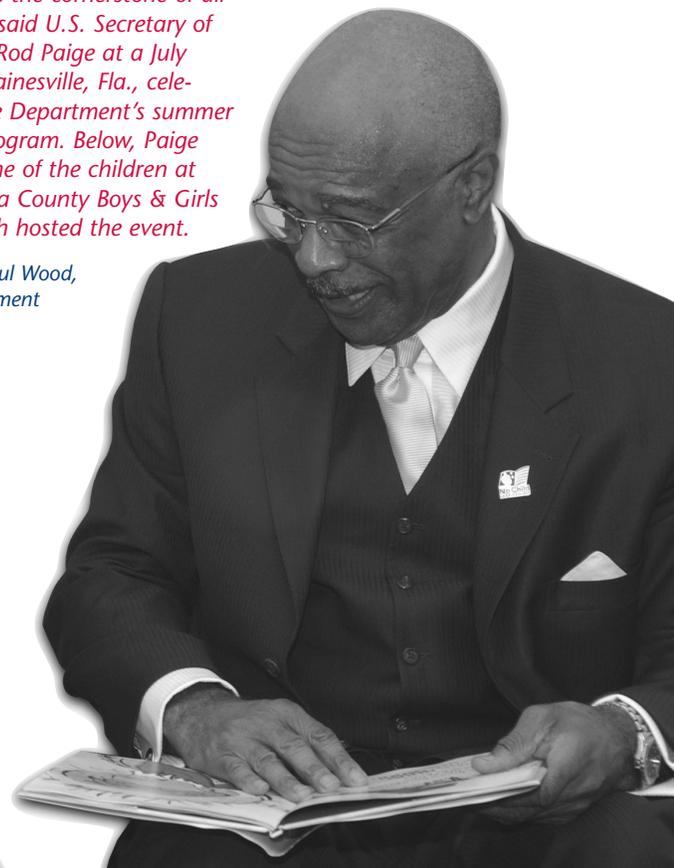
"We wanted to put books in the hands of our children, which is something this program has definitely accomplished," said Sandi Anusavice, director of curriculum for the Alachua County School District. Each student received a free book and reading log at the end of the school year. After students read 10 age-appropriate books and completed their reading log, they were eligible to receive another book.

For Jessica, a fifth-grader at Littlewood Elementary School, the program has meant she now has five of her favorite books at home that can she read over and over. Of the 100 books she's read this summer, her favorite is about monsters who go into a haunted house. "They say funny things that make me laugh," she mused.

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"Reading is the cornerstone of all learning," said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige at a July event in Gainesville, Fla., celebrating the Department's summer reading program. Below, Paige reads to one of the children at the Alachua County Boys & Girls Club, which hosted the event.

Photo by Paul Wood, U.S. Department of Education





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Department of Education (ED). Rod Paige, Secretary.

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the prizes they brought has generated more interest," said Anusavice.

Among those opportunities was a visit by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige along with the Disney characters "Belle" and "Pierre" of the DisneyHand Reading Together program during a celebration event in July. In addition to participating in a fun, interactive program, students received a book from Belle and enjoyed a pizza party.

In his remarks, Secretary Paige said, "Reading is the cornerstone of all learning. Research shows that students often lose some of their reading skills during the summer break, so it's important to encourage children to keep up those skills."

That's the main reason the Alachua County Boys & Girls Club chose to participate in the program. "This program was a perfect fit for the summer gap in our after-school programming," said Keith Blanchard, the club's director. "We wanted to do something to prevent the summer slide when kids stop reading and learning. We also wanted the students to develop a healthy habit of reading for fun."

Kendall, a fifth-grader at Glen Springs Elementary, did most of her reading at the Boys & Girls Club this summer. She found that the requirement to read age-appropriate books meant reading chapter books. "So now I like to read," she said, "but the chapter books take a lot longer." She's now reading *Around the World in 80 Days* by Jules Verne.

Principal Lacy Redd of Newberry Elementary opened the rural school's media center Tuesday evenings over the summer so students and their parents could replenish their book supply and spend time reading together. The popularity of the program was evident when 50 families showed up the night of a torrential rainstorm.

"The assessment we take each September usually shows a slide of three to four months when students don't read over the summer," said Redd, noting that she hopes the value of the program

will show in this year's test scores. "This Summer Reading Achievers Program has enabled us to continue what we've done all year—encourage our students to read." As a special treat, students at the school who read 10 or more books were treated to breakfast by a local restaurant.

In the first three days of school, Redd collected logs from 200 of her 440 students, with the expectation she'll receive about 100 more. While teachers and administrators throughout the county tallied their students' logs, Anusavice and her team prepared 10,000 prize bags—a bag for each of the more than half the school districts' 19,000 eligible students.

With more than 30 local sponsors, the bags were full of gift certificates and prizes. "The community response has been phenomenal," said Anusavice. In addition to prize bags for everyone who read 10 books and completed a reading log, there were prizes for the students who read the most books in each class and drawings at the local and district level for additional prizes that were provided by the program's 12 national sponsors and many local contributors.

Students who read 10 books over the summer also will receive certificates from the U.S. Department of Education, and schools with the highest percentages of participating students will be recognized.

The program is supported by a network of national sponsors, including First Book, Fisher-Price, Scholastic Inc., National PTA, Target Corporation, USA Football, Communities in Schools Inc., the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Verizon, Barnes and Noble, MeadWestvaco and Time Inc.

Disney characters Pierre and Belle read to children at the celebration event.

Photo by Paul Wood

Alachua County is one of 11 sites around the country participating in the second year of the *No Child Left Behind* Summer Reading Achievers Program for students in grades K–8. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that up to 150,000 students will participate at all the sites, which also include Springfield, Mass.; Portsmouth, N.H.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Camden, N.J.; Kansas City, Kan.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Albuquerque, N.M.; San Diego, Calif., and the state of South Dakota. Last year, the Atlanta Public Schools piloted the program, with nearly 18,000 students reading over 150,000 books.

While the Alachua County School District has sponsored summer reading programs through the local libraries in the past, the chance to participate in the Education Department-sponsored program offered new opportunities. "The addition of national and local sponsors and



“What happens when we fail to read? Well, we know the answer: the mind remains enslaved to ignorance. The great thoughts of the past are undiscovered. Our horizons remain fixed, limited, surrounded by unknown territory. Our imagination is unengaged. Life itself remains narrow and possibilities remain diminished. And we don't have as much fun, because reading is so pleasurable.”

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, in his remarks announcing an Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grant from the Education Department to Detroit Public Schools, Aug. 11, 2004.



Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

School libraries are critical to meeting schools' instructional goals: they promote literacy by encouraging reading. However, based on the most recent findings in *The Status of Public and Private School*

Library Media Centers in the United States: 1999-2000, a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, about 40 percent of public schools with library media centers did not have a full-time state-certified library media specialist. Only 32 percent of public schools with library media centers maintained a flexible schedule for class visits to the library, while just 50 percent of public school library media centers scheduled times before or after school when students could use the library independently.

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the Improving Literacy Through

School Libraries program is designed to improve the literacy skills of students by providing them with access to up-to-date school library materials; technologically advanced school library media centers; and well trained, professionally certified school library media specialists. This new program is one component of the U.S. Department of Education's commitment to dramatically improve student achievement by focusing available resources, including those of school library media centers, on reading achievement.

School library media centers can contribute to improved student achievement by providing instructional materials aligned to the curriculum; by collaborating with teachers, administrators and parents; and by extending their hours of operation beyond the school day.

The Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program is a competitive one-year grant for school districts in which at least 20 percent of the students are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

Last month, the Department awarded districts across the country 92 of these grants averaging \$200,000, nearly double the average amount of grants (\$130,000) awarded in 2002, the year of the program's start.

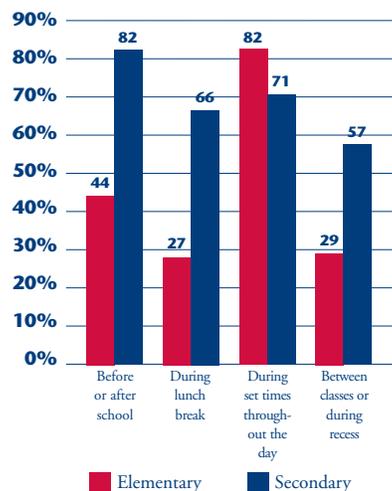
For more information, visit www.ed.gov/programs/lsl.

As states across the nation release their education report cards revealing which schools met their progress goals, parents no doubt will have a few questions about what these changes under *No Child Left Behind* mean to their child, school and community. Below are a few questions parents may want to consider:

- How many special education, minority, limited English proficient or economically disadvantaged students are achieving at grade level (are proficient) in either reading or mathematics?
- What percentage of students graduate from your child's high school? How many attend college?
- Does the school offer afternoon, weekend or summer school instruction for students who need extra help in reading and language arts or math?
- Does the district inform parents of the choices and options available to them under the *No Child Left Behind Act*?
- How many of your school's teachers meet the highly qualified teacher standards under *No Child Left Behind*? How many teachers hold only emergency credentials?
- Is there an explicit student disciplinary policy? How does the school inform parents when their child has misbehaved and been placed in detention, suspended or expelled?
- Has the school been identified as a "persistently dangerous school"?

A full checklist of these and more questions is available at www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbchecklist.html.

~ Library Use ~
Percentage of public school library media centers with scheduled times when students can use the library independently, by school level: 1999-2000



NOTE: School library may offer more than one scheduled period or set time.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, *Public School Library Media Center Questionnaire, 1999-2000*.

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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 RESOURCES! Just Added to **FREE** Web Site

The federal government's most dynamic Web site for learning resources—www.ed.gov/free—recently added to its collection nearly 20 new online resources in science, health and social studies. The Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site is designed to make it easy to find teaching and learning resources on subjects ranging from arts to vocational education, from more than 35 federal organizations. Updated weekly, the site includes, among recent additions:

Hubble: A View to the Edge of Space, from the National Science Foundation, offers a tour of the Hubble Space Telescope launched into orbit in 1989 and looks at the path of communication between Earth and the telescope, the crew of astronomers and craftspeople who keep the Hubble running and images of the universe captured by the telescope.

Open Wide and Trek Inside, from the National Institutes of Health, examines the mouth—its various purposes, types of teeth, bacteria, decay and diseases—and includes a teacher's guide for grades 1-2.

Hands on the Land, from the Bureau of Land Management, provides teacher and student materials about the Everglades ecosystem, bar habitats, rock classification, invasive species, forest carnivores, water quality in the wilderness and the use of Geographic Information Systems to map vegetation.

I Hear America Singing, from the Library of Congress, features recordings and histories of dozens of patriotic songs, including “America the Beautiful” and “The Star Spangled Banner,” along with a collection of sheet music published from 1800 to 1922 that consists of 9,000 pieces.