

THE

ACHIEVER



www.ed.gov • December 1, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 18

New York Education Leaders, Parent Groups Discuss NCLB Options

Federal, New York state and New York City education officials met on Nov. 13 with parent advocacy groups to discuss how to better inform parents of the education options available to their children under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The daylong conference, hosted by Every Person Influences Children, offered workshops on options for children who attend Title I schools (schools with students from low-income families) and on the accountability responsibilities of states and local education agencies under the law. Topics covered included how school performance is measured; how intervention strategies are used to improve schools; public school choice; supplemental services, such as free tutoring; and opportunities for homeless students and their families.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, students in schools that have

not met state-set achievement goals for two consecutive years are eligible to transfer to other public schools in their district that have met the state's goals, or may be eligible to receive supplemental educational services, such as tutoring, after-school programs or remedial classes.

The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, which leads the Department's efforts to provide more information to parents about the choices that the *No Child Left Behind Act* affords them for their children's education.

For more information about *No Child Left Behind*, visit www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=ln.

As part of his efforts to get to know every student at William Thomas Middle School, each week Principal Randy Jensen treats four students to a pizza lunch. "I have gained 30 pounds," he said, "but those 540 lunches have been the best hour I've spent each week."

Developing the Whole Child in Middle School

By Randy Jensen, American Falls, Idaho

When it was announced this year that over 75 percent of our eighth-grade students were proficient in both reading and math, it was time for a celebration at William Thomas Middle School (WTMS). That was quite an accomplishment, considering that when this same group of students entered the school as fifth-graders, only about 30 percent were proficient. Currently, almost 70 percent of the students at our school are economically disadvantaged and over 30 percent are English language learners.

One of the greatest influences on student performance at WTMS has been a commitment to our middle school philosophy; that is, everything must be based on the developmental readiness, needs and interests of young adolescents. Current research shows that when this concept is effectively implemented, higher levels of achievement result. My experience as principal at WTMS bears this out.

To focus on the growth of our young people, we have eliminated a tracking system that left students stuck in the rut of seemingly inescapable poor performance. We also made a shift from being a school that focused on school

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Photo by Cory Myers





The Achiever is published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Intercultural Affairs, U.S.

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

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For address changes and subscriptions, contact: ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794, 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827), edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

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discipline and the negative behaviors of students to one that looks at the positive strengths of each student and builds on those strengths.

In addition, we have implemented teacher teaming, a teacher advisory program, a flexible block schedule and a parent advisory committee. Our teacher advisory program has changed over the last 15 years, but the primary focus of having an adult advocate for every student has remained constant. Each advisor teacher has a "watch list" that is made up of four or five non-proficient students. They make sure that each of their students receives all the help possible to improve his or her learning.

Teams of teachers work together to integrate and coordinate

instructional efforts. Science and technology teachers know they play a key role in students learning and applying math skills. All content-area teachers know that they play a key role in teaching reading and writing.

This past year we made literacy a school-wide effort. With the help of a grant, we added a literacy coach to our team and provided ongoing, extensive training to every staff member. This training was done once a week during team collaboration time. In addition, we developed school-wide goals with team and individual action plans. As a result, we saw a 27 percent increase in reading proficiency rates.

All parents are invited to attend parent advisory committee meetings. Twice a year, over 90 percent of our parents attend student-led parent-teacher conferences. Parents frequently look to the school for help, and we must be there to support them. At this critical time in a child's life, we need to educate parents on issues pertaining to adolescence and encourage them to stay involved with the school and maintain a healthy, communicative relationship with their child.

As a principal, I work hard to know and have a personal relationship with every student in my school. Each week I interview four students and take them out for a pizza lunch. At some point during their tenure, nearly every student goes with me to Pizza Hut. I have gained 30 pounds, but those 540 lunches have been the best hour I've spent each week.

Also, every day during advisory period, I meet with students from different grade levels in what I call Principal Town Meetings. This time allows me to meet with every student in my school once a week to share important information on the operations of the school. If there is a problem at the school, I can address it with every student. If students need an inspirational speech on putting forth their best efforts, I can give it.

Developing the whole child is also a top priority at our school. Young adolescents need to explore different activities, develop their skills in the fine arts, and be introduced to the variety of careers from which they can choose.

Working with young adolescents is one of the most demanding and complex jobs in education. Because this is such a tumultuous time in their lives, those of us who know and love them must be their greatest advocates.

Randy Jensen has been the principal of William Thomas Middle School in American Falls, Idaho, for the past 15 years. Jensen is the recipient of the 2005 Middle Level Principal of the Year award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Jensen reviews an assignment with eighth-graders Juan Rico and Rosie Trevino.

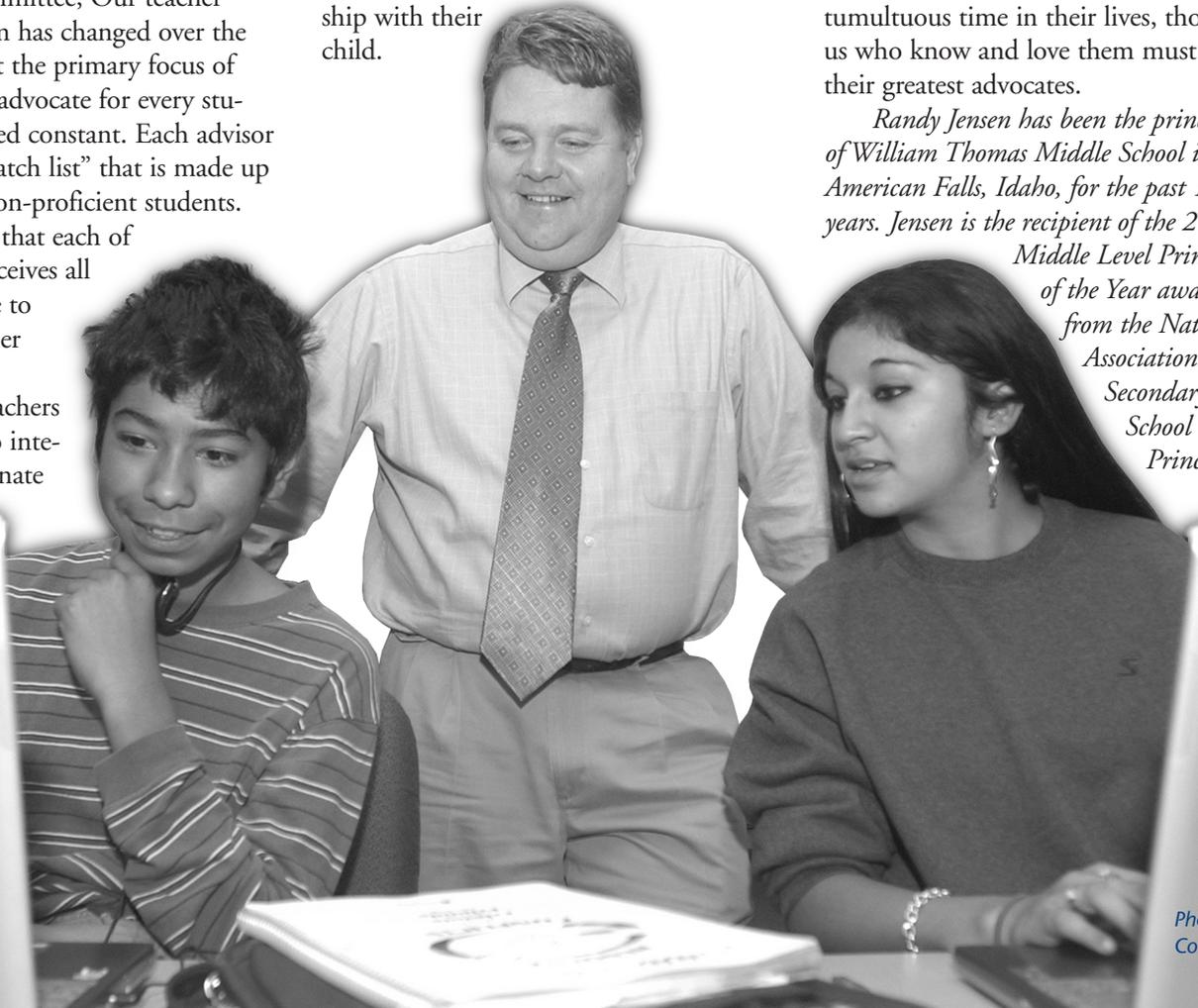


Photo by Cory Myers

"Education is a gift of men and women doing their best to pass along the wisdom and civilization of our intellectual heritage. It is not a perfect enterprise. Education is a very human activity, often fraught with mistakes, falsehoods, or ignorance. And it has very human lessons to teach us, such as the importance of each person, the need for forgiveness and compassion, the powerful calling of service and altruism, and the desperate demand for wisdom and good judgment."

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige in his remarks at the 25th Anniversary Convocation Celebration of Metropolitan College at the Catholic University of America, Oct. 28, 2004.



January 8, 2005

Third anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind **A Guide to Education**

The landscape of the American education system and how the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) seeks to improve it is the focus of a reader-friendly publication released recently by the U.S. Department of Education.

A Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind is a compact handout designed for the general public—ideal for use by schools and communities to help support their outreach efforts. The guide provides a statistical snapshot of the U.S. education system with interesting factoids about public schools and school districts, private and charter schools, English language learners, educators, and high school and college graduates. Also included are facts about national expenditures and academic achievement, which are illustrated with bar charts.

The second part of the guide, highlighting the *No Child Left Behind Act*, offers a short account of how key federal education legislation has evolved from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* mandate to the 2001 law. This section outlines initiatives under NCLB along with President Bush's plans and 2005 budget requests for strengthening each of the following: improving the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students; preparing, training and recruiting highly qualified teachers and principals; instructing limited English proficient and immigrant students; giving parents choices and creating innovative education programs; making the education system accountable; making the education system responsive to local needs; helping all children learn to read; and helping children with disabilities receive a high-quality education.

The guide also provides a glossary of frequently used terms, such as "adequate yearly progress," "disaggregation," and "highly qualified teacher." It concludes with a footnoted bibliography of references for the statistics it includes.

To download a copy, visit www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/guide/index.html.

For the paper version, while supplies last, contact the Department's publication center at 1-877-433-7827, with identification number EAT0261P.

U.S., Mexico Meet on ED

Improving education for Hispanic students was the focus of an international meeting Nov. 8-9 in Mexico City, Mexico, co-chaired by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Mexico's Secretary of Public Education Reyes Tamez Guerra.

Secretaries Paige and Tamez Guerra renewed formal bilateral cooperation through the signing of Annex

VIII to a Memorandum of Understanding between Mexico and the United States.

The agreement outlines the activities in which the United States and Mexico will work together to strengthen educational opportunities for Hispanic students in the following areas: migrant education, language acquisition, higher



Did You Know?

The number of alternative schools continues to grow as a response to the demand for more choices. Private schools total 27,223 and charter schools, 2,996. In fact, from 2000 to 2004, more than 1,000 new charter schools opened—a 50 percent growth rate.

Source: *A Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind*, U.S. Department of Education, 2004.

education, special education, vocational and adult education, educational technology, teacher exchange options, visas for educational and cultural visits, and development of bicultural study programs.

The main purposes of the agreement are to foster dialogue between policy-makers on education issues of mutual concern, and to facilitate links between educators, policy-makers and researchers in both countries. The agreement is renewed every two years through the signing of a new Annex, giving both countries an opportunity to modify existing plans for cooperation.

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THE ACHIEVER

December 1, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 18

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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



JUST ADDED! New Features Boost **FREE** Web Site

Two new features have been added to www.ed.gov/free, the Web site that makes 1,300 federally supported teaching and learning resources easier to find. With resources ranging from arts to vocational education, the Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site now includes a new link that helps to alleviate extensive online searching for material on key historical and cultural events. The “Special Collections” option provides a one-stop shop for resources on Black History Month, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, jazz appreciation, the Lewis and Clark expedition, Presidents Day, Veterans Day and Women’s History Month. FREE already provides resources in 10 subject areas (including language arts, math, science and social studies) with dozens of subtopics (reading, chemistry, U.S. history and others).

Another new feature, the “Past Home Page Resources” link, in an illustrative slideshow reviews resources that have been showcased on the home page. Within the listing is the link “U.S. Electoral College,” from the National Archives and Records Administration, which provides past electoral results and an electoral college calculator. For example, for the 2000 election, it includes popular vote totals by state, Electoral College members, and state laws and requirements. To view the slideshow, from the home page select “Previous Features,” then “Advance: Automatically” in the menu box.

To continue in its efforts to improve the Web site, the FREE Working Group is soliciting feedback. Simply select the link on the home page for a short seven-question survey.