

Spellings Hosts
Roundtables for
Educators on Coping
Strategies

Additional Support for Hurricane-Displaced Students

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings convened a group of mental health experts and school officials in October and November for a series of roundtable discussions on how to best help students and educators cope with the tragedy.

“Our efforts are ongoing, and our support is unwavering to ensure that these children continue to receive a high-quality education and that school officials have the support they need from us under these unique circumstances,” said Secretary Spellings.

The roundtable series began Oct. 21, in Mississippi, and was then held in Alabama, Texas, Georgia and Florida. These discussions with some three dozen experts who work with students provided



the basis for a brochure published by the U.S. Department of Education on the crucial role of recovery planning in schools and communities affected by natural disasters.

On the heels of President Bush’s proposal for a \$2.6 billion education package to assist student survivors and the schools in the Gulf Coast Region that serve them, the Department awarded Louisiana a \$20.9 million grant to help reopen charter schools damaged by the hurricanes, create 10 new charter schools, and expand existing charter schools to accommodate displaced students.

In addition, the Department will permit Gulf Coast states access to \$25.9 million in federal funds for vocational rehabilitation services without having to match these funds.

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Including All Children

New York School With Diverse Population Proves Every Student Can Succeed

“We believe that all children can learn.”

Just 15 minutes north of New York City sits Yonkers Public School 29 in a community so culturally rich that Spanish, Thai and Arabic are among the foreign languages spoken by residents.

Diversity at School 29, also known to its neighbors as Westchester Hills Elementary, is more than ethnic, however. Of the 527 children who are black, white, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian, nearly three-fourths qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Diversifying this population even further is the fact that one-quarter of the student body requires special education.

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For information about other Department hurricane relief efforts, visit hurricanehelpforschools.gov, which by late October had enabled nearly 500 schools to receive assistance from companies, organizations and private individuals.



Tips for Helping Students Recovering From Traumatic Events is a new brochure from the U.S. Department of Education that offers advice to parents, teachers, principals, coaches and others for dealing with students' disaster-related trauma. For a copy, visit www.ed.gov or call (877) 4ED-PUBS, while supplies last.

Spellings Speaks at National Press Club

In September, Secretary Spellings gave the address "Katrina: A Teachable Moment" at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. An excerpt of her speech follows.

... I've been so gratified by schools all across the country that are opening their doors and their hearts to displaced students, but I'm not the least bit surprised. Educators are simply showing America once again what a treasure they truly are. ...

After the pictures we've all seen on television and the looks on these children's faces, I know one thing for sure: These

tragedy of Katrina drives this point home, that as a nation, it is our moral obligation to leave no child behind.

... Take a look at our high school graduation rates. Among ninth-graders, five out of 10 minority students fail to finish high school on time. Overall, three out of 10 don't finish on time. Would we tolerate three out of every 10 planes going down? Would we tolerate three out of every 10 heart surgeries failing? Then why is it okay for three out of 10 kids to drop out?

Leaving our high school students behind is not only morally unacceptable, ... it's also economically untenable. ... The one million students who drop out of high school each year cost our nation more than \$260 billion in lost wages, lost taxes, lost productivity over their lifetimes. ...

So I would suggest ... how well our students are doing is not just an education issue; it's an economic issue, a civic issue, a social issue, a national security issue, and it's everybody's issue.

... With *No Child Left Behind*, President Bush and the Congress, in a very bipartisan way, led our nation in a historic commitment to give every child a quality education. We said to ourselves, we will close the achievement gap by 2014 across the board, with states measuring children's progress each year in reading and math, and focusing on each student and each group of students so we can discover where they need help before it's too late. ...



Photo by Leslie Williams

While we have encouraging results for younger children, the nation's recent education report card has shown no progress for high school students in 30 years. So it's time

to focus on improving high schools. That's why the president and I are supporting high school reform that focuses on reading, math and science to help more students reach the finish line on time and be ready for college or work. ...

In our global economy, 80 percent of the fastest-growing jobs will require education or training beyond high school. Just this week, I announced a commission on higher education to ask some of the vital questions we're facing in that area. ...

... The education gap means that U.S. high-tech companies are seeking employees abroad, not just because they can be paid less, but also because they are more skilled and more motivated. In other words, they are not following the money. They're following the brains. ...

Today, there is no Sputnik to galvanize the nation into action, but Katrina has. The achievement gap, the education gap, the quiet crisis will cast a very long shadow over our future if we do not summon the will to stay competitive, and competitiveness begins with education. We know the cure. We can do this: high standards with measured results; high expectations; quality curriculum; great teaching; parental focus. This is our mandate and our mission. It's also the right thing to do. Our children and our country deserve no less.

For the full speech, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Speeches" for the Sept. 21, 2005, remarks.

NATION'S REPORT CARD

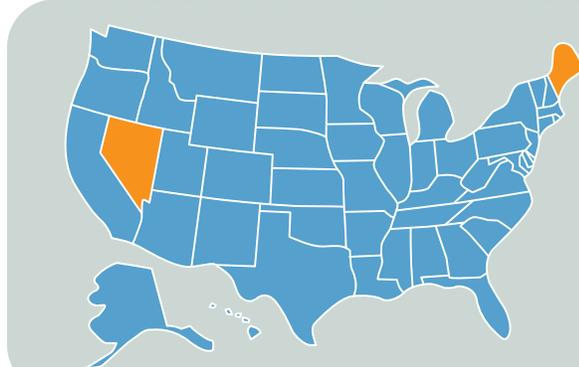
Black, Hispanic and lower-income students posted some of the larger gains in reading and mathematics, according to results from the Nation's Report Card released in October. The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress, which reported the national and state outcomes of more than 300,000 fourth- and eighth-graders tested, showed that overall math scores for both groups rose to all-time highs, and fourth-grade reading scores matched the all-time record.

"These results, like the long-term July data, confirm that we are on the right track with *No Child Left Behind*, particularly with younger students who have benefited from the core principles of annual assessment and disaggregation of data," said Secretary Spellings. "[They] clearly show a need to apply accountability principles and focused instruction in our middle and high schools."

For details, visit nationsreportcard.gov.

young people need and deserve a quality education. In fact, we're having what educators call a "teachable moment." What's a teachable moment? It's an opportunity to learn from and act on the moment we're in. And Katrina is a potent reminder to all of us that every single one of our children must be given the opportunity to learn and the chance to share in the American dream. I sincerely hope the

AROUND THE COUNTRY



MAINE—Former Gov. Angus King, who created a statewide program in 2002 to provide laptop computers to seventh- and eighth-grade public school students and their teachers, raised \$850,000 in private funds this summer to establish the Maine Learning Technology

Yet, School 29—which was recently honored by the U.S. Department of Education with a *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Award—has proven that neither color nor income nor ability determines success. On the 2005 state assessment, 100 percent of fourth-graders proved proficient in both reading and mathematics. (This school year will be the first for New York to test grades 3–8 for its accountability goals at the elementary and middle school levels.)

Moreover, for the last few years, School 29 has increasingly moved more students past the mark of proficiency to the top level of mastery. For instance, on the 2004 reading exam, 31 percent met the state standards but 67 percent exceeded standards, compared to 45 percent and 15 percent, respectively, at demographically similar schools.

“We believe that all children can learn,” said Marilyn Walder, who has been the principal for the past 14 years. “But there must be a strong effort for ensuring that that’s not a cliché.” To do so, she added, the school focuses dually on “excellence and equity” for all children.

Walder knows firsthand what education looks like in the



absence of these twin goals. When she arrived at School 29 in 1987, Yonkers Public Schools was in its second year of desegregation, and the vestiges of a separate and unequal system were highly evident. In fact, the achievement gap at School 29 between white students and their minority peers was as wide as 70 percent.

In response, Walder, who was then assistant principal, and her colleagues outlined a comprehensive plan targeting four critical areas that needed attention in order to turn the school around: high expectations, staff development, school climate and multiculturalism. Initiatives in these areas, which drive school reform to this day, are providing the foundation for developing “the whole child,” she explained.

“We recognize that all individuals are unique, so every child in our school is addressed in a unique and individual manner,” Walder said. “We do that by taking a look at their lives—what they bring to the table and what we want them to learn from us.”

Each student at School 29 is assigned an Academic Instructional Services plan that tracks progress from the first day of enrollment. Designed by a team of faculty members, the plan examines a child’s skill level in various subjects, socioeconomic status, and even neighborhood conditions—any influence that would affect school performance. Based on these and other determinants, the team may recommend tutoring and, in some cases, counseling services.

The instructional program at School 29 is intended to help students discover and celebrate their own uniqueness, as well as that of others. In 1988, School 29 implemented an ecology magnet program, becoming the only school in the district to have this focus. It is an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates reading, math, social studies, chemistry and biology. The objective is that

through the study of their biosphere—the living earth—children will develop an awareness of and a commitment to conserve the environment in which they live. This global perspective, the staff believes, will help children to recognize similarities and respect differences among various peoples of the world, which is vital for



a school where 11 languages are represented among students learning English.

As part of the ongoing ecology focus, every year each section of the school’s three-wing building is assigned a “biome” to investigate, and each area is decorated accordingly. Last year, in teacher Joe Gianantonio’s wing, students made a life-size



Yonkers

Foundation, a nonprofit that will offer free home Internet access to approximately 11,000 low-income children participating in the state’s laptop program. Other program participants can purchase the Internet service at a discounted rate.

NEVADA—With 12 schools opening this year and 88 more to be built over the next few years, Las Vegas has launched an extensive teacher recruitment drive that is spanning the globe. The Clark County School District, the nation’s fifth largest with nearly 300,000 students, hired 51 teachers this year from the Philippines and 14 from Spain to meet shortages in the

fields of math, science, and bilingual and special education. The area’s economic boom is boosting the student population, which is expected to reach more than half a million by 2018. In addition, the district expects an immediate hike in enrollment with survivors of Hurricane Katrina looking for employment in the city’s casino industry.



Clockwise from top: Music therapist Paul Diamond with third-grader Pedro; Tracy Ingram with son Quincy; reading teacher Marguerite Robinson with fourth-graders Mimoza and Tamir; Principal Walder; and Giannantonio in his ecology class. On the cover, rehabilitation skills teacher Susan O'Brien with third-grader Nathaniel. Photos by Tom McWilliam.

club, for example, welcomes English language learners while the cheerleading club accepts the physically disabled. Even in regard to its structure, the school has made sure to include all children. Four years ago, School 29 built a new addition to accommodate more students in the Yonkers community, particularly the special needs students, who have increased from 14 percent to 23 percent of the school's population. Because of this one-story structure that is wheelchair accessible, School 29 offers the only rehabilitation skills class in the district.

Its special education population includes students with cognitive disabilities such as autism as well as those who are wheelchair-bound. For these varied needs, the school uses a multisensory approach to learning, which includes occupational, speech and art therapy as well as vision, hearing and clinical assistance, with the support of two full-time nurses and an assistant.

Similar to the study of cultures around the globe, the school staff considers the inclusion of children with disabilities another step toward an appreciation of diversity.

"I believe it puts regular education children at an advantage," said Susan O'Brien, who has taught special education at School 29 for 19 years. "It helps them to realize that these children have a lot to contribute. Just because they're not physically perfect doesn't mean that their minds aren't good and that they don't have a lot to contribute to society."

The empathy for children with diverse needs expressed by the faculty accounts largely for School 29's achievements. "They're

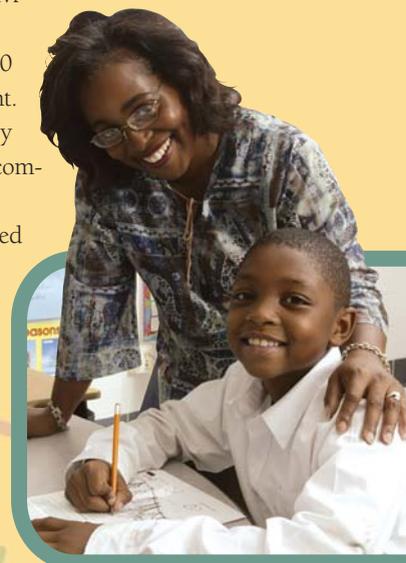
always giving," said Walder. "They go beyond the call of duty. They truly care about the children."

Staff support is part of what Walder calls a "paradigm for success in action." Her reference describes the assembly of stakeholders, from the state to the student level, who work collaboratively to prepare every child for life-long learning. This partnership, among other efforts, raised \$130,000 for a new playground that is wheelchair accessible. With bake sales and other activities, parents raised \$19,000 of that amount.

Attracted by this sense of community, Tracy Ingram enrolled her son at School 29 this year. She pointed to other qualities that she feels justify a two-hour daily trip between her child's school in New York and her workplace in Connecticut: a well-structured curriculum, low staff turnover, strong leadership and exposure to a diverse population.

"We share this world with a lot of people," said Ingram. "My son has to mingle with people of all different nationalities, all different handicaps. He might be a state senator. He has to know what goes on firsthand. So what better way is there for him to interact?"

—BY NICOLE ASHBY



igloo from more than 800 milk and water cartons for a study of the Arctic. For this year's theme, the wetlands, his group plans to build a pond in the school's courtyard.

Giannantonio, who teaches autistic children, also helps to coordinate the program's "Trout in the Classroom," a yearlong project for raising 200 brown trout eggs that culminates in June with the release of the fish into the New York watershed. "It's an exciting program, something that if I was in grade school now I would love to have in my class," he said.

Public School 29 has been successful with these endeavors because it excludes no one—inside or outside the classroom. The drama



Public School 29



- > **Grade Span:** Pre-K-8
- > **Locale:** Large city
- > **Total Students:** 527
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 35% black, 34% Hispanic, 22% white, 8% Asian, 1% American Indian
- > **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 70%
- > **English Language Learners:** 9%
- > **Special Education Students:** 23%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In reading and mathematics, 100% (based on fourth-graders assessed on the 2005 state exam).
- > **Interesting Fact:** More than 10 languages are represented among English language learners, including Spanish, Portuguese, Thai, Arabic and Hindi.

November 11

Veterans Day, a national celebration to honor American veterans of all wars. To commemorate this historic occasion in the classroom, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers a teacher's resource guide for educating students in grades 4–12 about the contributions America's 25 million veterans have made toward defending democracy. To download a copy or for activity ideas, visit www.va.gov/vetsday.



December 8

White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference, Nashville, Tenn., sponsored by a consortium of federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education. Part of a series of regional conferences being held around the country, this meeting for grassroots leaders will provide information about federal grant opportunities. To register, visit www.fbc.gov or call (202) 456-6718.

December 8–9

Commission on the Future of Higher Education Meeting Nashville, Tenn., part of a series of public hearings sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. Convened by Secretary Spellings in September, the 19-member commission will hold a roundtable discussion to focus on access, affordability and accountability in higher education, which will contribute to a final report next August. For details, visit www.ed.gov and click on "About ED" and then "Boards & Commissions," or call (800) USA-LEARN.

Q & A GLOSSARY

Is my child being taught by a highly qualified teacher?

In keeping with its mission to ensure high-quality instruction for every child, the *No Child Left Behind Act* sets the goal that every public school classroom have a highly qualified teacher (HQT) by the end of this school year.

Under the law, a highly qualified teacher must: have a bachelor's degree; be fully certified by the state; and demonstrate content knowledge in each core subject he or she teaches. The requirement applies to all public school teachers of core academic subjects, including those who provide special education and teach English as a second language.

However, according to new guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education, states that do not reach the 100-percent

goal by the end of the 2005–06 school year but are making a "good-faith effort" to do so must develop a plan detailing the steps they will take to ensure that they meet the HQT goal by the end of the 2006–07 school year. The Department will provide this additional time after examining whether the state is: (1) implementing a plan for reaching the goal based on an acceptable definition of "highly qualified teacher"; (2) informing parents and the public on classes taught by highly qualified and non-highly qualified teachers; (3) accurately reporting HQT data to the Department; and (4) ensuring that classrooms with low-income and minority children are receiving an equitable share of experienced and qualified teachers.

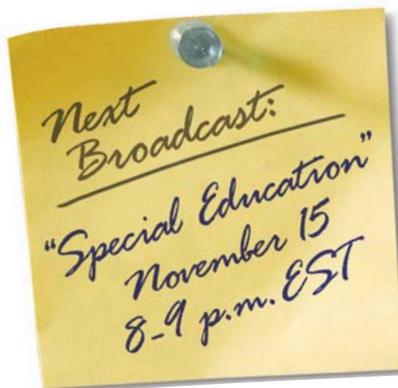
HQT highly qualified teacher: a public school teacher who has a bachelor's degree, full state certification and demonstration of subject-matter competency for each core academic subject taught.

News Show Explores Special Education

Ensuring students with special needs receive the quality education all children deserve is the topic of the November broadcast of *Education News Parents Can Use*, the U.S. Department of Education's monthly television program.

Recognizing that this month marks 30 years since Congress enacted the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, the news show will explore how the law has increased opportunities for this population in the classroom, in higher education and in the job market. In addition, it will look at how the accountability provisions of *No Child Left Behind* are helping to ensure students with disabilities achieve high standards.

Panelists and guests will discuss the Department's efforts for helping classroom



teachers and special educators establish an instructional partnership; suggestions for parents on early intervention for children suspected of having a disability; and the effectiveness of the Individualized Education Program in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Each month, *Education News Parents Can Use* showcases: schools and school districts from across the country; conversations with school officials, parents and education experts; and advice and free resources for parents and educators.

To learn about viewing options, including webcasts, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Parents," then "News Parents Can Use," or call toll-free (800) USA-LEARN.

Please note that the show will take a break in December and resume its broadcast in January.



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Teachers Ask the Secretary

The U.S. Department of Education recently launched a new feature on its Web site that gives teachers the opportunity to post their questions and comments directly to Secretary Spellings and subsequently receive answers.

Teachers Ask the Secretary—an interactive, online service at www.ed.gov/teachersask—allows users to learn about a wide range of teacher-related topics, including teacher quality, professional development and state academic standards.

Currently, the site lists responses to questions such as:

- > Are teachers with experience in Title I schools eligible for loan forgiveness?
- > Can teachers be reimbursed for

out-of-pocket classroom expenses?

- > Why is it not mandatory for children to attend kindergarten?
- > Does *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) allow adjustments for testing special education students?
- > How does NCLB prioritize art and music instruction?
- > Will salaries increase to help meet the teacher shortage?
- > What efforts are in place to acculturate new teachers?

Teachers Ask the Secretary is the latest in a series of interactive Web resources for educators, which also include online courses and an electronic bulletin of Department-sponsored events and efforts. The resources are part of the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, a comprehensive program that offers professional development, research-based classroom strategies and national recognition of stellar educators.



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