

**ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION**

Straight A's: A Citizen's Update on Education

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WHITE HOUSE BEGINS PUSH FOR RECRUITING AND KEEPING HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

The *No Child Left Behind Act* has generated a hot debate among administrators, teachers and parents alike. Some of the main issues involve the definition in the law of a “highly qualified” teacher and how school districts are going to recruit these new teachers given the overall teacher shortage that many already face.

Under the new law, every *new* teacher hired must be highly qualified by the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. Meeting this requirement will translate into an additional 2.2 million teachers that school districts will need to hire over the next decade. With many states already facing teacher shortages, these new requirements are going to prove tough to meet, especially in inner cities, rural areas and other high-poverty locales. In an attempt to hop aboard the “highly qualified” train before getting run over, the White House has begun a big push to recruit new teachers.

During his radio address on March 2, President Bush began a campaign to attract new teachers to our nation's classrooms. He aimed his first proposal at recent college graduates and sought to raise interest in the teaching profession among current college students with a loan forgiveness program. The program would forgive up to \$17,500 of teachers' college loans in exchange for a five-year commitment to teaching math, science or special education in poorer neighborhoods. In an effort to keep current teachers within the profession, he proposed a \$400 tax deduction that would allow them to recover some out-of-pocket expenses for school supplies.

TIME Study: Elementary School Teachers Spend Over \$1 Billion on School Supplies

A new study found that the President's proposed out-of-pocket school supplies tax deduction would benefit teachers, but would not fully cover their expenses. According to the study provided to Time magazine by the research firm Quality Education Data, elementary school teachers spend over \$1 billion a year of their own money on school supplies for use in their classrooms. On average, a teacher spends \$521 annually, which represents 35 percent more than the amount his school provides.

Teachers in the study, who have an average salary of \$42,000, say the greatest need is for materials for at-risk students. Examples cited included books for a fifth-grade student who reads at a first-grade level, and visual aids for students who are not English proficient. Of the teachers surveyed, first year teachers, who happen to make the lowest salaries, spend the most (\$701) on supplies.

In the same week, President Bush launched his “A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom” initiative in a Minnesota high school. The event promoted his effort to encourage recruitment and training of new teachers and school professionals. In addition to the student loan forgiveness program and the tax deduction, key parts of the program include:

- Providing state grants to recruit and train teachers and principals
- Recruiting high-quality individuals to become teachers
- Expanding programs to train teachers in specific subject areas
- Implementing the Teacher Protection Act which allows teachers, principals and other school professionals to undertake reasonable actions to maintain order in the classroom without fear of litigation

New Teacher Tax Credits Proposal Would Benefit Title I Teachers

President Bush was not the only person who had teachers on his mind last week. On March 3, **Congresswoman Heather Wilson (R-NM)** introduced a bill to provide tax credits for teachers in Title I schools. The bill would provide a \$2,000 non-refundable tax credit for teachers, assistant teachers, principals and assistant principals who teach full time in a Title I school.

According to Congresswoman Wilson, the *No Child Left Behind Act* was an important first step in education reform, but more work needs to be done:

“I think we can do even more. I think we can support our teachers and give them the professional development and the resources they need to do their jobs. Next to their parents, the most important person in a child’s education is their teacher. I’ve visited over 100 schools in the last three years. We need to attract and keep the best teachers we can to the schools that need great teachers most.”

The bill targets Title I schools because they are in the poorest neighborhoods and undergo the greatest difficulty keeping experienced teachers. If the bill is passed, the tax credits would be available to teachers in the 44,877 Title I schools in the country beginning in the 2003 tax year.



SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The term “scientifically based research” is used 117 times in the *No Child Left Behind Act* and is featured as the foundation for many programs and initiatives. The term’s prevalence throughout the new law signals a change from funding programs that seem to be working in the classroom and toward programs that have proven results based on scientific research. The law mandates the use of scientifically based research in everything from professional development and technical assistance to reading curriculum design. It also requires activities performed in the classroom to be proven scientifically effective for the children served.

On February 6, **Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Susan**

Neuman hosted a seminar that brought together education and science experts to discuss the meaning of scientifically based research.

The seminar featured a paper on “The Logic and the Basic Principles of Scientific Based Research,” by Michael Feuer and Lisa Towne of the National Research Council (NRC). The NRC was organized to associate the broad community of science and technology with the National Academy of Science’s purposes of further knowledge and advising the federal government. During his presentation at the seminar, Feuer spoke of the need to bring scientific reasoning and the culture of science to bear on the important decisions we make about kids and schools. However, he noted that there are very few studies in education that use scientifically based research.

Stephen Raudenbush of the University of Michigan compared the movement in education toward more scientifically-based research to a similar path that the field of medicine traveled. He noted that one of the few scientifically based studies was a Tennessee class size study, which he described as an “amazing state-wide randomized experiment to evaluate the impact of large versus small classes.”

A complete transcript of the seminar and links to the papers presented can be found on the Department of Education’s Web site:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/research/index.html>



WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO? A LESSON ON THE FEDERAL BUDGET

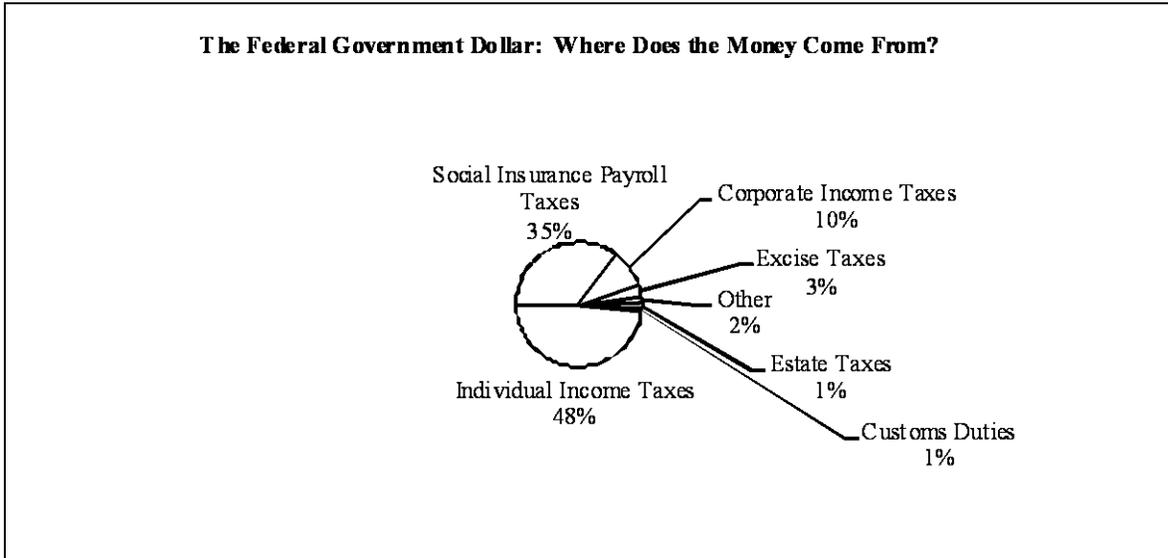
In “Money Blues,” singer/songwriter Bob Dylan sings, “Sittin' here thinkin' Where does the money go?” The song narrates a story of a man down on his luck and down to his last dime, but it could easily apply to the convoluted federal budget process and its price tag for fiscal year 2003.

The fiscal year 2003 \$2.16 trillion (\$2,160,000,000,000!) budget breaks down to about \$7,000 for every man, woman and child in the country. That figure translates into approximately \$6 billion per day and a little more than \$4 million *per minute* (and you thought long-distance rates were outrageous). Now, the important questions--Where does the money come from and, even more relevant, where does it go?

The federal budget covers funding for everything from large programs such as Social Security and Pell grants, to smaller-ticket items such as small business loans and even repairs to the panda enclosure at the National Zoo (National Zoo’s panda cam: <http://pandas.si.edu/pandacam/index.htm>).

The federal budget consists of “revenues” and “outlays.” For a given year, the budget makes spending recommendations based on anticipated income from federal taxes.

While taxes are not the government's only source of income, they make up the lion's share (97 percent).



Because education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States, the federal government pays only 9 percent of education funding for grades K-12. ***Funding for education accounts for less than 2.5 percent of all federal spending and is targeted for specific purposes.*** The bulk of education spending comes from state and local tax revenues.

Social Security payments make up the largest percentage of the federal budget (**22 percent**) and provide monthly payments to more than 50 million retired and disabled workers, their dependents and survivors. Other federal spending pays for Medicare and Medicaid (**18 percent**) and defense (**17 percent**). Programs including interest on the federal debt, housing, transportation and foreign aid make up **40 percent** of the budget.

After receiving the President's budget proposal in early February, Congress begins work on its own budget resolution in an attempt to agree to a plan before the appropriations committees begin the actual allocation of funds on May 15. Key players in negotiating the Congressional budget resolution are President Bush, **Sens. Kent Conrad (D-ND)** and **Pete Domenici (R-NM)**, the Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Senate Budget Committee and **Reps. Jim Nussle (R-IA)** and **John Spratt, Jr. (D-SC)**, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee.



CBO DIRECTOR REVISES ESTIMATE OF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET, REPUBLICANS HINT AT BALANCED BUDGET RESOLUTION

Reversing his earlier projections, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Director Dan Crippen now projects budget surpluses for 2002 and 2003. Given this information,

Republicans have renewed their hope for a balanced budget for 2003. Testifying before the Senate Budget Committee on March 6, Crippen presented the following change in outlook.

Congressional Budget Office Estimate of the President's Budget

	Fiscal Year 2002 Surplus/Deficit	Fiscal Year 2003 Surplus/Deficit
January 2002	(\$21 billion) Deficit	(\$14 billion) Deficit
March 2002	\$5 billion Surplus	\$6 billion Surplus

These projections do not include new initiatives such as the \$43 economic billion stimulus bill which Congress passed and the President is expected to sign.

The House Budget Committee is set to markup the fiscal year 2003 Congressional budget resolution on March 13. It will feature the President's dual spending priorities--fighting the war on terrorism and bolstering homeland security, but is expected to also address lawmakers' concerns by adding more money for transportation and a Medicare prescription drug benefit. The President's budget recommended a 2.8 percent increase for education.

The full House is tentatively scheduled to take up the Congressional budget resolution on the floor the following week, perhaps on March 21. **House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL)** is cautious when asked about a balanced budget, but is far from ready to give up the idea entirely:

"We're in a time of war. We've had a downturn. We're in a recession. We've had a whole area of internal security we've been working on. There are extraordinary expenses. Our goal is a balanced budget, but there are needs to be taken care of."

The Senate Budget Committee will not begin its markup until the week of March 18 with floor consideration happening after the Senate returns from spring recess on April 8. With different parties in control, both chambers will likely include different priorities in their version of the Congressional budget resolution, making a mutual agreement on the final resolution unlikely.



FORMER SECRETARIES OF EDUCATION GATHER TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Last month, **Secretary of Education Rod Paige** joined four former secretaries of education to examine teacher shortages, achievement gaps, school vouchers, standardized testing and other issues that affect grades K-12 at an education summit at Duke University. The Education Leadership Summit marked the first time that all living secretaries of education were brought together.

In addition to Paige, the panel featured Lamar Alexander, William Bennett, Lauro F. Cavazos and Richard Riley (Shirley M. Hufstедler was sick with the flu and had to cancel). Former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt served as the moderator. Each of the participants had an opportunity to give a brief historical perspective on his tenure as Secretary, comment on the recently passed *No Child Left Behind Act*, and offer solutions to improving the current state of education. Their comments included more parental and community involvement, emphasized early childhood development, and suggested making teaching a year-round profession.

The secretaries submitted more in-depth essays that will be available in the May issue of Phi Delta Kappan magazine.

Ed Week story: <http://www.edweek.com/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=24secretaries.h21>



ON THE BOOKSHELVES: EDUCATIONAL REFORM, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND LESSONS ON IMPLEMENTATION

New Title I Report: Lessons from the Past and Challenges for the Future

In a new report, *Implementing Title I Standards, Assessments and Accountability: Lessons from the Past, Challenges for the Future*, Michael Cohen uses the experience of implementing the requirements of the previous reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act from 1994 to “shed light on the challenges and opportunities and choices facing federal and state officials” in implementing the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The lessons are as follows:

- Federal legislation pushes all the states forward—even if they don’t comply with the letter of the law
- If it can’t be done, it won’t be done
- If we don’t know how to do it well, it will probably be done poorly, if at all
- Each state marches to the beat of its own drummer—and sometimes, more than one drummer
- No one believes that the Education Department will really enforce Title I requirements
- States are and must remain the “laboratories of American democracy”
- A balance of flexibility and focused enforcement can work

Cohen concludes that while state compliance with the new Title I standards, assessments and accountability requirements is possible, simply following the lessons from the past will not be enough, substantial investments must be made at the federal, state and local levels. Finally, he calls for more investments to give students the opportunities to learn, “including smaller classes, modern buildings and 21st century technology, and extended learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs.”

Copies of this report are available for download at:
<http://www.edexcellence.net/NCLBconference/NCLBconferenceindex.html>

Obstacles to Success in Educational Reform

According to a new study by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), current efforts to reform elementary and secondary education need to go far beyond federal law, standards and accountability. *Facing the Hard Facts in Educational Reform* identifies key factors that influence educational achievement that are often overlooked during education reform. Its author, Paul Barton, identifies increased tardiness, absenteeism, drug use and verbal abuse of teachers by students and lack of effective use of computers in the classroom as some of several obstacles that impede successful educational reform.

Copies of *Facing the Hard Facts in Educational Reform* can be downloaded at www.ets.org/research/pic/facingfacts.pdf

New Model for Implementing and Sustaining School Improvement

Achieving World Class Schools: Mastering School Improvement Using a Genetic Model, offers anyone who is serious about school improvement a model to help school districts implement and sustain concepts and practices that affect ongoing school improvement. The book looks at six core areas, which it calls “chromosomes,” that define a district's capacity to implement school improvement and enhance the teaching-learning process. These chromosomes are: leadership, change, professional development, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Perhaps taking their cue from the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the book's authors, Paul Kimmelman and David Kroeze, encourage readers to use high quality research and data analysis for school improvement. They then provide a working model that school improvement committees can use to develop a plan to organize their efforts. Finally, guest experts offer national and international perspectives on school improvement efforts currently underway in brief, focused essays.

More information on the book is available at:
<http://www.christopher-gordon.com/Authors/kimmelman.htm>

Straight A's: A Citizen's Update on 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 help make it possible for every child in America to receive an excellent education.