

**ALLIANCE FOR  
EXCELLENT EDUCATION**

# **Straight A's:**

**An Update on Public Education:  
Policy and Progress**

Volume 3, No. 3: February 17, 2003

---



## **CONGRESS COMES TO AGREEMENT ON THIS YEAR'S EDUCATION BUDGET: \$3 Billion Increase Falls Short of Promise Made in the No Child Left Behind Act**

Now in the fifth month of fiscal 2003, Congress has finally come to an agreement on the omnibus spending bill that will fund education programs in the next school year. The bill, which includes appropriations for 11 federal agencies, will be signed by President Bush sometime this week. Under the agreement reached by House and Senate conferees, education programs will receive \$53.1 billion, which is \$3.16 billion more than last year, a six percent increase.

Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will each receive increases of \$1.3 billion over fiscal 2003—an increase of \$300 million over what was requested in the FY '03 Bush budget. Even with that increase, Title I will still be \$5.25 billion below the \$16.0 billion *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* authorized level in 2003, which means that hundreds of thousands of students, especially those in older grades, are not likely to receive the support services they need to graduate from high school, and are at risk of dropping out.

Over 40 education programs that were “zeroed out” (received no funding) in the Bush budget were restored in the omnibus bill. The Smaller Learning Communities program, for example, received \$162 million—a \$20 million increase over last year.



## **BUSH BUDGET FOR FISCAL 2004 CUTS AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS BY 40 PERCENT: Education Advocates Criticize Cuts**

When he presented President Bush's budget for fiscal 2004, **U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige** announced that 21st Century Learning Centers, a very popular afterschool program, had been cut by 40 percent, from \$1 billion to \$600 million. The administration justified the cut by pointing to a Mathematica study that said the program had little effect on academic achievement. According to *Shortchanging Education Reform*, a report by the Democratic Staff of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and the Workforce, this cut would deny afterschool programs to over half a million disadvantaged children (*The report is available at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/bush2004budget.pdf>*).

## **Bush Budget Cuts Afterschool Programs by 40 Percent**

(Continued from p. 1)

Meanwhile, supporters of the afterschool program argued that the study was based on only one year of data in the early stages of the program, which has undergone dramatic changes since 2000 and especially since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind*. **Afterschool Alliance executive director Judy Y. Samelson** said she found it “terribly disappointing that the report highlights only negative findings and that the Bush administration is using this study to justify a deep, indefensible cut in the federal afterschool program.”

Samelson and other afterschool proponents pointed to the many positive findings contained in the Mathematica report. For instance, among middle school students, the study found improvements in math grades and higher teacher satisfaction with students’ completed homework. In addition, the study reported higher average mathematics grades, less absenteeism, and less tardiness for black and Hispanic afterschool participants. Afterschool programs also increase the likelihood of parental involvement, usually in the form of attendance at school open houses or parent-teacher organization meetings.

Visit the Afterschool Alliance Web site at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>



### **LEARNING FROM THE PAST: President’s Budget Includes Significant Increases for History Programs**

According to a recent National Assessment of Education Progress report on student achievement in U.S. history, American students continue to lack a basic understanding of our nation’s past. Fifty-seven percent of twelfth-graders, for instance, scored below basic on the test. In an effort to raise these test scores, as well as generate a greater understanding of our shared history throughout the country, the President’s fiscal 2004 budget makes a strong commitment to American history and teaching history to our nation’s schoolchildren.

On Sept. 17, 2002, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution and a little more than a year after the terrorist attacks on our nation, President Bush announced the creation of “We the People,” a new program that would raise awareness of American history throughout our country, but especially in classrooms:

*Our Founders believed the study of history and citizenship should be at the core of every American’s education. Yet today, our children have large and disturbing gaps in their knowledge of history. . . Ignorance of American history and civics weakens our sense of citizenship. To be an American is not just a matter of blood or birth; we are bound by ideals, and our children must know those ideals.*

To follow through on this commitment, the President’s budget requests \$25 million to support “We the People” as part of a \$152 million request for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The \$25 million request would enable NEH to establish and implement an ambitious program for the American people focused on the nation’s

history, culture, ideals, and principles. Not only would the program provide additional opportunities for humanities teachers to study significant texts on American history, it would also help schools establish or improve course offerings in American history, create summer enrichment programs for teachers and principals centered around American history, and fund an annual national essay contest for high school students.

The President's budget also would double funding for the Teaching of Traditional American History, from \$50 million to \$100 million. This program makes competitive grants to school districts to promote the teaching of American history in elementary and secondary schools as a separate academic subject, instead of grouping it with related fields under the umbrella of social studies.

In related news, a recent *Education Week* article, "History Invading Social Studies' Turf in Schools," gives a very good summary of the debate about permanently separating history from social studies classes:

<http://www.edweek.com/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=19hist.h22>

### **Paige Holds Mathematics Summit**

On Feb. 6, as part of a new five-year mathematics and science initiative, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige held a mathematics summit to discuss ways to improve student achievement and instruction. The summit was the first step of a five-year plan to "upgrade American students' status internationally and [maintain] our role as leaders in technology and engineering," according to Paige. Summit participants, who included representatives from business, academia, and the federal government, also discussed how to further engage the public, develop a research base, and enhance teacher knowledge in the mathematics and science fields.

The secretary's mathematics and science initiative has three goals: 1) drawing attention to the need for better math and science education; 2) beginning a major campaign to recruit, prepare, train, and retrain teachers with strong backgrounds in math and science and; 3) improving knowledge of what boosts student learning in math and science.

Presentations and papers from the summit are available on the new Mathematics & Science Initiative Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/inits/mathscience/>

For more information, read the U.S. Department of Education's press release at: <http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-2003/02062003c.html>

### **College Freshmen Need Extra Help in Math and English**

According to a new report by the California State University system, 59 percent of freshman entering the system needed remedial education in math and English. In high school, these same students ranked in the top third of their graduating classes.

In response to the report, David Spence, CSU executive vice chancellor, said that CSU will begin a pilot program at 50 high schools to identify students who need extra help before they enter college. The program would administer an expanded eleventh-grade California Standards Test in math and English to twelfth-grade students before their senior year. The test results would then tell students whether they needed to raise their math and English skills before entering college. The responsibility of getting these students up to speed, however, would still rest on the public schools.

Read more in *The Sacramento Bee* at: <http://www.sacbee.com/content/news/education/story/6017926p-6973944c.html>



## SCHOOL DISTRICTS FEEL THE EFFECTS OF STATE BUDGET DEFICITS: Less Than Expected Federal Funding Exacerbates Squeeze

According to a new report by the National Conference of State Legislatures, state budget shortfalls have grown by 50 percent in the last two months. The Feb. 4 report says that two-thirds of the states must reduce their budgets by a total of nearly \$26 billion between now and June 30, the end of the fiscal year for most states.

At least 30 states say revenue collections are below budget forecasts and 37 states say spending is exceeding budgeted levels, with all but five reporting excessive Medicaid or other health care costs. Thus far, few states have made a decision to raise taxes out of fear that raising taxes would only further slow the state's economic recovery, and cause even greater revenue loss. In order to balance budgets, many states have been tapping rainy day funds and cutting spending.

As a result, education spending has been a target in several states. Twelve states have cut spending on higher education and nine have cut elementary and secondary education. Twenty-nine states have imposed across-the-board budget cuts. These cuts worry state budget planners who are also concerned because the proposed federal budget for next year does not cover the cost of *No Child Left Behind*, special education mandates, or the cost of election reform.

State budget cuts and climbing costs for the upcoming school year are also affecting local school districts. When combined with less federal funding than expected for the *No Child Left Behind Act*, many school districts are forced to cut budgets. Some districts have had to lay off staff, including teachers and teachers' aides, cut school days from the school calendar, and increase class sizes.

A related report by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) found that many states are falling behind in meeting the requirements of *NCLB*. According to the report, released Jan. 28, only 12 states are on track to comply with even half of the major federal requirements. Of the 40 *NCLB* requirements that ECS examined, only 12 states are close to fulfilling half or more. North Carolina is the furthest along, having met 26 requirements, but Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Oregon have met only three.

In response to the report, U.S. Department of Education spokesman Dan Langan told *USA Today* that states are "indeed making progress" and that "what you see today may not be the same tomorrow, because of a change in state policy or program." A few days later, on Feb. 3, **U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige** announced that all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, had submitted their state educational accountability plans for review on time. The plans detail how and under what timeline states plan to achieve full proficiency toward state academic content.

The ECS Web site is now providing a day-to-day status of how far along states are in meeting *NCLB* requirements at: <http://nclb.ecs.org/nclb/>

More information on the National Conference of State Legislatures report at: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2003/pr030204.htm>



## **MORE STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES: Newly Given Addresses, but Very Familiar Problems**

In the last issue of *Straight A's*, you read about several governors who proposed changes to education, or education funding, in their State of the State address. Over the last couple of weeks, additional governors have given State of the State addresses. Not surprisingly, most speeches address familiar themes of budget deficits and forthcoming spending cuts.

### **Maryland: Governor Robert Ehrlich**

Last year, Maryland became a national leader in adequately funding education when its legislature passed a six-year \$1.3 billion plan to implement the Thornton Commission's blueprint to balance funding for students in poorer areas compared to more affluent areas. (*To learn more about the Thornton Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence visit <http://mlis.state.md.us/other/education/index.htm>.*) In his State of the State address, Gov. Robert Ehrlich proposed a \$242 million increase in K-12 spending, almost \$100 million more than commission requires. However, Ehrlich's plan assumes that the legislature will legalize slot machines at four horseracing tracks—a move that would bring \$1 billion in potential revenue to the state.

Since the slot machine proposal was introduced two weeks ago, the Ehrlich administration has announced plans to hire an independent consultant and rework the details of the proposal in hopes of gaining additional support from state legislators. One possible change could be manipulating the formula for dividing the annual profits so that a bigger share goes to racetrack owners and horse breeders, and less to education.

Such a change could mean the state's public schools would receive a smaller percentage of the proceeds than the 64 percent now on the table. Currently, racetrack owners are slated to receive 25 percent of the revenue. Without the revenue from the slot machines, Maryland's pledge to increase annual spending on public schools could go unfulfilled, as the state could face up to a \$1 billion deficit under the requirements of the education bill passed last year.

### **South Carolina: Governor Mark Sanford**

In his State of the State address, Gov. Mark Sanford took the state's education system to task for its low graduation rate and stressed that he wanted to make education the state's highest priority. However, given the reality of a \$1 billion budget shortfall, he admitted that cuts to K-12 education programs might be unavoidable. He urged the state legislature to enact legislation that would cap enrollment to 900 students in high schools; 700 students in middle schools, and 500 students in elementary schools.

### **Nevada: Governor Kenny Guinn**

Despite facing a \$700 million shortfall, Gov. Kenny Guinn urged the state legislature to accept a budget plan that would increase education funding for K-12 by \$311 million over the next two years and raise spending on K-12 from \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion by fiscal 2005. Specifically, Guinn focused on the area of teacher quality and proposed

## **State of the State Addresses (Nevada)**

(Continued from p. 5)

spending \$33 million over two years to provide \$3,000 annual stipends for teachers in hard-to-staff areas, such as special education and math. He also sought \$2,000 for teachers in low-performing schools and asked the state to continue its \$2,000 signing bonus for new teachers. To pay for these increases, Guinn proposed tripling the state's tax on cigarettes and sharply increasing the liquor tax in hopes of raising \$980 million in new revenue over two years.

## **South Dakota: Governor Mike Rounds**

In his State of the State address, Gov. Mike Rounds proposed a \$15.1 million increase in education, "one of the largest single increases ever in the state of South Dakota." Rounds also asked South Dakota legislators to enact a new scholarship program to entice college graduates to remain in the state after graduation and serve as teachers, engineers, and perhaps nurses. In addition to Rounds' agenda, the state legislature also must work to close a \$54 million budget shortfall.



## **SILVER LINING OF AN OTHERWISE DARK CLOUD?: Teaching Field Experiences Rush of Applicants as Economic Downturn Continues**

According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, the economic downturn has led many people to shun the tumultuous world of technology and business in favor of the relatively stable environment that the teaching profession provides. This migration, combined with better recruitment and attractive incentives for teachers, has meant large increases in teacher applicant pools for school districts around the country. L.A. Unified, for example, received 25,000 applications for 2,500 positions this year.

Despite the boon for school districts, experts caution that the teacher shortage is far from over. One in three new teachers will leave the classroom within three years. A recent report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that one third of teachers quit during their first three years and almost half leave within five. The most disturbing fact is that the turnover rate for teachers is highest in poor, predominantly minority schools. The reasons vary and include low pay, poor training, and lack of support services from school districts.

According to several recent studies, the key to preventing a teacher shortage is to keep working teachers happy and in the classroom longer to prevent the constant replacement of teachers. In its report, *New Teacher Excellence: Retaining Our Best*, the Alliance recommends that school districts provide well-organized induction programs for all new teachers. (Read the Alliance report at <http://www.all4ed.org>).

The report argues that these programs allow school districts to hire, keep, and professionally develop new teachers who meet their state's definition of "qualified" and possess a major in the subject they will teach, regardless of whether they were trained in a traditional or alternative teacher preparation program before they began teaching. Induction programs, when combined with financial incentives, such as a federal tax

credits, student-loan-forgiveness programs, or college scholarships, will help districts to not only attract qualified teachers, but, more importantly, encourage the teachers to stay.

For more information, read “Teacher Shortage Abates” in the *Los Angeles Times* at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-shortage10feb10,1,3456157.story>

### **A License to Lead?: A New Leadership Agenda for America's Schools**

In a new report, Frederick M. Hess argues that school districts nationwide need to revamp principal and superintendent recruitment strategies and begin to look for qualified candidates outside the education field. The report, *A License to Lead: A New Leadership Agenda for America's Schools*, borrows strategies from teacher recruitment and applies them to principal and superintendent hires.

According to the report, two different camps of leadership reform have emerged: One camp supports raising qualifications needed for entry into the profession. The other camp favors recruiting a few high-profile individuals from outside of the education field. According to Hess, “neither approach addresses the long-term challenge of deepening the talent pool, enhancing accountability, and providing sustained support to talented practitioners in the field and to those who would join them.”

Hess analyzes the current licensure system and the shortcomings of current reform strategies. He also describes his idea of a “New Leadership Agenda” which would reconceptualize leadership, produce performance-oriented criteria for recruiting and hiring leaders, develop reliable systems to monitor leadership performance and hold leaders accountable, and provide support systems and ongoing professional development.

The complete report is available through the Progressive Policy Institute at: [http://www.pponline.org/documents/New\\_Leadership\\_0103.pdf](http://www.pponline.org/documents/New_Leadership_0103.pdf)

### **Taking “STEPS” Toward Teacher Excellence**

The Council for Basic Education (CBE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education released a resource guide for helping institutions implement a highly successful program called “Standards-based Teacher Education Project (STEP).” The program offers guidance and support to Arts and Sciences and Education faculty as they redesign teacher preparation programs by using K-12 academic standards and new teacher licensure standards to strengthen program requirements, courses, and assessments.

STEP embodies three principles: 1) Teachers must know the subjects they are teaching; 2) Teachers must know how to teach students to learn at high levels; and 3) Teachers must know how to monitor and assess how well students are learning. Twenty-five campuses in five states have implemented the STEP program, which incorporates P-12 academic content standards into teacher education programs to improve the requirements, curriculum courses, and assessments required of teachers-to-be.

The STEP Web site hosts a report that profiles eleven of the campuses and acts as a “buffet” of “information and expertise” for anyone who wishes to learn about or implement the STEP program. It not only outlines the underlying structure of STEP and the process of implementation, but discusses STEP as a tool for changing national and state measures of accountability and teacher quality. The report also offers the perspective of state education officials and national leaders.

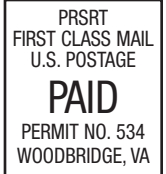
To learn more about STEP, visit CBE’s Web site at: <http://www.c-b-e.org/teachered/step.htm>.

**Straight A’s: An Update on Public 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 make it possible for America’s 6 million at-risk middle and high school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.



ALLIANCE FOR  
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

1101 Vermont Ave., NW  
Suite 411  
Washington, DC 20005



**STRAIGHT A'S: AN UPDATE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION: POLICY AND PROGRESS.  
FEBRUARY 17, 2003**

**Volume 3 No. 3: February 17, 2003**

In this issue:

- Congress Comes to Agreement on This Year's Education Budget: \$3 Billion Increase Falls Short of Promise Made in the No Child Left Behind Act
- Bush Budget for Fiscal 2004 Cuts Afterschool Programs by 40 Percent: Education Advocates Criticize Cuts
- Learning From the Past: President's Budget Includes Significant Increases for History Programs
- School Districts Feel the Effects of State Budget Deficits: Less Than Expected Federal Funding Exacerbates Squeeze
- More State of the State Addresses: Newly Given Addresses, but Very Familiar Problems
- Silver Lining of an Otherwise Dark Cloud?: Teaching Field Experiences Rush of Applicants as Economic Downturn Continues



ALLIANCE FOR  
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Alliance for Excellent Education 1101 Vermont Ave., NW Suite 411 Washington, DC 20005

Susan Frost, Executive Director; Jason Amos, Associate Editor  
Phone: (202) 842-4888 Fax (202) 842-1613  
Alliance@all4ed.org <http://www.all4ed.org>