

The Education Report

A weekly report of public policy issues in American Education from

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1. Congress in Recess

Congress will return November 12th to start the process of organizing the 108th Congress, which convenes in January, and to finalize plans for a lame-duck session in early December to finish remaining incomplete appropriations measures. Many believe that several of the unfinished appropriations bills could be completed during this session, but whether Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations will be one of them remains unclear. Congress will most likely pass a fifth continuing resolution shortly before the 22nd, setting the stage for a longer term CR to be enacted in December to extend funding for programs not yet funded through full year appropriations measures.

2. ED Department Publishes NCLB Desktop Reference Manual

Intended to assist educators in implementing The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), this 180-page document is available on line or through a call in number. Described as a comprehensive and straightforward guide to each of the major reforms under the new law, the manual covers Titles I through X explaining the purpose of each program, how that program works, its fundamental requirements, and what performance and accountability measurements are required.

Copies of the reference manual can be obtained by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS. Copies are also available online at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.html>.

3. Secretary Paige Sends Letter to States on NCLB Implementation Warning Not to Lower Standards

On Wednesday, US Secretary Rod Paige sent a letter to the nation's state school chiefs regarding the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. The letter began by praising those educators and administrators that have embraced the new legislation and its requirements. He stressed that those schools identified under the new NCLB provisions that are in need of improvement are not "failing." In fact, many are succeeding in some areas, and the Secretary emphasized his belief that such schools are simply "capable of getting better results for all their students."

The tone of the Secretary's message changed dramatically in the latter half of the letter, as he charged that some schools have reacted to NCLB by lowering expectation levels to mask the existence of low-performing schools. Secretary Paige admonished those that have resorted to reducing standards, saying "it is nothing less than shameful that some defenders of the status quo are trying to hide performance of underachieving schools in order to shield parents from reality. Not only is this political tactic an embarrassment, it undermines the public's trust in education as the cornerstone of freedom."

To view the full text of the letter, go to <http://www.ed.gov>.

4. Bush Administration Unveils New Disability Website

On Monday October 21, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao unveiled a new website resource for people with disabilities, DisabilityInfo.gov. Disabilityinfo.gov is a collaborative effort across multiple federal agencies. It is intended to be a one stop center with government information related to people with disabilities and disability policy in areas including civil rights, education, technology, employment, housing, health care and transportation. The website is housed at the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor and is a component of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative.

5. US and China Sign Memorandum of Understanding for E-Language Project

On Monday, Education Secretary Rod Paige and China's vice minister of education Zhou Ji signed an agreement to cooperatively build an E-Learning Project to help students and educators learn a second language, either in Chinese or English.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum in Shanghai last October, President Bush proposed three Web-based, joint education initiatives; the E-Language Project was one of the President's three proposals. Under the Star Schools Program, the US Department of Education will contribute \$3 million to the US-Chinese E-Language Project.

The joint project will benefit US schools that lack the teachers with the language skills to offer instruction in Chinese. Additionally, the E-Language Program will help those schools with significant immigrant populations that need English as a second language instruction.

