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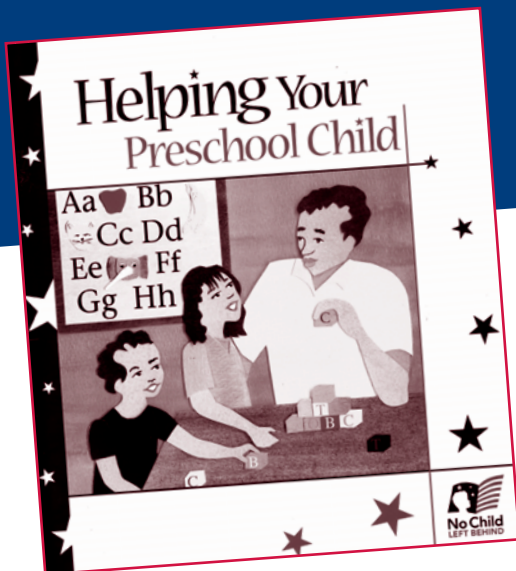
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FIRST CLASS



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

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



HELPING YOUR CHILD! Booklet Focuses on the Preschool Years

The first five years of a child's life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, social and cognitive growth. The development a child undergoes early in life can determine the level of success that the child will experience later in life.

Helping Your Preschool Child, one of a series of booklets for family and caregivers published by the U.S. Department of Education, offers ideas for activities that will help children from infancy through age 5 acquire the essential building blocks for learning. Most of the activities make learning experiences out of everyday routines, such as washing and drying dishes or setting the dinner table—household chores that can help children learn new

words and how to read, how to listen and follow directions, how to count and how to sort. The activities use materials found in the home or that can be had free of charge from a local library. They are designed to be fun and help create an environment rich in literacy interactions and full of opportunities for children to use language constantly.

In addition, the booklet covers topics that include “What About Kindergarten?” which offers school preparation strategies, “Taking Charge of TV” and “Choosing Child Care.”

For an online copy, visit www.ed.gov/parents/academic/preschool/part.html or call the Department's publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS with identification number EK0455P for a paper copy while supplies last.



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New Rule Increases Flexibility for Students with Disabilities

A new provision of the *No Child Left Behind Act* will give local school districts greater flexibility in meeting the act's requirements for educating students with disabilities.

Under final rules published in the Dec. 9 issue of the *Federal Register*, states, school districts and schools will have the flexibility to count the proficient scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take assessments based on alternate achievement standards. Without this flexibility, those scores would have to be measured against grade-level standards and considered "not proficient" when states measure adequate yearly progress. In other words, those students will be assessed by their achievement gauged by standards deemed appropriate for their intellectual development, thus allowing states to more accurately gauge their progress.

However, the number of those proficient scores may not exceed 1 percent of all students in the grades tested (about 9 percent of students with disabilities).

Nationally, about 9 percent of the total student population is served in special education, of which about 9 percent have the most significant cognitive disabilities.

The new guidelines, which still call for the alternate achievement standards to be tied to state academic content standards, also allow states and school districts to exceed the 1-percent limit if they can demonstrate that they have a larger population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The 1-percent cap applies only to district and state accountability decisions, not individual schools.

The new provision was originally proposed by the Department and published in the *Federal Register* on March 20. A significant change from the proposed regulation is the elimination of a definition of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Rather, individual states will define this group of students.

For more information, visit www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/12/12092003.html.

The Three Rs for Success

Indiana School Proves Formula for Achievement: Results, Research and Relationships

By Maggie Riechers

To Principal Stephany Bourne of Indian Village Elementary School in Fort Wayne, Ind., the three Rs for success are Results, Research and Relationships. The school uses an instructional leadership method that involves frequent testing, re-evaluation and close ties to each student. At Indian Village, a 2003 *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon School winner, the formula has proven to be an enormous success. When Bourne took over as principal six years ago, Indiana was reviewing the school because of its low scores on the state assessment. In 2001, this urban school—which is 53 percent white, 24 percent black and 17 percent Hispanic—placed in the top 5 percent of schools in northern Indiana.

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"We use the data to drive change," says Indian Village Elementary School Principal Stephany Bourne, describing the "results" component of her three-part formula for success.





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“These three Rs are responsible for our success,” says Bourne, whose school has nearly two-thirds of its students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. “It is a very data-driven, research-based method.” It works like this:

- **Results.** In addition to being tested yearly by the state, students are tested quarterly by the school. The data collected are shared among teachers and, as needed, students receive weekly remediation or enrichment. Students along with their parents are kept informed of progress. “We look at weaknesses,” says Bourne. “If a child falls below 80 percent, we put her or him in remediation. We use the data to drive change. It’s important for schools to collect data and look at the results.”

The entire school meets each Monday and focuses on attendance, homework and behavior. Each class receives one star for meeting criteria in each of these categories. During the twice-a-year parent-teacher conferences, which are attended by 97 percent of parents, teachers share each student’s data sheet. Data sheets are also included in report cards.

- **Research.** Teachers use research-based curricula and teaching methods, such as the Reading Recovery

Program, for the bottom 20 percent of first-graders, who receive individual help from a full-time specialist once a day for 20 minutes. Another teaching method used is the Balanced Literacy Model. Employed throughout the school district, this model uses writing, self-selected reading and shared and guided reading. “Reading achievement is the whole key to success,” says Bourne, “not just passing state exams but helping kids to become lifelong learners.”

In the science and technology area, the school’s main focus is “Indiana Project 2016,” which encourages students to solve a problem through the use of inventions and technology.

- **Relationships.** “Relationships run through the emotional and academic part of the day,” says Bourne. This includes relationships among students, teachers and parents. The school begins each day with a “peace pledge” in which students promise to have a peaceful day. “The atmosphere is calm, peaceful, loving and respectful,” adds Bourne.

The results of this approach have been more than impressive. In the 1998-99 school year, when Bourne began at Indian Village, the composite passing rate for third-graders on the state tests in math and language arts was 38.5 percent. The rate jumped to 71.8 percent in the 2002-03 school year. The fall 2003 results are even better. Seventy-six percent of third-graders passed in language arts and 90 percent passed in math. In the area of closing the gap in test scores

between minority children and the pop-



ulation-at-large, Bourne is proud of the fact that one minority group has done particularly well. “One hundred percent of black children passed math and 64 percent passed language arts,” she boasts. Another group, children in poverty, are also doing well, and in some cases slightly better than their counterparts who do not qualify for assisted lunch programs.

However, data collection and specialized programs represent just a part of Indian Village’s success. Everyone seems to be working together to reach the same goal. Fourth-graders come in early to tutor third-graders. Volunteers in the school range from National Honor Society high schoolers to retirees to parents. Fourth- and fifth-graders are trained as conflict mediators who monitor behavior on the playground and help students work out their differences.

For Bourne, who knows every child’s name and gives out many hugs during the course of a day, all the improved test results mean nothing if students aren’t respectful. “The kids have done an amazing job of getting along,” says Bourne. “Two years ago there were 72 referrals to the principal’s office relating to behavior issues in the first nine weeks of school. This year, there were 17 in the first 10 weeks. The kids just get it. They can distinguish between a good choice and a bad one.”

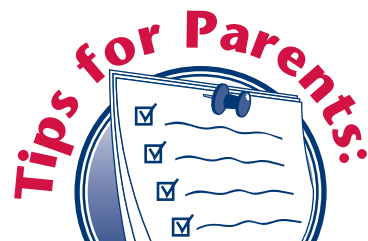
For more information about Indian Village Elementary, visit www.fwcs.k12.in.us.



In just four years after Bourne (pictured below, center) started as principal, Indian Village has moved from having some of the lowest scores on the state exam to placing in the top 5 percent of northern Indiana schools.

"[W]e have been working with our local school district to make sure that Nicholas [my son] is sufficiently challenged in academic subjects rather than just limited during his school time to socialization and vocational training. ... [No Child Left Behind] requires that my son's school ... and all the other school districts ... in the U.S. look at children like Nicholas and determine how well they are doing in their own right. The requirement of NCLB to assess student progress, disaggregate the data and hold schools accountable for ALL students means that children who have historically not been expected to achieve are not buried in the details and ultimately left behind."

Mark Howard, parent of an eight-year-old son with autism, in his remarks at a U.S. Department of Education press conference on students with disabilities, Dec. 9, 2003.



Last month U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige unveiled a new initiative to help parents play a more active role in their child's education. "Ten Key Benefits for Parents of English Language Learners" is a summary of the *No Child Left Behind Act's* (NCLB) most important provisions that affect approximately five million English language learners in this country. NCLB allows parents:

1. To have their child receive a quality education and be taught by a highly qualified teacher.
2. To have their child learn English and other subjects such as reading, language arts and math at the same academic level as all other students.
3. To know if their child has been identified and recommended for placement in an English language acquisition program, and to accept or refuse such placement.
4. To choose a different English language acquisition program for their child.
5. To transfer their child to another school if his or her school is identified as "in need of improvement."
6. To apply for supplemental services for their child, such as tutoring, if the child's school is identified as "in need of improvement" for two years.
7. To have their child tested annually to assess his or her progress in English language acquisition.
8. To receive information regarding their child's performance on academic tests.
9. To have their child taught with programs that are scientifically proven to work.
10. To have the opportunity for their child to reach his or her greatest academic potential.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind Flexibility for Students with Disabilities

The number of children being served in programs for the disabled is increasing (see chart below). Under a new regulation of *No Child Left Behind*, when measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), local school districts will have the flexibility to count the *proficient* scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take assessments based on alternate achievement standards.

Among the key features of this new provision are:

High expectations and accountability for every child

- The NCLB law prohibits schools from excluding students with disabilities from the accountability system, a practice some have used to mask the fact that certain groups of children are not learning. Excluding students with disabilities from testing is also a violation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).
- Most students with disabilities should participate in the same tests taken by their peers. Some of these students should receive accommodations such as increased time or the use of assistive technology to ensure that their unique needs are taken into account.

Flexibility for states and districts

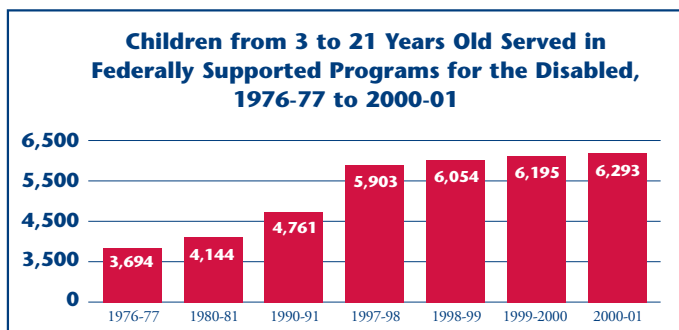
- Although the number of proficient scores based on alternate achievement standards may not exceed 1 percent of all students in the grades tested, the new regulation will allow states and school districts to apply for a higher limit if they can demonstrate that they have a larger population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Individual

schools, however, are not subject to the 1-percent cap.

Parents' right to know their children are learning

- The *No Child Left Behind Act*, building on IDEA, intentionally prohibits states and schools from excluding students with disabilities from accountability systems so parents will know whether their children are getting the high-quality education they deserve.

For a detailed copy of this regulation, visit www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2003-4/120903a.html.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2002.