



THE ACHIEVER

www.ed.gov • October 15, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 15

Paige Announces 2004 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools

More than 250 of the nation's schools have been named 2004 *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced last month.

The *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools program recognizes schools that are either academically superior in their states or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

"For years, many of our underprivileged children were ignored and pre-judged, moved to the back of the room and quietly pushed through the system, with their scores hidden in averages," Secretary Paige said. "So we must change our approach, incentives and expectations. We must foster a climate of academic excellence, enabling all students to reach the highest levels of scholarship."

The schools are selected based on one of three criteria:

1. Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance on state tests, as determined by the chief state school officer;
2. Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent on state tests; and
3. Private schools that achieve in the top 10 percent in the nation.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading/language arts and mathematics, as evidenced by state assessments. Each state sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals for AYP, deciding the criteria most appropriate for its school districts.

A complete list of this year's Blue Ribbon Schools is available at www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html.

Blue-Ribbon Data

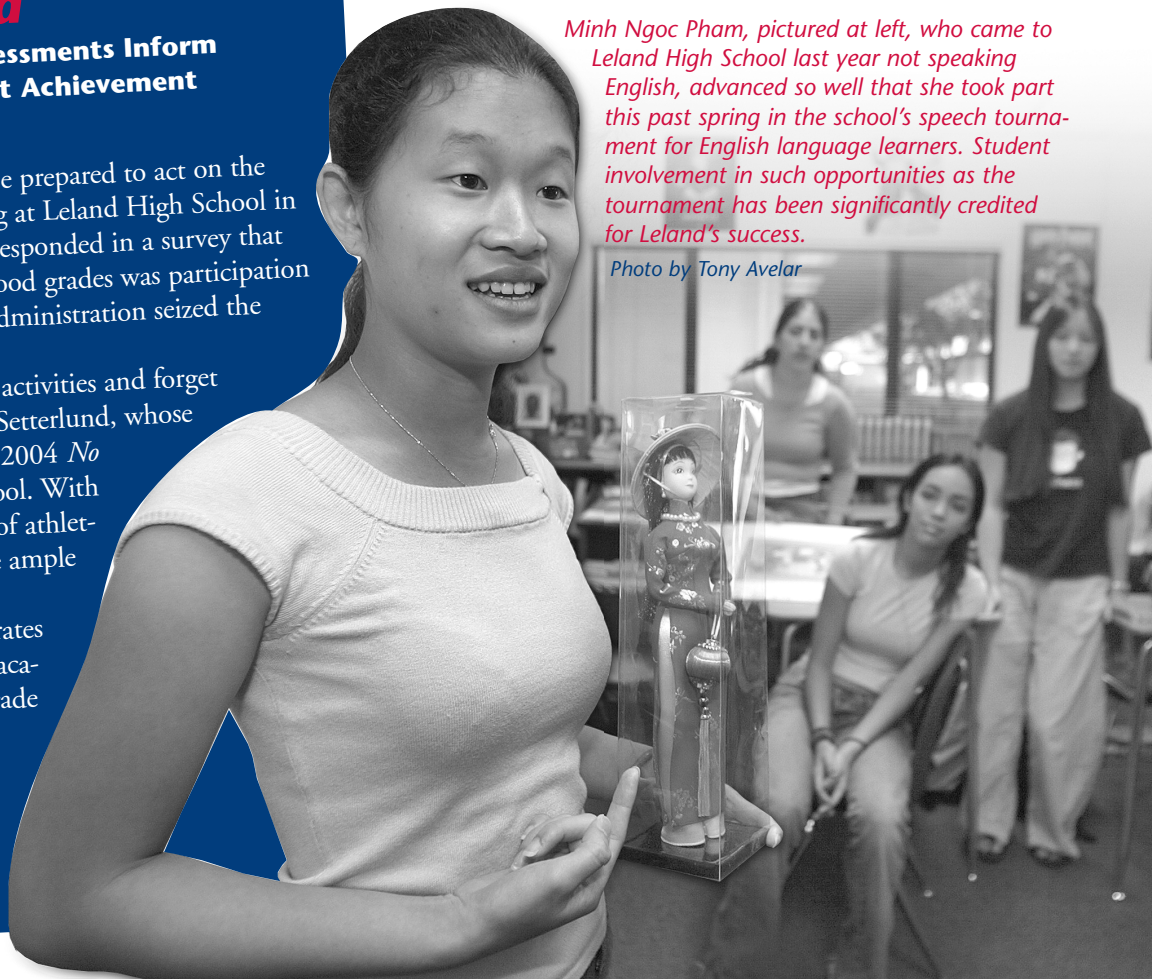
Surveys, Statistics and Self-Assessments Inform School's Efforts to Spur Student Achievement

If you ask for data, you had better be prepared to act on the findings. At least that's the thinking at Leland High School in San Jose, Calif. So when students responded in a survey that the most important contributor to good grades was participation in school activities, the faculty and administration seized the opportunity.

"It's hard to be active in school activities and forget about grades," noted Principal Bob Setterlund, whose school was honored last month as a 2004 *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon School. With more than 40 clubs and a full slate of athletic activities, students at Leland have ample opportunities to get involved.

Student performance demonstrates the link between involvement and academic success: the overall school grade point average (GPA) for grades 9 through 12 is just over 3.0, with more than 40 percent of the students carrying a GPA above 3.5.

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Minh Ngoc Pham, pictured at left, who came to Leland High School last year not speaking English, advanced so well that she took part this past spring in the school's speech tournament for English language learners. Student involvement in such opportunities as the tournament has been significantly credited for Leland's success.

Photo by Tony Avelar



The Achiever is published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, U.S.

Department of Education (ED). Rod Paige, Secretary.

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The school's combined SAT score for 2003 was 1161, and students took 685 Advanced Placement exams with a 70 percent passing rate.

Survey results are just one type of data integrated into the academic environment at Leland. The school's academic departments and cross-departmental committees assess schoolwide, classroom and student-specific data when developing strategies for improvement. These groups share responsibility for determining appropriate interventions, formulating strategic plans and evaluating progress.

One such strategy seeks to increase the achievement level of the school's ethnic minority students. With a state-based adequate yearly progress (AYP) target of 11.2 percent proficient in English/language arts and 9.6 percent in math for 2004, more than half of Leland's Hispanic students achieved at proficient levels (64.6 percent and 53.8 percent, respectively); and nearly all of the Asian-Pacific Islander students achieved at the same levels (88.0 percent and 94.7 percent, respectively). The two minorities comprise 54 percent of the 1,800-member student body.

Almost half of the school's economically disadvantaged students, comprising 6 percent of the student population, also ranked proficient on state exams (45.8 percent in both AYP categories). Altogether, these scores contributed to Leland High School being the only school in the San Jose Unified School District to achieve all of its AYP targets in 2004.

A significant amount of data used by the school is student-specific, including self-assessments. During their freshman and sophomore years students take a number of online assessments to determine their interests, learning styles and personality characteristics. They also explore different careers and look at their options for continuing their education or receiving vocational training after high school.

At the end of their sophomore year, students meet one-on-one with their advisers and plan their junior and senior year courses based on their interests and goals following graduation. By senior year, each student has a college portfolio and has received assistance writing essays and preparing for interviews through a four-year program that is integrated into the social science and English curricula.

"Students need help selecting a college that meets their needs," explained Joan Albers, the career center coordinator. "It doesn't matter so much that they go to a big-name school. It matters that they get to college and that they be successful when they are there." Last year, 93 percent of Leland's graduates went on to postsecondary education.

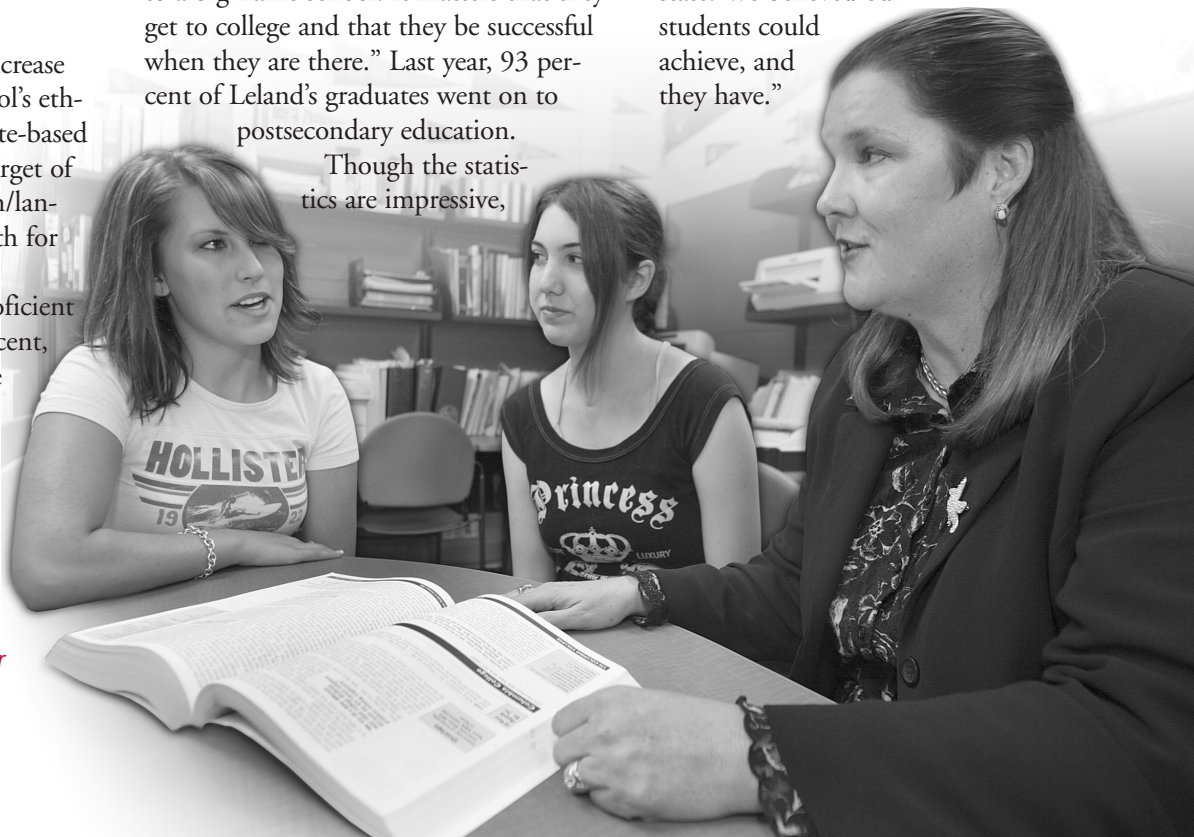
Though the statistics are impressive,

Setterlund keeps going back to student involvement as a key indicator of success. "When everyone is involved in something, we will have achieved what we are after," he said.

Involvement is encouraged as early as the summer before students enter the ninth grade and continues through their senior year. Link Crew members, junior and senior volunteers, act as buddies to incoming freshman students, introducing them to school activities—even going with them to their first school dance. "They help them get involved quickly," noted Setterlund. "Right from the start we've seen a real beneficial effect on students' grades and achievement."

Similarly, the 350-member speech and debate team, for example, sponsors a debate tournament for English language learners from area high schools each spring. "This helps students for whom English is not their native language express their ideas and gives them a chance to speak out, to be heard," said Gay Brasher, the debate team coach.

Such opportunities for helping students to succeed, Principal Setterlund points out, are the result of data that revealed where the gaps needed to be filled. "About 10 years ago," he reflected, "we decided that if we didn't move to get better, the world would pass us by. We took a chance and adopted the most rigorous graduation requirements in the state. We believed our students could achieve, and they have."



College and career center coordinator Joan Albers confers with students.

Photo by Tony Avelar



"I remember when teachers were asking me in first grade to come for extra help. Mrs. Greeney and Mrs. May [would say], 'Little Al is not reading well. Would you get him here at 8:00 in the morning?' My mother got me there. I still struggled. I struggled through college. ... But I stayed with it. And I have learned to read. It's helped me as a writer in the work that I do. And the work that I do requires that I understand something about the world ... so I read."

Grammy-award winning jazz musician and 2004 Verizon Literacy Champion Al Jarreau, in a satellite interview for *Education News Parents Can Use* broadcast, September 21, 2004.

Paige's Circle



U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige last month discussed the results of the annual international report on education by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The following is an excerpt of his remarks:

I firmly believe that when it comes to education, "seeing is achieving." It is difficult to change if we do not know what must be changed. And this year's OECD report is like a new pair of glasses to help us see beyond our own borders.

In this dynamic global economy, it's extremely important that we measure ourselves against our friends and competitors.

The 30 nations measured here account for about 80 percent of world trade. If we are less competitive educationally, we will soon become less competitive economically. It's just a fact.

The OECD report confirms it. In every country, education and earnings are strongly linked—even after factoring in tuition costs and lost income from college.

And the benefits are not limited to individuals—they include increased workforce productivity and technological progress.

Here in the United States, the report found that income differences between adults with a high school diploma and those without—and between high school and college graduates—are some of the highest in the world.

Studies show that even a two-year associate degree packs a large financial punch in terms of lifetime earnings.

So we need to encourage all Americans—and the schools that teach them—to see the value of continuing their education. ...

For the full text, visit www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2004/09/09132004a.html.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind Physical Education

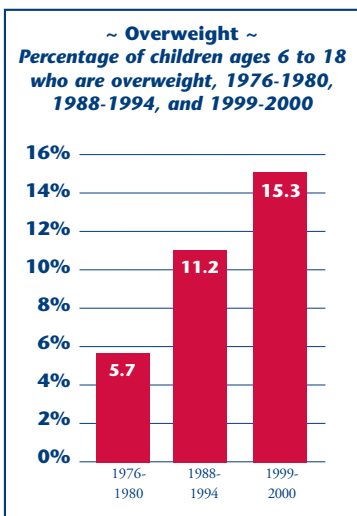
U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige last month joined other federal officials to announce a new initiative entitled "Schools for a Healthier U.S. Challenge" aimed at helping children eat healthy and exercise. The U.S. Department of Education will also release a brochure giving parents advice on healthy lifestyles, in English and Spanish.

Secretary Paige made the announcement during a visit to the North Ridge Elementary School in Raleigh, N.C., where he presented a grant check to the Wake County Public School System for its comprehensive, research-based program to encourage students' lifelong physical fitness and good nutrition. Wake County Public School System is slated to receive more than \$1.3 million over three years

as part of the Carol M. White Physical Education Program. The program, part of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, provides grants to local school districts and community-based organizations to initiate, expand or improve physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in grades K–12. This year, the program will award a total of 237 new grants worth nearly \$69 million.

"When our children are unhealthy, they are not ready to learn," Paige said. "Millions of our K–12 students are out of shape; many are overweight or obese. And there are many reasons why: consumption of high-fat, high-calorie foods and drinks, consumption of soda, lack of physical exercise, and too much time playing video or computer games and watching television."

Other top Bush administration officials also visited schools across the country in September to underscore the administration's commitment to promoting healthy children, including Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Julie Gerberding.



NOTE: "Overweight" is defined as body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile of the 2000 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention BMI-for-age growth charts (www.cdc.gov/growthcharts). BMI is calculated as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, Washington, D.C., 2004.

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October 15, 2004 • Vol. 3, No. 15

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FIRST CLASS



**"When it comes to
the education of our
children ... failure is
not an option."**

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

NEW GUIDE! *Successful Charter Schools*

Twelve years after the first charter school was launched, nearly 3,000 charter schools nationwide serve as beacons of public school innovation and reform due to an unprecedented combination of freedom and accountability: freedom to lengthen the school day, require dress codes, put teachers on school boards, and adopt any instructional practice that will help achieve the mission of building the skills students need to succeed in today's world.

How these schools have boosted student achievement is the focus of a new guide from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement. *Successful Charter Schools* offers practical advice and concrete examples from eight charter schools, all of which are meeting state standards of accountability for all students under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The charter schools range from those educating urban students in largely underserved public schools to those serving parents in more affluent communities who want an alternative to the local public school program.

The first of two sections provides an overview of common elements, including organizational structure, leadership and mission, novel curricula and programs, efforts to promote a community of continuous learning, partnerships and accountability for results. It also includes such illustrative samples as one school's list of parent involvement activities for which parents commit to serve 20 hours annually.

The second section provides rich descriptions about each of the schools featured, which include The Arts and Technology Academy Public Charter School, Washington, D.C.; BASIS School, Inc., Tucson, Ariz.; Community of Peace Academy, St. Paul, Minn.; KIPP Academy Houston, Houston, Texas; Oglethorpe Charter School, Savannah, Ga.; Ralph A. Gates Elementary School, Lake Forest, Calif.; Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, Boston, Mass.; and The School of Arts and Sciences, Tallahassee, Fla.

For a free copy of *Successful Charter Schools*, while supplies last, contact the Department's publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS with identification number EU 0109P. Or visit www.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charter for an online copy.