

**U.S. Department of Education  
Press Release**

**Federal Education Grants Aimed at Making Children Healthier,  
Decreasing Childhood Obesity**

"Schools for a Healthier US Challenge" part of the Bush Administration's plan to help Americans live longer, healthier lives

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RALEIGH, N.C. — U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige today joined other Cabinet members and senior members of the Bush Administration to encourage parents and schools to present healthier choices for children to help prevent childhood obesity, and announced federal education grants to support initiatives aimed at helping children eat healthy and exercise.

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," Secretary 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.

"We can change this, and we must. President Bush has directed that our schools work to make our children healthier through a new

initiative, the 'Schools for a HealthierUS Challenge.' We can educate our children and keep them healthy. And it only takes the right incentives, some common sense and a resolute will to make this happen."

Other top Bush Administration officials visited schools across the country today to underscore the Administration's commitment to promoting healthy children, including: Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. Each Department will also release a joint-brochure giving parents advice on healthy lifestyles, in English and Spanish.

Secretary Thompson, who spoke to 4th and 5th graders in Philadelphia, announced \$36 million in new funding for the Steps to a Healthier US Grant program whose goal is to reduce the burden of diabetes, overweight, obesity and asthma and addresses risk factors such as physical inactivity, poor nutrition and tobacco use. Secretary Veneman visited an elementary school in Woodbury, Minn., announced grants, had lunch with the students and participated in a visit to a physical education class. Surgeon General Dr Richard Carmona visited a new Steps grantee in Cleveland, Ohio, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Julie Gerberding visited a new program in DeKalb County, Georgia.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the bipartisan landmark education reform law designed to change the culture of America's schools by closing the achievement gap among groups of students, offering more flexibility to states, giving parents more options and teaching students based on what works. Under the law's strong accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those with disabilities, achieve academically.

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