CONGRATULATIONS to Secretary Richard W. Riley for Successful Education Revamping Campaign: Progress in Math and Science Cited

According to the *The National Education Goals Report: Building a Nation of Learners* (1994), the United States Department of Education has accomplished a lot of educational successes in the promotion of math and science all over the nation. In 1990, only one out of every five students in Grade 8, and only one out of every eight students in grades 4 and 12, had met the Goals Panel' s performance standard in mathematics. However, mathematics achievement increased significantly in 1992 among 4th and 8th graders, but not among 12th graders. As for science, American students are making rapid progress as well. In 1991, American 13-year-olds were outperformed by students in Taiwan, Korea and Hungary in three out of four areas tested on an international science assessment. In 1994 and 1995, American students caught up with their foreign counterparts and kept making significant progress. The following report from *The Washington Post* has justified my research and observation. (Chen-ching Li - Washington, D.C.)

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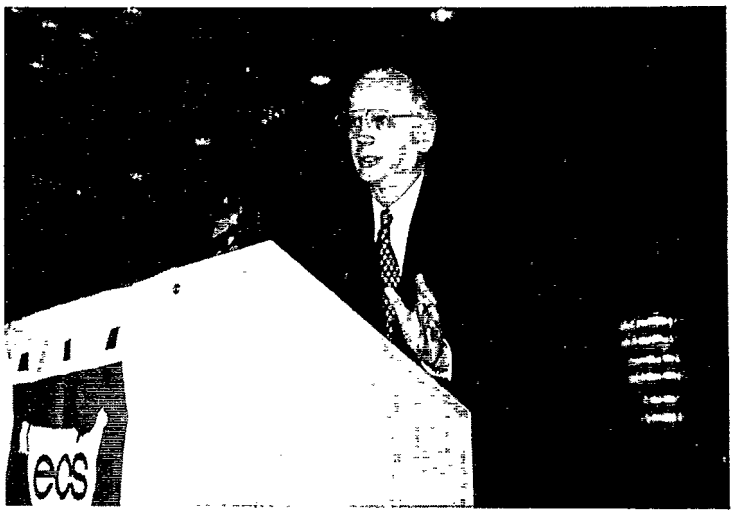

Secretary Richard W. Riley, recipient of the James B. Conant Award for outstanding service to education, addressed to educators during the 1995 ECS Meeting in Denver. (Photo by Chen-ching Li)

A Mixed Report Card for Education

Progress in Math and Science Cited, but Gap Between Whites and Hispanics Remains

By Valerie Strauss
Washington Post Staff Writer

American public school students are dropping out less and scoring higher on math and science tests than a decade ago, but educators are still not moving quickly enough to close a stubborn proficiency gap between white and Hispanic students, according to a report issued by the Department of Education.

The annual "Condition of Education" report, released Monday by the department's National Center for Education Statistics, also said that students are taking more difficult courses than they were before the landmark report "A Nation at Risk" was issued in 1983, and that more high school graduates head for college right after high school.

"Areas on which schools, communities and states have focused attention are now showing results of greater student achievement," Education Secretary Richard W. Riley said in an interview.

While he acknowledged that progress was "not as fast as we'd like it" and that some areas of the American educational system remain "in crisis," Riley said the country was "on the right path, and . . . this is no time to retreat from our efforts to keep education a national priority."

Riley criticized the $3.8 billion in education budget cuts passed by the House, especially when the number of students enrolled—in kindergarten through grade 12—will reach a record high of more than 51 million in 1997, according to Education Department projections. The Senate has yet to take up the budget cuts.

The annual report contains 60 indicators that shed light on American education from preschool through post-secondary education, including data on enrollment, student achievement, curricula, revenue and expenditures, staffing and salaries, and tuition.

According to Riley, the good news is directly related to reform efforts across the country that have taken root since "A Nation at Risk" advocated tougher course requirements for high school graduation.

He said the report is especially significant because it comes at a time when conditions for many schoolchildren are more difficult because of crime, violence, poverty and English deficiency. "The fact is that with many of the conditions out there that would mitigate against scores going up . . . the scores are generally up," he said.

For example, an emphasis on improving math and science proficiency is paying off: Between 1982 and 1992, the last year for which complete data are available, math and science proficiency scores of 17-year-olds increased 9 and 11 points, respectively. Proficiency scores in reading and writing have not shown similar increases.

During that same period, the percentage of high school graduates taking the courses recommended in "A Nation at Risk" jumped from 13 percent to 47 percent. That means students are taking more algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus, as well as advanced science courses.

Progress also can be seen in the number of students going directly to college after high school. Even though college costs are rising relative to family income, the proportion of students going straight to college—mostly four-year institutions—rose between 1980 and 1993 from 49 percent to 62 percent, the report said.

The report also saw a rise in the number of students who remain in high school. In 1980, for example, 93.9 percent of high school students from the year before were still enrolled; in 1993, the last year for which statistics are available, the percentage was 95.5.

Still, the report noted that efforts to close the performance gap between white and minority students have not been as successful as educators would like.

The report discussed at length the achievement of Hispanic students. It found that in 1993, 17 percent of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds were in preschool programs compared to 35 percent of white children. And as early as age 9, differences can still be seen in the academic performance of Hispanic and white students.

Although scores for Hispanic 9-year-olds have increased in math and science over the past 15 to 20 years, there has been little change in the gap between the scores of white and Hispanic 9-year-olds over this time period, the report said.

Furthermore, at age 13, the achievement gap between Hispanics and white students persists for reading, math and science, and the gap continues in high school, the report said.

"Hispanic children are likely to be at an educational disadvantage relative to whites for several reasons, including lower average levels of parental education and a greater likelihood of living in poverty," it said.