

National Center for Educational Accountability

national sponsor of Just for the Kids

Inform
Inspire
Improve

New and Improved www.Just4kids.org: What we did on our summer vacation!

History and mission

Since *Just for the Kids* was first established in 1995, its mission has been to inform, inspire and improve student achievement. It has done so by using achievement data as a means to shine a light on what high-performing schools and districts are doing to find success.

Celebrating its tenth year in service, eighth year hosting our public website, and fifth year of conducting studies of practices in more than 350 consistently high-performing schools and districts (now in fourteen states), *Just for the Kids* is determined to take data to the next level!

Today, the web is the most powerful and effective way to inform public school communities about students' academic success and help them make a positive impact on student achievement. At the same time, expectations and standards for presenting web-based information and tools increase at a very rapid pace. We therefore recognize the continuing need for improving the way we share information on our website.

With input from *Just for the Kids* state affiliates, we are excited to announce several new features that will benefit www.just4kids.org users and support school improvement efforts throughout the country.

Status of state-based information and tools

Our national home page map interface, which allows visitors to quickly enter and begin viewing school and best practice information for the state of their choice, is now shaded with different colors denoting the presence of *Just for the Kids* school reports, best practice state studies and consistently high-performing schools lists and analyses in each state. This allows our users to instantly find the status of a state's participation in the *Just for the Kids School Improvement Model*. This and many other features that improve the look and feel, navigation, and consistency of information found on the website were contributed by National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA), national sponsor of *Just for the Kids*, to increase the value of information shared on the site for all users.

Community tools in English and Spanish

A direct link to English and Spanish versions of the Communities *Just for the Kids* website (www.communitiesjust4kids.org) and tutorials are now available from the *Just for the Kids* US home page. Contribution of this direct link and information especially suited for families and communities of public schools was made possible through our sister organization, Communities *Just for the Kids*.

Performance at a glance through district and school “dashboards”

Just for the Kids interactive dashboards present school and district communities an overall understanding of performance within their entire district at a glance and allow them to easily view Just for the Kids School Reports at the grade and subject level within individual schools, including new *best in state* charts. The addition of *best in state charts* provides schools a way to always have a higher goal in mind. New links provided from the dashboard pages connect users with best practice evidence collected from not only best in state schools, but high-performing schools throughout the country.

To view our new dashboards, simply search for a school or district and the first view you'll see will contain this new feature. Contribution of this feature's design and functionality came from our *Just for the Kids-California* affiliate and exemplifies the importance and value of collaboration of our network of state affiliate partners.

Using high-performers as benchmarks for success

Just for the Kids Consistently High-Performing Schools online data tools have just recently become available for several states. These tools equip school leaders with a user-friendly resource of information regarding consistently high-performing schools in their state, and connect them to information about their school's proximity to high-performance. More specifically, they will answer questions such as: *Which schools in my state are consistently high-performing in any given subject, or across all state-tested subjects? How does my school's performance compare to Just for the Kids criteria for identifying consistently high-performing schools?*

Development of this site area for *Just for the Kids-Texas* was supported in part by funding

from IBM Corporation and has now been added to thirteen state sites.

More to come

We hope that you will take time to visit www.just4kids.org and make good use of these new tools on behalf of your schools. Help features have also been expanded and we always encourage your feedback to make further improvements.

Our next release of enhancements is scheduled for Spring/Summer 2006. Updates to school data are dependent upon availability of data from each state. We anticipate 2005 data to begin populating state sites in October through December of this year.

More about NCEA and Just for the Kids

The National Center for Educational Accountability is a collaboration of The University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States and Just for the Kids. NCEA's mission is to improve learning through the effective use of school and student data and the identification and replication of best practices found in high-performing districts, schools and classrooms. NCEA is the national sponsor of Just for the Kids School Improvement Tools and Services which present complex data in a way that is fair, actionable and available for all members of our public school communities. NCEA works in partnership with a growing number of Just for the Kids state affiliate partners in over twenty states.

For more information or to *Contact Us*, visit www.just4kids.org or c/o **National Center for Educational Accountability**; 4030-2 West Braker Lane; Austin, TX 78759; Phone: 512.232.0770; Fax: 512.232.0777; mikehudson@just4kids.org or jspence@just4kids.org