

MEDIA ADVISORY

EVENT DATE: Tues., Sept. 9, at 10 a.m. CDT

U.S. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TO RECOGNIZE AMERICAN STAR OF TEACHING IN HOUSE SPRINGS, MISSOURI

The U.S. Department of Education's Linda McKay will highlight effective teaching practices and the *No Child Left Behind Act* during a visit to Cedar Springs Elementary School in House Springs, Mo., at 10 a.m. CDT on Tuesday, Sept. 9. In a surprise announcement, McKay will recognize third-grade science teacher Cathy Wittrock as Missouri's 2008 *No Child Left Behind* American Star of Teaching. U.S. Rep. Russ Carnahan and St. Louis Rams Linebacker Chris Draft will also attend the event.

WHO: **Linda McKay**, senior advisor to the assistant deputy secretary for safe and drug-free schools, U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Rep. Russ Carnahan
Chris Draft, linebacker, St. Louis Rams
Charles Nicastro, St. Louis Area supervisor for the Missouri State Department of Education
Kimm O'Connor, principal, Cedar Springs Elementary School

WHAT: School visit to Cedar Springs Elementary School

WHERE: Cedar Springs Elementary School , 6922 Rivermont Trails, House Springs, Mo.

WHEN: Tuesday, Sept. 9 at 10 a.m. CDT

With more than 400 students in grades K-4, Cedar Springs Elementary School in House Springs, Mo., made Adequate Yearly Progress in 2007, exceeding district and state averages. Approximately 29 percent of Cedar Springs' students are economically disadvantaged.

Cathy Wittrock uses inquiry based learning to teach science and has trained other teachers in her district and state. She also focuses on character education with her students to create a positive classroom environment. Wittrock and her students develop class rules and a motto and she uses props such as puppets, music and role-playing to help make learning real for her students. She also co-sponsors the Science Club, which helps students conduct experiments, as well as takes field trips and prepares students for the Science Fair.

"Teachers like Cathy Wittrock combine a passion for teaching with high expectations that every child can learn," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. "We at the U.S. Department of Education are proud to recognize these dedicated, hard-working professionals, who are committed to closing the achievement gap and challenging every child to achieve his or her potential."

Teachers across all grade levels and disciplines will be honored this fall as American Stars of Teaching. One teacher will be recognized in every state and the District of Columbia. A committee of former teachers at the U.S. Department of Education selected the American Stars from among 4,000 nominations based on their success in improving academic performance and making a difference in their students' lives.

Started in 2004, the American Stars of Teaching is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, which includes regional and district workshops, roundtables for teachers and principals, regular e-mail updates, and digital learning. By the end of this summer, the teachers of over one million students will have benefited from these Teacher-to-Teacher activities.

President Bush and Congress have provided an unprecedented \$31.8 billion in federal funding since 2002 to support teachers. One of President Bush's new initiatives -- the Teacher Incentive Fund - was funded for the first time in 2006 and is providing financial incentives to teachers who improve student achievement in high-poverty schools. Another program supporting teachers is permanent student loan forgiveness up to \$17,500 for highly qualified math and science teachers who choose to serve low-income communities.

The Department and Secretary Spellings are committed to supporting educators through efforts such as the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative and other programs.