

Biography of The Honorable ROD PAIGE

On January 20, 2001, the United States Senate confirmed Dr. Rod Paige as the 7th U.S. Secretary of Education and the first African-American to serve in this role.

For Paige, the son of public school educators that day was the crowning achievement of a long career in education and a life of determination and hard work that began in segregated Monticello, Mississippi.

His resume speaks of his persistence in the journey. He earned a bachelor's degree from Jackson State University in Mississippi and when he couldn't find a southern college that would admit African-Americans to graduate school, he went to Indiana University and earned both masters and doctorate degrees.

In the years since, he's been a teacher, a coach, a school board member, a dean of a college school of education, and superintendent of the nation's 7th largest school district in Houston, Texas.

Paige is the first school superintendent ever to serve as Secretary of Education. And his vast experience as a practitioner -- from the blackboard to the board room -- paid off during long hours of work to pass President Bush's number one domestic priority -- the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Now he is leading the charge -- in partnership with the states -- to implement these historic reforms that give local districts the tools and the resources to help every child learn, regardless of the color of their skin or the accent of their speech. And the first year since No Child Left Behind became the law of the land has seen good progress.

States have moved forward, working to improve student achievement, empowering parents with options and information, providing supplemental services to students in danger of being left behind, and tapping new sources for talented teachers to lead in our nation's classrooms.

In January, the Department celebrated a major victory for accountability when all states -- for the first time in the history of the American public school system -- submitted plans outlining how they will ensure that all their schools are places of high expectations and high standards. Five states have completed the peer review process and the rest are underway.

As Secretary, Paige has held the Department to the same high standards expected of our schools. Prior to his taking office, investigators uncovered wide-scale criminal fraud, abuse, and waste within the Department that was featured on NBC News' *The Fleecing of America*.