



Photos by Stephen Schmitt/The Journal News

Fifth-grade student Karen Goncalves, 10, of Mount Vernon wears with pride a hat with the message "Read To Succeed" to welcome state Education Commissioner Richard Mills yesterday to Lincoln Elementary School.

Education chief praises school's achievements

Mills also meets with business leaders for program support

David McKay Wilson
The Journal News

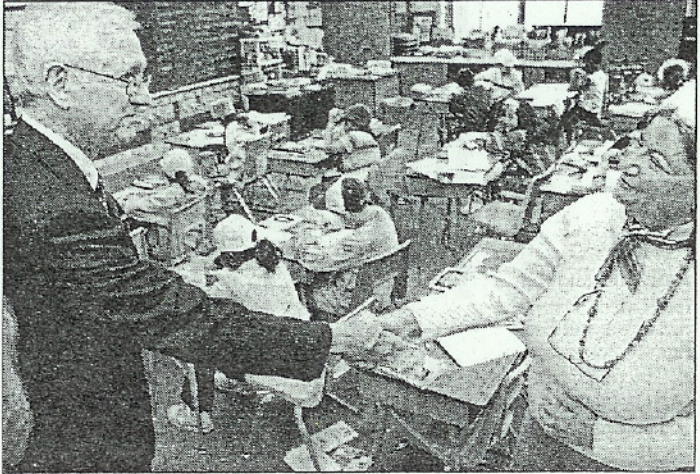
State Education Commissioner Richard Mills came to Westchester yesterday to visit a model elementary school in Mount Vernon and speak to business leaders involved in supporting his efforts to close the achievement gap between minority and white students.

The visit to Mount Vernon's Lincoln Elementary School was part of Mills' statewide tour of New York districts that have found a way to boost achievement at inner city schools. At Lincoln, Mills saw chess instruction in one classroom, while sixth-graders studied genetic theory in the school's computer lab.

In another classroom, students read essays about their favorite people, while fifth-graders conducted a science experiment with balloons in the carpeted corridor. When the experiment was botched because the students didn't properly measure the results, teacher Dawn Mullin told them they had to do it again.

"Good for you," Mills told Mullin. "If you didn't do it again, the students would get the feeling that it didn't matter."

This year, Lincoln was among the state's top-scoring schools on statewide standardized tests, with 99 percent of its fourth-graders passing the English Language Arts exam and 100 percent of its



State Education Commissioner Richard Mills yesterday congratulates Lincoln Elementary School teacher Michelle Gorshoff on a job well done. Gorshoff teaches fourth-grade math at the Mount Vernon school. Mills visited the school after it made great improvements in its students' test scores.

students passing the math test. It scores near the top in a school where 25 percent of the students have limited English proficiency and 53 percent qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches.

Mills attributed Lincoln's success to the leadership of its enthusiastic principal, George Albano, as well as its high expectations for students, top-notch teaching staff, and a school culture that promoted literacy.

"The principal was utterly devoted to the success of each student, and it showed," Mills said. "It's a happy place, and it's a serious place and you can see that the improvement is intentional, with educators there focused on data."

From Mount Vernon, Mills traveled to the Hilton Rye Town to

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es can keep pace in the global marketplace.

"I know that if you don't find the worker you need here, they will look elsewhere," Mills said.

The Westchester group is a member of the Business Council of New York, which has encouraged business leaders to join its Engage New York campaign, a call to engage business in promoting educational excellence.

The effort has strong support from Armonk-based computer giant IBM, which over the past decade has promoted standards-based reform on a national level through Achieve Inc.

Now IBM is lending its support to a statewide effort to support education reforms that will result in a highly educated work force.

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