

CASN NEWS February 2009

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"And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country -- and this country needs and values the talents of every American. That is why we will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world."

- President Barack Obama, February 24, 2009.

STIMULUS BILL INCLUDES SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

This month (February 2009) President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a landmark \$787 billion stimulus package that includes an unprecedented investment in children and schools.

Congressional leaders worked at legislative warp speed to iron out their differences and expedite the bill's passage. Although the economic stimulus package includes less funding for education than what the U.S. House called for, it contains more than what the Senate included in its version of the legislation. Ultimately, the ARRA provides:

- \$13 billion for Title I (\$10 billion for state grants and \$3 billion for school improvement)
- \$12.2 billion for IDEA
- \$2.1 billion for Head Start
- \$15.6 billion for Pell Grants

There is also approximately \$54 billion in discretionary stimulus education funds to be handled and disbursed by the U.S. Department of Education. These funds have some criteria attached to them for channeling to the states, but how they might be used is flexible. Also, while all of the money for new school construction was stripped out of the final bill, a portion of the state stabilization fund can be used for school repairs and renovation, no funds are allowed to be used for NEW buildings.

OBAMA OUTLINES SOME ED GOALS, INCLUDING INCREASE IN POSTSECONDARY ED

In his first address to a joint session of Congress, President Obama outlined a series of challenges for the nation that included giving every child a "complete and competitive education." Americans must attain greater levels of education, the president said, if the nation is to compete globally, and he pledged that his administration would work to make the U.S. have the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. "Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma," Mr. Obama said. "And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish." Education is vital to our national interest,

he asserted, because "countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow." President Obama called on Congress to ensure every U.S. child receives a "complete and competitive education" and asked high-school students to stay in school and complete at least a year of higher education. The country's high-school and college dropout rates are "a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow," he said. "Dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting on yourself -- it's quitting on your country."

Obama added that if young Americans commit to community service, "we will make sure that you can afford a higher education." Though offering few details, Mr. Obama mentioned legislation co-sponsored by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass) and Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), called the Serve America Act, which would make ServeAmerica Corps participants eligible for educational awards.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-na-obama-education25-2009feb25,0,2871040.story?track=rss>

U.S. SCHOOLS MORE RACIALLY SEGREGATED THAN BEFORE

About 40% of U.S. black and Latino students attend schools that are increasingly racially isolated, according to a new report from the University of California's Civil Rights Project. "It would be a tragedy if the country assumed from the Obama election that the problems of race have been solved, when many inequalities are actually deepening," said Gary Orfield, Civil Rights Project Co-Director.

MR. DUNCAN GOES TO WASHINGTON

Secretary of Education nominee Arne Duncan sailed through his recent confirmation hearings, buoyed by bipartisan support that had one senator, Republican Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, calling Duncan the "best" of "several distinguished" cabinet appointments by President-elect Obama, according to Education Week. Duncan was praised in his capacity as an innovator while head of the Chicago Public Schools, and professed a strong commitment to "accountability," while skirting the issue of the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Mr. Duncan also expressed support for charter schools and incentive pay for teachers, but stressed that these kinds of changes should be done with due consideration and in collaboration with teacher unions. He also declared support for increased funding to students in special education, and favors allowing students in special education and English-language learners to use alternative assessments under NCLB. He added that he hoped to get closer to the goal of universal pre-kindergarten. "At the K-12 level, we want to continue to dramatically raise standards and improve teacher quality," Mr. Duncan said. "We must do dramatically better. We must continue to

innovate. We must build upon what works and we must stop doing what doesn't work."

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/01/13/18duncan.h28.html>

MORE ON SECRETARY OF EDUCATION DUNCAN -- SOME ENCOURAGING WORDS

During his confirmation hearing on January 13, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan outlined the President's education priorities:

--"First, we must invest in early childhood education."

--"Second, we know that teacher quality must be addressed on many levels: recruitment, preparation, retention, and compensation."

--"Third, we know that only about 70% of high school students graduate."

--"Fourth, we must make sure that our citizens have the means and the encouragement to aim for education and training beyond high school."

Toward the end of his remarks, the Secretary also mentioned:

appropriately supporting students with disabilities; helping English language learners to be successful; promoting innovation that accelerates student learning; and aligning the education system to prepare students for the jobs of the future and the responsibilities of active citizenship in a democratic society.

http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2009_01_13/2009_01_13.html (source: Ed Review)

SUCCESS OF FINLAND'S SCHOOLS INTRIGUES TEXAS EDUCATORS

Educators in Texas are looking to Finland for ideas on how to close achievement gaps among students & improve math & science performance. School reformers in Texas are considering mirroring some steps Finland has taken, including the establishment of one curriculum for all schools, setting high standards for all students while providing help for those who need it & allowing well-trained teachers the freedom to teach. (source: The Dallas Morning News) (full story included in the accompanying CASN News - the HS Files, February 2009)

FLEX PERIODS ALLOW STUDENTS TO GET EXTRA HELP

Some Northern Virginia schools have added blocks of "flex time" to the school day to offer students additional tutoring, independent study or other assistance without having to have them come in before or after school. "People came to realize we needed to make the most of every minute," said Mel Riddile, an associate director at the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "This is a big issue with student achievement. Some students need more time and don't learn at the same rate."

ECONOMY SPURS GROWTH IN FLORIDA'S DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

More Florida high-school students are enrolling in college classes to save college tuition and textbook costs, and more educators are encouraging the practice because it will improve schools' grades from the state beginning next year. "We've always encouraged students to take higher-level courses, because it's the right thing to do and enhances students' abilities when they go to college, but now it becomes much more useful for the school," said Judy Klinek, an assistant Palm Beach County superintendent.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

The National Council of Teachers of English is calling for a more interactive approach to writing in schools that is expected to better engage students in the process. Students are writing e-mails, Facebook posts and text messages, and teachers must connect to this new approach and move away from the standard five-paragraph essay method of writing, officials said.

POLICY WATCH: PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR MERGING MOST SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Pennsylvania's 500 school districts would be consolidated to 100 or fewer under a proposal offered by Gov. Ed Rendell that would also increase total public school funding by 2.8%. "There is nothing sacrosanct about the need to maintain 500 separate schools districts across the state -- each with its own staggering, & growing, administrative costs," he told the legislature. *source: Philadelphia Inquirer*

"SHAPING" NEW POLICY WATCH: DUNCAN MAY TAKE LISTENING TOUR

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan says that after working under No Child Left Behind as head of Chicago Public Schools, he is in step with school accountability, but wants NCLB to be less punitive. Duncan said that having every state devise its own standards under NCLB is a bad idea. He also wants to "rebrand" the law, but is unsure what to call it and says he's open to suggestions. *source: U.S. News & World Report.*

THE FORGOTTEN MIDDLE - MAKING SURE THAT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE ON TARGET FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER

The level of academic achievement students reach by eighth grade has a greater impact on their college- and work-readiness than anything that happens academically in high school. Unfortunately, most eighth graders are not on track to be college- and work-ready upon graduation, according to The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring that All Students Are on Target for College and Career Readiness before High School, a new report from ACT.

Researchers analyzed predictors of college- & career-readiness, including background characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, parent education level, family income, & main language spoken at home; course work; high school grade point average; & student testing behaviors. None of the predictors, though, had as much impact as eighth grade achievement. Generally, only those students who were on target for college- & work-readiness in the eighth grade were actually ready in eleventh or twelfth grade.

Researchers found that to ensure that students are adequately prepared & on target to be college- & work-ready by 8th grade, interventions must be made in the previous grades. The following recommendations are made in the report to boost academic achievement & preparedness for postsecondary success:

- 1) focus K-8 standards on the knowledge and skills necessary for college- and work-readiness, and require them for all students;
- 2) monitor student progress and intervene with students who are not on target for readiness, starting in the upper elementary grades and continuing through middle school;
- 3) improve students' academic behaviors; and
- 4) increase federal and state support for schools to implement intervention programs.

<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ForgottenMiddle.pdf>

WHY AREN'T MORE MINORITY STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ADVANCED CLASSES -- OR DOES ASPIRATION DRIVE TRACKING IN FLORIDA

As more Florida middle-school students enroll in high-school classes in the hopes of getting ahead, some educators worry that black and Hispanic children are being left behind, creating de facto segregation. Most of the Florida middle-school students taking advanced classes are white, even at some schools where the total student population is overwhelmingly minority, a newspaper analysis found.

Some experts in middle grade education fear this is basically segregation, but the issue breaks down into the familiar arguments around student tracking: some say middle-school students aren't ready to be treated like high-school students, while others complain that the brightest children shouldn't be held back because minorities aren't signing up for certain courses. Officials point out that the courses are voluntary, and this is the crux of the matter to some observers. Parent involvement is key and should be encouraged in communities where minority parents are less likely to have gone to college or have high educational aspirations for their children. "Unless you believe that African-American and Latino kids are

somehow, as a group, academically inferior to white kids," said Professor Kevin Welner, who has written on this topic, "then you have to believe there are a lot of kids in those lower-track classes who have the potential for tremendous academic success."

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/orl-middle1509feb15,0,7368875.story>

HAS OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM REPLACED HEALTH CARE AS "OUR GREATEST NATIONAL SHAME"?

In an op-ed piece in The New York Times, Nicholas Kristof writes that our education system has replaced our healthcare system as "our greatest national shame." America once held a global edge because of our willingness to educate all children well, not just male elites, but since the 1970s other countries have surpassed us, in his opinion. The stimulus bill "takes some wobbly steps toward reform," and he notes that its \$100 billion for education almost doubles the entire discretionary budget for the Department of Education. He also asks pointedly: "For those who oppose education spending in the stimulus, a question: Do you really believe that slashing half a million teaching jobs would be fine for the economy, for our children and for our future?" He notes that there are numerous education programs that, while small in scale, "have done remarkably well in overcoming the pathologies of poverty," & cites researchers who say we now know from education data where there are huge opportunities to successfully change the way children are taught and encourage meaningful student achievement. We "know that the existing national school system is broken," Kristof says, "and that we're not trying hard enough to fix it."

Read more: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/opinion/15kristof.html>

See also: <http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-me-schools13-2009feb13,0,5490153.story>

MAY IS NATIONAL EXHIBITION MONTH

For the past several years, the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) has encouraged schools to participate in National Exhibition Month, a nation-wide campaign to promote and celebrate exhibitions as a preferred form of student assessment. NEM mobilizes hundreds of schools and organizations to participate in activities that make their exhibition work public and to advocate for the use of exhibitions in their local contexts.

As the Obama administration and a new Congress consider setting new priorities for education, CES is counting on the involvement of educators and community

activists to help push the discussion about assessment on a local and national level.

Because May is fast approaching, you are encouraged to begin planning your participation right away. Whether writing a letter to the editor, hosting a public event at your school, or inviting media or community leaders to observe or judge exhibitions, find a way to participate that is both realistic and engaging.

Over the next few weeks, CES asks that you complete a short online survey about exhibitions and how you plan to participate in May. CES collects this information and uses it to organize the nationwide effort. To access the survey, please click on the following link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=POKsPOVmuQRpzzC9pZ8nxw_3d_3d.

For more information, including suggestions for activities, resources, and support materials for how to organize a successful event, please visit: <http://www.essentialschools.org/exhibitions.html>.

PRACTICES TO CELEBRATE

First Annual San Diego Science Festival — Saturday, February 28, 2009 through Saturday, April 4, 2009

The San Diego Science Festival—the first event of its kind in California and planned as the biggest celebration of science on the West Coast—introduces San Diego’s Nifty Fifty science role models. The Nifty Fifty started as a group of 50 and has now grown to more than 100 science community leaders who are volunteering their time to increase educational interest and awareness in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). This elite group of scientists will visit area middle and high schools in the spring of 2009 to speak to students about science and research, their own personal challenges and aspirations as scientists, and “hot” careers in science. They will encourage students to take advantage of the many activities planned for the Festival, which will positively impact over 100,000 students throughout the greater San Diego area. For more information about the festival, contact Larry Bock at 760-846-3473 or biobock@mac.com, or go to <http://sdsciencefestival.com/>.

Top Students Tutor 9th & 10th Graders

In the hopes of raising freshman and sophomore student achievement, one Florida high school is asking top upperclassmen to tutor younger students to prepare them for the annual state test in March in the hopes of raising the school's grade from a

D to a B. "I want the Class of '09 to be the one that made a difference," said tutor Salina Peace.

SOME FUNDING, AWARD, & TEACHER-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Applications The U.S. Department of Education has announced the opening of applications for the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship at the U.S. Department of Education for the 2009-2010 school year. Currently practicing, state certified Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade public school teachers and instructional specialists/coaches with at least three years of teaching experience are eligible to apply by March 16, 2009. For the 2008-2009 pilot year of the Fellowship program, 20 part-time Classroom Fellows and 5 full-time Washington Fellows are serving as Teaching Ambassador Fellows, learning about and contributing to the national dialogue on education policy.

For more information about the 2009-2010 Fellowship application and other opportunities to learn about federal education policy and public resources supporting classroom teaching and learning, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship>.

NEH Summer Programs For School Teachers for 2009

Each summer the National Endowment for the Humanities supports rigorous national seminars, institutes, and workshops for American school teachers. Program participants receive stipends to help defray travel and living expenses.

Seminars and Institutes

Seminars and Institutes are 2-6 week projects which take place in the United States and abroad. They are intended to deepen the participants' understanding of important subjects in the humanities. For a complete list of the 31 projects offered in the summer of 2009, along with eligibility requirements and contact information for the directors, go to the NEH website at: www.neh.gov/projects/si-school.html. Application Deadline is March 2, 2009 (postmark). TIME SENSITIVE

Landmarks of American History and Culture

Landmarks of American History and Culture are 1-week workshops which take place at sites of historical or cultural significance across the nation. They provide teachers with the opportunity to engage in intensive study and discussion of important topics in American history and culture. For a complete list of the 20 projects offered in the summer of 2009, along with eligibility requirements and contact information for the directors, go to the NEH website at: www.neh.gov/projects/landmarks-school.html. Application Deadline is March 16, 2009 (postmark).

Just Do One Video Contest

Have you ever wanted to change the world? Just Do One is on a worldwide quest for the best short video articulating personal-action solutions for a better planet.

Entrants must be U.S. residents, 13 years or older. The grand prize winner will receive \$5,000.

Entries accepted from January 1, 2009 through midnight, March 1, 2009. (Please note that the deadline may be moved to April 1 or May 1, 2009, dependent upon the receipt of a total of when at least 100 entry videos have been received.

<http://justdoone.org/> TIME SENSITIVE

Igniting Creative Energy (ICE) National Student Challenge

The 8th annual Igniting Creative Energy Challenge is an educational competition is designed to encourage students to learn more about energy conservation and the environment. Student entries must reflect the theme "Igniting Creative Energy" and demonstrate an understanding of what an individual, family or group can do to make a difference in their home or community.

A total of four grand prizes will be awarded to three students and one teacher. Three students, one in each grade cluster, whose work best addresses the challenge criteria will receive a hosted trip to Washington, D.C., for themselves and a parent or legal guardian. In addition, the teacher with the highest average score of student work from fifteen or more qualifying entries will also receive a trip for two to Washington, D.C. While there, students will share their winning challenge entries with government and energy leaders during the 20th Annual Energy Efficiency Forum, June 15-16, at the National Press Club.

In addition to the national winners, the highest scoring student in each state or province will be recognized. Schools may also be eligible to receive a \$1,000 U.S. charitable donation to help beautify their school, educate their students, or otherwise impact their community.

The program is open to all students in grades K-12 in the United States and Canada (except Quebec), however only students enrolled in accredited public and private schools are eligible for the grand prize. Entry deadline is March 13, 2009. <http://www.ignitingcreativeenergy.org/>

Listen to a Life Contest

What can you learn when you listen to a life? Young people can become more aware of their own dreams and goals – and what's needed to achieve them – when they hear the real-life stories of older adults. The annual Listen to a Life Essay Contest is also an opportunity to build closer connections between young and old as they get to know each other in new, often unexpected ways.

To enter, a young person 8-18 years old interviews an older person over 50 years (cannot be a parent; they can be a grandparent, older friend, mentor, neighbor, nursing home resident, etc.) about their hopes and goals through their life, how they achieved goals and overcame obstacles, or how dreams may have changed along the way.

The contest is open to legal residents of the United States and Canada (except Quebec).

The grand prize is a Lenovo ThinkCentre computer with \$800 of Orchard Software and an iPod Classic with video from Orchard Software plus \$25,000 of Orchard Software for the school. Twenty runner-up prizes of \$400 of Orchard Software and an iPod Shuffle from Orchard Software.

The Listen to a Life Contest runs to March 30, 2009 at 11:59 pm ET. <http://www.legacyproject.org/contests/ltal.html>

Doodle for Google Contest

There is not much time to get the word out on this one, so tell your colleagues, especially the art and computer teachers/students. Google is sponsoring its annual "Doodle for Google" contest with some pretty good prizes. <http://www.google.com/doodle4google/>

CDWG "Win a Wireless Lab Sweepstakes"

Win one of five Grand Prize packages, including a 21st Century Classroom (interactive whiteboard, notebook computers, wireless cart, projector, printer and document camera) and a \$5,000 digital media grant from Discovery Education. Over 25 additional technology prizes will also be awarded. Schools can win only one prize. The Grand Prizes are valued between \$41,658 and \$41,957.

The contest is open only to K-12 public school students. All entries are made on behalf of the entrant's school. There are monthly random drawings to award the

prizes: January 3-31, 2009, February 1-29, 2009, March 1-31, 2009, April 1-30, 2009, and May 1, 2009.

<http://cdwg.discoveryeducation.com/1208/rules.cfm>

Doors to Diplomacy Competition

The U.S. Department of State and Global SchoolNet are pleased to announce the 2009 "Doors to Diplomacy" competition. This educational award program recognizes student-created web projects that best teach others about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy.

=> Register now! => Projects due March 15, 2009

=> Open to students middle/high school students ages 12-19 worldwide

Engage students in a performance-based collaborative, project-design competition which:

*Supports standards-based coursework

*Increases students' global perspective

*Connects students to their local communities

*Increases real world, workforce preparation, transferable skills

*Involves students in the assessment

*Teaches students 21st century, information-age skills

(research, teamwork, project-management, publishing, digital media, audio, video)

Students work in small teams with teacher-coaches. Projects must be completed by March 15, 2009. Winners will be announced in May 2009. Every team completing a final entry will receive a special "Doors to Diplomacy" certificate recognizing their achievement. Each student member of the team winning the "Doors to Diplomacy" receives a \$2,000 scholarship, and the winning coaches' schools each receive a \$500 cash award.

For a complete description and information about eligibility and judging criteria go to: <http://www.globalschoolnet.org/gsndoors/>

For more information, contact:

- Dr. Yvonne Marie Andres, Global SchoolNet, Phone: 760-635-0001

- Janice Clark, U.S. Department of State, Phone: 703-875-5086

American Honda Foundation: Grants for Youth and Scientific Education

The American Honda Foundation makes grants to K-12 schools, colleges, universities, trade schools, and other youth-focused non-profit organizations for

programs that benefit youth and scientific education. Maximum award: \$60,000.
Eligibility: schools and youth-focused nonprofit organizations. Deadline: Grant applications are accepted four times per year; next deadline is May 1, 2009.
<http://corporate.honda.com/america/philanthropy.aspx?id=ahf>