

CASN News January 2011

CASN News is supported by the Career Academy Support Network. CASN is based in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California Berkeley and works primarily with high schools and districts engaged in high school redesign.

To learn more about CASN and for free, down-loadable resources; videos about academy practices; an academy forms bank; and more, visit <http://casn.berkeley.edu> We also invite you to visit our new College Going Culture/ College Access website at <http://collegetools.berkeley.edu>

"Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."- Albert Einstein

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ANNOUNCEMENT: CASN SEEKS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Career Academy Support Network (CASN), a project of the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley, seeks an Executive Director. Since 1998 CASN has provided technical assistance, research, and policy analysis to help high schools implement and improve career academies and other small learning communities (see <http://casn.berkeley.edu>). Unusually strong research evidence indicates that career academies can contribute to students' success in high school and beyond.

CASN funding comes from foundation grants and from contracts with local, state, and federal education agencies.

Duties of the Executive Director include:

- (1) developing new funding and taking the lead in writing and submitting proposals;
- (2) overseeing contract management, project budgets and the allocation of staff time to projects;
- (3) providing direction and ongoing guidance for CASN staff;
- (4) writing and submitting reports to funders;
- (5) managing CASN communications including the web site and CASN reports;
- (6) conducting research and professional development and writing reports;
- (7) maintaining and developing relationships with other organizations and agencies in the field;
- (8) making presentations at meetings and conferences;
- (9) taking the lead in strategic planning; and
- (10) carrying out individual projects and project tasks.

Applicants should have experience organizing and operating career academies or other small learning communities in high schools; a successful record of writing proposals and carrying out funded projects in education; demonstrated ability to coordinate a team of professionals who work independently; and experience managing complex projects in districts and schools. Desirable qualifications also include an administrative credential, or a masters or doctoral degree in education or a related field; experience working with schools both within and outside California; and some familiarity with the University of California.

Applications are due by January 31, 2011. The appointment may start as early as March, 2011. Salary range is \$98,900 to \$109,900 depending on prior experience and qualifications. Applicants should email a statement explaining interest and qualifications, with an attached vita or resume, to Carrie Collins ccollins@berkeley.edu.

FEDERAL ED FUNDING FOR 2011 TO BE DETERMINED BY NEW, MORE FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE CONGRESS

Funding for K-12 programs will remain frozen at current levels for more than two months under legislation approved by Congress....leaving it to the new more-fiscally conservative

Congress that recently took office to set final spending levels for fiscal 2011.

The bill extended funding for almost all federal programs, including those in the U.S. Department of Education, at fiscal 2010 levels until March 4. Advocates are already bracing for a potentially protracted budget battle when lawmakers finish the job of writing the spending bills for fiscal year 2011, which began back on October 1.

By the time the measure expires, the now-Democratic House of Representatives will have changed to Republican control and the GOP will have larger numbers in the Senate—the party gained six seats in that chamber in the 2010 midterm election. House Republican leaders have pledged to restore federal spending to fiscal year 2008 levels, although they haven't been specific about which programs they would like to scale back. Senate Republicans and some Democrats also have pledged to take a tougher fiscal line.

The short-term extension is “the worst option for education,” said Joel Packer, a principal at the Washington-based Raben Group, which represents the Committee for Education Funding, a lobbying coalition.

Mr. Packer, who previously worked as a lobbyist for the National Education Association, is expecting a grim fiscal fight come January. He said an unfinished fiscal 2011 budget makes it harder for districts to plan for the future, and he held out little hope for increases once the new Congress is in place.

“It’s going to be terrible,” he said. “I think we’ll be negotiating between a significant cut and a freeze. ... I would be hopeful that President Obama actually draws some firm lines in the sand and says if they send me a bill that cuts education [and other priorities] below [certain] levels, I will veto.” (source: Education Week)

POLICY WATCH: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OBAMA'S EDUCATION AGENDA IN 2011

President Barack Obama's ambitious education agenda will face new challenges under a Republican-dominated House taking office this month. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle are in agreement that the No Child Left Behind law needs to be revised, but the divided Congress makes it unlikely that the law will be rewritten in 2011, some say. Representative John Kline, the incoming Republican chairman of the House education committee, plans to seek a reduction in the role the federal government plays in setting policies for the nation's schools.(source: New York Times)

COLLEGE BOARD PLANS REVISIONS FOR AP EXAMS

The College Board is announcing an overhaul of many Advanced Placement courses. Standardized curricula will be created for the courses and synchronized with new exams to eliminate much of the uncertainty about AP exams. It also will allow teachers to spend more class time helping students develop critical-thinking skills. The changes will first affect German and French, followed by biology and U.S. History courses in

2012-13. Changes to other AP subjects will be introduced in 2014 or beyond. (See a longer article in the accompanying CASN News HS Files)

STUDENT DUO WINS SIEMENS PRIZE FOR DEVELOPING SPEECH-RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Two Oregon high-school students won top team honors in an academic competition sponsored by the Siemens Foundation for their work in developing speech-recognition technology that could be used to assist autistic children. The students, who said they were inspired by the movie "I, Robot," developed a more accurate algorithm for technology that recognizes emotions in a person's speech. The pair is working on a wristband device equipped with the technology that could be used by autistic children, who often have difficulties recognizing emotions in others. Another student won the top individual prize for his star-formation research.

IN THE NEWS: VIRTUAL LEARNING AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS

There is new "national" thinking among E-Learning organizations and proponents. The widespread pledge by most states to adopt common core standards could allow virtual education to truly break down state boundaries for teachers and students, experts say.

ED WEEKS NAMES MARYLAND TOP STATE IN TERMS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, POLICY AND FINANCING

Maryland schools were top-ranked nationally for the third year in a row in an annual Education Week evaluation of schools' performance, policy-making and financing. New York, Massachusetts, Virginia and Florida followed in the top five. Nebraska, South Dakota and Washington, D.C., received the worst grade -- a D-plus -- and the country as a whole received a C. "What makes Maryland stand out is that it is on the one hand a strong achiever and has shown improvement, but it is also a real leader in terms of policy," said Education Week's vice president of editorial projects in education.

RESEARCH STUDY FROM GATES FOUNDATION OFFERS CLUES TO TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

"Value added" gauges based on growth in student test scores and students' perceptions of their teachers both hold promise as components of a system for identifying and promoting teacher effectiveness, according to preliminary findings from the first year of a major study.

The analysis released ...by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, shows that teachers' value-added histories strongly predicted how they would perform in other classrooms or

school years—as did students’ perceptions of their teachers’ ability to maintain order in the classroom and provide challenging lessons. The findings are part of the Seattle-based foundation’s \$45 million Measure of Effective Teaching study. The project seeks to identify the most accurate measures of superior teaching.

While underscoring the preliminary nature of the findings, Gates officials said they were heartened to see that some of the measures being studied do appear predictive of good teaching. “I was hugely excited and encouraged” by the findings, said Vicki Phillips, the foundation’s director of education programs. “It has implications for what people can be doing right now. It begins to answer questions teachers have had. And I think it shows that valid teacher feedback doesn’t need to be limited to test scores alone.”

The preliminary findings are based on data from five of the six districts participating in the study. They are New York City; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.; Hillsborough County, Florida; Dallas, Texas; and Denver, Colorado.

A team of researchers directed by Thomas J. Kane, the foundation’s deputy director of research and data for its education program, analyzed student scores on state tests given in grades 4-8 in the 2009-10 school year, using value-added modeling. Such modeling purports to control for a student’s past performance and other factors so that learning gains can be attributed to specific teachers.

The researchers also analyzed student-perception data gathered from 2,519 classrooms, grades 4-8. Those data were gathered by using the Tripod survey instrument, developed by Harvard University researcher Ron Ferguson, in which students score teachers on a 1-to-5 scale on such aspects as whether teachers make the point of their lessons clear, are caring and considerate of students, and explain material in several different ways.

The analysts found that, in every grade and subject studied, teachers’ value-added histories were strongly predictive of their performance in other classrooms. While they found a degree of volatility in the estimates from year to year, that volatility “is not so large as to undercut the usefulness of value-added as an indicator of future performance,” the study says. Similarly, the researchers found that student perceptions of a given teacher were generally consistent across his or her classes, and that students gave high ratings to teachers whose classes consistently made learning gains. (sources: Education Week, N.Y. Times, Washington Post)

SUCCESS STRATEGIES FROM THE BROAD PRIZE DISTRICTS

Since 2002, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation has awarded the Broad Prize to the large urban school district that has made the most progress nationwide in raising student achievement, narrowing achievement gaps between income and ethnic groups, and improving college readiness. The Broad Foundation recently published an analysis of the data used to inform the decision for the 2010 Broad Prize. This new analysis includes strategies from some of the 30 large urban school districts that show better relative academic performance than their states for African-American, Hispanic, or low-income students.

According to Kati Haycock, President, The Education Trust, "None of these school districts would ever suggest that their work is complete. But many are leading their states -- some, indeed, the nation -- in improving the learning outcomes and life chances for low-income students and students of color. As school systems work to provide a quality education to all children, regardless of family background, we need to identify and learn from those who are paving the way." Eli Broad adds, "These 30 districts offer inspiration and hope to every educator, parent, leader, and citizen who is committed to preparing students for college, careers, and life in the 21st century. At the same time, we need to be concerned that more than two-thirds of America's large urban districts still trail their state averages in serving traditionally under-served students. We must learn from and replicate successful district practices nationwide."

Among the Districts and policies and practices featured in the analysis are:

** Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia

- Rigorous curriculum (with explicit benchmarks in every grade and every subject) is relevant to students' lives
- Central office exists to serve teachers, acting as a model and guide for instructional effectiveness
- Superintendent provides skillful leadership, and the board works collaboratively, efficiently, and effectively
- District's organizational structure supports student achievement and district goals
- Smart budgeting ensures a primary focus on students
- "Results-based accountability system" drives continuous improvement and holds all staff accountable.
- Each school prepares an annual data-driven improvement plan.

** Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach, California

- Teachers use a common core pedagogy that outlines specific expectations and instructional requirements and encourages higher order thinking
- Teachers receive regular objective feedback from classroom "walkthroughs" that

are aligned to school and district goals.

- Student achievement goals drive the recruitment, selection, hiring, & placement of staff.
- District undergoes continuous improvement that is fueled by extensive student data and comprehensive evaluation of progress.
- District keeps the community engaged and involved.
- Students have extensive school choice and individualized learning opportunities (e.g., about 40 percent of students attend an out-of-boundary school)

**** Socorro Independent School District, Texas**

- Students at risk of dropping out are proactively identified, monitored, and supported, with those most at risk receiving extensive, one-on-one mentoring.
- A specialized instructional protocol is used to boost academic achievement among English Language Learners
- Assessment data is routinely analyzed to make instructional and resource decisions
- Staff monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and provide feedback to one another on how to improve.
- Principals are true instructional leaders.
- Central office holds schools accountable for academic performance and provides them with support necessary to improve.
- District develops an annual district improvement plan with community participation.

Editor's NOTE: There is a web site associated with the Broad Prize that includes District Fact Sheets and data as well as Best Practice Tools by category, articles on Best Practices, and discussions with superintendents. <http://www.broadprize.org/resources/overview.html>

VOICES OF OUR STUDENTS: HEAR US OUT - PATH TO COLLEGE

In Spring 2010, a group of 12 high school students in Hamilton County, Tenn., and another 13 high school students in Seattle asked their peers questions as part of a What Kids Can Do (WKCD) project called Hear Us Out, a collaboration with two local education funds, Chattanooga's Public Education Foundation and Seattle's Alliance for Education. The results showed that too often, students lack supports and resources on their path to college. Almost a third of students said they had never spoken with a school counselor on the topic, and though 86 percent said the idea of college had been planted starting in

elementary school and peaking in grades 6-9, they wished these early conversations had been followed up with concrete advice and help as soon as they entered high school, instead of junior or senior year. Sixty-eight percent indicated they planned to attend college right after graduation, but more than two-thirds said the cost of college was their biggest hurdle, and 40 percent knew little about financial aid. On almost every measure, lower-income students faced more obstacles and less support than higher-income students, beginning at the planning stage, when 78 percent of higher-income students say they expect to attend college right after graduation, compared with 64 percent of lower-income students. Comparable gaps show up when responses of white and Asian students are placed beside African-American and Hispanic students. For example, 79 percent of Asian students expect to attend college right after graduation, but only 56 percent of Hispanics do.

http://www.centerforyouthvoice.org/Center_for_Youth_Voice/Hear_Us_Out.html

FROM THE BLOGS

As American educators ponder what and how students will learn via "next-generation" standards and tests, a new British analysis suggests differences in why students study can have as great an impact on their college and career readiness.

"Learning, Performance and Improvement," in the latest issue of the London-based Institute of Education journal *Research Matters* finds students learn and behave differently if they—and their teachers—focus on improving their knowledge and competence rather than proving it. Yet simply talking about learning won't overcome a classroom atmosphere focused on meeting test benchmarks.

In a review of more than 100 studies from the U.S. and across the globe, Chris Watkins, Institute reader in education at the University of London, ties the current discussion over how to teach modern critical thinking and problem-solving skills back to the decades-old discussion of students' motivation in the classroom.

The research suggests two parallel motivations drive student achievement: "learning orientation," the drive to improve your knowledge and competency; and "performance orientation," the drive to prove that competency to others. Watkins found the highest-achieving students had a healthy dose of both types of motivation, but students who focused too heavily on performance ironically performed less well academically, thought less critically, and had a harder time overcoming failure.

SOME ON LINE RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Hybrid Medical Animation's Videos

Finding it difficult to "show" your health or biology students how different parts of their cells, bodies, or even toothpaste work? Try this part of the Vimeo site. It has animations of different cellular and molecular processes. The animations are not only factual but they are beautiful as well. Videos are shareable and can be embedded onto websites. The clips are spectacular for entry level biology students to visualize molecular and cellular processes, but the detail and intricacy of the clips makes them extremely suitable for advanced placement biology students. <http://vimeo.com/hybridmedical/videos>

32 Interesting Ways to Use Goggle Docs

Find exceptional ideas for using Google Docs in this online presentation. Use ideas presented here at a variety of levels and subject areas. Create a collaborative environment using these ideas. Revisit this presentation often as more ideas are frequently added. https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=dhn2vcv5_8323t58h3ft

Digital Is: The National Writing Project

This collection is an attempt to unpack the wide range of technology-based writing, show what it might look like in practice, and explore new multi-media authoring tools and websites that redefine the kinds of writing students can compose in our classrooms. The Digital Is website hosts resources, reflections, and stories about what it means to teach writing in our digital, interconnected world. It explores how we write, share, collaborate, publish, and participate today and in the future, and what that means for the teaching of writing. It is an emerging knowledge-base created and curated by its community of educators, kindergarten through university level. In today's world of texting, tweeting, blogging, and social networking, young people are learning new literacies to succeed in the information rich, fast paced world, and schools need to embrace exciting challenges by adapting teaching practices and equipping students with the technology-related communication skills they need to thrive in school and in the global workplace. <http://digitalis.nwp.org/>

Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project - Stanford University

Stanford's collection of King resources is among the most complete, and includes biographical and contextual information on King and his work. There are original documents as well as timelines and other study aids. Visit the Liberation Curriculum to find lesson plans, an online dictionary, and other features. The lesson plans are linked to standards. The site also includes video clips that require Flash. <http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/>

TEDTalks

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design. It started in 1984 as a conference that brought together people from those three worlds, but has broadened its scope since then. TEDTalks began as a way to share what happens at TED with the world. Under the tagline "ideas worth spreading, talks from TED were posted online. Millions around the world are fans of TED and both educators and students will find something inspiring. TED is a favorite source of new learning. <http://www.ted.com>

**** Sidebar: Several of you have asked for a source for a recent "animated" version of one of Sir Ken Robinson's talks. You can find this on TED at http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms.html*

Edutopia

Edutopia is supported by the George Lucas Educational Foundation and features stories and videos about best practices in schools and districts; successful, interactive learning environments; project-based learning; and more. There is a rich collection of videos, many of which can be downloaded or streamed online. <http://www.edutopia.org>

SOME FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Google Global Science Fair

Google revealed today that it's launching the Google Science Fair, which the company described as the "first global online science competition." Google partnered with a number of organizations to launch the competition, including CERN, the Lego Group, National Geographic, and Scientific American.

Students aged 13 to 18 are eligible to participate in the inaugural Google Science Fair singly or in groups of two or three. Registration is opening today and will be open through April 4.

Judging criteria will focus on quality of the data, the writeup, and the significance of the concept for the project, as well as the quality of the video or presentation that the students must produce for the project. There is no specific theme for the debut event, but the rules for the competition state that the question should be "interesting, creative, worded scientifically and relevant to the world today." A sample project can be found on the google Science Fair site. <http://www.google.com/events/sciencefair/> (There are special sections for students and teachers. The Teachers section includes tips on motivating and supporting students, etc.)

The initial round of judging in May will result in 60 semifinalists. Fifteen finalists will be chosen from this pool to participate in a live, in-person event to be held at Google headquarters in July. Those finalists will be selected from three age groups--13 to 14, 15 to 16, and 17 to 18--with five finalists chosen from each group.

Prize will be awarded to the 15 finalists, along with a grand prize winner and a people's choice winner. They include a \$50,000 scholarship for the grand prize winner (split evenly among team members should a team win), \$25,000 for each finalist or finalist team, and \$10,000 for the people's choice winner. Prizes for the students' schools and families will also be awarded.

Further information about the Google Science Fair can be found at <http://www.google.com/events/sciencefair/>

National Igniting Creative Energy Challenge

The National Igniting Creative Energy Challenge is an educational competition 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. Maximum award: \$1,000 for school. Eligibility: students in grades K-12. Deadline: February 17, 2007. <http://www.ignitingcreativeenergy.org/>